

Chapter 21, The Rise of Progressivism

For a long time in America, the stirrings of progressivism (as it was later called) were brewing with all the urbanization and industrialization. Progressivism was a broad and colored phenomenon with many views but there was a central dogma to it.

The Progressive Impulse

Belief in Progress—progressives believed in progress as an optimistic vision for the improvement and advancement of society; however, they also believe that certain natural laws (Darwinism, etc.) that governed progress so humans needed to try to contribute order to progress

- I. Varieties of Progressivism; progressives believed in most of these ideas
 - A. One impulse of progressivism was “antimonopoly” or the fear of concentrated power and the urge to limit authority; this echoed populism
 - B. Social Cohesion—individuals work in a web of society; this would cause the impulse to help women, blacks, immigrants, etc.
 - C. Faith in Knowledge—knowledge helped organization and create a more humane world
 - D. Government Roles—the government must play an active role in stabilizing society
- II. The Muckrakers
 - A. Coined by Theodore Roosevelt, the first progressives were “muckraking” journalists who exposed scandals, etc.
 - B. The first muckrakers attempted to bring down railroad giants because they looked at them as the pillars of corruption in corporate America
 - C. Ida Tarbell exposed the Standard Oil trust
 - D. Lincoln Steffens, reporter for *McClure’s Magazine*, advocated urban political reform (removal of bosses, etc.); journalists were more upset about the apathetic public than the bosses themselves
 - E. Muckrakers worked especially from 1900-1910 to expose problems in society in a fervent way which caused people to react and push for change
- III. The Social Gospel
 - A. A general outrage for social and economic injustice pervaded muckrakers’ exposés
 - B. The Salvation Army was a military-structured Christian social welfare group from England
 - C. Walter Rauschenbusch was a Protestant theologian who believed that individuals should work for the vast improvement of the web of society rather than struggle for survival of the fittest
 - D. American Catholics favored Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (Of New Things) which pushed for social equality
 - E. Father John A. Ryan was a Catholic liberal who worked to expand the scope of Catholic social welfare organizations
 - F. Some dismissed the Social Gospel as irrelevant and it was never a major element of progressivism
- IV. The Settlement House Movement
 - A. Progressives argued against Social Darwinists that poverty, etc. were the results of bad environments rather than genetic and moral failings so conditions needed improvement
 - B. Jane Addams and Hull House
 1. Progressives such as Jane Addams sought to improve the conditions of crowded immigrants in cities by establishing settlement houses, the first of which being Hull House in Chicago
 2. They were run by the middle class and immigrants found ways to establish middle class lives
 3. Note that immigrants did not live in the houses, only some of the middle class reformers
 4. They helped spawn the idea of social work
 - C. Female leaders, especially college women, were great catalysts for the progressive movement; women were the major workers in settlement houses
- V. The Allure of Expertise
 - A. As seen in the settlement house movement, progressives believed that bureaucracy and scientific investigation could solve any problem
 - B. They put an emphasis on expertise
 - C. A new breed of social scientists arose to rebel against the Social Darwinists such as Thorstein Veblen who proposed a new economic system where highly trained engineers controlled power who understood the “machine process” of society

- D. Earlier “Taylorism” gave rise to social science, a new area of inquiry, which produced a generation of bureaucratic reformers who looked for ways to manage modern society
 - E. Social scientists also pushed for the organization of middle class professionals
- VI. The Professions
- A. Modern society saw an increase in administrative and professional tasks; this was considered the “new middle class”
 - B. The new middle class placed a high value on education, individual accomplishment, and worked to secure their position in society
 - C. Pressures for reform were laid on charlatan professionals
 - D. American Medical Association—trained professional doctors formed local associations until in 1901, they formed the American Medical Association (AMA) which called for strict standards in the practice of medicine; most doctors took part in it; licenses became required by government
 - E. Rigorous new standards were set for medical education, especially by Johns Hopkins
 - F. Lawyers established boards to regulate admission to their profession
 - G. National Association of Manufacturers and United States Chamber of Commerce were business administration organizations
 - H. National Farm Bureau Federation was the umbrella of agricultural organizations
 - I. These organizations both guarded the untrained from the professions as well as, sometimes, “undesirables” like blacks
- VII. Women and the Professions
- A. Although many women were barred from professions, many middle-class college educated women joined professions
 - B. Although some women joined “male professions” (medicine, law, etc) many just joined professions that were “appropriate” for women, the most important being teaching
 - C. Since the Civil War, many women had become nurses which adopted professional standards
 - D. Male-dominated colleges began admitting women
 - E. “Women’s professions” placed values on “helping” as well as traditional professional values and were reminiscent of the “domestic” image

Women and Reform

Women lived in a culture that believed women were not suitable for traditionally male professions but many were prominent figures in the Progressive Movement.

- I. The “New Woman”
 - A. As new conveniences made home maintenance easier, coupled with longer schooling for children and income-producing activity moving from the home to the workplace, women looked for activities outside of the home
 - B. Similarly, women spent more time caring for children because they lived longer and they had less
 - C. Many times, women would not even marry (10% of women from 1880-1900) and most prominent reformers were single
 - D. “Boston Marriages”—either female roommates or romantic relationships between women
 - E. Women began to initiate more divorces, 1 in 21 marriages in 1880 to 1 in 9 in 1916
 - F. More women were graduating high school and college
- II. The Clubwomen
 - A. Large network of women’s associations sprouted at the end of the 19th Century
 - B. Clubs began as cultural organizations for the middle and upper class
 - C. GFWC—1892, General Federation of Women’s Clubs coordinates activities, rapid exponential growth
 - D. Clubs shifted from cultural issues to social betterment, women could not vote so they were nonpartisan and clubs were usually wealthy so they could make their presence felt
 - E. Many clubs excluded blacks, National Association of Colored Women was the black female federation; though modeled after white counterparts, some crusaded for civil rights
 - F. Clubs rarely raised overt challenges to women’s place in home but they were efforts to *extend* women out of the home; they did not challenge male society but got to experience the social world
 - G. Charlotte Perkins Gilman—*Women and Economics* (1898) argued that “gender roles” were obsolete

- H. Much work by women was uncontroversial (planting trees, helping schools, etc.)
 - I. Some was controversial: workplace reform, food and drug reform, Indian reform
 - J. Women were responsible for outlawing alcohol and “mother’s pensions,” a precursor to Social Security which gave single mothers money
 - K. Responsible for Children’s Bureau of the Labor Department
 - L. Women’s Trade Union League—1903, upper-class reformers support strikes, unions, etc.
 - M. “Maternal” character appealed to men (and women) who were necessary for political reform (voting); they emphasized “nurturing” and “protecting” as buzzwords
- III. Woman Suffrage
- A. One of the most influential, important events in American history
 - B. Women were leaders, both sexes supported it
 - C. Radical Challenge of Women’s Suffrage
 1. The arguments were usually rooted in divine causes early on: “Natural Rights,” women deserved equal rights as men
 2. Elizabeth Cady Stanton—1892: if women are citizens, they have equal rights to other citizens, argued against traditional view of “women’s sphere”
 3. Antisuffrage groups argued for “natural order,” women were men’s servants
 - D. Suffragists Organize
 1. Better organization caused victories over antisuffragists
 2. NAWSA—National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1893 by Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt; Jane Addams was major follower
 3. Success was a result of less powerful talk, acquiescing to old values but arguing that women could bring their own virtues to politics
 4. Temperance Movement—women would calm wars
 5. Conservative Arguments for Suffrage—Florence Kelly (NAACP, 1906) expressed that suffrage speeches usually were based on how blacks, etc. could vote so why couldn’t “well-born” women
 - E. Triumphs
 1. Washington (1910) and then California (1912) allow women to vote, followed by other western states
 2. Ethnic battles in the East fueled Catholic resentment of female suffrage
 3. After many states gave suffrage NINETEENTH AMENDMENT allowed women to vote
 4. Alice Paul argued for constitutional Equal Rights Amendment to protect women completely
 5. Caused division between feminists
 6. Women were just as divided as men when they could vote and they did not actually enact a huge maternal force on the vote that they had promised

The Assault on the Parties

Progressives knew government was the ultimate source of reform but believed it was ineffective in its current state; they resolved to reform it.

- I. Early Attack
 - A. Third parties (Independent Republicans, etc.) tried to challenge the standstill that politics was at with two parties
 - B. New voting systems were more private to protect from bosses
 - C. Two ways to attack party politics
 1. Increase the power of the people
 2. Secret ballots
- II. Municipal Reform
 - A. Party rule was worst in cities, muckraking journalists helped to expose it
 - B. Middle-class citizens had avoided politics because it was “dirty” but joined it around the 1890s
 - C. Reformers grew in strength against bosses and their businessmen who benefited from party rule
- III. New Forms of Government
 - A. Commission Plan—nonpartisan commission replaced city governments
 - B. City-Manager Plan—“corrupting influence of politics” did not influence business leaders so they would take over a city as the “manager”

- C. Many large cities chose to disallow party nomination of mayor candidates
 - D. Reformers strengthened power of mayors
 - E. Progressives came to control existing political systems
 - F. Tom Johnson—Cleveland’s mayor, ultimately came to control utilities
 - G. Cleveland had reputation as “best-governed city in America”
- IV. Statehouse Progressivism
- A. State-level progressives believed ill-paid state legislatures were controlled by party bosses
 - B. Initiative and Referendum—from Populists, initiative allowed voters to vote directly on bills during elections, referendum allowed for legislation to ask approval from voters
 - C. Direct Primary—took selection of candidates from bosses
 - D. Recall—voters could remove politicians (remember California?)
 - E. States banned campaign contribution by corporations and corporate lobbying
 - F. Raised politicians like Woodrow Wilson (pres of Princeton) to governor and president
 - G. Robert La Follette—governor of Wisconsin, made his state the “laboratory of progressivism,” he was one of the greatest reformers of his time, before national reformers arose; changed many things from the workplace to taxes on inherited fortunes
- V. Parties and Interest Groups
- A. A decline of voter turnout represented the decrease in party influence
 - B. “Interest groups” replaced parties; they were basically groups that had one agendum (farmer’s, women, settlement houses, etc.)

Sources of Progressive Reform

Many groups other than the typical middle class white Eastern progressive were responsible for reform, among them African Americans and Westerners.

- I. Labor, the Machine, and Reform
- A. AFL (American Federation of Labor) avoided political reform, but some parties were important
 - B. Union Labor Party in San Francisco elected two mayors and was able to push for pro-labor legislation as well as a child labor law in California
 - C. Bosses also helped to reform, including Charles Francis Murphy of Tammany Hall who used his influence to help working conditions, “protect child laborers, and eliminate the worst abuses of the industrial economy”
 - D. Triangle Shirtwaist Fire—after a serious fire in a workplace that killed 146, mostly women, workers, a commission under pressure from Tammany and Women’s Clubs researched the fire and issued many reforms
 - E. Tammany Hall produced the most effective politicians in NY congress for workplace reform
- II. Western Progressives
- A. Western states realized federal government had major political power and should be their target
 - B. Federal government decided land and water claims as well as land grants, money, etc.
 - C. Political parties were weak so government reforms passed quickly
- III. African Americans and Reform
- A. Blacks were faced with rigid social norms and followed Booker T. Washington’s “put down your bucket where you are” philosophy to push for immediate reform
 - B. W.E.B. Dubois was chief spokesman for blacks, never experience slavery, university educated
 - C. Wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), encouraged blacks to strive for the best, go to college, etc.
 - D. Niagara Movement, launched at Niagara Falls, incorporated into National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
 - E. NAACP used lawsuits, fought against disenfranchisement, etc.
 - F. NAACP was not radical or egalitarian and found respect because of it; relied on high class blacks who ended up creating a black elite, to pull the race up on the whole

Crusade for Social Order and Reform

Moral issues were also the focus of reformers (prostitution, alcohol, divorce, immigration).

- I. The Temperance Crusade
 - A. Many recognized that alcohol caused violence, squandering of money, industrial inefficiency, etc.
 - B. Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was founded in 1873 and expanded quickly, publicized evils of alcohol
 - C. Eventually leagues united and called for Eighteenth Amendment; the Prohibition Laws which took effect in 1920
- II. Immigration Restriction
 - A. Immigration had created new moral evils with an influx of culture so reformers wanted to either assimilate immigrants or limit immigration
 - B. Eugenics—the study of creating new hybrids and breeds, was applied to humans and arguments against immigrant pollution of WASP stock were published
 - C. Human eugenicists ranked humans based on racial stock
 - D. Echoing Hitlerian ideals, the sterilization of retarded people, criminals, etc. was called for, for the betterment of humanity
 - E. Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) called for Anglo-Saxon, Nordic Americans and the elimination of other races
 - F. Senator William P. Dillingham (VT) chaired a commission of “experts” that issued The Dillingham Report to lower certain types of immigration for a better America
 - G. Many reformers ended up following these anti-immigration principles

Challenging the Capitalist Order

Many progressives traced issues back to corporate America and its corruption.

- I. The Dream of Socialism
 - A. Socialist Party, headed by Eugene V. Debs, their presidential candidate, gained power in the early 20th Century; the only time the US ever questioned capitalism
 - B. Won many positions
 - C. Some socialists were radical (Marxist), others were more militant, (Industrial Workers of the World, IWW, “Wobblies”); championed unskilled workers, strikes, etc.; wanted unions
 - D. After a strike in the northwest in lumber, the US shut down IWW
 - E. Socialism declined quickly
- II. Decentralization and Regulation
 - A. Many progressives believed that centralization and amalgamation of corporate firms created problems in the US but most did not turn to socialism for the answer
 - B. Called for smaller businesses and the breaking up of monopolies
 - C. Louis D. Brandeis, lawyer and Supreme Court Justice called for the breakdown of “bigness”
 - D. The Problems of Corporate America—government must regulate combinations and promote competition
 - E. “Good Trusts” and “Bad Trusts”—government should distinguish between those who abuse power and those who don't because trusts aren't always bad
 - F. Theodore Roosevelt ultimately called for national reform on all levels

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