**WILSON, Woodrow (1856-1924)**

Thomas Woodrow Wilson served two terms as the 28th President of the United States (1913-1921) and is remembered for leading the nation through World War I. Wilson graduated from Princeton University in 1879 and briefly attended the University of Virginia Law School before earning his doctorate from the Johns Hopkins University in 1886. After an early career in academia, Wilson later became president of Princeton University (1902-1910) and served one term as Governor of New Jersey (1911-1913). In the Presidential election of 1912, Wilson was elected with running mate Thomas R. Marshall on a Democratic platform that stressed individualism and states’ rights.

Wilson expanded the role of the federal government in regulating the economy during his Presidency and is remembered for three pieces of Progressive legislation: the Revenue Act of 1913 which reduced traffic on imports and reinstituted a graduated federal income tax; the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 which allowed for greater regulation of banks, credit and money supply through the establishment of the Federal Reserve banks and system; and the Federal Trade Commission Act of 1914 which prohibited unfair business practices and fraudulent advertising. In 1916 he supported legislation that prohibited child labor with the Child Labor Reform Act, and helped to enact an eight-hour workday for railroad workers. He is also remembered for nominating the first Jewish justice to the U.S. Supreme Court, Louis Brandeis. Although during his presidential campaign Wilson assured greater racial equality, once in office he reneged on those promises. Wilson’s administration reintroduced racial segregation in governmental offices—not federal policy since 1863—and allowed the dismissal of many African-Americans from their federal positions.

During Wilson’s Presidency, two constitutional amendments passed—the 18th Amendment (1920) which enacted Prohibition; and the 19th Amendment (1919), which gave American women the right to vote. Wilson initially took little interest in women’s suffrage but through a combination of confrontational protests by the National Women’s Party, the hypocritical nature of crusading for democracy abroad but not domestically, and recognizing women’s essential contributions to war services, he came to support a constitutional amendment.

Wilson attempted to keep the United States neutral during World War I, even campaigning for a second term as President with the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War.” But due to aggressive behavior against the United States in early 1917, including German submarine attacks on American merchant ships and the Zimmerman Telegram in which Germany tried to persuade Mexico to form an alliance against the United States, Wilson declared war on Germany on April 2, 1917.

Following the end of World War I, Wilson helped to negotiate the Treaty of Versailles at the Paris Peace Conference (1919), which included a plan for an international organization, the League of Nations. His vision for this coalition, of which Germany was excluded from membership, would be to resolve disputes as a way of avoiding another World War. Twice rejected by the Senate, the United States never became a member and, partially as a result, the League of Nations was never a strong negotiating forum. Nevertheless, Wilson did receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in 1919 and his plan laid the groundwork for Franklin D. Roosevelt’s proposed United Nations during World War II.

Bibliography: Goehlert, Robert and Dawn Childress. Woodrow Wilson: A Bibliography of Books In English. Indiana University, 2006. <http://www.indiana.edu/~global/resources/guides/WilsonGuide.pdf>

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