The Roaring Twenties

Social Studies 30-1
Chapter Issue: To what extent do contemporary economic policies and practices reflect the principles of liberalism?

Question for Inquiry #1: In what ways did economies in the first half of the 20th century reflect the principles of liberalism?

Question for Inquiry #2: In what ways have economies reflected the principles of liberalism since the Second World War?

The Roaring Twenties
The Stock Market Crash
The Great Depression
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Question for Inquiry #2:
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Consider This...

How do the developments of economic prosperity, mass production, mass marketing, and consumerism reflect the principles of liberalism? How might this affect attitudes in society?
Post WW1

In the post-war atmosphere with the memories of the recent First World War still lingering, conservative Republican candidate Warren G. Harding became president of the United States in 1921.

Harding campaigned on a platform that promised a “return to normalcy.” The three central ideas of this platform were:

- isolationism—a retreat from involvement in other countries’ affairs, especially European countries
- nativism—the promotion of policies that favor the existing dominant culture in a country and reduce immigration
- a reduction of government involvement in the lives of citizens
Harding’s Presidency

✓ With the Revenue Act of 1921, Harding reduced income taxes, and repealed the excess profits tax that had been applied to corporations during the First World War.

✓ The Harding administration also passed the Emergency Quota Act (1921), which reduced immigration by approximately 75 per cent. The number of immigrants admitted from any given country was limited to 3 per cent of the number of citizens of that country who were residing in the United States in 1910—thus, Harding’s government attempted to preserve the existing ethnic composition of American society.

✓ He also tried to protect American business and agriculture from foreign competition with the Fordney- McCumber Tariff (1922).
When Harding died while still in office in 1923, his vice-president, Calvin Coolidge, assumed the presidency, and won the 1924 presidential election with a comfortable majority.

Coolidge favoured similar policies to those of Harding and was a strong advocate of commercial enterprise.
Coolidge’s Presidency

Coolidge’s laissez-faire stance is reflected in the classical liberal economic policies of his administration.

- Personal income taxes were further reduced with the Revenue Act of 1924 and reduced again with the Revenue Act of 1928.
- In addition, Coolidge twice vetoed legislation passed by Congress that would have allowed the government to subsidize American farmers by buying surplus crops and selling them at lower prices in foreign markets.

During Coolidge’s term, the American government also continued the nativism and isolationism of the Harding administration.

- The Immigration Act (1924) further reduced immigration by limiting the number of citizens admissible from any country to 2 per cent of the number of citizens of that country who were residing in the United States in 1890.
- The Act also banned immigration from Asia entirely.

How are tax reduction and reduced agricultural subsidies a reflection of classical liberal economic principles?
Economic/Social Prosperity and Consumerism

After the First World War, North America experienced a brief recession as the booming war-time economy came to an end. This recession ended quickly as factories switched to the production of consumer goods, and the economy continued to grow until 1929.

As the North American free-market economy expanded and rapidly modernized, major social changes occurred.

This period would become known as the **Roaring Twenties!**
Welcome to a New Era!

The Roaring Twenties were a period in history of dramatic social and political change.

• For the first time, more Americans lived in cities than on farms. The nation’s total wealth more than doubled between 1920 and 1929, and this economic growth swept many Americans into an affluent but unfamiliar “consumer society.”

• People from coast to coast bought the same goods (thanks to nationwide advertising and the spread of chain stores), listened to the same music, did the same dances and even used the same slang!

• Many Americans were uncomfortable with this new, urban, sometimes racy “mass culture”
The Birth of Mass Culture

• Flapper Girls
• Music/ Dancing – The Jazz Age
• Cars – The Model T
• The Radio
• Appliances
• Movies
Flappers

Flapper = young woman with bobbed hair and short skirts who drank, smoked and said what might be termed “unladylike” things, in addition to being more sexually “free” than previous generations.

In reality, most young women in the 1920s did none of these things (though many did adopt a fashionable flapper wardrobe), but even those women who were not flappers gained some unprecedented freedoms...

- **Voting!** The 19th Amendment to the Constitution had guaranteed that right in 1920.
- **Money!** Millions of women worked in white-collar jobs and could afford to participate in the burgeoning consumer economy.
- **Sex!** The increased availability of birth-control devices made it possible for women to have fewer children.
- **Free Time!** New machines and technologies like the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner eliminated some of the drudgery of household work.
Memes!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QegIgnarTH4
The Jazz Age

With this new found attitude, freedom, and wealth, what many young people wanted to do was live their best lives... i.e., party! This mean dancing!

- The Charleston
- The Cake Walk
- The Black Bottom
- The Flea Hop

Jazz bands played at dance halls in major cities. Radio stations and phonograph records carried their tunes to listeners across the nation. Some older people objected to jazz music’s “vulgarity” and “depravity” (and the “moral disasters” it supposedly inspired), but many in the younger generation loved the freedom they felt on the dance floor.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y4zvdox4rM
The Model T

The Model T, sold by the Ford Motor Company from 1908 to 1927, was the earliest effort to make a car that most people could actually buy. Although cars did exist before then, many ordinary people couldn’t afford them.

The Model T was actually affordable and it became so popular at one point that a majority of Americans owned one, directly helping rural Americans become more connected with the rest of the country and leading to the numbered highway system. The manufacturing needs of the Model T went hand in hand with Ford’s revolutionary modernization of the manufacturing process.

Sweet ride! Where should we hit up? The Jazz Club?
The Radio

The radio introduced a whole new practice of entertainment and communication to people’s everyday lives. It changed the face of society’s culture through its widespread use. Radios provided people with a new, effective and efficient means of communication, including listening to news broadcasts.
Appliances

Household appliances or commonly known as "electric servants" during the 1920s made everyday task easier and faster to accomplish.

This meant there was more time to work and entertainment!
New Appliances of the 1920’s

- Vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, and washing machines were becoming popular in many American homes.
- Throughout the 1920’s, the electric iron, the electric toaster and the waffle iron also began to be sold.
- 2/3 of all American homes had electricity by 1924.

The Electric Vacuum

With the electric vacuum becoming popular, brooms are becoming less popular. Vacuums are more efficient and easier to use than a broom. Vacuums were being invented, so we see an increase in the number of homes that have vacuums.

The downside?

Even though new things are being invented, everything doesn’t just get better. New jobs are being created to build the new “stuff” in factories, but once everything is made, sales go down. Most families have all the new “stuff”, and everything is built to last, so there is no need to buy more.

What’s next?

After the 1920’s, new inventions are made, and old inventions are improved. Things just keep getting better and better for the people.

Sources

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She’ll hug you for this time saver

Any Gift will please her—but

She’ll hug you for this time saver

The 15 Year Iron that Defied 3 Engineers of Famous Laboratories in Six Out

Here is your chance to turn yourself suddenly into a home mechanic and learn how to keep this iron in perfect working order. It is so simple that anyone can do it. It will cost you nothing but a little time.

The Electric Refrigerator

Before refrigerators, people used ice boxes. Ice in the ice boxes was replaced about everyday by an “ice man”. Ice boxes were less efficient than refrigerators.

The Electric Iron

Before the electric iron, women would use a variety of irons, rotating them from the ironing board to the stove, while keeping them clean of ashes.

The Electric Toaster

If you want really good toast, you really have to have an electric toaster. The Hoover 1920 toaster is the best one around. It toasts bread, browned bread, and even the crusty crust!

The Waffle Iron

Waffle ironing is becoming more popular. The Hoover 1920 waffle iron is the best one around. It toasts bread, browned bread, and even the crusty crust!
Movies

For many middle-class Americans, the 1920s was a decade of unprecedented prosperity. Rising earnings generated more disposable income for the consumption of entertainment and leisure. This new wealth coincided with and fueled technological innovations, resulting in the booming popularity of entertainments like movies, sports, and radio programs. Radio and cinema contributed to the development of a national media culture in the United States.
Movies

As the popularity of “moving pictures” grew in the early part of the decade, movie "palaces" capable of seating thousands sprang up in major cities. A ticket for a double feature and a live show cost 25 cents. For a quarter, Americans could escape from their problems and lose themselves in another era or world. People of all ages attended the movies with far more regularity than today, often going more than once per week. By the end of the decade, weekly movie attendance swelled to 90 million people!

The silent movies of the early 1920s gave rise to the first generation of movie stars. No star captured the attention of the American viewing public more than Charlie Chaplin. Sad-eyed with a mustache, baggy pants, and a cane, Chaplin was the top box office attraction of his time.
Not everything was fun and games...

Prohibition

http://prohibition.themobmuseum.org/
Prohibition Vocabulary

**Prohibition** = the legal prevention of the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages in the USA from 1920 to 1933 under the terms of the 18th Amendment

**Bootlegging** = the illegal production and sale of liquor

**Speakeasy** = illegal, secretive drinking establishments
Prohibition

Prohibition was introduced in the United States in 1920 when the 18th Amendment was passed, imposing a constitutional ban on the sale, production, importation and transportation of alcoholic beverages.

Consumption itself was not banned.

The reason for its introduction was varied. At the time the country’s troops were fighting in World War One and many felt it wasn’t appropriate to drink alcohol because of this. Others cited religious obligations claiming drinking alcohol went against God’s will. Practically, a ban on alcohol was considered useful in that it would boost supplies of important grains such as barley during wartime. However the biggest driving force was a changing shift in perceptions toward alcohol, with many calling for Prohibition arguing that drinking alcohol was damaging American society.
Prohibition

Despite Prohibition people continued to drink and gangsters made huge sums of money through the illegal trafficking of alcohol and sale of bootleg booze. In the cities, like New York and Chicago, clandestine drinking dens thrived, also known as speakeasy’s, giving rise to an underworld of alcohol consumption that has to this day characterised the period. These bars claimed to sell soft drinks but actually served alcohol under the table.

New York City Deputy Police Commissioner John A. Leach (right) watching agents pour liquor into a sewer following a raid
Prohibition

As a result, the Prohibition era also is remembered as a period of gangsterism, characterized by competition and violent turf battles between criminal gangs. Organized crime capitalized upon these restrictions through bootlegging and speakeasys. Entire illegal economies (bootlegging, speakeasies, and distilling operations) flourished.

Al Capone, Mob boss in Chicago, is the most infamous gangster and bootlegger of the Prohibition era. Capone’s criminal operation at its height in the late 1920s reached an estimated $100 million in revenue (nearly $1.4 billion in 2016) from liquor distribution, speakeasies, beer brewing, gambling, prostitution and other rackets.
In what ways did economies in the first half of the 20th century reflect the principles of liberalism? How did the developments of economic prosperity, mass production, mass marketing, and consumerism reflect the principles of liberalism during the 1920s? How did this affect attitudes in society?