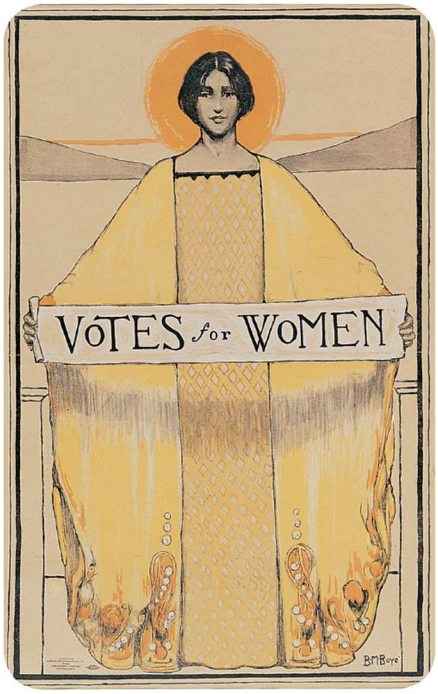
20 THE PROGRESSIVES



"VOTES FOR WOMEN," BY B. M. BOYE This striking poster was the prize-winning entry in a 1911 contest sponsored by the College Equal Suffrage League of Northern California.

LOOKING AHEAD

1. What role did women and women's organizations play in the reforms of the progressive era? How did progressive-era reforms affect women?
2. What changes to politics and government did progressive reformers advocate at the local, state, and federal levels? How did government change as a result of their reform efforts?
3. How did Woodrow Wilson's progressivism differ from that of Theodore Roosevelt? In what ways was it similar to Roosevelt's?

SETTING THE STAGE

WELL BEFORE THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, many Americans had become convinced that the rapid changes in their society–industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and other jarring events–had created intolerable problems. Out of that concern emerged a broad effort to impose order and justice on a society that seemed to be approaching chaos. By the early years of the twentieth century, this outlook had acquired a name: progressivism.

The progressive impulse took many forms–so many, in fact, that even today scholars do not agree on what progressivism means. But despite, or perhaps because of, its great diversity, progressivism created a remarkable period of political and social innovation. From the late nineteenth century until at least the end of World War I, reformers were the most dynamic and influential force in American politics and culture. They brought into public debate such issues as the role of women in society, the ways to deal with racial difference, the question of how to govern cities, the fairest way to organize the economy, the role of political parties and political machines, the impact of immigration and cultural diversity, and the degree to which the state should impose moral norms on communities and individuals.

Progressivism began as a movement within communities, cities, and states–many different local efforts to improve the working of society. Slowly but steadily, these efforts began to become national efforts. Broad movements emerged around passionate issues: woman suffrage, racial equality, the rights of labor. And the federal government itself, beginning in the early twentieth century, became a crucible of progressive reform. Reformers attempted to make Washington more responsive to their demands. Some worked successfully for the direct popular election of U.S. senators–to replace what they considered the corrupt process by which state legislatures chose members of the Senate. But ultimately it was the presidency, not the Congress, that became the most important vehicle of national reform–first under the dynamic leadership of Theodore Roosevelt and then under the disciplined, moralistic leadership of Woodrow Wilson. By the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, the federal government–which had exercised very limited powers prior to the twentieth century–had greatly expanded its role in American life.

I. THE PROGRESSIVE IMPULSE

BELIEF IN PROGRESS

Progressivism was, first, an optimistic vision. Progressives believed, as their name implies, in the idea of progress. They believed that society was capable of improvement and that continued growth and advancement were the nation's destiny.

But progressives believed, too, that growth and progress could not continue to occur recklessly, as they had in the late nineteenth century. The “natural laws” of the marketplace, and the doctrines of laissez faire and Social Darwinism that celebrated those laws, were not sufficient. Direct, purposeful human intervention in social and economic affairs was, they argued, essential to ordering and bettering society.

A. VARIETIES OF PROGRESSIVISM

“ANTIMONOPOLY”

Progressives did not always agree on the form their intervention should take, and the result was a variety of reform impulses that sometimes seemed to have little in common. One powerful impulse was the spirit of “antimonopoly,” the fear of concentrated power and the urge to limit and disperse authority and wealth. This vaguely populist impulse appealed not only to many workers and farmers but to some middle-class Americans as well. And it encouraged government to regulate or break up trusts at both the state and national level.

Another progressive impulse was a belief in the importance of social cohesion: the belief that individuals are part of a great web of social relationships, that each person's welfare is dependent on the welfare of society as a whole. That assumption produced a concern about the “victims” of industrialization and other people who had difficult lives.

FAITH IN KNOWLEDGE

Still another impulse was a deep faith in knowledge–in the possibilities of applying to society the principles of natural and social sciences. Many reformers believed that knowledge was more important than anything else as a vehicle for making society more equitable and humane. Most progressives believed, too, that a modernized government could–and must–play an important role in the process of improving and stabilizing society. Modern life was too complex to be left in the hands of party bosses, untrained amateurs, and antiquated institutions.

B. THE MUCKRAKERS

Among the first people to articulate the new spirit of reform were crusading journalists who began to direct public attention toward social, economic, and political injustices. They became known as the “muckrakers,” after Theodore Roosevelt accused one of them of raking up muck through his writings. They were committed to exposing scandal, corruption, and injustice to public view.

IDA TARBELL AND LINCOLN STEFFENS

At first, their major targets were the trusts and particularly the railroads, which the muckrakers considered powerful and deeply corrupt. Exposés of the great corporate organizations began to appear as early as the 1860s, when Charles Francis Adams Jr. and others uncovered corruption among the railroad barons. One of the most notable muckrakers was the journalist Ida Tarbell's enormous study of the Standard Oil trust (published first in magazines and then as a two-volume book in 1904). By the turn of the century, many muckrakers were turning their attention to government, particularly to the urban political machines. The most influential, perhaps, was Lincoln Steffens, a reporter for *McClure's* magazine and the author of a famous book based on his articles, *The Shame of the Cities* (1904). His portraits of “machine government” and “boss rule”; his exposure of “boodlers” in cities as diverse as St. Louis, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York; his tone of studied moral outrage–all helped arouse sentiment for urban political reform. The alternative to leaving government in the hands of corrupt party leaders, the muckrakers argued, was for the people themselves to take a greater interest in public life. The muckrakers reached the peak of their influence in the first decade of the twentieth century. By presenting social problems to the public with indignation and moral fervor, they helped inspire other Americans to take action.

C. THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

The growing outrage at social and economic injustice helped produce many reformers committed to the pursuit of what came to be known as “social justice.” (Social justice is a term widely used around the world to describe a kind of justice that goes beyond the individual, seeking justice for society as a whole. Advocates of social justice are likely to believe in an egalitarian society and support for poor and oppressed people.) That impulse helped create the rise of what became known as the “Social Gospel.” By the early twentieth century, it had become a powerful movement within American Protestantism (and, to a lesser extent, within American Catholicism and Judaism). It was chiefly concerned with redeeming the nation's cities.

The Salvation Army, which began in England but soon spread to the United States, was one example of the fusion of religion with reform. A Christian social welfare organization with a vaguely military structure, by 1900 it had recruited 3,000 “officers” and 20,000 “privates” and was offering both material aid and spiritual service to the urban poor. In addition, many ministers, priests, and rabbis left traditional parish work to serve in the troubled cities. Charles

Sheldon's *In His Steps* (1898), the story of a young minister who abandoned a comfortable post to work among the needy, sold more than 15 million copies. It was one of the most successful novels of the era.

FATHER JOHN RYAN

Walter Rauschenbusch, a Protestant theologian from Rochester, New York, published a series of influential discourses on the possibilities for human salvation through Christian reform. To him, the message of Darwinism was not the survival of the fittest. He believed, rather, that all individuals should work to ensure a humanitarian evolution of the social fabric. Some American Catholics seized on the 1893 publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (New Things) as justification for their own crusade for social justice. Catholic liberals such as Father John A. Ryan took to heart the pope's warning that “a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself.” For decades, he worked to expand the scope of Catholic social welfare organizations.

D. THE SETTLEMENT HOUSE MOVEMENT

An element of much progressive thought was the belief in the influence of the environment on individual development. Social Darwinists such as William Graham Sumner had argued that people's fortunes reflected their inherent “fitness” for survival. Progressive theorists disagreed. Ignorance, poverty, even criminality, they argued, were not the result of inherent genetic failings or of the workings of providence; they were, rather, the effects of an unhealthy environment. To elevate the distressed, therefore, required an improvement of the conditions in which they lived.

JANE ADDAMS AND HULL HOUSE

Nothing produced more distress, many urban reformers believed, than crowded immigrant neighborhoods, which publicists such as Jacob Riis were exposing through vivid photographs and lurid descriptions. One response to the problems of such communities, borrowed from England, was the settlement house. The most famous, and one of the first, was Hull House, which opened in 1889 in Chicago as a result of the efforts of the social worker Jane Addams. It became a model for more than 400 similar institutions throughout the nation. Staffed by members of the educated middle class, settlement houses sought to help immigrant families adapt to the language and customs of their new country. Settlement houses avoided the condescension and moral disapproval of earlier philanthropic efforts. But they generally embraced a belief that middle-class Americans had a responsibility to impart their own values to immigrants and to teach them how to create middle-class lifestyles.

Young college women (mostly unmarried) were important participants in the settlement house movement. Working in a settlement house, which was a protected site that served mostly women, was consistent with the widespread assumption that women needed to be sheltered from difficult environments. The clean and well-tended buildings that settlement houses created were not only a model for immigrant women, but an appropriate site for elite women as well.

The settlement houses helped create another important element of progressive reform: the profession of social work. Workers at Hull House, for example, maintained a close relationship with the University of Chicago's pioneering work in the field of sociology. A growing number of programs for the professional training of social workers began to appear in the nation's leading universities, partly in response to the activities of the settlements.

E. THE ALLURE OF EXPERTISE

As the emergence of the social work profession suggests, progressives involved in humanitarian efforts placed a high value on knowledge and expertise. Even nonscientific problems, they believed, could be analyzed and solved scientifically. Many reformers came to believe that only enlightened experts and well-designed bureaucracies could create the stability and order America needed.

Some reformers even spoke of the creation of a new civilization, in which the expertise of scientists and engineers could be brought to bear on the problems of the economy and society. The social scientist Thorstein Veblen, for example, proposed a new economic system in which power would reside in the hands of highly trained engineers. Only they, he argued, could fully understand the “machine process” by which modern society must be governed.

F. THE PROFESSIONS

The late nineteenth century saw a dramatic expansion in the number of Americans engaged in administrative and professional tasks. Industries needed managers, technicians, and accountants as well as workers. Cities required commercial, medical, legal, and educational services. New technology required scientists and engineers, who, in turn, required institutions and instructors to train them. By the turn of the century, those performing these services had come to constitute a distinct social group–what some historians have called a new middle class.

The new middle class placed a high value on education and individual accomplishment. By the early twentieth century, its millions of members were building organizations and establishing standards to secure their position in society. The idea of professionalism had been a frail one in America even as late as 1880. When every patent-medicine salesman could claim to be a doctor, when every frustrated politician could set up shop as a lawyer, when anyone who could read and write could pose as a teacher, a professional label by itself carried little weight. There were, of course, skilled and responsible doctors, lawyers, teachers, and others; but they had no way of controlling or distinguishing themselves clearly from the amateurs, charlatans, and incompetents who presumed to practice their trades. As the demand for professional services increased, so did the pressures for reform.

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Among the first to respond was the medical profession. In 1901, doctors who considered themselves trained professionals reorganized the American Medical Association into a national professional society. By 1920, nearly two-thirds of all American doctors were members. The AMA quickly called for strict, scientific standards for admission to the practice of medicine, with doctors themselves serving as protectors of the standards. State governments - responded by passing new laws requiring the licensing of all physicians. By 1900, medical education at a few medical schools–notably Johns Hopkins in Baltimore (founded in 1893)–compared favorably with that in the leading institutions of Europe. Doctors such as William H. Welch at Hopkins revolutionized the teaching of medicine by moving students out of the classrooms and into laboratories and clinics.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS

There was similar movement in other professions. By 1916, lawyers in all forty-eight states had established professional bar associations. The nation's law schools accordingly expanded greatly. Businessmen supported the creation of schools of business administration and created their own national organizations: the National Association of Manufacturers in 1895 and the United States Chamber of Commerce in 1912. Even farmers, long the symbol of the romantic spirit of individualism, responded to the new order by forming, through the National Farm Bureau Federation, a network of agricultural organizations designed to spread scientific farming methods.
While removing the untrained and incompetent, the admission requirements also protected those already in the professions from excessive competition and lent prestige and status to their trades. Some professionals used their entrance requirements to exclude blacks, women, immigrants, and other “undesirables” from their ranks. Others used them simply to keep the numbers down, to ensure that demand would remain high.

THE INFANT WELFARE SOCIETY, CHICAGO **The Infant Welfare Society was one of many “helping” organizations in Chicago and other large cities–many of them closely tied to the settlement houses–that strove to help immigrants adapt to American life and create safe and healthy living conditions. Here, a volunteer helps an immigrant mother learn to bathe her baby.**
(The Library of Congress (LC-DIG-npcc-33267))

G. WOMEN AND THE PROFESSIONS

Both by custom and by active barriers of law and prejudice, American women found themselves excluded from most of the emerging professions. But a substantial number of middle-class women–particularly those emerging from the new women's colleges and coeducational state universities–entered professional careers nevertheless.

FEMALE-DOMINATED PROFESSIONS

A few women managed to establish themselves as physicians, lawyers, engineers, scientists, and corporate managers in the early 1900s. Several leading medical schools admitted women, and in 1900 about 5 percent of all American physicians were female (a proportion that remained unchanged until the 1960s). Most, however, turned by necessity to those "helping" professions that society considered vaguely domestic and thus suitable for women: settlement houses, social work, and most important, teaching. Indeed, in the late nineteenth century, more than two-thirds of all grammar school teachers were women, and perhaps 90 percent of all professional women were teachers. For educated black women, in particular, the existence of segregated schools in the South created a substantial market for African American teachers.

Women also dominated other professional activities. Nursing had become primarily a women's field during and after the Civil War. By the early twentieth century, it was adopting professional standards. And many women entered academia–often receiving advanced degrees at such predominantly male institutions as the University of Chicago, MIT, or Columbia, and finding professional opportunities in the new and expanding women's colleges.

DEBATING THE PAST

PROGRESSIVISM

UNTIL the early 1950s, most historians generally agreed on the central characteristics of progressivism. It was just what progressives themselves said it was: a movement by the "people" to curb the power of the "special interests."

George Mowry challenged this traditional view in *The California Progressives* (1951). He described the reform movement in California not as a people's protest, but, rather, as an effort by a small and privileged group of business and professional men to limit the power of large new corporations and labor unions. Richard Hofstadter expanded on this idea in *The Age of Reform* (1955), describing progressives throughout the country as people suffering from "status anxiety"–old, formerly influential, upper-middle-class families seeking to restore their fading prestige by challenging the powerful new institutions that had begun to displace them.

The Mowry-Hofstadter thesis provoked new challenges and new interpretations of the meaning of progressivism. Gabriel Kolko, in *The Triumph of Conservatism* (1963), rejected the Mowry-Hofstadter idea that progressivism represented the efforts of a displaced elite. Progressivism, he argued, was an effort to regulate business undertaken, not by the "people" or "displaced elites," but by corporate leaders, who saw in government supervision a way to protect themselves from competition. Martin Sklar's *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism* (1988) is a more sophisticated version of a similar argument.

A more moderate challenge to the "psychological" interpretation of progressivism came from historians embracing a new "organizational" view of history. In *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (1967), Robert Wiebe presented progressivism as a response to dislocations in American life brought on by rapid changes in the economy. Economic power had moved to large, national organizations, while social and political life remained centered primarily in local communities. The result was widespread disorder and unrest. Progressivism, Wiebe argued, was the effort of a "new middle class"–a class tied to the emerging national economy–to stabilize and enhance their position in society by creating national institutions suitable for the new national economy.

Some historians continued to argue that progressivism was a movement of the people against the special interests. J. Joseph Huthmacher argued in 1962 that much of the force behind progressivism came from members of the working class, especially immigrants, who pressed for such reforms as workmen's compensation and wage and hour laws. John Buenker, in *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (1973), claimed that political machines and urban "bosses" were important sources of reform energy and helped create twentieth-century liberalism.

Other historians writing in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to link reform to some of the broad processes of political change that had created the public battles of the era. Richard L. McCormick's *From Realignment to Reform* (1981), a study of political change in New York State, argued that the crucial change in this era was the decline of the political parties and the rise of interest groups working for particular social and economic goals.

Many historians see progressivism as rooted in gender and have focused on the role of women (and the vast network of voluntary associations they created) in shaping and promoting progressive reform. Historians Kathryn Sklar, Linda Gordon, Ruth Rosen, and Elaine Tyler May, among others, argued that some progressive battles were part of an effort by women to protect their interests within the domestic sphere in the face of jarring challenges from the new industrial world. This protective urge drew women reformers to such issues as temperance, divorce, prostitution, and the regulation of female and child labor. Other women worked to expand their own roles in the public world. Progressivism cannot be understood, historians of women contend, without understanding the role of women and the importance of issues involving the family and the private world within it.

(© Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Other historians have sought to place progressivism in a broader context. Daniel Rodgers's *Atlantic Crossings* (1998) is a study of how European reforms influenced American progressives. Both Michael McGerr, in *A Fierce Discontent* (2003), and Alan Dawley, in *Changing the World* (2003), have characterized progressivism as a fundamentally moral undertaking. McGerr viewed it as an effort by the middle class to create order and stability, whereas Dawley saw it as an effort by groups on the left to attack social injustice.

Given the range of disagreement over the nature of the progressive movement, it is hardly surprising that some historians have despaired of finding any coherent definition for the term. Peter Filene, for one, suggested in 1970 that the concept of progressivism as a "movement" had outlived its usefulness. But Daniel Rodgers, in an important 1982 article, "In Search of Progressivism," disagreed. The very diversity of progressivism, he argued, accounted both for its enormous impact on its time and for its capacity to reveal to us today the "noise and tumult" of an age of rapid social change.

UNDERSTAND, ANALYZE, AND EVALUATE

1. What is the "psychological" interpretation of how people became progressives?
2. What is the gendered view of progressive reform advanced by historians?
3. Was progressivism a "people's" movement?

II. WOMEN AND REFORM

KEY ROLE OF WOMEN IN REFORM CAUSES

The prominence of women in reform movements is one of the most striking features of progressivism. In most states in the early twentieth century, women could not vote. They almost never held public office. They had footholds in only a few (and usually primarily female) professions and lived in a culture in which most people, male and female, believed that women were not suited for the public world. What, then, explains the prominent role so many women played in the reform activities of the period?

A. THE "NEW WOMAN"

SOCIOECONOMIC ORIGINS OF THE NEW WOMAN

The phenomenon of the "new woman," widely remarked upon at the time, was a product of social and economic changes that affected the private world as much as the public one, even if such changes affected mostly middle-class people. By the end of the nineteenth century, almost all income-producing activity had moved out of the home and into the factory or the office. At the same time, children were beginning school at earlier ages and spending more time there. For many wives and mothers who did not work for wages, the home was no longer an all-consuming place. Technological innovations such as running water, electricity, and eventually household appliances made housework less onerous (even if higher standards of cleanliness counterbalanced many of these gains).
Declining family size also changed the lives of many women. Middle-class white women in the late nineteenth century had fewer children than their mothers and grandmothers had borne. They also lived longer. Many women thus now spent fewer years with young children in the home and lived more years after their children were grown.

"BOSTON MARRIAGES"

Some educated women shunned marriage, believing that only by remaining single could they play the roles they envisioned in the public world. Single women were among the most prominent female reformers of the time: Jane Addams and Lillian Wald in the settlement house movement, Frances Willard in the temperance movement, Anna Howard Shaw in the suffrage movement, and many others. Some of these women lived alone. Others lived with other women, often in long-term relationships–some of them quietly romantic–that were known at the time as "Boston marriages." The divorce rate also rose rapidly in the late nineteenth century, from one divorce for every twenty-one marriages in 1880 to one in nine by 1916; women initiated the majority of them.

B. THE CLUBWOMEN

Among the most visible signs of the increasing public roles of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the women's clubs, which proliferated rapidly beginning in the 1880s and 1890s and became the vanguard of many important reforms.

GFWC

The women's clubs began largely as cultural organizations to provide middle- and upper-class women with an outlet for their intellectual energies. In 1892, when women formed the General Federation of Women's Clubs to coordinate the activities of local organizations, there were more than 100,000 members in nearly 500 clubs. By 1917, there were over 1 million. By the early twentieth century, the clubs were becoming less concerned with cultural activities and more concerned with contributing to social betterment. Because many club members were from wealthy families, some organizations had substantial funds at their disposal to make their influence felt. And ironically, because women could not vote, the clubs had a nonpartisan image that made them difficult for politicians to dismiss.
Black women occasionally joined clubs dominated by whites. But most such clubs excluded blacks, and so African Americans formed clubs of their own. Some of them affiliated with the General Federation, but most became part of the independent National Association of Colored Women. Some black clubs also took positions on issues of particular concern to African Americans, such as lynching and aspects of segregation.

A PUBLIC SPACE FOR WOMEN

The women's club movement seldom raised overt challenges to prevailing assumptions about the proper role of women in society. Few clubwomen were willing to accept the arguments of such committed feminists as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who in her 1898 book, *Women and Economics,* argued that the traditional definition of gender roles was exploitive and obsolete. Instead, the club movement allowed women to define a space for themselves in the public world without openly challenging the existing, male-dominated order.
Much of what the clubs did was uncontroversial: planting trees; supporting schools, libraries, and settlement houses; building hospitals and parks. But clubwomen were also an important force in winning passage of state (and ultimately federal) laws that regulated the conditions of woman and child labor, established government inspection of workplaces, regulated the food and drug industries, reformed policies toward the Indian tribes, applied new standards to urban housing, and, perhaps most notably, outlawed the manufacture and sale of alcohol. They were instrumental in pressuring state legislatures in most states to provide "mother's pensions" to widowed or abandoned mothers with small children–a system that ultimately became absorbed into the Social Security system. In 1912, they pressured Congress into establishing the Children's Bureau in the Labor Department, an agency directed to develop policies to protect children.

THE COLORED WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF WASHINGTON, D.C. **The women's club movement spread widely through American life and produced a number of organizations through which African American women gathered to improve social and political conditions. The Colored Women's League of Washington, D.C., members of which appear in this 1894 photograph, was founded in 1892 by Sara Fleetwood, a registered nurse who was the wife of Christian Fleetwood, one of the first African American soldiers to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism in the Civil War. The league she founded was committed to "racial uplift," and it consisted mostly of teachers, who created nurseries for the infants of women who worked and evening schools for adults. Members of the League are shown here gathered on the steps of Frederick Douglass's home on Capitol Hill. Sara Fleetwood is in the second row on the far right.**
(The Library of Congress)

WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE

In many of these efforts, the clubwomen formed alliances with other women's groups, such as the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), founded in 1903 by female union members and upper-class reformers. It was committed to persuading women to join unions. In addition to working on behalf of protective legislation for women, WTUL members held public meetings on behalf of female workers, raised money to support strikes, marched on picket lines, and bailed striking women out of jail.

C. WOMAN SUFFRAGE

Perhaps the largest single reform movement of the progressive era, indeed one of the largest in American history, was the fight for woman suffrage.

RADICAL CHALLENGE OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

It is sometimes difficult for today's Americans to understand why the suffrage issue could have become the source of such enormous controversy. But at the time, suffrage seemed to many of its critics a very radical demand, in part because of the rationale some of its early supporters used to advance it. Throughout the late nineteenth century, many suffrage advocates presented their views in terms of "natural rights," arguing that women deserved the same rights as men–including, first and foremost, the right to vote. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, wrote in 1892 of woman as "the arbiter of her own destiny … if we are to consider her as a citizen, as a member of a great nation, she must have the same rights as all other members." This was an argument that boldly challenged the views of the many men and women who believed that society required a distinctive female "sphere" in which women would serve first and foremost as wives and mothers. And so a powerful antisuffrage movement emerged, dominated by men but with the active support of many women. Opponents railed against the threat suffrage posed to the "natural order" of civilization. Antisuffragists, many of them women, associated suffrage with divorce (not without some reason, since many suffrage advocates also supported making it easier for women to obtain a divorce). They linked suffrage with promiscuity, immorality, and neglect of children.

SHIRTWAIST WORKERS ON STRIKE **The Women's Trade Union League was notable for bringing educated, middle-class women together with workers in efforts to improve factory and labor conditions. These picketing women are workers in the "Ladies Tailors" garment factory in New York.**
(The Library of Congress (LC-DIG-ggbain-04507))

SUFFRAGE PAGEANT, 1913
On March 3, 1913–the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration as president–more than 5,000 supporters of woman suffrage staged a parade in Washington, D.C., that overshadowed Wilson's own arrival there. Crowds estimated at over half a million watched the parade, not all of them admirers of the woman suffrage movement, and some of the onlookers attacked the marchers. The police did nothing to stop the attacks. This photograph depicts a suffragist, Florence Noyes, costumed as Liberty, posing in front of the U.S. Treasury Building, part of a pageant accompanying the parade. Woman suffrage was one of the most important and impassioned reform movements of the progressive era.
(The Library of Congress)

NAWSA

In the first years of the twentieth century, the suffrage movement began to overcome this opposition and win some substantial victories, in part because suffragists were becoming better organized and more politically sophisticated than their opponents. Under the leadership of Anna Howard Shaw, a Boston social worker, and Carrie Chapman Catt, a journalist from Iowa, membership in the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) grew from about 13,000 in 1893 to over 2 million in 1917. The movement gained strength because many of its most prominent leaders began to justify suffrage in “safer,” less threatening ways. Suffrage, some supporters began to argue, would not challenge the “separate sphere” in which women resided. It was, they claimed, precisely because women occupied a distinct sphere–because as mothers and wives and homemakers they had special experiences and special sensitivities to bring to public life–that woman suffrage could make such an important contribution to politics. In particular, many suffragists argued that enfranchising women would help the temperance movement, by giving its largest group of supporters a political voice. Some suffrage advocates claimed that once women had the vote, war would become a thing of the past, since women would–by their calming, maternal influence–help curb the belligerence of men. That was one reason why World War I gave a final, decisive push to the movement for suffrage.

Conservative Arguments for Suffrage

Suffrage also attracted support for other, less optimistic reasons. Many middle-class people found persuasive the argument that if blacks, immigrants, and other “base” groups had access to the franchise, then it was a matter not only of justice but of common sense to allow educated, “well-born” women to vote.

Nineteenth Amendment

The principal triumphs of the suffrage movement began in 1910, when Washington became the first state in fourteen years to extend suffrage to women. California followed a year later, and four other western states in 1912. In 1913, Illinois became the first state east of the Mississippi to embrace woman suffrage. And in 1917 and 1918, New York and Michigan–two of the most populous states in the Union–gave women the vote. By 1919, thirty-nine states had granted women the right to vote in at least some elections; fifteen had allowed them full participation. In 1920, finally, suffragists won ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which guaranteed political rights to women throughout the nation.

To some feminists, however, the victory seemed less than complete. Alice Paul, head of the militant National Woman's Party (founded in 1916), never accepted the relatively conservative “separate sphere” justification for suffrage. She argued that the Nineteenth Amendment alone would not be sufficient to protect women's rights. Women needed more: a constitutional amendment that would provide clear, legal protection for their rights and would prohibit all discrimination on the basis of sex. But Alice Paul's argument found limited favor even among many of the most important leaders of the recently triumphant suffrage crusade.

III. THE ASSAULT ON THE PARTIES

Reforming Government

Sooner or later, most progressive goals required the involvement of government. Only government, reformers agreed, could effectively counter the many powerful private interests that threatened the nation. But American government at the dawn of the new century was, progressives believed, poorly adapted to perform their ambitious tasks. At every level, political institutions were outmoded, inefficient, and corrupt. Before progressives could reform society effectively, they would have to reform government itself. Many reformers believed the first step must be an assault on the dominant role the political parties played in the life of the state.

A. Early Attacks

Attacks on party dominance had been frequent in the late nineteenth century. Greenbackism and Populism, for example, had been efforts to break the hammerlock with which the Republicans and Democrats controlled public life. The Independent Republicans (or mugwumps) had also attempted to challenge the grip of partisanship.

These early assaults enjoyed some success. In the 1880s and 1890s, for example, most states adopted the secret ballot. Prior to that, the political parties themselves had printed ballots (or “tickets”), with the names of the party's candidates, and no others. They distributed the tickets to their supporters, who then simply went to the polls to deposit them in the ballot box. The old system had made it possible for bosses to monitor the voting behavior of their constituents; it had also made it difficult for voters to “split” their tickets–to vote for candidates of different parties for different offices. The new secret ballot–printed by the government and distributed at the polls to be filled out and deposited in secret–helped chip away at the power of the parties over voters.

B. Municipal Reform

Many progressives, such as Lincoln Steffens, believed the impact of party rule was most damaging in the cities. Municipal government therefore became one of the first targets of those working for political reform.

Middle-Class Progressives

The muckrakers struck a responsive chord among a powerful group of urban, middle-class progressives. For several decades after the Civil War, “respectable” citizens of the nation's large cities had avoided participation in municipal government. Viewing politics as a debased and demeaning activity, they shrank from contact with the “vulgar”

elements who were coming to dominate public life. By the end of the century, however, a new generation of activists–some of them members of old aristocratic families, others a part of the new middle class–were taking a growing interest in government.
These activists faced a formidable array of opponents. In addition to challenging the powerful city bosses and their entrenched political organizations, they were attacking a large group of special interests: saloon owners, brothel keepers, and, perhaps most significantly, those businessmen who had established lucrative relationships with the urban political machines and who viewed reform as a threat to their profits. Finally, there was the great constituency of urban working people, many of them recent immigrants, to whom the machines were a source of needed jobs and services. Gradually, however, the reformers gained in political strength.

C. New Forms of Governance

Commission Plan

One of the first major successes came in Galveston, Texas, where the old city government proved unable to deal with the effects of a destructive tidal wave in 1900. Capitalizing on public dismay, reformers, many of them local businessmen, won approval of a new city charter. The mayor and council were replaced by an elected, nonpartisan commission. In 1907, Des Moines, Iowa, adopted its own version of the commission plan, and other cities followed.

City-Manager Plan

Another approach to municipal reform was the city-manager plan, by which elected officials hired an outside expert–often a professionally trained business manager or engineer–to take charge of the city government. The city manager would presumably remain untainted by the corrupting influence of politics. By the end of the progressive era in the early 1920s, almost 400 cities were operating under commissions, and another 45 employed city managers.
In most urban areas, the enemies of partnership had to settle for less absolute victories. Some cities made the election of mayors nonpartisan (so that the parties could not choose the candidates) or moved them to years when no presidential or congressional races were in progress (to reduce the influence of the large turnouts that party organizations produced). Reformers tried to make city councilors run at large, to limit the influence of ward leaders and district bosses. They tried to strengthen the power of the mayor at the expense of the city council, on the assumption that reformers were more likely to succeed in getting a sympathetic mayor elected than they were to win control of the entire council.

Tom Johnson

Some of the most successful reformers emerged from conventional political structures that progressives came to control. Tom Johnson, the celebrated reform mayor of Cleveland, waged a long war against the powerful streetcar interests in his city, fighting to lower streetcar fares to 3 cents, and ultimately to impose municipal ownership on certain basic utilities. After Johnson's defeat and death, his talented aide Newton D. Baker won election as mayor and helped maintain Cleveland's reputation as the best-governed city in America. Hazen Pingree of Detroit, Samuel “Golden Rule” Jones of Toledo, and other mayors effectively challenged local party bosses to bring the spirit of -reform into city government.

TOM JOHNSON
As sentiment for municipal reform grew in intensity in the late nineteenth century, it became possible for progressive mayors committed to ending “boss rule” to win election over machine candidates in some of America's largest cities. One of the most prominent was Tom Johnson, the reform mayor of Cleveland. Johnson made a fortune in the steel and streetcar business and then entered politics, partly as a result of reading Henry George's *Poverty and Progress*. He became mayor in 1901 and in his four terms waged strenuous battles against party bosses and corporate interests. He won many fights, but he lost what he considered his most important one: the struggle for municipal ownership of public utilities.

AMERICA IN THE WORLD

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

ENORMOUS energy, enthusiasm, and organization drove the reform efforts in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much of it a result of social crises and political movements in the United States. But the “age of reform,” as some scholars have called it, was not just an American phenomenon. It was part of a wave of social experimentation that was occurring through much of the industrial world.

Several industrializing nations–the United States, Britain, Germany, and France–adopted the term “progressivism” for their efforts, but the term that most broadly defined the new reform energies was “social democracy.” Social democrats in many countries shared a belief in the betterment of society, not through religion or inherited ideology, but through the accumulation of knowledge. They favored improving the social condition of all people through economic reforms and government programs of social protection. And they believed that these changes could come through peaceful political change, rather than through radicalism or revolution. Political parties committed to these goals emerged in several countries: the Labour Party in Britain, Social Democratic parties in various European nations, and the short-lived Progressive Party in the United States. Intellectuals, academics, and government officials across the world shared the knowledge they were accumulating and observed social programs. An important moment in the growth of social democracy were the many Paris expositions of 1889 and 1900. Their symbol was the famous Eiffel Tower, and their meaning for many progressives was the possibilities of progress through industrial innovation. Not only tourists, but progressive experts as well, visited the Paris expositions; and they held meetings while they were there to share their visions of the future.

At the turn of the century, American reformers visited Germany, France, Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands, observing the reforms in progress there, while European reformers visited the United States. Reformers from both the United States and Europe were also fascinated by the advanced social experiments in Australia and, especially, New Zealand–which the American reformer Henry Demarest Lloyd once called “the political brain of the modern world.” New Zealand's dramatic experiments in factory regulation, woman suffrage, old-age pensions, progressive taxation, and labor arbitration gradually found counterparts in many other nations. William Allen White, a progressive journalist from Kansas, said of this time: “We were parts of one another, in the United States and Europe. Something was welding us into one social and economic whole with local political variations … [all] fighting a common cause.”

Social democracy–or, as it was sometimes called in the United States and elsewhere, social justice or the Social Gospel–was responsible for many public programs. Germany began a system of social insurance for its citizens in the 1880s while undertaking a massive study of society that produced more than 140 volumes of “social investigation” of almost every aspect of the nation's life. French reformers pressed in the 1890s for factory regulation, assistance to the elderly, and progressive taxation. Britain pioneered the settlement houses in working-class areas of London–a movement that soon spread to the United States as well–and, like the United States, witnessed growing challenges to the power of monopolies at both the local and national level.

In many countries, social democrats felt pressure from the rising worldwide labor movement and from the rise of socialist parties in many industrial countries. Strikes, sometimes violent, were common in France, Germany, Britain, and the United States in the late nineteenth century. The more militant workers became, the more unions grew. Social democrats did not always welcome the rise of militant labor movements, but they took them seriously and tried to use them to support their own reform efforts.

The politics of social democracy represented a great shift in the character of public life all over the industrial world. Instead of battles over the privileges of aristocrats or the power of monarchs, reformers now focused on the social problems of ordinary people and attempted to improve their lot. “The politics of the future are social politics,” the British reformer Joseph Chamberlain said in the 1880s, referring to efforts to deal with the problems of ordinary citizens. That belief was fueling progressive efforts across the world in the years that Americans have come to call the “progressive era.”

UNDERSTAND, ANALYZE, AND EVALUATE

1. What is social democracy? How does it differ from socialism?

2. What progressive era reforms in American social and political life can be seen in other nations as well?

3. Social democratic political parties continue to exist in many countries throughout the world. Why was the Progressive Party in the United States so short-lived?

D. STATEHOUSE PROGRESSIVISM

The assault on boss rule in the cities did not, however, always produce results. Consequently, many progressives turned to state government as an agent for reform. They looked with particular scorn on state legislatures, whose ill-paid, undistinguished members, they believed, were generally incompetent, often corrupt, and totally controlled by party bosses. Reformers began looking for ways to circumvent the boss-controlled legislatures by increasing the power of the electorate.

INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

Two of the most important changes were innovations first proposed by Populists in the 1890s: the initiative and the referendum. The initiative allowed reformers to circumvent state legislatures by submitting new legislation directly to the voters in general elections. The referendum provided a method by which actions of the legislature could be returned to the electorate for approval. By 1918, more than twenty states had enacted one or both of these reforms.

DIRECT PRIMARY AND RECALL

Similarly, the direct primary and the recall were efforts to limit the power of party and improve the quality of elected officials. The primary election was an attempt to take the selection of candidates away from the bosses and give it to the people. (In the South, it was also an effort to limit black voting–since primary voting, many white southernersq believed, would be easier to control than general elections.) The recall gave voters the right to remove a public official from office at a special election, which could be called after a sufficient number of citizens had signed a petition. By 1915, every state in the nation had instituted primary elections for at least some offices. The recall encountered more strenuous opposition, but a few states (such as California) adopted it as well.

Other reform measures attempted to clean up the legislatures themselves. Between 1903 and 1908, twelve states passed laws restricting lobbying by business interests in state legislatures. In those same years, twenty-two states banned campaign contributions by corporations, and twenty-four states forbade public officials to accept free passes from railroads. Many states also struggled successfully to create systems of workmen's compensation for workers injured on the job. And starting in 1911, reformers successfully created pensions for widows with dependent children.

Reform efforts proved most effective in states that elevated vigorous and committed politicians to positions of leadership. In New York, Governor Charles Evans Hughes exploited progressive sentiment to create a commission to regulate public utilities. In California, Governor Hiram Johnson limited the political power of the Southern Pacific Railroad. In New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson, the Princeton University president elected governor in 1910, used executive leadership to win reforms designed to end New Jersey's widely denounced position as the "mother of trusts."

ROBERT LA FOLLETTE

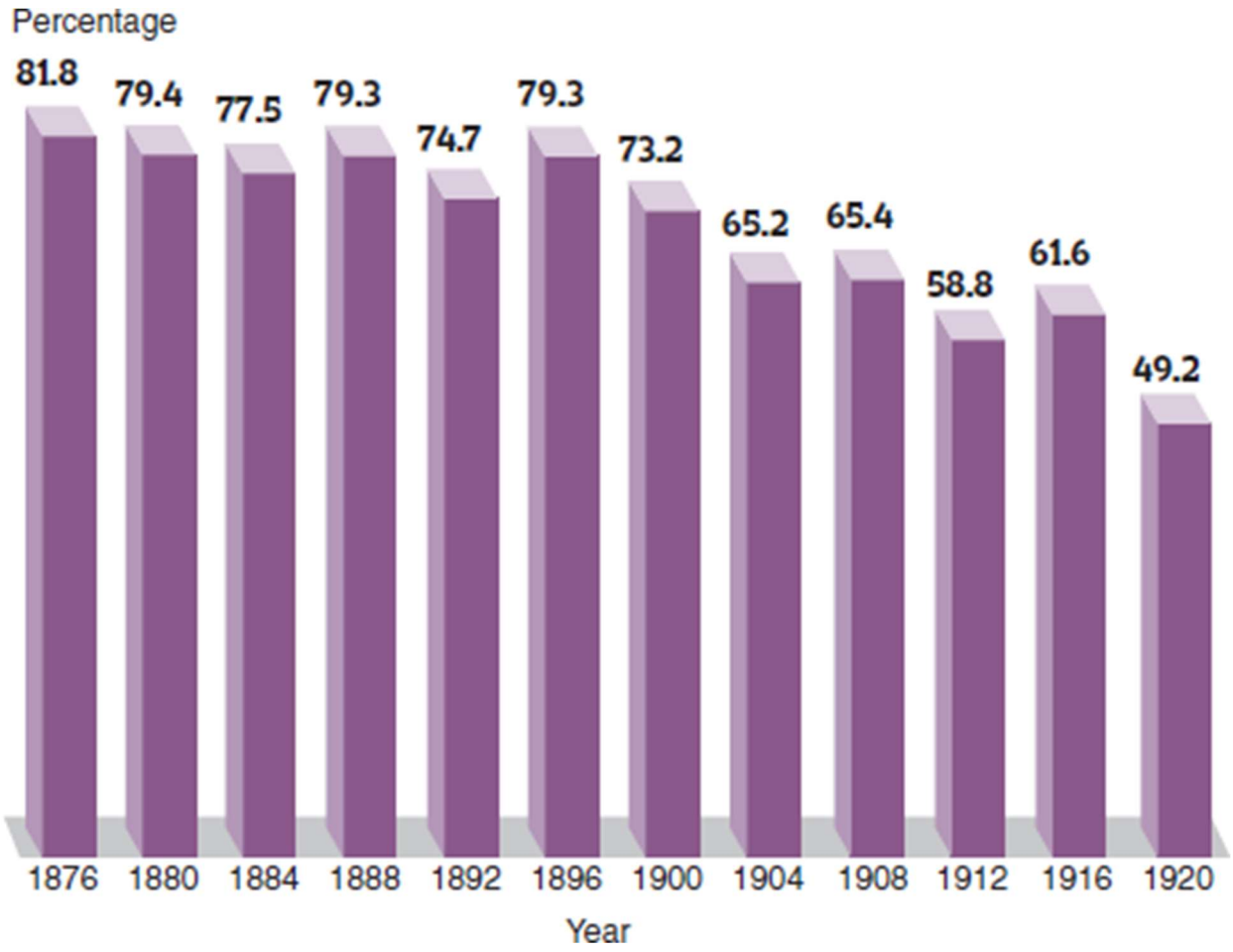
The most celebrated state-level reformer was Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin. Elected governor in 1900, he helped turn his state into what reformers across the nation described as a "laboratory of progressivism." Under his leadership the Wisconsin progressives won approval of direct primaries, initiatives, and referendums. They regulated railroads and utilities. They passed laws to regulate the workplace and provide compensation for laborers injured on the job. They instituted graduated taxes on inherited fortunes, and they nearly doubled state levies on railroads and other corporate interests. La Follette used his personal magnetism to widen public awareness of progressive goals. Reform was the responsibility not simply of politicians, he argued, but of newspapers, citizens' groups, educational institutions, and business and professional organizations as well.

ROBERT LA FOLLETTE CAMPAIGNING IN WISCONSIN
After three terms as governor of Wisconsin, La Follette began a long career in the U.S. Senate in 1906, during which he worked uncompromisingly for advanced progressive reforms–so uncompromisingly, in fact, that he was often almost completely isolated. He titled a chapter of his autobiography "Alone in the Senate." La Follette had a greater impact on his own state, whose politics he and his sons dominated for nearly forty years and where he was able to win passage of many reforms that the federal government resisted.
(The Library of Congress (LC-DIG-ggbain-06406)

E. PARTIES AND INTEREST GROUPS

DECLINE OF PARTY INFLUENCE

The reformers did not, of course, eliminate parties from American political life. But they did contribute to a decline in party influence. Evidence of their impact came from, among other things, the decline in voter turnout. In the late nineteenth century, up to 81 percent of eligible voters routinely turned out for national elections because of the strength of party loyalty. In the early twentieth century, while turnout remained high by today's standards, the figure declined markedly as parties grew weaker. In the presidential election of 1900, 73 percent of the electorate voted. By 1912, that figure had declined to about 59 percent. Never again did voter turnout reach as high as 70 percent.
Why did voter turnout decline in these years? The secret ballot was one reason. Party bosses had less ability to get voters to the polls. Illiterate voters had trouble reading the new ballots. Party bosses lost much of their authority and were unable to mobilize voters as successfully as they had in the past. But perhaps the most important reason for the decline of party rule (and voter turnout) was that other power centers were beginning to replace them. They have become known as “interest groups.” Beginning late in the nineteenth century and accelerating rapidly in the twentieth, new organizations emerged outside the party system: professional organizations, trade associations representing businesses and industries, labor organizations, farm lobbies, and many others. Social workers, the settlement house movement, women's clubs, and others learned to operate as interest groups to advance their demands.



VOTER PARTICIPATION IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1876–1920
One of the striking developments of early-twentieth-century politics was the significant decline in popular participation in politics. This chart shows the steady downward progression of voter turnout in presidential elections from 1876 to 1920. Turnout remained high by modern standards (except for the aberrant election of 1920, in which turnout dropped sharply because women had recently received the vote but had not yet begun to participate in elections in large numbers). But from an average rate of participation of about 79 percent in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, turnout dropped to an average of about 65 percent between 1900 and 1916.

- ***What were some of the reasons for this decline?***

IV. SOURCES OF PROGRESSIVE REFORM

Middle-class reformers, most of them from the East, dominated the public image and much of the substance of progressivism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But they were not alone in seeking to improve social conditions. Working-class Americans, African Americans, westerners, and even party bosses also played crucial roles in advancing some of the important reforms of the era.

A. LABOR, THE MACHINE, AND REFORM

Although the American Federation of Labor, and its leader Samuel Gompers, remained largely aloof from many of the reform efforts of the time (reflecting Gompers's firm belief that workers should not rely on government to improve their lot), some unions played important roles in reform battles. Between 1911 and 1913, thanks to political pressure from labor groups such as the newly formed Union Labor Party, California passed a child-labor law, a workmen's compensation law, and a limitation on working hours for women. Union pressures contributed to the passage of similar laws in many other states as well.

One result of the assault on the parties was a change in the party organizations themselves, which attempted to adapt to the new realities so as to preserve their influence. They sometimes allowed their machines to become vehicles of social reform. One example was New York City's Tammany Hall, the nation's oldest and most notorious city machine. Its astute leader, Charles Francis Murphy, began in the early years of the century to fuse the techniques of boss rule with some of the concerns of social reformers. Tammany began to use its political power on behalf of legislation to improve working conditions, protect child laborers, and eliminate the worst abuses of the industrial economy.

TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FIRE

In 1911, a terrible fire swept through the factory of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in New York City; 146 workers, most of them women, died. Many of them had been trapped inside the burning building because management had locked the emergency exits to prevent malingering. For the next three years, a state commission studied not only the background of the fire but also the general condition of the industrial workplace. It was responding to intense public pressure from women's groups and New York City labor unions–and to quiet pressure from Tammany Hall. By 1914, the commission had issued a series of reports calling for major reforms in the conditions of modern labor. The report itself was a classic progressive document, based on the testimony of experts, filled with statistics and technical data. Yet, when its recommendations reached the New York legislature, its most effective supporters were not middle-class progressives but two Tammany Democrats from working-class backgrounds: Senator Robert F. Wagner and Assemblyman Alfred E. Smith. With the support of Murphy and the backing of other Tammany legislators, they steered through a series of pioneering labor laws that imposed strict regulations on factory owners and established effective mechanisms for enforcement.

VICTIMS OF THE TRIANGLE FIRE, 1911

In this bleak photograph, victims of the fire in the factory of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company are laid out on the sidewalk near the building, as police and passersby look up at the scene of the blaze. The tragedy of the Triangle Fire galvanized New York legislators into passing laws to protect women workers.

B. Western Progressives

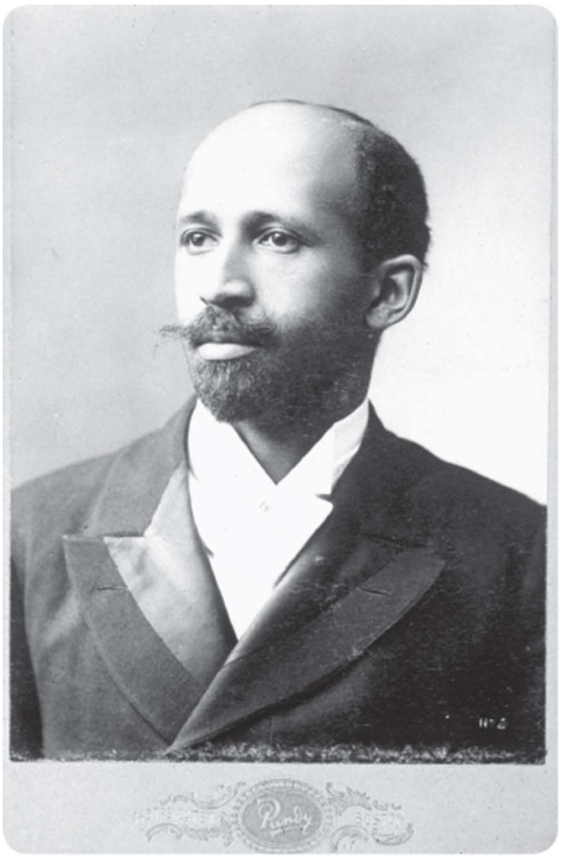
The American West produced some of the most notable progressive leaders of the time: Hiram Johnson of California, George Norris of Nebraska, William Borah of Idaho, and others–almost all of whom spent at least some of their political careers in the U.S. Senate. For western states, the most important target of reform energies was not state or local governments, which had relatively little power, but the federal government, which exercised a kind of authority in the West that it had never possessed in the East. That was in part because some of the most important issues to the future of the West required action above the state level. Disputes over water, for example, almost always involved rivers and streams that crossed state lines. The question of which states had the rights to the waters of the Colorado River created a political battle that no state government could resolve; the federal government had to arbitrate.
More significant, perhaps, the federal government exercised enormous power over the lands and resources of the western states and provided substantial subsidies to the region in the form of land grants and support for railroad and water projects. Huge areas of the West remained (and still remain) public lands, controlled by Washington–a far greater proportion than in any states east of the Mississippi. Much of the growth of the West was (and continues to be) a result of federally funded dams and water projects.

C. African Americans and Reform

One social question that received little attention from white progressives was race. But among African Americans themselves, the progressive era produced some significant challenges to existing racial norms.
African Americans faced greater obstacles than any other group in challenging their own oppressed status and seeking reform. Thus it was not surprising, perhaps, that so many embraced the message of Booker T. Washington in the late nineteenth century, to "put down your bucket where you are," to work for immediate self-improvement rather than long-range social change. Not all African Americans, however, were content with this approach. And by the turn of the century a powerful challenge was emerging–a challenge to the philosophy of Washington but, more important, to the entire structure of race relations. The chief spokesman for this new approach was W. E. B. Du Bois.

W. E. B. Du Bois

Du Bois, unlike Washington, had never known slavery. Born in Massachusetts, educated at Fisk University in Nashville and at Harvard, he grew to maturity with a more expansive view than Washington of the goals of his race and the responsibilities of white society to eliminate prejudice and injustice. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), he launched an open attack on the philosophy of Washington, accusing him of encouraging white efforts to impose segregation and of limiting the aspirations of his race. "Is it possible and probable," he asked, "that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meager chance for developing their exceptional men? If history and reason give any distinct answer to these questions, it is an emphatic No."



THE YOUNG W. E. B. DU BOIS
This formal photograph of W. E. B. Du Bois was taken in 1899, when he was thirty-one years old and a professor at Atlanta University. He had just published *The Philadelphia Negro,* a classic sociological study of an urban community, which startled many readers with its description of the complex class system among African Americans in the city.

NAACP FOUNDED

Rather than content themselves with education at the trade and agricultural schools, Du Bois advocated, talented blacks should accept nothing less than a full university education. They should aspire to the professions. They should, above all, fight for their civil rights, not simply wait for them to be granted as a reward for patient striving. In 1905, Du Bois and a group of his supporters met at Niagara Falls–on the Canadian side of the border because no hotel on the American side of the Falls would have them–and launched what became known as the Niagara Movement. Four years later, after a race riot in Springfield, Illinois, they joined with white progressives sympathetic to their cause to form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Whites held most of the offices at first, but Du Bois, its director of publicity and research, was the guiding spirit. In the ensuing years, the new organization led the drive for equal rights, using as its principal weapon lawsuits in the federal courts.

Within less than a decade, the NAACP had begun to win some important victories. In *Guinn v. United States* (1915), the Supreme Court supported its position that the grandfather clause in an Oklahoma law was unconstitutional. (The statute denied the vote to any citizen whose ancestors had not been enfranchised in 1860.) In *Buchanan v. Worley* (1917), the Court struck down a Louisville, Kentucky, law requiring residential segregation. The NAACP established itself, particularly after Booker T. Washington's death in 1915, as one of the nation's leading black organizations, a position it would maintain for many years.

Among the many issues that engaged the NAACP and other African American organizations was the phenomenon of lynching in the South. Du Bois was an outspoken critic of lynching and an advocate of a federal law making it illegal (since state courts in the South routinely refused to prosecute lynchers). But the most determined opponents of lynching were southern women. They included white women such as Jessie Daniel Ames. The most effective crusader was a black woman, Ida Wells Barnett, who worked both on her own (at great personal risk) and with such organizations as the National Association of Colored Women and the Women's Convention of the National Baptist Church to try to discredit lynching and challenge segregation.

V. CRUSADE FOR SOCIAL ORDER AND REFORM

Reformers directed many of their energies at the political process. But they also crusaded on behalf of what they considered moral issues. There were campaigns to eliminate alcohol from national life, to curb prostitution, to limit divorce, and to restrict immigration. Proponents of each of those reforms believed that success would help regenerate society as a whole.

A. THE TEMPERANCE CRUSADE

Many progressives considered the elimination of alcohol from American life a necessary step in restoring order to society. Scarce wages vanished as workers spent hours in the saloons. Drunkenness spawned violence, and occasionally murder, within urban families. Working-class wives and mothers hoped through temperance to reform male behavior and thus improve women's lives. Employers, too, regarded alcohol as an impediment to industrial efficiency; workers often missed time on the job because of drunkenness or came to the factory intoxicated. Critics of economic privilege denounced the liquor industry as one of the nation's most sinister trusts. And political reformers, who (correctly) looked on the saloon as one of the central institutions of the urban machine, saw an attack on drinking as part of an attack on the bosses. Out of such sentiments emerged the temperance movement.

WCTU

Temperance had been a major reform movement before the Civil War, mobilizing large numbers of people in a crusade with strong evangelical overtones. In 1873, the movement developed new strength. Temperance advocates formed the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), led after 1879 by Frances Willard. By 1911, it had 245,000 members and had become the single largest women's organization in American history to that point. In 1893, the Anti-Saloon League joined the temperance movement and, along with the WCTU, began to press for a specific legislative solution: the legal abolition of saloons. Gradually, that demand grew to include the complete prohibition of the sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages.

EIGHTEENTH AMENDMENT

Despite substantial opposition from immigrant and working-class voters, pressure for prohibition grew steadily through the first decades of the new century. By 1916, nineteen states had passed prohibition laws. But since the consumption of alcohol was actually increasing in many unregulated areas, temperance advocates were beginning to advocate a national prohibition law. America's entry into World War I, and the moral fervor it unleashed, provided the last push to the advocates of prohibition. In 1917, with the support of rural fundamentalists who opposed alcohol on moral and religious grounds, progressive advocates of prohibition steered through Congress a constitutional amendment embodying their demands. Two years later, after ratification by every state in the nation except Connecticut and Rhode Island (bastions of Catholic immigrants), the Eighteenth Amendment became law, to take effect in January 1920.

IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION

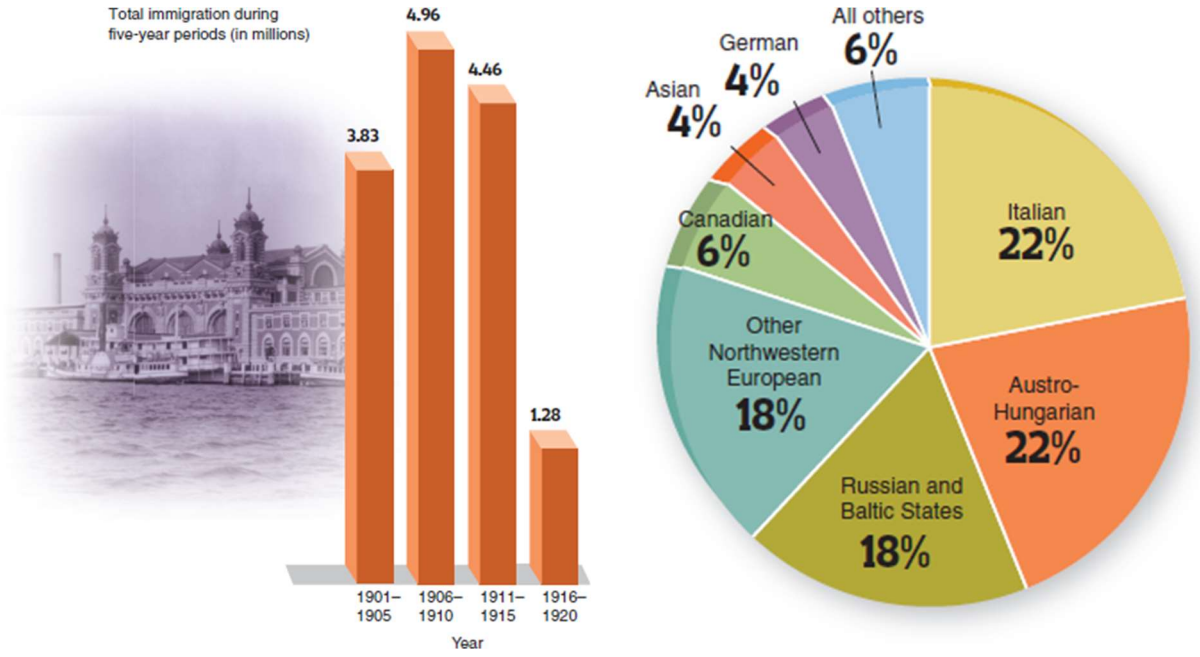
Virtually all reformers agreed that the growing immigrant population had created social problems, but there was wide disagreement on how best to respond. Some progressives believed that the proper approach was to help the new residents adapt to American society. Others argued that efforts at assimilation had failed and that the only solution was to limit the flow of new arrivals.

EUGENICS AND NATIVISM

In the first decades of the century, pressure grew to close the nation's gates. New scholarly theories, appealing to the progressive respect for expertise, argued that the introduction of immigrants into American society was polluting the nation's racial stock. Among the theories created to support this argument was eugenics, the science of altering the reproductive processes of plants and animals to produce new hybrids or breeds. In the early twentieth century, there was an effort, funded by the Carnegie Foundation, to turn eugenics into a method of altering human reproduction as well. But the eugenics movement when applied to humans was not an effort to "breed" new people, an effort for which no scientific tools existed. It was, rather, an effort to grade races and ethnic groups according to their genetic qualities. Eugenicists advocated the forced sterilization of the mentally retarded, criminals, and others. But they also spread the belief that human inequalities were hereditary and that immigration was contributing to the multiplication of the unfit. Skillful publicists such as Madison Grant, whose *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) established him as the nation's most effective nativist, warned of the dangers of racial "mongrelization" and of the importance of protecting the purity of Anglo-Saxon and other Nordic stock from pollution by eastern Europeans, Latin Americans, and Asians.

A special federal commission of "experts," chaired by Senator William P. Dillingham of Vermont, issued a study filled with statistics and scholarly testimony. It argued that the newer immigrant groups–largely southern and eastern Europeans–had proven themselves less assimilable than earlier immigrants. Immigration, the report implied, should be restricted by nationality. Many people who rejected these racial arguments nevertheless supported limiting immigration as a way to solve such urban problems as overcrowding, unemployment, strained social services, and social unrest.

The combination of these concerns gradually won for the nativists the support of some of the nation's leading progressives, among them former president Theodore Roosevelt. Powerful opponents–employers who saw immigration as a source of cheap labor, immigrants themselves, and their political representatives–managed to block the restriction movement for a time. But by the beginning of World War I (which effectively blocked immigration temporarily), the nativist tide was gaining strength.



LEFT: TOTAL IMMIGRATION, 1900–1920 **Emigration to the United States reached the highest level in the nation's history to that point in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, there was no five-year period when as many as 3 million immigrants arrived in America. In the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, more than 3 million newcomers arrived in every five-year period–and in one of them, as this chart reveals, the number reached almost 5 million.** **RIGHT: SOURCES OF IMMIGRATION, 1900–1920** **At least as striking as the increase in immigration in the early twentieth century was the change in its sources. In the nineteenth century, the vast majority of immigrants to the United States had come from northern and western Europe (especially Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia). Now, as this chart shows, the major sources were southern and eastern Europe, with over 60 percent coming from Italy, Russia, and the eastern European regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.**

- ***Why did the flow of immigrants drop so sharply in the period 1916–1920?***
- ***What impact did these changing sources have on attitudes toward immigration in the United States?***

VI. CHALLENGING THE CAPITALIST ORDER

If there was one issue that overshadowed, and helped to shape, all others in the minds of reformers, it was the character of the dramatically growing modern industrial economy. Most of the problems that concerned progressives could be traced back, directly or indirectly, to the growing power and influence–and also, reformers believed, corruption–of corporate America. So it is not surprising that prominent among progressive concerns was reshaping or reforming the behavior of the capitalist world.

A. THE DREAM OF SOCIALISM

EUGENE DEBS

At no time in the history of the United States to that point, and seldom after, did radical critiques of the capitalist system attract more support than in the period 1900–1914. Although never a force to rival or even seriously threaten the two major parties, the Socialist Party of America grew during these years into a force of considerable strength. In the election of 1900, it had attracted the support of fewer than 100,000 voters; in 1912, its durable leader and perennial presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, received nearly 1 million ballots. Strongest in urban immigrant communities, particularly among Germans and Jews, it also attracted the loyalties of a substantial number of Protestant farmers in the South and Midwest. Socialists won election to over 1,000 state and local offices. And they had the support at times of such intellectuals as Lincoln Steffens, the crusader against municipal corruption, and Walter Lippmann, the brilliant young journalist and social critic. Florence Kelley, Frances Willard, and other women reformers were attracted to socialism, too, in part because of its support for pacifism and labor organizing.

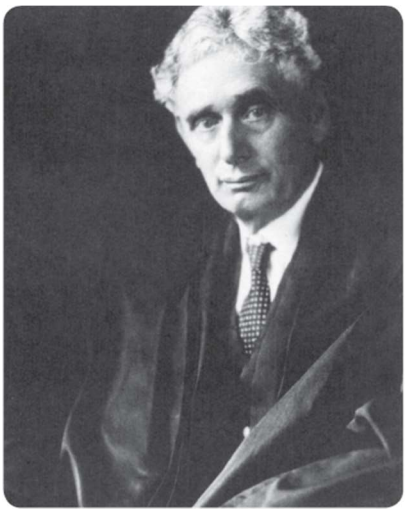
"WOBBLIES"

Virtually all socialists agreed on the need for basic structural changes in the economy, but they differed widely on the extent of those changes and the tactics necessary to achieve them. Some socialists endorsed the radical goals of European Marxists; others envisioned a moderate reform that would allow small-scale private enterprise to survive but would nationalize major industries. Some believed in working for reform through electoral politics; others favored militant direct action. Among the militants was the radical labor union the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), known to opponents as the "Wobblies" (a nickname of unknown origin). Under the leadership of William ("Big Bill") Haywood, the IWW advocated a single union for all workers and abolition of the "wage slave" system; it rejected political action in favor of strikes–especially the general strike. The Wobblies were widely believed to have been responsible for the dynamiting of railroad lines and power stations and other acts of terror in the first years of the -twentieth century.

The IWW was one of the few labor organizations of the time to champion the cause of unskilled workers and had particular strength in the West–where a large group of migratory laborers (miners, timbermen, and others) found it very difficult to organize or sustain conventional unions. In 1917, a strike by IWW timber workers in Washington and Idaho shut down production in the industry. That brought down upon the union the wrath of the federal government, which had just begun mobilizing for war and needed timber for war production. Federal authorities imprisoned the leaders of the union, and state governments between 1917 and 1919 passed a series of laws that outlawed the IWW. The organization survived for a time but never fully recovered.

SOCIALISM'S DEMISE

Moderate socialists who advocated peaceful change through political struggle dominated the Socialist Party. They emphasized a gradual education of the public to the need for change and patient efforts within the system to enact it. But World War I dramatically weakened the socialists. They had refused to support the war effort, and a growing wave of antiradicalism subjected them to enormous harassment and persecution.



LOUIS BRANDEIS

Brandeis graduated from Harvard Law School in 1877 with the best academic record of any student in the school's previous or subsequent history. His success in his Boston law practice was such that by the early twentieth century he was able to spend much of his time in unpaid work for public causes. His investigations of monopoly power soon made him a major figure in the emerging progressive movement. Woodrow Wilson nominated him for the U.S. Supreme Court in January 1916. He was one of the few nominees in the Court's history never to have held prior public office, and he was the first Jew ever to have been nominated. The appointment aroused five months of bitter controversy in the Senate before Brandeis was finally confirmed. For the next twenty years, he was one of the Court's most powerful members–all the while lobbying behind the scenes on behalf of the many political causes (preeminent among them Zionism, the founding of a Jewish state) to which he remained committed.

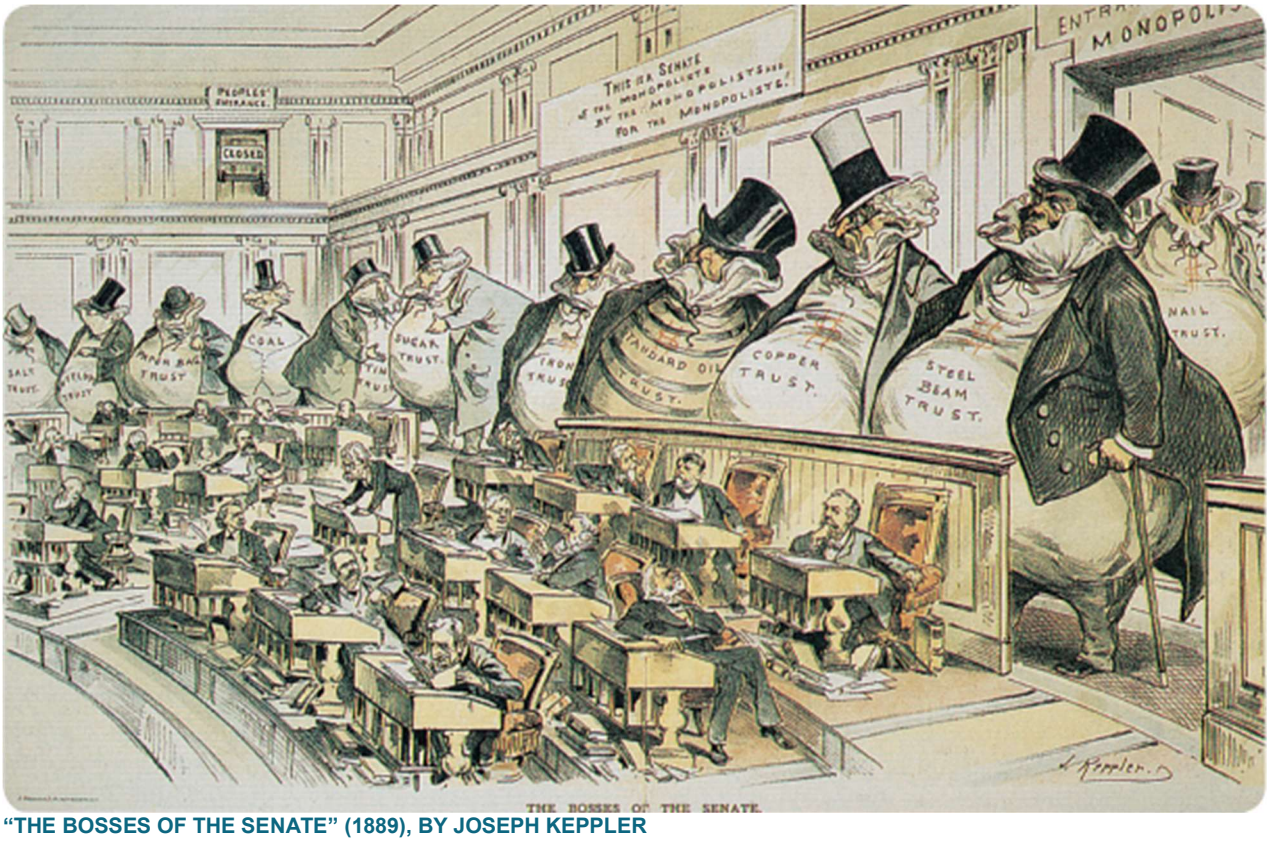
B. DECENTRALIZATION AND REGULATION

Most progressives retained a faith in the possibilities of reform within a capitalist system. Rather than nationalize basic industries, many reformers hoped to restore the economy to a "more human" scale. Few envisioned a return to a society of small, local enterprises; some consolidation, they recognized, was inevitable. They did, however, argue that the federal government should work to break up the largest combinations and enforce a balance between the need for bigness and the need for competition.

This viewpoint came to be identified particularly closely with Louis D. Brandeis, a brilliant lawyer and later justice of the Supreme Court, who wrote widely (most notably in his 1913 book, *Other People's Money*) about the "curse of bigness."

THE PROBLEM OF CORPORATE CENTRALIZATION

Brandeis and his supporters opposed bigness in part because they considered it inefficient. But their opposition had a moral basis as well. Bigness was a threat not just to efficiency but to freedom as well. It limited the ability of individuals to control their own destinies. It encouraged abuses of power. Government must, Brandeis insisted, regulate competition in such a way as to ensure that large combinations did not emerge.



"THE BOSSES OF THE SENATE" (1889), BY JOSEPH KEPPLER

Keppler was a popular political cartoonist of the late nineteenth century who shared the growing concern about the power of the trusts–portrayed here as bloated, almost reptilian figures standing menacingly over the members of the U.S. Senate, to whose chamber the "people's entrance" is "closed."

"GOOD TRUSTS" AND "BAD TRUSTS"

Other progressives were less enthusiastic about the virtues of competition. More important to them was efficiency, which they believed economic concentration encouraged. What government should do, they argued, was not to fight "bigness," but to guard against abuses of power by large institutions. It should distinguish between "good trusts" and "bad trusts," encouraging the good while disciplining the bad. Since economic consolidation was destined to remain a permanent feature of American society, continuing oversight by a strong, modernized government was essential. One of the most influential spokesmen for this emerging "nationalist" position was Herbert Croly, whose 1909 book, *The Promise of American Life,* became an influential progressive document.

Increasingly, the attention of nationalists such as Croly focused on some form of coordination of the industrial economy. Society must act, Walter Lippmann wrote in a notable 1914 book, *Drift and Mastery,* "to introduce plan where there has been clash, and purpose into the jungles of disordered growth." To some nationalists, that meant businesses themselves learning new ways of cooperation and self-regulation. To others, the solution was for government to play a more active role in regulating and planning economic life. One of those who came to endorse that position (although not fully until after 1910) was Theodore Roosevelt, who once said: "We should enter upon a course of supervision, control, and regulation of those great corporations." Roosevelt became for a time the most powerful symbol of the reform impulse at the national level.

VII. THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE MODERN PRESIDENCY

“Presidents in general are not lovable,” the famous writer and columnist Walter Lippmann, who had known many, said near the end of his life. “They've had to do too much to get where they are. But there was one President who was lovable–Teddy Roosevelt–and I loved him.”
Lippmann was not alone. To a generation of progressive reformers, Theodore Roosevelt was more than an admired public figure; he was an idol. No president before, and few since, had attracted such attention and devotion. Yet, for all his popularity among reformers, Roosevelt was in many respects decidedly conservative. He earned his extraordinary popularity less because of the extent of the reforms he championed than because he brought to his office a broad conception of its powers and invested the presidency with something of its modern status as the center of national political life.

A. THE ACCIDENTAL PRESIDENT

When President William McKinley suddenly died in September 1901, the victim of an assassination, Roosevelt (who had been elected vice president less than a year before) was only forty-two years old, the youngest man ever to assume the presidency. “I told William McKinley that it was a mistake to nominate that wild man at Philadelphia,” party boss Mark Hanna was reported to have exclaimed. “Now look, that damned cowboy is President of the United States!”

ROOSEVELT'S BACKGROUND

Roosevelt's reputation as a wild man was a result less of the substance of his early political career than of its style. As a young member of the New York legislature, he had displayed an energy seldom seen in that lethargic body. As a rancher in the Dakota Badlands (where he retired briefly after the sudden death of his first wife), he had helped capture outlaws. As New York City police commissioner, he had been a flamboyant battler against crime and vice. As assistant secretary of the navy, he had been a bold proponent of American expansion. As commander of the Rough Riders, he had led a heroic, if militarily useless, charge in the battle of San Juan Hill in Cuba during the Spanish-American War.
But Roosevelt as president rarely rebelled against the leaders of his party. He became, rather, a champion of cautious, moderate change. Reform, he believed, was a vehicle less for remaking American society than for protecting it against radical challenges.

B. GOVERNMENT, CAPITAL, AND LABOR

ROOSEVELT'S VISION OF FEDERAL POWER

Roosevelt allied himself with those progressives who urged regulation (but not destruction) of the trusts. At the heart of Roosevelt's policy was his desire to win for government the power to investigate the activities of corporations and publicize the results. The new Department of Commerce and Labor, established in 1903 (later to be divided into two separate departments), was to assist in this task through its investigatory arm, the Bureau of Corporations.

PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT
To a generation of progressive reformers, Theodore Roosevelt was an idol. No president before, and few since, had attracted such attention and devotion from the American people.
(The Library of Congress (LC-DIG_ppmsca-37602))

NORTHERN SECURITIES COMPANY

Although Roosevelt was not a trustbuster at heart, he made a few highly publicized efforts to break up combinations. In 1902, he ordered the Justice Department to invoke the Sherman Antitrust Act against a great new railroad monopoly in the Northwest, the Northern Securities Company, a $400 million enterprise pieced together by J. P. Morgan and others. To Morgan, accustomed to a warm, supportive relationship with Republican administrations, the action was baffling. He told the president, “If we have done anything wrong, send your man to my man and they can fix it up.” Roosevelt proceeded with the case nonetheless, and in 1904 the Supreme Court ruled that the Northern Securities Company must be dissolved. Although he filed more than forty additional antitrust suits during the remainder of his presidency, Roosevelt had no serious commitment to reverse the prevailing trend toward economic concentration.

A similar commitment to establishing the government as an impartial regulatory mechanism shaped Roosevelt's policy toward labor. In the past, federal intervention in industrial disputes had almost always meant action on behalf of employers. Roosevelt was willing to consider labor's position as well. When a bitter 1902 strike by the United Mine Workers endangered coal supplies for the coming winter, Roosevelt asked both the operators and the miners to accept impartial federal arbitration. When the mine owners balked, Roosevelt threatened to send federal troops to seize the mines. The operators finally relented. Arbitrators awarded the strikers a 10 percent wage increase and a nine-hour day, although no recognition of their union–less than they had wanted but more than they would likely have won without Roosevelt's intervention. Roosevelt viewed himself as no more the champion of labor than as a champion of management. On several occasions, he ordered federal troops to intervene in strikes on behalf of employers.

C. THE “SQUARE DEAL”

During Roosevelt's first years as president, he was principally concerned with winning reelection, which required that he not antagonize the conservative Republican Old Guard. By skillfully dispensing patronage to conservatives and progressives alike, and by winning the support of northern businessmen while making adroit gestures to reformers, Roosevelt had neutralized his opposition within the party by early 1904. He won its presidential nomination with ease. And in the general election, where he faced a dull conservative Democrat, Alton B. Parker, he captured over 57 percent of the popular vote and lost no states outside the South.

HEPBURN ACT

During the 1904 campaign, Roosevelt boasted that he had worked in the anthracite coal strike to provide everyone with a “square deal.” One of his first targets after the election was the powerful railroad industry. The Interstate Commerce Act of 1887, establishing the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), had been an early effort to regulate the industry; but over the years, the courts had sharply limited its influence. Roosevelt asked Congress for legislation to increase the government's power to oversee railroad rates. The Hepburn Railroad Regulation Act of 1906 sought to restore some regulatory authority to the government, although the bill was so cautious that it satisfied few progressives.

BOYS IN THE MINES **These young boys, covered in grime and no more than twelve years old, pose for the noted photographer Lewis Hine outside the coal mine in Pennsylvania where they separated coal from slate in coal breakers. The rugged conditions endured by mine workers were one cause of the great strike of 1902, in which Theodore Roosevelt intervened.** (The Library of Congress)

PURE FOOD AND DRUG ACT

Roosevelt also pressured Congress to enact the Pure Food and Drug Act, which restricted the sale of dangerous or ineffective medicines. When Upton Sinclair's powerful novel *The Jungle* appeared in 1906, featuring appalling descriptions of conditions in the meatpacking industry, Roosevelt pushed for passage of the Meat Inspection Act, which helped eliminate many diseases once transmitted in impure meat. Starting in 1907, he proposed, but mostly failed to achieve, even more stringent reforms: an eight-hour workday, broader compensation for victims of industrial accidents, inheritance and income taxes, regulation of the stock market, and others. He also started openly to criticize conservatives in Congress and the judiciary who were obstructing these programs. The result was a widening gulf between the president and the conservative wing of his party.

D. ROOSEVELT AND CONSERVATION

Roosevelt's aggressive policies on behalf of conservation contributed to that gulf. Using executive powers, he restricted private development on millions of acres of undeveloped government land–most of it in the West–by adding them to the previously modest national forest system. When conservatives in Congress restricted his authority over public lands in 1907, Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, seized all the forests and many of the water power sites still in the public domain before the bill became law.

Roosevelt was the first president to take an active interest in the new and struggling American conservation movement. In the early twentieth century, the idea of preserving the natural world for ecological reasons was not well established. Instead, many people who considered themselves "conservationists"–such as Pinchot, the first director of the National Forest Service (which he helped to create)–promoted policies to protect land for carefully managed development.

FEDERAL AID TO THE WEST

The Old Guard eagerly supported another important aspect of Roosevelt's natural resource policy: public reclamation and irrigation projects. In 1902, the president backed the National Reclamation Act, better known as the Newlands Act (named for its sponsor, Nevada senator Francis Newlands). The Newlands Act provided federal funds for the construction of dams, reservoirs, and canals in the West–projects that would open new lands for cultivation and (years later) provide cheap electric power.

E. ROOSEVELT AND PRESERVATION

Despite his sympathy with Pinchot's vision of conservation, Roosevelt also shared some of the concerns of the naturalists–those within the conservation movement committed to protecting the natural beauty of the land and the health of its wildlife from human intrusion. Early in his presidency, Roosevelt even spent four days camping in the Sierras with John Muir, the nation's leading preservationist and the founder of the Sierra Club.

Roosevelt added significantly to the still-young National Park System, whose purpose was to protect public land from any exploitation or development. Congress had created the first national park–Yellowstone, in Wyoming, in 1872–and had authorized others in the 1890s: Yosemite and Sequoia in California, and Mount Rainier in Washington State. Roosevelt added land to several existing parks and also created new ones: Crater Lake in Oregon, Mesa Verde in Utah, Platt in Oklahoma, and Wind Cave in South Dakota.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS AND FORESTS

This map illustrates the steady growth throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the systems of national parks and national forests in the United States. Although Theodore Roosevelt is widely and correctly remembered as a great champion of national parks and forests, the greatest expansions of these systems occurred after his presidency. Note, for example, how many new areas were added in the 1920s.

What is the difference between national parks and national forests?

F. THE HETCH HETCHY CONTROVERSY

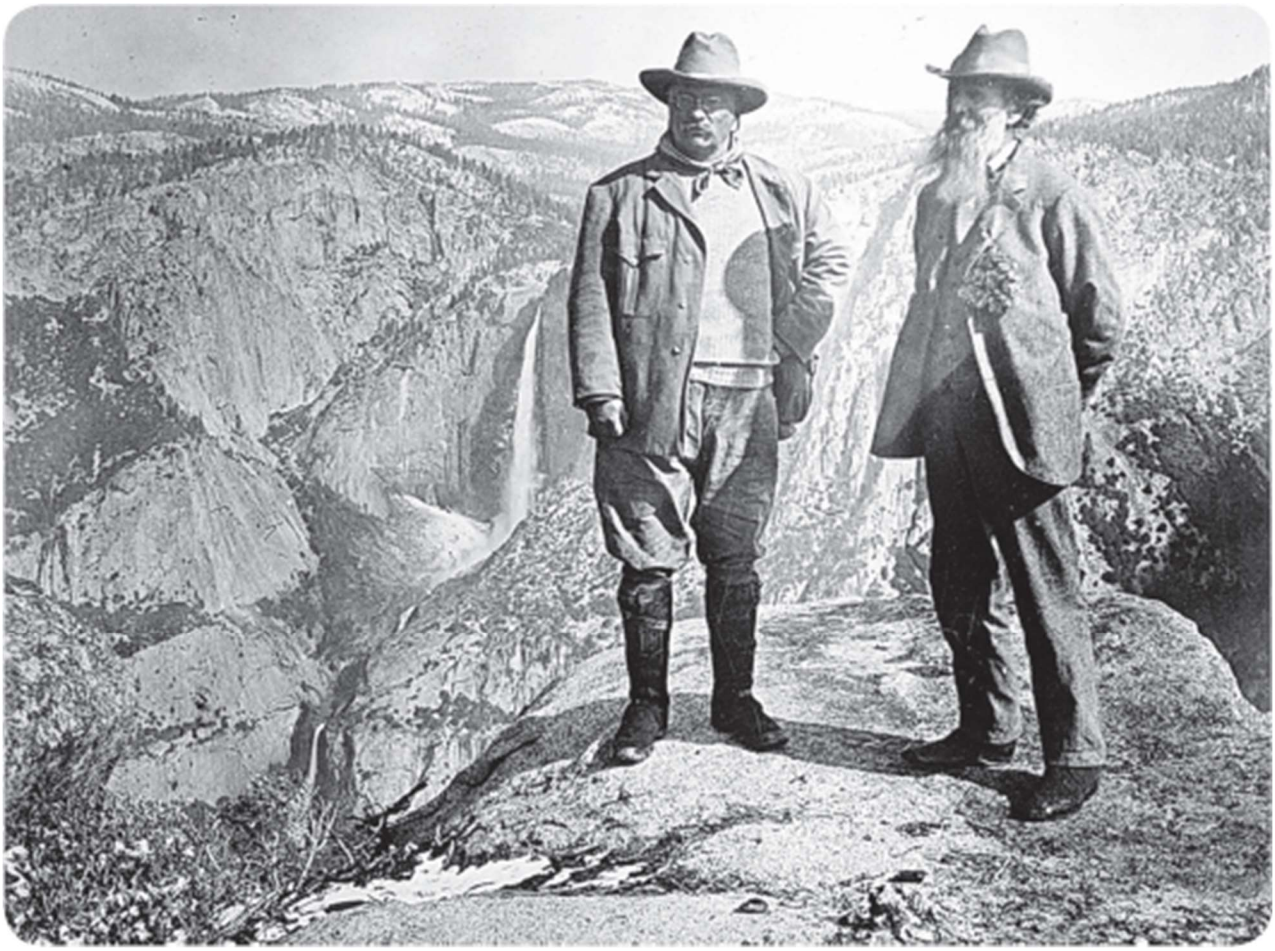
The contending views of the early conservation movement came to a head beginning in 1906 in a sensational controversy over the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. Hetch Hetchy (a name derived from a local Indian term meaning “grassy meadows”) was a spectacular, high-walled valley popular with naturalists. But many residents of San Francisco, worried about finding enough water to serve their growing population, saw Hetch Hetchy as an ideal place for a dam, which would create a large reservoir for the city–a plan that Muir and other naturalists furiously opposed.

In 1906, San Francisco suffered a devastating earthquake and fire. Widespread sympathy for the city strengthened the case for the dam; and Theodore Roosevelt–who had initially expressed some sympathy for Muir's position–turned the decision over to Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot had no interest in Muir's aesthetic and spiritual arguments. He approved construction of the dam.

COMPETING CONSERVATIONIST VISIONS

For over a decade, a battle raged between naturalists and the advocates of the dam, a battle that consumed the energies of John Muir for the rest of his life and that eventually, many people believed, led to his death. “Dam Hetch Hetchy!” Muir once said. “As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man.” To Pinchot, there was no question that the needs of the city were more important than the claims of preservation. Muir helped place a referendum question on the ballot in 1908, certain that the residents of the city would oppose the project “as soon as light is cast upon it.” Instead, San Franciscans approved the dam by a huge margin. Although there were many more delays in succeeding years, construction of the dam finally began after World War I.

This setback for the naturalists was not, however, a total defeat. The fight against Hetch Hetchy helped mobilize a new coalition of people committed to preservation, not “rational use,” of wilderness



ROOSEVELT AND MUIR IN YOSEMITE

John Muir, founder and leader of the Sierra Club, considered Theodore Roosevelt a friend and ally–a relationship cemented by a four-day camping trip the two men took together in Yosemite National Park in 1903. Roosevelt was indeed a friend to the national park and national forest systems and added considerable acreage to both. Among other things, he expanded Yosemite (at Muir's request). But unlike Muir, Roosevelt was also committed to economic development. As a result, he was not always a reliable ally of the most committed preservationists.

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G. THE PANIC OF 1907

Despite the flurry of reforms Roosevelt was able to enact, the government still had relatively little control over the industrial economy. That became clear in 1907, when a serious panic and recession began.

TENNESSEE COAL AND IRON COMPANY

Conservatives blamed Roosevelt's “mad” economic policies for the disaster. And while the president naturally (and correctly) disagreed, he nevertheless acted quickly to reassure business leaders that he would not interfere with their recovery efforts. J. P. Morgan, in a spectacular display of his financial power, helped construct a pool of the assets of several important New York banks to prop up shaky financial institutions. The key to the arrangement, Morgan told the president, was the purchase by U.S. Steel of the shares of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, currently held by a threatened New York bank. He would, he insisted, need assurances that the purchase would not prompt antitrust action. Roosevelt tacitly agreed, and the Morgan plan proceeded. Whether or not as a result, the panic soon subsided.

Roosevelt loved being president. As his years in office produced increasing political successes, as his public popularity continued to rise, more and more observers began to assume that he would run for reelection in 1908, despite the long-standing tradition of presidents serving no more than two terms. But the Panic of 1907, combined with Roosevelt's growing “radicalism” during his second term, so alienated conservatives in his own party that he might have had difficulty winning the Republican nomination. In 1904, moreover, he had made a public promise to step down four years later. And so in 1909, Roosevelt, fifty years old, retired from public life–briefly.

VIII. THE TROUBLED SUCCESSION

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

William Howard Taft, who assumed the presidency in 1909, had been Theodore Roosevelt's most trusted lieutenant and his handpicked successor; progressive reformers believed him to be one of their own. But Taft had also been a restrained and moderate jurist, a man with a punctilious regard for legal process; conservatives expected him to abandon Roosevelt's aggressive use of presidential powers. By seeming acceptable to almost everyone, Taft easily won election to the White House in 1908. He received his party's nomination virtually uncontested. His victory in the general election in November–over William Jennings Bryan, running for the Democrats for the third time–was a foregone conclusion.

Four years later, however, Taft would leave office the most decisively defeated president of the twentieth century, his party deeply divided and the government in the hands of a Democratic administration for the first time in twenty years.

A. TAFT AND THE PROGRESSIVES

PAYNE-ALDRICH TARIFF

Taft's first problem arose in the opening months of the new administration, when he called Congress into special session to lower protective tariff rates, an old progressive demand. But the president made no effort to overcome the opposition of the congressional Old Guard, arguing that to do so would violate the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers. The result was the feeble Payne-Aldrich Tariff, which reduced tariff rates scarcely at all and in some areas raised them. Progressives resented the president's passivity.

Taft may not have been a champion of reform, but neither was he a consistent opponent of change. In 1912, he supported and signed legislation to create a federal Children's Bureau to investigate “all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life.” Julia Lathrop, the first chief of the bureau, was a veteran of Hull House and a close associate of Jane Addams. She helped make the Children's Bureau a force for progressive change not just in federal policy, but also in state and local governments.

But a sensational controversy broke out late in 1909 that helped put an end to Taft's popularity with reformers. Many progressives had been unhappy when Taft replaced Roosevelt's secretary of the interior, James R. Garfield, an aggressive conservationist, with Richard A. Ballinger, a conservative corporate lawyer. Suspicion of Ballinger grew when he attempted to invalidate Roosevelt's removal of nearly 1 million acres of forests and mineral reserves from private development.

BALLINGER-PINCHOT DISPUTE

In the midst of this mounting concern, Louis Glavis, an Interior Department investigator, charged Ballinger with having once connived to turn over valuable public coal lands in Alaska to a private syndicate for personal profit. Glavis took the evidence to Gifford Pinchot, still head of the Forest Service and a critic of Ballinger's policies. Pinchot took the charges to the president. Taft investigated them and decided they were groundless. But Pinchot was not satisfied, particularly after Taft fired Glavis for his part in the episode. He leaked the story to the press and asked Congress to investigate the scandal. The president discharged him for insubordination. The congressional committee appointed to study the controversy, dominated by Old Guard Republicans, exonerated Ballinger. But progressives throughout the country supported Pinchot. The controversy aroused as much public passion as any dispute of its time; and when it was over, Taft had alienated the supporters of Roosevelt completely and, it seemed, irrevocably.

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT
Taft could be a jovial companion in small groups, but his public image was of a dull, stolid man who stood in sharp and unfortunate contrast to his dynamic predecessor, Theodore Roosevelt. Taft also suffered public ridicule for his enormous size. He weighed as much as 350 pounds at times, and wide publicity accompanied his installation of an oversized bathtub in the White House.

B. THE RETURN OF ROOSEVELT

During most of these controversies, Theodore Roosevelt was far away: on a long hunting safari in Africa and an extended tour of Europe. To the American public, however, Roosevelt remained a formidable presence thanks to intensive newspaper coverage of his every move abroad. His return to New York in the spring of 1910 was a major public event. Roosevelt insisted that he had no plans to reenter politics, but within a month he announced that he would embark on a national speaking tour before the end of the summer. Furious with Taft, he was becoming convinced that he alone was capable of reuniting the Republican Party.

"NEW NATIONALISM"

The real signal of Roosevelt's decision to assume leadership of Republican reformers came in a speech he gave on September 1, 1910, in Osawatomie, Kansas. In it he outlined a set of principles, which he labeled the "New Nationalism," that made clear he had moved a considerable way from the cautious conservatism of the first years of his presidency. He argued that social justice was possible only through the vigorous efforts of a strong federal government whose executive acted as the "steward of the public welfare." Those who thought primarily of property rights and personal profit "must now give way to the advocate of human welfare." He supported graduated income and inheritance taxes, workers' compensation for industrial accidents, regulation of the labor of women and children, tariff revision, and firmer regulation of corporations.

ROOSEVELT AT OSAWATOMIE
Roosevelt's famous speech at Osawatomie, Kansas, in 1910 was the most radical of his career and openly marked his break with the Taft administration and the Republican leadership. "The essence of any struggle for liberty," he told his largely conservative audience, "has always been, and must always be to take from some one man or class of men the right to enjoy power, or wealth, or position or immunity, which has not been earned by service to his or their fellows."

C. SPREADING INSURGENCY

The congressional elections of 1910 provided further evidence of how far the progressive revolt had spread. In primary elections, conservative Republicans suffered defeat after defeat while almost all the progressive incumbents were reelected. In the general election, the Democrats, who were now offering progressive candidates of their own, won control of the House of Representatives for the first time in sixteen years and gained strength in the Senate. But Roosevelt still denied any presidential ambitions and claimed that his real purpose was to pressure Taft to return to progressive policies. Two events, however, changed his mind. The first, on October 27, 1911, was the announcement by the administration of a suit against U.S. Steel, which charged, among other things, that the 1907 acquisition of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company had been illegal. Roosevelt had approved that acquisition in the midst of the 1907 panic, and he was enraged by the implication that he had acted improperly.

Roosevelt was still reluctant to become a candidate for president because Senator Robert La Follette, the great Wisconsin progressive, had been working since 1911 to secure the presidential nomination for himself. But La Follette's candidacy stumbled in February 1912 when, exhausted, and distraught over the illness of a daughter, he appeared to suffer a nervous breakdown during a speech in Philadelphia. Roosevelt announced his candidacy on February 22.

D. ROOSEVELT VERSUS TAFT

La Follette retained some diehard support. But for all practical purposes, the campaign for the Republican nomination had now become a battle between Roosevelt and Taft. Roosevelt scored overwhelming victories in all thirteen presidential primaries. Taft, however, remained the choice of most party leaders, who controlled the nominating process.

The battle for the nomination at the Chicago convention revolved around an unusually large number of contested - delegates: 254 in all. Roosevelt needed fewer than half the disputed seats to clinch the nomination. But the Republican National Committee, controlled by the Old Guard, awarded all but 19 of them to Taft. At a rally the night before the convention opened, Roosevelt addressed 5,000 cheering supporters. "We stand at Armageddon," he told the roaring crowd, "and we battle for the Lord." The next day, he led his supporters out of the convention, and out of the party. The convention then quietly nominated Taft on the first ballot.

THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY

Roosevelt summoned his supporters back to Chicago in August for another convention, this one to launch the new Progressive Party and nominate himself as its presidential candidate. Roosevelt approached the battle feeling, as he put it, “fit as a bull moose” (thus giving his new party an enduring nickname).
The “Bull Moose” party was notable for its strong commitment to a wide range of progressive causes that had grown in popularity over the previous two decades. The party advocated additional regulation of industry and trusts, -sweeping reforms of many areas of government, compensation by the government for workers injured on the job, pensions for the elderly and for widows with children, and (alone among the major parties) woman suffrage. The delegates left the party's convention filled with hope and excitement.
Roosevelt himself, however, entered the fall campaign aware that his cause was almost hopeless, partly because many of the insurgents who had supported him during the primaries refused to follow him out of the Republican Party. His pessimism was also a result of the man the Democrats had nominated for president.

IX. WOODROW WILSON AND THE NEW FREEDOM

The 1912 presidential contest was not simply one between conservatives and reformers. It was also one between two brands of progressivism. And it matched the two most important national leaders of the early twentieth century in unequal contest.

A. WOODROW WILSON

Reform sentiment had been gaining strength within the Democratic as well as the Republican Party in the first years of the century. At the 1912 Democratic National Convention in Baltimore in June, Champ Clark, the conservative Speaker of the House, was unable to assemble the two-thirds majority necessary for nomination because of progressive opposition. Finally, on the forty-sixth ballot, Woodrow Wilson, the governor of New Jersey and the only genuinely progressive candidate in the race, emerged as the party's nominee.

WILSON'S “NEW FREEDOM”

Wilson had risen to political prominence by an unusual path. He had been a professor of political science at Princeton until 1902, when he was named president of the university. Elected governor of New Jersey in 1910, he demonstrated a commitment to reform. During his two years in the statehouse, he earned a national reputation for winning passage of progressive legislation. As a presidential candidate in 1912, Wilson presented a progressive program that came to be called the “New Freedom.” Roosevelt's New Nationalism advocated accepting economic concentration and using government to regulate and control it. But Wilson seemed to side with those who (like Louis Brandeis) believed that bigness was both unjust and inefficient, that the proper response to monopoly was not to regulate it but to destroy it.
The 1912 presidential campaign was an anticlimax. William Howard Taft, resigned to defeat, barely campaigned. Roosevelt campaigned energetically (until a gunshot wound from a would-be assassin forced him to the sidelines during the last weeks before the election), but he failed to draw any significant numbers of Democratic progressives away from Wilson. In November, Roosevelt and Taft split the Republican vote; Wilson held on to most Democrats and won. He polled only 42 percent of the vote, compared with 27 percent for Roosevelt, 23 percent for Taft, and 6 percent for the socialist Eugene V. Debs. But in the electoral college, Wilson won 435 of the 531 votes. Roosevelt had carried only six states, Taft two, Debs none.

B. THE SCHOLAR AS PRESIDENT

Wilson was a bold and forceful president. He exerted firm control over his cabinet, and he delegated real authority only to those whose loyalty to him was beyond question. His most powerful adviser, Colonel Edward M. House, was an intelligent and ambitious Texan who held no office and whose only claim to authority was his personal intimacy with the president.

LOWERING THE TARIFF

In legislative matters, Wilson skillfully welded together a coalition that would support his program. Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress made his task easier. Wilson's first triumph as president was the fulfillment of an old Democratic (and progressive) goal: a substantial lowering of the protective tariff. The Underwood-Simmons Tariff provided cuts substantial enough, progressives believed, to introduce real competition into American markets and thus to help break the power of trusts. To make up for the loss of revenue under the new tariff, Congress approved a graduated income tax, which the recently adopted Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution now permitted. This first modern income tax imposed a 1 percent tax on individuals and corporations earning more than $4,000 a year, with rates ranging up to 6 percent on annual incomes over $500,000.

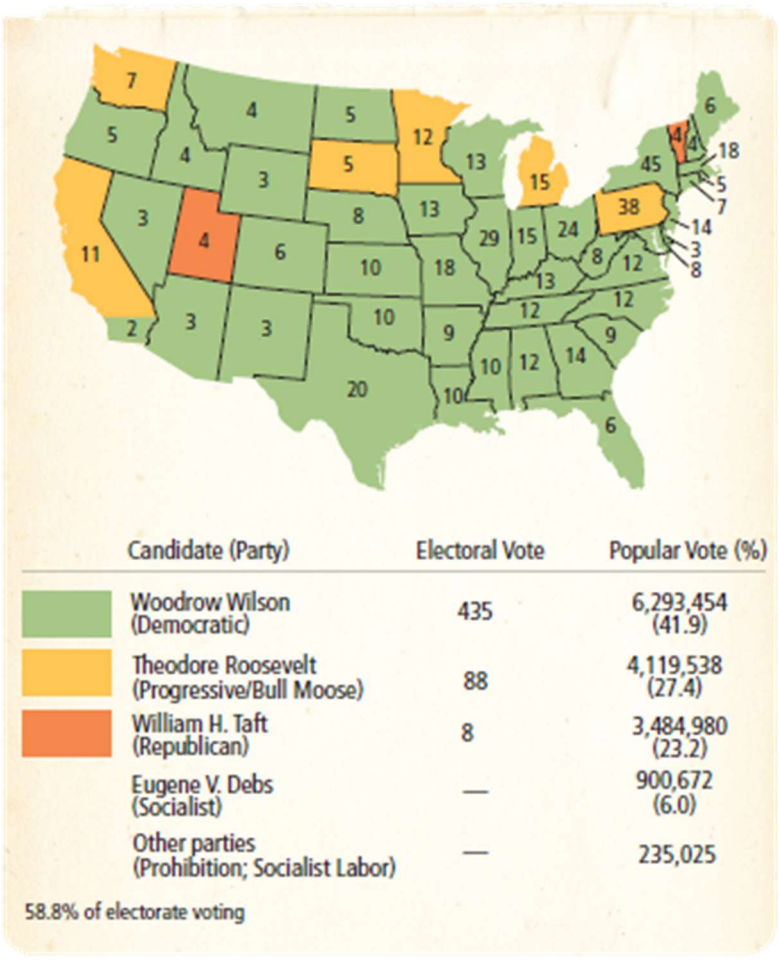
FEDERAL RESERVE ACT

Wilson held Congress in session through the summer to work on a major reform of the American banking system: the Federal Reserve Act, which Congress passed and the president signed on December 23, 1913. It created twelve regional banks, each to be owned and controlled by the individual banks of its district. The regional Federal Reserve banks would hold a certain percentage of the assets of their member banks in reserve; they would use those reserves to support loans to private banks at an interest (or "discount") rate that the Federal Reserve system would set; they would issue a new type of paper currency–Federal Reserve notes–that would become the nation's basic medium of trade and would be backed by the government. Most important, they would be able to shift funds quickly to troubled areas–to meet increased demands for credit or to protect imperiled banks. Supervising and regulating the entire system was a national Federal Reserve Board, whose members were appointed by the president. Nearly half the nation's banking resources were represented in the system within a year, and 80 percent by the late 1920s.

WOODROW WILSON

Woodrow Wilson, the 28th president of the United States, was a Virginian (the first southerner to be elected president since before the Civil War), a professor of political science and later president of Princeton University, governor of New Jersey, and known as a brilliant progressive. His election to the presidency brought the first Democrat to the White House since 1896. (The Library of Congress (3a21763v))

In 1914, turning to the central issue of his 1912 campaign, Wilson proposed two measures to deal with the problem of monopoly. In the process he revealed how his own approach to the issue was beginning to change. There was a proposal to create a federal agency through which the government would help business police itself–a regulatory commission of the type Roosevelt had advocated in 1912. There were also proposals to strengthen the government's ability to break up trusts–a decentralizing approach characteristic of Wilson's 1912 campaign. The two measures took shape as the Federal Trade Commission Act and the Clayton Antitrust Act. The Federal Trade Commission Act created a regulatory agency that would help businesses determine in advance whether their actions would be acceptable to the government. The agency would also have authority to launch prosecutions against "unfair trade practices," and it would have wide power to investigate corporate behavior. Wilson signed the Federal Trade Commission Bill happily. But he seemed to lose interest in the Clayton Antitrust Bill and did little to protect it from conservative assaults, which greatly weakened it. The future, he had apparently decided, lay with government supervision.



Candidate (Party)	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote (%)
Woodrow Wilson (Democratic)	435	6,293,454 (41.9)
Theodore Roosevelt (Progressive/Bull Moose)	88	4,119,538 (27.4)
William H. Taft (Republican)	8	3,484,980 (23.2)
Eugene V. Debs (Socialist)	—	900,672 (6.0)
Other parties (Prohibition; Socialist Labor)	—	235,025

58.8% of electorate voting

ELECTION OF 1912

The election of 1912 was one of the most unusual in American history because of the dramatic schism within the Republican Party. Two Republican presidents–William Howard Taft, the incumbent, and Theodore Roosevelt, his predecessor–ran against each other in 1912, opening the way for a victory by the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson, who won with only about 42 percent of the popular vote. A fourth candidate, the socialist Eugene V. Debs, received a significant 6 percent of the vote.

- ***What events caused the schism between Taft and Roosevelt?***

C. RETREAT AND ADVANCE

By the fall of 1914, Wilson believed that the program of the New Freedom was essentially complete and that agitation for reform would now subside. He refused to support the movement for national woman suffrage. Deferring to southern Democrats, and reflecting his own southern background, he condoned the reimposition of segregation in the agencies of the federal government (in contrast to Roosevelt, who had ordered the elimination of many such barriers). When congressional progressives attempted to enlist his support for new reform legislation, Wilson dismissed their proposals as unconstitutional or unnecessary.

The congressional elections of 1914, however, shattered the president's complacency. Democrats suffered major losses in Congress, and voters who in 1912 had supported the Progressive Party began returning to the Republicans. Wilson would not be able to rely on a divided opposition when he ran for reelection in 1916. By the end of 1915, therefore, Wilson had begun to support a second flurry of reforms. In January 1916, he appointed Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court, making him not only the first Jew but also the most progressive justice to serve there. Later, he supported a measure to make it easier for farmers to receive credit and one creating a system of workers' compensation for federal employees.

CHILD-LABOR LAWS

Wilson was sponsoring measures that expanded the powers of the national government in important ways. In 1916, for example, he supported the Keating-Owen Act, the first federal law regulating child labor. The measure prohibited the shipment of goods produced by underage children across state lines, thus giving an expanded importance to the constitutional clause assigning Congress the task of regulating interstate commerce. The president similarly supported measures that used federal taxing authority as a vehicle for legislating social change. After the Court struck down Keating-Owen, a new law attempted to achieve the same goal by imposing a heavy tax on the products of child labor. (The Court later struck it down too.) And the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 demonstrated another way in which the federal government could influence local behavior; it offered matching federal grants to support agricultural extension education. Over time, these innovative uses of government overcame most of the constitutional objections and became the foundation of a long-term growth in federal power over the economy.

LOOKING BACK

The powerful surge of reform efforts in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth–-reforms intended to help the United States deal with the extraordinary changes and the vexing problem of the modern industrial era–caused many Americans to come to identify themselves as “progressives.” That label meant many different things to many different people, but at its core was a belief that human effort and government action could improve society. The reform crusades gained strength steadily, driven by both men and women, and by people of many races and ethnicities. By the early twentieth century, progressivism had become a powerful, transformative force in American life.

This great surge of reform eventually reached the federal government and national politics, as progressives began to understand the limits of state and local reform. Success, they came to believe, required the engagement of the federal government. Two national leaders–Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson–contributed to a period of national reform that made the government in Washington a great center of power for the first time since the Civil War–a position it has never relinquished. Progressivism did not solve the nation's problems, but it gave movements, organizations, and governments new tools to deal with them.

KEY TERMS/ PEOPLE/ PLACES/ EVENTS

Alice Paul

“Bull Moose” party

Eugenics

Gifford Pinchot

Hetch Hetchy

Hull House

IWW (“Wobblies”)

Jane Addams

Louis Brandeis

Muckrakers

NAACP

New Freedom

New Nationalism

Prohibition

Robert La Follette

Social Gospel

Triangle Shirtwaist Company

fire

W. E. B. Du Bois

RECALL AND REFLECT

1. What “moral” crusades did progressives undertake in their efforts to reform the social order?
2. How did W. E. B. Du Bois's philosophy on race relations differ from that of Booker T. Washington?
3. What were some of the approaches progressives used to challenge the power and influence of capitalist corporate America?
4. What was Theodore Roosevelt's “New Nationalism”?
5. What was Woodrow Wilson's “New Freedom”?

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS