

## Political Extremists

The 1920s gave rise to several types of political extremism. Fundamentalism, the belief that everything written in the Bible is literally true and contains no error or contradiction, was one of the most popular varieties of extremism during this time. Fundamentalists used their power to pass laws that prohibited the teaching of evolution in public schools.

Although decimated during reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan began to revive during this time. The Klan's membership spread in great numbers outside of the south, and the scope of the Klan's persecutions widened. No longer were African Americans the Klan's only targets. Jews, Catholics, immigrants, and other groups found themselves being terrorized by the Klan. However, Klan activity began to diminish in 1925 after the arrest of a major Klan leader.

Many began to feel a renewed anti-immigration sentiments after the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. Accused of killing two men during a robbery, Sacco and Vanzetti, both Italian immigrants and anarchists, were convicted and executed without a fair trial.

Another important court case, the Scopes Trial, regarding the teaching of evolution in schools, confronted Fundamentalism. A Tennessee science teacher, John T. Scopes, violated local law and taught evolution in his classroom. While it was clear that Scopes was guilty of his crime, the court case generated

publicity against Fundamentalism when defense attorney Clarence Darrow challenged Fundamentalist prosecutor William Jennings Bryan's views.

