

Changes in the U.S. due to Poverty

6th Hour History

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After WWII, the United States entered into a period of dynamic change. While some change created opportunity, some change strained Americans. The government (both Federal and State) enacted policies to meet people's needs, but some of the policies were disliked. To illustrate this, one can examine American poverty during the Cold War.

During the 1950s and '60s, there were many things going on including the Baby Boom and the Cold War. Due to the Cold War, America was spending a great deal of money on increasing the military strength and the development of nuclear weapons. At the time, the Baby Boomers were looking for jobs to raise their families. This mass increase in population caused a decline in open jobs. Plus, with all the government spending bent towards the military, people could not get checks for unemployment. This caused poverty throughout the country.

The government responded to this increase in nationwide poverty by creating programs that would make jobs for unemployed persons and give government funds to people with part-time jobs. This was called the War on Poverty. The first program was Work-Training Program, which was proposed by Lyndon B. Johnson. It was created to provide work and training for the 200,000 jobless Americans between the ages of 16 and 21. Another program, which was also created by Johnson, was the Work-Study Program. This program provided young Americans who had part-time jobs and couldn't afford to go to college with government funding. This was developed and funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. One more program that the government created in the War on Poverty was the Community Action program, which targeted poverty on the streets by asking men and women to make long term plans to prevent poverty. Lyndon Johnson planned to give loans to those in poverty to help get them on their feet.

The government action of creating programs for the poor helped a great deal. Following the War on Poverty, U.S. poverty rates dropped to their lowest level to date at 11.1%. Ever since the War on Poverty, the levels of poverty in America have stayed low between 11 and 15%, which is great. Even though the Office of Economic Opportunity was dismantled by Nixon in 1973, many of its programs are still in effect after being transferred to other branches of the government. This government funding influenced people to trust their government in times of need and led them to an education that would benefit the nation.

The nation's poverty during the 1950s and '60s is a good case study when looking at the government policies before, during and after the second world war. This shows how some government policies were liked and disliked because it shows the government in action creating policies to help the needs of the American people. They didn't do this to make more money or to get famous, the government knew that the people were in trouble and unable to provide for their families and the government wanted to help.