

Chapter 28
Progressivism and the
Republican Roosevelt,
1901–1912

Presented by:
Mr. Anderson, M.Ed., J.D.





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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

I. Progressive Roots (cont.)

- **Other reformers:**
 - University-based economists urged new reforms modeled on European examples
 - Feminists added social justice to suffrage on list of needed reforms
 - Urban pioneers entered fight to improve lot of families living and working in festering cities

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**
 - Reformer-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 lobbies, 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



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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

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:

V. Progressive Women (cont.)

- Florence Kelley became State of Illinois's 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



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V. Progressive Women (cont.)

- Corner saloons attracted ire of progressives:
 - **Woman'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

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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

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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 lusted greedily for power
- First burst into headlines with legal attack on Northern Securities Company (1902):
 - Railroad holding company organized by financial titan J. 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 monopolists controlling sugar, fertilizer, 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 corral 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



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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:
 - Envidable 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 clumsiness of Taft
 - Roosevelt returned in 1910 and stirred up tempest by giving flaming speech at Osawatimie, 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 markets
 - 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

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



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

CHRONOLOGY	
1882 Sierra Club founded	1908 Muller v. Oregon Taft defeats Bryan for presidency Admiral-Treadwell Act
1889 National Consumers League founded	1909 Payne-Adams tariff
1900 Conservation system established in California, Texas Progressive Robert La Follette elected governor of Wisconsin American Socialist Party of America formed	1910 Railroads (Hatch) affairs Washington State grants women suffrage
1909 Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell publish muckraking exposés Antitrust and antitrust Newlands Act	1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Co. Company fire Standard Oil antitrust case U.S. Steel Corporation antitrust suit California grants women suffrage
1906 Department of Commerce and Labor established Elkins Act Women's Trade Union League founded	1912 Taft wins Republican nomination over Roosevelt Wilson defeats Taft and Roosevelt for presidency Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon grant women suffrage Children's Bureau established in Department of Labor
1908 Northern Pacific case Roosevelt wins election to first full term as president	1913 Sherman's Amendment passed (school election of U.S. senators) Federal Reserve Act San Francisco decides to build Francisco Bay Bridge
1908 Lochner v. New York	1920 Women's Bureau established in Department of Labor
1908 Hepburn Act Upson Sinclair publishes The Jungle Meat Inspection Act Pure Food and Drug Act	
1909 "Bosworth panic"	
