

Joyia's Script

Both WWI and WWII were supported through the government use of railroads to transport supplies and military personnel. James L. Evenson, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Marine Corps Reserve describes the crippling of the railroad industry in his dissertation thesis *Capability in decline: A historical analysis of the post-World War II degradation of domestic railroads and the Impact on the United States military*. Lieutenant Colonel Evens (2006) describes the overuse of the railroad industry during WWII below:

The end of World War II marked a significant milestone for the railroad industry in the United States. The war was over. The railroads had performed well. More men and materiel had moved from the factories, bases, and forts to the ports in support of the war effort than had during World War I.' The railroad industry in the 1940s performed this productive feat with slightly less equipment, infrastructure, and personnel than it had in April 1917. From the end of 1941 and until the beginning of 1946, American railroads accounted for about ninety percent of the domestic materiel movement of the Army and Navy, and provided nearly ninety-seven percent of the domestic movements of American troops (p. 10, para. 1)

By the start of the Korean War in June 1950, the government no longer felt the need to depend solely on railroads. By this time, railroad labor union disputes had posed a threat to the newest war and, the government began using federal funding to create interstate highways, and commercial airliners. The railroad industry soon began to feel the shock from the shift. Evenson (2006) expands on this transportation shift:

With cities building airports at public expense, and the federal government paying for air traffic control with taxpayer monies, the railroads remained burdened with creating and maintaining rail-related infrastructure and plants on a taxable basis. Money-losing passenger services between heavily taxed stations that no longer attracted the public meant that the monetary losses to the financial bottom lines soon mounted for most carriers of rail passenger (p.)

Railroad abandonment became evident as most rail companies either went bankrupt or consolidated with other rail companies. This makes a lot of sense because now in an age of nuclear warfare, the inflexibility of rail transportation wasn't adequate enough to "meet national emergency needs" of the military.

Additionally, during this time frame, suburbanization and New York City's shrinking economic base was influencing GCT's decline. Dating back to the prewar era, New York's economy had gradually been shifting from a manufacturing-based to a service-based. In Benjamin L. Klebaner's (1981) book, *New York City's changing economic base*, economist Thomas Stanback Jr. asserts that "production employment had dropped, manufacturing plants left the city for NY suburbs, and to "smaller towns and cities, particularly to locations in the new fast-growing areas of the South and Southwest" (p. 50). Stanback's research of a study conducted by the Conservation of Human Resources revealed that service-based economies creates a dichotomy of "both well-paying and poorly-paying jobs", eliminating the middle-class population (in Klebaner, p. 53). Without a middle-class spending money and paying taxes, NYC had to borrow money from banks to pay its bills and fund social programs such as Medicaid

and welfare. After President Ford told NY to literally “Drop Dead”, following New York’s request for a bailout, thousands of blue-collar workers lost their jobs.

Though the economy had drastically declined, Grand Central Station still hadn’t completely flat-lined yet. Once state psychiatric hospitals were deinstitutionalized due to high maintenance costs and inhumane conditions, mentally ill ex-patients and unskilled workers in search of affordable housing found refuge in Grand Central’s Waiting Room. According to the Robert McFadden’s (1985) article *Homeless pose problems at Grand Central*, “their presence . . . led to sharp increases in violence and crime in the terminal, and to complaints from commuters and businesses” (para 2). Additionally, Phil Brown (2013), author of the book, *The Transfer of Care: Psychiatric Desinstitutionalization and its Aftermath*, states “parks, transportation terminals and other public spaces have become less comfortable as a result of patient loiterers, many of them among the growing number of the urban homeless” (p.141). Once GCT was deemed a national landmark, efforts to restore and get rid of the homeless ensued.