

## **Republican Party Platform (Excerpts), 1912**

### **Monopoly and Privilege**

The Republican party is opposed to special privilege and to monopoly. It placed upon the statute-book the interstate commerce act of 1887, and the important amendments thereto, and the anti-trust act of 1890, and it has consistently and successfully enforced the provisions of these laws. It will take no backward step to permit the reestablishment in any degree of conditions which were intolerable....

### **The Tariff**

We reaffirm our belief in a protective tariff. The Republican tariff policy has been of the greatest benefit to the country, developing our resources, diversifying our industries, and protecting our workmen against competition with cheaper labor abroad, thus establishing for our wage-earners the American standard of living. The protective tariff is so woven into the fabric of our industrial and agricultural life that to substitute for it a tariff for revenue only would destroy many industries and throw millions of our people out of employment. The products of the farm and of the mine should receive the same measure of protection as other products of American labor.

### **Banking and Currency**

The Republican party has always stood for a sound currency and for safe banking methods. It is responsible for the resumption of specie payments and for the establishment of the gold standard....

### **The Civil Service**

We reaffirm our adherence to the principle of appointment to public office based on proved fitness, and tenure during good behavior and efficiency. The Republican party stands committed to the maintenance, extension and enforcement of the Civil Service Law, and it favors the passage of legislation empowering the President to extend the competitive service as far as practicable. We favor legislation to make possible the equitable retirement of disabled and superannuated members of the Civil Service in order that a higher standard of efficiency may be maintained.

We favor the amendment of the Federal Employers' Liability Law so as to extend its provisions to all government employees, as well as to provide a more liberal scale of compensation for injury and death.

### **Campaign Contributions**

We favor such additional legislation as may be necessary more effectually to prohibit corporations from contributing funds, directly or indirectly, to campaigns for the nomination or election of the President, the Vice-President, Senators, and Representatives in Congress.

We heartily approve the recent Act of Congress requiring the fullest publicity in regard to all campaign contributions, whether made in connection with primaries, conventions, or elections.

## **Conservation Policy**

We rejoice in the success of the distinctive Republican policy of the conservation of our National resources, for their use by the people without waste and without monopoly. We pledge ourselves to a continuance of such a policy.

We favor such fair and reasonable rules and regulations as will not discourage or interfere with actual bona-fide homeseekers, prospectors and miners in the acquisition of public lands under existing laws.

## **The Navy**

We believe in the maintenance of an adequate navy for the National defence, and we condemn the action of the Democratic House of Representatives in refusing to authorize the construction of additional ships.

## **Merchant Marine**

We believe that one of the country's most urgent needs is a revived merchant marine. There should be American ships, and plenty of them, to make use of the great American Inter-Oceanic canal now nearing completion.

## **Immigration**

We pledge the Republican party to the enactment of appropriate laws to give relief from the constantly growing evil of induced or undesirable immigration, which is inimical to the progress and welfare of the people of the United States.

## **Economy and Efficiency in Government**

We commend the earnest effort of the Republican administration to secure greater economy and increased efficiency in the conduct of government business; extravagant appropriations and the creation of unnecessary offices are an injustice to the taxpayer and a bad example to the citizen.

## **Civic Duty**

We call upon the people to quicken their interest in public affairs, to condemn and punish lynchings and other forms of lawlessness, and to strengthen in all possible ways a respect for law and the observance of it. Indifferent citizenship is an evil against which the law affords no

## **Democratic Party Platform (Excerpts), 1912**

### **Tariff Reform**

We declare it to be a fundamental principle of the Democratic party that the Federal government, under the Constitution, has no right or power to impose or collect tariff duties, except for the purpose of revenue, and we demand that the collection of such taxes shall be limited to the necessities of government honestly and economically administered.

The high Republican tariff is the principal cause of the unequal distribution of wealth; it is a system of taxation which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer; under its operations the American farmer and laboring man are the chief sufferers; it raises the cost of the necessities of life to them, but does not protect their product or wages. The farmer sells largely in free markets and buys almost entirely in the protected markets. In the most highly protected industries, such as cotton and wool, steel and iron, the wages of the laborers are the lowest paid in any of our industries. We denounce the Republican pretence on that subject and assert that American wages are established by competitive conditions, and not by the tariff.

### **High Cost of Living**

The high cost of living is a serious problem in every American home. The Republican party, in its platform, attempts to escape from responsibility for present conditions by denying that they are due to a protective tariff. We take issue with them on this subject, and charge that excessive prices result in a large measure from the high tariff laws enacted and maintained by the Republican party and from trusts and commercial conspiracies fostered and encouraged by such laws, and we assert that no substantial relief can be secured for the people until import duties on the necessities of life are materially reduced and these criminal conspiracies broken up.

### **Anti-Trust Law**

A private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable. We therefore favor the vigorous enforcement of the criminal as well as the civil law against trusts and trust officials, and demand the enactment of such additional legislation as may be necessary to make it impossible for a private monopoly to exist in the United States.

### **Rights of the States**

We believe in the preservation and maintenance in their full strength and integrity of the three coordinate branches of the Federal government—the executive, the legislative, and the judicial—each

### **Income Tax and Popular Election of Senators**

We congratulate the country upon the triumph of two important reforms demanded in the last national platform, namely, the amendment of the Federal Constitution authorizing an income tax, and the amendment providing for the popular election of senators, and we call upon the people of all the States to rally to the support of the pending propositions and secure their ratification.

### **Presidential Primary**

The movement toward more popular government should be promoted through legislation in each State which will permit the expression of the preference of the electors for national candidates at presidential primaries.

### **Campaign Contributions**

We pledge the Democratic party to the enactment of a law prohibiting any corporation from contributing to a campaign fund and any individual from contributing any amount above a reasonable maximum.

### **Term of President**

We favor a single Presidential term, and to that end urge the adoption of an amendment to the Constitution making the President of the United States ineligible to reelection, and we pledge the candidates of this Convention to this principle.

### **Railroads, Express Companies, Telegraph and Telephone Lines**

We favor the efficient supervision and rate regulation of railroads, express companies, telegraph and telephone lines engaged in interstate commerce. To this end we recommend the valuation of railroads, express companies, telegraph and telephone lines by the Interstate Commerce Commission, such valuation to take into consideration the physical value of the property, the original cost, the cost of reproduction, and any element of value that will render the valuation fair and just.

### **Rights of Labor**

"The expanding organization of industry makes it essential that there should be no abridgement of the right of the wage earners and producers to organize for the protection of wages and the improvement of labor conditions, to the end that such labor organizations and their members should not be regarded as illegal combinations in restraint of trade."

### **Conservation**

We believe in the conservation and the development, for the use of all the people, of the natural resources of the country. Our forests, our sources of water supply, our arable and our mineral lands, our navigable streams, and all the other material resources with which our country has been so lavishly endowed, constitute the foundation of our national wealth. Such additional legislation as may be necessary to prevent their being wasted or absorbed by special or privileged interests, should be enacted and the policy of their conservation should be rigidly adhered to.

### **Civil Service Law**

The law pertaining to the civil service should be honestly and rigidly enforced, to the end that merit and ability shall be the standard of appointment and promotion, rather than service rendered to a political party; and we favor a reorganization of the civil service, with adequate compensation commensurate with the class of work performed for all officers and employees; and also favor the extension to all classes of civil service employees of the benefits of the provisions of the employers' liability law. We also recognize the right of direct petition to Congress by employees for the redress of grievances.

### **Law Reform**

We recognize the urgent need of reform in the administration of civil and criminal law in the United States, and we recommend the enactment of such legislation and the promotion of such measures as will rid the present legal system of the delays, expense, and uncertainties incident to the system as now administered.

# The Progressive Party Platform of 1912

August 5, 1912

*The Progressive party's 1912 platform provides the most ample and ambitious statement of the national legislative aims of Progressivism. It was particularly noteworthy for spelling out in detail a program of social legislation. Although Theodore Roosevelt (Doc. 24) had succeeded in taking the leadership of the party away from La Follette, the platform reflects on most counts the inspiration of La Follette and his admirers. The most controversial plank in the platform, both inside and outside the party, was that on business, since a stronger antitrust statement had been rejected by Roosevelt and his associates. Roosevelt had never abandoned his conviction that an elaborate attack on big business along the lines of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act was futile (see Doc. 28). For his views on this subject he was strongly taken to task by Woodrow Wilson in the campaign (Doc. 35). Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, National Party Platforms, 1840-1956 (Urbana, 1956), pp. 175-82.*

The conscience of the people, in a time of grave national problems, has called into being a new party, born of the nation's sense of justice. We of the Progressive party here dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of the duty laid upon us by our fathers to maintain the government of the people, by the people and for the people whose foundations they laid. . . .

## THE OLD PARTIES

Political parties exist to secure responsible government and to execute the will of the people.

From these great tasks both of the old parties have turned aside. Instead of instruments to promote the general welfare, they have become the tools of corrupt interests which use them impartially to serve their selfish purposes. Behind the ostensible government sits enthroned an invisible government owing no allegiance and acknowledging no responsibility to the people.

To destroy this invisible government, to dissolve the unholy alliance between corrupt business and corrupt politics is the first task of the statesmanship of the day.

The deliberate betrayal of its trust by the Republican party, the fatal incapacity of the Democratic party to deal with the new issues of the new time, have compelled the people to forge a new instrument of government through which to give effect to their will in laws and institutions.

Unhampered by tradition, uncorrupted by power, undismayed by the magnitude of the task, the new party offers itself as the instrument of the people to sweep away old abuses, to build a new and nobler commonwealth. . . .

## THE RULE OF THE PEOPLE

. . . . In particular, the party declares for direct primaries for the nomination of State and National officers; for nation-wide preferential primaries for candidates for the presidency; for the direct election of United States Senators by the people; and we urge on the States the policy of the short ballot, with responsibility to the people secured by the initiative, referendum and recall. . . .

## EQUAL SUFFRAGE

The Progressive party, believing that no people can justly claim to be a true democracy which denies political rights on account of sex, pledges itself to the task of securing equal suffrage to men and women alike.

## CORRUPT PRACTICES

We pledge our party to legislation that will compel strict limitation of all campaign contributions and expenditures, and detailed publicity of both before as well as after primaries and elections.

## PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC SERVICE

We pledge our party to legislation compelling the registration of lobbyists; publicity of committee hearings except on foreign affairs, and recording of all votes in committee; and forbidding federal appointees from holding office in State or National political organizations, or taking part as officers or delegates in political conventions for the nomination of elective State or National officials.

## THE COURTS

The Progressive party demands such restriction of the power of the courts as shall leave to the people the ultimate authority to determine

fundamental questions of social welfare and public policy. To secure this end, it pledges itself to provide:

1. That when an Act, passed under the police power of the State, is held unconstitutional under the State Constitution, by the courts, the people, after an ample interval for deliberation, shall have an opportunity to vote on the question whether they desire the Act to become law, notwithstanding such decision.

2. That every decision of the highest appellate court of a State declaring an Act of the Legislature unconstitutional on the ground of its violation of the Federal Constitution shall be subject to the same review by the Supreme Court of the United States as is now accorded to decisions sustaining such legislation.

#### ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

. . . . We believe that the issuance of injunctions in cases arising out of labor disputes should be prohibited when such injunctions would not apply when no labor disputes existed.

We believe also that a person cited for contempt in labor disputes, except when such contempt was committed in the actual presence of the court or so near thereto as to interfere with the proper administration of justice, should have a right to trial by jury.

#### SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL JUSTICE

The supreme duty of the Nation is the conservation of human resources through an enlightened measure of social and industrial justice. We pledge ourselves to work unceasingly in State and Nation for:

Effective legislation looking to the prevention of industrial accidents, occupational diseases, overwork, involuntary unemployment, and other injurious effects incident to modern industry;

The fixing of minimum safety and health standards for the various occupations, and the exercise of the public authority of State and Nation, including the Federal Control over interstate commerce, and the taxing power, to maintain such standards;

The prohibition of child labor;

Minimum wage standards for working women, to provide a "living wage" in all industrial occupations;

The general prohibition of night work for women and the establishment of an eight-hour day for women and young persons;

One day's rest in seven for all wage workers;

The eight-hour day in continuous twenty-four-hour industries;

The abolition of the convict contract labor system; substituting a system of prison production for governmental consumption only; and the application of prisoners' earnings to the support of their dependent families;

Publicity as to wages, hours and conditions of labor; full reports upon industrial accidents and diseases; and the opening to public inspection of all tallies, weights, measures and check systems on labor products;

Standards of compensation for death by industrial accident and injury and trade disease which will transfer the burden of lost earnings from the families of working people to the industry, and thus to the community;

The protection of home life against the hazards of sickness, irregular employment and old age through the adoption of a system of social insurance adapted to American use;

The development of the creative labor power of America by lifting the last load of illiteracy from American youth and establishing continuation schools for industrial education under public control and encouraging agricultural education and demonstration in rural schools. . . .

We favor the organization of the workers, men and women, as a means of protecting their interests and of promoting their progress. . . .

#### BUSINESS

We demand that the test of true prosperity shall be the benefits conferred thereby on all the citizens, not confined to individuals or classes. . . .

We therefore demand a strong National regulation of inter-State corporations. The corporation is an essential part of modern business. The concentration of modern business, in some degree, is both inevitable and necessary for national and international business efficiency. But the existing concentration of vast wealth under a corporate system, unguarded and uncontrolled by the Nation, has placed in the hands of a few men enormous, secret, irresponsible power over the daily life of the citizen—a power insufferable in a free government and certain of abuse. . . .

We urge the establishment of a strong Federal administrative commission of high standing, which shall maintain permanent and active supervision over industrial corporations engaged in inter-State commerce, or such of them as are of public importance. . . .

Such a commission must enforce the complete publicity of those corporate transactions which are of public interest; must attack unfair competition, false capitalization and special privilege. . . .

We may hope for the dawn of a new day in labor conditions. We may hope that better and more humane industrial conditions and A GREAT GAIN IN THE SUM TOTAL OF HUMAN WELFARE AND HUMAN HAPPINESS will result from this beneficent and long-desired legislation.

### The Socialist Party's Platform, 1912

The Socialist party declares that the capitalist system has outgrown its historical function, and has become utterly incapable of meeting the problems now confronting society. We denounce this outgrown system as incompetent and corrupt and the source of unspeakable misery and suffering to the whole working class.

Under this system the industrial equipment of the nation has passed into the absolute control of a plutocracy which exacts an annual tribute of hundreds of millions of dollars from the producers. Unafraid of any organized resistance, it stretches out its greedy hands over the still undeveloped resources of the nation—the land, the mines, the forests and the water powers of every State of the Union.

In spite of the multiplication of labor-saving machines and improved methods in industry which cheapen the cost of production, the share of the producers grows ever less, and the prices of all the necessities of life steadily increase. The boasted prosperity of this nation is for the owning class alone. To the rest it means only greater hardship and misery. The high cost of living is felt in every home. Millions of wage-workers have seen the purchasing power of their wages decrease until life has become a desperate battle for mere existence.

Multitudes of unemployed walk the streets of our cities or trudge from State to State awaiting the will of the masters to move the wheels of industry.

The farmers in every state are plundered by the increasing prices exacted for tools and machinery and by extortionate rents, freight rates and storage charges.

Capitalist concentration is mercilessly crushing the class of small business men and driving its members into the ranks of propertyless wage-workers. The overwhelming majority of the people of America are being forced under a yoke of bondage by this soulless industrial despotism.

It is this capitalist system that is responsible for the increasing burden of armaments, the poverty, slums, child labor, most of the insanity, crime and prostitution, and much of the disease that afflicts mankind.

Under this system the working class is exposed to poisonous conditions, to frightful and needless perils to life and limb, is walled around with court decisions, injunctions and unjust laws, and is preyed upon incessantly for the benefit of the controlling oligarchy of wealth. Under it also, the children of the working class are doomed to ignorance, drudging toil and darkened lives.

In the face of these evils, so manifest that all thoughtful observers are appalled at them, the legislative representatives of the Republican and Democratic parties remain the faithful servants of the oppressors.

### Working Program

As measures calculated to strengthen the working class in its fight for the realization of its ultimate aim, the co-operative commonwealth, and to increase its power against capitalist oppression, we advocate and pledge ourselves and our elected officers to the following program:

#### Collective Ownership

1. The collective ownership and democratic management of railroads, wire and wireless telegraphs and telephones, express service, steamboat lines, and all other social means of transportation and communication and of all large scale industries.
2. The immediate acquirement by the municipalities, the states or the federal government of all grain elevators, stock yards, storage warehouses, and other distributing agencies, in order to reduce the present extortionate cost of living.
3. The extension of the public domain to include mines, quarries, oil wells; forests and water power.
4. The further conservation and development of natural resources for the use and benefit of all the people: . . .
5. The collective ownership of land wherever practicable, and in cases where such ownership is impracticable, the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all the land held for speculation and exploitation.
6. The collective ownership and democratic management of the banking and currency system.

#### Unemployment

The immediate government relief of the unemployed by the extension of all useful public works. All persons employed on such works to be engaged directly by the government under a work day of not more than eight hours and at not less than the prevailing union wages. The government also to establish employment bureaus; to lend money to states and municipalities without interest for the purpose of carrying on public works; and to take such other measures within its power as will lessen the widespread misery of the workers caused by the misrule of the capitalist class.

#### Industrial Demands

The conservation of human resources, particularly of the lives and well-being of the workers and their families:

1. By shortening the work day in keeping with the increased productivity of machinery.
2. By securing for every worker a rest period of not less than a day and a half in each week.
3. By securing a more effective inspection of workshops, factories and mines.

4. By forbidding the employment of **children** under sixteen years of age.
5. By the **co-operative** organization of the industries in the **federal penitentiaries** for the benefit of the convicts and their dependents.
6. By forbidding the **interstate transportation** of the products of child labor, of convict labor and of all **uninspected** factories and mines.
7. By abolishing the profit system in government work and substituting either the direct hire of labor or the awarding of contracts to **co-operative** groups of workers.
8. By establishing minimum wage scales.
9. By abolishing official charity and substituting a non-contributory system of old age pensions, a **general system** of insurance by the State of all its members against unemployment and invalidism and a system of compulsory insurance by employers of their workers, without cost to the latter, against industrial diseases, accidents and death.

#### Political Demands

1. The absolute freedom of **press, speech and assemblage**.
2. The adoption of a **graduated income tax** and the extension of inheritance taxes, graduated in proportion to the value of the estate and to nearness of kin—the proceeds of these taxes to be employed in the socialization of industry.
3. The **abolition of the monopoly ownership of patents** and the substitution of collective ownership, with **direct rewards to inventors** by premiums or royalties.
4. Unrestricted and **equal suffrage for men and women**.
5. The adoption of the **initiative, referendum and recall** and of **proportional representation**, nationally as well as locally.
6. The **abolition of the Senate** and of the **veto power of the President**.
7. The election of the President and Vice-President by **direct vote of the people**.
8. The **abolition of the power usurped by the Supreme Court of the United States** to pass upon the constitutionality of the legislation enacted by Congress. National laws to be repealed only by act of Congress or by a **referendum vote of the whole people**.
9. **Abolition of the present restrictions upon the amendment of the constitution**, so that instrument may be made amendable by a **majority of the voters** in a majority of the States.
10. The **granting of the right of suffrage in the District of Columbia** with representation in Congress and a democratic form of municipal government for purely local affairs.
11. The extension of democratic government to all United States territory.
12. The enactment of further measures for the **conservation of health**. The creation of an independent bureau of health, with such restrictions as will secure full liberty to all schools of practice.

13. The enactment of further measures for general education and particularly for vocational education in useful pursuits. The **Bureau of Education to be made a department**.

14. The **separation of the present Bureau of Labor from the Department of Commerce and Labor and its elevation to the rank of a department**.

15. **Abolition of all federal districts courts and the United States circuit court of appeals**. State courts to have jurisdiction in all cases arising between citizens of several states and foreign corporations. The **election of all judges for short terms**.

16. The immediate **curbing of the power of the courts** to issue injunctions.

17. The **free administration of the law**.

18. The calling of a convention for the **revision of the constitution of the U.S.**

Such measures of relief as we may be able to force from capitalism are but a **preparation of the workers to seize the whole powers of government**, in order that they may thereby lay hold of the whole system of socialized industry and thus come to their **rightful inheritance**.

#### ✧ E S S A Y S

From different angles, the two essays following treat the ambivalence (and the internal differentiation) of progressive reform. In a sweeping review of progressive historiography, historian Richard L. McCormick of Rutgers University reclaims the social-justice side of progressive reformers from recent preoccupation with their coercive, social-control tendencies. In the second essay, along the same lines, Robert Westbrook, a professor of history at the University of Rochester, contrasts the ethics of Progressive Era documentary photographer Lewis Hine with those of his more manipulative, and socially condescending, contemporaries.

### Evaluating the Progressives

RICHARD L. MCCORMICK

Convulsive reform movements swept across the American landscape from the 1890s to 1917. Angry farmers demanded better prices for their products, regulation of the railroads, and the destruction of what they thought was the evil power of bankers, middlemen, and corrupt politicians. Urban residents crusaded for better city services, more efficient municipal government, and, sometimes, the control of social groups whose habits they hated and feared. Members of various professions, such as social workers and doctors, tried to improve the dangerous and unhealthy conditions in which many people lived and worked. Businessmen, too, lobbied incessantly for goals which they

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