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CHAPTER

The Search for Order in an Era of Limits 1973–1980

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Early in 1971, a new fictional character appeared on national television. Archie Bunker was a gruff blue-collar worker who berated his wife and bemoaned his daughter's marriage to a bearded hippie. Prone to bigoted and insensitive remarks, Archie and his wife Edith sang "Those Were the Days" at the opening of each episode of *All in the Family*, a half-hour comedy. The song celebrated a bygone era, when "girls were girls and men were men." Disdainful of the liberal social movements of the 1960s, Archie professed a conservative, hardscrabble view of the world.

Archie Bunker became a folk hero to many conservative Americans in the 1970s; he said what they felt. But his significance went beyond his politics. *All in the Family* gave voice to a national search for order. His feminist daughter, liberal son-in-law, and black neighbors brought that changing world into Archie's modest home in Queens, New York. Not all Americans were as resistant to change as Archie. Most were ordinary, middle-of-the-road people confronting the aftermath of the tumultuous late 1960s and early 1970s. The liberalism of those years challenged Americans to think in new ways about race, gender roles, sexual morality, and the family. Vietnam and the Watergate scandal had compounded matters by producing a crisis of political authority. An "old order" had seemingly collapsed. But what would take its place was not yet clear.

Alongside cultural dislocation and political alienation, the country confronted economic setbacks. In 1973, inflation began to climb at a pace unprecedented in the post-World War II decades, and economic growth slowed. An energy crisis, aggravated by U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, produced fuel shortages. Foreign competition in manufacturing brought less expensive, and often more reliable, goods into the U.S. market from nations such as Japan and West Germany. As a result, more American plants closed. The great economic ride enjoyed by the United States since World War II was over.

What distinguishes the period between the energy crisis (1973) and the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency (1980) is the collective national search for order in the midst of economic crisis, political realignment, and rapid social change. Virtually all the verities and touchstones of the postwar decades—Cold War liberalism, rising living standards, and the nuclear family—had come under question, and most agreed on the urgency to act. For some, this search demanded new forms of liberal experimentation. For others, it led instead to the conservatism of the emerging New Right.

IDENTIFY THE BIG IDEA

How did the legacy of social changes—such as shifting gender roles, civil rights, and challenges to the family—in the 1960s continue to reverberate in the 1970s, leading to both new opportunities and political disagreement?



Shifting Gender Roles As American society underwent dramatic changes in the 1970s, women seized new opportunities and expanded their role in national life. Donna Wright, shown here on break from her work at the Blue Ribbon Mine, was the only woman working at the mine in 1979. Photo by Kit Miniciler/The Denver Post via Getty Images.

An Era of Limits

The economic downturn of the early 1970s was the deepest slump since the Great Depression. Every major economic indicator — employment, productivity, growth — turned negative, and by 1973 the economy was in a tailspin. Inflation, brought on in part by military spending in Vietnam, proved especially difficult to control. When a Middle East embargo cut oil supplies in 1973, prices climbed even more. Unemployment remained high and productivity growth low until 1982. Overall, the 1970s represented the worst economic decade of the postwar period — what California governor Jerry Brown called an “era of limits.” In this time of distress, Americans were forced to consider other limits to the growth and expansion that had long been markers of national progress. The environmental movement brought attention to the toxic effects of modern industrial capitalism on the natural world. As the urban crisis grew worse, several major cities verged on bankruptcy. Finally, political limits were reached as well: None of the presidents of the 1970s could reverse the nation’s economic slide, though each spent years trying.

Energy Crisis

Modern economies run on oil. If the oil supply is drastically reduced, woe follows. Something like that happened to the United States in the 1970s. Once the

world’s leading oil producer, the United States had become heavily dependent on inexpensive imported oil, mostly from the Persian Gulf (Figure 29.1). American and European oil companies had discovered and developed the Middle Eastern fields early in the twentieth century, when much of the region was ruled by the British and French empires. When Middle Eastern states threw off the remnants of European colonialism, they demanded concessions for access to the fields. Foreign companies still extracted the oil, but now they did so under profit-sharing agreements with the Persian Gulf states. In 1960, these nations and other oil-rich developing countries formed a cartel (a business association formed to control prices), the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**.

Conflict between Israel and the neighboring Arab states of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan prompted OPEC to take political sides between 1967 and 1973. Following Israel’s victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, Israeli-Arab tensions in the region grew closer to boiling over with each passing year. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Egypt and Syria invaded Israel to regain territory lost in the 1967 conflict. Israel prevailed, but only after being resupplied by an emergency American airlift. In response to U.S. support for Israel, the Arab states in OPEC declared an oil embargo in October 1973. Gas prices in the United States quickly jumped by 40 percent and heating oil prices by 30 percent. Demand outpaced supply, and Americans found themselves parked for

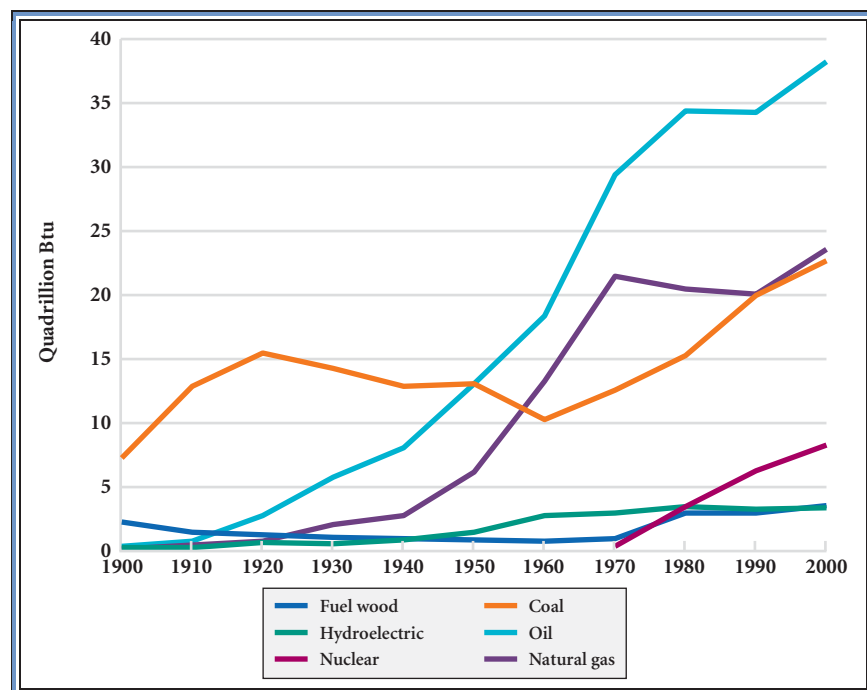


FIGURE 29.1
U.S. Energy Consumption,
1900–2000

Coal was the nation’s primary source of energy until the 1950s, when it was surpassed by oil and natural gas. The revival of coal consumption after 1960 stemmed from new open-pit mining in the West that provided cheaper fuel for power plants. The decline in oil consumption in 1980 reflects the nation’s response to the oil crisis of the 1970s, including, most notably, fuel-efficient automobiles. Nuclear energy became an important new fuel source, but after 1990 its contribution leveled off as a result of the safety concerns triggered by the Three Mile Island incident.

hours in mile-long lines at gasoline stations for much of the winter of 1973–1974. Oil had become a political weapon, and the West’s vulnerability stood revealed.

The United States scrambled to meet its energy needs in the face of the oil shortage. Just two months after the OPEC embargo began, Congress imposed a national speed limit of 55 miles per hour to conserve fuel. Americans began to buy smaller, more fuel-efficient cars such as Volkswagens, Toyotas, and Datsuns (later Nissans) — while sales of Detroit-made cars (now nicknamed “gas guzzlers”) slumped. With one of every six jobs in the country generated directly or indirectly by the auto industry, the effects rippled across the economy. Compounding the distress was the raging inflation set off by the oil shortage; prices of basic necessities, such as bread, milk, and canned goods, rose by nearly 20 percent in 1974 alone. “THINGS WILL GET WORSE,” one newspaper headline warned, “BEFORE THEY GET WORSE.”

Environmentalism

The **energy crisis** drove home the realization that the earth’s resources are not limitless. Such a notion was also at the heart of the era’s revival of **environmentalism**. The environmental movement was an offshoot of sixties activism, but it had numerous historical precedents: the preservationist, conservationist, and wilderness movements of the late nineteenth century; the conservationist ethos of the New Deal; and anxiety about nuclear weapons and overpopulation in the 1940s. Three of the nation’s leading environmental organizations — the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and the Natural Resources Council — were founded in 1892, 1935, and 1942, respectively. Environmental activists in the 1970s extended the movement’s historical roots through renewed efforts to ensure a healthy environment and access to unspoiled nature (Thinking Like a Historian, p. 940).

The movement had received a hefty boost back in 1962 when biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a stunning analysis of the pesticide DDT’s toxic impact on the human and natural food chains. A succession of galvanizing developments followed in the late 1960s. The Sierra Club successfully fought two dams in 1966 that would have flooded the Grand Canyon. And in 1969, three major events spurred the movement: an offshore drilling rig spilled millions of gallons of oil off the coast of Santa Barbara; the Cuyahoga River near Cleveland burst into flames because of the accumulation of flammable chemicals on its surface; and Friends of the Everglades opposed an airport that threatened



Earth Day, 1970

No single event better encapsulated the growing environmental awareness of Americans than the nationwide celebration of the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. In this photograph, college students in California release a balloon as part of that day’s activities. Julian Wasser/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images.

plants and wildlife in Florida. With these events serving as catalysts, environmentalism became a certifiable mass movement on the first **Earth Day**, April 22, 1970, when 20 million citizens gathered in communities across the country to express their support for a cleaner, healthier planet.

Environmental Protection Agency Earlier that year, on the heels of the Santa Barbara oil spill, Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act, which created the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**. A bipartisan bill with broad support, including that of President Nixon, the law required developers to file environmental impact statements assessing the effect of their projects on ecosystems. A

IDENTIFY CAUSES

What major factors led to the birth of the environmental movement in the 1970s?

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN



The Environmental Movement: Reimagining the Human-Earth Relationship

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of the environmental movement in the United States. Environmentalism took a variety of forms and initially was embraced by politicians across the political spectrum, including Republican president Richard Nixon, who signed the National Environmental Policy Act in 1970. Yet environmentalism also proved to be politically divisive. The following documents provide a range of perspectives on an important social and political movement discussed in this chapter.

1. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1962.

For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals, from the moment of conception until death. In the less than two decades of their use, synthetic pesticides have been so thoroughly distributed throughout the animate and inanimate world that they occur virtually everywhere. They have been recovered from most of the major river systems and even from streams of groundwater flowing unseen through the earth.

2. Ralph Nader, foreword to *Ecotactics: The Sierra Club Handbook for Environmental Activists*, 1970. In the Sierra Club's guide to environmental activism, environmental and consumer rights activist Nader discusses "environmental violence."

Pollution is violence and environmental pollution is environmental violence. It is a violence that has different impacts, styles and time factors than the more primitive kinds of violence such as crime in the streets. Yet in the size of the population exposed and the seriousness of the harm done, environmental violence far exceeds that of street crime. . . .

To deal with a system of oppression and suppression, which characterizes the environmental violence in this country, the first priority is to deprive the polluters of their unfounded legitimacy.

3. President Richard Nixon, State of the Union Address, January 22, 1970.

I shall propose to this Congress a \$10 billion nationwide clean waters program to put modern municipal waste treatment plants in every place in America where they are needed to make our waters clean again, and do it now. . . .

As our cities and suburbs relentlessly expand [. . .] priceless open spaces needed for recreation areas accessible to their people are swallowed up — often forever. Unless we preserve these spaces while they are available,

we will have none to preserve. Therefore, I shall propose new financing methods for purchasing open space and parklands now, before they are lost to us.

The automobile is our worst polluter of the air. Adequate control requires further advances in engine design and fuel composition. We shall intensify our research, set increasingly strict standards, and strengthen enforcement procedures — and we shall do it now.

We can no longer afford to consider air and water common property, free to be abused by anyone without regard to the consequences. Instead, we should begin now to treat them as scarce resources, which we are no more free to contaminate than we are free to throw garbage into our neighbor's yard.

4. "Earthrise" over the moon's surface, December 24, 1968. Photo taken by Apollo 8 crewmember Bill Anders, as the Apollo spacecraft orbited the moon.



NASA.

5. Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, 1969. A best-selling book that warned of a coming global overpopulation straining the world's resources.

Nothing could be more misleading to our children than our present affluent society. They will inherit a totally different world, a world in which the standards, politics, and economics of the 1960s are dead. As the most powerful nation in the world today, and its largest consumer, the United States cannot stand isolated. We are today involved in the events leading to famine; tomorrow we may be destroyed by its consequences.

Our position requires that we take immediate action at home and promote effective action world-wide. We must have population control at home, hopefully through a system of incentives and penalties, but by compulsion if voluntary methods fail. We must use our political power to push other countries into programs which combine agricultural development and population control. And while this is being done we must take action to reverse the deterioration of our environment before population pressure permanently ruins our planet.

6. President Ronald Reagan, speech at the Republican National Convention, July 17, 1980.

Make no mistake. We will not permit the safety of our people or our environmental heritage to be jeopardized, but we are going to reaffirm that the economic prosperity of our people is a fundamental part of our environment.

Our problems are both acute and chronic, yet all we hear from those in positions of leadership are the same tired proposals for more government tinkering, more meddling, and more control — all of which led us to this state in the first place.

7. "Waste Produced by a Typical Family in a Year."



© Martyn Goddard/Corbis.

Sources: (1) Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), 15; (2) John G. Mitchell and Constance L. Hastings, eds., *Ecotactics: The Sierra Club Handbook for Environmental Activists* (New York: Trident Press, 1970), 13–15; (3 & 6) Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu; (5) Louis Warren, ed., *American Environmental History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 296.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. Compare sources 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7. What are the different ways the environmental threat was understood and characterized? What kinds of solutions were proposed?
2. Source 4 is one of the first ever photographs of the earth taken from space. How would this visual perspective encourage viewers to think of the earth's resources as finite?
3. How does source 6 help us understand the opposition that developed to environmentalism? Why did some Americans oppose the environmental movement?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Using what you have learned about the environmental movement in this chapter and the documents above, construct an essay in which you make a historical argument about the origins of the movement, the issues that it raised, and the opposition that developed. How did the movement shape politics in the 1970s?

spate of new laws followed: the Clean Air Act (1970), the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1970), the Water Pollution Control Act (1972), and the Endangered Species Act (1973).

The Democratic majority in Congress and the Republican president generally found common ground on these issues, and *Time* magazine wondered if the environment was “the gut issue that can unify a polarized nation.” Despite the broad popularity of the movement, however, *Time*’s prediction was not borne out. Corporations opposed environmental regulations, as did many of their workers, who believed that tightened standards threatened their jobs. “IF YOU’RE HUNGRY AND OUT OF WORK, EAT AN ENVIRONMENTALIST,” read one labor union bumper sticker. By the 1980s, environmentalism starkly divided Americans, with proponents of unfettered economic growth on one side and environmental activists preaching limits on the other.

Nuclear Power An early foreshadowing of those divisions came in the brewing controversy over nuclear power. Electricity from the atom — what could be better? That was how Americans had greeted the arrival of power-generating nuclear technology in the 1950s. By 1974, U.S. utility companies were operating forty-two nuclear power plants, with a hundred more planned. Given the oil crisis, nuclear energy might have seemed a godsend; unlike coal- or oil-driven plants, nuclear operations produced no air pollutants.

Environmentalists, however, publicized the dangers of nuclear power plants: a reactor meltdown would be catastrophic, and so, in slow motion, would the dumping of the radioactive waste, which would generate toxic levels of radioactivity for hundreds of years. These fears seemed to be confirmed in March 1979, when the reactor core at the **Three Mile Island** nuclear plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, came close to meltdown. More than 100,000 people fled their homes. A prompt shutdown saved the plant, but the near catastrophe enabled environmentalists to win the battle over nuclear energy. After the incident at Three Mile Island, no new nuclear plants were authorized, though a handful with existing authorization were built in the 1980s. Today, nuclear reactors account for 20 percent of all U.S. power generation — substantially less than several European nations, but still fourth in the world.

Economic Transformation

In addition to the energy crisis, the economy was beset by a host of longer-term problems. Government spending on the Vietnam War and the Great Society made

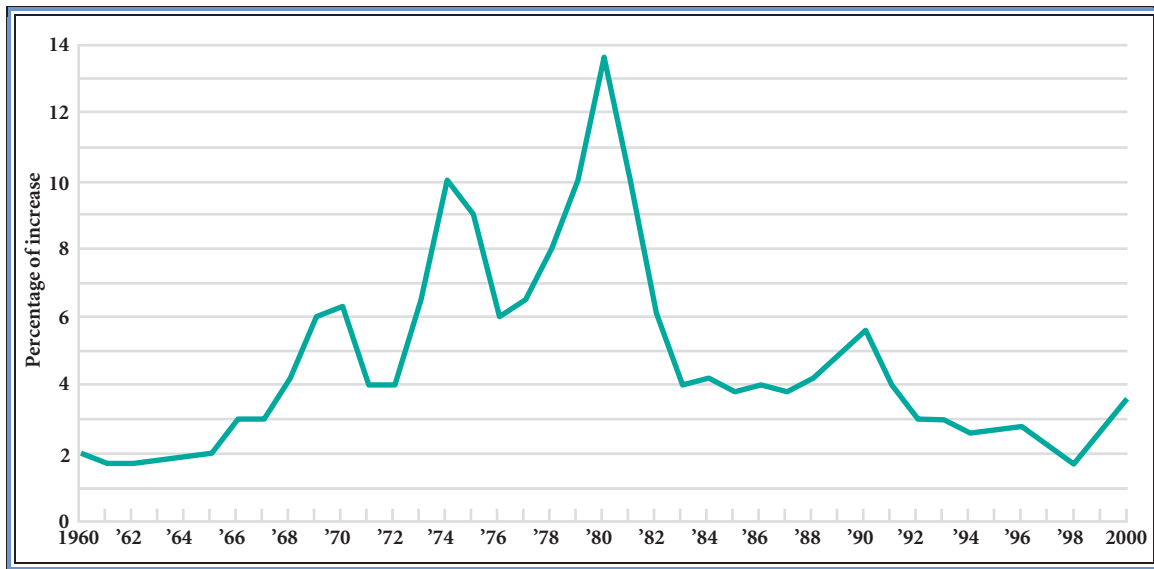
for a growing federal deficit and spiraling inflation. In the industrial sector, the country faced more robust competition from West Germany and Japan. America’s share of world trade dropped from 32 percent in 1955 to 18 percent in 1970 and was headed downward. As a result, in a blow to national pride, nine Western European countries had surpassed the United States in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) by 1980.

Many of these economic woes highlighted a broader, multigenerational transformation in the United States: from an industrial-manufacturing economy to a postindustrial-service one. That transformation, which continues to this day, meant that the United States began to produce fewer automobiles, appliances, and televisions and more financial services, health-care services, and management consulting services — not to mention many millions of low-paying jobs in the restaurant, retail, and tourist industries.

In the 1970s, the U.S. economy was hit simultaneously by unemployment, stagnant consumer demand, and inflation — a combination called **stagflation** — which contradicted a basic principle taught by economists: prices were not supposed to rise in a stagnant economy (Figure 29.2). For ordinary Americans, stagflation meant a noticeable decline in purchasing power, as discretionary income per worker dropped 18 percent between 1973 and 1982. None of the three presidents of the decade — Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter — had much luck tackling stagflation. Nixon’s New Economic Policy was perhaps the most radical attempt. Nixon imposed temporary price and wage controls in 1971 in an effort to curb inflation. Then he took an even bolder step: removing the United States from the gold standard, which allowed the dollar to float in international currency markets and effectively ended the Bretton Woods monetary system established after World War II.

The underlying weaknesses in the U.S. economy remained, however. Ford, too, had little success. His Whip Inflation Now (WIN) campaign urged Americans to cut food waste and do more with less, a noble but deeply unpopular idea among the American public. Carter’s policies, considered in a subsequent section of this chapter, were similarly ineffective. The fruitless search for a new economic order was a hallmark of 1970s politics.

Deindustrialization America’s economic woes struck hardest at the industrial sector, which suddenly — shockingly — began to be dismantled. Worst hit was the steel industry, which for seventy-five years had been the economy’s crown jewel. Unscathed by World

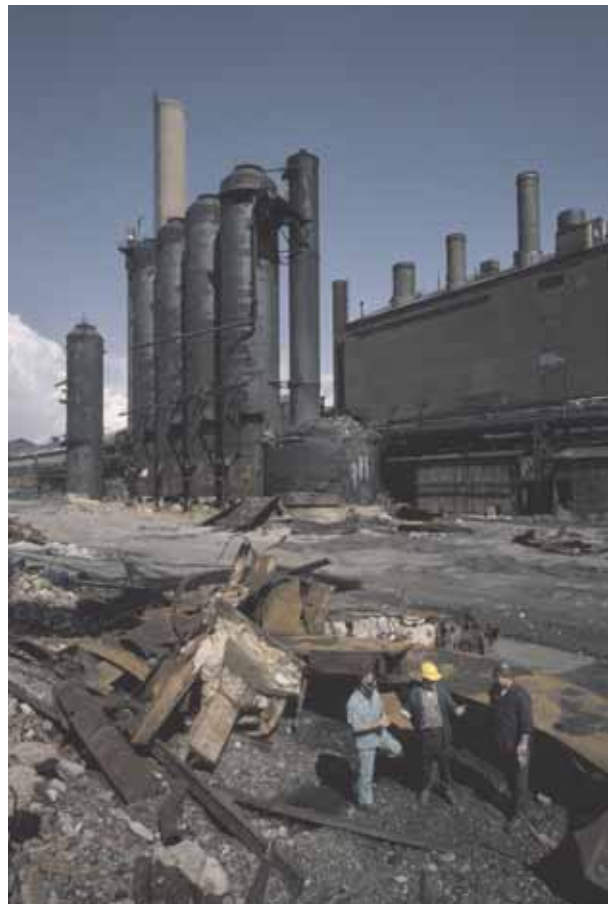
**FIGURE 29.2****The Inflation Rate, 1960–2000**

The impact of the oil crisis of 1973 on the inflation rate appears all too graphically in this figure. The dip in 1974 reflects the sharp recession that began that year, after which the inflation rate zoomed up to a staggering 14 percent in 1980. The return to normal levels after 1980 stemmed from very harsh measures by the Federal Reserve Board, which, while they succeeded, came at the cost of a painful slowdown in the economy.

War II, U.S. steel producers had enjoyed an open, hugely profitable market. But lack of serious competition left them without incentives to replace outdated plants and equipment. When West Germany and Japan rebuilt their steel industries, these facilities incorporated the latest technology. Foreign steel flooded into the United States during the 1970s, and the American industry was simply overwhelmed. Formerly titanic steel companies began a massive dismantling; virtually the entire Pittsburgh region, once a national hub of steel production, lost its heavy industry in a single generation. By the mid-1980s, downsizing, automation, and investment in new technologies made the American steel industry competitive again — but it was

Deindustrialization

Increasing economic competition from overseas created hard times for American industry in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the nation's once-proud core industries, such as steel, declined precipitously in these decades. This photo shows a steel mill in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, being demolished in 1982. Once the center of American steel production, Pittsburgh suffered hard times in the 1970s and 1980s. The result of such closures was the creation of the so-called Rust Belt in the Northeast and Midwest (Map 29.1). Lynn Johnson/National Geographic/Getty Images.



PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

What major developments shaped the American economy in the 1970s and contributed to its transformation?

a shadow of its former self, and it continues to struggle to this day.

The steel industry was the prime example of what became known as **deindustrialization**. The country was in the throes of an economic transformation that left it largely stripped of its industrial base.

Steel was hardly alone. A swath of the Northeast and Midwest, the country's manufacturing heartland, became the nation's **Rust Belt** (Map 29.1), strewn with abandoned plants and distressed communities. The automobile, tire, textile, and other consumer durable industries (appliances, electronics, furniture, and the like) all started shrinking in the

1970s. In 1980, *Business Week* bemoaned “plant closings across the continent” and called for the “reindustrialization of America.”

Organized Labor in Decline Deindustrialization threw many tens of thousands of blue-collar workers out of well-paid union jobs. One study followed 4,100 steelworkers left jobless by the 1977 shutdown of the Campbell Works of the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. Two years later, 35 percent had retired early at half pay; 10 percent had moved; 15 percent were still jobless, with unemployment benefits long gone; and 40 percent had found local work, but mostly in low-paying, service-sector jobs. In another instance, between 1978 and 1981, eight Los Angeles companies—including



MAP 29.1

From Rust Belt to Sunbelt, 1940–2000

One of the most significant developments of the post–World War II era was the growth of the Sunbelt. Sparked by federal spending for military bases, the defense industry, and the space program, states of the South and Southwest experienced an economic boom in the 1950s. This growth was further enhanced in the 1970s, as the heavily industrialized regions of the Northeast and Midwest declined and migrants from what was quickly dubbed the Rust Belt headed to the South and West in search of jobs.

such giants as Ford, Uniroyal, and U.S. Steel — closed factories employing 18,000 workers. These Ohio and California workers, like hundreds of thousands of their counterparts across the nation, had fallen from their perch in the middle class (America Compared, p. 946).

Deindustrialization dealt an especially harsh blow to the labor movement, which had facilitated the postwar expansion of that middle class. In the early 1970s, as inflation hit, the number of strikes surged; 2.4 million workers participated in work stoppages in 1970 alone. However, industry argued that it could no longer afford union demands, and labor's bargaining power produced fewer and fewer concrete results. In these hard years, the much-vaunted labor-management accord of the 1950s, which raised profits and wages by passing costs on to consumers, went bust. Instead of seeking higher wages, unions now mainly fought to save jobs. Union membership went into steep decline, and by the mid-1980s organized labor represented less than 18 percent of American workers, the lowest level since the 1920s. The impact on liberal politics was huge. With labor's decline, a main buttress of the New Deal coalition was coming undone.

Urban Crisis and Suburban Revolt

The economic downturn pushed already struggling American cities to the brink of fiscal collapse. Middle-class flight to the suburbs continued apace, and the

“urban crisis” of the 1960s spilled into the “era of limits.” Facing huge price inflation and mounting piles of debt—to finance social services for the poor and to replace disappearing tax revenue—nearly every major American city struggled to pay its bills in the 1970s. Surrounded by prosperous postwar suburbs, central cities seemingly could not catch a break.

New York, the nation's financial capital and its largest city, fared the worst. Its annual budget was in the billions, larger than that of most states. Unable to borrow on the tightening international bond market, New York neared collapse in the summer of 1975; bankruptcy was a real possibility.

When Mayor Abraham Beame appealed to the federal government for assistance, President Ford refused. “Ford to City: Drop Dead” read the headline in the *New York Daily News*. Fresh appeals ultimately produced a solution: the federal government would lend New York money, and banks would declare a three-year moratorium on municipal debt. The arrangement saved the city from defaulting, but the mayor was forced to cut city services, freeze wages, and lay off workers. One pessimistic observer declared that “the banks have been saved, and the city has been condemned.”

Cities faced declining fortunes in these years for many reasons, but one key was the continued loss of

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

How did cities and suburbs experience the “era of limits” differently, and why?

“Ford to City: Drop Dead”

In the summer of 1975, New York City nearly went bankrupt. When Mayor Abraham Beame appealed to President Gerald Ford for assistance, these newspaper headlines captured the chief executive's response. Though it was ultimately saved from financial ruin, the city's brush with insolvency symbolized the larger problems facing the nation: economic stagnation, high inflation, and unemployment. Hard times had seemingly spared no one. AP Images.





Economic Malaise in the Seventies

Most major economic indicators in the United States turned downward in the 1970s, as the long postwar expansion ground to an unmistakable halt. The figures below offer evidence of how developments in the United States compared with other industrialized countries.

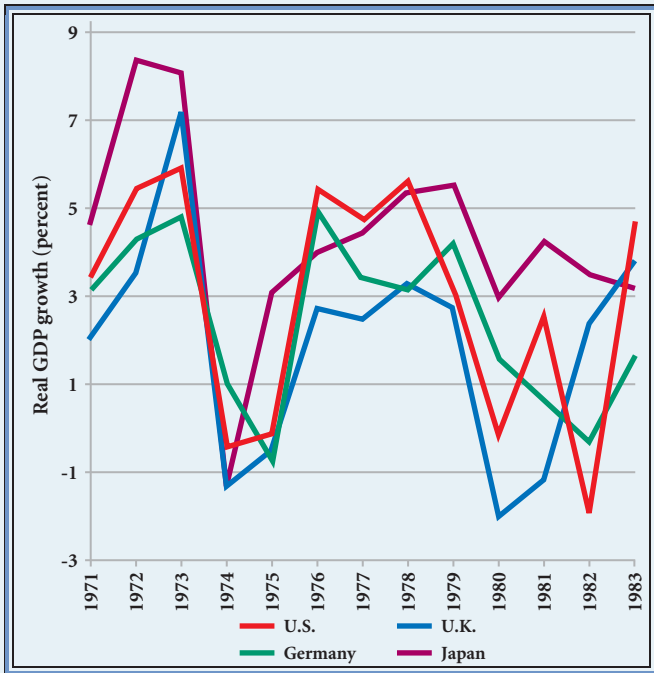


FIGURE 29.3
Falling Gross Domestic Product

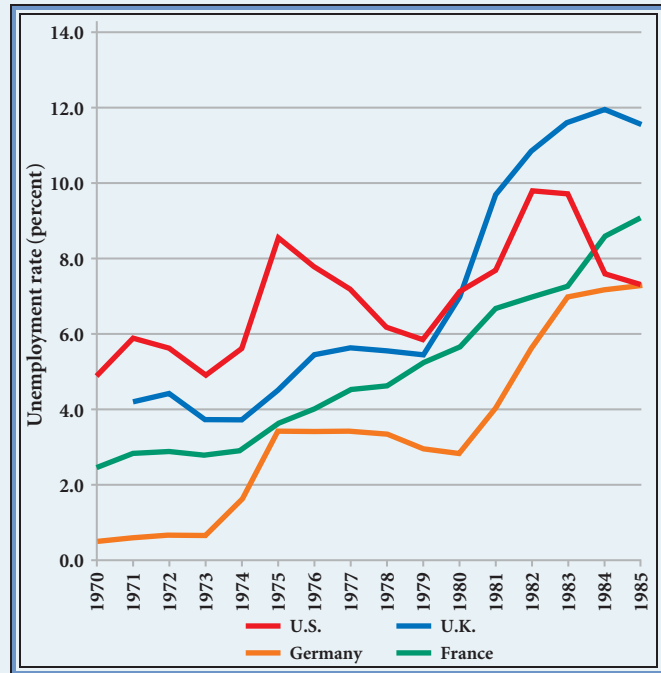


FIGURE 29.4
Rising Unemployment

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. In what ways do these figures demonstrate an integrated global economy?
2. What does the GDP graph indicate about how global economic integration affected the U.S. economy? Notice that Japan's GDP growth remained strong in the late 1970s and early 1980s. With what historical development within the U.S. does that correspond?

residents and businesses to nearby suburbs. In the 1970s alone, 13 million people (6 percent of the total U.S. population) moved to the suburbs. New suburban shopping centers opened weekly across the country, and other businesses — such as banks, insurance companies, and technology firms — increasingly sought suburban locations. More and more, people lived *and* worked in suburbs. In the San Francisco Bay area, 75 percent of all daily commutes were suburb-to-suburb, and 78 percent of New York's suburban

residents worked in nearby suburbs. The 1950s “organization man,” commuting downtown from his suburban home, had been replaced by the engineer, teacher, nurse, student, and carpenter who lived in one suburb and worked in another.

Beyond city limits, suburbanization and the economic crisis combined powerfully in what became known as the **tax revolt**, a dramatic reversal of the postwar spirit of generous public investment. The premier example was California. Inflation pushed real

estate values upward, and property taxes skyrocketed. Hardest hit were suburban property owners, along with retirees and others on fixed incomes, who suddenly faced unaffordable tax bills. Into this dire situation stepped Howard Jarvis, a conservative anti-New Dealer and a genius at mobilizing grassroots discontent. In 1978, Jarvis proposed **Proposition 13**, an initiative that would roll back property taxes, cap future increases for present owners, and require that all tax measures have a two-thirds majority in the legislature. Despite opposition by virtually the entire state leadership, including politicians from both parties, Californians voted overwhelmingly for Jarvis's measure.

Proposition 13 hobbled public spending in the nation's most populous state. Per capita funding of California public schools, once the envy of the nation, plunged from the top tier to the bottom, where it was second only to Mississippi. Moreover, Proposition 13's complicated formula benefitted middle-class and wealthy home owners at the expense of less-well-off citizens, especially those who depended heavily on public services. Businesses, too, came out ahead, because commercial property got the same protection as residential property. More broadly, Proposition 13 inspired tax revolts across the country and helped conservatives define an enduring issue: low taxes.

In addition to public investment, another cardinal marker of New Deal and Great Society liberalism had been a remarkable decline in income inequality. In the 1970s, that trend reversed, and the wealthiest Americans, those among the top 10 percent, began to pull ahead again. As corporations restructured to boost profits during the 1970s slump, they increasingly laid off high-wage workers, paid the remaining workers less, and relocated overseas. Thus upper-class Americans benefitted, while blue-collar families who had been lifted into the middle class during the postwar boom increasingly lost out. An unmistakable trend was apparent by the end of the 1970s. The U.S. labor market was dividing in two: a vast, low-wage market at the bottom and a much narrower high-wage market at the top, with the middle squeezed smaller and smaller.

Politics in Flux, 1973–1980

A search for order characterized national politics in the 1970s as well. It began with a scandal. Misbehavior is endemic to politics. Yet what became known as the Watergate affair—or simply **Watergate**—implicated President Richard Nixon in illegal behavior severe enough to bring down his presidency. Liberals

benefitted from Nixon's fall in the short term, but their long-term retreat continued. Politics remained in flux because while liberals were on the defensive, conservatives had not yet put forth a clear alternative.

Watergate and the Fall of a President

On June 17, 1972, something strange happened at Washington's Watergate office/apartment/hotel complex. Early that morning, five men carrying wiretapping equipment were apprehended there attempting to break into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Queried by the press, a White House spokesman dismissed the episode as "a third-rate burglary attempt." Pressed further, Nixon himself denied any White House involvement in "this very bizarre incident." In fact, the two masterminds of the break-in, G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, were former FBI and CIA agents currently working for Nixon's Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP).

The Watergate burglary was no isolated incident. It was part of a broad pattern of abuse of power by a White House obsessed with its enemies. Liddy and Hunt were on the White House payroll, part of a clandestine squad hired to stop leaks to the press. But they were soon arranging illegal wiretaps at DNC headquarters, part of a campaign of "dirty tricks" against the Democrats. Nixon's siege mentality best explains his fatal misstep. He could have dissociated himself from the break-in by firing his guilty aides or even just by letting justice take its course. But it was election time, and Nixon did not trust his political future to such a strategy. Instead, he arranged hush money for the burglars and instructed the CIA to stop an FBI investigation into the affair. This was obstruction of justice, a criminal offense.

Nixon kept the lid on until after the election, but in early 1973, one of the Watergate burglars began to talk. In the meantime, two reporters at the *Washington Post*, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, uncovered CREEP's links to key White House aides. In May 1973, a Senate investigating committee began holding nationally televised hearings, at which administration officials implicated Nixon in the illegal cover-up. The president kept investigators at bay for a year, but in June 1974, the House Judiciary Committee began to consider articles of impeachment. Certain of being convicted by the Senate, Nixon became, on August 9, 1974, the first U.S. president to resign his office. The next day, Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as president. Ford, the Republican minority leader in the House of Representatives, had replaced Vice President Spiro Agnew,

who had himself resigned in 1973 for accepting kickbacks while governor of Maryland. A month after he took office, Ford stunned the nation by granting Nixon a “full, free, and absolute” pardon.

Congress pushed back, passing a raft of laws against the abuses of the Nixon administration: the **War Powers Act** (1973), which reined in the president’s ability to deploy U.S. forces without congressional approval; amendments strengthening the **Freedom of Information Act** (1974), which gave citizens access to federal records; the **Ethics in Government Act** (1978); and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (1978), which prohibited domestic wiretapping without a warrant.

Popular disdain for politicians, evident in declining voter turnout, deepened with Nixon’s resignation in 1974. “Don’t vote,” read one bumper sticker in 1976. “It only encourages them.” Watergate not only damaged short-term Republican prospects but also shifted the party’s balance to the right. Despite mastering the populist appeal to the “silent majority,” the moderate Nixon was never beloved by conservatives. His relaxation of tensions with the Soviet Union and his visit to communist China, in particular, won him no friends on the right. His disgraceful exit benefitted the more conservative Republicans, who proceeded to reshape the party in their image.

Watergate Babies As for the Democrats, Watergate granted them a reprieve, a second chance at recapturing their eroding base. Backed by a public deeply disenchanted with politicians, especially scandal-tainted Republicans, congressional Democrats had an opportunity to repair the party’s image. Ford’s pardon of Nixon saved the nation a prolonged and agonizing trial, which was Ford’s rationale, but it was decidedly unpopular among the public. Pollster Louis Harris remarked that should a politician “defend that pardon in any part of this country, North or South, [he] is almost literally going to have his head handed to him.” Democratic candidates in the 1974 midterm elections made Watergate and Ford’s pardon their top issues. It worked. Seventy-five new Democratic members of the House came to Washington in 1975, many of them under the age of forty-five, and the press dubbed them Watergate babies.

Young and reform-minded, the Watergate babies solidified huge Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress and quickly set to work. They eliminated the House Un-American

Activities Committee (HUAC), which had investigated alleged Communists in the 1940s and 1950s and anti-war activists in the 1960s. In the Senate, Democrats reduced the number of votes needed to end a filibuster from 67 to 60—a move intended to weaken the power of the minority to block legislation. In both houses, Democrats dismantled the existing committee structure, which had entrenched power in the hands of a few elite committee chairs. And in 1978, the Ethics in Government Act forced political candidates to disclose financial contributions and limited the lobbying activities of former elected officials. Overall, the Watergate babies helped to decentralize power in Washington and bring greater transparency to American government.

In one of the great ironies of American political history, however, the post-Watergate reforms made government *less* efficient and *more* susceptible to special interests—the opposite of what had been intended. Under the new committee structure, smaller subcommittees proliferated, and the size of the congressional staff doubled to more than 20,000. A diffuse power structure actually gave lobbyists more places to exert influence. As the power of committee chairs weakened, influence shifted to party leaders, such as the Speaker of the House and the Senate majority leader. With little incentive to compromise, the parties grew more rigid, and bipartisanship became rare. Finally, filibustering, a seldom-used tactic largely employed by anti-civil rights southerners, increased in frequency. The Congress that we have come to know today—with its partisan rancor, its army of lobbyists, and its slow-moving response to public needs—came into being in the 1970s.

Political Realignment Despite Democratic gains in 1974, the electoral realignment that had begun with Richard Nixon’s presidential victories in 1968 and 1972 continued. As liberalism proved unable to stop runaway inflation or speed up economic growth, conservatism gained greater traction with the public. The postwar liberal economic formula—sometimes known as the Keynesian consensus—consisted of micro-adjustments to the money supply coupled with federal spending. When that formula failed to restart the economy in the mid-1970s, conservatives in Congress used this opening to articulate alternatives, especially economic deregulation and tax cuts.

On a grander scale, deindustrialization in the Northeast and Midwest and continued population growth in the Sunbelt was changing the political geography of the country. Power was shifting, incrementally but perceptibly, toward the West and South (Table 29.1). As states with strong trade unions at the center of the postwar

EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

What changed and what remained the same in American politics as a result of the Watergate scandal?

TABLE 29.1

Political Realignment: Congressional Seats

State	Apportionment	
	1940	1990
Rust Belt		
Massachusetts	14	10
Connecticut	6	6
New York	45	31
New Jersey	14	13
Pennsylvania	33	21
Ohio	23	19
Illinois	26	20
Indiana	11	10
Michigan	17	16
Wisconsin	10	9
Total	199	155
Sunbelt		
California	23	52
Arizona	2	6
Nevada	1	2
Colorado	4	6
New Mexico	2	3
Texas	21	30
Georgia	10	11
North Carolina	12	12
Virginia	9	11
Florida	6	23
Total	90	156

In the fifty years between 1940 and 1990, the Rust Belt states lost political clout, while the Sunbelt states gained it—measured here in congressional seats (which are apportioned based on population). Sunbelt states gained 66 seats, with the Rust Belt losing 44. This shifting political geography helped undermine the liberal coalition, which was strongest in industrial states with large labor unions, and paved the way for the rise of the conservative coalition, which was strongest in southern and Bible Belt states, as well as California. Source: Office of the Clerk of the House, clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/congApp/bystate.html.

liberal political coalition—such as New York, Illinois, and Michigan—lost industry, jobs, and people, states with traditions of libertarian conservatism—such as

California, Arizona, Florida, and Texas—gained greater political clout. The full impact of this shifting political geography would not be felt until the 1980s and 1990s, but its effects had become apparent by the mid-1970s.

Jimmy Carter: The Outsider as President

“Jimmy who?” was how journalists first responded when James Earl Carter, who had been a naval officer, a peanut farmer, and the governor of Georgia, emerged from the pack to win the Democratic presidential nomination in 1976. When Carter told his mother that he intended to run for president, she had asked, “President of what?” Trading on Watergate and his down-home image, Carter pledged to restore morality to the White House. “I will never lie to you,” he promised voters. Carter played up his credentials as a Washington outsider, although he selected Senator Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota as his running mate, to ensure his ties to traditional Democratic voting blocs. Ford still might have prevailed, but his pardon of Nixon likely cost him enough votes in key states to swing the election to the Democratic candidate. Carter won with 50 percent of the popular vote to Ford’s 48 percent.

For a time, Carter got some mileage as an outsider—the common man who walked to the White House after the inauguration and delivered fireside chats in a cardigan sweater. The fact that he was a born-again Christian also played well. But Carter’s inexperience began to show. He responded to feminists, an important Democratic constituency, by establishing a new women’s commission in his administration. But later he dismissed the commission’s concerns and became embroiled in a public fight with prominent women’s advocates. Most consequentially, his outsider strategy made for chilly relations with congressional leaders. Disdainful of the Democratic establishment, Carter relied heavily on inexperienced advisors from Georgia. And as a detail-oriented micromanager, he exhausted himself over the fine points of policy better left to his aides.

On the domestic front, Carter’s big challenge was managing the economy. The problems that he faced defied easy solution. Most confounding was stagflation. If the government focused on inflation—forcing prices down by raising interest rates—unemployment became worse. If the government tried to stimulate employment, inflation became worse. None of the levers of government economic policy seemed to work. At heart, Carter was an economic conservative. He



Jimmy Carter

President Jimmy Carter is seen here at a family picnic in his hometown of Plains, Georgia, just after he received the Democratic nomination for president in 1976. Carter was content to portray himself as a political outsider, an ordinary American who could restore trust to Washington after the Watergate scandal. A thoughtful man and a born-again Christian, Carter nonetheless proved unable to solve the complex economic problems, especially high inflation, and international challenges of the late 1970s. © Owen Franken/Corbis.

toyed with the idea of an “industrial policy” to bail out the ailing manufacturing sector, but he moved instead in a free-market direction by lifting the New Deal-era regulation of the airline, trucking, and railroad industries. **Deregulation** stimulated competition and cut prices, but it also drove firms out of business and hurt unionized workers.

The president’s efforts failed to reignite economic growth. Then, the Iranian Revolution curtailed oil supplies, and gas prices jumped again. In a major TV address,

Carter lectured Americans about the nation’s “crisis of the spirit.” He called energy conservation “the moral equivalent of war”—or, in the media’s shorthand, “MEOW,” which aptly captured the nation’s assessment of Carter’s sermonizing. By then, his approval rating had fallen below 30 percent. And it was no wonder, given an inflation rate over 11 percent, failing industries, and long lines at the pumps. It seemed the worst of all possible economic worlds, and the first-term president could not help but worry about the political costs to him and his party.



To see a longer excerpt of Carter’s TV address, along with other primary sources from this period, see *Sources for America’s History*.

Reform and Reaction in the 1970s

Having lived through a decade of profound social and political upheaval—the Vietnam War, protests, riots, Watergate, recession—many Americans were exhausted and cynical by the mid-1970s. But while some retreated to private concerns, others took reform in new directions. Civil rights battles continued, the women’s movement achieved some of its most far-reaching aims, and gay rights blossomed. These movements pushed the “rights revolution” of the 1960s deeper into American life. Others, however, pushed back. Social conservatives responded by forming their own organizations and resisting the emergence of what they saw as a permissive society.

Civil Rights in a New Era

When Congress banned job discrimination in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the law required only that employers hire without regard to “race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.” But after centuries of slavery and decades of segregation, would nondiscrimination bring African Americans into the economic mainstream? Many liberals thought not. They believed that government, universities, and private employers needed to take positive steps to open their doors to a wider, more diverse range of Americans—including other minority groups and women.

Among the most significant efforts to address the legacy of exclusion was **affirmative action**—procedures designed to take into account the disadvantaged position of minority groups after centuries

UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

What kind of president did Jimmy Carter hope to be, and how successful was he at implementing his agenda?



March for Affirmative Action

Following the Supreme Court's 1978 Bakke decision, Americans grew even more divided over the policy of affirmative action. For many people, such as African Americans and Latinos, affirmative action promised that groups who faced historical discrimination would have equal opportunity in jobs and education. For many whites, affirmative action looked like "reverse discrimination," and they fought its implementation. AP/Wide World Photos.

of discrimination. First advanced by the Kennedy administration in 1961, affirmative action received a boost under President Lyndon Johnson, whose Labor Department fashioned a series of plans in the late 1960s to encourage government contractors to recruit underrepresented racial minorities. Women were added under the last of these plans, when pressure from the women's movement highlighted the problem of sex discrimination. By the early 1970s, affirmative action had been refined by court rulings that identified acceptable procedures: hiring and enrollment goals, special recruitment and training programs, and set-asides (specially reserved slots) for both racial minority groups and women.

Affirmative action, however, did not please many whites, who felt that the deck was being stacked against them. Much of the dissent came from conservative groups that had opposed civil rights all along. They charged affirmative action advocates with "reverse discrimination." Legal challenges abounded, as employees, students, and university applicants went to court to object to these new procedures. Some liberal groups sought a middle position. In a widely publicized 1972 letter, Jewish organizations, seared by the memory of

quotas that once kept Jewish students out of elite colleges, came out against all racial quotas but nonetheless endorsed "rectifying the imbalances resulting from past discrimination."

A major shift in affirmative action policy came in 1978. Allan Bakke, a white man, sued the University of California at Davis Medical School for rejecting him in favor of less-qualified minority-group candidates. Headlines across the country sparked anti-affirmative action protest marches on college campuses and vigorous discussion on television and radio and in the White House. Ultimately, the Supreme Court rejected the medical school's quota system, which set aside 16 of 100 places for "disadvantaged" students. The Court ordered Bakke admitted but indicated that a more flexible affirmative action plan, in which race could be considered along with other factors, would still pass constitutional muster. *Bakke v. University of California* thus upheld affirmative action but, by rejecting a quota system, also called it into question. Future court rulings and state referenda, in the 1990s and 2000s, would further limit

TRACE CHANGE OVER TIME

How did affirmative action evolve between 1961 and 1978?

the scope of affirmative action. In particular, California voters passed Proposition 209 in 1996, prohibiting public institutions from using affirmative action to increase diversity in employment and education.

The Women's Movement and Gay Rights

Unlike the civil rights movement, whose signal achievements came in the 1960s, the women's and gay rights movements flourished in the 1970s. With three influential wings — radical, liberal, and “Third World” — the women's movement inspired both grassroots activism and legislative action across the nation. For their

part, gay activists had further to go: they needed to convince Americans that same-sex relationships were natural and that gay men and lesbians deserved the same protection of the law as all other citizens. Neither move-

ment achieved all of its aims in this era, but each laid a strong foundation for the future.

Women's Activism In the first half of the 1970s, the women's liberation movement reached its historic peak. Taking a dizzying array of forms — from lobbying legislatures to marching in the streets and establishing all-female collectives — women's liberation produced activism on the scale of the earlier black-led civil rights movement. Women's centers, as well as women-run child-care facilities, began to spring up in cities and towns. A feminist art and poetry movement flourished. Women challenged the admissions policies of all-male colleges and universities — opening such prestigious universities as Yale and Columbia and nearly bringing an end to male-only institutions of higher education. Female scholars began to transform higher education: by studying women's history, by increasing the number of women on college and university faculties, and by founding women's studies programs.

Much of women's liberation activism focused on the female body. Inspired by the Boston collective that first published *Our Bodies, Ourselves* — a groundbreaking book on women's health — the women's health movement founded dozens of medical clinics, encouraged women to become physicians, and educated millions of women about their bodies. To reform antiabortion laws, activists pushed for remedies in more than thirty state legislatures. Women's liberationists founded the antirape movement, established rape crisis centers around the nation, and lobbied state legislatures and

Congress to reform rape laws. Many of these endeavors and movements began as shoestring operations in living rooms and kitchens: *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was first published as a 35-cent mimeographed booklet, and the antirape movement began in small consciousness-raising groups that met in churches and community centers. By the end of the decade, however, all of these causes had national organizations and touched the lives of millions of American women.

Equal Rights Amendment Buoyed by this flourishing of activism, the women's movement renewed the fight for an **Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)** to the Constitution. First introduced in 1923, the ERA stated, in its entirety, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on the basis of sex.” Vocal congressional women, such as Patsy Mink (Democrat, Hawaii), Bella Abzug

EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

How did the idea of civil rights expand during the 1970s?



Phyllis Schlafly

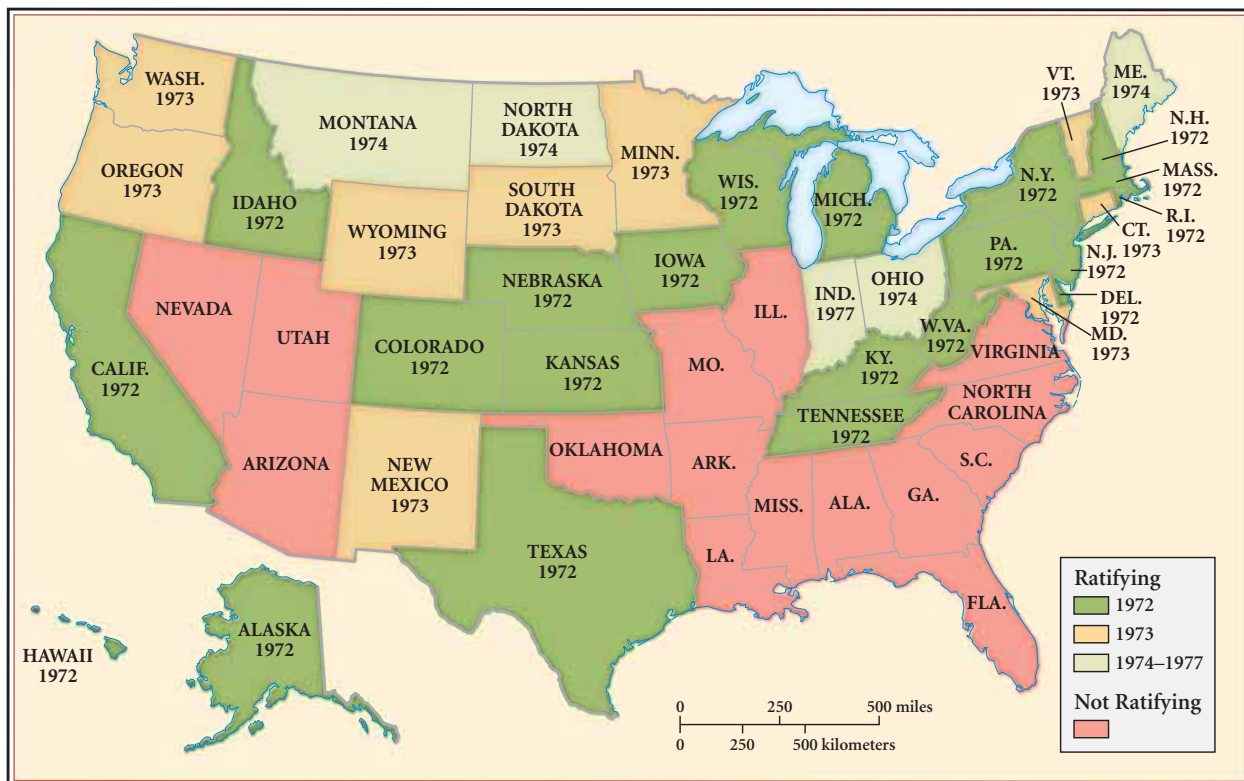
Phyllis Schlafly, leader of the organization STOP ERA, talks with reporters during a rally at the Illinois State Capitol on March 4, 1975, at a time when the state legislature was considering whether to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Schlafly described herself as a housewife and called her strenuous political career a hobby. © Bettmann/Corbis.

(Democrat, New York), and Shirley Chisholm (Democrat, New York), found enthusiastic male allies — among both Democrats and Republicans — and Congress adopted the amendment in 1972. Within just two years, thirty-four of the necessary thirty-eight states had ratified it, and the ERA appeared headed for adoption. But then, progress abruptly halted (Map 29.2).

Credit for putting the brakes on ERA ratification goes chiefly to a remarkable woman: Phyllis Schlafly, a lawyer long active in conservative causes. Despite her own flourishing career, Schlafly advocated traditional roles for women. The ERA, she proclaimed, would create an unnatural “unisex society,” with women drafted into the army and forced to use single-sex toilets. Abortion, she alleged, could never be prohibited by law. Led by Schlafly’s organization, **STOP ERA** (founded in 1972), thousands of women mobilized, showing up at statehouses with home-baked bread and apple pies. As labels on baked goods at one anti-ERA rally

expressed it: “My heart and hand went into this dough / For the sake of the family please vote no.” It was a message that resonated widely, especially among those troubled by the rapid pace of social change (American Voices, p. 954). The ERA never was ratified, despite a congressional extension of the deadline to June 30, 1982.

Roe v. Wade In addition to the ERA, the women’s movement had identified another major goal: winning reproductive rights. Activists pursued two tracks: legislative and judicial. In the early 1960s, abortion was illegal in virtually every state. A decade later, thanks to intensive lobbying by women’s organizations, liberal ministers, and physicians, a handful of states, such as New York, Hawaii, California, and Colorado, adopted laws making legal abortions easier to obtain. But progress after that was slow, and women’s advocates turned to the courts. There was reason to be optimistic. The



MAP 29.2

States Ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment, 1972–1977

The ratifying process for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) went smoothly in 1972 and 1973 but then stalled. The turning point came in 1976, when ERA advocates lobbied extensively, particularly in Florida, North Carolina, and Illinois, but failed to sway the conservative legislatures in those states. After Indiana ratified in 1977, the amendment still lacked three votes toward the three-fourths majority needed for adoption. Efforts to revive the ERA in the 1980s were unsuccessful, and it became a dead issue.

Debating the Equal Rights Amendment

Phyllis Schlafly

Lawyer and political activist Phyllis Schlafly was the most prominent opponent of the ERA. Her organization, STOP ERA, campaigned against the amendment in critical states and helped to halt ratification.

Women's magazines, the women's pages of newspapers, and television and radio talk shows have been filled for months with a strident advocacy of the "rights" of women to be treated on an equal basis with men in all walks of life. But what about the rights of the woman who doesn't want to compete on an equal basis with men? Does she have the right to be treated as a woman — by her family, by society, and by the law? . . .

The laws of every one of our 50 states now guarantee the right to be a woman — protected and provided for in her career as a woman, wife, and mother. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment will wipe out all our laws which — through rights, benefits, and exemptions — guarantee this right to be a woman. . . . Is this what American women want? Is this what American men want?

The laws of every one of the 50 states now require the husband to support his wife and children — and to provide a home for them to live in. In other words, the law protects a woman's right to be a full-time wife and mother, her right not to take a job outside the home, her right to care for her own baby in her own home while being financially supported by her husband. . . .

There are two very different types of women lobbying for the Equal Rights Amendment. One group is the women's liberationists. Their motive is totally radical. They hate men, marriage, and children. They are out to destroy morality and the family. . . . There is another type of woman supporting the Equal Rights Amendment from the most sincere motives. It is easy to see why the business and professional women are supporting the Equal Rights Amendment — many of them have felt the keen edge of discrimination in their employment.

Source: From *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, November 1972. Reprinted by permission.

Jerry Falwell

Jerry Falwell was a fundamentalist Baptist preacher in Virginia, a television evangelist, and the founder of the political lobbying organization known as the Moral Majority.

I believe that at the foundation of the women's liberation movement there is a minority core of women who were once bored with life, whose real problems are spiritual problems. Many women have never accepted their God-given roles. . . . God Almighty created men and women biologically different and with differing needs and roles. He made men and women to complement each other and to love each other. . . . Women who work should be respected and accorded dignity and equal rewards for equal work. But this is not what the present feminist movement and equal rights movement are all about.

The Equal Rights Amendment is a delusion. I believe that women deserve more than equal rights. And, in families and in nations where the Bible is believed, Christian women are honored above men. Only in places where the Bible is believed and practiced do women receive more than equal rights. Men and women have differing strengths. The Equal Rights Amendment can never do for women what needs to be done for them. Women need to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and be under His Lordship. They need a man who knows Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, and they need to be part of a home where their husband is a godly leader and where there is a Christian family. . . .

ERA is not merely a political issue, but a moral issue as well. A definite violation of holy Scripture, ERA defies the mandate that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Ep. 5:23). In 1 Peter 3:7 we read that husbands are to give their wives honor as unto the weaker vessel, that they are both heirs together of the grace of life. Because a woman is weaker does not mean that she is less important.

Source: Excerpt from *Listen America!* by Jerry Falwell, copyright © 1980 by Jerry Falwell. Used by permission of Doubleday, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC. All rights reserved. Any third party use of this material, outside of this publication, is prohibited. Interested parties must apply directly to Random House LLC for permission.

Elizabeth Duncan Koontz

Elizabeth Duncan Koontz was a distinguished educator and the first black woman to head the National Education Association and the U.S. Women's Bureau. At the time she made this statement at state legislative hearings on the ERA in 1977, she was assistant state superintendent for public instruction in North Carolina.

A short time ago I had the misfortune to break my foot. . . . The pain . . . did not hurt me as much as when I went into the emergency room and the young woman upon asking me my name, the nature of my ailment, then asked me for my husband's social security number and his hospitalization number. I asked her what did that have to do with my emergency.

And she said, "We have to be sure of who is going to pay your bill." I said, "Suppose I'm not married, then." And she said, "Then give me your father's name." I did not go through that twenty years ago when I was denied the use of that emergency room because of my color.

I went through that because there is an underlying assumption that all women in our society are protected, dependent, cared for by somebody who's got a social security number and hospitalization insurance. Never once did she assume I might be a woman who might be caring for my husband, instead of him by me, because of some illness. She did not take into account the fact that one out of almost eight women heading families in poverty today [is] in the same condition as men in families and poverty. . . .

My greater concern is that so many women today . . . oppose the passage of the ERA very sincerely and . . . tell you without batting an eye, "I don't want to see women treated that way." And I speak up, "What way is that?" . . . Women themselves have been a bit misguided. We have mistaken present practice for law, and women have . . . assumed too many times that their present condition cannot change. The rate of divorce, the rate of desertion, the rate of separation, and the death rate of male supporters is enough for us to say: "Let us remove all legal barriers to women and girls making their choices — this state cannot afford it."

Source: William A. Link and Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, eds., *The South in the History of the Nation* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 295–296.

Caroline Bird

Caroline Bird was the lead author of *What Women Want*, a report produced by women's rights advocates following the 1977 National Women's Conference, held in Houston, Texas.

The Declaration of Independence, signed in 1776, stated that "all Men are created equal" and that governments derive their powers "from the Consent of the Governed." Women were not included in either concept. The original American Constitution of 1787 was founded on English common law, which did not recognize women as citizens or as individuals with legal rights. A woman was expected to obey her husband or nearest male kin, and if she was married her person and her property were owned by her husband. . . .

It has been argued that the ERA is not necessary because the Fourteenth Amendment, passed after the Civil War, guarantees that no state shall deny to "any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." . . .

Aside from the fact that women have been subjected to varying, inconsistent, and often unfavorable decisions under the Fourteenth Amendment, the Equal Rights Amendment is a more immediate and effective remedy to sex discrimination in Federal and State laws than case-by-case interpretation under the Fourteenth Amendment could ever be.

Source: Caroline Bird, *What Women Want* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 120–121.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Schlafly and Koontz have different notions of what it means to be a woman. Explain what these differences are and how they inform the authors' distinct views of the ERA.
2. Why does Schlafly believe that women will be harmed by the ERA?
3. Schlafly and Falwell argue that women need the protection and support of men. Are they right? How would Koontz likely respond?
4. How do each of the four authors define women's roles and responsibilities in society?

Supreme Court had first addressed reproductive rights in a 1965 case, *Griswold v. Connecticut*. *Griswold* struck down an 1879 state law prohibiting the possession of contraception as a violation of married couples' constitutional "right of privacy." Following the logic articulated in *Griswold*, the Court gradually expanded the right of privacy in a series of cases in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Those cases culminated in *Roe v. Wade* (1973). In that landmark decision, the justices nullified a Texas law that prohibited abortion under any circumstances, even when the woman's health was at risk, and laid out a new national standard: Abortions performed during the first trimester were protected by the right of privacy. At the time and afterward, some legal authorities questioned whether the Constitution recognized any such privacy right and criticized the Court's seemingly arbitrary first-trimester timeline. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court chose to move forward, transforming a traditionally state-regulated policy into a national, constitutionally protected right.

For the women's movement, *Roe v. Wade* represented a triumph. For evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, Catholics, and conservatives generally, it was a bitter pill. In their view, abortion was, unequivocally, the taking of a human life. These Americans, represented by groups such as the National Right to Life Committee, did not believe that something they regarded as immoral and sinful could be the basis for

women's equality. Women's advocates responded that illegal abortions — common prior to *Roe* — were often unsafe procedures, which resulted in physical harm to women and even death. *Roe* polarized what was already a sharply divided public and mobilized conservatives to seek a Supreme Court reversal or, short of that, to pursue legislation that would strictly limit the conditions under which abortions could be performed. In 1976, they convinced Congress to deny Medicaid funds for abortions, an opening round in a campaign against *Roe v. Wade* that continues today.

Harvey Milk The gay rights movement had achieved notable victories as well. These, too, proved controversial. More than a dozen cities had passed gay rights ordinances by the mid-1970s, protecting gay men and lesbians from employment and housing discrimination. One such ordinance in Dade County (Miami), Florida, sparked a protest led by Anita Bryant, a conservative Baptist and a television celebrity. Her "Save Our Children" campaign in 1977, which garnered national media attention, resulted in the repeal of the ordinance and symbolized the emergence of a conservative religious movement opposed to gay rights.

Across the country from Miami, developments in San Francisco looked promising for gay rights advocates, then turned tragic. No one embodied the combination of gay liberation and hard-nosed politics better than a San Francisco camera-shop owner named



Harvey Milk

In November 1977, Harvey Milk became the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in the United States, when he won a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Shockingly, almost exactly a year from the day of his election, Milk was assassinated.

© Bettmann/Corbis.

Harvey Milk. A closeted businessman in New York until he was forty, Milk arrived in San Francisco in 1972 and threw himself into city politics. Fiercely independent, he ran as an openly gay candidate for city supervisor (city council) twice and the state assembly once, both times unsuccessfully.

By mobilizing the “gay vote” into a powerful bloc, Milk finally won a supervisor seat in 1977. He was not the first openly gay elected official in the country — Kathy Kozachenko of Michigan and Elaine Noble of Massachusetts share that distinction — but he became a national symbol of emerging gay political power. Tragically, after he helped to win passage of a gay rights ordinance in San Francisco, he was assassinated in 1978 — along with the city’s mayor, George Moscone — by a disgruntled former supervisor named Dan White. When White was convicted of manslaughter rather than murder, five thousand gays and lesbians in San Francisco marched on city hall.

After the Warren Court

In response to what conservatives considered the liberal judicial revolution under the Warren Court, President Nixon came into the presidency promising to appoint “strict constructionists” (conservative-minded justices) to the bench. In three short years, between 1969 and 1972, he was able to appoint four new justices to the Supreme Court, including the new chief justice, Warren Burger. Surprisingly, despite the conservative credentials of its new members, the Burger Court refused to scale back the liberal precedents set under Warren. Most prominently, in *Roe v. Wade* the Burger Court extended the “right of privacy” developed under Warren to include women’s access to abortion. As we saw above, few Supreme Court decisions in the twentieth century have disappointed conservatives more.

In a variety of cases, the Burger Court either confirmed previous liberal rulings or chose a centrist course. In 1972, for instance, the Court deepened its intervention in criminal procedure by striking down all existing capital punishment laws, in *Furman v. Georgia*. In response, Los Angeles police chief Ed Davis accused the Court of establishing a “legal oligarchy” that had ignored the “perspective of the average citizen.” He and other conservatives vowed a nationwide campaign to bring back the death penalty — which was in fact shortly restored, in *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976). Other decisions advanced women’s rights. In 1976, the Court ruled that arbitrary distinctions based on sex in the workplace and other arenas were unconstitutional, and in 1986 that sexual harassment violated the Civil

Rights Act. These rulings helped women break employment barriers in the subsequent decades.

In all of their rulings on privacy rights, however, the Burger Court was reluctant to move ahead of public attitudes toward homosexuality. Gay men and lesbians still had no legal recourse if state laws prohibited same-sex relations. In a controversial 1986 case, *Bowers v. Hardwick*, the Supreme Court upheld a Georgia sodomy statute that criminalized same-sex sexual acts. The majority opinion held that homosexuality was contrary to “ordered liberty” and that extending sexual privacy to gays and lesbians “would be to cast aside millennia of moral teaching.” Not until 2003 (*Lawrence v. Texas*) would the Court overturn that decision, recognizing for all Americans the right to sexual privacy.

The American Family on Trial

In 1973, the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) aired a twelve-part television series that followed the life of a real American family. Producers wanted the show, called simply *An American Family*, to document how a middle-class white family coped with the stresses of a changing society. They did not anticipate that the family would dissolve in front of their cameras. Tensions and arguments raged, and in the final episode, Bill, the husband and father (who had had numerous extramarital affairs), moved out. By the time the show aired, the couple was divorced and Pat, the former wife, had become a single working mother with five children.

An American Family captured a traumatic moment in the twentieth-century history of the family. Between 1965 and 1985, the divorce rate doubled, and children born in the 1970s had a 40 percent chance of spending part of their youth in a single-parent household. As wages stagnated and inflation pushed prices up, more and more families depended on two incomes for survival. Furthermore, the women’s movement and the counterculture had called into question traditional sex roles — father as provider and mother as homemaker — and middle-class baby boomers rebelled against what they saw as the puritanical sexual values of their parents’ generation. In the midst of such rapid change, where did the family stand?

Working Families in the Age of Deindustrialization

One of the most striking developments of the 1970s and 1980s was the relative stagnation of wages. After World War II, hourly wages had grown steadily ahead

of inflation, giving workers more buying power with each passing decade. By 1973, that trend had stopped in its tracks. The decline of organized labor, the loss of manufacturing jobs, and runaway inflation all played a role in the reversal. Hardest hit were blue-collar and pink-collar workers and those without college degrees.

Women Enter the Workforce Millions of wives and mothers had worked for wages for decades. But many Americans still believed in the “family wage”: a breadwinner income, earned by men, sufficient to support a family. After 1973, fewer and fewer Americans had access to that luxury. Between 1973 and the early 1990s, every major income group except the top 10 percent saw their real earnings (accounting for inflation) either remain the same or decline. Over this period, the typical worker saw a 10 percent drop in real wages. To keep their families from falling behind, women streamed into the workforce. Between 1950 and 1994, the proportion of women ages 25 to 54 working for pay increased from 37 to 75 percent. Much of that increase occurred in the 1970s.

PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

Why did the struggles of working families become more prominent in the 1970s, and what social and economic concerns did those families have?

Americans were fast becoming dependent on the two-income household (Figure 29.5).

The numbers tell two different stories of American life in these decades. On the one hand, the trends unmistakably show that women, especially in blue-collar and pink-collar families, *had* to work for wages to sustain their family’s standard of living: to buy a car, pay for college, afford medical bills, support an aging parent, or simply pay the rent. Moreover, the number of single women raising children nearly doubled between 1965 and 1990. Women’s paid labor was making up for the declining earning power or the absence of men in American households. On the other hand, women’s real income overall grew during the same period. This increase reflected the opening of professional and skilled jobs to educated baby-boomer women. As older barriers began to fall, women poured into law and medicine, business and government, and, though more slowly, the sciences and engineering. Beneficiaries of feminism, these women pursued careers of which their mothers had only dreamed.

Workers in the National Spotlight For a brief period in the 1970s, the trials of working men and women made a distinct imprint on national culture.

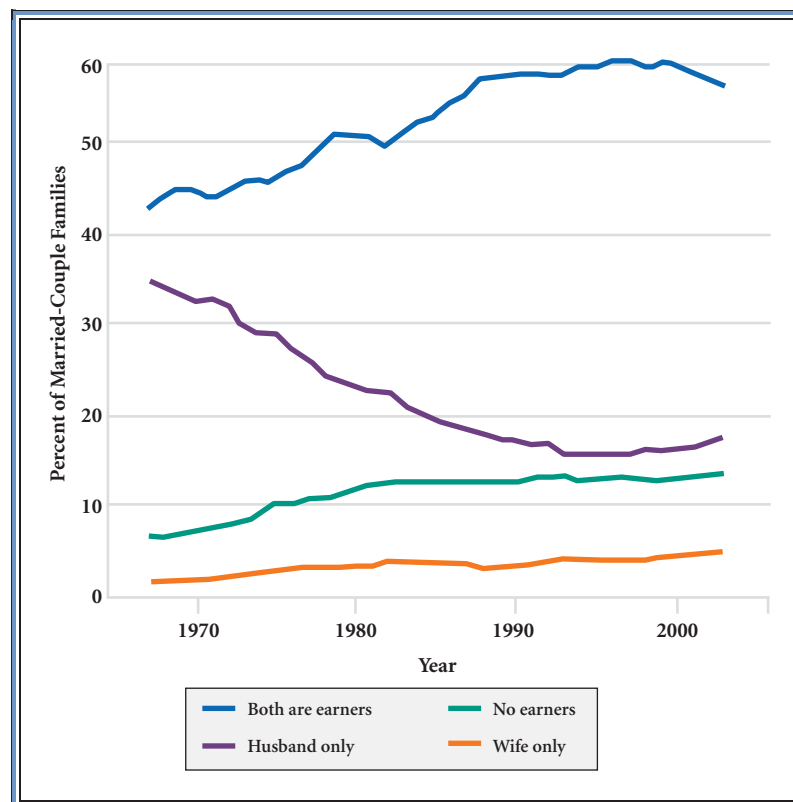


FIGURE 29.5
The Increase in Two-Worker Families

In 1968, about 43 percent of married couples sent both the husband and the wife into the workforce; thirty years later, 60 percent were two-earner families. The percentage of families in which the wife alone worked increased from 3 to 5 percent during these years, while those with no earners (welfare recipients and, increasingly, retired couples) rose from 8 to 13 percent. Because these figures do not include unmarried persons and most illegal immigrants, they do not give a complete picture of the American workplace. But there is no doubt that women now play a major role in the workforce.

Blue-Collar Blues

Unemployment in the 1970s affected blue-collar workers most, with many factories closing and new construction at a standstill. In many cities, joblessness among construction workers stood between 20 and 30 percent. In this 1976 photo, an unemployed carpenter in Cleveland, Ohio, files for unemployment insurance. The “blue-collar blues” caused by long unemployment lines, high inflation, and difficult economic times hit American workers hard in the late 1970s. © 1976 Settle/The New York Times Company. Reprinted with Permission.



Reporters wrote of the “blue-collar blues” associated with plant closings and the hard-fought strikes of the decade. A 1972 strike at the Lordstown, Ohio, General Motors plant captivated the nation. Holding out not for higher wages but for better working conditions—the plant had the most complex assembly line in the nation—Lordstown strikers spoke out against what they saw as an inhumane industrial system. Across the nation, the number of union-led strikes surged, even as the number of Americans in the labor movement continued to decline. In Lordstown and most other sites of

strikes and industrial conflict, workers won a measure of public attention but typically gained little economic ground.

When Americans turned on their televisions in the mid-1970s, the most popular shows reflected the “blue-collar blues” of struggling families. *All in the Family* was joined by *The Waltons*, set during the Great Depression. *Good Times*, *Welcome Back, Kotter*, and *Sanford and Son* dealt with poverty in the inner city. *The Jeffersons* featured an upwardly mobile black couple. *Laverne and Shirley* focused on young working women

Good Times

The popular 1970s sitcom *Good Times* examined how the “blue-collar blues” affected a working-class black family struggling to make ends meet in tough economic times. The show’s theme song spoke of “temporary layoffs . . . easy credit ripoffs . . . scratchin’ and surviving.” Its actors, many of them classically trained, brought a realistic portrait of working-class African American life to television. © Bettmann/Corbis.



in the 1950s and *One Day at a Time* on working women in the 1970s making do after divorce. The most-watched television series of the decade, 1977's eight-part *Roots*, explored the history of slavery and the survival of African American culture and family roots despite the oppressive labor system. Not since the 1930s had American culture paid such close attention to working-class life.

The decade also saw the rise of musicians such as Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Paycheck, and John Cougar (Mellencamp), who became stars by turning the hard-scrabble lives of people in small towns and working-class communities into rock anthems that filled arenas. Springsteen wrote songs about characters who “sweat it out in the streets of a runaway American dream,” and, to the delight of his audience, Paycheck famously sang, “Take this job and shove it!” Meanwhile, on the streets of Harlem and the South Bronx in New York, young working-class African American men experimenting with dance and musical forms invented break dancing and rap music—styles that expressed both the hardship and the creativity of working-class black life in the deindustrialized American city.

Navigating the Sexual Revolution

The economic downturn was not the only force that placed stress on American families in this era. Another such force was what many came to call the “sexual revolution.” Hardly revolutionary, sexual attitudes in the 1970s were, in many ways, a logical evolution of developments in the first half of the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1910s, Americans increasingly viewed sex as a component of personal happiness, distinct from reproduction. Attitudes toward sex grew even more lenient in the postwar decades, a fact reflected in the Kinsey studies of the 1940s and 1950s. By the 1960s, sex before marriage had grown more socially acceptable—an especially profound change for women—and frank discussions of sex in the media and popular culture had grown more common.

In that decade, three developments dramatically accelerated this process: the introduction of the birth control pill, the rise of the baby-boomer-led counterculture, and the influence of feminism. First made

available in the United States in 1960, the birth control pill gave women an unprecedented degree of control over reproduction. By 1965, more than 6 million American women were taking advantage of this pharmaceutical advance.

Rapid shifts in attitude accompanied the technological breakthrough. Middle-class baby boomers embraced a sexual ethic of greater freedom and, in many cases, a more casual approach to sex outside marriage. “I just feel I am expressing myself the way I feel at that moment in the most natural way,” a female California college student, explaining her sex life, told a reporter in 1966. The rebellious counterculture encouraged this attitudinal shift by associating a puritanical view of sex with their parents’ generation.

Finally, women’s rights activists reacted to the new emphasis on sexual freedom in at least two distinct ways. Many feminists felt that the sexual revolution was by and for men: the emphasis on casual sex seemed to perpetuate male privilege—the old double standard; sexual harassment was all too common in the workplace; and the proliferation of pornography continued to commercialize women as sex objects. On the other hand, they remained optimistic that the new sexual ethic could free women from those older moral constraints. They called for a revolution in sexual *values*, not simply behavior, that would end exploitation and grant women the freedom to explore their sexuality on equal terms with men.

Sex and Popular Culture In the 1970s, popular culture was suffused with discussions of the sexual revolution. Mass-market books with titles such as *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, Human Sexual Response*, and *The Sensuous Man* shot up the best-seller list. William Masters and Virginia Johnson became the most famous sex researchers since Alfred Kinsey by studying couples in the act of lovemaking. In 1972, English physician Alex Comfort published *The Joy of Sex*, a guidebook for couples that became one of the most popular books of the decade. Comfort made certain to distinguish his writing from pornographic exploitation. “Sex is the one place where we today can learn to treat people as people,” he wrote.

Hollywood took advantage of the new sexual ethic by making films with explicit erotic content that pushed the boundaries of middle-class taste. Films such as *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), and *Shampoo* (1974), the latter starring Hollywood’s leading ladies’ man, Warren Beatty, led the way. Throughout the decade, and into the 1980s, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) scrambled to keep its guide for parents—the system of rating pictures G, PG, R, and X (and, after 1984, PG-13)—in tune with Hollywood’s advancing sexual revolution.

On television, the popularity of social problem shows, such as *All in the Family*, and the fear of losing

EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

What were three major consequences of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s?



Midnight Cowboy

In the mid-1970s, the movie industry embraced the “sexual revolution” and pushed the boundaries of middle-class taste. Movies such as *Midnight Cowboy* (1975)—starring Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight—were part of a larger shift in American culture in which frank sexual discussions and the portrayal of sexual situations in various media grew more acceptable. John Springer Collection/Corbis.

advertising revenue moderated the portrayal of sex in the early 1970s. However, in the second half of the decade networks both exploited and criticized the new sexual ethic. In frivolous, lighthearted shows such as the popular *Charlie’s Angels*, *Three’s Company*, and *The Love Boat*, heterosexual couples explored the often confusing, and usually comical, landscape of sexual morality. At the same time, between 1974 and 1981, the major networks produced more than a dozen made-for-TV movies about children in sexual danger—a sensationalized warning to parents of the potential threats to children posed by a less strict sexual morality.

Middle-Class Marriage Many Americans worried that the sexual revolution threatened marriage itself. The notion of marriage as romantic companionship had defined middle-class norms since the late nineteenth century. It was also quite common throughout most of the twentieth century for Americans to see sexual satisfaction as a healthy part of the marriage bond.

But what defined a healthy marriage in an age of rising divorce rates, changing sexual values, and feminist critiques of the nuclear family? Only a small minority of Americans rejected marriage outright; most continued to create monogamous relationships codified in marriage. But many came to believe that they needed help as marriage came under a variety of economic and psychological stresses.

A therapeutic industry arose in response. Churches and secular groups alike established marriage seminars and counseling services to assist couples in sustaining a healthy marriage. A popular form of 1960s psychotherapy, the “encounter group,” was adapted to marriage counseling: couples met in large groups to explore new methods of communicating. One of the most successful of these organizations, Marriage Encounter, was founded by the Catholic Church. It expanded into Protestant and Jewish communities in the 1970s and became one of the nation’s largest counseling organizations. Such groups embodied another long-term shift in how middle-class Americans understood marriage. Spurred by both feminism and psychotherapeutic models that stressed self-improvement, Americans increasingly defined marriage not simply by companionship and sexual fidelity but also by the deeply felt emotional connection between two people.

Religion in the 1970s: The Fourth Great Awakening

For three centuries, American society has been punctuated by intense periods of religious revival—what historians have called Great Awakenings (Chapters 4 and 8). These periods have seen a rise in church membership, the appearance of charismatic religious leaders, and the increasing influence of religion, usually of the evangelical variety, on society and politics. One such awakening, the fourth in U.S. history, took shape in the 1970s and 1980s. It had many elements, but one of its central features was a growing concern with the family.

In the 1950s and 1960s, many mainstream Protestants had embraced the reform spirit of the age. Some of the most visible Protestant leaders were social activists who condemned racism and opposed the Vietnam War. Organizations such as the National Council of Churches—along with many progressive Catholics and Jews—joined with Martin Luther King Jr. and other African American ministers in the long battle for civil rights. Many mainline Protestant churches, among them the Episcopal, Methodist, and Congregationalist denominations, practiced a version

of the “Social Gospel,” the reform-minded Christianity of the early twentieth century.

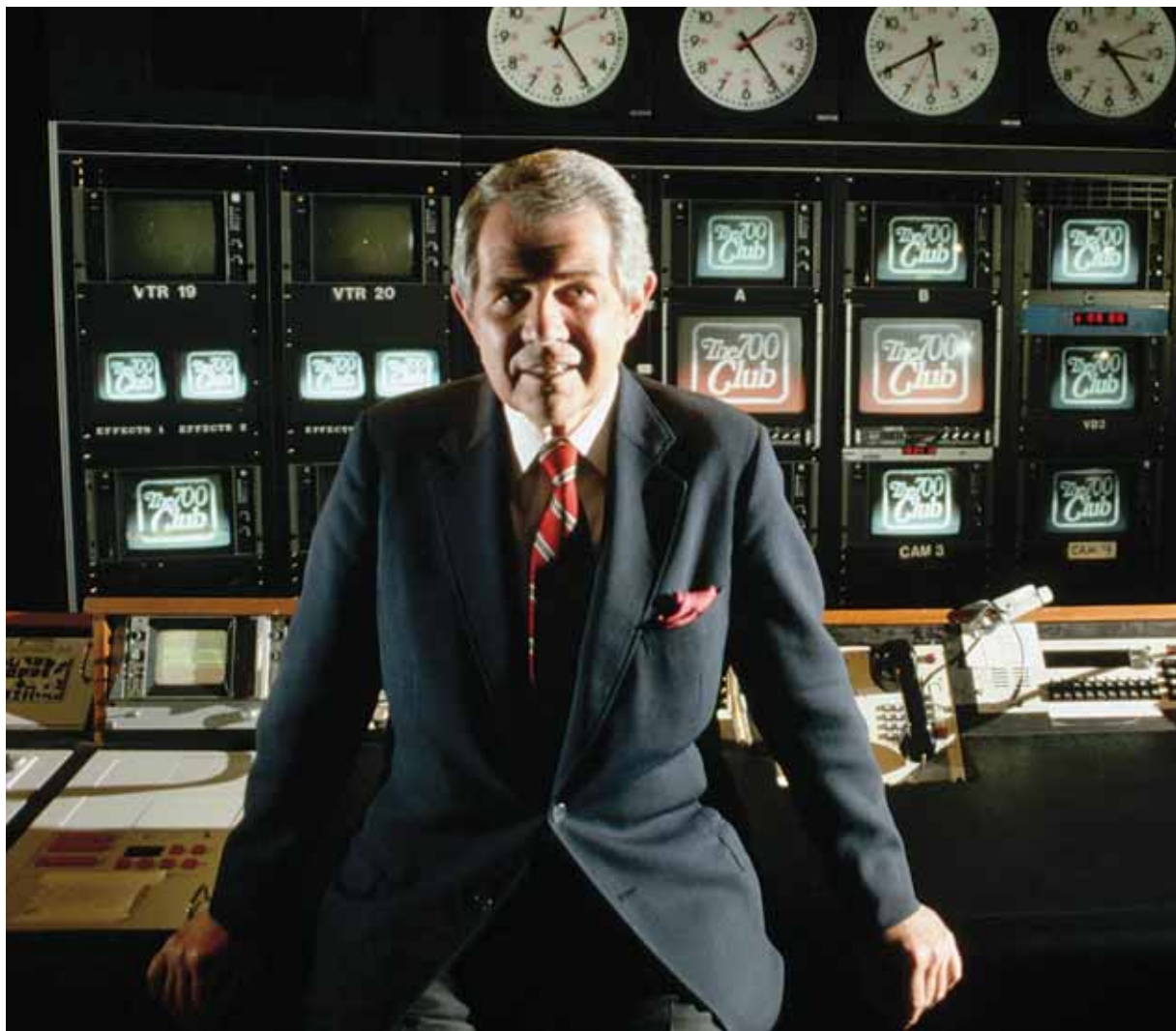
Evangelical Resurgence Meanwhile, **evangelicalism** survived at the grass roots. Evangelical Protestant churches emphasized an intimate, personal salvation (being “born again”); focused on a literal interpretation of the Bible; and regarded the death and resurrection of Jesus as the central message of Christianity. These tenets distinguished evangelicals

from mainline Protestants as well as from Catholics and Jews, and they flourished in a handful of evangelical colleges, Bible schools, and seminaries in the post-war decades.

No one did more to keep the evangelical fire burning than Billy Graham. A graduate of the evangelical Wheaton College in Illinois, Graham cofounded Youth for Christ in 1945 and then toured the United States and Europe preaching the gospel. Following a stunning 1949 tent revival in Los Angeles that lasted eight weeks, Graham shot to national fame. His success in Los Angeles led to a popular radio program, but

EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

How did evangelical Christianity influence American society in the 1970s?



Televangelism

Television minister (“televangelist”) and conservative political activist Pat Robertson, shown here in the control room of his *700 Club* TV show, was a leading figure in the resurgence of evangelical Christianity in the 1970s and 1980s. Reaching millions of viewers through their television ministries, men such as Robertson built huge churches and large popular followings. © Wally McNamee/CORBIS

he continued to travel relentlessly, conducting old-fashioned revival meetings he called crusades. A massive sixteen-week 1957 crusade held in New York City's Madison Square Garden made Graham, along with the conservative Catholic priest Fulton Sheen, one of the nation's most visible religious leaders.

Graham and other evangelicals in the 1950s and 1960s laid the groundwork for the Fourth Great Awakening. But it was a startling combination of events in the late 1960s and early 1970s that sparked the evangelical revival. First, rising divorce rates, social unrest, and challenges to prevailing values led people to seek the stability of faith. Second, many Americans regarded feminism, the counterculture, sexual freedom, homosexuality, pornography, and legalized abortion not as distinct issues, but as a collective sign of moral decay in society. To seek answers and find order, more and more people turned to evangelical ministries, especially Southern Baptist, Pentecostal, and Assemblies of God churches.

Numbers tell part of the story. As mainline churches lost about 15 percent of their membership between 1970 and 1985, evangelical church membership soared. The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination, grew by 23 percent, while the Assemblies of God grew by an astounding 300 percent. *Newsweek* magazine declared 1976 “The Year of the Evangelical,” and that November the nation made Jimmy Carter the nation's first evangelical president. In a national Gallup poll, 34 percent of Americans answered yes when asked, “Would you describe yourself as a ‘born again’ or evangelical Christian?”

Much of this astonishing growth came from the creative use of television. Graham had pounded the pavement and worn out shoe leather to reach his converts. But a new generation of preachers brought religious conversion directly into Americans' living rooms through television. These so-called televangelists built huge media empires through small donations from millions of avid viewers — not to mention advertising. Jerry Falwell's *Old Time Gospel Hour*, Pat Robertson's *700 Club*, and Jim and Tammy Bakker's *PTL (Praise the Lord) Club* were the leading pioneers in this televised race for American souls, but another half dozen — including Oral Roberts and Jimmy Swaggart — followed them onto the airwaves. Together, they made the 1970s and 1980s the era of Christian broadcasting.

Religion and the Family Of primary concern to evangelical Christians was the family. Drawing on selected Bible passages, evangelicals believed that the

nuclear family, and not the individual, represented the fundamental unit of society. The family itself was organized along paternalist lines: father was breadwinner and disciplinarian; mother was nurturer and supporter. “Motherhood is the highest form of femininity,” the evangelical author Beverly LaHaye wrote in an influential book on Christian women. Another popular Christian author declared, “A church, a family, a nation is only as strong as its men.”

Evangelicals spread their message about the Christian family through more than the pulpit and television. They founded publishing houses, wrote books, established foundations, and offered seminars. Helen B. Andelin, for instance, a California housewife, produced a homemade book called *Fascinating Womanhood* that eventually sold more than 2 million copies. She used the book as the basis for her classes, which by the early 1970s had been attended by 400,000 women and boasted 11,000 trained teachers. *Fascinating Womanhood* led evangelical women in the opposite direction of feminism. Whereas the latter encouraged women to be independent and to seek equality with men, Andelin taught that “submissiveness will bring a strange but righteous power over your man.” Andelin was but one of dozens of evangelical authors and educators who encouraged women to defer to men.

Evangelical Christians held that strict gender roles in the family would ward off the influences of an immoral society. Christian activists were especially concerned with sex education in public schools, the proliferation of pornography, legalized abortion, and the rising divorce rate. For them, the answer was to strengthen what they called “traditional” family structures. By the early 1980s, Christians could choose from among hundreds of evangelical books, take classes on how to save a marriage or how to be a Christian parent, attend evangelical churches and Bible study courses, watch evangelical ministers on television, and donate to foundations that promoted “Christian values” in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress.

Wherever one looked in the 1970s and early 1980s, American families were under strain. Nearly everyone agreed that the waves of social liberalism and economic transformation that swept over the nation in the 1960s and 1970s had destabilized society and, especially, family relationships. But Americans did not agree about how to restabilize families. Indeed, different approaches to the family would further divide the country in the 1980s and 1990s, as the New Right would increasingly make “family values” a political issue.



“Family Values”

During the 1980 presidential campaign, the Reverend Jerry Falwell, pictured here with Phyllis Schlafly, supported Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party with “I Love America” rallies around the country. Falwell, head of the Moral Majority, helped to bring a new focus on “family values” to American politics in the late 1970s. This was a conservative version of the emphasis on male-breadwinner nuclear families that had long been characteristic of American values. AP/Wide World Photos.

SUMMARY

For much of the 1970s, Americans struggled with economic problems, including inflation, energy shortages, income stagnation, and deindustrialization. These challenges highlighted the limits of postwar prosperity and forced Americans to consider lowering their economic expectations. A movement for environmental protection, widely supported, led to new laws and an awareness of nature’s limits, and the energy crisis highlighted the nation’s dependence on resources from abroad, especially oil.

In the midst of this gloomy economic climate, Americans also sought political and cultural resolutions to the upheavals of the 1960s. In politics, the

Watergate scandal led to a brief period of political reform. Meanwhile, the battle for civil rights entered a second stage, expanding to encompass women’s rights, gay rights, and the rights of alleged criminals and prisoners and, in the realm of racial justice, focusing on the problem of producing concrete results rather than legislation. Many liberals cheered these developments, but another effect was to strengthen a new, more conservative social mood that began to challenge liberal values in politics and society more generally. Finally, we considered the multiple challenges faced by the American family in the 1970s and how a perception that the family was in trouble helped to spur an evangelical religious revival that would shape American society for decades to come.

C H A P T E R R E V I E W

MAKE IT STICK Go to **LearningCurve** to retain what you've read.



TERMS TO KNOW Identify and explain the significance of each term below.

Key Concepts and Events

**Organization of Petroleum
Exporting Countries (OPEC)**
(p. 938)
energy crisis (p. 939)
environmentalism (p. 939)
Silent Spring (p. 939)
Earth Day (p. 939)
**Environmental Protection
Agency (EPA)** (p. 939)
Three Mile Island (p. 942)
stagflation (p. 942)
deindustrialization (p. 944)
Rust Belt (p. 944)
tax revolt (p. 946)
Proposition 13 (p. 947)

Watergate (p. 947)
War Powers Act (p. 948)
Freedom of Information Act
(p. 948)
Ethics in Government Act
(p. 948)
deregulation (p. 950)
affirmative action (p. 950)
Bakke v. University of California
(p. 951)
Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)
(p. 952)
STOP ERA (p. 953)
Roe v. Wade (p. 956)
evangelicalism (p. 962)

Key People

Rachel Carson (p. 939)
Gerald Ford (p. 947)
Howard Jarvis (p. 947)
Jimmy Carter (p. 949)
Phyllis Schlafly (p. 953)
Harvey Milk (p. 956)
Billy Graham (p. 962)

REVIEW QUESTIONS Answer these questions to demonstrate your understanding of the chapter's main ideas.

1. Why did the U.S. economy struggle in the 1970s? How was the period after 1973 different from 1945–1972?
2. How was the “rights liberalism” of this era different from the “welfare liberalism” of the 1930s and 1940s?
3. How was the American family of the 1970s different from that of the 1950s? Without romanticizing either period, how would you account for the differences?
4. **THEMATIC UNDERSTANDING** Examine the category “Work, Exchange, and Technology” on the thematic timeline on page 803. How did economic developments in the 1970s reverse the course the national economy had been on since World War II? More broadly, can you identify events in each of the timeline categories that made the 1970s a decade of important historical transition?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Recognize the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters by answering these questions.

1. **ACROSS TIME AND PLACE** Consider the history of the American economy in the twentieth century. Compare the 1970s with other eras: the Great Depression of the 1930s, the industrial boom of the World War II years, and the growth and rising wages in the 1950s and 1960s. Using these comparisons, construct a historical narrative of the period from the 1920s through the 1970s.
2. **VISUAL EVIDENCE** Study the photographs on pages 943 and 959 and the map on page 944. How did the economic downturn of the 1970s affect the lives of ordinary Americans and American culture broadly? What connections can you draw between the two photographs and developments in the global economy and the rise of the Sunbelt?

MORE TO EXPLORE Start here to learn more about the events discussed in this chapter.

Jeffrey Hadden and Anson Shupe, *Televangelism: Power and Politics on God's Frontier* (1988). A thought-provoking analysis of Christian broadcasting.

Daniel Horowitz, *Jimmy Carter and the Energy Crisis of the 1970s* (2005). Analysis and documents.

N. E. H. Hull and Peter Charles Hoffer, *Roe v. Wade: The Abortion Rights Controversy in American History* (2001). A sweeping treatment of the controversial decision.

Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (2008). An excellent overview of the era.

Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962–1992* (1993). A balanced account of environmentalism.

The Oyez Project at Northwestern University, at oyez.org/oyez/frontpage, is an invaluable resource for more than one thousand Supreme Court cases, with audio transcripts, voting records, and summaries.

TIMELINE Ask yourself why this chapter begins and ends with these dates and then identify the links among related events.

1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earth Day first observed • Environmental Protection Agency established
1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Rights Amendment passed by Congress • Phyllis Schlafly founds STOP ERA • <i>Furman v. Georgia</i> outlaws death penalty • Watergate break-in (June)
1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Roe v. Wade</i> legalizes abortion • Endangered Species Act • OPEC oil embargo; gas shortages • Period of high inflation begins • War Powers Act
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nixon resigns over Watergate • Congress imposes 55 miles-per-hour speed limit
1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York nears bankruptcy • “Watergate babies” begin congressional reform
1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jimmy Carter elected president
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposition 13 reduces California property taxes • <i>Bakke v. University of California</i> limits affirmative action • Harvey Milk assassinated in San Francisco
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Mile Island nuclear accident

KEY TURNING POINTS: Based on this timeline, what were the three or four major political turning points of the 1970s? Defend your answer by explaining the impact of the changes.