

Paper 4 – The Second Red Scare

“To what extent did the Second Red Scare change America?”

The Second Red Scare did not change America because consumerism/homeownership and the Warren Court were greater drivers of social change during that time period.

The Second Red Scare did not change America because consumerism and homeownership was a greater factor in social change during the time period. In its first 8 years of production, Barbie generated over \$500 million dollars in revenue. Sales of one brand of lipstick increased from \$50,000 in 1950 to 4.5 million in 1952. This exemplifies the affluence and willingness to spend their money that Americans exhibited in the post-WWII years. After all, Barbies and lipsticks serve no practical purpose, and Barbies were relatively expensive for children's toys. And yet, Americans time and again demonstrated a willingness to spend their hard-earned money on these somewhat frivolous items, showing a large societal shift from the frugality of the 1930s and the war years, as well as just about every period in American history. This consumerism drove industries as well, reshaping the economic landscape of America. For example, the number of automobiles purchased annually grew by 20 million from 1950 to 1960. As well as demonstrating the prevalence of consumerism, these purchases fueled the auto industry, providing manual labor jobs working on assembly lines, as well as providing jobs at mechanic's shops, road construction companies, gas stations, and more across America. These workers would have been able to afford the house-in-the-suburbs American Dream of the 1950s, and take part in the massive societal shift the country was undergoing. When evaluating the causes of change during the period of the Second Red Scare, consumerism is vital to the changing economic and political landscape. Furthermore, homeownership generated social change in the postwar years. The development of Levittowns, some with more than 17,000 homes each, facilitated the mass migration from cities and rural areas into the new suburbs. In addition to creating jobs, this caused change in ways America had never before seen. For one, traditionally families had been large and rural, and child rearing duties were shared among extended family members. However, homeownership among young couples led to the collapse of this family structure – between 1940 and 1960 the average size of households decreased by nearly 10%, despite the fact that families were having more children (during the same time period, the number of families with 3 children doubled and the number with four children quadrupled). This led young mothers to turn to other sources for advice on child care, such as Benjamin Spock's books. This meant that the baby boomer generation was raised dramatically differently from other generations. In

addition to these immediate changes, this lead to other changes such as the youth activism seen during the 1960s. Furthermore, homeownership and consumerism allowed women to work outside the home for the first time in American history. The proximity of suburbs to cities full of jobs, as well as the amount of families that now had cars, allowed women to get jobs in cities. Additionally, consumerism meant that more retail jobs as sale clerks were available to these women. This allowed women, even married women, to achieve a measure of financial independence they had never had access to before, and encouraged the feminist activism which led to much social change. When evaluating change in the 1950s, the increase in consumerism and homeownership clearly had a much greater affect than the Second Red Scare.

The Second Red Scare did not change America because the Warren Court was a much greater contributor to the social change of the time. To begin, the Warren Court ruled to outlaw racial segregation in public schools in the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the South especially, this caused dramatic change. Riots and protests erupted, arguing against this forward progress. Cases such as the Little Rock Nine demonstrate how divisive the issue was and what a departure integration was from the norm. However, integration did eventually become the norm, replacing the entrenched system of segregation in the South. This is some of the most dramatic social change our country has ever seen, and it paved the way for the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Furthermore, while the Second Red Scare changed little in the daily lives of African Americans living in the South, *Brown v. Board of education* very much did. When assessing causes of social change in the 1950s, the Warren Court ruling on *Brown v. Board of education* was a much greater factor in social change than the Second Red Scare. Furthermore, the *Cooper v. Aaron* case that stemmed directly from the *Brown* ruling created political change. By formally requiring states to abide by Supreme Court decisions, it increased the power of the federal government at the expense of state's rights. In addition to generating political change in and of itself, the ruling paved the way for social change arising from the many more progressive Supreme Court rulings by the Warren Court, by requiring that states follow them. When gauging political and social change during the post war years, it is vital to consider the Warren Court ruling on *Cooper v. Aaron*. Additionally, the *One, Inc. v. Olesen* ruling was seen as remarkable social progress for the LGBTQ community in the 1950s. It allowed the continued publication of a gay magazine, and in doing so declared that homosexuality was not "obscene". This removed some of the social stigma, or at least the unequal and discriminatory wording of the law. It allowed the LGBTQ community to communicate more freely among themselves, because media discussing homosexuality was no longer covered under laws prohibiting obscene publication. When evaluating the cause of social change in the period of the Second

Red Scare, the One, Inc. ruling, which created social progress and allowed the LGBTQ community to be more open, can be contrasted with the Lavender Scare (which is closely related to the Second Red Scare), which created no change in America but rather reinforced the same prejudices that had been in place for centuries, and it is clear that the Warren Court's rulings created much more change in America than the Second Red Scare.