



The Progressive Presidents

Objectives

1. Describe how Theodore Roosevelt tried to limit the power of business.
2. Summarize the main points of Roosevelt's Square Deal.
3. Identify the reforms promoted by Presidents Taft and Wilson.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Explain Issues From the Past Every era in history has its issues—the ideas or problems that people think about, argue about, and put their energies into. As you read about history, explain these issues to yourself as a way of understanding what mattered to people of that time. Use headings and main ideas to help you identify and explain the issues.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

efficient, p. 650

rigid, p. 653

Key Terms and People

Theodore Roosevelt, p. 649

trustbuster, p. 650

conservation, p. 651

national park, p. 651

William Howard Taft, p. 652

Woodrow Wilson, p. 652

★ **Background Knowledge** Although Progressives made many gains at the state and local levels, they had little success at the national level. William McKinley, who was elected President in 1896 and 1900, had the strong support of bankers and business leaders. Then, a shocking assassination thrust a Progressive into the presidency.

The First Progressive President

On September 6, 1901, an unemployed anarchist stood nervously in line at the world's fair in Buffalo, New York. He was waiting to shake the hand of President William McKinley. When McKinley extended his hand, the assassin fired two shots into the President. McKinley died eight days later.

Vice President **Theodore Roosevelt** then became President. At age 42, he was the youngest President to take office. He was also a strong supporter of Progressive goals.

Teddy Roosevelt Teddy Roosevelt—or TR, as he was called—came from a wealthy New York family. As a child, he suffered from asthma and often was sick. To build his strength, he lifted weights, ran, and boxed. For a time, he worked on a cattle ranch.

TR wanted to serve the public. At the age of 23, he was elected to the New York state legislature. Later, he served on the Civil Service Commission. He then headed New York City's police department and served as assistant secretary of the navy.

Main Idea

Theodore Roosevelt was the first President to support limits on the power of business.



Campaign tray showing Teddy Roosevelt as a soldier

In 1898, the United States went to war against Spain. (You will read about this in the next chapter.) Roosevelt led a unit of troops in some daring exploits that received widespread publicity. He returned home to a hero's welcome and was elected governor of New York. Two years later, Roosevelt was elected Vice President under McKinley.

Vocabulary Builder

efficient (ee FISH ehnt) *adj.* done in a way that minimizes waste and gets better results

TR and Big Business As President, Roosevelt won a reputation as a **trustbuster**, a person working to destroy monopolies and trusts. He was not against big business, he said. Indeed, he liked big business. But he saw a difference between "good trusts" and "bad trusts." Good trusts, he said, were **efficient** and fair and should be left alone. Bad ones took advantage of workers and cheated the public by eliminating competition. The government, he said, must either control bad trusts or break them up.

Roosevelt resolved to do just that. In 1902, he had the government bring a lawsuit against the Northern Securities Company. Northern Securities was a trust that had been formed to control competition among railroads. TR argued that the company used unfair business practices.

In 1904, the Supreme Court ruled that Northern Securities had violated the Sherman Antitrust Act. It ordered the trust to be broken up. The decision was a victory for Progressives. For the first time, the Sherman Antitrust Act had been used to break up trusts, not unions.

Roosevelt later launched suits against other trusts, including Standard Oil and the American Tobacco Company. In time, the courts broke up both trusts because they attempted to limit free trade.

A Boost for Organized Labor Roosevelt also clashed with mine owners. In 1902, Pennsylvania coal miners went on strike for better pay and a shorter workday. Mine owners refused to negotiate with the miners' union.

As winter approached, schools and hospitals ran out of coal. Furious at the owners, Roosevelt threatened to send in troops to run the mines. Finally, the mine owners sat down with the union and reached an agreement. Roosevelt was the first President to side with strikers.

Checkpoint What was Theodore Roosevelt's attitude toward big business?

Main Idea

Roosevelt's program of Progressive reform included measures to conserve natural resources and protect consumers.

The Square Deal

Roosevelt ran for President in his own right in 1904. During the campaign, he promised Americans a Square Deal. By this, he meant that everyone from farmers and consumers to workers and owners should have the same opportunity to succeed. That promise helped Roosevelt win a huge victory.

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Conserving Natural Resources Roosevelt took action to protect the nation's wilderness areas. To fuel the nation's surging industrial growth, lumber companies were cutting down entire forests. Miners were removing iron and coal at a frantic pace, leaving gaping holes in the earth.

Roosevelt loved the outdoors and worried about the destruction of the wilderness. He pressed for **conservation**, or the protection of natural resources. Roosevelt was not against using resources, but he believed they had to be used wisely, with an eye toward the future. For example, he urged lumber companies to plant new trees in the forests they were clearing. Roosevelt declared:

“I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.”

—Theodore Roosevelt, “The New Nationalism”

Under Roosevelt, the U.S. Forest Service was formed in 1905 to conserve the nation's woodlands. Roosevelt also had thousands of acres of land set aside for national parks. A **national park** is a natural area protected and managed by the federal government.

Roosevelt and Conservation

In 1903, President Roosevelt (left) went camping in California's Yosemite Valley with conservationist John Muir (right). The trip strengthened Roosevelt's commitment to conservation. Today, you can still enjoy the wilderness areas of Yosemite National Park. **Critical Thinking: Link Past and Present** What do the two pictures above suggest about the long-term effects of Roosevelt's conservation policies?



Explain Issues From the Past

Explain Roosevelt's reasons for supporting conservation and how they affected his approach to big business.

Protecting Consumers Roosevelt also supported reforms to protect consumers. Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* had shocked Roosevelt. The President made public a report exposing unhealthy conditions in meatpacking plants. The public outcry forced Congress to pass a law in 1906 allowing closer inspections of meatpacking houses.

Muckrakers had also exposed drug companies for making false claims about medicines and adding harmful chemicals to canned foods. In response, Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act, which required food and drug makers to list all the ingredients on packages.

Checkpoint Why did Roosevelt support conservation?

Main Idea

Roosevelt's successors also promoted reforms.

Three-Way Race

TR, the "bull moose" candidate, made the presidential election of 1912 a three-way race. **Critical Thinking: Draw Inferences** Why does the cartoonist show the "moose" nipping at the elephant?



Taft and Wilson

Roosevelt did not want to run for reelection in 1908. Instead, he backed William Howard Taft, his secretary of war. Taft won easily.

Troubles for Taft Taft's approach to the presidency was far different from Roosevelt's. Unlike the energetic Roosevelt, Taft was quiet and cautious. Roosevelt loved power, Taft was wary of it.

Nevertheless, Taft supported many Progressive causes. He broke up even more trusts than TR. He favored the graduated income tax, approved new safety rules for mines, and signed laws giving government workers the eight-hour workday. He also oversaw the creation of a federal office to make regulations controlling child labor.

Despite such actions, Taft lost Progressive support. In 1909, he signed a bill that raised most tariffs. Progressives opposed the new law, arguing that tariffs raised prices for consumers. Also, Taft modified some conservation policies. Progressives accused the President of blocking conservation efforts.

Election of 1912 By 1912, Roosevelt had broken with Taft. He decided to run against Taft for the Republican nomination. Roosevelt had massive popular support, but Taft controlled the Republican Party leadership. At its convention, the Republican Party nominated Taft.

Roosevelt and his supporters stormed out of the convention. They set up a new party, called the Progressive Party, and chose Roosevelt as their candidate. He accepted, saying "I feel as strong as a bull moose." Roosevelt's Progressive Party became known as the Bull Moose Party.

Democrats chose Woodrow Wilson, also a Progressive, as their candidate. Wilson had served as president of Princeton University and as governor of New Jersey. Wilson was known as a brilliant

scholar and a cautious reformer. Though honest and idealistic, he was often criticized for being rigid and unwilling to compromise with others.

Together, Taft and Roosevelt won more votes than Wilson. However, they split the Republican vote, and so Wilson won the 1912 presidential election.

Wilson and the New Freedom Wilson hoped to restore free competition among American corporations. He called his program to achieve this goal the New Freedom. To ensure fair competition, Wilson persuaded Congress to create the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 1914. The FTC had the power to investigate companies and order them to stop using unfair practices to destroy competitors.

Wilson signed the Clayton Antitrust Act in 1914. The new law banned some business practices that limited competition. In addition, it stopped antitrust laws from being used against unions.

To regulate banking, Congress passed the Federal Reserve Act in 1913. The act set up a system of federal banks and gave the government the power to raise or lower interest rates and control the money supply.

Checkpoint How did a split among Republicans enable Woodrow Wilson to become President?

★ Looking Back and Ahead Despite Wilson's successes, the Progressive movement slowed after 1914. By then, Progressives had achieved many of their goals. Also, in 1914, war broke out in Europe. Americans worried that the war might soon affect them. You will read about World War I in the next unit.

Vocabulary Builder

rigid (RIH jihd) *adj.* strict; not easily bent or changed



Woodrow Wilson

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Recall** Why did Theodore Roosevelt want to break up Northern Securities and Standard Oil?
(b) Identify Benefits Which groups of people might have benefited from Roosevelt's actions as a trustbuster?
- (a) Recall** Why did the Republican Party split during the 1912 presidential election campaign?
(b) Draw Conclusions What impact might a powerful third party such as the Bull Moose Party have on a presidential election?

Reading Skill

- 3. Explain Issues From the Past** Reread the text following the subheading "A Boost for Organized Labor." Explain the central issues that moved Roosevelt. How did he interact with big business over these issues?

Vocabulary Builder

Read each sentence below. If the sentence is true, write YES. If the sentence is not true, write NO and explain why.

- 4.** Theodore Roosevelt was called a **trustbuster** because he lost the trust of the people.

- 5.** Roosevelt was a strong supporter of **conservation**, which is the protection of natural resources.

Writing

- 6.** Write the opening paragraph to an editorial evaluating TR's presidency. Complete the following topic sentence, and introduce each point that follows with a transition word: Theodore Roosevelt's Square Deal created a number of reforms that were *(express your opinion here)*. For example, he _____. In addition, he _____. Most important (OR worst of all), he _____.