

READ TO DISCOVER

1. How did President Eisenhower try to manage the nation's problems?
2. How did the workforce change in the 1950s?
3. What was suburban life like during the 1950s?
4. What was early television programming like?
5. How did trends in popular culture reflect larger social changes among teenagers in the 1950s?

DEFINE

automation
baby boom
juvenile delinquency
rock 'n' roll

IDENTIFY

Oveta Culp Hobby
Modern Republicanism
George Meany
Highway Act
Elvis Presley

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

People in suburbs and those in urban areas still face different challenges. Use **current events** or other **current events** sources to learn about the challenges faced by the people living in each of these areas today. Record your findings in your journal.

CNN NEWS.com

The Affluent Society

“Who decides whether you shall be happy or unhappy? You do! Happiness is achievable and the process for obtaining it is not complicated. Anyone who desires it, who wills it, and who learns and applies the right formula may become a happy person.”

—Reverend Norman Vincent Peale,
The Power of Positive Thinking

During the 1950s millions of Americans listened to the advice of Reverend Norman Vincent Peale, a dynamic speaker and Protestant minister who wrote the 1952 book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Peale's claim that all people could achieve success if they had the right attitude represented the optimism of the decade. In an era dominated by Cold War fears, Peale offered a formula to help people overcome their anxieties.



Eisenhower, often referred to by his nickname, Ike, was a calming force for Americans.

The Eisenhower Era

President Dwight D. Eisenhower also reflected the optimism of the 1950s. Rejecting the Democrats' reform proposals, Americans elected Eisenhower, a Republican, in 1952. He took office in 1953 determined to boost the economy and reform the federal government. He pledged to cut bureaucracy, to curb what he called the "creeping socialism" of the New Deal, to balance the budget, and to reduce government regulation of the economy.

In his first year as president, Eisenhower eliminated thousands of government jobs and cut billions of dollars from the federal budget. To reduce government influence over the economy, he cut farm subsidies. He also turned over federally owned coastal lands to the states, which could then allow those lands to be developed. Nevertheless, Social Security and unemployment benefits were expanded during his administration, and the minimum wage was increased. Eisenhower established the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, under the supervision of Texan **Oveta Culp Hobby**. The president also supported the largest increase in educational spending up to that time. This approach to domestic affairs, which Eisenhower described as "conservative when it comes to money and liberal when it comes to human beings," became known as **Modern Republicanism**.

Providing funding for social programs, defense, and other government obligations weakened Eisenhower's pledge to balance the federal budget. Only three of the eight budgets he presided over were balanced. During his years in office the federal debt grew by about 9 percent, to \$291 billion.

✓ READING CHECK: Summarizing Why did many Americans support Eisenhower in the 1950s?