

Chapter 28: Progressivism and the Republican Revolt (1901-1912)

Chapter Synopsis

- America's population was about 76,000,000 by 1900
 - 13,000,000 more would immigrate before WWII in 1914
- The early 1900s were full of reform by reform-minded people called "progressives"
 - They tried to create reform to suppress "monopoly, corruption, inefficiency, and social injustice"

Progressive Roots

- Popular reform against social and economic injustice against the poor had happened with the Greenback Labor Party in the 1870s and the Populist Party in the 1890s
 - Reform sentiment was only getting stronger as socioeconomic gap between rich industrialists and poor husbandmen widened
 - The "laissez-faire" economics allowed by the federal government was increasingly becoming the culprit of social injustice and the target for progressives
 - William Jennings Bryan and the Populists saw "bloated trusts" as the problem and the cause of corruption
- The government was too weak to control industry, people felt that it was up to them to start reform movements
 - Several authors, such as Henry Demarest Lloyd, Thorstein Veblen, Jacob A. Riis, and Theodore Roosevelt wrote about the injustices of government in influential novels
- Socialism had some popularity
 - Socialism is the idea that all industrial processes are owned by everyone; similar to communism, except that in communism it is even looser without a central government to orchestrate the distribution of everybody's fair share
 - Some socialists preached the social gospel, which used Christianity to try and initiate reform
- Women were at the forefront of reform, advocating for women's suffrage and better social justice systems

Raking Muck with the Muckrakers

- "Muckrakers," publishers of cheap magazines targeting social injustices, were becoming more popular
 - Included magazines *McClure's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Collier's*, and *Everybody's*
 - There was fierce competition between them, and circulation of them boomed, reaching a very large American audience
 - They criticized "the beef trust, the 'money trust,' the railroad barons, and the corrupt amassing of American fortunes," as well as tariff lobbies and other injustices
 - They also criticized the "vendors of potent patent medicines"
 - Some major articles included

- “The Shame of the Cities,” by Lincoln Steffens of *McClure’s* about “corrupt alliance between big business and municipal government”
- Ida M. Tarbell of *McClure’s* about a report of the corruption at Standard Oil
- “Frenzied Finance” by Thomas W. Lawson about corrupt stock trading
- “The Treason of the Senate” by David G. Phillips of *Cosmopolitan* about how most senators were loyal to trusts and not to the people’s interests

American and National Identity: The use of the press to express the people’s complaints about society are a reference to the fundamental American right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Therefore, as America became more educated and books and periodicals became more commonplace and influential, an increasingly derisive view of American history in the writing of many authors was a powerful source of motivation for progressivism. These “muckrakers,” writing articles and books such as “The Shame of the Cities,” “Frenzied Finance,” and “The Treason of the Senate,” examined the social and economic injustices of the large trusts and the federal government. The sense of responsibility for the authors to expose these fundamental flaws in our society show the innate responsibility the people feel to participate in government, another necessary pillar of democracy. Thus, with the active criticism of society through writing, the U.S. is shown to be an especially healthy democracy that doesn’t suppress the freedom of speech and one that is dynamic and listens to efforts by the people, such as these reform movements.

Political Progressivism

- The group of progressive reformers was very diverse
 - It included militarists like President Theodore Roosevelt
 - It included pacifists like Jane Addams
 - It included people from both political parties and at different official positions
- The progressives had unifying themes of “achieving two chief goals: to use the state to curb monopoly power and to improve the common person’s conditions of life and labor”
 - They wanted to take power back from interests groups to the people again
 - They advocated for direct primary elections (rather than through indirect legislation)
 - They favored the idea of initiative that people could propose laws by themselves (not requiring Congressmen to begin the process of lawmaking)
 - They wanted the idea of a referendum, which would allow some laws to be decided finally by a vote by the people
 - They liked the idea of the recall of “faithless elected officials, particularly those who had been bribed by bosses or lobbyists”
 - They tried to root out graft, or corrupt politics usually dictated by bribery
 - One policy they supported for this was the Australian ballot, in which people’s votes were secret so that people did not have to vote towards the direction of their bribe
 - They wanted the direct election of senators (as opposed to indirect election by state legislature which was the case back then)
 - The senators were often very rich and people worried that they were corrupt and not well-chosen

- This was approved with the 17th Constitutional Amendment, which allowed direct election of senators
- They often supported women's suffrage
 - They believed that women, often at the forefront of reform, would vote towards reformist policies
 - Women were especially against alcohol and saloons, another major problem that the progressives were willing to reform

Progressivism in the Cities and States

- Progressives had many reform movements in the cities
 - They created “expert-staffed commissions” as the head of urban affairs
 - This distanced politics from urban rule, which limited the corruption of political machine bosses and instead put power in the hands of qualified experts
 - They also “attacked ‘slumlords,’ juvenile delinquency, and wide-open prostitution” in red-light districts
 - They improved living conditions with better sanitation, electrical power, and transportation
- Wisconsin had a very strong urban reform movement
 - The governor Robert M. La Follette had to battle trusts’ interest groups to get into the governor position
 - He took a lot of control away from corrupt corporations and returned it to the people and improved public regulation of facilities

Progressive Women

- Women's progressive reform was based in the settlement house movement started by Jane Addams with the Hull House
 - Women could not vote nor hold public office at the time
 - The settlement homes “exposed middle-class women to the problems plaguing America's cities, including poverty, political corruption, and intolerable working and living conditions” — women were more conscious of society's problems and therefore more willing to help with the progressive movement
 - Settlement homes also prepared women with skills to fight social injustice, such as “literary clubs” in which women improved their literary skills (which could be used to satirically expose the problems of society or call for reform)
 - Women believed that the settlement houses were an extension of the women's “sphere of influence” in the home — felt totally justified in helping out with the reform movement
 - Went further to dominate reform in more “maternal issues,” especially those involving child labor (e.g., children in dangerous coal mines) and sanitation in homes (e.g., tuberculosis in tenements)
 - Women helped create reformist and regulationist organizations such as the National Consumers League, the Women's Trade Union League, the Children's Bureau, and the Women's Bureau

- The latter two in the Department of Labor in the Executive Branch, gave women and children laborers a stronger say in government
- Women were especially focused on the theme of reforming factory conditions to be more safe
 - Factories were often unsafe and unsanitary
 - In the Triangle Shirtwaist Company there was a fire (1911) that killed many people because of poor adherence to fire safety codes
 - This led to a strong backlash from women reformists, which passed stronger factory regulations and even insurance for industrial workers
 - Thirty states had followed NY's lead by 1917 with similar laws
 - Factory inspectors were being hired by the states to check for new regulations
 - Supreme Court case Muller v. Oregon (1908) allowed special, more protective labor laws to be given to women because of their bodies that were more prone to deterioration in the tough factory environment
 - Supreme Court case Lochner v. New York (1905) went against a law trying to establish a ten-hour work day for bakers (went against the reformist movement)
 - This was counteracted later in 1917 when the Supreme Court supported a ten-hour work day for factory workers
- Women were very strongly against saloons (alcohol-selling shops)
 - Alcohol was connected with prostitution, which was also strongly detested by reformists
 - Women created the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) that went against the sale of alcoholic drinks
 - Allied themselves with the well-financed Anti-Saloon League
 - The 18th Constitutional Amendment (1919) banned alcoholic drinks in the U.S.
 - However, this only lasted temporarily

Culture and Society: The reform movements were so varied at the time period and showed how far progressivism spread—through every aspect in one's life. Not only did progressivism attempt to curb the monopolies of big business, but it also tried to improve the worker's standard of living, and it helped families by protecting children against child labor and tenements against disease from overcrowding, and it supported the women's suffrage movement that had been smoldering since before the Civil War, and it supported the temperance movement that had also been around for several decades. As a result, many influential organizations were created that had and still have a major role in society; the WCTU, for example, played a large role in the anti-alcohol movement that later spawned the 18th amendment banning alcoholic drinks, and it was the largest organization of women, an organization that persists up to today. Such a wide range of reform movements shows that it was not just a sporadic trend caused by the epochal issues of the early 1900s; rather, it was a systematic wave of progressivism that swept the nation and powered so many reform units simultaneously and with so much interest.

TR's Square Deal for Labor

- Roosevelt supported the progressive movement, believe that the public interest was being topped by company's influences
 - He created the Square Deal that advocated for the 3 C's: "control of the corporations, consumer protection, and conservation of natural resources"
 - First use of the Square Deal involved a coal miner strike in PA in 1902
 - 140,000 workers called for shorter working hours and an increase in wages, eventually led to a shortage of coal
 - When the situation began to get serious, Roosevelt called in leaders of the coal company and representatives coal strikers; felt that the former was in the wrong and enforced the Square deal by threatening to militarily control the mines if a compromise with the workers was not reached
 - This eventually ended with the (slightly reduced) demands of the coal miners and a decreased control over the factory workers by the company
 - Roosevelt created the Department of Commerce (1903) to help regulate trade and more intensely investigate the affairs of business to prevent corruption

TR Corrals the Corporations

- Theodore Roosevelt increased restrictions on trusts
 - The Elkins Act (1903) restricted the railroad companies
 - It cracked down on rebates with heavy fines, which helped the railroad companies unfairly
 - The Hepburn Act (1906) limited free passes and bribery, and it expanded the power of the ICC
 - The ICC had a larger range of relevant industries (e.g., now "express companies, sleeping-car companies, and pipelines" as well)
 - The ICC had power to "nullify existing rates and stipulate maximum rates"
- Roosevelt believed in the distinction between "good trusts" and "bad trusts"
 - Good trusts worked towards the public interest
 - Bad trusts worked to gain power and money without considering the public interest
 - Roosevelt began to "bust" bad trusts
 - The Northern Securities Company, part of J. P. Morgan's financial empire, was trying to monopolize the railroads; it was dissolved by Roosevelt in 1904
 - Roosevelt sued 40 trusts, earning his title as a "trust buster"
 - However, he was still controlled in his efforts, knowing that ending these trusts also meant ending very successful businesses that helped the American economy overall; he did it only to protect the interests of the people and not excessively

Caring for the Consumer

- There was a movement towards better food inspection acts as part of the progressive movement

- This was fueled by the gruesome (and true) reports of food-making conditions at factories
- This caused Congress to pass the Meat Inspection Act (1906) increasing federal regulations on prepared meat, as well as the Food and Drug Act (1906) to prevent mislabeling of foods

Politics and Power: While early progressivism had thought that the federal government was too unwieldy to initiate reform radical enough to satisfy the working people that asked for reform and that reform needs therefore to stem from nonpolitical efforts alone, Theodore Roosevelt with his “Square Deal” policy that the national government indeed should have the power to control American life, politically, and economically. By strengthening the ICC and passing laws such as the Elkins act and Hepburn act that strengthened government control and regulations over trusts, as well as with “trust-busting,” Roosevelt shows that the American government is not only strong in terms of foreign affairs and military (as it had shown recently under Roosevelt and McKinley with the Spanish-American war and the dealing with its colonies), but it also set the precedent of the national government to thoroughly intervene with economics. This was thus the end of the laissez-faire capitalism that allowed the oppressive trusts to form, and therefore political power was more merged with big business as a result of Roosevelt’s efforts.

Earth Control

- Most people didn’t care about the environment so much before Roosevelt
 - People colonizing the West destroyed the land with overfarming and logging
 - Roosevelt loved the outdoors and the wild, very much a conservationist
 - Roosevelt’s most lasting legacy was his conservation efforts
- A preliminary land protection act was the Desert Land Act (1877)
 - This sold land cheap to farmers as long as they irrigated it within three years
- The Forest reserve Act (1891) allowed the government to set aside land for national parks and other reserves
 - 46 million acres of land were protected under this act originally
 - Roosevelt set aside another 125 million acres of reserves, as well as some coal deposits and water resources
- The Newlands Act (1902) allowed the government to collect money from the sale of land in the West to fund irrigation systems
 - This caused many dams to be built to redirect water into irrigation systems
- The Hetch Hetchy Valley had a dam built to create a water supply for San Francisco
 - Some people disagreed with this because they thought nature should stay totally untouched
 - Some people, like Roosevelt, agreed with this because although it didn’t totally preserve nature, it still conserved it *and* used it for the common good
 - This was a “multiple-use resource management” system that occurred under Roosevelt’s presidency
- Large lumber businesses and farmers learned how to work even with these conservationist policies; small, individual farmers and loggers could not compete, however

Geography and the Environment: Because land serves as an essential role in America's growth and has a large reason in America's overall economic and social structure, and also because Roosevelt was an conservationist, there was much change in terms of land reform in the U.S. during Roosevelt's presidency. Such land reform helped fix the arid land problems worsened by rapid farming of already-arid land with the Homestead Act (with the Desert Land Act), as well as collecting funds to do so (with the Newlands Act). These early conservationist policies also created the grounds for conservation efforts today, with the Hetch Hetchy Valley dispute serving as a precedent-setting case that showed the government's favoring of conserving land to a rational degree, while its opponents wanted total conservation of the land. But not only did preserving the land and the resources of America have practical benefits towards maintaining the natural sanctity and environmental healthy of America, it also had roots in the most basic, Jeffersonian view of America as an agrarian nation born out of hard labor in the agricultural industry. In other words, protecting the highly-valuable land also protects the heritage of American history.

The "Roosevelt Panic" of 1907

- Roosevelt was elected president in 1904
- There was a brief financial panic in the stock market in 1907 — the Panic of 1907, or the "Roosevelt Panic"
 - Many people blamed Roosevelt
 - Roosevelt in turn blamed trusts for purposely doing it to malign the government
 - This led to monetary reform
 - This created a more "elastic medium of exchange" when banks ran out of their reserves through the Aldrich-Vreeland Act (1908) that allowed banks to print emergency currency.
 - These monetary reforms allowed the Federal Reserve Act (1913) to happen a few years later

The Rough Rider Thunders Out

- The Republicans nominated William Howard Taft as presidential nominee for election of 1908
- The Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan as presidential nominee (again)
- Taft won the election of 1908 to become the president
 - People wanted him to continue Roosevelt's popular policies
 - The Socialist Party (under Eugene Debs of the Pullman strike) also got 420,000 votes, which made it somewhat significant
- Theodore Roosevelt was very popular during his presidency because of his youthfulness and rationality
 - He was rational and did not totally go against trusts; he only went against them when it was necessary to do so and would benefit the economy and quiet the masses of laborers
 - He was full of energy and embodied the popular western cowboy spirit
 - Roosevelt also increased the power of the presidency with the big stick policy and with his dominance of domestic affairs

- Roosevelt was also a major proponent of reform movements (i.e., with his Square Deal), which would be the focus of many later presidents

Taft: A Round Peg in a Square Hole

- Taft was somewhat chubby but likeable and popular
 - He was also well-educated (graduated second from Yale) and experienced (was a lawyer and judge)
 - He had served under Roosevelt, both in the U.S. and in the Philippines
- Taft had many comebacks that didn't allow him to continue Roosevelt's policies in full
 - He wasn't as enthusiastic and zealous as Roosevelt, which was a trait that allowed for Roosevelt's outgoing-ness and use of crushing power
 - He was more pacifistic and status-quo than Roosevelt, who was militaristic and radical

American and National Identity: The peaceful transition of presidencies from Roosevelt to Taft showed multiple aspects of truly American identity. First of all, it shows the ability of the Americans to peacefully pass power down from one leader to another, as had been the case for almost all of the presidents. Here, however, was a very uneventful transition that did not involve major opposition from the opposite party (Bryan and the Democrats were not too popular), and Taft wanted to uphold the previous policies of Roosevelt. This was similar to the peaceful transitions between Washington and John Adams, or Jefferson and Madison, or Kennedy and Johnson (in the future); these peaceful duet-presidencies showed the power a democracy ruled by an popular interest with a healthy party system with strong parties (hence two presidencies in a row with similar policies) yet still fierce inter-party campaigning..

The Dollar Goes Abroad as a Diplomat

- Taft decided to use foreign investment as a method to strengthen foreign relations and increase American involvement and importance in the world; this was called "dollar diplomacy"
 - The main focus was in Manchuria (China), where Japan and Russia had bought up most of the railroads and threatened to monopolize China
 - This would then close the "Open Door" policy of China, which the U.S. did not want; Taft and Secretary of State Philander C. Knox proposed to buy up all of the railroads in Manchuria as a result but were laughed at
 - Another major focus was Latin America, which was full of revolution
 - Taft didn't want European nations to intervene because of the Monroe Doctrine, nor did he want their money to invest in the Latin American countries and thereby control them
 - Some of this led to hatred, such as when the U.S. marines occupied and supervised Nicaragua for 13 years
 - Taft urged investments in revolutionary Latin American countries to aid them in their struggles and investments in anything related to the security of the Panama Canal in order to keep it under America's grip

America in the World: While the age of rampant expansion and the fervor to protect the Americas and the Panama Canal from European intervention and to protect America's markets in East Asia were already past during McKinley's and Roosevelt's presidencies, Taft sought to still keep America's presence strong

in the world. While his method did not involve a militaristic regime, he emphasized American soft power through investments and stronger foreign relations. Besides the two major world wars that would follow in the few decades after that, this showed an increase in America's economic foreign policy as well as its militaristic one that had been so emphasized during Roosevelt's patriotic campaigns in the world during his presidency. After an era in which America had already proven its military prowess by winning essentially every international conflict it has become involved in, this economic involvement showed to the world America's economic superiority and trading potential as well, which elevated America's status in the world even further.

Taft the Trustbuster

- Taft sued 90 trusts in one term, while Roosevelt only sued 44 trusts in two terms
- In 1911, the Standard Oil Company was dissolved for violating the Sherman Anti-Trust Act
- Also in 1911, Taft dissolved the U.S. Steel Corporation
 - This angered Roosevelt because Roosevelt had personally been associated with a member of the U.S. Steel Corporation

Culture and Society: By this time, the third term of trust-busting so far, it had become nearly a normal task. Society did not really question the fact that Taft had noticed 90 monopolistic trusts. In fact, this shared the cultural view that trusts were all evil and monopolistic in general. Such a heavy-handed policy might have created a dent in the economy by preventing highly competitive and successful companies from operating, but it also increased wages and decreased the monopolies, which was what the laborers had been asking for all along. Therefore, by the cultural norms of that time period, this government policy of trust-busting was only a logical next step to the strikes, and this method used the power of law and thus was more effective than striking.

Taft Splits the Republican Party

- There were two main sections of the Republican party
 - One faction was more radical, the one that Roosevelt belonged to; they wanted a lower tariff (to more strongly discourage trusts) and more reform
 - The other was more conservative and was the section that Taft favored more of
- Taft signed the Payne-Aldrich Bill (1909) that increased the number of items that the tariff was on (therefore essentially increasing the tariff and strengthening trusts)
 - This enraged the radical Republicans
- Taft criticized Roosevelt-supporter and chief of the Agriculture Department's Division of Forestry, Gifford Pinchot, and supported the position of Richard Ballinger — this was the Ballinger-Pinchot quarrel
 - Roosevelt supporters cried out against Taft for this; this essentially split the Republican party
- Roosevelt was so against Taft's policies that he even orated a speech urging the federal government (i.e., Taft) to remember the social and economic injustices of large corporations and more strongly act against them, to support a more radical side of Republicanism
 - He deemed this strengthening of philosophy "New Nationalism"

- The weakening of the Republican Party caused it to lose a lot of votes in Congress in 1910 to barely hold a majority

The Taft-Roosevelt Rupture

- The National Progressive Republican League (1911) was formed as the radical branch of the Republican party
 - It chose Senator La Follette of Wisconsin as its leader, and then Roosevelt once he considered himself fit for re-election after Taft's unfavorable term
- At the Republican convention in 1912, the delegates chose Taft as the presidential candidate
 - Roosevelt was bitter and still wanted to run for a third term against Taft

The "Bull Moose" Campaign of 1912

- The Democrats were glad that the Republicans had split
 - They knew that if they chose a strong leader they would probably have a strong chance at the presidency
 - Woodrow Wilson, an academic and a progressive in education, was their presidential candidate—he based his campaign on a "New Freedom" ideal
 - The Democrats supported women's suffrage
 - The Democrats supported small government and personal entrepreneurs
- Roosevelt created his own New Nationalism third-party party
 - Its symbol was a bull moose
 - He wanted to consolidate trusts and labor unions, as well as stronger regulation by the central government
- Both presidents supported an active government role in an age of progressivism
- Woodrow Wilson won the presidential election
 - Roosevelt finished third, Taft fourth, and the Socialists (Debs) last with 900,000 votes

Politics and Power: The split of the Republican Party into a more radical and conservative faction, as well as the ensuing presidential election, proved to be a mess of a power play. Taft was not careful to respect the popular "my opinions" of Roosevelt as his party and the people wanted; instead he led a moderate in-between Roosevelt and a less progressive president and he had weakened the popularity of Rooseveltian reform. Next, the decision to shoulder rising progressive member Senator La Follette for popular leader Theodore Roosevelt, and to shed unpopular leader Bryan for a new and progressive leader, Woodrow Wilson, were both political plays designed to increase the parties' popularities by aligning with what the people want. The tactic of the Democrats eventually prevailed, putting Democrat Woodrow Wilson into the presidency. Therefore, the presidential election of 1912 was about the political competition between a weakened Republican party and a strengthening Democratic party, leading (unsurprisingly) to a Democrat victory. Also unique to this election were strengths of third-party candidates: Roosevelt's "Bull Moose" campaign won second in the presidential election, and the Socialists polled 900,000 votes. This shows the political diversity of opinion that the Americans had during this time period, simply not being married to a specific political view.