Progressive Era

Who are the Progressives?

• Those with a spirit of discontent with the status quo and an exciting sense of new social possibilities

• This spirit was born within a growing urban middle class, especially amongst married “stay-at-home” women seeking something greater than themselves

• Populism was rural; Progressivism was urban

Who are the Progressives?

• Although seeking to reform new urban-industrial order, they were NOT a singular united movement
  ○ Took pride in using research/facts to support ideas

The Muckrakers

• T. Roosevelt’s term for authors who dredge up the worst of American life
  ○ They brought attention to social ills & stirred up public support for reform movements
    • McClure’s & Collier’s cheap magazines with exposé stories

Municipal Corruption

• Prosecutors fought against “city-bosses”
• Heavy regulation reduced control private utility companies had over cities
• Local government reforms:
  ○ City-manager system: city divided into “wards”, each ward elects a city council member, council hires a city manager
  ○ Often used “mayor” as an “at-large” district & chairman of council

State-Wide Election Reform

• By 1910, all states used “secret ballot”
• Primaries to let all party members select candidate rather than just party’s elites
• Initiative: voters design and then vote on new laws
• Referendum: legislature designs laws, but people must vote to ratify
• Recall: voters can remove a public official from office
• Designed to add more “democracy”; ironically voter participation & party loyalty begin to decline
Robert La Follette
- Governor of Wisconsin
- Championed numerous reforms
  - Worker’s compensation
  - Utility rate controls
  - Minimum wages
  - Direct-primary elections
  - Direct election of U.S. Senators
  - Women’s Suffrage
  - Progressive income tax
  - “Wisconsin Idea”: legislation based on research & expert testimony

Florence Kelley
- Hull House resident
- Chief Factory Inspector (Ill.) 1893
  - Outlawed child labor
  - Limit working hours for women
  - Supported result of Muller v. Oregon
- Helped establish NAACP
  - Fought for equal funding of white/black schools
- Federal child labor laws
  - “Why are seals, bears, reindeer, fish, wild game in the national parks, buffalo [and] migratory birds all found suitable for federal protection, but not children?”

Urban Moral Control
- Urban entertainment venues for lower classes viewed by reformers as “moral traps”
  - Sought regulation of amusement parks, dance halls, & movies
  - Prostitution viewed as “white slavery”
  - American Social Hygiene Assoc. obtained city laws against
  - Connections made to racism, anti-immigration
  - Mann Act, illegal to take a woman across state lines for “immoral purposes”
  - Alcohol linked to domestic abuse, health problems, & work injuries...also pitted native-born against new immigrants
  - Anti-Saloon League brings shift from “temperance” to “prohibition” at local, state, and national levels

Immigration & Eugenics
- 1900-1917: 17 million new arrivals
  - Urban slums became rally cry to restrict immigration
    - 1911 Congressional study proved immigrants innately degenerate
    - 1917 literacy test (in English or native language) for admission
    - Physical health tests for admission (quarantine at Ellis Island)
- Eugenics: control of reproduction to alter a species
  - Immigration restriction to keep U.S. population from “inferior” genetics additions
  - Forced sterilization of “unfit” or “worthless”: criminals, sex offenders, & mentally deficient

Mixed Perspectives on “Race”
- 1900: 10 million blacks, mostly in south (20% urban)
- “Jim Crow” segregation laws
  - Black codes denied political equality
  - Jim Crow denied social equality
- Lynching rose in the South
- 1890-1910 racism grew more harsh in North
- The Birth of a Nation movie celebrates KKK (praised by Pres. Wilson)

Mixed Perspectives on “Race”
- Development of strong black community
  - Thriving churches in cities & rural areas
  - Colleges: Fisk (Nashville), Howard (Wash, DC), Morehouse & Spelman (Atlanta)
  - Development of businesses—Tulsa’s Greenwood district known as “Black Wall Street”
  - Negro Baseball League
- Some “Progressive” friends
  - Lillian Wald (NYC settlement house), Ray S. Baker (muckraker), Mary White Ovington (helped est. NAACP)
Mixed Perspectives on “Race”

- **Ida B. Wells-Barnett**
  - Sued RR company for forcing her to leave her train seat; won but overturned by TN Supreme Court
  - Most prominent “muckraker” on topic of lynching
  - Articles appeared in various national newspapers & magazines

- **Booker T. Washington**
  - Encouraged blacks to patiently prove worth of equality by their hard work
  - Established vocational arts school: Tuskegee Institute

- **W.E.B. Du Bois**
  - Demanded immediate equality for blacks, esp. in education
  - Niagara Movement becomes NAACP to promote activism & legal challenges

Women’s Suffrage Revived

- **Suffrage movement didn’t die after 15th Amendment**
  - Becomes more active in Progressive Era
  - Linked to immigration/racial issues of Era
    - Why should middle-class women be denied suffrage when poor, recent immigrant men could vote?
    - Allowing white women suffrage would dilute influence of black men’s votes
  - Inspired by revival of similar movement in Britain
  - By 1910, full female suffrage in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho
    - Why were western states more likely to allow female suffrage?

- **Carrie Chapman Catt**
  - Replaced Susan B. Anthony as president of National American Woman Suffrage Association
  - Focused on grass-roots organization
    - Largely white, native-born, & middle class

- **Alice Paul**
  - More influenced by militant tactics of British suffragists’
  - Founded National Women’s Party to pressure Congress & President for constitutional amendment

Enlarging Women’s “Sphere”

- **Charlotte Perkins**
  - Linked female subordination to economic dependence on men
    - Female econ. independence = female equality with men
    - Government should support day care centers to help women afford to be able to work outside of the home

- **Margaret Sanger**
  - Birth-control options needed for health & economic reasons
    - Pamphlets banned as “obscene mail”
    - 1916: first birth-control clinic in U.S.
    - Founded “Planned Parenthood”

Coming of Socialism

- **Influenced by Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto**
  - Rather than communist revolutions in eastern Europe, sought to win elections & then impact reform in U.S.
  - 1900: Socialist Party of America is formed
    - Membership of labor leader Eugene Debs integrated socialist thought into many labor unions
    - Embraced by “cultural rebels” in Greenwich Village, NYC
  - 1912 election: 1 Congressman & many state/municipal offices
  - Staunch “anti-war” support in WWI decreases support
National Progressivism with T. R./Taft

- T.R. as Pres. upon McKinley’s death
  - “Square Deal”
    - Control corporations (“trust-busting”, Hepburn Act, & supporting unions)
    - Consumer protection (Pure Food/Drug Act)
    - Conserve natural resources (national parks)
- Taft: T.R’s “hand-picked” successor
  - Supports T.R’s policies (sometimes)
  - Mann-Elkins Act: ICC regulates telephone & telegraph companies
  - Allows sale of public lands in Alaska (lots of coal)
  - T.R. wants progressive GOP for 1910 Congress

National Progressivism with Wilson

- Regulating Big Business
  - Federal Trade Commission: investigate unfair business practices
  - Clayton Antitrust Act: strengthens Sherman Antitrust Act
  - Adamson Act: 8-hour workday for interstate railroad workers
  - Workmen’s Compensation Act: on-the-job injury “insurance” for federal employees
- Financial Policy
  - Underwood-Simmons Tariff: reduced import tax rates 15%
  - Federal Reserve: public-private partnership for regulate banking system & issue paper currency

Constitutional Changes

- 16th Amendment (1913)
  - Congress can tax personal income
- 17th Amendment (1913)
  - Direct election of Senators (no longer picked by state legislature)
- 18th Amendment (1919)
  - Outlaws manufacture, sale, & transportation of alcohol
- 19th Amendment (1920)
  - Suffrage can’t be denied based on gender

Progressivism Ends

- 1916 Election
  - Close race between Wilson & reunited Republicans
  - World War I becomes dominant focus

1912 Election

- Four-way election
  - Democrat: Woodrow Wilson
  - Republican: William H. Taft
  - Progressive (Bull Moose): Theodore Roosevelt
  - Socialist: Eugene V. Debs

1912 Election Map

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