

The Progressive Presidents

Theodore Roosevelt: Masculine Progressivism

On September 6, 1901, during a visit to the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, President William McKinley was shot twice at point blank range by an anarchist named Leon Czolgosz. Initial reports in the succeeding days suggested the president's condition was improving, so vice president Theodore Roosevelt went on a vacation to Mount Marcy in upstate New York. He was returning from a climb to the summit of Mt. Marcy on September 13, when a park ranger brought him a telegram informing him that McKinley's condition had deteriorated, and, in fact, he was near death. Roosevelt and his family immediately left for Buffalo. On route, at 5:22am on September 14, Roosevelt received a telegram that McKinley had died a few hours earlier.

Roosevelt was sworn in as President at 3:30pm on September 14. He became president just 6 weeks before his 43rd birthday. He had already achieved a very busy life. He was a Harvard graduate, had been an historian and author, a New York state assemblyman, a Dakota Territory Badlands rancher and deputy sheriff, a buffalo hunter, the U.S. Civil Service Commissioner, New York City Police Commissioner, Assistant Secretary of the Navy and Colonel and leader of his own military unit, the Rough Riders, in Cuba in the Spanish-American War, Governor of New York and vice President. Wow!

As a reform governor of New York in 1898, Roosevelt annoyed the New York state Republican Party machine boss, Thomas Platt. Roosevelt promised to root out state political corruption, and especially "party machine politics." Platt wanted Roosevelt gone. The Republicans were looking for a vice presidential candidate to run with William McKinley in 1900 who came from the reform wing of the party. Platt suggested Roosevelt. Roosevelt had a reputation as a moderate Progressive. At the same time he was faithful to the Republican Party. He balanced the ticket perfectly.

One Republican who was less than happy about Roosevelt as a vice presidential candidate was McKinley's campaign manager, Mark Hanna. After McKinley's death, Hanna complained that, "I told McKinley that it was a mistake to nominate that wild man...I asked him if he realized what would happen if he should die. Now look! That damned cowboy is President of the United States."

Theodore Roosevelt was a brilliant thinker, politician and campaigner. Sickly as a child, Teddy forced himself to exercise and train to "become a man" through sheer determination. Life for him was an act of self-will. He was self righteous, ambitious, egotistical; for him everything was a contest and he meant to win.

Teddy Roosevelt's ideas and worldview was fairly representative of the views of the educated upper and upper middle class American of the end of the 19th century. He had absorbed both Populist and Progressive ideas and believed that that scientific thought could, in the hands of experts, cure the nation's ills. What makes Roosevelt different from most others of his class, was his own exuberance, and his own investment of personality into the office.

Roosevelt's presidency marks the beginning of the administrative state so dear to the European Progressives. Additionally, it is an amazing "imperial presidency;" a period dominated by the sheer force of personality of Theodore Roosevelt, a larger than life chief executive if ever there was one. Roosevelt believed that it was the president's duty to lead the nation by force of will, to use the office as a "bully pulpit" from which to preach a message of reform and shepherd the nation in the direction that he believed that it should go. Teddy Roosevelt was a vigorous, boisterous man, who brought his vision of reform to the fore in American politics by what amounted to a force of will and of personality. His was a "masculine Progressivism" that fit well with his powerful personality.

The Square Deal

The assassination of President William McKinley threw the conservative Republicans into a panic. They feared that Roosevelt, might put into effect too many of his Progressive ideas. Roosevelt manifested a lively concern that his administration should afford a "square deal" for all Americans—businessmen, laborers, farmers, and consumers.

The Roosevelt Administration

First State of the Union Message — In his first State of the Union message in December 1901 Roosevelt called for:

1. greater control of corporations by the federal government;
2. more authority for the Interstate Commerce Commission;
3. conservation of natural resources;
4. extension of the merit system in civil service;
5. construction of an isthmian canal;
6. a vigorous foreign policy.

The speech was calculated to calm the fears of his more conservative party associates. It was balanced between calls for reform and traditional Republican policy. We should remember here that the American people didn't elect a reformer in 1900. In fact, given a choice between an obvious reform candidate, Democrat/Populist William Jennings Bryan, and a conservative Republican incumbent, they had elected the conservative, William McKinley. So, Roosevelt, who had come to the White House over the dead body of McKinley, had to tread softly. In his first state of the Union Address, delivered just a few weeks after attaining the presidency, Roosevelt's speech sent a mixed message. Part of it laid out a blueprint for extensive reform. Part or it supported traditional Republican policies.

During his first term in office, Roosevelt's major reform activity was against the great industrial giants—the so-called trusts. Whereas, more extreme reformers like Bryan were inclined to try to destroy these industries, Roosevelt believed that government regulation was preferable to destruction. He firmly believed that if the great trusts were well regulated they would provide a greater benefit to all — workers, consumers, and businessmen— than if these corporations were destroyed.

Roosevelt has often received criticism from left leaning historians for not going far enough as a reformer. He advocated trust busting, but distinguished between "good"

trusts and “bad” trusts. He called for effective railway regulation, but was unwilling to either nationalize the railroads or over-regulate the industry. He was often critical of the more sensational muckrakers whom he believed offered criticism without offering solutions. He demanded a “square deal” for labor, but attacked extremists in the labor movement like Eugene V. Debs and Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld. Roosevelt dramatized some popular reform issues, but he avoided the most dangerous party issues such as tariff and monetary policy reform (the silver controversy). These were Republican sacred cows, and I suspect that Roosevelt was a traditional conservative when it came to the tariff and the gold standard. In fact, Roosevelt said as much about gold in the campaign of 1900.

The Coal Strike

Roosevelt’s concern for a “square deal” for all Americans prompted him to take action in a strike that took place in the coal industry not long after he came to office. For many years miners in the coal districts of eastern Pennsylvania had held grievances against the mine owners. Their grievances included:

- ★ long hours;
- ★ low wages;
- ★ substandard company housing;
- ★ the refusal of the mine owners to recognize the union.

Under the leadership of the United Mine Workers, the Pennsylvania miners went on strike in May 1902.

The White House Conference — In October 1902, with the strike dragging on (and winter on the way), Roosevelt invited the mine owners and John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers, to confer with him in the White House. The president’s attempt to mediate failed completely. Neither the mine owners nor the workers were willing to make any concessions.

Soon after the White House Conference, Roosevelt quietly began a personal campaign to resolve the conflict. He let it be known that he might use federal troops to run the mines if the strike dragged on into the winter and deprived Americans of coal to heat their homes. He even hinted that he might nationalize the coal industry in the best interests of the American people. Faced with the possibility of having their companies confiscated, the operators agreed to a 10 percent wage increase and a nine-hour workday demanded by miners. Faced with losing their jobs to soldiers, the miners took the offer. Note that this was accomplished by Roosevelt himself, who bullied both sides into an agreement by using the potentially absolute power of the state to achieve the desired result.

Election of 1904

Having served three and a half years of McKinley’s term, Roosevelt was eager to become president in his own right.

Democrats — The Democrats decided that maybe William Jennings Bryan, whom they had run in 1896 and 1900 was not a good candidate. The delegates to the Democratic national convention nominated a conservative New York judge, Alton B. Parker. Democratic Party leaders hoped that Parker could be acceptable to a wide range of

voters. Parker was conservative on economic issues, and Democrats thought that he would be a contrast to the Progressive Roosevelt. Parker was a poor choice, as it happens. The “Solid South” supported Parker, but the Populist/Progressive Democrats supported Roosevelt.

Republicans — Roosevelt had feared that the ultraconservative wing of his party would support Mark Hanna. But Hanna’s death early in 1904 removed all likelihood of opposition, and Roosevelt was nominated by acclamation at the Republican national convention.

The Campaign — The campaign quickly became a referendum on the personality and style of Teddy Roosevelt and on Progressive reform. Roosevelt was reelected by an electoral vote of 336 to 140 for Parker. He carried every state outside of the Solid South. In popular votes, Roosevelt received 7,628,000 votes to Parker’s 5,084,000.

Handling the Trusts

Roosevelt was opposed to any program that destroyed the trusts, but he advocated government regulation of industry under the terms of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890.

The Northern Securities Case — The first assault in the battle against business combinations in restraint of trade occurred when the government filed suit in 1902 against the Northern Securities Company, a holding company that had a controlling share of stock in the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy railroads. After vigorous federal prosecution, the Northern Securities Corporation was dissolved. The decision of the federal court was upheld in 1904 by the Supreme Court. Roosevelt, declared that the most powerful corporation, like the humblest citizen, should be compelled to obey the law.

Federal Legislation — Congress passed several measures designed to facilitate enforcement of the Sherman Antitrust Act and Interstate Commerce Act. In 1903, congress created the Bureau of Corporations. It was a department within the Department of Commerce and Labor. The Bureau of Corporations was authorized to investigate possible violations of antitrust laws. Congress appropriated a special fund of \$500,000 for bringing suit against illegal business combinations.

Federal Prosecutions — During the almost eight years of the Roosevelt presidency the Justice Department obtained twenty-four indictments against the trusts. In the course of deliberating alleged violations of the Sherman Antitrust Act, the Supreme Court formulated what became known as the “rule of reason”—only “unreasonable” combinations in restraint of trade should be prohibited.

Regulating the Railroads

Roosevelt constantly called for a more comprehensive regulation of the railroads by extending the power of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The Elkins Act — This measure, passed in 1903, struck at the practice of secret rebates, which had been declared illegal by the Interstate Commerce Act of 1877. According to the Elkins Act, the recipient, as well as the grantor of the rebate, was made liable to prosecution. Further, the agent or official of the railroad was held legally responsible for any deviation from regular published rates.

The Hepburn Act — By increasing the power of the Interstate Commerce Commission the Hepburn Act (1906) made a great advance toward government regulation of the railroads. Although the Hepburn Act fell short of conferring an absolute power upon the Interstate Commerce Commission, it made the commission an effective regulatory agency.

After the passage of the Hepburn Act the federal courts showed an increasing disposition to support the decisions of the commission. In 1910 the Supreme Court laid down the principle that the railroads could expect protection from the federal courts only if they proved “beyond any reasonable doubt” that their property was being confiscated. At the same time, however, the judiciary as a whole refused to sanction extreme penalties imposed upon railroads or shippers found guilty of violating the law.

Conservation

Roosevelt wanted to stop the exploitation of the country’s natural resources. He restricted private development on millions of acres of undeveloped government land. Conservatives in congress then restricted his authority over public lands. Before this became law, Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, worked furiously to seize all the public forests.

Even before Roosevelt was president, The National Forest service had been created with the Forest Reserve Act. Roosevelt was the first president to take an active roll in the conservation movement. Roosevelt created the United States Forestry Service in 1905 as a department under the Dept. of Agriculture. He added millions of acres to the National Forests and Parks.

The Newlands Act — Recommended by Roosevelt, the Newlands Act passed in 1902, provided for the appropriation of most of the money received from the sale of public lands in the West and Southwest to finance construction of irrigation projects. Within five years twenty-eight projects in fourteen states were under way.

National Parks and Forests — Roosevelt was not the originator of the campaign for the establishment of national parks, but he gave vigorous support to those who were trying to preserve regions of great natural beauty. In addition, to prevent the forests from being virtually depleted, he set aside 148 million acres as timber reserves.

Internal Waterways — Conservation included also the utilization of the system of inland bodies of water to facilitate transportation, to promote irrigation projects, and to develop waterpower sites. To supervise such activities, Roosevelt appointed the Internal Waterways Commission.

National Conservation Commission — In 1908 Roosevelt held a governors’ conference at the White House to discuss fundamental issues relating to conservation. The result of the conference was the creation by Roosevelt of the National Conservation Commission, with Gifford Pinchot as chairman, and the creation of thirty-six state boards that cooperated with the national body.

Consumer Protection Laws

The creation of administrative agencies that controlled businesses in the name of consumer protection was a goal near and dear to Progressives. Roosevelt was able to

The Progressive Presidents

achieve this administrative feat as a result of two factors that increased demand for further government supervision.

- ◆ A scandal arose from companies supplying spoiled canned meat to servicemen during the Spanish-American War.
- ◆ The works of muckrakers such as Upton Sinclair on the meatpacking industry led to demands for government supervision of the meatpacking industry.

The Pure Food and Drug Act, passed in 1906, forbade the adulteration or fraudulent labeling of foods and drugs sold in interstate commerce. The Meat Inspection Act, also passed in 1906, provided for the supervision of conditions of sanitation in meatpacking firms engaged in interstate commerce and for federal inspection of the meat they sold.

William Howard Taft: Practical Progressivism

Although Taft was more conservative than Roosevelt, he nevertheless sympathized with the political reformers of his time and approved of many of their objectives. In listing the achievements of his four years in office, his admirers included the vigorous prosecution of illegal trusts and other business combinations, the extension of the merit system for new branches of the civil service, the adoption of the eight-hour workday for employees on government contracts, and the passage of legislation reserving additional public lands from private enterprise. But Taft frequently took issue with the methods of the political reformers and criticized the haste with which they attempted to effect change. Whereas Roosevelt had looked at reform as a personal crusade, Taft, a jurist at heart, believed that reform was a slow and careful legislative and judicial process.

Standing just over six feet tall and weighing in at a biscuit over 300 pounds, Taft is the largest man ever to hold either the presidency or the Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Court. By the way, he is the only man to have ever served in both jobs. Taft received abuse because of his size throughout his life. In college his nickname was “Big Lub.” As Governor-General of the Philippines, Taft once sent a telegram to Washington, D.C. that read, “Went on a horse ride today; feeling good;” Secretary of War Elihu Root replied, “How’s the horse?”

Election of 1908

At the end of his second term, Teddy Roosevelt’s popularity was at its peak. He could have been nominated again for president and won. He declined to run for a third term, basing his decision largely on the two-term tradition established by George Washington.

Democrats

Once more dominant in Democratic circles, William Jennings Bryan was chosen by the national convention for the third time. The Democratic platform called for lower tariffs, new anti-trust legislation and a federal income tax. Mostly, though, the Democrats criticized the Republicans as the “party of privilege and private monopolies.” This rhetoric sounded hollow in the face of Roosevelt’s Trust-busting career.

One unusual feature of the election of 1908 was the action taken by the American Federation of Labor. For the first time in its history, the union gave its endorsement to a presidential candidate — William Jennings Bryan.

Republicans

The Republican national convention was dominated by Theodore Roosevelt. The delegates were wildly enthusiastic over the president. When delegates realized that Teddy would not run again, they looked to him for a hand-picked successor. Teddy chose William Howard Taft to succeed him and the delegates complied with Roosevelt’s wishes. They nominated Taft to be their standard bearer and adopted a platform that had been drafted in the White House. The platform called for:

- ★ strengthening the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887.
- ★ further, more aggressive anti-trust prosecutions.
- ★ more conservation.
- ★ expanding the nation’s highway system.
- ★ revising the tariffs.

The Campaign

Although Bryan was a skilled orator, he was unable to make any headway in the campaign. Increasingly, Bryan's speeches seemed anxious and irrational in the face of Roosevelt's record for reform. Part of Bryan's problem was that he had to run against both Taft and Roosevelt, who campaigned for his hand-picked successor. Taft was relaxed and easygoing in the face of Bryan's frantic campaigning. Roosevelt basked in the light of his own success. Bryan unleashed the slogan, "Shall the People Rule?" In a time of peace and prosperity, and given the success of Republican trust-busting, Bryan's message refused to resonate with the American people.

Taft's Victory

Taft won 321 electoral votes to Bryan's 162. The Democratic candidate had thus regained for his party some of the ground lost by presidential candidate Alton B. Parker four years earlier.

Reforms Under Taft

Few reforms were expected from William Howard Taft. He was careful, conservative, and, above all, judicially minded— he liked to stress the legalistic limits on the powers of the president. But, despite his conservative nature, Taft recognized the force of the Progressive movement. He supported a number of progressive ideas, and during his presidential tenure he would surpass Roosevelt as a Progressive reformer. His style was less personal and egotistical than Roosevelt's; he was practical and determined and eventually surpassed his predecessor. His administration:

- ★ promoted 90 anti-trust suits (T.R.-44).
- ★ got congress to strengthen regulation of interstate commerce on the railroads.
- ★ established the Department of Labor
- ★ promoted and passed substantial child-labor laws.
- ★ got the 8 hour work day for all workers contracted to the U.S. government.
- ★ began the work to create a federal income tax, (Taft was the first to recommend that income tax (which was unconstitutional) be created by means of a Constitutional amendment.)

Taft and the Tariff

In spite of these impressive reform measures, Taft began to lose the support of the progressives in the Republican Party. This split began in April 1909 when Congress adopted the Payne-Aldrich Tariff. Taft had supported the Progressive view that low tariffs were better, but in the spring of 1909, he switched sides and supported passage of the Payne-Aldrich tariff. The tariff began as a reduction of tariffs, but grew with amendments in the Senate.

Because the Payne-Aldrich tariff increased the duty on print paper used by publishers, the publishing industry viciously criticized Taft, further tarnishing his image. Although Taft consulted Congress during the creation of the bill to a certain extent, critics charged that he ought to have personally dictated more reductions on the bill. However, unlike Roosevelt, Taft believed that the president should not dictate to lawmakers and should leave Congress free to act as it saw fit. Taft is often accused of anti-reform conservatism because he refused to impose his will on Congress in this matter and others. But really,

what we are looking at is a difference in style and conception of the constitutional place of the president between Taft and other Progressive presidents.

Taft and Conservation

Another area where Taft's governing style led to trouble with the Progressives was in the area of conservation. Taft's Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger was accused by a field officer of the Government Land Office named Louis Glavis of interfering with an investigation of corruption within the national forests in Alaska. The GLO, launched an investigation of Ballinger, based on Glavis's claims, and exonerated Ballinger. Angry at the outcome of the investigation, Glavis went to the press. *Collier's Weekly Magazine* ran a series of muckraking articles against Ballinger. A feud broke out between Ballinger and Gifford Pinchot, head of the Forest Service. Pinchot was convinced that Ballinger wanted to sell out U.S. Lands to big company interests. Taft fired Glavis for insubordination. Humiliated by the accusations, Ballinger resigned. But, Pinchot angry at Taft's support of Ballinger, had complained about both Ballinger and the President to members of Congress and the press. Really annoyed, Taft fired Pinchot. Taft's support of Ballinger, and his dismissal of Pinchot, cost the Republicans a lot of voters in the congressional elections of 1910.

Actually, Taft did quite a bit for conservation. He withdrew almost 59 million acres of coal and timber lands from public sale. He also signed the Appalachian Forest Reserve Act, which allowed the federal government to obtain a large amount of land in the Appalachians and White Mountains (New Hampshire). In spite of Taft's positive record, though, his reputation was tarnished among conservationists by the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy.

Joe Cannon and a Progressive Victory of 1910

Early in 1910 the progressive wing of the Republican Party launched an attack against Speaker of the House Joseph G. "Uncle Joe" Cannon of Illinois. Uncle Joe had made himself the most powerful man in Congress. As speaker, he determined the order of business in the House. He also headed the House Rules Committee and appointed all of the leadership on committees. He was also able to block bills from being introduced in the House and he could choose to keep certain representatives from speaking.

Cannon ruled the House of Representatives with an iron hand. The progressives charged that Cannon, a conservative, used his powers to block all progressive and reform legislation. The progressives were determined to end Cannon's control of government. In March 1910, Nebraska Representative George W. Norris proposed an amendment to the House Rules that would require that the members of the House Rules Committee be elected by the full House. Cannon and the conservatives fought the measure to maintain his power. After heated debate about forty Republican progressives sided with the Democrats in favor of Norris' motion. Cannon lost his ability to seat members on the Rules Committee. A year later the speaker was stripped of his right to appoint any committee members. The speaker remained a powerful and influential member of the government, but that power would never be as great as Cannon's.

Summation of Taft's Presidency

Taft's presidency was, in most ways, more successful as a reform administration than either Roosevelt's. Taft's presidential style was less personality based, less dictatorial, less abrasive, and more in keeping with conventional notions of the president's place in the government. Because of Taft's more conventional and practical approach, he accomplished more reform and more successful prosecution of trusts, but received less credit for his successes. To make matters worse for Taft, he had to endure constant criticism and reproach from Roosevelt, who believed that "Taft wasn't doing it right," and also probably resented Taft's success. Overall, we could make the argument that Taft's methods were more successful than his mentor Roosevelt's more high-handed, personal rule. We can also argue that Taft's practical moderate reform methods were far less destructive and far more realistic than the reforms and rule of his successor, Democratic Progressive and academic Woodrow Wilson.

Woodrow Wilson: Idealistic Progressivism

Split in the Republican Party and the Election of 1912

By 1912 the Republican Party was split wide open with the “old guard” conservatives on one side and the progressives on the other. Roosevelt was no longer satisfied with Taft’s leadership. Teddy began to try to line up enough progressive Republican delegates to get the nomination and become the Republican candidate for the election of 1912. Taft had the advantage of being the incumbent president. Roosevelt supporters at the Republican convention complained that they had been railroaded by the Taft forces. The convention nominated Taft.

Unable to tolerate the personal humiliation he suffered at the hands of Taft and the Old Guard, Roosevelt struck back hard. On the evening of June 22, 1912, Roosevelt asked his supporters to leave the Convention. Roosevelt maintained that President Taft had allowed fraudulent seating of delegates in order to capture the presidential nomination from progressive forces within the Party.

The “Bull Moose Party”

Roosevelt’s supporters called another convention in Chicago and launched a third party, the Progressive Party. They have the nickname the Bull Moose Party. Naturally, they nominated Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt called his platform the “New Nationalism.” By “New Nationalism” he meant that he wanted to expand the powers of the federal government so that it might become an effective tool for national and international progress and reform.

The Democrats

The Democrats believed (rightly) that the split in the Republican Party would insure victory for whoever got the Democratic nomination. They chose Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey. Wilson was the son of a southern Presbyterian minister. He had been educated at Princeton, the University of Virginia and Johns Hopkins University. In 1902, he became the president of Princeton.

Wilson initially believed that the president should lead the government of the U.S. and make sure that the government followed the will of the American people. Wilson had not favored progressivism until he became governor of New Jersey in 1910. As governor he gained a reputation as a progressive leader by fighting the city bosses and political machines in his own party, and tightening up New Jersey corporation laws. Wilson was also an idealist and a man of convictions. He sensed the popular discontent in the country and he felt he could do something about it. He wanted to establish a “New Freedom” for ordinary Americans by fighting injustice and special interests.

The Democratic platform called for tariff reduction, banking reform, legislation in support of wage earners and farmers and vigorous enforcement of antitrust laws.

The election proved to be a clear-cut victory for the Democrats. Wilson received 435 votes, Roosevelt 88 and Taft 8. But Wilson was a “minority” president. He received only 6 million popular votes out of 15 million, just at 41% of the American electorate voted for him.

Wilson and the New Freedom

Once in office, Wilson began to push his program for reform called the “New Freedom.” Here are a few areas where Wilson made some changes.

Tariff Reform — The Wilson administration passed the Underwood Tariff Act of 1913. The act made significant reduction in tariffs. The act reduced tariffs on almost 1000 items including cotton, woolens, iron, steel and agricultural products.

The 16th Amendment made it possible to create an income tax. The new income tax was graduated from 1-6 percent on incomes above a minimum of \$3,000. Wilson had promised that most Americans would never pay income taxes, and even the richest Americans would never pay more than 7% of their adjusted income. At its passage, a family making \$4,000, or a single person making \$3,000 per year after deductions, would pay a 1% tax. The highest rate was 7% on an annual adjusted income of \$500,000. By the end of World War I Wilson himself had already violated his promise. Rates were raised from a maximum of 7% to a maximum of 77% of gross income by 1918.

Banking Reform — Very few people were happy with the banking of the 1900s, but not everyone had the same reasons for not liking them. Progressives wanted more government control of banks. In fact, some Populists and a few Progressives wanted the government to nationalize the entire U.S. banking system as some European countries had already done. Business groups wanted greater private control of them.

The Federal Reserve Act of 1913 was a compromise between the two. By this act two bank systems were created. The regular privately owned state banks were regulated by a system of Federal Reserve Banks. These Federal Reserve Banks provided services to member banks. In times of economic crisis smaller banks could depend on the Federal Reserve Banks to keep the smaller banks from folding. The Federal Reserve banks would act as both lender to and regulator of the privately owned state banks.

Antitrust Laws — The antitrust movement was strengthened by the introduction of a new law—the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914. This act aimed at business abuses which had not until then been illegal.

- ★ It prohibited price-fixing to promote monopoly
- ★ It prohibited “tying contracts” which required the purchaser to agree not to buy or sell products to competitors
- ★ It declared interlocking directorate illegal
- ★ It prohibited corporations from acquiring stock if the purchase tended to create a monopoly
- ★ It prohibited the use of injunctions by companies to break up strikes unless life or property was endangered.

Federal Trade Commission was created to regulate industry engaged in interstate commerce. The commission was authorized to;

- ★ Require annual and special reports on companies business activities
- ★ Investigate business activities of corporate executives
- ★ Publish reports of its findings
- ★ Order corporations to stop engaging in unfair competition

As Wilson became increasingly more involved in the international problems running up to World War I and after the U.S. entered the war, his Progressivism, and his policies in general became increasingly more idealistic, less practical. Wilson clothed some Populist/Progressive reform goals in “war emergency” rationalizations. The prime example here is Prohibition.

- ★ The Prohibition movement was among the reform movements that grew out of the evangelical reform movements of the 1840s.
- ★ Calls for prohibition gathered steam in the Midwest and West and rural South in the 1860s and 70s, but the movement was less popular in the Northeast.
- ★ The movement had very little support from ethnic Irish, Germans and other immigrant groups.
- ★ Prohibition was demanded by the "dries" — primarily evangelical Protestant denominations, especially the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Scandinavian Lutherans. They identified saloons as politically corrupt and drinking as a personal sin. They were opposed by the "wets" — primarily liturgical Protestants (Episcopalians, German Lutherans) and Roman Catholics, who denounced the idea that the government should define morality.
- ★ Even in the wet stronghold of New York City there was an active prohibition movement, led evangelical church groups and African-American labor activists who believed that Prohibition would benefit workers, especially African-Americans.
- ★ As we might expect, business interests became involved as well. Tea and coffee merchants and soda fountain manufacturers generally supported Prohibition, thinking a ban on alcohol would increase sales of their products.

In the 1916 presidential election, both Democratic incumbent Woodrow Wilson and Republican candidate Charles Evans Hughes ignored the Prohibition issue. Democrats and Republicans had strong wet and dry factions, and neither candidate wanting to alienate any part of his political base.

In January 1917, the 65th Congress convened. For the first time, the dries outnumbered the wets by 140 to 64 in the Democratic party and 138 to 62 among Republicans. With America's declaration of war against Germany in April, German-Americans—a major force against prohibition—were widely discredited and their protests subsequently ignored.

A resolution calling for a constitutional amendment to create a nationwide Prohibition of alcohol was introduced in Congress and passed by both houses in December 1917. Wilson supported the move, but realized the controversial nature of the policy.

In order to defuse possible criticism from “wets,” Wilson announced that the amendment was a matter of war policy. He announced that the manufacture of alcoholic beverages used grain that could be put to better use making bread and other foods that were essential the war effort. So, if you were critical of prohibition, you could be cast as unpatriotic. Wilson also made it sound like it was a short term policy that would end with the war. Of course, neither of these statements were true, but the end justified the means for the idealistic Wilson.

The Progressive Presidents

On January 16, 1919, the Amendment was ratified by thirty-six of the forty-eight states. On October 28, 1919, the amendment was supplemented by the Volstead Act which would enforce the amendment. Prohibition began on January 16, 1920, when the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect. A total of 1,520 Federal Prohibition agents (police) were given the task of enforcing the law.

Although it was highly controversial, Prohibition was widely supported by really mixed bag of folks. Progressives believed that it would improve society as generally did women, southerners, those living in rural areas and African-Americans. There were a few exceptions such as the Woman's Organization for Prohibition Reform who fought against it. Will Rogers often joked about the southern pro-prohibitionists: "The South is dry and will vote dry. That is, everybody sober enough to stagger to the polls."

Supporters of the Amendment soon became quite confident that it would not be repealed, to the point that one of its creators, Senator Morris Sheppard, joked that "there is as much chance of repealing the Eighteenth Amendment as there is for a humming-bird to fly to the planet Mars with the Washington Monument tied to its tail."

Wilson is the last of the progressive presidents. Perhaps he went a bit to far for his time, but mostly he got the United States involved in a European war. We'll take another look at Wilson later as the first wartime president of the 20th century in a later lecture.