Chapter 28
Progressivism and the Republican Roosevelt, 1901–1912

Presented by:
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I. Progressive Roots

– Progressive ideas and theories:
  • Old philosophy of hands-off individualism seemed out of place in modern machine age
  • Progressive theorists insisted society could no longer afford luxury of limitless “let-alone” (laissez-faire) policy
  • The people, through government, must substitute mastery for drift
– Politicians and writers began to pinpoint targets:
  • Bryan, Altgeld, and Populists branded “bloated trusts” with stigma of corruption and wrongdoing

I. Progressive Roots (cont.)

• 1894: Henry Demarest Lloyd criticized Standard Oil Company in his book Wealth Against Commonwealth
• Thorstein Veblen assailed new rich in his The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899):
  – Attacked “predatory wealth” and “conspicuous consumption”
  – In his view, parasitic leisure class engaged in wasteful “business” rather than productive “industry”
  – Urged social leadership pass from superfluous titans to useful engineers
• Jacob A. Riis shocked middle-class Americans in 1890 with How the Other Half Lives
I. Progressive Roots (cont.)

- Damning indictment of dirt, disease, vice, and misery in New York slums
- Book deeply influenced Theodore Roosevelt

• Novelist Theodore Dreiser:
  - Used his blunt prose to batter promoters and profiteers in *The Financier* (1912) and *The Titan* (1914)

• Socialists registered appreciable strength at ballot box (see Thinking Globally section)

• Social gospel movement:
  - Promoted a brand of progressivism based on Christianity
  - Used religious doctrine to demand better housing and living conditions for urban poor

II. Raking Muck with the Muckrakers

• Popular magazines—McClure’s, *Cosmopolitan*, *Collier’s* and *Everybody’s*:
  - Dug deep for dirt the public loved
  - Editors financed extensive research
  - President Theodore Roosevelt called them muckrakers
  - Reformers writers Lincoln Steffens and Ida M. Tarbell targeted:
    » Corrupt alliance between big business and municipal government.
    » Exposé of Standard Oil Company
    » Malpractices of life insurance companies, tariff lobbyists, trusts, etc.
    » Some of most effective fire by muckrakers directed at social evils
II. Raking Muck with the Muckrakers (cont.)

- Immoral “white slave” traffic in women, rickety slums, appalling number of industrial accidents, subjugation of blacks, and abuse of child labor
- Vendors of patent medicines also criticized

• Muckrakers signified much about nature of progressive reform movement:
  - Long on lamentation but stopped short of revolutionary remedies
  - Counted on publicity to right social wrongs
  - Sought not to overthrow capitalism, but to cleanse it
  - Cure for ills of American democracy was more democracy
III. Political Progressivism (cont.)

• “Who were the progressives?”
  – Militarists—Theodore Roosevelt
  – Pacifists—Jane Addams
  – Female settlement workers, labor unionists, and enlightened businessmen
  – Sought to modernize American institutions to achieve two goals:
    • Use state to curb monopoly power
    • Improve common person’s conditions of life and labor
III. Political Progressivism  
(cont.)

– Emerged in both political parties, in all regions, and at all levels of government.

– Regain power from corrupt “interests” by:
  • Direct primary elections to undercut party bosses.
  • Initiative so voters could directly propose legislation.
  • Referendum would place laws on ballot for final approval by people.
  • Recall would enable voters to remove corrupt officials beholden to lobbyists.

III. Political Progressivism  
(cont.)

– Rooting out graft became a prime goal.

– Introduced secret Australian ballot to counteract boss rule.

– Direct election of senators a favorite goal achieved by constitutional amendment:
  • Seventeenth Amendment, approved in 1913, established direct election of U.S. senators.

– Woman suffrage received growing support:
  • States like Washington, California, and Oregon gradually extended vote to women.
IV. Progressivism in the Cities and States

• Progressives scored impressive gains in cities:
  – Galveston, Texas appointed expert-staffed commissions to manage urban affairs
  – Other communities adopted city-manager system
  – Urban reformers attacked “slumlords,” juvenile delinquency, wide-open prostitution
  – Looked to German and English cities for examples of how to improve services:
    • Clean up water supplies

IV. Progressivism in the Cities and States (cont.)

• Light streets
• Run trolley cars
• Support for public ownership of utilities grew

– Reforms bubbled up to states, like Wisconsin:
  • Governor Robert (“Fighting Bob”) La Follette a crusader and militant progressive Republican leader
    – Wrested considerable control from crooked railroad and lumber corporations and returned it to the people
    – Perfected a scheme for regulating public utilities

IV. Progressivism in the Cities and States (cont.)

– Other states marched toward progressivism:
  • Undertook to regulate railroads and trusts by way of public utility commissions
  • Leaders:
    – Hiram W. Johnson of California
    – Charles Evans Hughes of New York
V. Progressive Women

• Women an indispensable part of progressive army
  – Critical focus was settlement house movement—which offered a side door to public life:
    • Exposed middle-class women to problems plaguing cities:
      – Poverty, political corruption, and intolerable working and living conditions
    • Gave them skill and confidence to attack those evils

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V. Progressive Women (cont.)

– Women’s club movement provided a broader civic entryway for middle-class women
– Women, whose place was seen in home, defended new activities as an extension—not a rejection—of traditional roles:
  • Thus driven to moral and “maternal” issues:
    – Child labor, unsafe food, etc.
  • Agitated through groups like National Consumers League (1899) and Women’s Trade Union League (1903)
  • Campaigned for factory reform and temperance:

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V. Progressive Women (cont.)

– Florence Kelley became State of Illinois’ first chief factory inspector:
  » One of nation’s leading advocates for improved factory conditions
  » Took control of new National Consumers League
– In landmark case Muller v. Oregon (1908):
  – Louis D. Brandeis persuaded Supreme Court to accept laws protecting women workers by presenting evidence of harmful effects of factory labor on women’s weaker bodies
  – Progressives hailed Brandeis’s achievement as triumph over existing legal doctrines
– American welfare state focused more on protecting women and children than on granting benefits to everyone
V. Progressive Women (cont.)

– Setbacks:
  • 1905, Supreme Court in *Lochner v. New York* voided New York law establishing ten-hour day for bakers
  • If laws regulating factories not enforced, they proved worthless—for example, lethal fire (1911) at Triangle Shirtwaist Company of New York
    – 146 women died
  • By 1917 thirty states had workers’ compensation laws

– Corner saloons attracted ire of progressives:
  – *Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)* mobilized nearly one million women
  – Some states and counties passed “dry” laws to control, restrict, or abolish alcohol
  – Big cities generally “wet” because immigrants accustomed in Old Country to free flow of alcohol
  – By World War I (1914), nearly half of U.S. population lived in “dry” territory
VI. TR's Square Deal for Labor

• TR feared public interest being submerged at home:
  – As a progressive, he called for a “Square Deal” for capital, labor, and public at large
  – His program embraced three C’s:
    • Control of corporations
    • Consumer protection
    • Conservation of natural resources
  – First test came in coal mines of Pennsylvania (1902)
    • Exploited workers struck for better pay and hours

VI. TR's Square Deal for Labor (cont.)

• Roosevelt finally threatened to seize mines if owners would not agree to arbitration with workers
  – First threat to use U.S. troops against owners, as opposed to against workers
• Roosevelt urged Congress to create new Department of Commerce and Labor (1903)
  – Ten years later it was separated in two
• New agency included a Bureau of Corporations authorized to investigate businesses engaged in interstate commerce:
  – Bureau helped break stranglehold of monopoly
  – Cleared road for era of “trust-busting”
VII. TR Corrals the Corporations

• First—railroads:
  – **Elkins Act** (1903) aimed at railroad rebates:
    • Heavy fines imposed on railroads that gave rebates and on shippers that accepted them
  – **Hepburn Act** (1906):
    • Free passes severely restricted
    • Interstate Commerce Commission expanded:
      – Included express companies, sleeping-car companies and pipelines
      – Commission could nullify existing rates and stipulate maximum rates

VII. TR Corrals the Corporations
(cont.)

*Trusts a fighting word in progressive era*

– Roosevelt believed trusts here to stay:
  • Some were “good” trusts with public consciences
  • Some were “bad” trusts that lust greedily for power
– First burst into headlines with legal attack on Northern Securities Company (1902):
  • Railroad holding company organized by financial titan J.P. Morgan and empire builder James J. Hill
  • They sought a virtual monopoly in Northwest
  • TR challenged potentates of industrial aristocracy

VII. TR Corrals the Corporations
(cont.)

• Supreme Court upheld TR’s antitrust suit and ordered Northern Securities Company to dissolve:
  – Northern Securities decision jolted Wall Street
  – Angered big business
  – Enhanced Roosevelt’s reputation as trust smasher
• TR initiated over forty legal proceedings against giant monopolies:
  – Supreme Court (1905) declared beef trust illegal
  – Fist of justice fell upon monopolies controlling sugar, fertilizers, harvesters, and other key products
• TR’s real purpose was symbolic: prove conclusively that government, not private business, ruled country
VII. TR Corrals the Corporations (cont.)

- TR believed in regulating, not fragmenting, big business combines
- He hoped to make business leaders more amenable to federal regulation
- He never swung trust-crushing stick with maximum force
- Industrial behemoths more “tame” by end of TR’s reign

- His successor, William Howard Taft actually “busted” more trusts than TR
  - Taft launched suit against U.S. Steel (1911) but it caused a political reaction by TR

VIII. Caring for the Consumer

- Roosevelt backed a measure (1906) that benefited both corporations and consumers:
  - Even meat packing industry called for safer canned products
  - Uproar from Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1906):
    - Intended to focus on plight of workers
    - Instead appalled public with description of disgustingly unsanitary preparation of food products
    - Described Chicago’s slaughterhouses
VIII. Caring for the Consumer (cont.)

- Roosevelt induced Congress to pass:
  - **Meat Inspection Act** (1906):
    - Decreed that preparation of meat shipped over state lines subject to federal inspection from coral to can
  - **Pure Food and Drug Act** (1906):
    - Designed to prevent adulteration and mislabeling of foods and pharmaceuticals

IX. Earth Control

- Steps to conserve U.S. natural resources:
  - **Desert Land Act** (1877):
    - Whereby federal government sold arid land cheaply on condition that purchaser irrigate soil within three years
  - **Forest Reserve Act** (1891):
    - Authorized president to set aside public forests as national parks and other reserves
    - Some 46 million acres rescued from logging in 1890s
IX. Earth Control (cont.)

– Carey Act (1894) distributed federal land to states on condition that it be irrigated and settled
– New day for conservation dawned with Roosevelt (see “Makers of America: The Environmentalists”)
  • TR seized banner of conservation leadership
  • Congress responded with landmark Newlands Act (1902):
    – Washington authorized to collect money from sale of public land in western states
    – Use funds for development of irrigation projects
    – Roosevelt Dam, constructed on Arizona’s Salt River, dedicated by Roosevelt in 1911
IX. Earth Control (cont.)

• TR worked to preserve nation's shrinking forests:
  – Set aside some 125 million acres in federal reserves
  – Earmarked millions of acres of coal deposits, and water resources useful for irrigation and power

• Conservation and reclamation were Roosevelt's most enduring tangible achievements

• Disappearance of frontier—believed to be source of national characteristics (individualism and democracy) encouraged popular support for conservation

• As did Jack London's *Call of the Wild* (1903)
IX. Earth Control (cont.)

- Organizations:
  - Boy Scouts of America became largest youth group
  - Audubon Society tried to save wild native birds
  - Sierra Club (1892) dedicated to preserve wildness of western landscape

- Losses:
  - (1913) San Francisco built dam in **Hetch Hetchy Valley**
    - Caused deep division between preservationists (John Muir) and conservationists that persists to present day
IX. Earth Control (cont.)

- Roosevelt’s chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, believed “wilderness was waste”
- Pinchot and TR wanted to use nation’s natural endowment intelligently—thus, two battles:
  » One with greedy commercial interests that abused nature
  » Other with romantic preservationists in thrall to simple “woodman-spare-that-tree” sentimentality
- National policy developed “multiple-use resource management”
  » Try to combine recreation, sustained-yield logging, watershed protection, and summer stock grazing on same expanse of federal land

IX. Earth Control (cont.)

- Westerners learned how to work with federal management of natural resources:
  • New agencies, such as Forest Service and Bureau of Reclamation
  • Worked with federal programs devoted to rational, large-scale, and long-term use of natural resources
  • Single-person enterprises shouldered aside, in interest of efficiency, by combined bulk of big business and big government
X. The “Roosevelt Panic” of 1907

- Roosevelt’s second term (1905-1909):
  - Called for regulating corporations, taxing incomes, and protecting workers
  - Declared (1904) under no circumstances would he be a candidate for a third term
  - Suffered sharp setback (1907) when short panic descended on Wall Street:
    - Frightened “runs” on banks
    - Financial world blamed Roosevelt
    - Conservatives called him “Theodore the Meddler”

X. The “Roosevelt Panic” of 1907 (cont.)

- Results of 1907 panic:
  - Paved way for long-overdue monetary reforms
  - Currency shortage showed need for more elastic medium of exchange
  - Congress (1908) responded with Aldrich-Vreeland Act:
    - Authorized national banks to issue emergency currency backed by various kinds of collateral
  - Path smoothed for momentous Federal Reserve Act of 1913 (see Chap. 29)

XI. The Rough Rider Thunders Out

- Roosevelt in 1908:
  - Could have won second presidential nomination and won election
  - However, he felt bound by promise of 1904
  - Sought successor who would carry out “my policies”:
    - Selected William Henry Taft, secretary of war and a mild progressive
    - He often served when Roosevelt away
XI. The Rough Rider Thunders Out (cont.)

- In 1908 TR “steamrolled” convention to get Taft’s nomination on first ballot
- Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan again

Campaign of 1908:
- Taft and Bryan both tried to claim progressive TR’s mantle
- Majority chose stability with Roosevelt-endorsed Taft, who polled 321 electoral votes to 162 for Bryan
- Socialists amassed 420,793 votes for Eugene V. Debs (see Chap. 26)

XI. The Rough Rider Thunders Out (cont.)

- Roosevelt branded by adversaries as wild-eyed radical
- Number of laws he inspired not in proportion to amount of noise he made
- Attacked by reigning business lords, but they knew they had a friend in White House
  - Should first and foremost be remembered as cowboy who tamed bronco of adolescent capitalism, thus ensuring it a long adult life
XI. The Rough Rider Thunders Out (cont.)

• Roosevelt’s achievements and popularity:
  – His youthfulness appealed to young of all ages
  – Served as political lightning rod to protect capitalists against popular indignation and against socialism
  – Sought middle road between unbridled individualism and paternalist collectivism

XI. The Rough Rider Thunders Out (cont.)

– In conservation crusade, he tried to mediate between:
  • Romantic preservationists and rapacious resource-predators
  • Probably his most typical and his most lasting achievement
– Other contributions of Roosevelt:
  • Greatly enlarged power/prestige of presidency
  • Helped shape progressive movement and later liberal reform
  • Opened eyes of Americans to fact that they shared world with other nations and needed to accept responsibilities of a great power

XII. Taft: A Round Peg in a Square Hole

• William Howard Taft:
  – Enviable reputation as lawyer and judge
  – Trusted administrator under Roosevelt
  – Suffered from lethal political handicaps:
    • Not a dashing political leader like TR
    • Recoiling from controversy, Taft generally adopted attitude of passivity toward Congress
    • Taft a poor judge of public opinion
XII. Taft: A Round Peg in a Square Hole (cont.)

- His candor made him chronic victim of “foot-in-mouth” disease
- A mild progressive, but at heart wedded to status quo rather than change
- His cabinet did not contain a single representative of party’s “insurgent” wing

XIII. The Dollar Goes Abroad as a Diplomat

- Taft’s foreign policy:
  - Use investments to boost American political interests abroad—dollar diplomacy:
    - Encouraged Wall Street to invest in foreign areas of strategic concern to U.S.A.
      - Especially Far East and Panama Canal
    - Thus bankers would strengthen American defenses and foreign policies—bring prosperity to homeland
    - Almighty dollar supplanted TR’s big stick
    - Railroad investments in Manchuria were Taft’s most spectacular effort, but Russia and Japan blocked effort
XIII. The Dollar Goes Abroad as a Diplomat (cont.)

– New trouble spot in revolution-riddled Caribbean:
  • Wall Street encouraged to pump dollars into financial
    vacuums in Honduras and Haiti to keep foreign funds out
  • Sporadic disorders in Cuba, Honduras, and Dominican
    Republic brought American forces to restore order and
    protect American investments
  • 2,500 marines (1912) landed in Nicaragua
  • Remained in Nicaragua for 13 years (see Map 29.1)

XIV. Taft the Trustbuster

• Taft gained some fame as smasher of monopolies:
  – Brought 90 suits against trusts during his four
    years compared to 44 for Roosevelt in 7½ years
  – Biggest action came in 1911 when Supreme Court
    ordered dissolution of Standard Oil Company:
      • Judged to be a combination in restraint of trade in
        violation of Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890

XIV. Taft the Trustbuster (cont.)

– Supreme Court also handed down its famous “rule
  of reason”:
  • Doctrine—only those combinations that
    “unreasonably” restrained trade were illegal
  • Doctrine tore big hole in government’s antitrust net
– 1911: antitrust suit against U.S. Steel Corporation:
  • Infuriated Roosevelt who had encouraged merger
  • Once Roosevelt’s protégé, President Taft increasingly
    took on role of his antagonist
XV. Taft Splits the Republican Party

• Progressives in Republican Party wanted lower tariffs:
  – Thought they had a friend in Taft
  – House passed moderately reductive bill
  – Senate added numerous upward tariff revisions
  – Much to dismay of supporters, Taft signed **Payne-Aldrich Bill** and called it "best bill that the Republican Party ever passed"

XV. Taft Splits the Republican Party (cont.)

• Taft proved to be dedicated conservationist:
  – Established Bureau of Mines to control mineral resources
  – His accomplishments overshadowed by Ballinger-Pinchot quarrel (1910):
    • Secretary of Interior Richard Ballinger opened public lands in Wyoming, Montana, Alaska to corporate use
    • Ballinger sharply criticized by Gifford Pinchot, chief of Agriculture Department’s Division of Forestry and a stalwart Rooseveltian

XV. Taft Splits the Republican Party (cont.)

• Taft dismissed Pinchot on charges of insubordination
  – Widened rift between Roosevelt and Taft
• Reformist wing of Republican party up in arms:
  • Taft being pushed into arms of Old Guard
  • By 1910 Grand Old Party split wide-open, largely due to dumsiness of Taft
  • Roosevelt returned in 1910 and stirred up tempest by giving flaming speech at Osawatomie, Kansas
  • Announced doctrine of "New Nationalism."
    – Urged national government to increase its power to remedy economic and social abuses
XV. Taft Splits the Republican Party (cont.)

- Results of divisions within Republican Party:
  - Lost badly in congressional elections of 1910
  - Democrats emerged with 228 seats, leaving once-dominant Republicans with only 161
  - A socialist representative, Victor L. Berger, elected from Milwaukee
  - Republicans, by virtue of holdovers, retained Senate, 51 to 41:
    * but even there reformers challenged Old Guard

XVI. The Taft-Roosevelt Rupture

- Now a full-fledged revolt:
  - 1911: National Progressive Republican League formed
    * Fiery Senator La Follette (Wisconsin) became leading presidential candidate for group
  - February 1912, Roosevelt wrote to seven governors that he was willing to accept Republican nomination
    * His reasoning—third-term tradition applied to three consecutive elective terms
    * Roosevelt entered primaries, pushing La Follette aside

XVI. The Taft-Roosevelt Rupture (cont.)

- Taft-Roosevelt explosion near in June 1912, at Republican convention in Chicago
  * Rooseveltites about 100 delegates short of winning nomination
  * Challenged right of some 250 Taft delegates to be seated
  * Most of the contests settled for Taft
  * Roosevelt refused to quit game:
    - Having tasted for first time bitter cup of defeat, TR led a third-party crusade
XVII. The “Bull Moose” Campaign of 1912

- Democrats jubilant over Republican divisions
  - Assumed could win in 1912 with a strong reformer

- Governor Woodrow Wilson seemed good fit:
  - Scholar of government who became reformist president of Princeton University in 1902
  - Elected governor of New Jersey in 1910, Wilson campaigned against "predatory" trusts
  - Once elected, Wilson drove through legislature a number of progressive reforms

XVII. The “Bull Moose” Campaign of 1912 (cont.)

- Democrats met at Baltimore (1912):
  - Nominated Wilson, aided by William Jennings Bryan's switch to his side
  - His progressive reform platform dubbed *New Freedom*

- Progressive Republican ticket:
  - Third-party with Roosevelt as its candidate for president
  - Pro-Roosevelt supporters held convention in Chicago in August 1912

XVII. The “Bull Moose” Campaign 1912 (cont.)

- Settlement-house pioneer Jane Addams placed Roosevelt’s name in nomination for presidency:
  - Symbolized rising political status of women as well as Progressive support for social justice
  - TR received thunderous applause when he declared "We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord!"
  - Roosevelt said he felt “as strong as a bull moose” thus bull moose symbol
XVII. The “Bull Moose” Campaign 1912 (cont.)

• Big issue of campaign was two versions of reform:
  – TR and Wilson agreed on more active government, but disagreed on specific strategies

• Roosevelt’s **New Nationalism:**
  • Based on ideas of progressive thinker Herbert Cody in his book *The Promise of American Life*
  • Favored continued consolidation of trusts and labor unions
  • Paralleled by growth of powerful regulatory agencies
  • Campaigned for woman suffrage

XVII. The “Bull Mouse” Campaign 1919 (cont.)

• Broad program of social welfare, including minimum wage laws and publicly supported health care
• TR’s Progressives looked forward to comprehensive welfare state of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal

• Wilson’s **New Freedom:**
  • Favored small enterprise, entrepreneurship
  • Free functioning of unregulated, unmonopolized market
  • Shunned social welfare proposals
  • Pinned economic faith on competition—the “man on the make,” as Wilson put it
XVII. The “Bull Mouse” Campaign 1919 (cont.)

- Banking reform and tariff reduction
- Keynote of Wilson's campaign not regulation but fragmentation of big industrial combines
  - Chiefly by vigorous enforcement of antitrust laws
- Election of 1912 offered voters a choice not merely of policies but of political and economic philosophies—a rarity in U.S. History

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XVII. The “Bull Mouse” Campaign 1919 (cont.)

- Election's returns:
  - Wilson won with 435 electoral votes and 6,296,547 popular votes (41% of total)
  - Roosevelt finished second with 88 electoral votes and 4,118,571 popular votes
  - Taft won only eight electoral votes and 3,484,720 popular votes (see Map 28.1)
  - Socialist candidate, Eugene V. Debs, rolled up 900,672 popular votes, 6% of total cast

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Map 28.1

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XVII. The “Bull Mouse” Campaign 1919 (cont.)

– Taft himself had a fruitful old age:
  • Taught law for eight years at Yale University
  • In 1921 became chief justice of Supreme Court—a job for which he was far better suited than presidency