

Section

2

Postwar Politics



Section Audio



Spotlight Video

Essential Question

What economic, social, and political challenges did Americans face after World War II?

Reading Guide

Content Vocabulary

inflation (p. 851) desegregate (p. 855)
closed shop (p. 853)

Academic Vocabulary

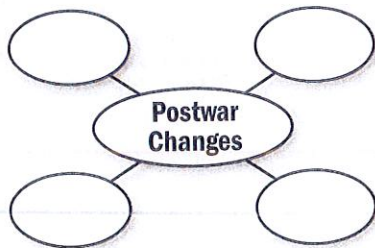
stable (p. 851)
domestic (p. 852)

Key People and Events

Fair Deal (p. 852)
Taft-Hartley Act (p. 853)

Reading Strategy

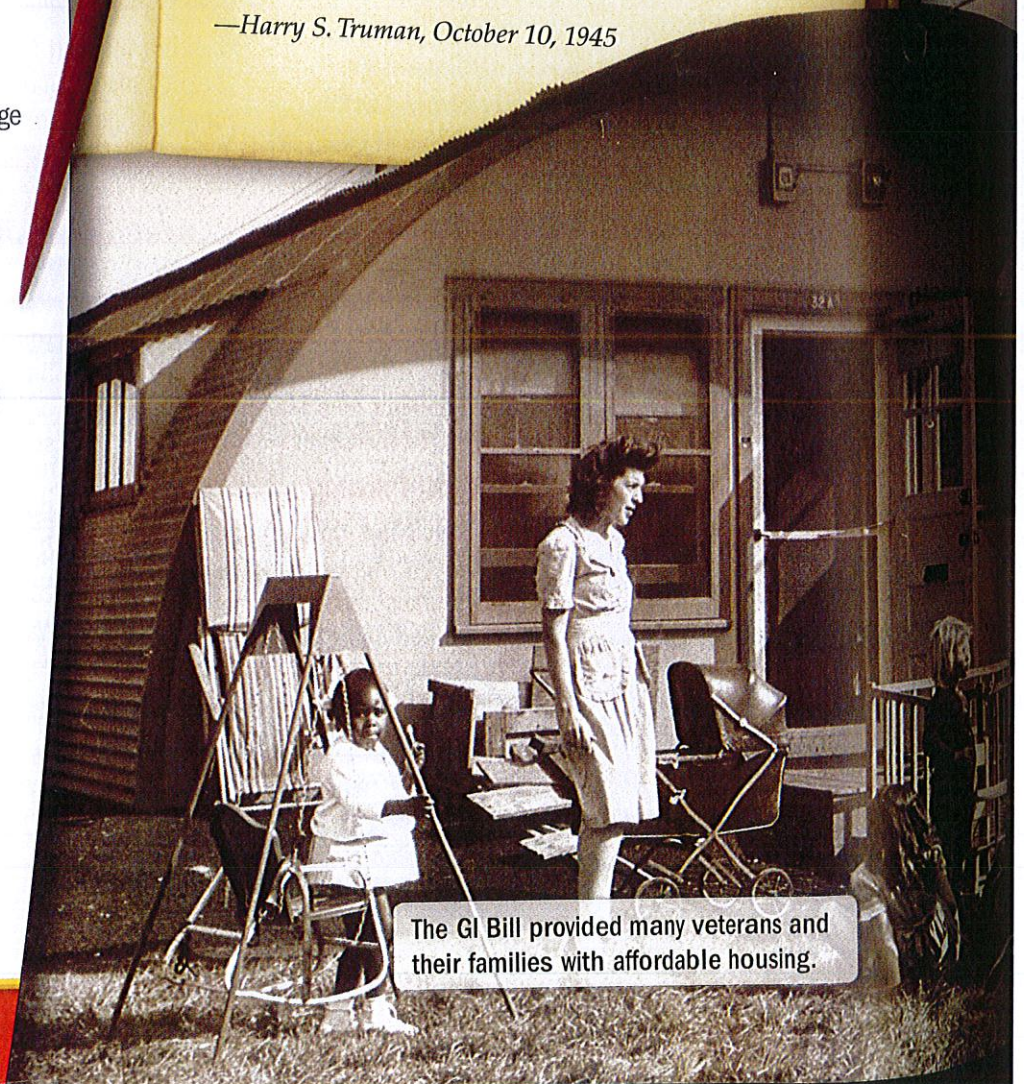
Taking Notes Create a diagram to describe social and economic change in postwar America.



American Diary

When soldiers returned home after World War II, they came back to a nation facing the difficult task of changing from wartime to peacetime. Would the economy collapse again and another depression sweep the country? President Truman was optimistic: "We are having our little troubles now . . . just a blowup after the letdown from war." Public fears, however, forced the nation's leaders into a debate over how best to deal with America's economic problems.

—Harry S. Truman, October 10, 1945



The GI Bill provided many veterans and their families with affordable housing.

The Postwar Economy

Main Idea Americans faced rising prices and labor unrest during the late 1940s.

History and You How difficult is it for you to adjust to major changes? Read to learn about how Americans tried to adjust to a peacetime economy after World War II.

After World War II, the United States had to adjust its economy to peacetime life. Industries shifted from producing war materials to making consumer goods, such as cars and appliances. Defense workers had to be retrained to work in consumer industries, and returning soldiers needed jobs.

During the war, government price controls kept the cost of consumer goods **stable**, or unchanging. When the government lifted these controls, prices began to climb. This rise in prices, or **inflation**, also came from a huge increase in consumer demand and spending. During the war years, Americans saved their money because many consumer goods were unavailable or rationed. Now they were eager for new consumer products and services.

Because of inflation, prices rose much faster than wages. During the war, workers had accepted government controls on wages and agreed not to strike. Now they would no longer be put off. When employers refused to raise wages, labor strikes broke out and disrupted the economy. In 1946 a miners' strike raised fears about fewer coal supplies. Meanwhile, a strike by railroad workers led to a shutdown of the nation's railroads.

Alarmed by the labor unrest, President Truman pressured the striking miners and railroad workers to go back to their jobs. In May 1946, he threatened to draft them into the army if they did not return to work. The president insisted he had the right to take such steps to keep vital industries operating.

President Truman finally forced striking miners back to work. He did this by having the government take over the mines. At the same time, he persuaded mine owners to grant many of the workers' demands. Truman also pressured railroad workers to return to work.

Reading Check **Describing** What happened to prices when demand grew after the war?

Primary Source The GI Bill

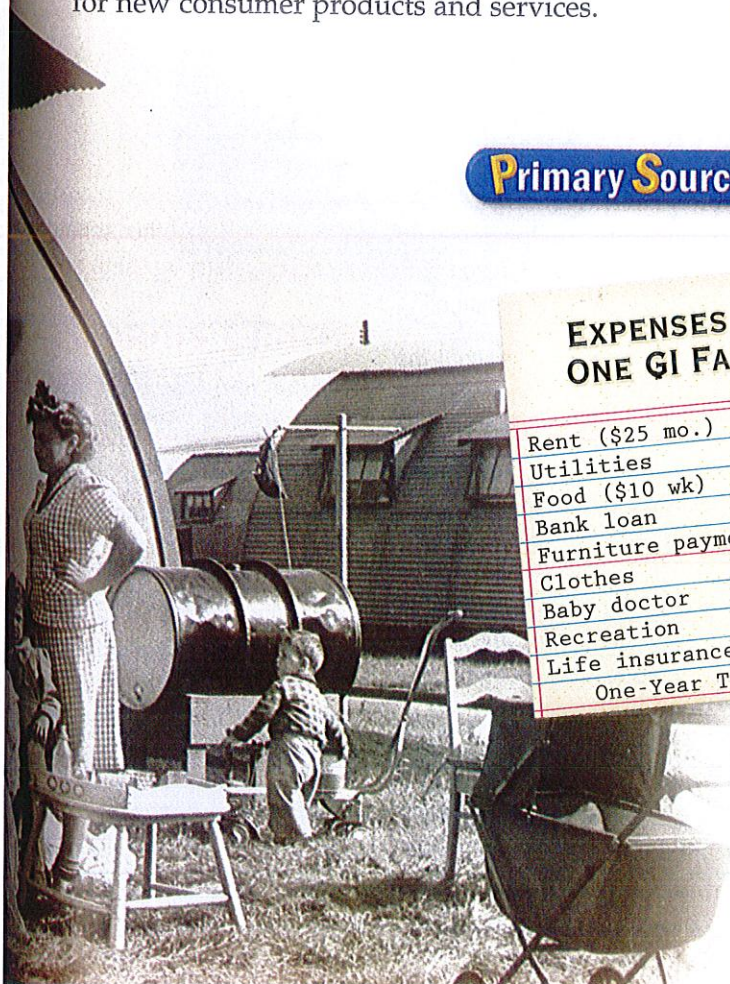
EXPENSES FOR ONE GI FAMILY

Rent (\$25 mo.)	\$ 300
Utilities	120
Food (\$10 wk)	520
Bank loan	264
Furniture payment	150
Clothes	60
Baby doctor	40
Recreation	50
Life insurance	67
One-Year Total	\$1,571

Help for Veterans In 1944 Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the GI Bill of Rights. GI stands for "government issue." This law provided billions of dollars in loans to help returning GIs—soldiers, sailors, and marines—attend college, receive special training, set up businesses, or buy homes. It also provided unemployment and health benefits for the GIs as they looked for jobs.

Critical Thinking

Explaining How did the GI Bill help war veterans?



Truman Faces the Republicans

Main Idea President Truman and the Republican-controlled Congress disagreed over how to solve the nation's economic problems.

History and You Have you ever been at a game in which a team that was predicted to lose won a stunning victory? Read to find out how Truman beat the odds in the 1948 presidential race.

In September 1945, President Truman presented a plan of **domestic**—or home-based—reforms aimed at solving some of the nation's economic problems. Truman later called this program the **Fair Deal**.

Truman proposed to raise the minimum wage, expand Social Security benefits, increase federal spending to create jobs, build

new public housing, and create a system of national health insurance. However, because of opposition by a coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats, these measures failed to pass in Congress.

Republicans Control Congress

Many Americans blamed Truman and the Democrats for the nation's problems and called for change. The Republicans seized upon this discontent in the congressional elections of 1946. The slogan "Had Enough?" helped the Republican Party win control of both houses of Congress.

The new Republican Congress set out to limit government spending, control labor unions, and reverse New Deal policies. Conservative Republicans especially favored big business and wanted to limit the power of labor unions.

People IN HISTORY

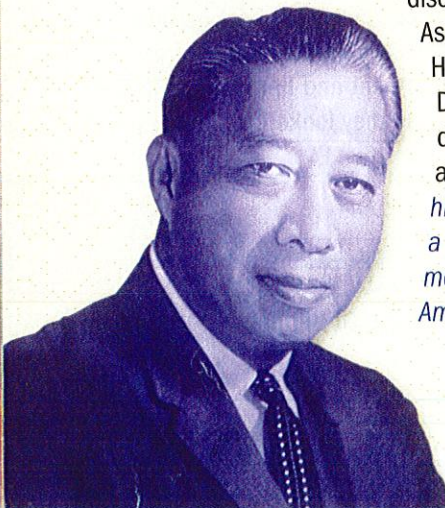
Hiram Fong

U.S. Senator, Hawaii

On March 12, 1959, Congress voted to admit the territory of Hawaii as a state. One of the two senators elected was Hiram Fong, who had served 14 years in the territorial legislature. As the first person of Chinese descent to hold a seat in the Senate, Fong supported civil rights. He also supported immigration reform that removed

discrimination against Asian-Pacific people.

Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye described Fong as "a legend in his time. He was a patriot . . . a most revered Asian-American leader."



Margaret Chase Smith

U.S. Senator, Maine

In 1950 Senator Margaret Chase Smith and six other senators issued the Declaration of Conscience condemning "hate and character assassination."

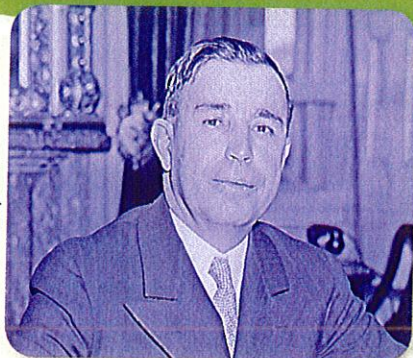
"Those of us who shout the loudest about Americanism . . . are all too frequently those who, by our own words and acts, ignore some of the basic principles of Americanism—The right to criticize. The right to hold unpopular belief. The right to protest. The right of independent thought."



In the spring of 1947, Republican legislators introduced a measure that became known as the **Taft-Hartley Act**. This measure limited the actions workers could take against their employers. It outlawed the **closed shop**, or the practice of forcing business owners to hire only union members.

The Taft-Hartley Act also allowed the government to temporarily stop any strike that endangered public health or safety. This provision was intended to prevent any future strikes like those of the miners and the railroad workers the year before.

Labor unions sharply criticized the Taft-Hartley Act. They claimed that the measure erased many of the gains that labor had made since 1933. Truman, realizing that the Democrats needed the support of labor, vetoed the act. The Republican-controlled Congress, however, overrode Truman's veto.



Dennis Chavez

U.S. Senator, New Mexico

Dennis Chavez represented New Mexico in the U.S. Senate from May 11, 1935, until his death in 1962. He was the first American-born Latino senator. A lifelong supporter of civil rights, he cowrote one of the first Senate bills to stop discrimination in employment. He declared, *"I have been fighting for the so-called underprivileged all my days because I was one of them."*

CRITICAL Thinking

Speculating If Fong, Smith, and Chavez were in the Senate today, what issues do you think they might be addressing? Why?

Government Reorganization

Truman and Congress agreed on improving the efficiency of the federal government, which had grown considerably since the New Deal. In 1947 Congress passed the National Security Act. It unified the armed services under the Department of Defense. The act also set up a permanent Joint Chiefs of Staff, made up of the heads of each of the armed forces, to coordinate military policy. A National Security Council, located within the White House, would advise the president on foreign and military matters.

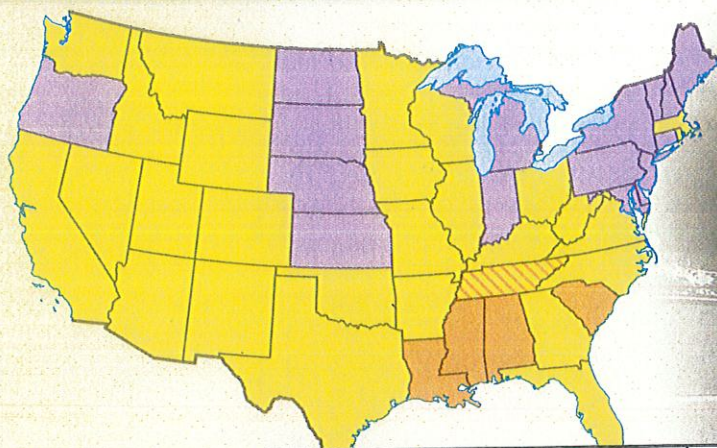
The National Security Act also set up another institution, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA aids American foreign policy by collecting information about what is going on in other countries, evaluating it, and passing it on to the president and other foreign-policy decision makers.

Many Americans feared that the CIA would be used to spy on American citizens. Truman, however, promised that the new agency would operate only in foreign lands and would not bring "police state methods" into American society.

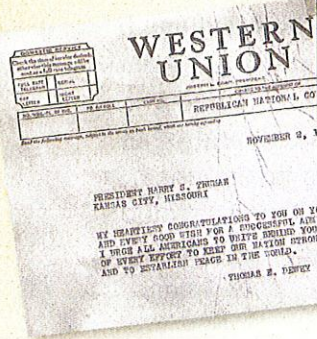
The Election of 1948

As the 1948 presidential race neared, Truman seemed to have little chance of winning. Continuing economic problems made the president unpopular with many voters. Truman's failure to get U.S. domestic reforms passed made him look weak and ineffective.

Divisions within the Democratic Party also increased the chances of a Republican victory. At the Democratic national convention, two groups left the party altogether. Reacting angrily to Truman's support of civil rights, a group of Southern Democrats formed the States' Rights Democratic Party, or Dixiecrats. They nominated South Carolina's governor Strom Thurmond for president. At the same time, some Democrats left to form the Progressive Party, with Henry Wallace as their nominee for president. Wallace opposed Truman's foreign policy and called for closer American-Soviet ties.

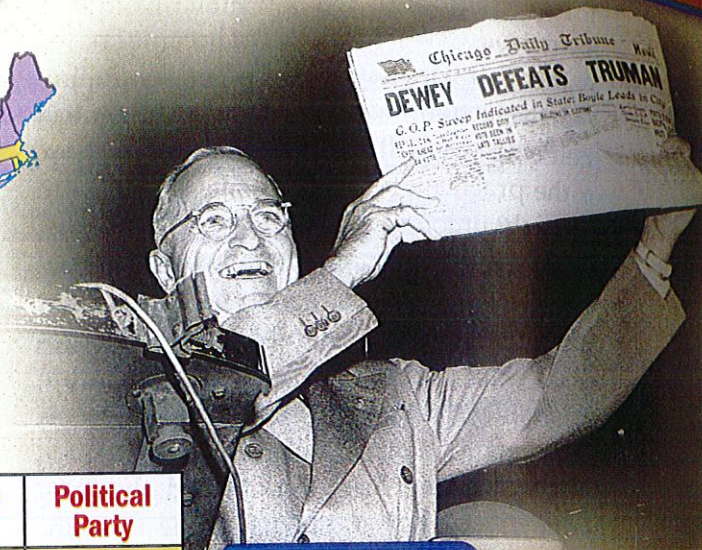


Candidate	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	Political Party
Truman	303	24,105,812	Democrat
Dewey	189	21,970,065	Republican
Thurmond	39	1,169,021	States' Rights



"We were getting good crowds despite the newspaper reports that Mr. Dewey was a 10-to-1 bet to win the election."

—William J. Bray, assistant on the 1948 presidential campaign train



Map Skills

- 1. Comparing** From which region did Thurmond receive the most support?
- 2. Calculating** By how many electoral votes did Truman win over Dewey?

Maps in Motion See StudentWorks™ Plus or glencoe.com.

Dewey Leads Polls

With the Democrats badly divided, it looked as though Governor Thomas Dewey of New York, the Republican nominee, would surely win the election. A dignified and popular candidate, Dewey seemed unbeatable. Opinion polls showed him with a huge lead. One pollster remarked: "Mr. Dewey is still so clearly ahead that we might just as well get ready to listen to his inaugural."

Perhaps the only one who gave Truman a chance to win was Truman himself. Ignoring the polls, the determined president poured his efforts into an energetic campaign. Traveling more than 21,000 miles (33,800 km) by train on a "whistle-stop" tour of the country, he gave some 300 speeches along the way. In town after town, he sharply attacked what he called "that do-nothing, good-for-nothing, worst Congress" for rejecting his Fair Deal legislation.

Truman Stages an Upset

On Election Day experts still expected Dewey to win. Expectations for a Republican victory were so great that on the evening of the election—before many votes were counted—the *Chicago Daily Tribune* newspaper issued a special edition announcing "Dewey Defeats Truman."

The nation was in for a great surprise. When all the ballots were counted, Truman had edged out Dewey by more than 2 million votes. The president's narrow victory was based largely on support from workers, African Americans, and farmers. Almost as remarkable as Truman's victory was the new popularity of the Democratic Party. In the election, Democrats regained control of both houses of Congress.

✓ Reading Check

Analyzing Why was the outcome of the 1948 presidential election a surprise?

A Fair Deal for Americans

Main Idea The Truman administration pushed for civil rights reforms.

History and You Have you ever put all your energy into making something important happen? Read to learn why President Truman wanted Congress to pass his legislation.

Truman took the election results as a sign that Americans wanted reform. He quickly reintroduced the Fair Deal legislation he presented to Congress in 1945. Some of these reform measures passed, but his plan lacked broad support, and Congress defeated most of the measures. Congress did pass laws to raise the minimum wage, expand Social Security benefits for senior citizens, and provide funds for housing for low-income families.

In a message to Congress in 1948, Truman called for an end to discrimination based on race, religion, or ethnic origins. He tried to persuade Congress to protect the voting rights of African Americans, abolish the poll tax,

and make lynching a federal crime. Despite failing to get these measures passed, the president did take steps to advance the civil rights of African Americans. He ordered federal agencies to end job discrimination against African Americans and ordered the armed forces to **desegregate**—to end the separation of races. The president also instructed the Justice Department to enforce existing civil rights laws.

When Truman proposed his domestic agenda to Congress in 1949, he proclaimed that “every segment of our population and every individual has a right to expect from our government a fair deal.” Truman asked for the clearance of slums, government-backed medical insurance, higher minimum wages, and more federal money for public schools. Although much of the president’s Fair Deal vision went unfulfilled, he made an important start toward improving the lives of millions of Americans.

Reading Check Analyzing Why did President Truman call his proposed reforms a “fair deal”?

Section 2 Review

History ONLINE
Study Central™ To review this section, go to glencoe.com.

Vocabulary

1. Use each of the following terms in a complete sentence that will explain its meaning: *stable, inflation, domestic, closed shop, desegregate.*

Main Ideas

2. **Explaining** What happened to the price of American consumer goods after World War II? Why did this happen?
3. **Discussing** Why was Truman given little chance of winning the 1948 presidential election?

4. **Analyzing** What steps did President Truman take to end discrimination and segregation during his term in office? Was he successful?

Critical Thinking

5. **Explaining** Why was the CIA formed, and why were some Americans suspicious of the organization?
6. **Interpreting** Create a diagram like the one below that lists the main goals of the Fair Deal.



7. **Persuasive Writing** President Truman threatened to draft striking coal miners into the army. Write a paragraph in which you explain whether you agree or disagree that a president should have this power.

Answer the Essential Question

8. What economic, social, and political challenges did Americans face after World War II?