Chapter 17: The Progressive Era

Amid great political and social change, women gain a larger public role and lead the call for reform. President Theodore Roosevelt dubs his reform policies a Square Deal.

The Progressive Era

Section 1: The Origins of Progressivism
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Section 1: The Origins of Progressivism
Political, economic, and social change in late 19th century America leads to broad progressive reforms.

I. Four Goals of Progressivism
   A. Concerns of Progressives
      1. Early 1900s, middle-class reformers address problems of 1890s
      2. Different reform efforts collectively called progressive movement
      3. Reformers aim to restore $ opportunity, correct injustice by:
         a. protecting social welfare
         b. promoting moral improvement
         c. creating economic reform
         d. fostering efficiency
   B. Protecting Social Welfare
      1. Social Gospel, settlement houses spur new reformers
         a. Florence Kelley, political activist, advocate for women, children
            i. helps pass law prohibiting child labor, limiting women’s hours
   C. Promoting Moral Improvement
      1. Many feel poor should uplift themselves through own behavior
      2. Prohibition—banning of alcoholic drinks
         a. Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) spearheads prohibition crusade
D. Creating Economic Reform
   1. 1893 panic prompts doubts about capitalism; many become socialists
   2. Muckrakers—journalists who expose corruption in politics, business

E. Fostering Efficiency
   1. Many use experts, science to make society, workplace more efficient
      a. Brandeis uses social scientists’ data in trial
   2. Scientific management—time and motion studies applied to workplace
   3. Assembly lines speed up production, make people work like machines
      a. cause high worker turnover

II. Cleaning Up Local Government
   A. Reforming Local Government
      1. Reformers try to make government efficient, responsive to voters
         a. Some cities adopt government by commission of experts
         b. Many use council–manager: people elect council that appoints manager
   B. Reform Mayors
      1. Hazen Pingree of Detroit tackles taxes, transit fares, corruption
      2. Socialist Tom Johnson of Cleveland fights corrupt utility companies

III. Reform at the State Level
   A. Reform Governors
      1. Governors push states to pass laws to regulate large businesses
      2. Robert M. La Follette is 3–term governor, then senator of Wisconsin
         a. attacks big business
   B. Protecting Working Children
      1. Child workers get lower wages, small hands handle small parts better
         a. families need children’s wages
      2. National Child Labor Committee gathers evidence of harsh conditions
      3. Labor unions argue children’s wages lower all wages
      4. Groups press gov. to ban child labor, cut hours
C. Efforts to Limit Working Hours
   1. Muller v. OR—Court upholds limiting women to 10-hour workday
   2. Bunting v. OR—upholds 10-hour workday for men
   3. Reformers win workers’ compensation for families of injured, killed
D. Reforming Elections
   1. OR adopts secret ballot, initiative, referendum, recall
   2. Initiative—bill proposed by people, not lawmakers, put on ballots
   3. Referendum—voters, not legislature, decide if initiative becomes law
   4. Recall—voters remove elected official through early election
   5. Primaries allow voters, not party machines, to choose candidates
E. Direct Election of Senators
   1. Seventeenth Amendment permits popular election of senators

Section 2: Women in Public Life
As a result of social and economic change, many women enter public life as workers and reformers.

I. Women in the Work Force
   A. Changing Patterns of Living
      1. Only middle-, upper-class women can devote selves to home, family
      2. Poor usually have to work for wages outside home
   B. Farm Women
      1. South/Midwest farms, women’s roles same as before
      2. Perform household tasks, raise livestock, help with crops
   C. Women in Industry
      1. After 1900, 1:5 women hold jobs; 25% in manufacturing
      2. 50% industrial workers in garment trade; earn half of men’s wages
      3. Jobs in offices, stores, classrooms require high school education
4. Business schools train bookkeepers, stenographers, typists

D. Domestic Workers
1. In 1870, 70% of employed women do domestic work
2. Many African–American, immigrant women do domestic labor
   a. married immigrants take in piecework, boarders

II. Women Lead Reform
A. Women Get Involved
1. Many female industrial workers seek to reform working conditions
2. Women form cultural clubs, sometimes become reform groups

B. Women in Higher Education
1. Many women active in public life have attended new women’s colleges
2. 50% college-educated women never marry; many work on social reforms

C. Women and Reform
1. Women reformers target workplace, housing, education, food, drugs
2. National Association of Colored Women (NACW)—child care, education
3. Susan B. Anthony of National American Woman Suffrage Assoc. (NAWSA)
   a. works for woman suffrage, or right to vote

D. A Three-Part Strategy for Suffrage
1. Convince state legislatures
2. Test 14th Amendment—states lose representation if deny men vote
3. Push for constitutional amendment

Section 3: Teddy Roosevelt’s Square Deal
As president, Theodore Roosevelt works to give citizens a Square Deal through progressive reforms.

I. A Rough-Riding President
A. Roosevelt’s Rise
1. Theodore Roosevelt has sickly childhood, drives self in athletics
2. Is ambitious, rises through New York politics to become governor
3. NY political bosses cannot control him, urge run for vice–president

B. The Modern Presidency
1. President McKinley shot; Roosevelt becomes president at 42
2. His leadership, publicity campaigns help create modern presidency
3. Supports federal government role when states do not solve problems
   a. Square Deal—Roosevelt’s progressive reforms

II. Using Federal Power
A. Student of history
B. Trustbusting
   1. By 1900, trusts control about 4/5 of U.S. industries
   2. TE wants to curb trusts that hurt public interest
      a. breaks up some under Sherman Antitrust Act
C. 1902 Coal Strike
   1. Coal reserves low; forces miners, operators to accept arbitration
   2. Sets principle of federal intervention when strike threatens public
D. Railroad Regulation
   1. TR pushes for federal regulation to control abuses
      a. Elkins Act—stops rebates, sudden rate changes
      b. Hepburn Act—limits passes, ICC to set maximum rates

III. Health and the Environment
A. Regulating Foods and Drugs
   1. Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle—unsanitary conditions in meatpacking
   2. Roosevelt commission investigates, backs up Sinclair’s account
   3. Roosevelt pushes for Meat Inspection Act:
      a. dictates sanitary requirements
      b. creates federal meat inspection program
B. Pure Food and Drug Act
   1. Food, drug advertisements make false claims; medicines often unsafe
   2. Pure Food and Drug Act halts sale of contaminated food, medicine
      a. requires truth in labeling
C. Conservation and Natural Resources
1. 1887, U.S. Forest Bureau established, manages 45 million acres
2. Private interests exploit natural environment

D. Conservation Measures
1. Roosevelt sets aside forest reserves, sanctuaries, national parks
2. Believes conservation part preservation, part development for public

IV. Roosevelt and Civil Rights
A. Civil Rights at the Turn of the 20th Century
1. Roosevelt does not support new civil rights legislation for African Americans
2. Supports individual African Americans in civil service
   a. invites Booker T. Washington to White House
3. NAACP—National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
   a. goal is full equality among races
   b. Founded 1909 by W. E. B. Du Bois and black, white reformers

Section 4: Progressivism Under Taft
Taft’s ambivalent approach to progressive reform leads to a split in the Republican Party and the loss of the presidency to the Democrats.

I. Taft Becomes President
A. Taft Stumbles
1. 1908, Republican William Howard Taft wins with Roosevelt’s support
2. Has cautiously progressive agenda; gets little credit for successes
3. Does not use presidential bully pulpit to arouse public opinion
B. The Payne–Aldrich Tariff
1. Taft signs Payne–Aldrich Tariff—compromise bill, moderate tariffs
2. Progressives angry, think he abandoned low tariffs, progressivism
C. Disputing Public Lands
1. Conservationists angry Richard A. Ballinger named interior secretary
   a. Ballinger puts reserved lands in public domain
b. Interior official protests action, is fired, writes magazine exposé
2. Gifford Pinchot head of U.S. Forest Service
   a. testifies against Ballinger
   b. is fired by Taft?

II. The Republican Party Splits
   A. Problems within the Party
      1. Republicans split over Taft’s support of House Speaker Joseph Cannon
      2. Cannon weakens progressive agenda; progressives ally with Democrats
      3. 1910 midterm elections, Democrats get control of House
   B. The Bull Moose Party
      1. 1912 convention, Taft people outmaneuver Roosevelt’s for nomination
      2. Progressives form Bull Moose Party; nominate Roosevelt, call for:
         a. more voter participation in government
         b. woman suffrage
         c. labor legislation, business controls
      3. Runs against Democrat Woodrow Wilson, reform governor of NJ

III. Democrats Win in 1912
   A. The Election
      1. Wilson endorses progressive platform called the New Freedom
         a. wants stronger antitrust laws, banking reform, lower tariffs
         b. calls all monopolies evil
      2. Roosevelt wants oversight of big business; not all monopolies bad
      3. Socialist Party candidate Eugene V. Debs wants to end capitalism
      4. Wilson wins great electoral victory; gets majority in Congress

Section 5: Wilson’s New Freedom
Woodrow Wilson establishes a strong reform agenda as a progressive leader.

I. Wilson Wins Financial Reforms
A. Wilson’s Background
   1. lawyer, professor, president of Princeton, NJ governor
   2. As president, focuses on trusts, tariffs, high finance
B. Two Key Antitrust Measures
   1. Clayton Antitrust Act stops companies buying stock to form monopoly
   2. Ends injunctions against strikers unless threaten irreparable damage
   3. Federal Trade Commission (FTC)—new “watchdog” agency
      a. investigates regulatory violations
      b. ends unfair business practices
C. A New Tax System
   1. Wilson pushes for Underwood Act to substantially reduce tariffs
   2. Sets precedent of giving State of the Union message in person
   3. His use of bully pulpit leads to passage
D. Federal Income Tax
   1. Sixteenth Amendment legalizes graduated federal income tax
E. Federal Reserve System
   1. Federal Reserve System—private banking system under federal control
   2. Nation divided into 12 districts; central bank in each district
II. Women Win Suffrage
A. Local Suffrage Battles
   1. College-educated women spread suffrage message to working-class
   2. Go door-to-door, take trolley tours, give speeches at stops
      a. some adopt bold tactics of British suffragists
B. Catt and the National Movement
   1. Carrie Chapman Catt, head of NAWSA, stresses organization, lobbying
   2. National Woman’s Party aggressively pressures for suffrage amendment
   3. Work of patriotic women in war effort influences politicians
   4. 1920 Nineteenth Amendment grants women right to vote
III. The Limits of Progressivism
   A. Wilson and Civil Rights
      1. As candidate, wins support of NAACP for favoring civil rights
      2. As president, opposes antilynching legislation
      3. Yet, appoints fellow white Southerners to cabinet who extend segregation
   B. NAACP feels betrayed; Wilson self-defense widens rift
   C. The Twilight of Progressivism
      1. Outbreak of World War I distracts Americans; reform efforts stall