2. Businesses... With rationing of consumer goods over, businesses converted from production of war materials to consumer goods.
INCREASED CONSUMERISM

• By the mid-1950s, nearly 60% of Americans were members of the middle class
• Consumerism (buying material goods) came to be equated with success and status
• The advertising industry capitalized on runaway consumerism by encouraging more spending
• Ad agencies increased their spending 50% during the 1950s
1. Americans purchased goods on credit
4. **Labor Unions** became more powerful... ... and workers gained new benefits and higher salaries
Following WWII, Americans prospered due to an expanding economy stimulated by America’s involvement in the war. Changing patterns in American society at the end of WWII changed the way most Americans lived and worked.
2. The **Baby Boom** ...was the main force behind economic and social changes.
THE BABY BOOM

- During the late 1940s and through the early 1960s the birthrate in the U.S. soared
- At its height in 1957, a baby was born in America every 7 seconds (over 4.3 million babies in ’57 alone)
- Baby boomers represent the largest generation in the nation’s history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Births per year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2,559,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>3,311,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>4,097,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>4,300,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>4,027,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>3,160,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
INTERSTATE HIGHWAY ACT 1956

In 1956 Eisenhower authorized a nationwide highway network – 41,000 miles of road linking America

The Interstate Highway system resulted in:

• More trucking
• Less railroad
• More suburbs, further away
1. Greater investment in education
   ...including the G.I. bill...

SAFARI Montage chap. 3 Post-War U.S.A.
...the G.I. Bill of Rights... ...gave educational, housing, and employment benefits to World War II veterans.