

## Progressive Business Reforms

The early progressives identified political and social problems that made individual or local efforts to fix them. The progressive movement provided one of the best examples of Americans attempting to overcome problems through reform. The demand for reform was due to such causes as oppression of the workers, little government interference in business practices, government corruption, and other social injustices. Generally reform movements like the one in the Progressive era are based on the belief that society can be made better.

### **Interstate Commerce Act- 1887**

Early on, many American businesses operated with little regulations from the government. However, change was on horizon around the late 1800's. One of the first changes made in the relationship between business and government was the regulation of railroad practices. Early on, railroad's sometimes charged local farmers more to haul their crops over short distances than they charged for large companies to ship goods longer distance's on more competitive national routes. Some states passed laws prohibiting this practice, but the US Supreme Court said this was unconstitutional. The Court said that only Congress had the power to regulate interstate (*between states*) commerce (*business*). So in 1887 Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act. This federal law now prohibited unfair practices by railroad companies, such as charging higher rates for shorter routes. The law even created an agency, Interstate Commerce Commission, to enforce the Act. This was the first example of government regulating private business in America.

### **The Pure Food and Drug Act- 1906**

Progressive Presidents during this time were also concerned with protecting consumers in America. So in 1906 two key laws were passed under T. Roosevelt: The Meat inspection Act & the Pure Food and Drug Act. The first Act was a response to muckraker's accounts of unsanitary meatpacking plants. Now all meat that in the U.S. was first inspected by the government before it could be sold. This was to ensure that things like rats and poisoned bread did not end up in the sold meat. The Pure Food and Drug Act established a new Agency, Food and Drug Administration or F.D.A. to test and approve all food and drugs before they were sold. This was to ensure that products were not mislabeled or falsely advertising ingredients or cures.

### **Department of Labor- 1913**

In 1911, public attitudes began to shift towards labor unions after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. In this horrific accident 146 garment workers were killed because the doors to the factory were bolted shut from the outside each work day, there were no sprinklers in the building, and it had only one inadequate fire escape. In response, Congress passed legislation that was sympathetic to unions but it also created separate Cabinet post, the Department of Labor in 1913, which studied the problems of labor. This cabinet post was to "promote and develop the welfare of working people, and to improve their working conditions". This was yet

another example of change in the relationship of government and private business in that Government was now paying attention to the treatment of laborers.

### **Clayton Antitrust Act - 1914**

Previous to 1914, the Sherman Anti-trust Act tried to stop monopolies from engaging in unfair practices that prevented fair completion in business. However, the law was very vague and unclear. Further Progressive reforms were heard in 1914 with the passage of the Clayton Anti-trust Act. This law extended the power of the government in private business affairs by laying out specific rules that made it harder for trusts to form and to squeeze out competition. For example, it was now illegal to lower prices in one regional market but not another. In addition, the Federal Trade Commission was created to regulate and monitor private business.

### **Child Labor Act 1916-**

Progressive President Wilson expanded worker protection with specific regard to children. In 1916, he signed the Child Labor Act which prohibited companies involved in interstate commerce from hiring workers under 14 years of age. Although the law protected fewer than 10% of children in the workforce, it set minimum protections and opened the door for future government regulation in business hiring and working practices. Previous to this law child labor abuse was only investigated by the government. There were no laws regulating how businesses were to treat or hire child laborers.

### **Federal Reserve Act 1913-**

Progressives also wanted government to stabilize the banking system. This they hoped would reduce many of the financial panics, which frequently plagued the country and often triggered economic depressions. In 1913 Congress passed the Federal Reserve Act which divided the nation up into 12 regions, each with a Federal Reserve Bank. These banks make up the central bank of the US. Under this system the private banks remain independent, but agree to operate under the rules of the Federal Reserve System, or the "The Fed". The Fed set monetary policy to regulate the amount of money that goes into circulation around the nation. It also offers a safety net to private banks by lending them money if they are short of funds. They also determine how much a bank can loan out to people and business and set interest rate for companies and people that borrow money.

1. How did the Progressive Presidents and legislation reform/change/impact the following areas( 12-18 Sentences) (Cite Information):
  - a. Interstate Business
  - b. Food & Drugs
  - c. Labor Relations & Child Labor
  - d. Monopolies
  - e. Banking



Explain the meaning of the cartoon:

It shall be unlawful for any person engaged in commerce to pay or contact for the payment of anything of value to or for the benefit of a customer of such person in the course of such commerce as compensation or in consideration for any services or facilities furnished by or through such customer in connection with the processing, handling, sale, or offering for sale of any products or commodities manufactured, sold, or offered for sale by such person, unless such payment or consideration is available on proportionally equal terms to all other customers competing in the distribution of such products or commodities.

-Clayton Antitrust Act (1914)

1. The Progressives supported many pieces of federal legislation that attempted to
  - A) deny labor unions the right to collectively bargain for their members
  - B) regulate the abuses of the economy by industry
  - C) allow businesses to run without government control
  - D) nationalize all banks and businesses under a single set of regulations



Explain the meaning of the cartoon:

Document A Source: Excerpt from Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, 1909

As more young immigrants moved from farms in the country to urban areas, dance halls became a popular form of recreation. Many progressive reformers found these dance halls to be inappropriate and pushed to create alternative forms of entertainment for youth, like amusement parks.

One Sunday night at twelve o'clock I walked past a large public dance hall. As I was standing by the rail, a young man approached me and quite simply asked me to introduce him to some 'nice girl,' saying that he did not know anyone there. I replied that a public dance hall was not the best place in which to look for a nice girl, and he said: 'But I'm awfully lonesome since I came to Chicago.' And then he added rather defiantly: 'Some nice girls do come here. It's one of the best halls in town.'

The public dance halls are filled with frivolous and irresponsible young people in a feverish search for pleasure. They are not a substitute for the old dances on the village green in which all of the older people in the village participated. Chaperonage then was not a social duty but natural and inevitable.

Let us fix this modern city so that it shall be free from the wickedness and weakness which tempt the young people who are living in its tenement houses and working in its factories.

- Vocabulary Defiantly: boldly opposing
- Frivolous: Not having serious purpose or value
- Chaperonage: adult supervision
- Tenement: run-down and overcrowded apartment

Document B: Excerpts from an article by a Progressive social reformer, Louise de Koven Bowen, called “Dance Halls,” published in June 1911.

The dances are short—four to five minutes; the intermissions are long— fifteen to twenty minutes; thus ample opportunity is given for drinking. In these same halls obscene language is permitted, and even the girls carry on indecent conversation, cursing a lot, while the less sophisticated girls stand around listening, scandalized but fascinated. Many of the halls are poorly lighted. There is very little protection in case of fire...

A city law should be passed covering the following points:

1. All dance halls should be made to comply with the regulations of the Building and Fire Departments so as to insure proper sanitation and adequate fire protection....
2. The sale of liquor in dance halls or in buildings connected with them should be prohibited....
7. No immoral dancing or familiarity should be tolerated.
8. People under the influence of liquor or known prostitutes should not be permitted in dance halls....
11. There should be an inspector of dance halls who should have in his department a corps of assistants who would regularly inspect the halls and make reports concerning them to him weekly.

Vocabulary familiarity: inappropriate or offensive language or behavior

Document C: Excerpt from Jane Addams’ book, *Twenty Years at Hull- House*, (1910). This passage comes from a chapter called “Immigrants and Their Children.”

An Italian girl who has had lessons in cooking will help her mother to connect the entire family with American food and household habits. That the mother has never baked bread in Italy—only mixed it in her own house and then taken it out to the village oven—makes all the more valuable her daughter's understanding of the complicated cooking stove. The same thing is true of the girl who learns to sew, and more than anything else, perhaps, of the girl who receives the first simple instruction in the care of little children—that skillful care which every tenement-house baby requires if he is to live through his second summer.

Through civic instruction in the public schools, the Italian woman slowly becomes urbanized, and the habits of her entire family change. The public schools in the immigrant neighborhoods deserve all the praise as Americanizing forces.

Document D: The document below was written by Hilda Satt Polacheck in the 1950s, in her book *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl*. She tells about her memories of Hull House from 1896.

Several days before Christmas 1896 one of my Irish playmates suggested that I go with her to a Christmas party at Hull-House. I asked her if there would be any Jewish children at the party. She said that there were Jewish children at the parties every year.

I then began to understand that things might be different in America. In Poland it had not been safe for Jewish children to be on the streets on Christmas.

At the party, the children of the Hull-House Music School sang some songs, that I later found out were called “Christmas carols.” I shall never forget the sweetness of those voices. I could not connect this beautiful party with any hatred or superstition that existed among the people of Poland.

As I look back, I know that I became an American at this party. I was with children who had been brought here from all over the world, with their fathers and mothers, in search of a free and happy life. And we were all having a good time at a party, as the guests of an American, Jane Addams.

Directions: Use documents A-D to fill out the graphic organizer below. You must have three points for each side.

Progressive social reformers were generous and helpful: List the 3 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

2) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

3) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

Progressive social reformers were condescending and judgmental: List the 3 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

2) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

3) From Document \_\_\_\_\_: