
Changes Occurred During The Progressive Era

Before the Progressive Era began, the United States experienced massive migrations as well as rapid urbanization. Along with these changes, big businesses began to rise in the last decades of the nineteenth century such as those of Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. These developments were followed by efforts to reshape the American economy and the environment. This age was known as the Gilded Age which was marked by new forms of consumption and marketing. Along with new innovations in technology, the Gilded Age also includes a growing middle class, horrible conditions of the poor, and a diverse workforce. The Progressive Era then emerged as a response to the injustices of this time. Although some believe the Progressive reformers didn't have significant change, the reality is that reformers worked on the reform with different priorities, for the most part concentrating on improving conditions for poor people, diminishing unbridled capitalism, and defending the unrepresented.

During this time, progressive reforms were formed because there were many groups that didn't have much say in the government such as women, African Americans, immigrants, and children. During the movement, women were able to become engaged in public issues as depicted in the National Archives photograph taken 1918 stating "20,000,000 American women are not self-governed"(Doc. 6). Although women were involved in more issues as depicted in the picture, the reality is that they weren't successful in gaining their rights quickly. There were many other prominent women such as Florence Kelley who was an activist on the reform of factories, yet women still weren't able to gain voting rights until after WWI. In addition, Progressives had a short-lived success in regard to child labor issues when the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act was passed. The Supreme Court shut down this act in the case of Hammer v. Dagenhart in 1918 arguing that manufacturing practices were subject to state law(Doc. 5). Therefore, child labor laws weren't addressed until the New Deal Era of the 1930s. This meant many children were being put to work for long hours and companies were able to get away with it. Overall, issues regarding minority groups such as women and children weren't able to reach much success nationally during the Progressive Era.

Along with defending minorities, reformers wanted to improve conditions for the poor. Progressive reformers used the newly developed mass print media to shed light on social issues. In Neill-Reynolds report, he uncovered the horrible working conditions of workers(Doc.2). His purpose was to let the nation know about sordid businesses and bring about change in sanitation practices. More reformers emerged along with Neill-Reynolds known as muckrakers who brought awareness to the public and were able to successfully improve conditions for the poor. In addition, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were two influential presidents during this period. Theodore Roosevelt made it evident that he was advocating for direct vote of senators by the people(Doc.3). His purpose in this speech was to move the Republican Party and the nation itself in a progressive direction. By advocating for direct vote for senators, the poor and the middle-class people were able to have more say in the government. Although the poor weren't able to attain the best conditions, reformers were successful in making major breakthroughs in most of their issues.

During the Progressive Era, progressives became increasingly alarmed by the power of unregulated business. To regulate big businesses Woodrow Wilson passed the Clayton

Antitrust Act in 1914 in which he specifically exempted labor unions from being targeted by antitrust actions(Doc.4). The historical situation of this act was that it was passed to replace the Sherman Antitrust Act which wasn't very successful. In addition, as shown in the Washington Post of 1907, Theodore Roosevelt regulated trusts as he is seen killing the bear labeled "bad trusts" in the cartoon(Doc.1). The artist's purpose was to portray Roosevelt as successfully regulating trust and big businesses. This was known as Roosevelt's "Square Deal" in which one of his goals was control of corporations. Although the cartoon portrays him as being successful, many trusts still existed because Roosevelt could not bust all of them. Progressives such as Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt weren't completely successful, they were still able to regulate some corporations and monopolies.

Although it may seem progressive reformers weren't successful in bringing about the reform nationally, most of the radical ideas and solutions had a huge impact in history. By bringing up the idea of better living conditions for the poor as well as many minorities, reformers helped bring about more rights for other minority groups later in the 1900s such as the end of racial segregation. There were many other problems that progressive reformers identified such as those in the economy and big businesses. Overall, Progressive reformers helped bring about change by identifying the key problems during this time and pushing the government towards solutions.