

Unit 8: Essay 2

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“While many Americans were enjoying economic prosperity during the 1920s, there was also increasing social conflict.” Assess the validity of this statement with reference to THREE of the following:

fundamentalism

Ku Klux Klan

prohibition

nativism

Sacco and Vanzetti case

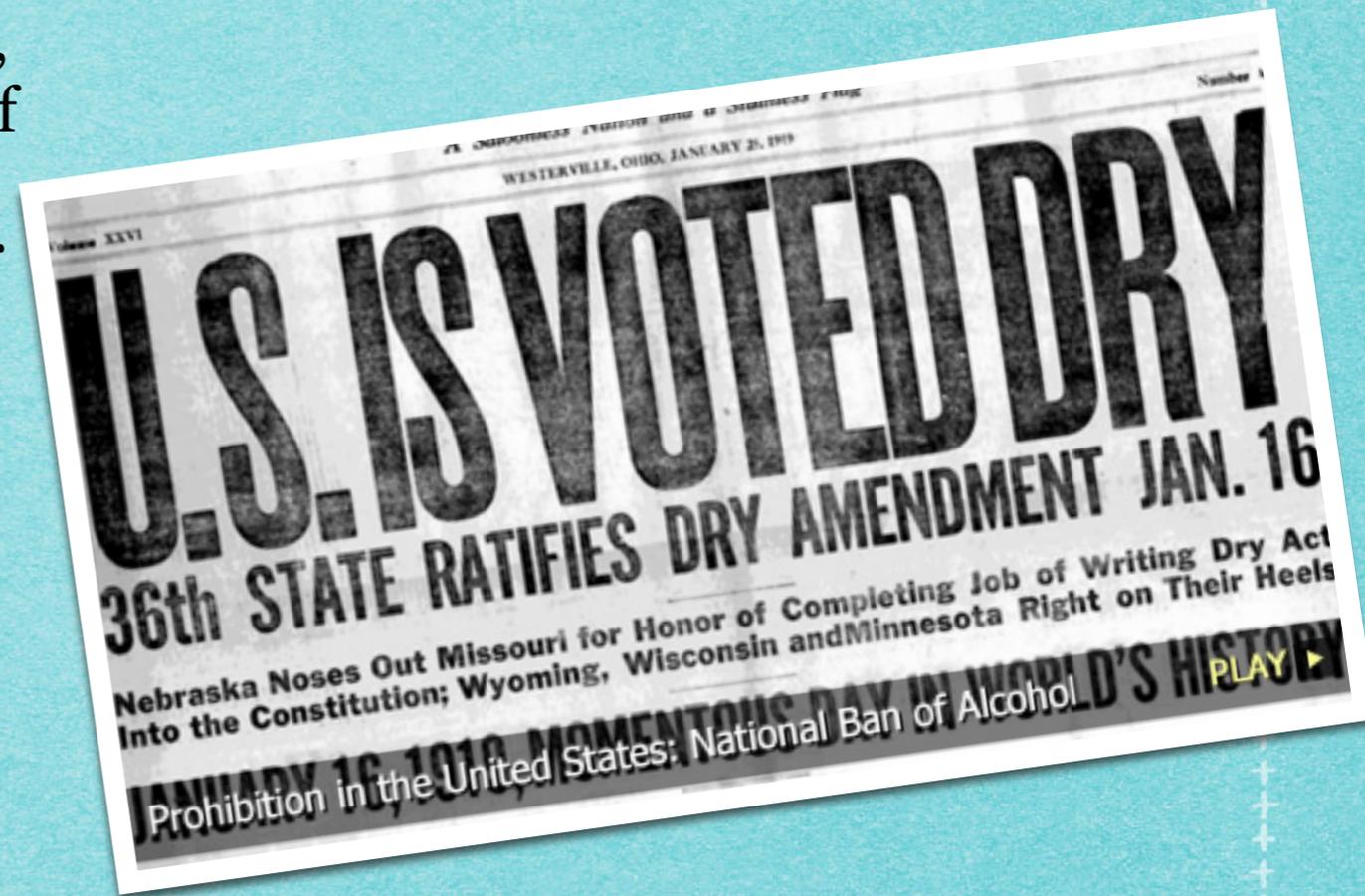
THESIS:

Although many Americans during the "Roaring Twenties" enjoyed economic prosperity, The Ku Klux Klan, Prohibition and the Sacco and Vanzetti Case increased social conflict.

Prohibition

During Prohibition, the manufacture, transportation, import, export, and sale of alcoholic beverages were restricted or illegal. Prohibition was supposed to lower crime and corruption, reduce social problems, lower taxes needed to support prisons and poorhouses, and improve health and hygiene in America. Instead, Alcohol became more dangerous to consume; organized crime blossomed; courts and prisons systems became overloaded; and endemic corruption of police and public officials occurred.

On January 16, 1920 the 18th Amendment went into effect, enabling national prohibition. The amendment didn't prohibit the consumption of alcohol so some business who had made or bought alcohol before prohibition began we're still legally allowed to serve it throughout prohibition. However those businesses were seldom and few.



Prohibition Continued

Prohibition did not stop Americans from drinking alcohol. Large quantities of alcohol were smuggled in from Canada and Mexico and many people began illegally making it themselves. This led to the creation of "speakeasies" or underground drinking establishments.



Prohibition Continued

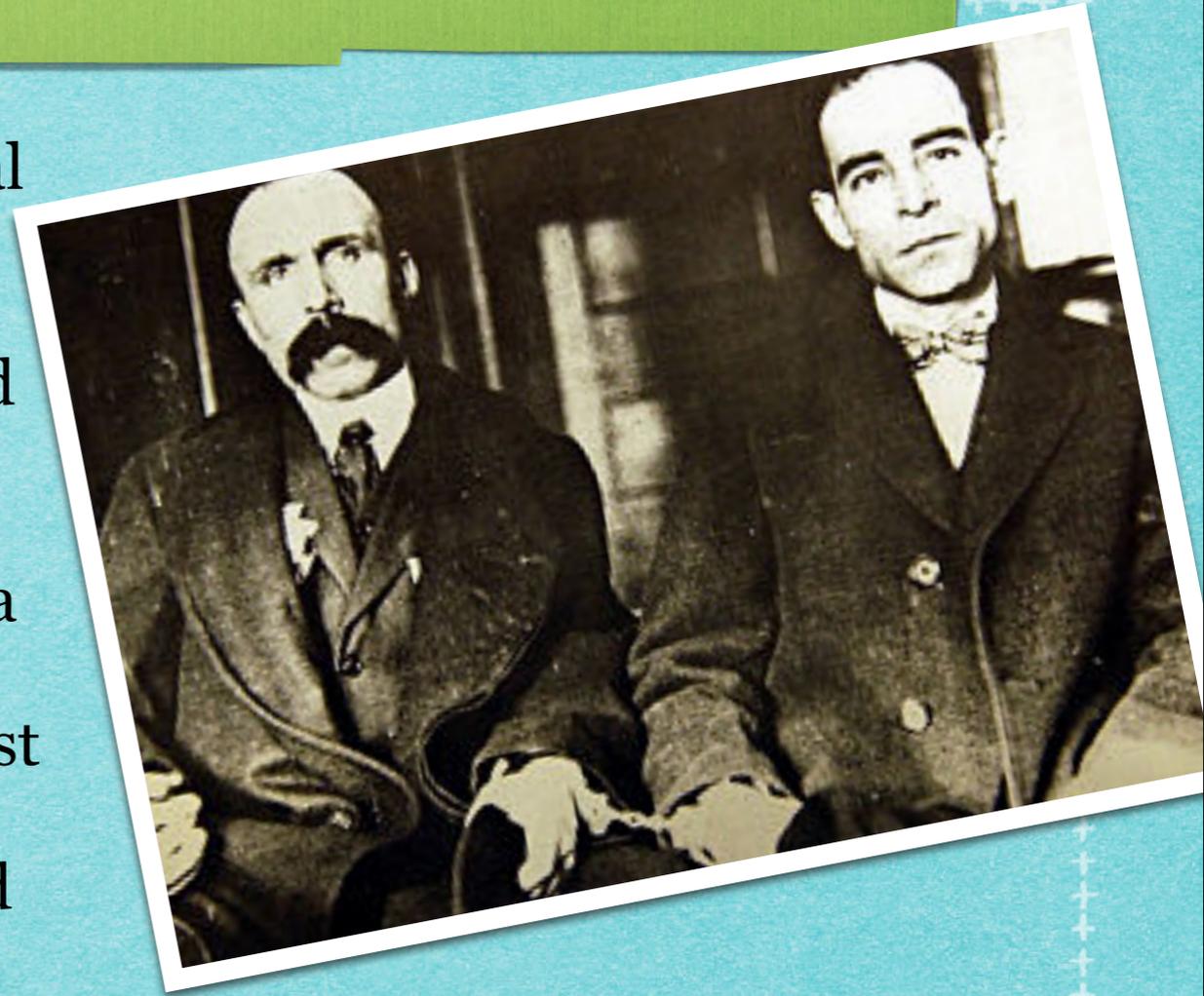
Prohibition also led to the creation of the organized crime business. Organized crime groups began to take over the importing ("bootlegging"), manufacturing, and distributing of alcoholic drinks. Al Capone, one of the most infamous bootleggers of them all, was able to build his criminal empire largely on profits from illegal alcohol.

Even prominent citizens and politicians later admitted to having used alcohol during Prohibition. President Harding kept the White House well stocked with bootleg liquor, though, as a Senator, he had voted for Prohibition. This discrepancy between legality and actual practice led to widespread contempt for authority. Over time, more people drank illegally and so money ended up in gangsters' pockets. Arguments raged over the effectiveness of prohibition. It appears to have been successful in some parts of the country but overall led to an increase in social conflict.



Sacco and Vanzetti Case

The Sacco and Vanzetti case was an influential case beginning in 1921 involving two Italian American Immigrants who were convicted of the murder of a Massachusetts paymaster and his guard, and sentenced to death six years later. Ferdinando Nicola Sacco was a shoe factory worker and Bartolomeo Vanzetti was a fish peddler. The men were believed to be followers of Luigi Galleani, an Italian anarchist who advocated the use of revolutionary violence to achieve their ideological ends (and who was responsible for heading the movement of bombing Attorney General Mitchell Palmer's home), after authorities found a draft of a handbill for an anarchist meeting featuring Vanzetti as a speaker in Sacco's pocket.



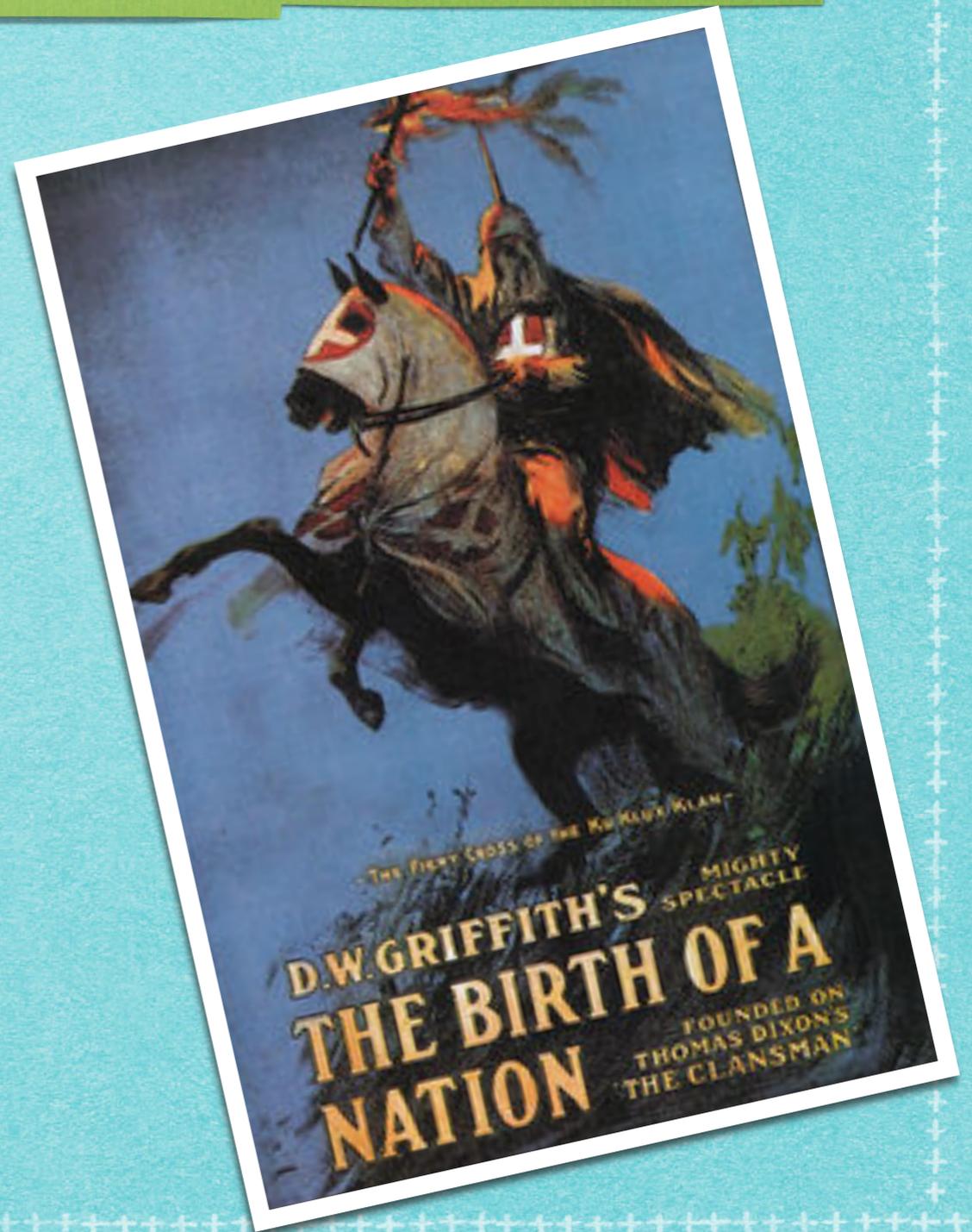
Sacco and Vanzetti Case

The case also coincided with a period of intense political repression, the “Red Scare”, which was a nationwide crusade of any suspect Americans connected with the Bolshevik Revolution and the “anarchy of Russia” after WWI. Given this, and the political climate at the time, both Sacco and Vanzetti were sentenced to death for a crime that could have just received a prison term. The results of the highly publicized trial created public outrage among liberals and radicals, as they regarded the trial as “juridical lynching” and many radicals made martyrs out of them demonstrating the “class struggle”. Thus, the Sacco and Vanzetti case proved to be a reflection of America’s social and political tensions following the end of WWI in the 1920s



The 2nd Ku Klux Klan

- Founded in Atlanta, Georgia spread throughout the South and then to the Midwest and West
- Started as "Knights of Mary Phagan"
- Influenced by film *The Birth of a Nation*
- Initiation fees brought in lots of money for organization
- 6 million members at its peak in the 1920's



Ku Klux Klan cont.

- ▶ Anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, Prohibitionist, and antisemitic
- ▶ Preached "One Hundred Percent Americanism"
- ▶ Most members were Protestants responding negatively to social and moral changes in society
- ▶ Had effect in elections because of the large number of members



Conclusion

Through out the decade of the 1920's or the "Roaring Twenties" many Americans prospered economically, however, underneath that prosperity there was increasing social conflict caused by The Ku Klux Klan, Prohibition and the Sacco and Vanzetti Case.