

Progressive Era Reform



Background

The **Progressive Movement** (1901-1917) was initiated as a response to political and corporate abuses at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Religious groups, members of the press, and radical political groups all cried out for reform, with solutions ranging from subtle reforms of the American capitalist economy, to a call for the creation of a socialist government.

Reforms were initiated by individuals, and at the city, state, and national levels of government. **President Theodore Roosevelt** supported the movement by embracing environmental conservation, forcing arbitration in the Anthracite Coal Strike, and busting monopolies that were harmful to the public.

Social Reformers

A number of social reformers also worked to reform what they viewed as the ills negatively impacting United States society:

Social Reformers	
Jane Addams	Pioneer in the field of social work who founded the settlement house movement through the establishment of Hull House in Chicago, Illinois.
Margaret Sanger	Educated urban poor about the benefits of family planning through birth control. She founded the organization that became Planned Parenthood .
Booker T. Washinton	Former slave who founded the Tuskegee Institute that focused on teaching African-Americans trade skills to earn a living and gain the trust of white society.
W.E.B. DuBois	Founder of the NAACP , and a Harvard-educated professor who focused on the need for a traditional liberal arts education for African-Americans who could then insist upon equal treatment and rights from white society.

Muckrakers

Muckrakers were members of the press that investigated corruption in order to expose problems to the American people. They had a great amount of influence, often resulting in the passage of laws designed to reform the abuse that they reported.

These muckrakers recalled the efforts of early reformers who exposed corruption in print. **Thomas Nast** worked diligently to expose the abuses of the NYC political machine called **Tammany Hall** and its leader **Boss Tweed** through the use of political cartoons. Jacob Riis exposed the plight of the urban poor and substandard housing in his 1890 book *How the Other Half Lives*.

Muckraker	Work	Subject	Results
Thomas Nast	Political Cartoons	Political corruption by NYC's political machine, Tammany Hall, led by Boss Tweed.	Tweed was convicted of embezzlement and died in prison.
Jacob Riis	<i>How the Other Half Lives</i> (1890)	Living conditions of the urban poor; focused on tenements.	NYC passed building codes to promote safety and health.
Ida B. Wells	<i>A Red Record</i> (1895)	Provided statistics on the lynching of African-Americans.	NAACP joined the fight for Federal anti-lynching legislation.
Frank Norris	<i>The Octopus</i> (1901)	This fictional book exposed monopolistic railroad practices in California.	In <i>Northern Securities v. U.S.</i> (1904), the holding company controlling railroads in the Northwest was broken up.
Ida Tarbell	" History of Standard Oil Company " in <i>McClure's Magazine</i> (1904)	Exposed the ruthless tactics of the Standard Oil Company through a series of articles published in <i>McClure's Magazine</i> .	In <i>Standard Oil v. U.S.</i> (1911), the company was declared a monopoly and broken up.
Lincoln Steffans	<i>The Shame of the Cities</i> (1904)	Examined political corruption in cities across the United States.	Cities began to use city commissions and city managers.
Upton Sinclair	<i>The Jungle</i> (1906)	Investigated dangerous working conditions and unsanitary procedures in the meat-packing industry.	In 1906 the Meat Inspection Act and Pure Food and Drug Act were passed.

City Reforms

Progressive reform began at the local or city level because it was easier to implement than at the vast state or national level. Urban corruption from political machines was a major focus, resulting in the reorganization of local government using the commissioner-and city-manager-styles of management.

City Reforms	
City Commissioner Plan	Cities hired experts in different fields to run a single aspect of city government. For example, the sanitation commissioner would be in charge of garbage and sewage removal.
City Manager Plan	A professional city manager is hired to run each department of the city and report directly to the city council.

State Reforms

Reform governors such as **Theodore Roosevelt** of New York, **Robert M. LaFollete** of Wisconsin, and **Woodrow Wilson** of New Jersey, all helped get reforms passed in their respective states. In addition, reforms first proposed by the Populist Party were enacted in order to make state governments more responsive to the needs of the people.

State Reforms	
Secret Ballot	Privacy at the ballot box ensures that citizens can cast votes without party bosses knowing how they voted.
Initiative	Allows voters to petition state legislatures in order to consider a bill desired by citizens.
Referendum	Allows voters to decide if a bill or proposed amendment should be passed.
Recall	Allows voters to petition to have an elected representative removed from office.
Direct Primary	Ensures that voters select candidates to run for office, rather than party bosses.

Federal Reforms

During the Progressive Era, the Federal Government passed an enormous amount of legislation designed to conserve the environment, tighten past economic regulations, preserve the health and safety of American citizens, and generally provide needed capitalist reforms.

Progressive Era Federal Legislation	
Newlands Reclamation Act (1902)	Encouraged conservation by allowing the building of dams and irrigations systems using money from the sale of public lands.
Elkins Act (1903)	Outlawed the use of rebates by railroad officials or shippers.
Pure Food and Drug Act (1906/1911)	Required that companies accurately label the ingredients contained in processed food items.
Meat Inspection Act (1906)	In direct response to Upton Sinclair's <i>The Jungle</i> , this law required that meat processing plants be inspected to ensure the use of good meat and health-minded procedures.
Hepburn Act (1906)	Strengthened the Interstate Commerce Commission, allowing it to set maximum railroad rates.
Federal Reserve Act (1913)	Created 12 district Federal Reserve Banks, each able to issue new currency and loan member banks funds at the prime interest rate, as established by the Federal Reserve Board.
Clayton Antitrust Act (1914)	Strengthened the Sherman Antitrust Act by outlawing the creation of a monopoly through any means, and stated that unions were not subject to antitrust legislation.
Federal Trade Act (1914)	Established the Federal Trade Commission, charged with investigating unfair business practices including monopolistic activity and inaccurate product labeling.

New Amendments

To provide a stable base of income for the Federal Government while providing graduated taxation, the **16th Amendment** was passed. Political machines were weakened by the passage of the **17th Amendment** which allowed state citizens to directly elect representatives to the U.S. Senate, instead of allowing party-controlled state legislatures to do so. In addition, the [Temperance Movement](#) and the [Women's Suffrage Movement](#) finally paid off with the passage of the **17th Amendment** and the **18th Amendment**.

Progressive Era Amendments	
16th (1913)	Granted Congress the power to tax income.
17th (1913)	Provided for the direct election of U.S. Senators.
18th (1919)	Prohibited making, selling, or transporting alcohol.
19th (1920)	Provided women suffrage (voting).

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