

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

From the Historians: The Progressive Era

The Story of American Freedom, Eric Foner (152-155)

1. How did the idea of “national state” and the role of the government change during the Progressive Era?

2. What were three of the “Federal” agencies created during the Progressive Era? What was their purpose? (Other could help on this.)

3. How was the electorate “simultaneously expanded and contracted” during the Progressive Era?

4. Why did many Progressives support women’s suffrage?

A Short History of the United States, Robert V. Remini (196-199)

5. How did states lead the way during the Progressive Era?

6. Who came up with the term “muckraker”? Why did he use this term?

7. What did Theodore Roosevelt support as part of his campaign for a “New Nationalism”?

8. What do you believe was the most important act signed into law by Woodrow Wilson? Why?

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From the Historians: The Progressive Era

Don't Know Much About History, Kenneth Davis (232-235)

9. What were three major accomplishments of W.E.B. Du Bois?

10. What joke was connected to Taft's name?

11. How did the Progressive Party get its nickname?

12. What were two major accomplishments during Woodrow Wilson's administration?
What was the biggest failure of Woodrow Wilson's administration?

A People's History of the United States, Howard Zinn (340-343)

14. What were two Progressive Amendments to the Constitution? What did they achieve?

15. According to Howard Zinn, what was the real goal of the "Progressive Period?"

16. During which presidency were acts passed to protect the quality of the American food supply? What were these acts?

17. According to Zinn, what really motivated Roosevelt's "progressive" policies?

Freedom and the Progressive State

Citizenship, nonetheless, remained central to the Progressive idea of freedom. Drawing on the heritage of the Civil War era and the reform programs of the Gilded Age, a broad coalition—reform-minded intellectuals, a resurgent women's movement, unionists, and socialists—emerged to reinvigorate the idea of an activist national state, and bring to its support a large urban middle-class and labor constituency. The old idea that "a minimum of State regulation" meant a "maximum of . . . freedom," wrote Father John A. Ryan, no longer could claim "any considerable number of adherents." Whether the aim was to regulate or destroy the power of the trusts, protect consumers, civilize the marketplace by eliminating cutthroat competition, or guarantee "industrial freedom" at the workplace, Progressives assumed that the modern era required a fundamental rethinking of the functions of government. The national state, noted one Progressive commentator, was "a moral agent," which should set the rules under which society conducted its affairs.²³

Most of the era's reform legislation, including changes in voting requirements, regulation of corporations, and the overseeing of safety and health conditions in factories, was enacted at the municipal and state levels. But the most striking development of the early twentieth century was the rise of the nation-state, complete with administrative agencies, independent commissions, and laws establishing the parameters for labor relations, business behavior, and financial policy, and acting as a broker among the disputatious groups whose conflicts threatened to destroy social harmony. These were the years when the Federal Reserve Board, the Federal Trade Commission, and other agencies came into existence, and when the federal government, through measures like the Pure Food and Drug Act (1906), sought to set basic rules for market behavior and protect citizens from market abuses.

To most Progressives, the tradition of localism and states' rights seemed an excuse for parochialism, an impediment to a renewed sense of national purpose. Poverty, economic insecurity, and lack of industrial democracy were national problems that demanded national solutions. As for *laissez-faire*, this, observed the Progressive social scientist Horace Kallen, had become "anathema among lovers of liberty." Many Progressives believed that economic evolution, rather than the misconduct of capitalists, had produced the large corporation acting nationally and even internationally. The same kind of process, they concluded, had made the national state the natural unit of political action. Only energetic government could create the social conditions for freedom. The democratic

state, wrote Herbert Croly, embodied an alternative to control of Americans' lives by narrow interests that manipulated politics or by the all-powerful corporations. To achieve the "Jeffersonian ends" of democratic self-determination and individual freedom, he insisted, it was now necessary to employ the "Hamiltonian means" of a government-directed economy.²⁴

Progressives could reject the traditional assumption that a powerful government posed a threat to freedom because their understanding of freedom was itself in flux. In a lecture in 1880 that would exert a powerful influence on Progressive social thought, the British philosopher T. H. Green had argued that freedom was a positive concept, a matter, ultimately, of "power." Green's call for a new definition of freedom was taken up throughout Progressive America. "Effective freedom," wrote John Dewey, who pondered the question from the 1890s until his death in 1952, was far different from the "highly formal and limited concept of liberty" as a preexisting possession of autonomous individuals that needed to be protected from outside restraint. It meant "effective power to do specific things," and as such was a function of "the *distribution* of powers that exists at a given time." Thus, freedom was "always a *social question*" and inevitably also a political issue. Freedom—and the individual endowments, powers, and desires it embodied—was constructed by and enjoyed through social institutions and democratic citizenship. "Freedom," wrote Dewey's brilliant young admirer Randolph Bourne, "means a democratic cooperation in determining the ideals and purposes and industrial and social institutions of a country."²⁵

What the nineteenth century had called autonomy appeared to Progressives like Dewey and Croly mere isolation; real freedom, they believed, involved the constant growth entailed by a lifetime of interaction with others. In seeing freedom as an ongoing process of self-realization, to be sure, they harked back to the Emersonian notion of personal fulfillment and even to Jefferson's natural right to "the pursuit of happiness." But to traditional notions of individualism and autonomy, Progressives wedded the idea that such freedom required the conscious creation of the social conditions for full human development. To Croly, this suggested that the state must become responsible for "a morally and socially desirable distribution of wealth." For Dewey, it meant equipping Americans with the intellectual resources required to understand the modern world, and empowering the state to combat economic deprivation and disempowerment. Progressivism, said the social scientist William F. Willoughby, "looks to state action as the . . . only practicable means now in sight, of giving to the individual, all individuals, not merely a small economically strong class, real freedom."²⁶

Yet while Progressive intellectuals developed a new conception of the national state, their "new democracy" (the title of Walter Weyl's influential book) had a highly ambiguous relationship to the inherited definition of political freedom as democratic participation in governance. Enhancing the power of the state made it all the more important to identify the boundaries of political participation. During the Progressive era, a host of changes were implemented in the electoral process and political arena, many seemingly contradictory in purpose. The electorate was simultaneously expanded and contracted, empowered and removed from direct influence on many functions of government. The era witnessed the massive disenfranchisement of blacks in the South (a process begun in Mississippi in 1890 and completed in Georgia in 1908), and a constitutional amendment enfranchising women—the largest expansion of democracy in U.S. history. It saw the adoption of measures like the initiative, referendum, and recall, designed to allow the electorate to propose and vote directly on legislation and remove officials from office, and the widespread replacement of elected mayors by appointed city managers. It saw literacy tests (increasingly common in the North as well as the South) expanded, and new residency and registration requirements implemented in the hope of limiting the franchise among the poor.²⁷

Taken as a whole, the electoral changes of the Progressive era represented a significant and ironic reversal of the nineteenth-century trend toward manhood suffrage and a rejection of the venerable idea that voting was an inalienable right of American citizenship. To most Progressives, the "fitness" of voters, not their absolute numbers, defined a functioning democracy. In the name of improving democracy, millions of men—mostly blacks, immigrants, and other workers—were eliminated from the voting rolls, even as millions of white women were added. The more egalitarian Progressives, like Dewey, believed that given the necessary opportunities and resources, all citizens were capable of mastering the spirit of disinterested inquiry and of applying themselves to finding pragmatic, "scientific" solutions to social problems. Thus, government could safely be removed from the control of trusts and machines and placed in the hands of "the people." Yet most Progressive thinkers were highly uncomfortable with the real world of politics, which seemed to revolve around the pursuit of narrow class, ethnic, and regional interests. Indeed, one reason for many Progressives' support for women's suffrage was the belief—encouraged by feminists—that as an independent, non-partisan force, women voters could help rescue politics from politicians and partisanship and reorient it toward the pursuit of the common good.²⁸

"He didn't believe in democracy, he believed simply in government," H. L.

Mendcken's quip about Theodore Roosevelt came uncomfortably close to the mark for many Progressive advocates of an empowered national state. The government could best exercise intelligent control over society through a "democracy" run by impartial experts and in many respects unaccountable to the citizenry. This technocratic impulse toward order, efficiency, and centralized management—all, ostensibly, in the service of social justice—was an important theme of Progressive reform. The title of Walter Lippmann's influential work of social commentary, *Drift and Mastery* (1914), posed the stark alternatives facing the nation. "Drift" meant continuing to operate according to the outmoded shibboleth of individual autonomy; "mastery," recognition that society could be remade by the application of rational inquiry to social problems and conflicts. "The scientific spirit," Lippmann wrote, was "the outlook of a free man." But, Lippmann feared, ordinary citizens, attached to antiquated ideas and parochial concerns, were ill-prepared to embrace it (an augury of his full-fledged repudiation of the idea of popular democracy during the 1920s). The new generation of corporate managers and educated professionals could be trusted to address creatively and efficiently America's deep social problems. For Lippmann, political freedom was less a matter of direct participation in governance than of proper policy outcomes.²⁹

But alongside this elitist administrative politics arose a more democratic Progressive vision of the activist state. As much as any other group, organized women reformers were its midwives. In the first two decades of the century, as women's suffrage for the first time became a mass movement, it moved beyond the elitism of the 1890s to engage a broad coalition, ranging from middle-class club women to unionists, socialists, and settlement house workers, and its rhetoric became more democratic and less nativist. Among the reasons for the movement's expanding base was that it became linked to the broad demand for state intervention on behalf of economic freedom. The immediate catalyst was a growing awareness of the plight of the immigrant poor among women involved in the settlement house movement, and the emergence of the condition of women and child laborers as a major focus of public concern.

Still barred from political participation in most states, women nonetheless were central to the era's political history. The effort of middle-class women to uplift the poor, through clubs, settlement houses, and other agencies, and of laboring women to uplift themselves, helped shift the center of gravity of political discourse toward activist government. Well-educated middle-class women not only found a calling in providing social services and education to poor families, but discovered the severe limitations of *laissez-faire* orthodoxy as an explanation for urban poverty and the failure of even well-organized social work

Jungle to expose the filthy conditions in meatpacking houses and neutralize opposition to its passage. The law required sanitary conditions and federal inspection of meatpacking facilities in any operation involved in interstate commerce.

To a very large extent the President's efforts reflected a larger Progressive movement that had developed within the country which demanded an end to the abuses of greedy corporations and machine politics. Several states had already initiated such reforms by requiring more accountability from business, and by returning government to the electorate. Wisconsin, for example, enacted railroad legislation and an income tax during the governorship of Robert M. La Follette. Other states joined the push toward progressivism, by adopting the direct primary and the initiative and referendum to allow voters a greater voice in deciding legislation. To a large extent the movement was advanced by a number of writers, such as Sinclair, Ida Tarbell, Henry Demarest Lloyd, Lincoln Stephens, and David Graham Phillips, who exposed corruption and greed in business and in both state and national politics. Magazines, including *Cosmopolitan*, *McClure's*, and the *American*, which had national circulation, published their reports, and these stories became more and more sensational as they delved deeper into the activities of such monopolies as the Standard Oil Company, the beef trust, and the Chicago stockyards, as well as corruption in city governments and the United States Senate. Roosevelt called them "muckrakers," comparing them to the man with the muckrake in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, who never sees what is around him because he is forever looking down at the filth he is raking.

The Progressive movement was an important development in the evolution of American democracy. It urged legislation that would allow the electorate to have a voice in initiating legislation that would benefit them; it urged legislation that would permit the public to approve or disapprove measures passed by state legislatures; and it urged legislation that would permit voters to recall elected officials who, for one reason or another, did not serve the public well-being. The electorate did not always take advantage of the proposed reforms, however. Indeed, compared with citizens of other democracies around the world, Americans have a poor record of exercising their voting rights. The percentage of qualified men and women who regularly go to the polls

rarely exceeds a little more than fifty percent, compared to eighty and ninety percent in other countries.

During the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, many of these reforms were put forward as part of the platforms of the various political parties: Democratic, Republican, Populist, Socialist, Socialist Labor, Progressive, Prohibition, Independence, and United Christian. In 1908, Roosevelt stepped aside—he could have run for another term but chose to abide by the example of George Washington by serving only two terms—and recommended William Howard Taft to succeed him as President. Taft, with a platform that called for stricter enforcement of the antitrust laws and further tariff protection, defeated William Jennings Bryan. The Mann-Elkins Act, passed on June 18, 1909, added telephone, telegraph, and cable companies to the jurisdiction of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) and permitted it to suspend rate increases or to reduce rates if necessary, subject to judicial review.

Republicans also passed the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1909, which raised duties to an average forty percent ad valorem, which Taft signed, declaring it "the best tariff bill the Republican party ever passed." A number of Insurgent Republicans sharply disagreed and joined Democratic efforts to reduce the tariff, but Taft vetoed those efforts. On January 21, 1911, these Insurgents formed the National Progressive Republican League in Washington, under the direction of Senator Robert M. La Follette, and demanded that the Republican Party directly support progressive legislation, such as the direct election of senators; the initiative, referendum, and recall reforms by the states; direct election of delegates to the national nominating convention; and direct primaries for the nomination of elective officers. Stewart Republicans resisted these demands and renominated Taft for President in 1912.

Insurgent Republicans in the House of Representatives, led by Representative George W. Norris of Nebraska, stripped Speaker Joseph Cannon of his dictatorial powers in controlling legislation. They also faulted Taft for failing to support and defend the conservationist views of his predecessor. When Theodore Roosevelt returned from a hunting trip to Africa, he broke with Taft, who he felt had betrayed his policies, and expounded on what he called the "new nationalism," which sup-

ported an income tax, workmen's compensation, labor laws for women and children, and stricter regulation of corporations. He then accepted the nomination of the Progressive Party in the election of 1912, declaring that he felt as strong as a "Bull Moose."

After a long and difficult struggle at the Democratic convention held in Baltimore between the forces of Beauchamp (Champ) Clark of Missouri, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey, a former president of Princeton University, the delegates chose Wilson on the forty-sixth ballot with a platform supporting political and economic reform. Wilson himself put forward a program known as the "New Freedom." It called for a reduced tariff, a reform of banking and currency, the strengthening of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, and the end of special privileges for business that had been granted by the federal government.

The election ended with the total triumph of the Democrats. The Party swept to victory in forty states. Wilson won 435 electoral votes to 88 for Roosevelt and 8 for Taft. He polled 6,286,214 popular votes to 4,126,020 for Roosevelt and 3,483,922 for Taft. For the first time in American history, African-Americans voted in large numbers for Wilson because he had promised them fair treatment and greater police protection. He won the support of W. E. B. DuBois, who had founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 to aid black people in their quest for economic and social equality. The Democrats also won control of the House of Representatives and elected more than two dozen governors, including several from traditionally Republican states, such as Massachusetts, Ohio, and New York.

Clearly, the Progressive movement had profoundly affected the course of American politics. It also helped bring about the passage in Congress of two important constitutional amendments: the Sixteenth, by which the income tax was legalized (it was adopted in February 1913); and the Seventeenth, which provided for the popular election of senators (and was ratified in April 1913).

One of the first things Wilson did on taking office was to call for the lowering of the tariff. He actually appeared before the members of Congress in giving his State of the Union address, thus reviving a practice of Presidents Washington and Adams that had been discontinued

by President Jefferson. Wilson informed the members that he wished to act as a partner in their legislative work, not as "a mere department of the Government hailing Congress from some isolated island of jealous power." As a result the Underwood-Simmons Tariff passed on October 13, 1913, which reduced rates on nearly 1,000 items, including wool, sugar, iron ore, leather, hemp, wood, coal, and many foods. It also levied a one percent tax on incomes over \$2,000 with a \$1,000 exemption for married men, and a graduated tax from one to six percent on incomes from \$20,000 to \$500,000. It was the first such income tax under the recently ratified Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Following an investigation by a Banking and Currency subcommittee, chaired by Arsene Pujio of Louisiana, into the monopolistic practices of the banking establishment, the Federal Reserve Act was passed on December 23, 1913. It established twelve regional banks, each owned by private member banks and authorized to issue federal reserve notes to member banks. A Federal Reserve Board of seven members, appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate, controlled this decentralized system. The act also authorized the board to raise or lower the discount rate of member banks, thereby enabling the board to command the availability of credit throughout the nation.

Two more pieces of Progressive legislation were approved: the Clayton Antitrust Act, passed on October 15, 1914, which strengthened the Sherman Antitrust Act by including practices not covered by the original legislation; and the Federal Trade Commission Act, enacted on September 26, 1914, which struck at business practices that were deemed to be unfair or in restraint of trade.

To strengthen his support from farmers and thereby his bid for reelection in 1916, Wilson signed the Federal Farm Loan Act, which divided the country into twelve districts, each having a Farm Loan bank that would provide farmers with long-term, low-interest credit. He also signed the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act in September 1916 which forbade the sale in interstate commerce of any product made by children under the age of sixteen.

A EUROPEAN war had broken out in the summer of 1914, and the attention of the nation was abruptly turned to it when a German

and, in the case of the legendary Joe Hill (1872?-1915), framed and executed, but granted a sort of immortality in the song "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night."

Under Debs, the Socialist Party attracted notable personalities, including Helen Keller, and managed to win as much as 6 percent of the presidential vote until the war intervened and in its wake the first powerful wave of anti-Communism swept the country, all but eradicating Socialism as a force in American politics and life.

Who was W.E.B. Du Bois?

One man who briefly joined the Socialists emerged from this period as the most eloquent and forceful voice for blacks since Frederick Douglass. In stark counterpoint to the accommodating spirit of Booker T. Washington (see pages 216-217), W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) became the trumpet of a new spirit of "manly agitation." The great civil rights upheaval in America was still half a century away, but Du Bois was its John the Baptist, the voice in the wilderness. Born in Massachusetts, he was the first black to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard, in 1895. He taught, lectured, and wrote, his most notable work being the classic *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Rejecting Washington's conservative restraint, Du Bois joined in founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, at that time a white-dominated organization, and became editor of its journal, *The Crisis*, where he served for a quarter-century.

Du Bois left the NAACP in 1934, when he promoted a more radical strategy and returned to teaching. Ten years later he rejoined the NAACP, and in 1945 was one of the Americans in attendance at the founding of the United Nations. Du Bois later joined the Communist party, left America, and renounced his citizenship, moving to Ghana, where he died.

American Voices

W.E.B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903):

So far as Mr. [Booker T.] Washington preaches thrift, patience, and industrial training for the masses, we must hold

up his hands and strive with him, rejoicing in his honors and glorying in the strength of this Joshua called of God and of man to lead the headless host. But so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustices, North or South, does not rightly value the privileges and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds—so far as he, the South, or the nation, does this—we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them.

What was the Bull Moose Party?

Though he could have run for another term and probably would have won handily, given his popularity, Teddy Roosevelt accepted the unwritten rule observed since Washington (and unbroken until Teddy's cousin Franklin D. came along). Having served out most of McKinley's unfinished term and his own full term, Roosevelt left a handpicked successor in the White House in William Howard Taft (1857-1930). In 1908, with Roosevelt's blessing and running on the Roosevelt record, Taft easily defeated the unsinkable William Jennings Bryan, who made his third unsuccessful bid for the White House. At the time, a common joke said the name Taft stood for "Take Advice From Teddy."

Roosevelt decided that he would head off for an African safari to stay out of Taft's way. But a year of bagging big game didn't quench Teddy's political hunting instincts. When he came back, he set about to recapture the Republican nomination from Taft, whose star could never shine as brilliantly as Roosevelt's had. Pegged a conservative, Taft had actually brought more antitrust suits than Roosevelt had, including the one that broke up Standard Oil in 1911, and Teddy's backers included a former Morgan banker. But this was to be an election fought to see who appeared most progressive. And it was Roosevelt who projected himself as the champion reformer. After a bloody battle in which Taft recaptured the Republican nomination, Roosevelt led a group of dissatisfied liberal Republicans out of the fold and into the Progressive Party. Claiming at one point that he was "as strong as a bull moose," Roosevelt gave the party its popular name.

The Democrats struggled through forty-six ballots before turning to Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), then governor of New Jersey, a surprise choice, and, for his times at least, rather liberal. The Democratic Party solidified behind Wilson, especially in the South, where Roosevelt was never forgiven for welcoming Booker T. Washington to the White House. Taft essentially threw in the towel and stayed out of the campaign—later to head the Supreme Court, the job he really always wanted. In spite of an unsuccessful assassination attempt that seemed to confirm his invincibility, Roosevelt campaigned hard, and Wilson's popular vote was less than the combined Taft-Roosevelt vote. (Socialist candidate Eugene V. Debs polled 6 percent of the vote—nearly a million votes, and an indication that the political winds had clearly shifted to the left.) But Wilson's electoral victory was sweeping. Taft won only two states and Roosevelt six. The rest of the country was solidly Democratic behind Wilson. And once again, a third-party candidacy had changed the course of American politics.

Like his opponents, Wilson ran on a progressive reform platform he called the "New Freedom." During his first administration, his legislative success was quite remarkable. Duties on foreign goods, the almost sacred weapon held by big business to keep out foreign competition, were reduced for the first time since the Civil War. The Sixteenth Amendment, imposing an income tax, was ratified. The Seventeenth Amendment, providing for election of U.S. senators by popular direct vote, was ratified. (Previously, U.S. senators had been chosen by state legislatures.) And a Federal Reserve Act gave the country its first central bank since Andrew Jackson's time. In other key reforms, the Federal Trade Commission was created and the Clayton Antitrust Act was passed; both were intended to control unfair and restrictive trade practices, exempting unions and farm groups.

The shame of Wilson's "progressive" administration was his abysmal record on civil rights. Under Wilson, Jim Crow became the policy of the U.S. government, with segregated federal offices, and blacks losing some of the few government jobs they held. Virginian-born, Wilson was a product of the post-Civil War South, and he reflected that mentality to a remarkable extent for a man who seemed so forward-thinking in other respects. But his

treatment of blacks was of little concern to a nation that was warily watching the approach of a European war.

Who was Pancho Villa?

Under Woodrow Wilson, America went from "big stick" to "Big Brother" when it came to Latin America. With the nearly completed Panama Canal to defend, Wilson was going to ensure that American power in the hemisphere would not be threatened. Local unrest in the Caribbean left American troops controlling Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. All were pushovers for American military might. Less simple to deal with was the instability in Mexico that produced Pancho Villa.

Mexico had undergone a series of coups and dictatorships in the early twentieth century, leaving General Victoriano Huerta installed as president in 1911 with the help of the American ambassador and the blessings of foreign investors who only wanted the stability that allowed them to exploit Mexico. But President Wilson refused to recognize Huerta's government, throwing Mexico into more turbulence. Using as a pretext the arrest of some American sailors, Wilson sent the U.S. Navy to invade Vera Cruz in 1914, and Huerta soon abdicated. The door was opened for another general, Venustiano Carranza, and two of his "generals," Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. An illiterate Indian, Zapata made some claims for social reform by giving land to the poor. Villa was simply a bandit who eventually rose against Carranza and seized Mexico City.

In an attempt to undermine Carranza, Villa began to attack the United States. He killed a dozen American passengers aboard a train in northern Mexico, and then began to make raids across the border into New Mexico, murdering a group of American mining engineers. An outraged Wilson sent General John J. Pershing (1860-1948) into Mexico in pursuit of Villa. But chasing the wily outlaw general was like trying to catch the wind. Villa led the American troops deeper into Mexican territory on a nine-month fox hunt that only served to alarm Carranza, raising tensions between America and Mexico.

With involvement in Europe's war growing more likely, Wil-

always publicly repudiated it. He always insisted on absolute equality. But he failed to accept the view that special measures were sometimes needed to achieve this equality."

Blacks began to organize: a National Afro-American Council formed in 1903 to protest against lynching, peonage, discrimination, disfranchisement; the National Association of Colored Women, formed around the same time, condemned segregation and lynchings. In Georgia in 1906 there was an Equal Rights Convention, which pointed to 260 Georgia Negroes lynched since 1885. It asked the right to vote, the right to enter the militia, to be on juries. It agreed blacks should work hard. "And at the same time we must agitate, complain, protest and keep protesting against the invasion of our manhood rights. . . ."

W. E. B. Du Bois, teaching in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1905, sent out a letter to Negro leaders throughout the country, calling them to a conference just across the Canadian border from Buffalo, near Niagara Falls. It was the start of the "Niagara Movement."

Du Bois, born in Massachusetts, the first black to receive a Ph.D. degree from Harvard University (1895), had just written and published his poetic, powerful book *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois was a Socialist sympathizer, although only briefly a party member.

One of his associates in calling the Niagara meeting was William Monroe Trotter, a young black man in Boston, of militant views, who edited a weekly newspaper, the *Guardian*. In it he attacked the moderate ideas of Booker T. Washington. When, in the summer of 1903, Washington spoke to an audience of two thousand at a Boston church, Trotter and his supporters prepared nine provocative questions, which caused a commotion and led to fistfights. Trotter and a friend were arrested. This may have added to the spirit of indignation which led Du Bois to spearhead the Niagara meeting. The tone of the Niagara group was strong:

We refuse to allow the impression to remain that the Negro-American assents to inferiority, is submissive under oppression and apologetic before insults. Through helplessness we may submit, but the voice of protest of ten million Americans must never cease to assail the ears of their fellows so long as America is unjust.

A race riot in Springfield, Illinois, prompted the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1910. Whites dominated the leadership of the new organization; Du Bois was the only black officer. He was also the first editor of the NAACP

periodical *The Crisis*. The NAACP concentrated on legal action and education, but Du Bois represented in it that spirit which was embodied in the Niagara movement's declaration: "Persistent manly agitation is the way to liberty."

What was clear in this period to blacks, to feminists, to labor organizers and socialists, was that they could not count on the national government. True, this was the "Progressive Period," the start of the Age of Reform; but it was a reluctant reform, aimed at quieting the popular risings, not making fundamental changes.

What gave it the name "Progressive" was that new laws were passed. Under Theodore Roosevelt, there was the Meat Inspection Act, the Hepburn Act to regulate railroads and pipelines, a Pure Food and Drug Act. Under Taft, the Mann-Elkins Act put telephone and telegraph systems under the regulation of the Interstate Commerce Commission. In Woodrow Wilson's presidency, the Federal Trade Commission was introduced to control the growth of monopolies, and the Federal Reserve Act to regulate the country's money and banking system. Under Taft were proposed the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution, allowing a graduated income tax, and the Seventeenth Amendment, providing for the election of Senators directly by popular vote instead of by the state legislatures, as the original Constitution provided. Also at this time, a number of states passed laws regulating wages and hours, providing for safety inspection of factories and compensation for injured workmen.

It was a time of public investigations aimed at soothing protest. In 1913 the Pujo Committee of Congress studied the concentration of power in the banking industry, and the Commission on Industrial Relations of the Senate held hearings on labor-management conflict.

Undoubtedly, ordinary people benefited to some extent from these changes. The system was rich, productive, complex; it could give enough of a share of its riches to enough of the working class to create a protective shield between the bottom and the top of the society. A study of immigrants in New York between 1905 and 1915 finds that 32 percent of Italians and Jews rose out of the manual class to higher levels (although not to *much* higher levels). But it was also true that many Italian immigrants did not find the opportunities inviting enough for them to stay. In one four-year period, seventy-three Italians left New York for every one hundred that arrived. Still, enough Italians became construction workers, enough Jews became businessmen and professionals, to create a middle-class cushion for class conflict.

Fundamental conditions did not change, however, for the vast majority of tenant farmers, factory workers, slum dwellers, miners, farm laborers, working men and women, black and white. Robert Wiebe sees in the Progressive movement an attempt by the system to adjust to changing conditions in order to achieve more stability. "Through rules with impersonal sanctions, it sought continuity and predictability in a world of endless change. It assigned far greater power to government . . . and it encouraged the centralization of authority." Harold Faulkner concluded that this new emphasis on strong government was for the benefit of "the most powerful economic groups."

Gabriel Kolko calls it the emergence of "political capitalism," where the businessmen took firmer control of the political system because the private economy was not efficient enough to forestall protest from below. The businessmen, Kolko says, were not opposed to the new reforms; they initiated them, pushed them, to stabilize the capitalist system in a time of uncertainty and trouble.

For instance, Theodore Roosevelt made a reputation for himself as a "trust-buster" (although his successor, Taft, a "conservative," while Roosevelt was a "Progressive," launched more antitrust suits that did Roosevelt). In fact, as Wiebe points out, two of J. P. Morgan's men—Elbert Gary, chairman of U.S. Steel, and George Perkins, who would later become a campaigner for Roosevelt—"arranged a general understanding with Roosevelt by which . . . they would cooperate in any investigation by the Bureau of Corporations in return for a guarantee of their companies' legality." They would do this through private negotiations with the President. "A gentleman's agreement between reasonable people," Wiebe says, with a bit of sarcasm.

The panic of 1907, as well as the growing strength of the Socialists, Wobblies, and trade unions, speeded the process of reform. According to Wiebe: "Around 1908 a qualitative shift in outlook occurred among large numbers of these men of authority. . . ." The emphasis was now on "enticements and compromises." It continued with Wilson, and "a great many reform-minded citizens indulged the illusion of a progressive fulfillment."

What radical critics now say of those reforms was said at the time (1901) by the *Bankers' Magazine*: "As the business of the country has learned the secret of combination, it is gradually subverting the power of the politician and rendering him subservient to its purposes. . . ."

There was much to stabilize, much to protect. By 1904, 318 trusts,

with capital of more than seven billion dollars, controlled 40% of the U.S. manufacturing.

In 1909, a manifesto of the new Progressivism appeared—a book called *The Promise of American Life* by Herbert Croly, editor of the *New Republic* and an admirer of Theodore Roosevelt. He saw the need for discipline and regulation if the American system were to continue. Government should do more, he said, and he hoped to see the "sincere and enthusiastic imitation of heroes and saints"—by whom he may have meant Theodore Roosevelt.

Richard Hofstadter, in his biting chapter on the man the public saw as the great lover of nature and physical fitness, the way hero, the Boy Scout in the White House, says: "The advisers to whom Roosevelt listened were almost exclusively representatives of industrial and finance capital—men like Hanna, Robert Bacon, and George W. Perkins of the House of Morgan, Elihu Root, Senator Nelson W. Aldrich . . . and James Stillman of the Rockefeller interests." Responding to his worried brother-in-law writing from Wall Street, Roosevelt replied: "I intend to be most conservative, but in the interests of the corporations themselves and above all in the interests of the country."

Roosevelt supported the regulatory Hepburn Act because he feared something worse. He wrote to Henry Cabot Lodge that the railroad lobbyists who opposed the bill were wrong: "I think they are very short-sighted not to understand that to beat it means to increase the movement for government ownership of the railroads." His action against the trusts was to induce them to accept government regulation, in order to prevent destruction. He prosecuted the Morgan railroad monopoly in the Northern Securities Case, considering it an antitrust victory, but it hardly changed anything, and, although the Sherman Act provided for criminal penalties, there was no prosecution of the men who had planned the monopoly—Morgan, Harriman, Hill.

As for Woodrow Wilson, Hofstadter points out he was a conservative from the start. As a historian and political scientist, Wilson wrote (*The State*): "In politics nothing radically novel may safely be attempted." He urged "slow and gradual" change. His attitude toward labor, Hofstadter says, was "generally hostile," and he spoke of the "crude and ignorant minds" of the Populists.

James Weinstein (*The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*) has studied the reforms of the Progressive period, especially the process by which business and government, sometimes with the aid of labor leaders, worked out the legislative changes they thought necessary.