

Chapter 6 Lesson 1

The Roots of Progressivism

Progressivism was an unorganized movement in response to laissez-faire economics and the results of an unregulated market. Progressives had many different ideas about how to best solve the problems of industrialized, urban society. Progressives felt that the market was not capable of addressing the issues of poverty, crime and sanitation.

Who were the Progressives?

- 1) They were generally middle class, urban, educated Americans
- 2) They belonged to both major political parties
- 3) Their leadership was often made up of : journalists, clergy members, educators , politicians and social workers
- 4) Most believed that the government should play a role in fixing the issues
- 5) Most also believed that the government was not capable of fixing the issues
- 6) They often believed strongly in science and technology and thought that science and technology could be used to address the issues

Muckrakers

The first major group to voice progressive ideas was a group of journalists known as muckrakers, because they investigated and exposed corruption and abuses in society.

- 1) Charles Edward Russell: journalist that wrote about horrible work conditions for workers and the terrible ways of the meatpacking industry, also helped to found the NAACP, he became a member of the Socialist party in 1908, he was expelled from the SP in 1917 because of his support for American intervention in WWI
- 2) Ida Tarbell: developed investigative techniques and dug into public records all over the country to expose the actions of John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil.
- 3) Lincoln Steffens: focused on the corruption in government, vote stealing, the power and corruption of political machines, supported the Soviet Union but later soured on the ideas of communism
- 4) Jacob Riis: came to America as a young man from Denmark, he worked a variety of jobs for several years, until he came upon work as a journalist. Used the new technique of flash photography, to photograph the poor and destitute (often immigrants). These photographs were put together with his writings in the book, *How the Other Half Lives*. His writing was later criticized because his views on certain ethnic groups were harsh and unflattering.

Many believed that government could be the right answer to the ills of society but that government was too corrupt and inefficient. One group of progressives wanted to make government more efficient. They believed that ideas of business efficiency (Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*) could be used to reform government. One plan was to eliminate the spoils system in municipal government.

Another suggestion was to divide governments into departments with an expert commissioner to lead each department. Another possibility was a city manager hired by a city council. In both systems experts are hired to run the city instead of hiring friends and supporters (patronage/spoils system).

Democratic reforms:

- 1) Recall: to vote to remove an elected official
- 2) Initiative: allows citizens to write legislation
- 3) Referendum: allows citizens to vote on legislation
- 4) Direct primary: allows citizens to directly choose candidates to run in the general election
- 5) Direct election of Senators: 17th Amendment to allow citizens of the state to directly elect their senators

Women's Suffrage

In the early days of the women's rights movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton urged women to demand the right to vote. But for many years the movement struggled to gain traction. Many women in the movement were also abolitionists and believed that the right to vote should be given to women at the same time as it was given to African American men. They were very disappointed that this did not occur. This event led to the split of the movement into two parts. The National Woman Suffrage Association (led by Stanton and Susan B. Anthony) wanted a constitutional amendment. The second group was the American Woman Suffrage Association (led by Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone). They emphasized getting states to grant women the right to vote first. This split weakened the movement.

In 1890, the two groups merged and became the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Slowly, women began to organize and understand the need for a political voice. The women began to give speeches, boycott and organize marches. Alice Paul, who trained as a suffragette in England, was greatly influenced by Emmaline and Christabel Pankhurst. She participated in a protest in England and was arrested. She went on a hunger strike and was force fed. After this she returned to the US where she founded the National Woman's party and began what was called the Silent Sentinels. This group of women silently protested for the right to vote. The picketers were arrested for obstructing traffic while protesting near the White House. They were arrested and while in jail, Alice Paul was force fed raw eggs. They witnessed and experienced brutal conditions. Others continued the protests and were often attacked by the opposition.

Congress was slowly moving toward the idea of an amendment and in 1918 the House of Representatives passed one. It was defeated in the Senate by two votes. During the next election, the NAWSA worked to defeat two anti-suffrage senators. In the next attempt, the amendment passed. The amendment was ratified in August of 1920.

Reforming Society:

Child Labor Laws: the progressive era saw the rise of laws to protect child laborers. The laws set minimum ages and maximum hours for child workers. States also began to pass compulsory school attendance laws, which required children to attend school.

Safety at the workplace: There was also a movement to bring about better working conditions for adult laborers. There was a push for workers' compensation laws that would pay an injured worker. There were two court cases concerning these issues, *Lochner v. New York* and *Mueller v. Oregon*.

Lochner v. New York: Law limiting the working hours of bakers was overturned as unconstitutional, stating that the state could not intervene between employers and employees and their liberties.

Mueller v. Oregon: a law limiting the hours of female laundresses was not overturned. The Court cited the states concern for the safety of mothers overriding the Fourteenth Amendment and the liberty of the workers and employers.

Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: the fire occurred in 1911 in a factory located on the 8th-10th floors of the Asch Building. There was only one functional elevator, the main stairwell was locked and the fire escapes were very narrow. Many were trapped by the fire and jumped from the top floors. 145 employees died mostly young immigrant women. This tragedy led to new regulations concerning fire and building safety.

Prohibition: Many progressives blamed alcohol consumption for social issues. This led to the temperance movement which advocated elimination or reduction of alcohol use. The major group in this movement was the Women's Christian Temperance Union. They also fought for rights for women. As time progressed, the movement shifted from temperance to prohibition.

Regulation of Big Business: Many progressives believed that big businesses needed regulation. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act was written to help the government break apart large monopolistic businesses. The ICC was also created during this time frame. The role of the ICC was to regulate the railroads.