

To help workers improve their economic position, union leaders sought to cooperate with management. **George Meany**, the AFL-CIO's first president, boasted that he had never led a strike. Meany claimed that he had no interest in reforming society. He stated that his only goal was to ensure "an ever rising standard of living" for his union's members. Many unions fought for and won guaranteed annual wages and cost-of-living adjustments—automatic pay raises linked to the rate of inflation. In return, unions made concessions to management. These included accepting automation plans or changes in work rules or production levels.

Union support weakened in the late 1950s when newspapers reported widespread corruption. They linked many unions to organized crime. As a result of these reports, Congress attempted to crack down on union corruption. In 1959 Congress passed the Landrum-Griffin Act, which banned ex-convicts from holding union offices, required frequent elections of officers, and regulated the investment of union funds. The negative publicity hurt union membership, which declined steadily after 1957.

✓ **READING CHECK: Making Generalizations** Why did union membership grow in the early 1900s?

Suburban Migration

Technological and income changes also led to increased geographic mobility for Americans. Millions of newly prosperous middle-class workers, particularly young couples, moved to the suburbs surrounding the nation's cities. By 1960 close to 60 million Americans—one third of the total U.S. population—lived in the suburbs.

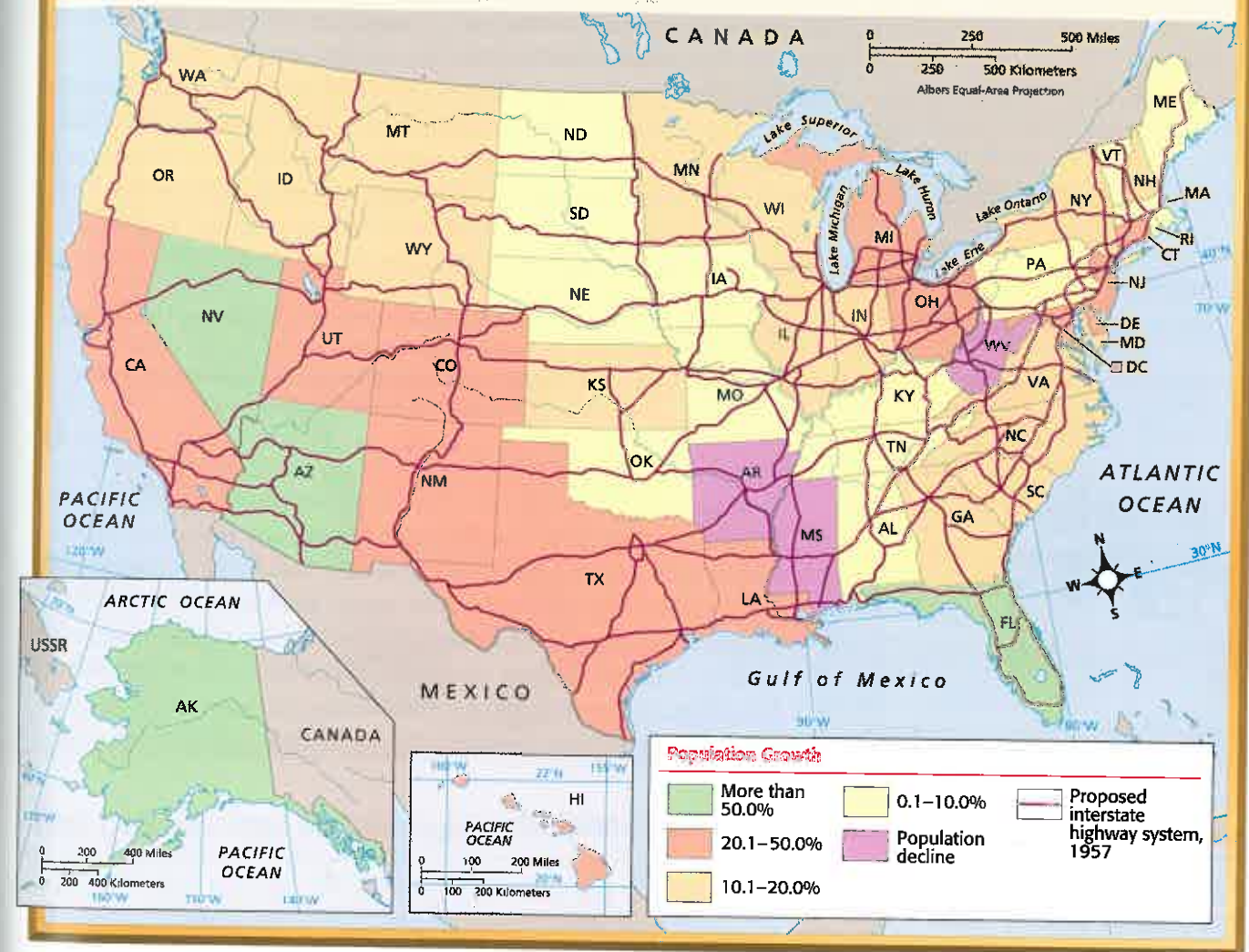
Many of these suburbs were "planned communities." Developers built entire neighborhoods to attract new homeowners. To save time and money, developers used the same floorplan to build most houses in the community. As a result, the houses in the neighborhoods looked almost exactly alike. The best known of these suburban developments were the two Levittowns, one in Pennsylvania and one in New York, built by the Levitt Company. These developments expanded so rapidly that they soon grew into small cities. As more companies followed the Levitt Company example, the number of suburbs grew. An average of 1 million new suburban homes were built each year between 1950 and 1960.

The explosion of suburban growth occurred in part because developers were able to keep housing costs low. This was possible because more Americans could afford to purchase homes. Veterans could get low-interest loans from the Veterans Administration and the GI Bill. The Highway Act of 1956 also contributed to suburban growth by providing the nation's highway system, making it easier for people to commute to jobs in the cities.

America on the Move, 1950–1960

Interpreting Maps The Highway Act of 1956 proposed an interstate highway system to make it easier for Americans to travel throughout the country.

LOCATE Which region had states that experienced a decline in population? What economic factors may have contributed to this decline?



Suburban Life

An expanding population moved into the growing suburbs. During the Great Depression and World War II, many people had postponed getting married or starting a family. After the war, Americans got married at younger ages and in greater numbers than they had for generations. They also began having more children. The soaring birthrate accounted for more than 90 percent of the increase—some 30 million people—in the U.S. population during the 1950s. People began to refer to this increase as the **baby boom**.

Raising the family. An emphasis on child rearing, focusing on the role of mothers, accompanied the baby boom. Many mothers followed the advice of pediatrician Benjamin Spock, who wrote *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* in 1946. Advertisements, popular magazines, and self-help books depicted the