

The Roaring Life of the 1920s

Section 1

Changing Ways of Life

Terms and Names

Prohibition The era that prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages

speakeasy Hidden saloons and nightclubs that illegally sold liquor

bootlegger Smugglers who brought alcohol in from Canada and the Caribbean

fundamentalism Religious movement based on the belief that everything written in the Bible was literally true

Clarence Darrow Famous trial lawyer

Scopes trial Trial of John Scopes for teaching evolution

Before You Read

In the last section, you learned about American business in the 1920s. In this section, you will read about new lifestyles and values that emerged in the 1920s.

As You Read

Use a diagram to show how the government attempted to deal with problems thought to stem from alcohol use and with the teaching of evolution.

RURAL AND URBAN DIFFERENCES

(Pages 434–437)

What was Prohibition?

The 1920 census showed a change in America. For the first time, more Americans lived in large towns and cities than in small towns and on farms.

The values that most Americans had grown up with were small-town values. They included conservative social standards, hard work, thriftiness, and close families. People knew their neighbors and followed the teachings of their churches.

By the 1920s, urbanization, or the movement of Americans from rural areas to the cities, had increased. New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia had become huge cities. There were over 65 cities with more than 100,000 people. Two million

people a year left their farms and small towns for the cities.

Urban values began to dominate the nation. Life in big cities was different from in small towns. People with different backgrounds came into contact with one another.

City people were more open to new ideas in art, science, and politics. They went out at night. They were more tolerant of drinking and gambling. Life was fast-paced. Sometimes it was impersonal and lonely. Many people who were new to city life found it hard to adjust.

One clash between small-town and city values led to an era known as **Prohibition**. Prohibition was the ban on alcoholic beverages set forth in the Eighteenth Amendment. It took effect in 1920. Most

Section 1, *continued*

support for prohibition came from religious rural white Protestants.

Even though it was the law, the effort to stop drinking was doomed. The government did not have enough officers to enforce it. People made their own alcohol illegally.

In cities, even respectable middle-class people flocked to **speakeasies**. These were hidden saloons and nightclubs that served liquor illegally.

People also bought liquor from **bootleggers**, or smugglers who brought it in from Canada and the Caribbean. Bootleggers created a chain of corruption by bribing police officers and judges.

Prohibition caused a general disrespect for the law. It also caused a great deal of money to flow out of lawful businesses and into organized crime. Underworld gangs took control of the illegal liquor business. The most famous gang was headed by Chicago's Al Capone. Chicago became known for bloody gang killings.

This rise in crime and violence led many people to demand the repeal of prohibition. By the middle of the decade, only 19 percent of Americans supported it. Prohibition was repealed by the Twenty-first Amendment in 1933.

1. How did prohibition affect the nation?

SCIENCE AND RELIGION CLASH

(Pages 438–439)

What was the Scopes Trial?

During the 1920s, the nation saw the rise of Christian **fundamentalism**. This religious movement was based on the belief that everything written in the Bible was literally true. Fundamentalists rejected the growing trust in science that most

Americans had. They were also against the religious faiths of other people, especially immigrants.

These beliefs led fundamentalists to reject Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. According to that theory, plant and animal species had developed over millions of years.

Fundamentalists believed that the Bible was correct in stating that the world and all its plants and animals were created by God in six days. They did not want evolution taught in schools.

Fundamentalist preachers drew large crowds to religious revivals, especially in the South and West. Fundamentalists also gained political power. In 1925, Tennessee passed a law making it a crime to teach evolution.

Many people opposed this law. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) promised to defend in court any teacher who would challenge the law.

John Scopes, a young biology teacher from Dayton, Tennessee, challenged the law. He openly taught about evolution. He was arrested, and his case went to trial. The ACLU hired **Clarence Darrow**, the most famous trial lawyer in the nation, to defend Scopes. William Jennings Bryan was the prosecutor.

Scopes was guilty because he broke the law. But the trial was really about evolution. It was also about religion in schools. Reporters came from all over the world to cover the **Scopes trial**. Huge crowds gathered.

The highlight of the trial was when William Jennings Bryan took the stand. Darrow questioned Bryan until Bryan said that while the earth was made in six days, they were "not six days of 24 hours."

Bryan was admitting that the Bible could be interpreted in different ways.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Section 1, *continued*

Even so, Scopes was found guilty. His conviction was later overturned by the state Supreme Court. But the ban on teaching evolution remained a law in Tennessee.

2. How did fundamentalist beliefs lead to the Scopes trial?

Section 1, *continued*

As you read about how the 1920s reflected conflicts and tensions in American culture, take notes to answer the questions below.

In January 1920, Prohibition went into effect.

1. a. Who tended to be supporters of Prohibition at this time? b. Why did they support it?	2. a. Who tended to be opponents of Prohibition at this time? b. Why did they oppose it?
3. Why was Prohibition repealed?	

In July 1925, Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan faced each other in the Scopes trial.

4. a. Who were Darrow's main supporters? b. Why did they support him?	5. a. Who were Bryan's main supporters? b. Why did they support him?
6. What was the outcome of the case?	

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

FROM *Shall the Fundamentalists Win?* (1922)

The reactionary temper of the 1920s sparked a resurgence of Protestant fundamentalism. So-called liberal Protestants sought to reconcile religion and reason, faith and science, and to challenge the backward tendencies of fundamentalism. The Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick exemplified such liberal Protestantism. His influential 1922 sermon, excerpted here, enraged fundamentalists and eventually forced his resignation from New York City's First Presbyterian Church. Fosdick went on to become one of the nation's most influential clergymen.

From "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" *Christian Work* 102 (June 10, 1922): 716–22.

This morning we are to think of the fundamentalist controversy which threatens to divide the American churches as though already they were not sufficiently split and riven. . . . Already all of us must have heard about the people who call themselves the Fundamentalists. Their apparent intention is to drive out of the evangelical churches men and women of liberal opinions. I speak of them the more freely because there are no two denominations more affected by them than the Baptist and the Presbyterian. We should not identify the Fundamentalists with the conservatives. All Fundamentalists are conservatives, but not all conservatives are Fundamentalists. The best conservatives can often give lessons to the liberals in true liberality of spirit, but the Fundamentalist program is essentially illiberal and intolerant.

The Fundamentalists see, and they see truly, that in this last generation there have been strange new movements in Christian thought. A great mass of new knowledge has come into man's possession—new knowledge about the physical universe, its origin, its forces, its laws; new knowledge about human history and in particular about the ways in which the ancient peoples used to think in matters of religion and the methods by

which they phrased and explained their spiritual experiences; and new knowledge, also, about other religions and the strangely similar ways in which men's faiths and religious practices have developed everywhere. . . .

Now, there are multitudes of reverent Christians who have been unable to keep this new knowledge in one compartment of their minds and the Christian faith in another. They have been sure that all truth comes from the one God and is His revelation. Not, therefore, from irreverence or caprice or destructive zeal but for the sake of intellectual and spiritual integrity, that they might really love the Lord their God, not only with all their heart and soul and strength but with all their mind, they have been trying to see this new knowledge in terms of the Christian faith and to see the Christian faith in terms of this new knowledge.

Doubtless they have made many mistakes. Doubtless there have been among them reckless radicals gifted with intellectual ingenuity but lacking spiritual depth. Yet the enterprise itself seems to them indispensable to the Christian Church. The new knowledge and the old faith cannot be left antagonistic or even disparate, as though a man on Saturday could use one set of regulative ideas for his life and on Sunday could change gear to another

altogether. We must be able to think our modern life clear through in Christian terms, and to do that we also must be able to think our Christian faith clear through in modern terms.

There is nothing new about the situation. It has happened again and again in history, as, for example, when the stationary earth suddenly began to move and the universe that had been centered in this planet was centered in the sun around which the planets whirled. Whenever such a situation has arisen, there has been only one way out—the new knowledge and the old faith had to be blended in a new combination. Now, the people in this generation who are trying to do this are the liberals, and the Fundamentalists are out on a campaign to shut against them the doors of the Christian fellowship. Shall they be allowed to succeed?

It is interesting to note where the Fundamentalists are driving in their stakes to mark out the deadline of doctrine around the church, across which no one is to pass except on terms of agreement. They insist that we must all believe in the historicity of certain special miracles, preeminently the virgin birth of our Lord; that we must believe in a special theory of inspiration—that the original documents of the Scripture, which of course we no longer possess, were inerrantly dictated to men a good deal as a man might dictate to a stenographer; that we must believe in a special theory of the Atonement—that the blood of our Lord, shed in a substitutionary death, placates an alienated Deity and makes possible welcome for the returning sinner; and that we must believe in the second coming of our Lord upon the clouds of heaven to set up a millennium here, as the only way in which God can bring history to a worthy denouement.

Such are some of the stakes which are being driven to mark a deadline of doctrine around the church. If a man is a genuine liberal, his primary protest is not against holding these opinions, although he may well protest against their being considered the fundamentals of Christianity. This is a free country and anybody has a right to hold these opinions or any others if he is sincerely convinced of them. The question is—Has anybody a right to deny the Christian name to those who dif-

fer with him on such points and to shut against them the doors of the Christian fellowship? The Fundamentalists say that this must be done. In this country and on the foreign field they are trying to do it. They have actually endeavored to put on the statute books of a whole state binding laws against teaching modern biology. If they had their way, within the church, they would set up in Protestantism a doctrinal tribunal more rigid than the pope's. In such an hour, delicate and dangerous, when feelings are bound to run high, I plead this morning the cause of magnanimity and liberality and tolerance of spirit. . . .

Here in the Christian churches are these two groups of people and the question which the Fundamentalists raise is this—Shall one of them throw the other out? Has intolerance any contribution to make to this situation? Will it persuade anybody of anything? Is not the Christian Church large enough to hold within her hospitable fellowship people who differ on points like this and agree to differ until the fuller truth be manifested? The Fundamentalists say not. They say the liberals must go. Well, if the Fundamentalists should succeed, then out of the Christian Church would go some of the best Christian life and consecration of this generation—multitudes of men and women, devout and reverent Christians, who need the church and whom the church needs. . . .

I do not believe for one moment that the Fundamentalists are going to succeed. Nobody's intolerance can contribute anything to the solution of the situation which we have described. If, then, the Fundamentalists have no solution of the problem, where may we expect to find it? In two concluding comments let us consider our reply to that inquiry.

The first element that is necessary is a spirit of tolerance and Christian liberty. When will the world learn that intolerance solves no problems? This is not a lesson which the Fundamentalists alone need to learn; the liberals also need to learn it. . . .

Nevertheless, it is true that just now the Fundamentalists are giving us one of the worst exhibitions of bitter intolerance that the churches of this country have ever seen. As one watches them and

listens to them he remembers the remark of General Armstrong of Hampton Institute, "Cantankerousness is worse than heterodoxy." There are many opinions in the field of modern controversy concerning which I am not sure whether they are right or wrong, but there is one thing I am sure of: courtesy and kindness and tolerance and humility and fairness are right. Opinions may be mistaken; love never is.

As I plead thus for an intellectually hospitable, tolerant, liberty-loving church, I am, of course, thinking primarily about this new generation. We have boys and girls growing up in our homes and schools, and because we love them we may well wonder about the church which will be waiting to receive them. Now, the worst kind of church that can possibly be offered to the allegiance of the new generation is an intolerant church. . . .

My friends, nothing in all the world is so much worth thinking of as God, Christ, the Bible, sin and salvation, the divine purposes for humankind, life everlasting. But you cannot challenge the dedicated thinking of this generation to these sublime themes upon any such terms as are laid down by an intolerant church.

The second element which is needed if we are to reach a happy solution of this problem is a clear insight into the main issues of modern Christianity and a sense of penitent shame that the Christian Church should be quarreling over little matters when the world is dying of great needs. If, during the war, when the nations were wrestling upon the very brink of hell and at times all seemed

lost, you chanced to hear two men in an altercation about some minor matter of sectarian denominationalism, could you restrain your indignation? You said, "What can you do with folks like this who, in the face of colossal issues, play with the tiddledywinks and peccadillos of religion?" . . .

The present world situation smells to heaven! And now, in the presence of colossal problems, which must be solved in Christ's name and for Christ's sake, the Fundamentalists propose to drive out from the Christian churches all the consecrated souls who do not agree with their theory of inspiration. What immeasurable folly!

Well, they are not going to do it; certainly not in this vicinity. I do not even know in this congregation whether anybody has been tempted to be a Fundamentalist. Never in this church have I caught one accent of intolerance. God keep us always so and ever increasing areas of the Christian fellowship; intellectually hospitable, open-minded, liberty-loving, fair, tolerant, not with the tolerance of indifference, as though we did not care about the faith, but because always our major emphasis is upon the weightier matters of the spirit.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that religious fundamentalists are "illiberal and intolerant"? Why or why not?
2. Why did fundamentalists feel threatened by new scientific knowledge?

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

FROM *In His Image* (1922)

William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925) ran as the Democratic nominee for president three times. He never won, but he remained famous for his theatrical speeches. During the 1920s, Bryan, a lifelong Presbyterian, emerged as the foremost spokesman for

the fundamentalist Christian movement. He became a powerful crusader against Darwinism and the inroads of "modernism" in schools and in society. During the famous trial of Tennessee teacher John Scopes, accused of teaching Darwinism in his science classes in violation of state law, Bryan served as one of the prosecuting attorneys. Bryan died five days after the controversial trial ended.

From *In His Image* (New York: Revell, 1922), pp. 120-23. [Editorial insertions appear in square brackets—Ed.]

The Origin of Man

Is any other proof needed to show the irreligious influence exerted by Darwinism applied to man? At the University of Wisconsin (so a Methodist preacher told me) a teacher told his class that the Bible was a collection of myths. When I brought the matter to the attention of the President of the University, he criticized me but avoided all reference to the professor. At Ann Arbor [University of Michigan] a professor argued with students against religion and asserted that no thinking man could believe in God or the Bible. At Columbia (I learned this from a Baptist preacher) a professor began his course in geology by telling his class to throw away all that they had learned in the Sunday school. There is a professor in Yale of whom it is said that no one leaves his class a believer in God. (This came from a young man who told me that his brother was being led away from the Christian faith by this professor.) A father (a Congressman) tells me that a daughter on her return from Wellesley [College] told him that nobody believed in the Bible stories now. Another father (a Congressman) tells me of a son whose faith was undermined by this doctrine in a Divinity School. Three preachers told me of having their interest in the subject aroused by the return of their children from college with their faith shaken. The Northern Baptists have recently, after a spirited contest, secured the adoption of a Confession of Faith: it was opposed by the evolutionists.

In Kentucky the fight is on among the Disciples, and it is becoming more and more acute in

the Northern branches of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. A young preacher, just out of a theological seminary, who did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, was recently ordained in Western New York. Last April I met a young man who was made an atheist by two teachers in a Christian college.

These are only a few illustrations that have come under my own observation—nearly all of them within a year. What is to be done? Are the members of the various Christian churches willing to have the power of the pulpit paralyzed by a false, absurd and ridiculous doctrine which is without support in the written Word of God and without support also in nature? Is "thus saith the Lord" to be supplanted by guesses and speculations and assumptions? I submit three propositions for the consideration of the Christians of the nation:

First, the preachers who are to break the bread of life to the lay members should believe that man has in him the breath of the Almighty, as the Bible declares, and not the blood of the brute, as the evolutionists affirm. He should also believe in the virgin birth of the Saviour.

Second, none but Christians in good standing and with a spiritual conception of life should be allowed to teach in Christian schools. Church schools are worse than useless if they bring students under the influence of those who do not believe in the religion upon which the Church and church schools are built. Atheism and Agnosticism are more dangerous when hidden under the cloak of religion than when they are exposed to view.

Third, in schools supported by taxation we should have a real neutrality wherever neutrality in religion is desired. If the Bible cannot be defended in these schools it should not be attacked, either directly or under the guise of philosophy or science. The neutrality which we now have is often but a sham; it carefully excludes the Christian religion but permits the use of the schoolrooms for the destruction of faith and for the teaching of materialistic doctrines.

It is not sufficient to say that *some* believers in Darwinism retain their belief in Christianity; some survive smallpox. As we avoid smallpox because *many* die of it, so we should avoid Darwinism because it *leads many astray*.

If it is contended that an instructor has a right to teach anything he likes, I reply that the parents who pay the salary have a right to decide what shall be taught. To continue the illustration used above, a person can expose himself to the smallpox if he desires to do so, but he has no right to communicate it to others. So a man can believe anything he pleases but he has no right to teach it against the protest of his employers.

Acceptance of Darwin's doctrine tends to destroy one's belief in immortality as taught by the Bible. If there has been no break in the line between

man and the beasts—no time when by the act of the Heavenly Father man became "a living Soul," at what period in man's development was he endowed with the hope of a future life? And, if the brute theory leads to the abandonment of belief in a future life with its rewards and punishments, what stimulus to righteous living is offered in its place?

Darwinism leads to a denial of God. [Friedrich] Nietzsche¹ carried Darwinism to its logical conclusion and it made him the most extreme of anti-Christians. I had read extracts from his writings—enough to acquaint me with his sweeping denial of God and of the Saviour—but not enough to make me familiar with his philosophy.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. On what basis does Bryan dismiss evolution? Do you find his arguments convincing? Explain.
2. In your view, how should educational institutions address the topic of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution?
3. Do you agree with Bryan's assertion that "righteous living" depends on belief in an afterlife?

¹ A prominent German philosopher.

The Scopes Trial (1925)

In the 1920s the Tennessee legislature passed a law forbidding teachers in the state-supported (but not private) schools to teach the Darwinian theory of evolution. John T. Scopes, a young biology teacher, defied the law and was brought to trial in the backwoods hamlet of Dayton. The case drew the attention of the nation. Scopes's defense team was buttressed by the celebrated attorney and agnostic, Clarence G. Darrow; aiding the prosecution was the famed orator and fundamentalist William J. Bryan, who had long spearheaded the nationwide crusade against evolution. Bryan was induced to take the stand as an expert witness on the Bible, and Darrow proceeded to skewer him and his "fool religion."

From *The World's Most Famous Court Trial: Tennessee Evolution Case* (Cincinnati: National Book-Club, 1925), pp. 303-04.

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From *The World's Most Famous Court Trial: Tennessee Evolution Case* (Cincinnati: National Book Club, 1925), pp. 303–04.

DARROW: Do you believe the story of the temptation of Eve by the serpent?

BRYAN: I do.

DARROW: Do you believe that after Eve ate the apple, or gave it to Adam, whichever way it was, that God cursed Eve, and at that time decreed that all womankind thenceforth and forever should suffer the pains of childbirth in the reproduction of the earth?

BRYAN: I believe what it says, and I believe the fact as fully—

DARROW: That is what it says, doesn't it?

BRYAN: Yes.

DARROW: And for that reason, every woman born of woman, who has to carry on the race, the reason they have childbirth pains is because Eve tempted Adam in the Garden of Eden?

BRYAN: I will believe just what the Bible says. I ask to put that in the language of the Bible, for I prefer that to your language. Read the Bible and I will answer.

DARROW: All right, I will do that.

[Darrow reads from Genesis 3:15-16.]

BRYAN: I accept it as it is.

DARROW: And you believe that came about because Eve tempted Adam to eat the fruit?

BRYAN: Just as it says.

DARROW: And you believe that is the reason that God made the serpent to go on his belly after he tempted Eve?

BRYAN: I believe the Bible as it is, and I do not permit you to put your language in the place of the language of the Almighty. You read that Bible and ask me questions, and I will answer them. I will not answer your questions in your language.

DARROW: I will read it to you from the Bible: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly

shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." Do you think that is why the serpent is compelled to crawl upon its belly?

BRYAN: I believe that.

DARROW: Have you any idea how the snake went before that time?

BRYAN: No, sir.

DARROW: Do you know whether he walked on his tail or not?

BRYAN: No, sir. I have no way to know. (Laughter in audience.)

DARROW: Now, you refer to the cloud that was put in the heaven after the flood, the rainbow. Do you believe in that?

BRYAN: Read it.

DARROW: All right, I will read it for you.

BRYAN: Your Honor, I think I can shorten this testimony. The only purpose Mr. Darrow has is to slander the Bible, but I will answer his question. I will answer it all at once, and I have no objection in the world, I want the world to know that this man, who does not believe in a God, is trying to use a court in Tennessee—

DARROW: I object to that.

BRYAN: (*continuing*) —to slur at it, and while it will require time, I am willing to take it.

DARROW: I object to your statement. I am examining you on your fool ideas that no intelligent Christian on earth believes.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did Bryan indicate his belief that the Bible is the literal word of God?
2. What do you think Darrow meant by an "intelligent Christian"?
3. Why do you think Bryan became the hero of biblical fundamentalists?

What Hath Ford Wrought; or, Spinoffs of the Automobile Revolution

Part A. For homework, answer the following questions.

1. Define each of the following terms:

a. assembly line

b. planned obsolescence

2. Summarize the following quote in your own words.

"The changes in new models should be so novel and attractive as to create dissatisfaction with past models. Automobile design is not, of course, pure fashion, but the laws of Paris dressmakers have come to be a factor in the automobile industry. Woe to the company which ignores them."²

—Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., 1922

3. Summarize the quote below in your own words.

"It is considered good manufacturing practice, and not bad ethics, occasionally to change designs so that old models will become obsolete and new ones will have to be bought. . . . Our principle of business is precisely to the contrary. We cannot conceive how to serve the customer unless we make for him something that, as far as we can provide, will last forever."³

—Henry Ford, 1923

4. Which of the above statements reflects the concept of planned obsolescence?

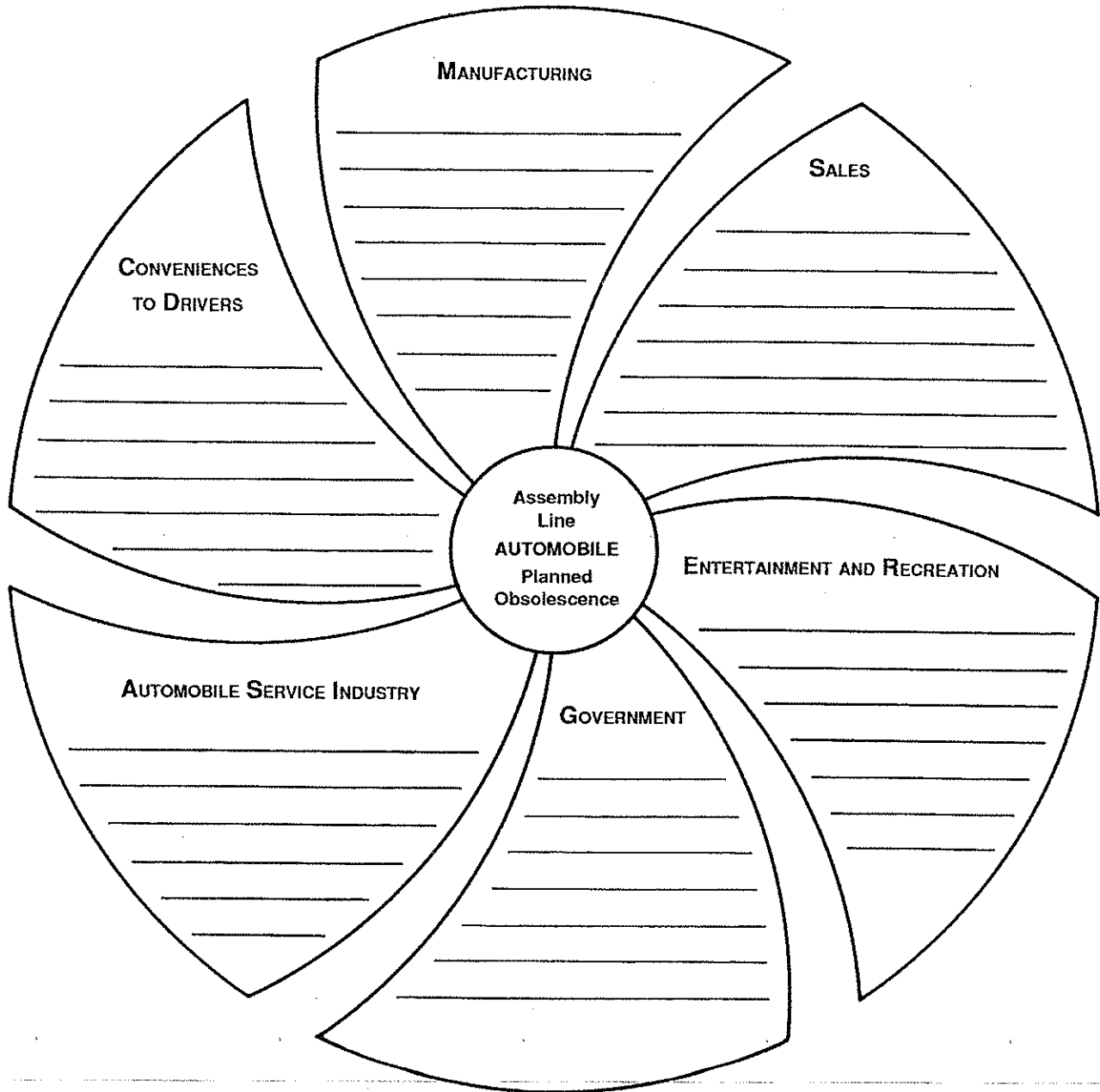
5. Which concept better fits your own view of the role of manufacturers? Why?

6. Which concept dominates the automobile industry today? Gives examples to support your position.

²Michael Jackman, ed., *The Macmillan Book of Business and Economic Quotations* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), 130.

³Jackman, *The Macmillan Books of Business and Economic Quotations*, 130.

Part B. Below is a pinwheel on which you can depict spinoffs of the automobile revolution. Categorize the following terms under the most appropriate heading on the pinwheel diagram: glass, car washes, drivers' licenses, advertising, upholstering, drive-in movies, car rentals, installment buying, rubber, parts and replacements, campers and recreational vehicles, highway maintenance, fast foods, used car industry, paint, parking lots, gas stations, car dealerships, car racing, policing highways, drive-in banks, car repairs, steel, car registration, motels, muffler chains.



Part C. To complete the lesson, answer the following questions.

1. In the visual, you listed many new occupations created by the automobile industry. What occupations were casualties of the automobile revolution?

2. How did the automobile revolution affect the following?

a. Crime

b. Generation gap

c. Rural revival

3. In what respects did the automobile produce the suburban culture of today?