

Chapter 20 The Spirit of Reform (1868–1920)

During the late 1800s widespread corruption in politics caused many people to seek reform. Reformers worked to improve living conditions, labor laws, the educational system, and the medical profession. Reformers also sought to gain more rights for women and African Americans. As you study this chapter, consider how a group might fight for its equal rights, what effect a Supreme Court ruling might have on workers' rights, and what ways a government might try to reform business.

Chapter 20

Section 1: The Gilded Age

In this section you will learn that during the late 1800s, widespread corruption affected local and national politics and caused a need for civil service reform. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

bosses

political machines

mugwumps

Pendleton Civil Service Act

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- What systems controlled city and state politics?
- What were some of the issues in the national government and presidential campaigns in the Gilded Age?
- How did the appointment of federal officials change during the late 1800s?

Chapter 20.1 Section Summary

In 1873 Mark Twain published the best-selling novel *The Gilded Age*. Twain believed that although American society looked golden from afar, the country actually was ugly and corrupt.

At the time, powerful political organizations used illegal methods to control city governments and gain wealth. Leading the organizations were **bosses**, political leaders who controlled elections through bribery and payoffs.

Bosses developed **political machines**, organizations that guaranteed votes at election time through both legal and illegal methods. Political machines often printed ballots listing only their candidates, paid people to vote for their candidates, and hired the ballot counters.

Political corruption was a major issue in the 1884 presidential election. The Republicans nominated James G. Blaine as their candidate. Some Republicans opposed Blaine because of his record of corruption. These Republican reformers were known as **mugwumps**, the Algonquian word for "big chiefs." Mugwumps instead supported the Democratic nominee, Grover Cleveland, who had a reputation for honesty. Cleveland won the election. He worked hard to hire and fire government employees based on merit rather than party loyalty.

Four years later, Cleveland won the popular vote but lost the electoral vote. Republican Benjamin Harrison won the presidency that year. However, Cleveland remained popular, and was again elected president in 1892. In 1896 Republican William McKinley won the presidency. McKinley worked well with Congress and helped restore public confidence in the presidency by avoiding corruption and scandal.

Many people also demanded changes in the civil service because of widespread corruption. Government jobs were often awarded to the friends and supporters of whoever was in office. Reformers wanted a competitive system that awarded jobs on the basis of merit. In 1883 the **Pendleton Civil Service Act** set up a merit system for awarding government jobs under the Civil Service Commission.

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Section 2: The Progressive Movement

In this section you will learn how reformers began to seek ways to improve living conditions, elections, education, and medicine in the late 1800s. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

progressives
muckrakers
direct primary
Seventeenth Amendment
recall
initiative
referendum
Wisconsin Idea

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- What were most progressives' common goals?
- What were some areas of society that progressives reformed during this period?
- How did progressives change government?

Chapter 20.2 Section Summary

In the late 1800s reformers began working to improve society. These people were known as **progressives**. They hoped to address the social and political problems caused by industrial and urban growth. Most progressives wanted the government to work with the people to solve social problems and to regulate business, health, and safety.

Some journalists helped to make the public aware of social problems. These journalists were known as **muckrakers** because they raked up and exposed the muck, or filth, of society.

As more people moved into the cities, housing became overcrowded and unsanitary. Reformers in New York supported laws requiring toilets, running water, and better ventilation in apartment buildings. City planners began to develop more public parks, pave streets, and improve public transportation and sanitation

systems.

Progressives also tried to make local and state governments respond to the people's needs through election reform. Progressives introduced the **direct primary**. In these elections, voters chose their own candidates rather than relying on party leaders to choose them. Congress also passed the **Seventeenth Amendment** in 1913, which allowed American voters, rather than state legislatures, to elect U.S. senators.

Some states and cities also introduced the **recall**. If enough voters signed a petition to remove an elected official, citizens could then vote to remove that official from public office. The **initiative** gave voters the ability to propose laws by collecting enough signatures on a petition. The **referendum** permitted voters to approve laws already proposed by state and local governments. Such reforms put more power in the hands of voters.

Wisconsin governor Robert M. La Follette supported direct primaries and the hiring of professionals to manage social problems. His program, the **Wisconsin Idea**, became a model for other state governments.

Reformers also helped to improve education by starting many new public high schools and kindergartens. Reforms were also made in health care, as the American Medical Association joined other progressive groups in supporting laws that protected public health.

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Section 3: Reforming the Workplace

In this section you will learn how progressives tried to reform the workplace, striving for laws that would improve wages, safety, and working conditions for laborers. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

capitalism

socialism

Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

Industrial Workers of the World

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- What kinds of jobs did children have, and what were working conditions like during the late 1800s?
- Why did progressives want to pass laws to protect workers?
- How did the courts react to labor legislation?

Chapter 20.3 Section Summary

In the late 1800s many women and children worked to help support their families. Children shined shoes, sold newspapers, sewed clothing, and made jewelry. Sometimes children as young as five years old were working long hours in textile mills. Progressives worked to pass laws restricting child labor. Although Congress passed child labor laws in 1916 and 1919, the Supreme Court later declared them unconstitutional.

Progressives also worked with labor unions to address working conditions faced by adults. In 1910 one third of U.S. workers lived in poverty, and many workers were killed or injured on the job. One year later, 146 workers died in the **Triangle Shirtwaist Fire** in New York City because the doors to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory were locked and they could not escape. Reformers tried to establish a minimum wage so workers could support themselves. The 8-hour workday was another important goal, as employers often forced laborers to work much longer hours.

U.S. courts often ruled against progressive labor laws. In 1898 the

Supreme Court upheld laws limiting the number of hours that laborers could work in dangerous jobs, such as mining. However, in *Lochner v. New York* the Court ruled that states could not restrict the hours of ordinary workers. The Supreme Court's position changed in 1908 when it upheld laws limiting women's work hours in the case *Muller v. Oregon*.

Membership in labor unions increased at this time. Unions worked for higher wages, fewer hours, and safer working conditions. The American Federation of Labor, or AFL, was one of the most powerful labor unions in the United States, with some 4 million members by 1920. The AFL supported **capitalism**, a system in which private businesses run most industries, and competition determines the cost of goods and workers' wages.

Other unions supported **socialism**, a system in which the government or the workers own and operate most of a nation's industries. Some union leaders formed the **Industrial Workers of the World**, or IWW, a union that tried to unite all workers to promote socialism. The IWW unionized many workers who were unwelcome in the AFL, including immigrants, women, African Americans, and migrant workers.

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Section 4: The Rights of Women and Minorities

In this section you will learn how progressives directed their efforts toward protecting the rights of women, African Americans, and American Indians. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

Women's Christian Temperance Union
Anti-Saloon League
Eighteenth Amendment
National American Woman Suffrage Association
National Woman's Party
Nineteenth Amendment
Atlanta Compromise
Niagara Movement
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Society of American Indians

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- Why did many women participate in the progressive movement, and what were their goals?
- What reforms did African Americans seek during the Progressive Era?
- How was the progressive movement limited?

Chapter 20.4 Section Summary

Women received greater educational opportunities in the late 1800s. Because there were few job opportunities, however, many women became involved in the reform movements of the Progressive Era.

Many progressive women were involved in the temperance movement, which blamed alcohol for many of society's problems. In 1874 reformers started the **Women's Christian Temperance Union**, which brought women together in the fight against alcohol. The union inspired other groups, such as the **Anti-Saloon League**, which was another temperance organization active in the early 1900s. Temperance efforts led to the passing of the **Eighteenth Amendment**

in 1919, which made preparing and selling alcoholic beverages illegal in the United States.

Women also became involved in the suffrage movement. The **National American Woman Suffrage Association** formed in 1890 to gain the vote for women. In 1913, suffragists also formed the **National Woman's Party**, which used picketing, hunger strikes, and civil disobedience to campaign for women's suffrage. In 1920 Congress passed the **Nineteenth Amendment**, giving women the right to vote.

African Americans also fought for their rights. Leader Booker T. Washington argued that African Americans should focus on improving their educational and economic opportunities, rather than on fighting discrimination and segregation. Washington outlined his philosophy in a 1895 speech known as the **Atlanta Compromise**. Other African Americans, such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, did not agree with Washington. Wells-Barnett confronted racial injustice directly by protesting the lynching of African American men in the South.

W. E. B. Du Bois also took a direct approach to fighting racial injustice. In 1905 Du Bois joined other African Americans in a meeting at Niagara Falls, Canada. Calling themselves the **Niagara Movement**, the group demanded economic and educational equality as well as an end to segregation and discrimination. In 1909 Du Bois also helped found the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**, or NAACP, to further the goals of the Niagara Movement. The NAACP worked to attack racial discrimination through the court system. The NAACP also worked to gain greater voting rights for African Americans. Other groups, such as the National Urban League, were founded during this period to help African Americans find jobs and housing in northern cities.

Some groups, such as American Indians, Chinese Americans, and Mexican Americans, did not benefit from the progressive movement because they did not fit into the urban agenda of the reformers. In 1911 educated and professional American Indians founded the **Society of American Indians**. Members of this organization believed that adopting the beliefs and practices of the larger society was the best solution to Indians' poverty and unemployment. Like the efforts of other reformers, however, members of this group did not

understand the views of Indians who lived on reservations and had different needs than urban Indians.

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Section 5: The Progressive Presidents

In this section you will learn how progressive reforms continued under the administrations of Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

arbitration

Pure Food and Drug Act

conservation

Bull Moose Party

Underwood Tariff

Sixteenth Amendment

Federal Reserve Act

Clayton Antitrust Act

Federal Trade Commission

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- What were the major points of Roosevelt's progressive policy?
- Why did progressives turn against President Taft?
- What reforms did Woodrow Wilson accomplish during his presidency?

Chapter 20.5 Section Summary

When President Theodore Roosevelt came into office in 1901, he believed that government should actively serve the public. When striking miners and managers could not resolve their differences, he brought them together for **arbitration**, a formal meeting to discuss and settle disagreements.

Roosevelt tried to regulate large trusts. He also supported laws regulating the railroads and their shipping rates. Roosevelt persuaded Congress to pass a meat inspection law and the **Pure Food and Drug Act** in 1906, which did not allow the manufacture, sale, or transportation of mislabeled or contaminated food or drugs between states.

Roosevelt joined other progressives in the **conservation** movement, an effort to preserve nature and its resources. Some conservationists argued that natural areas should be preserved

because they provided precious raw materials. Others, like Roosevelt, believed that state and national parks would provide rest and recreation for the American people.

William Howard Taft followed Roosevelt as president. Taft pursued reforms and regulations more cautiously than Roosevelt had, and this angered many progressives. Roosevelt and other progressives did not think that Taft supported strict enough regulation of big business.

Roosevelt decided to run for president again in 1912. When Taft received the Republican nomination, Roosevelt formed the Progressive Party, nicknamed the **Bull Moose Party**. Taft and Roosevelt split the Republican vote, and Democrat Woodrow Wilson was elected president.

As president, Wilson supported the **Underwood Tariff Act** of 1913, which brought the lowest tariff rates in years and introduced the income tax. The **Sixteenth Amendment** had also been ratified in 1913. This amendment allowed the federal government to pass direct taxes, such as the income tax.

Wilson also wanted to improve the banking system. The **Federal Reserve Act**, passed in 1913, set up 12 regional Federal Reserve banks overseen by two groups that would control banking policy. Under Wilson's administration, the **Clayton Antitrust Act** of 1914 toughened federal laws against monopolies. The **Federal Trade Commission** was also set up in 1914 to prevent unfair trade practices.