

A.P. U.S. HISTORY NOTES

Chapter 32: “Wilsonian Progressivism at Home and Abroad”

~ 1912 – 1916 ~

- I. The Emergence of Dr. Thomas Woodrow Wilson
 1. With the Republican Party split wide open, the Democrats sensed that they could win the presidency for the first time in 16 years.
 - i. One possible candidate was Dr. **Woodrow Wilson**, a once-mild conservative but now militant progressive who had been the president of **Princeton University**, governor of New Jersey (where he didn't permit himself to be controlled by the bosses, and had attacked trusts and passed liberal measures.
 - ii. In 1912, in Baltimore, the Democrats nominated Wilson on the 46th ballot after **William Jennings Bryan** swung his support over to Wilson's side.
 - a. The Democratic ticket would run under a platform called “**New Freedom**,” which would include many progressive reforms.
- II. The “Bull Moose” Campaign of 1912
 1. At the Progressive convention, **Jane Addams** put **Theodore Roosevelt**'s name on the nomination, and as TR spoke, he ignited an almost-religious spirit in the crowd.
 - i. TR got the Progressive nomination, and entering the campaign, TR said that he felt “as strong as a bull moose,” making that animal the unofficial Progressive symbol.
 2. Republican **William Taft** and TR tore into each other, as the former friends now ripped every aspect of each other's platforms and personalities.
 3. Meanwhile, TR's **New Nationalism** and Wilson's New Freedom became the key issues.
 - i. Roosevelt's New Nationalism was inspired by **Herbert Croly**'s *The Promise of American Life* (1910), and it stated that the government should control the bad trusts, leaving the good trusts alone and free to operate.
 - a. TR also campaigned for woman suffrage and a broad program of social welfare, such as minimum-wage laws and “socialistic” social insurance.
 - ii. Wilson's New Freedom favored small enterprise, desired to break up all trusts—not just the bad ones—and basically shunned social-welfare proposals.
 4. The campaign was stopped when Roosevelt was shot in the chest in Milwaukee, but he delivered his speech anyway, was rushed to the hospital, and recovered in two weeks.
- III. Woodrow Wilson: Minority President
 1. Woodrow Wilson easily won with 435 Electoral votes, while TR had 88 and Taft only had 8, but the Democrat did not receive the majority of the popular vote (only 41%)!
 2. Socialist **Eugene V. Debs** racked up over 900,000 popular votes, while the combined popular totals of TR and Taft exceeded Wilson!!!
 - i. Had the Republican Party not been split in 1910, it still could have won!
 3. William Taft would later become the only U.S. president to be appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as well, when he did so in 1921.
- IV. Wilson: The Idealist in Politics
 1. Woodrow Wilson was a sympathizer with the South, a fine orator, a sincere and morally appealing politician, and a very intelligent man.

- i. He was also cold, personality-wise, austere, intolerant of stupidity, and very idealistic.
 - 2. When convinced he was right, Wilson would break before he would bend, unlike TR.
- V. Wilson Tackles the Tariff
 - 1. Wilson stepped into the presidency already knowing that he was going to tackle the “triple wall of privilege”: the tariff, the banks, and the trusts.
 - 2. To tackle the tariff, Wilson successfully helped in the passing of the **Underwood Tariff** of 1913, which substantially reduced import fees and enacted a graduated income tax (under the approval of the recent **16th Amendment**).
- VI. Wilson Battles the Bankers
 - 1. The nation’s financial structure, as created under the Civil War **National Banking Act** had proven to be glaringly ineffective, as shown by the **Panic of 1907**, so Wilson had Congress authorize an investigation to fix this.
 - i. The investigation, headed by Senator **Aldrich**, in effect recommended a third **Bank of the United States**.
 - ii. Democrats heeded the findings of a House committee chaired by Congressman **Arsene Pujo**, which traced the tentacles of the “money monster” into the hidden vaults of American banking and business.
 - iii. **Louis D Brandeis’s** *Other People’s Money and How the Banker’s Use It* (1914) furthermore showed the problems of American finances at the time.
 - 2. In June 1913, Woodrow Wilson appeared before a special joint session of Congress and pleaded for a sweeping reform of the banking system.
 - i. The result was the epochal 1913 **Federal Reserve Act**, which created the new **Federal Reserve Board**, which oversaw a nationwide system of twelve regional reserve districts, each with its own central bank, and had the power to issue paper money (“Federal Reserve Notes”).
- VII. The President Tames the Trusts
 - 1. In 1914, Congress passed the **Federal Trade Commission Act**, which empowered a presidentially appointed position to investigate the activities of trusts and stop unfair trade practices such as unlawful competition, false advertising, mislabeling, adulteration, & bribery.
 - 2. The 1914 **Clayton Anti-Trust Act** lengthened the **Sherman Anti-Trust Act’s** list of practices that were objectionable, exempted labor unions from being called trusts (as they had been called by the Supreme Court under the Sherman Act), and legalized strikes and peaceful picketing by labor union members.
- VIII. Wilsonian Progressivism at High Tide
 - 1. After tackling the triple wall of privilege and leading progressive victory after victory, Wilson proceeded with further reforms, such as the **Federal Farm Loan Act** of 1916, which made credit available to farmers at low rates of interest, and the **Warehouse Act** of 1916, which permitted loans on the security of staple crops—both Populist ideas.
 - 2. The **La Follette Seamen’s Act** of 1915 required good treatment of America’s sailors, but it sent merchant freight rates soaring as a result of the cost of maintain sailor health.
 - 3. The **Workingmen’s Compensation Act** of 1916 granted assistance of federal civil-service employees during periods of instability but was invalidated by the Supreme Court.
 - 4. The 1916 **Adamson Act** established an eight-hour workday with overtime pay.
 - 5. Wilson even nominated Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court—making him the first Jew ever in that position—but stopped short of helping out Blacks in their civil rights fight.

6. Wilson appeased the business by appointing a few conservatives to the Federal Reserve Board and the Federal Trade Commission, but he used most of his energies for progressive support.
- IX. New Directions in Foreign Policy
1. Wilson, unlike his two previous predecessors, didn't pursue an aggressive foreign policy, as he stopped "**dollar diplomacy**," persuaded Congress to repeal the **Panama Canal Tolls Act** of 1912 (which let American shippers not pay tolls for using the canal), and even led to American bankers' pulling out of a six-nation, Taft-engineered loan to China.
 2. Wilson signed the **Jones Act** in 1916, which granted full territorial status to the Philippines and promised independence as soon as a stable government could be established.
 - i. The Filipinos finally got their independence on July 4, 1946.
 3. When California banned Japanese ownership of land, Wilson sent Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan to plead with legislators, and tensions cooled.
 4. When disorder broke out in **Haiti** in 1915, Wilson sent American marines, and in 1916, he sent marines to quell violence in the **Dominican Republic**.
 5. In 1917, Wilson bought the **Virgin Islands** from Denmark.
- X. Moralistic Diplomacy in Mexico
1. Mexico had been exploited for decades by U.S. investors in oil, railroads, and mines, but the Mexican people were tremendously poor, and in 1913, they revolted, installed full-blooded Indian General **Victoriano Huerta** to the presidency.
 - i. This led to a massive immigration of Mexicans to America, mostly to the Southwest.
 2. The rebels were very violent and threatened Americans living in Mexico, but Woodrow Wilson would not intervene to protect American lives.
 - i. Neither would he recognize Huerta's regime, even though other countries did.
 - ii. On the other hand, he let American munitions flow to Huerta's rivals, **Venustiano Carranza** and **Francisco ("Pancho") Villa**.
 3. After a small party of American sailors were arrested in **Tampico**, Mexico, in 1914, Wilson threatened to use force, and even ordered the navy to take over **Vera Cruz**, drawing protest from Huerta and Carranza.
 - i. Finally, the ABC powers—Argentina, Brazil, and Chile—mediated the situation, and Huerta fell from power and was succeeded by Carranza, who resented Wilson's acts.
 4. Meanwhile, "Pancho" Villa, combination bandit/freedom fighter, murdered 16 Americans in January 1916 in Mexico and then killed 19 more a month later in New Mexico.
 - i. Wilson sent General **John J. Pershing** to capture Villa, and he penetrated deep into Mexico, clashed with Carranza's and Villa's different forces, but didn't take Villa.
- XI. Thunder Across the Sea
1. In 1914, a Serbian patriot killed the Austria-Hungarian heir to the throne, and Austria declared war on Serbia, which was supported by Russia, who declared war on Austria-Hungary and Germany, which declared war on Russia and France, then invaded neutral Belgium, and pulled Britain into the war igniting **World War I**.
 2. Americans were thankful that the Atlantic Ocean separated the warring Europeans from America, and that the U.S. didn't have to go into war...at least not yet...
- XII. A Precarious Neutrality
1. Wilson, whose wife had recently died, issued a neutrality proclamation and was promptly wooed by both the Allies and the German-Austrian-Hungarian powers.

2. The Germans and Austro-Hungarians counted on their relatives in America for support, but the U.S. was mostly anti-German from the outset, as **Kaiser Wilhelm II** made for a perfect autocrat to hate.
3. German and Austro-Hungarian agents in America further tarnished the Central Powers' image when they resorted to violence in American factories and ports, and when one such agent left his briefcase in a New York elevator, its contents were found to contain plans for sabotage.

XIII. America Earns Blood Money

1. Just as WWI began, America was in a business recession, but the war, along with American trade (fiercely protested by the Central Powers that were technically free to trade with the U.S. but were prohibited from doing so by the British navy which controlled the sea lanes) with the Allies and Wall Street financing of the war by **J.P. Morgan** et al, pulled the U.S. out of it.
2. So, Germany announced submarine warfare around the British Isles, warning the U.S. that it would not try to attack neutral ships but that mistakes would probably occur.
 - i. Wilson thus warned that Germany would be held to "strict accountability" for any attacks on American ships.
 - ii. German subs, or **U-boats**, sank many ships, including the *Lusitania*, a British passenger liner that was carrying arms and munitions as well.
 - a. The attack killed 1198 lives, including 128 Americans.
 - b. The Germans had issued fliers warning Americans of the ship's possible torpedoing by German subs before its voyage.
3. America clamored for war in punishment for the outrage, but Wilson kept the U.S. out of it by use of a series of strong notes to the German warlords.
 - i. Even this was too much for Bryan, who resigned rather than go to war.
 - ii. After the German sank the *Arabic* in August 1915, killing two Americans and numerous other passengers, Germany finally agreed not to sink unarmed ships *without warning*.
4. After Germany seemed to break that pledge by sinking the *Sussex*, it issued the **Sussex pledge**, which agreed not to sink passenger ships or merchant vessels without warning, so long as the U.S. could get the British to stop their blockade.
 - i. Wilson couldn't do this, so his victory was a precarious one.

XIV. Wilson Wins Reelection in 1916

1. In 1916, Republicans chose **Charles Evans Hughes**, who made different pledges and said different things depending on where he was, leading to his being nicknamed "Charles Evasive Hughes."
2. The Democratic ticket, with Wilson at its head again, went under the slogan "He kept us out of war," and warned that electing Hughes would be leading America into World War I.
 - i. Ironically, Wilson would lead America into war in 1917.
 - ii. Actually, even Wilson knew of the dangers of such a slogan, as American neutrality was rapidly sinking, and war was going to be inevitable.
3. Wilson barely beat Hughes, with a vote of 277 to 254, with the final result dependent on results from California, and even though Wilson didn't specifically promise to keep America out of war, enough people felt that he did to vote for him.