Ch. 18 – Progressivism on National Stage/EQ: How well did Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson promote progressive goals in national policies?

18.1 – Introduction

- On February 22, 1902, the rich financier J. P. Morgan went to the White House to see President Theodore Roosevelt. Morgan had a dispute to resolve with the president.

- Roosevelt had recently ordered the Justice Department to file a lawsuit against Northern Securities Company, of which Morgan was part owner, for antitrust violations.

- Two years later, in 1904, the Supreme Court ruled against Northern Securities.

- In addition to local and state issues, progressives were also concerned about problems in the country as a whole.

- Many of them believed that the national government no longer served the interests of all Americans.

- Three presidents—Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson—worked to advance the progressive reforms.

- Their efforts helped change how Americans thought, and continue to think, about the role of government.

18.2 – Three Progressive Presidents

- The three presidents of the Progressive Era—Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson—held office between 1901 and 1921. Although differing in many ways, they shared a commitment to reform.

Theodore Roosevelt Promises a Square Deal

- Roosevelt believed that businesses, workers, and consumers should all receive a "square deal"—fair and honest treatment.

- His program of reform, which became known as the Square Deal, focused on regulating big business and protecting workers and consumers.

- Roosevelt believed the country needed a strong president. "I believe in power," he once said.

- But he thought that presidential power should be used to benefit all Americans.

Taft Continues Reforms

- As president, Taft continued reform efforts.

- Taft had campaigned for president on a low-tariff platform, but in 1909 he agreed to sign the Payne-Aldrich Bill, which raised tariffs.

- This action tarnished Taft’s record as a progressive.

The Election of 1912

- When the Republicans chose Taft as their candidate, Roosevelt decided to run as the candidate of a third party, a political party outside the two-party system.

- The split between Taft and Roosevelt helped Wilson win the 1912 election.

Wilson Promises New Freedom

- As president, this idealist and scholar set out to implement a national reform program that he called New Freedom.

- Wilson wanted to eliminate all trusts because he believed they were denying economic freedom to small businesses and ordinary citizens.

- Wilson pushed through other progressive reforms to give a greater voice to the average citizen, restrict corporate influence, and reduce corruption in the federal government.

- Among his most notable achievements were laws on banking and tariff reform and the creation of the Federal Trade Commission.
18.3 – Addressing the Effects of Industrialization

- The progressive presidents worked to reduce the harmful effects of industrialization, starting with the power of the trusts.

**Busting Trusts**

- Roosevelt began the progressive trustbusting movement.
- To regulate monopolies, he used the Sherman Antitrust Act. This law made illegal "every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce."
- The law had been passed in 1890 but had been ineffective. Its language was vague, and enforcement was weak.
- Roosevelt believed that government should regulate monopolies to make sure they operated for the good of the nation.
- In addition to breaking up J. P. Morgan's Northern Securities Company, Roosevelt limited the power of railroads to set rates and stifle business competition.
- Taft supported a stricter interpretation of the Sherman Act.
- Roosevelt distinguished between good and bad trusts, trying to break up only trusts created specifically to squash competition.
- In contrast, Taft did not think a court could determine a trust's motives, so he prosecuted any trusts that had the effect of limiting trade, regardless of intent.
- Passed in 1914, the Clayton Act extended the power of the Sherman Act by laying out rules that made it harder for trusts to form and to squeeze out competition.
- The Clayton Act also protected labor unions from antitrust regulation.

**Protecting Consumers and Workers**

- In addition to busting trusts, the progressive presidents tried to protect consumers.
- Two key laws were passed in 1906 during Roosevelt's presidency: the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act.
- The Meat Inspection Act required the Department of Agriculture to inspect packaged meat.
- The Pure Food and Drug Act established a new agency, the Food and Drug Administration, to test and approve drugs before they went on the market.

- This law addressed the calls for the regulation of patent medicines. These nonprescription medicines often promised magical cures, but many contained little more than alcohol or opium.
- Roosevelt also helped improve working conditions for coal miners.
- In 1902, he pressured coal mine owners and the striking United Mine Workers to submit to arbitration, a legal process in which a neutral outside party helps resolve a dispute.
- A government commission decided that the miners should have higher wages and shorter hours.
- However, it also declared that the owners did not have to recognize the union or hire only union workers.
- This arbitration pleased Roosevelt and many other progressives, who believed that government should be impartial in labor disputes and stronger than either big business or unions.
- Taft and Wilson also supported an eight-hour workday—at least for some workers.

**Protecting the Environment**

- Progressives also wanted to protect the natural environment.
- Some progressives supported preservation, the protection of wilderness lands from all forms of development.
- Other progressives supported conservation, the limited use of resources.
- The progressive presidents, especially Roosevelt, were sympathetic to the preservationist view.
• In 1905, Roosevelt backed the creation of the U.S. Forest Service.
  Its mission was to protect forests and other natural areas from excessive development. Roosevelt appointed Gifford Pinchot, a noted conservationist, to head the Forest Service.
• Taft added 2.7 million acres to the National Wildlife Refuge System.
• In 1916, Wilson supported the creation of the National Park Service (NPS).

18.4 – Reforming the National Government
Reforming the Banking System
• The Federal Reserve Act divides the country into 12 regions, each with a Federal Reserve Bank.
• Together, these banks and their operating rules make up the Federal Reserve System, or central bank of the United States.
• Under this system, private banks remain independent but agree to operate under the rules of the Federal Reserve System, which is also called the Federal Reserve or "the Fed."
• The Fed offers a safety net to private banks by lending them money if they are short of funds.
• It also sets monetary policy to regulate the amount of money in circulation, including setting interest rates and regulating how much banks can lend.
• The Fed has made the financial system much more stable.

Reforming Taxes and Tariffs
• Under strong pressure from progressives, and with some support from Taft, Congress proposed the Sixteenth Amendment, which would allow the federal government to impose an income tax.
• Progressives were pleased because a graduated income tax placed a higher burden on those who had more money.

Election of Senators Directly
• Progressives wanted senators to respond to the will of the people, not the power of big business.
• Therefore, they pushed Congress to propose the Seventeenth Amendment.
• Proposed in 1912 and ratified in 1913, the amendment required the direct election of senators by popular vote.
• This procedure gave average citizens more influence in the Senate.

Legislating Morals: Prohibition
• The widespread public support for prohibition—a ban on the production and sale of alcoholic beverages—was rooted in the temperance movement dating from the early 1800s. Most advocates were women, and the largest organization had been the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.
• The Eighteenth Amendment was ratified in 1919. It declared that the prohibition of "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" would take effect one year after ratification.

Establishing Women’s Suffrage
• Women had been trying to win the right to vote since before the Civil War. Many temperance activists also supported women’s suffrage.
• In 1919, Congress proposed the amendment by decisive votes in both the House and Senate.
• The Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920. It declared that "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."
Summary

Three progressive presidents—Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson—held office from 1901 to 1921, during the Progressive Era. Their goals and styles of leadership differed, but they all worked to bring about reforms on the national level.

Three distinct leaders Despite their varying leadership styles, the progressive presidents believed in using government to improve society. In carrying out reform programs, such as Roosevelt's Square Deal and Wilson's New Freedom, they increased the power of the presidency.

Addressing the effects of industrialization Reformers passed laws to break up monopolies and help workers. They tried to protect consumers through such laws as the Pure Food and Drug Act. They also tried to preserve the environment by conserving resources.

Sixteenth Amendment This amendment established a federal income tax, which progressives favored as a means to fund government programs. Congress made the tax a graduated income tax, which placed a heavier tax burden on the wealthy.

Seventeenth Amendment This amendment established the direct election of U.S. senators, another progressive goal. It replaced the election of senators by state legislatures.

Federal Reserve System Congress set up the Federal Reserve to bring stability to the banking system and prevent financial panics. The Fed, which consists of 12 federal banks, lends money to private banks and sets policies that govern interest rates and the amount of money in circulation.

Eighteenth Amendment This amendment established prohibition, or a ban on alcohol. Many progressives believed that alcohol consumption was a serious social ill.

Nineteenth Amendment This amendment guaranteed women the right to vote. This was an important progressive goal designed to advance democratic rights.