

# Postwar Confidence and Anxiety

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1945-1960

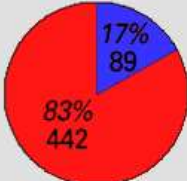
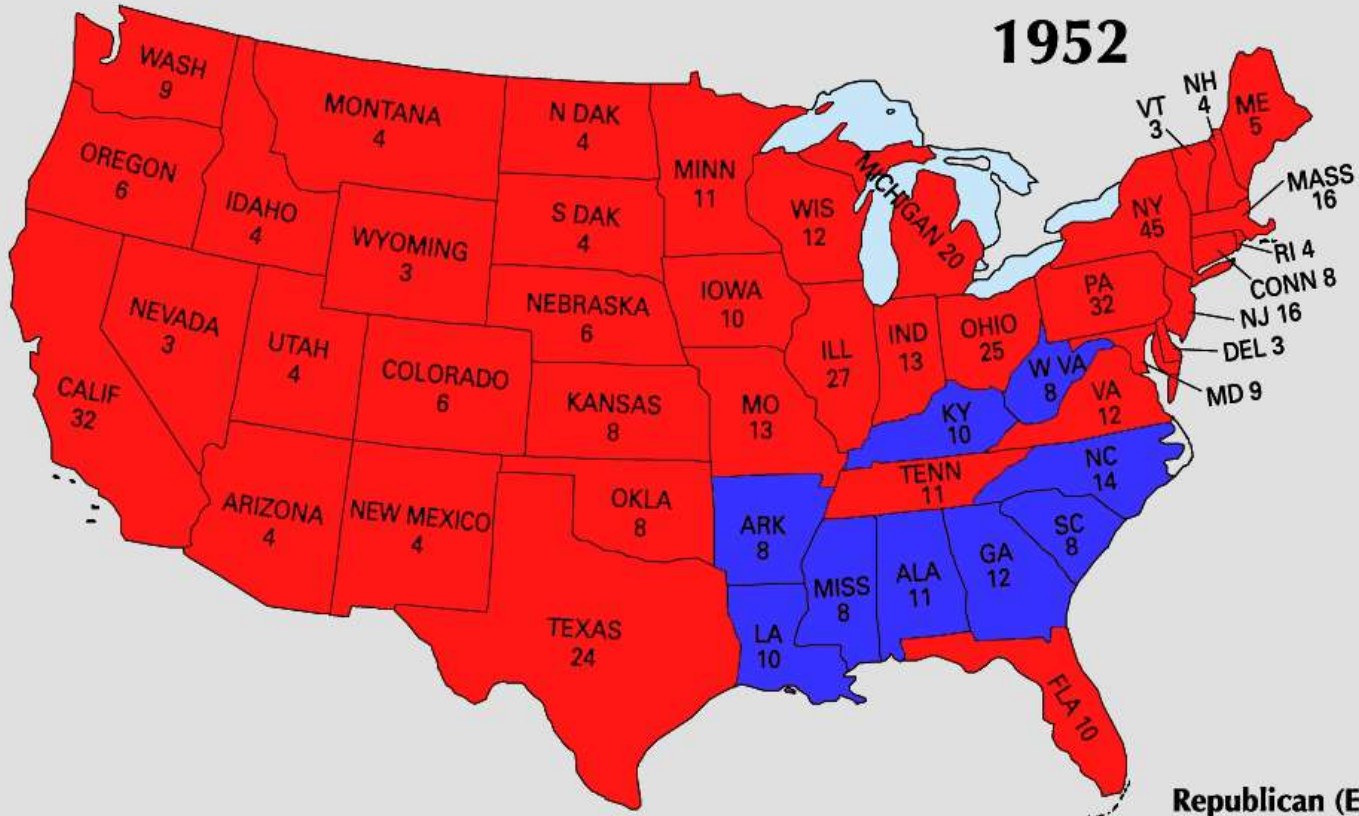
# Standards

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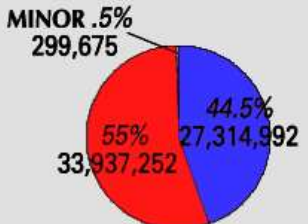
**SSUSH21 The student will explain economic growth and its impact on the United States, 1945-1970.**

- a. Describe the baby boom and its impact as shown by Levittown and the Interstate Highway Act.
- b. Describe the impact television has had on American culture
- c. Analyze the impact of technology on American life; include the development of the personal computer and air conditioning.
- d. Describe the impact of competition with the USSR as evidenced by the launch of Sputnik I and President Eisenhower's actions.

# 1952



**ELECTORAL VOTE TOTAL: 531**

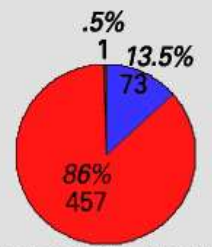
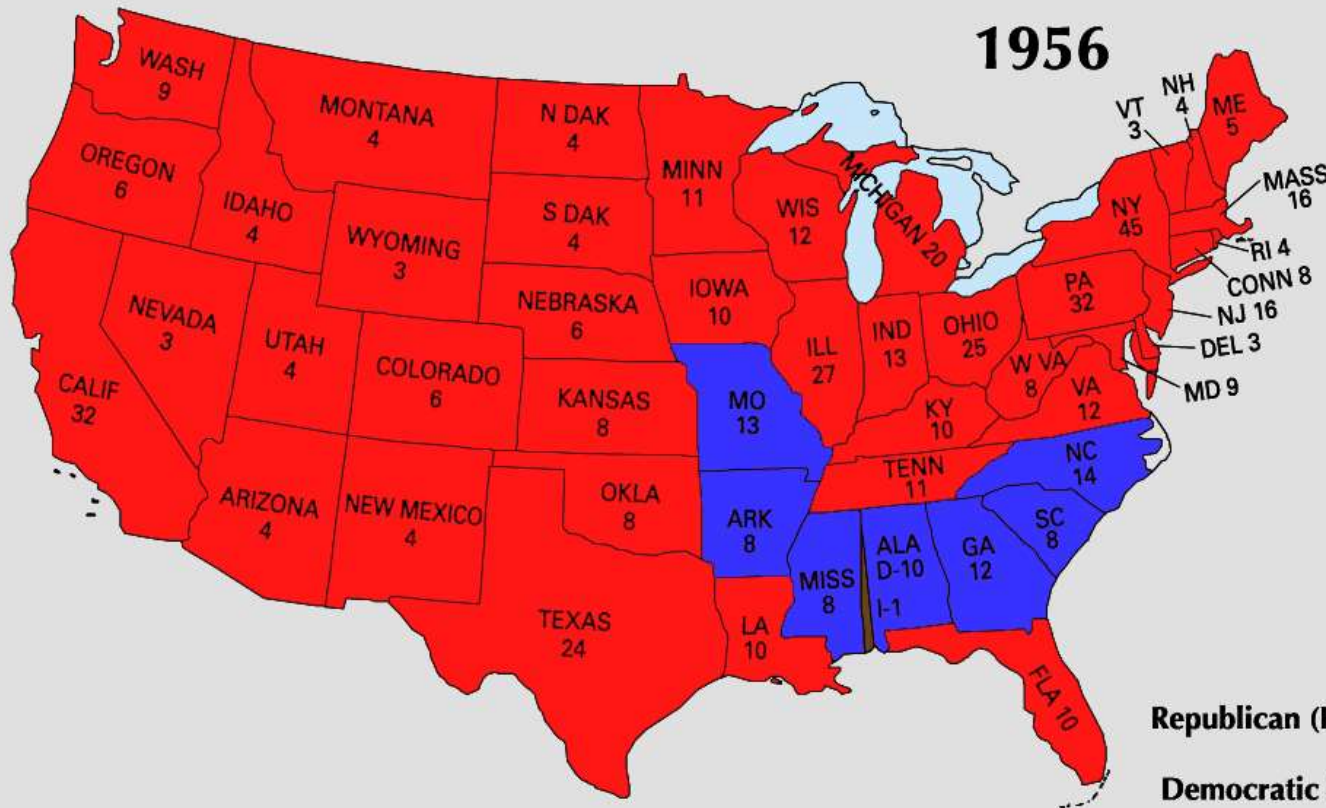


**POPULAR VOTE TOTAL: 61,551,919**

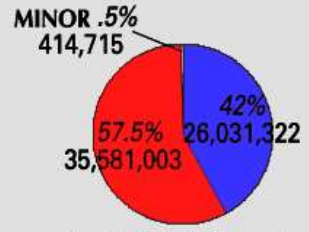
**Republican (Eisenhower)** 

**Democratic (Stevenson)** 

# 1956



**ELECTORAL VOTE TOTAL: 531**



**POPULAR VOTE TOTAL: 62,027,040**

Republican (Eisenhower) 

Democratic (Stevenson) 

Independent (Jones) 

# Eisenhower Takes Office



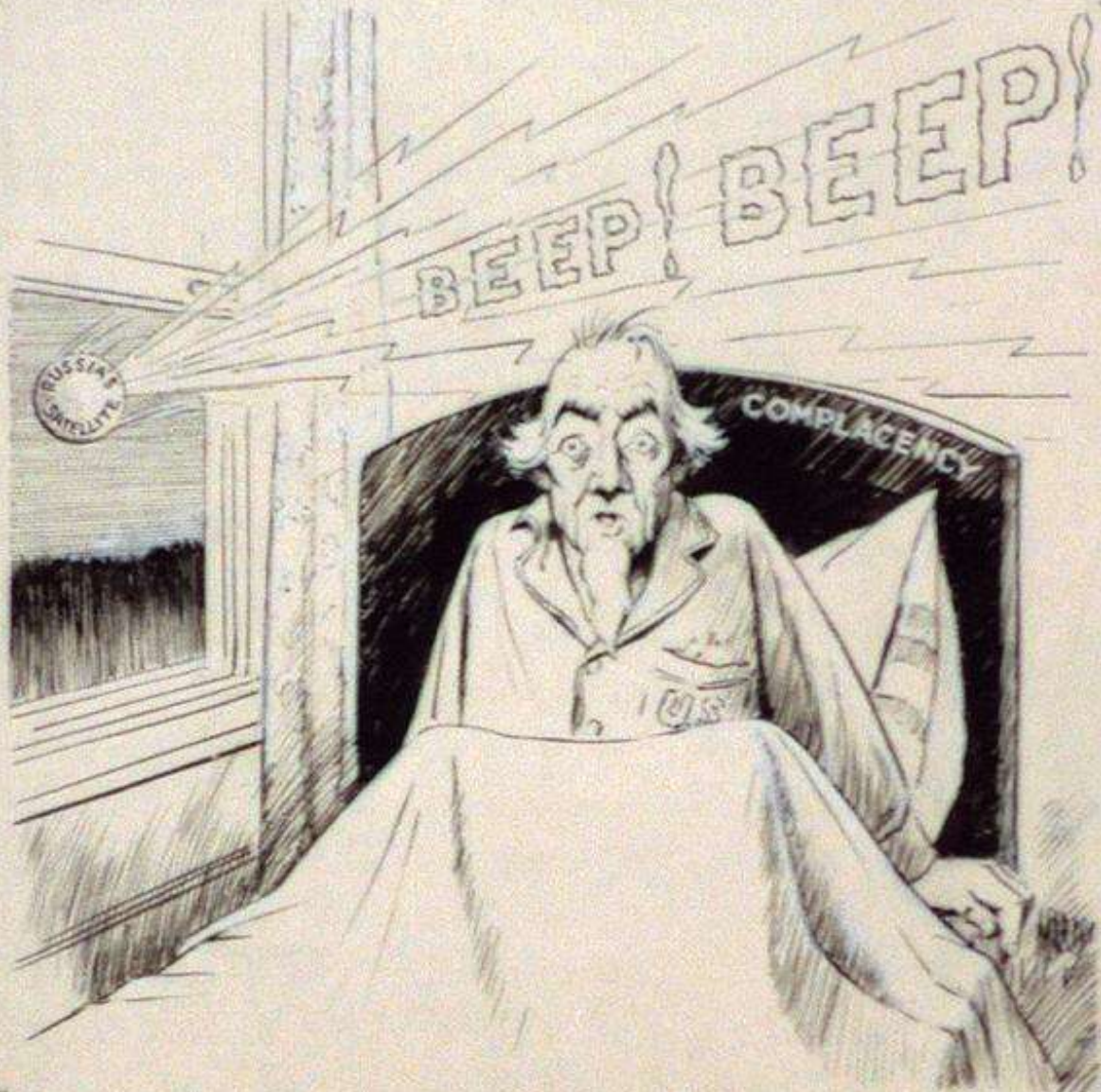
- Dwight D. Eisenhower –elected President in 1952
- Moderate Republican from Texas – Continued many New Deal policies
- Architect of the D-Day invasion of France in 1942
- Inherited the turmoil of the Cold War from Truman

# Cold War Blasts into Space



- October 1957 – USSR launches the *Sputnik I* satellite into space
- Official start of the “Space Race”
- Americans were shocked by the apparent superiority of USSR’s technological advances

552



AWAKE AT LAST?

REV  
6/10/66

SECRET

October 9, 1957

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT  
October 8, 1957, 8:30 AM

Others present: Secretary Quarles  
Dr. Waterman  
Mr. Hagen  
Mr. Holaday  
Governor Adams  
General Persons  
Mr. Hagerty  
Governor Pyle  
Mr. Harlow  
General Cutler  
General Goodpaster



Secretary Quarles began by reviewing a memorandum prepared in Defense for the President on the subject of the earth satellite (dated October 7, 1957). He left a copy with the President. He reported that the Soviet launching on October 4th had apparently been highly successful.

The President asked Secretary Quarles about the report that had come to his attention to the effect that Redstone could have been used and could have placed a satellite in orbit many months ago. Secretary Quarles said there was no doubt that the Redstone, had it been used, could have orbited a satellite a year or more ago. The Science Advisory Committee had felt, however, that it was better to have the earth satellite proceed separately from military development. One reason was to stress the peaceful character of the effort, and a second was to avoid the inclusion of materiel, to which foreign scientists might be given access, which is used in our own military rockets. He said that the Army feels it could erect a satellite four months from now if given the order -- this would still be one month prior to the estimated date for the Vanguard. The President said that when this information reaches the Congress, they are bound to ask why this action was not taken. He recalled,

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 11

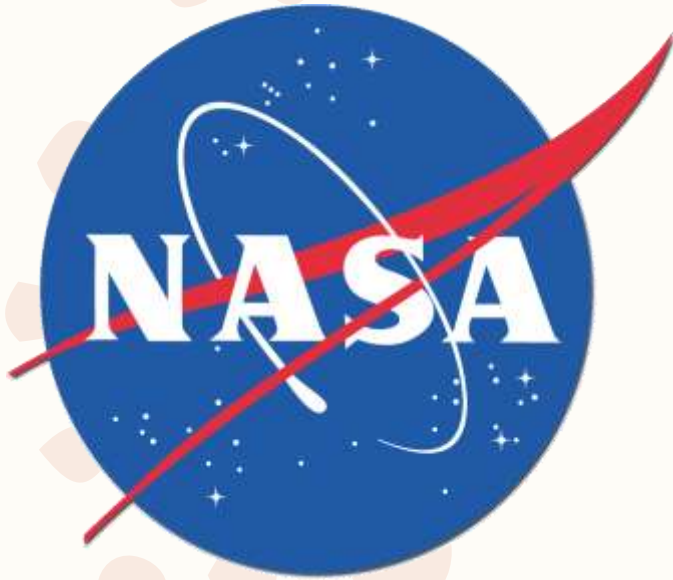
MR 76-49 DOCUMENT #65  
By J.W. Date 11-17-76

SECRET





# Congress reacts to *Sputnik I*



- President Eisenhower supported the National Defense Education Act – a billion dollar program intended to produce more scientists and teachers of science
- Congress created NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration)

# Revolutions in Science, Technology, and Medicine

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- The electronics industry experienced the most growth during the 1950s.
- 95% of American homes were electric powered
- Record players, refrigerators, and new “transistor radios” revolutionized the lives of Americans
- Consumer spending of the 1950s surpassed that of the 1920s.

# Revolutions in Science, Technology, and Medicine

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- Super computers opened doors for engineers and designers in space, aeronautics, and automobiles. What once took weeks to calculate, the computer could churn out in a matter of hours.
- Air travel was no longer affordable only for the ultra wealthy, as commercial flights became more accessible for people to travel around the country and even the world



# A longer life

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- Medical discoveries increased life expectancy
- Penicillin, an antibiotic discovered in the 1940s, improved the chances of someone surviving infection by bacteria.
- Polio is a debilitating disease that was a constant threat to people all over the world.
- Jonas Salk's discovery of the vaccine serum successfully immunized people
- Polio was nearly eradicated in the US by 1960

# Baby Boom changes society



- Soldiers returning from WWII come home and have a lot of babies
- At the peak of the “baby boom” 4.3 million babies born in a year (1 every 7 seconds)
- With rapid population growth comes changes in the structure of society

## IN BAD TIMES, FEWER BABIES BORN



SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

# Americans move to the suburbs



- “Baby Boom” families move in mass to the suburbs after WWII
- Automobiles allow easy transport from urban centers to suburbs
- William Levitt – leader in the mass production of suburban homes
- These communities designed by Levitt became known as Levittowns.





# Construction of Interstate Highway System



- Eisenhower pushed legislation for the new interstate highway system.
- Eisenhower deemed it necessary to homeland security.
- Would allow the military easy transport in case the US was attacked or invaded by the Soviet Union.
- Multi-lane expressways that would connect major cities
- Single largest construction endeavor in American history
- Allowed for the growth of suburbs as travel routes became more efficient and quicker to and from urban centers.

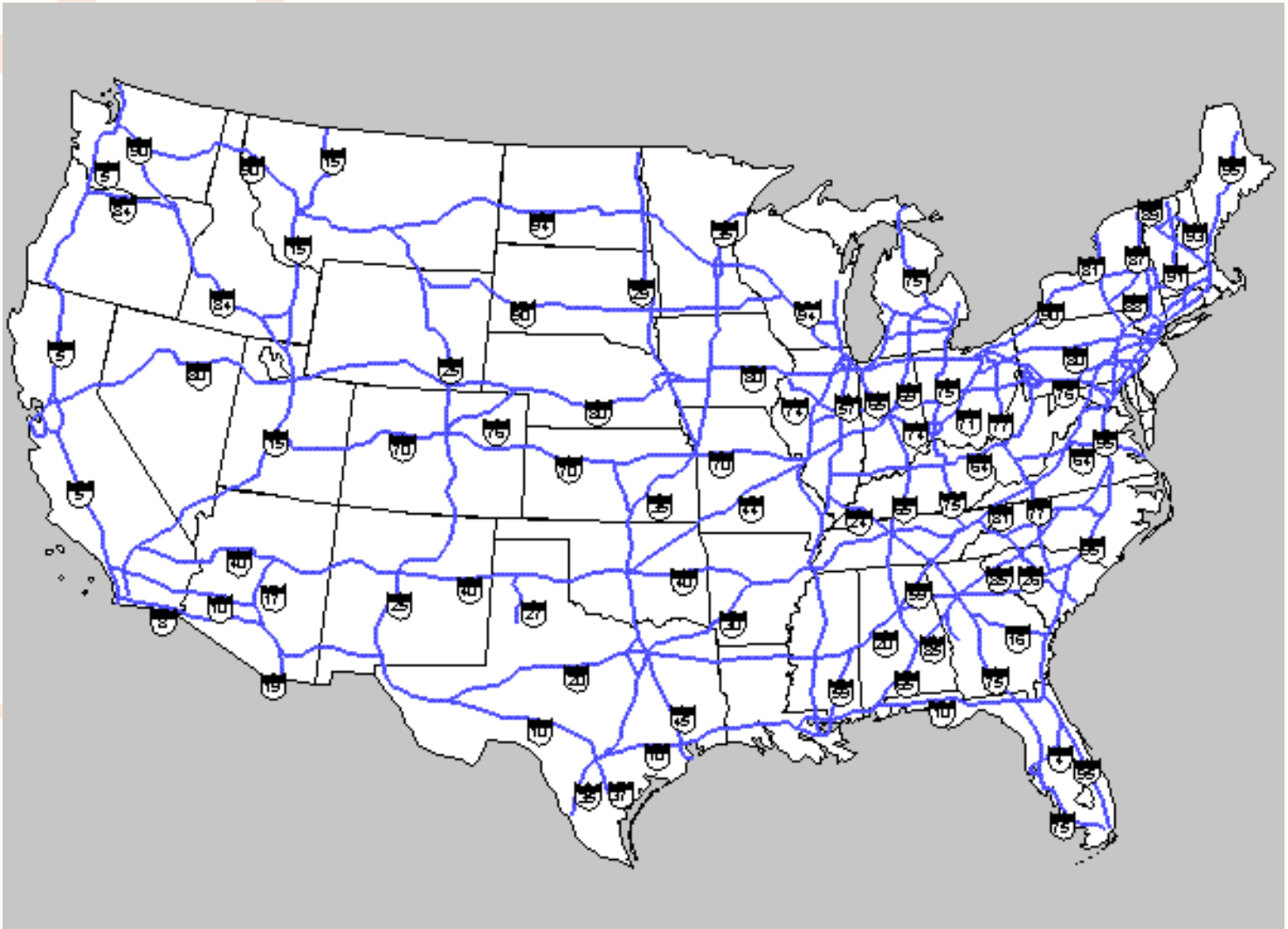








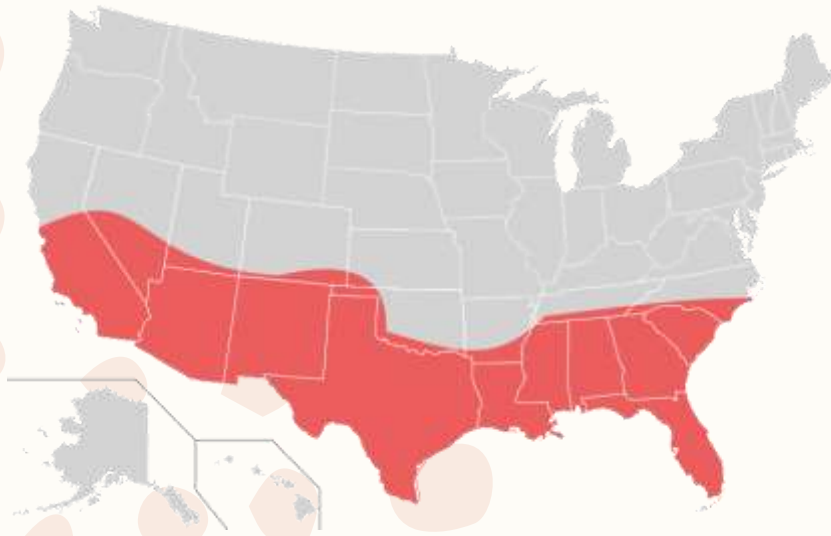
Photo by C. H. Stovel, Times

Such roads as this are essential for rapid movement of mechanized units of the Army and must be widened and realigned for National Defense.

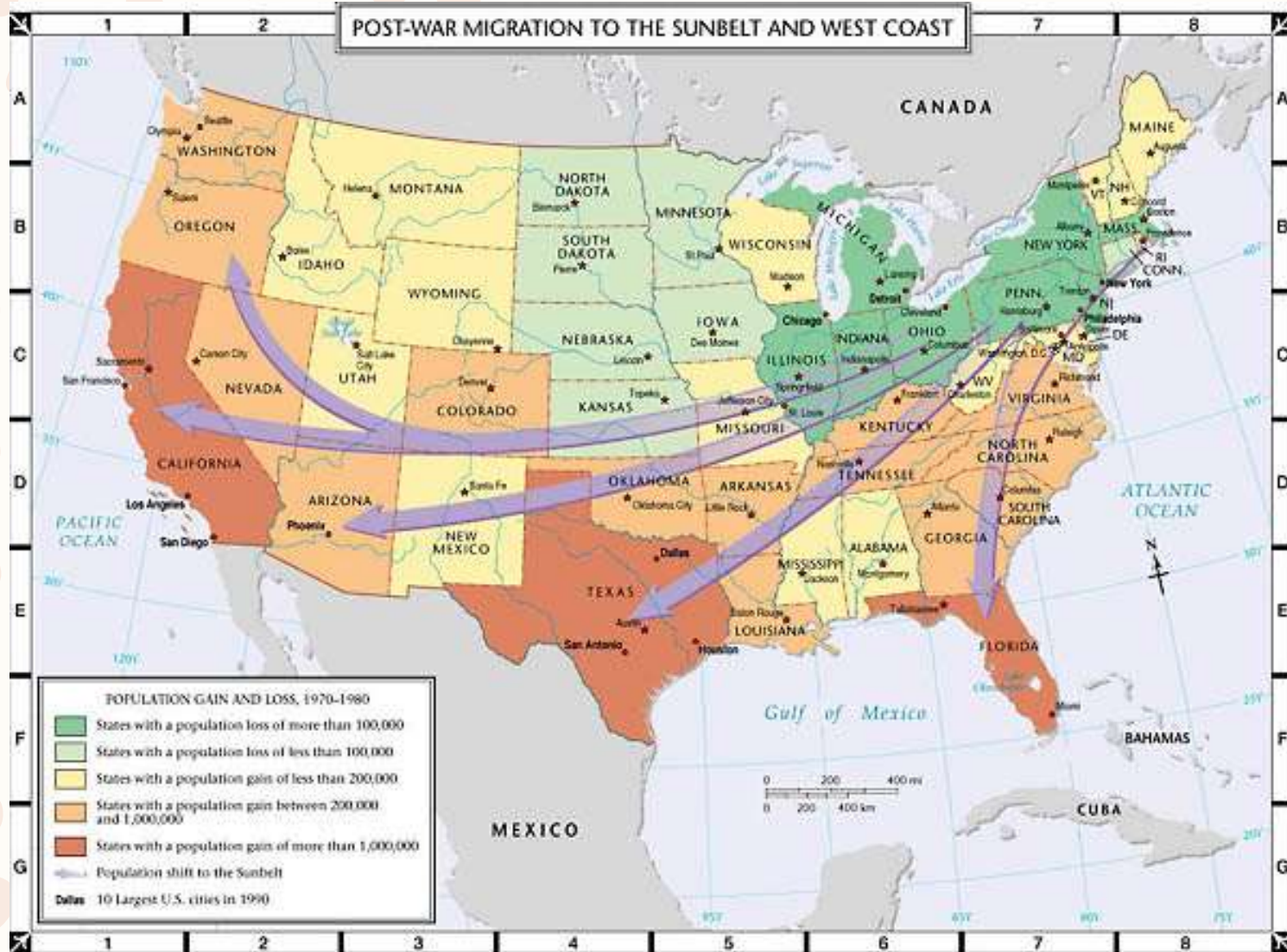
# Highways for National Defense

By C. H. PURCELL, State Highway Engineer

# Migrating to the Sunbelt



- Post-WWII people flock to the Sunbelt – name given to the South and Western states
- 1958 -Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants move to CA (symbolic of the migration patterns of the entire country)
- Air conditioning attracts many to the once unbearable climates
- Political power shifts from the Rust Belt and Northeast to the South and West





The invention of air-conditioning led to a population explosion in cities such as Phoenix, Dallas, Miami, Los Angeles and Atlanta.





# Television changes perceptions of society



- TV shows such as “Leave It to Beaver” and “Father Knows Best” paint the picture of the American nuclear family (father, mother and 2.4 kids)
- Network newscasts become standard in American homes
- Rock-n-Roll grows in popularity thanks to the images seen on television (Elvis Presley)

TV images of  
the “nuclear  
family”.





At left – Legendary CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite

He would be the face of American television for nearly 3 decades.

- Families would gather around the television set and watch the network evening news broadcasts



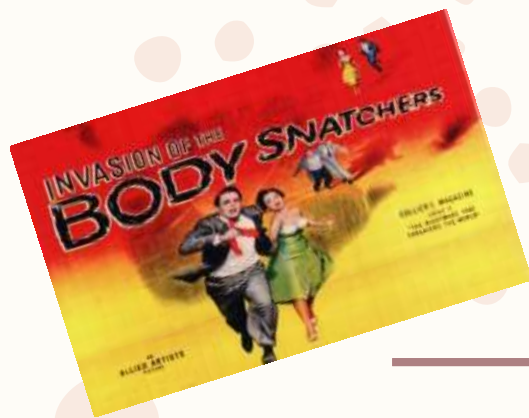
# Elvis Presley on The Ed Sullivan show



# The Cold War weighed on the minds of adults and children alike

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- Bomb shelters were big business as families and businesses constructed them and supplied them with canned goods, bottled water, and Geiger counters to survive a nuclear attack
- Children practiced duck and cover at schools



# Cold War effects on the Entertainment Industry

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- “Spy gear” that had once been novelty became popular as Americans hoped to be able to outsmart neighbors who might be Russian double agents.
- Comic book character, Captain America, fueled America’s thirst for “commie hunting”
- [Invasion of the Body Snatchers Trailer](#)



# Eisenhower's Warning

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- Eisenhower was concerned about the Cold War's effects on the US
- In his farewell address, he warned of the “military industrial complex,” whereby the nation would be driven by the needs of the arms race and war machine

# Non-Conformity

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- Not all Americans bought into the middle-class, suburban myth.
- Some in the academic, art, and entertainment worlds defied or criticized the norms of 1950s culture
- While most Hollywood films celebrated the consumerist/conformist lifestyle of the 1950s, some filmmakers challenged it with films movies such as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, based on the novel by Sloan Wilson.





# Abstract Expressionism

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- This style developed in the US after WWII
- It aimed to convey emotion instead of figurative images
- It was influenced by psychology and jazz
- These painters viewed painting as a struggle between self-expression and the chaos of the unconscious
- This style helped move the center of the western art world from Paris to New York



The Transcendental, Richard Pousette-Dart, 1941



Arshile Gorky, The Liver, 1944



Hans Hoffman, The Gate, 1959



Franz Kline, Painting No. 2, 1954



Mark Rothko, No. 61, 1953

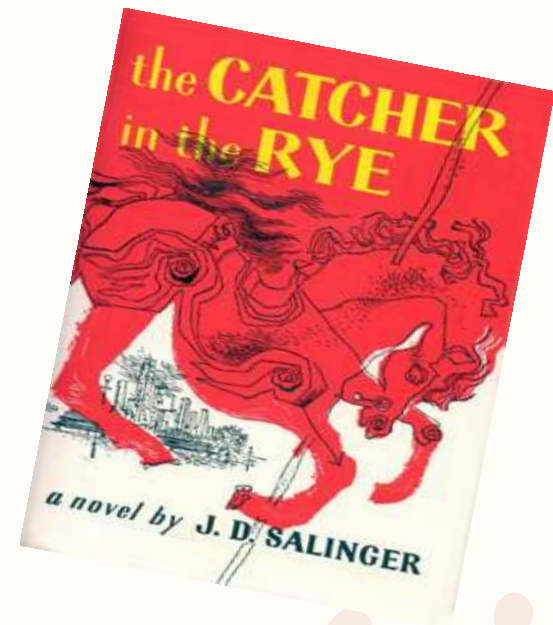


Jackson Pollock, Lavender Mist, 1950

# “Catcher in the Rye”

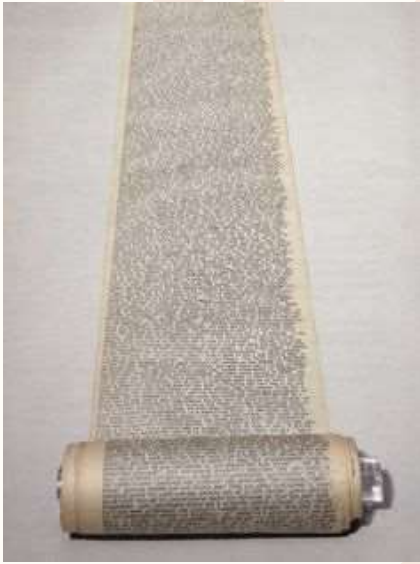
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- Told the adventures of anti-hero and nonconformist Holden Caulfield
- Some novelists satirized the American dream and challenged readers to think for themselves





# The Beats



- The stereotype of Beatniks: sometimes used mind-altering drugs; rebelled against social standards; studied art, poetry, and philosophy; criticized society; participated in “free verse” open microphone poetry readings, where participants were encouraged to speak their minds

--provided the mold for the “hippie” of the 1960s



- Beat literature encouraged individuality in and age of conformity
- Led by alternative writers such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac