

C. Progressive Era

1. Prosper of Industry

a) Republican policies

- (i) Following the Civil War, Republicans attacked Democrats by waving the “bloody shirt,” leading to many victories
- (ii) Other major issues included the tariff, currency, and civil service reform
- (iii) These republican policies helped American manufacturing flourish in the last quarter of the nineteenth century
- (iv) Tariff policies aided American business by preventing foreign goods into the market
- (v) Currency policies worked to control and stabilize the economy

b) Aims of Progressive movement

- (i) Progressives were never a single unified group seeking a single objective
- (ii) They sought civil service reform, political reform, government regulation of big business, improvement of conditions in the workplace, and the enactment of antitrust legislation.
- (iii) In response to an increasingly complex society, progressivism represented a “search for order”

c) Muckrakers

- (i) The popular press published articles on social, economic, and political issues of the day
- (ii) McClure’s published Ida Tarbell’s critical series on Standard Oil and Lincoln Steffens’s expose on city political machines.
- (iii) Soon, other editors rushed to adopt McClure’s formula

- (iv) A veritable army of journalists published stories exposing labor gangsters, the adulteration of foods and drugs, corruption in athletics, and other issues
 - (v) The degree of sensationalism used by some authors prompted Theodore Roosevelt to label them “Muckrakers”
- d) Robert M. La Follette and “Wisconsin Idea”
- (i) Corruption and mismanagement at state level impeded the efforts of municipal reformers
 - (ii) Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin perhaps best illustrated progressivism in action at the state level.
 - (iii) Among La Follette’s reforms were the adoption of direct primaries, corrupt practices acts, and laws to limit campaign spending and funding of lobbyists
 - (iv) La Follette also advocated state regulations of the railroads and management of natural resources
 - (v) Other states adopted many elements of the Wisconsin Idea
 - (vi) Some states went beyond Wisconsin in making their governments responsive to the popular will with the adoption of the initiative and referendum.
- e) Breaking vested interests
- (i) Political reaction to the growth of big business came first at the state level and dealt chiefly with the regulation of railroads
 - (ii) Strict railroad regulation resulted largely from agitation by the National Grange and focused on establishing reasonable maximum rates and outlawing unjust price discrimination
 - (iii) In *Munn V. Illinois* (1877), Supreme Court ruled that such regulations by states were constitutional when applied to business that served a public interest

- (iv) However, the Supreme Court declared invalid an Illinois law prohibiting discriminatory rates between long and short hauls in the Wabash case (1886) on the ground that a state could not regulate interstate commerce
- (v) The following year, Congress passed the interstate Commerce Act, which required that railroad charges be reasonable and just
- (vi) It also outlawed rebates, drawbacks, and other competitive practices
- (vii) In addition, the act created the Interstate Commerce Commission, the first federal regulatory board, to supervise railroad regulation
- (viii) The first antitrust legislation originated in the states
- (ix) Federal action came with the passage of the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890), which declared illegal trusts or other combinations in restraint of trade or commerce
- (x) The Interstate Commerce Act sought to outlaw the excesses of competition; The Sherman Act intended to restore competition
- (xi) The Supreme Court undermined the Sherman Act when it ruled that the American Sugar Refining Company, which controlled 98% of sugar refining, was engaged in manufacturing and therefore its dominance did not restrict trade
- (xii) In later cases, however, the Court ruled that agreements to fix prices did violate the Sherman Act
- (xiii) Although Theodore Roosevelt won a reputation as a “trustbuster,” he did not believe in breaking up big corporations indiscriminately; he preferred to regulate them
- (xiv) Roosevelt was not an enemy to all large-scale enterprises, merely those that flagrantly seemed to restrain trade

- (xv) Facing a Congress that would not pass strong regulatory laws, Roosevelt resorted to use of the Sherman Act
- (xvi) Although his Justice Department brought suit against the Northern Securities Company, the President preferred to reach “gentlemanly agreements: with large trusts
- (xvii) This proved successful with US Steel and International Harvester
- (xviii) When Standard Oil reneged on an agreement, however, the Justice Department brought suit.

f) Social Welfare reforms

- (i) By the 1890s, many states passed laws regulating conditions in the workplace
- (ii) These laws restricted child labor, set maximum hours for women and children, and regulated conditions in sweatshops
- (iii) Conservative judges, unwilling to accept an expansion of the states’ coercive power, often struck down such laws on the ground that they violated the “due process” clause of the 14th Amendment
- (iv) Progressives also achieved state legislation regulating the transportation, utilities, banking, and insurance industries
- (v) However, piecemeal regulation by the states failed to solve the problems of an increasingly complex society.

2. Federal Regulation

a) Progressive Era Amendments

- (i) 16th Amendment
- (ii) 17th Amendment
- (iii) 18th Amendment
- (iv) 19th Amendment

b) Income Tax

- (i) 16th Amendment – The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration
- c) State elections for senators, prohibition, women’s suffrage
 - (i) 17th Amendment – The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote.
 - (ii) 18th Amendment – After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.
 - (iii) 19th Amendment – The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.
- d) Policies of Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson
 - (i) Roosevelt (Bull Moose) – New Nationalism was based on regulation of large corporations
 - (ii) Wilson (Democrat) – New Freedom promised the eradication of special interests and a return to competition
 - (iii) Taft (Republican) – Listless Progressive was much less aggressive than T.R.
- e) “Square Deal”

- (i) The prospect of Roosevelt in the White House alarmed conservatives due to his robust personality and progressive ideals, Roosevelt moved slowly and with restraint
- (ii) His domestic program included some measure of control of large corporations, more power for the Interstate Commerce Commission, and the Conservation of natural resources

3. Effectiveness of Progressivism

a) Limits of Progressivism

- (i) Despite its democratic rhetoric, progressivism was paternalistic, moderate, and often soft - handed
- (ii) Reformers oversimplified issues and regarded their personal values as absolute standards
- (iii) Progressivism never truly challenged the fundamental principles of capitalism; nor did it seek to reorganize the basic structures of society
- (iv) Many progressives held anti- immigrant views, and few progressives concerned themselves with the plight of minorities, most notably African - Americans

b) Issues of Social Justice

- (i) Progressives were never a single unified group seeking a single objective
- (ii) They sought civil service reform, political reform, government regulation of big business, improvement of conditions in the workplace, and the enactment of antitrust legislation
- (iii) "Search for order"

c) Extension of Jim Crow and situation of African Americans

- (i) Progressivism proved to be reactionary when it came to minority and racial matters

- (ii) Only a handful of reform movements worked to support minorities against racial prejudice, and those only did so nominally
- (iii) In the South, the Progressive Era witnessed the institutionalization of “Jim Crow”
- (iv) Progressive women adopted racist arguments in support of the 19th Amendment, while Southern progressives argued for the disenfranchisement of blacks to “purify” the political system
- (v) Booker T. Washington and his philosophy failed to stem the rising tide of racism, and a split in the fight for equal treatment happened when a number of young and well - educated blacks broke away from his leadership
- (vi) Though racism was present throughout the country, many African - Americans would migrate north in search for better treatment and opportunities.
- (vii) A group comprised largely of white liberals founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909