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The Idea of Progressivism  
in the United States of America  
Pavel Pluhář

Bachelor Thesis 2017

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Myšlenka progresivismu pochází již z období osvícenství, v kontextu Spojených států amerických je však spjata zejména s obdobím 20. a 30. let. Předmětem práce je prozkoumat ideové kořeny progresivismu a na základě důkladné analýzy primárních textů konkrétně ukázat, jak se v těchto dekadách ona politická filosofie odrazila ve sféře domácí, zahraniční či kulturní politiky.

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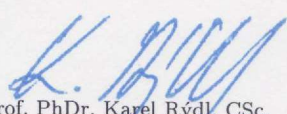
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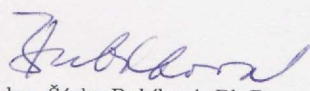
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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně Univerzity Pardubice.

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#### TITLE

The idea of Progressivism in the United States of America

#### ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis deals with the Progressive movement in the United States from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until Second World War. It depicts the events that prompted the Progressive sentiment and elaborates on the actual Progressive reforms that influenced the United States of America in terms of social, economic and foreign policies.

#### KEY WORDS

progressivism, Roosevelt, Wilson

#### NÁZEV PRÁCE

Myšlenka progresivismu ve Spojených státech amerických

#### ANOTACE

Tato práce pojednává o progresivismu ve Spojených státech amerických od začátku dvacátého století až po druhou světovou válku. Popisuje události, jež vedly k samotnému progresivismu a podrobně zkoumá samotné progresivní reformy, které ovlivnily Spojené státy americké v oblasti sociální, ekonomické a zahraniční.

#### KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

progresivismus, Roosevelt, Wilson

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## INTRODUCTION

The work *The Idea of Progressivism in the United States of America* aims at depicting the Progressive movement in the United States of America. The Progressive movement emerged as a reaction to various ills of the Gilded Age in the late 1890s. That included monopolies, massive immigration and no state regulation of business. First signs of Progressivism in the form of local and state reforms date back to 1890s, but the Progressive sentiment flourished predominantly from about 1900 to 1920. Progressivism was comprised of an assortment of people from the wide spectrum of the American society. The motives that encouraged their reforms did not concern only one specific theme. On contrary, Progressives focused on social ills, economic problems and on peace efforts during both World Wars. Moreover, there was not always consensus on some topics, such as imperialism and racial issues. Nevertheless, the Progressive core boils down to a conviction that the society must be fair to all members.

There was a substantial amount of Progressive reformists across the entire USA. In the urbanizing Northwest and Midwest, they assaulted on corruption in city and state government, while the Progressives in the South fought against railroad monopolies and child labor. The most influential Progressives were William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

William Jennings Bryan set the wheels in motion by forming the Populist's party, which fought against monopolies and demanded competitive business environment for farmers. It was, however, Theodore Roosevelt who assumed presidency in 1901 and took to passing various Progressive reforms on the federal level. A substantial amount of Progressive reforms were passed and some of them ratified as amendments during the presidency of Progressive Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Progressivism experienced a rapid decline following the Great War, yet the American society retained the Progressive sentiment with state and local reformists pushing through their Progressive agendas. That included Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who emulated many Progressives in certain spheres. On the other hand, many Progressives, especially the most influential ones, disregarded the problem of racial injustice and some of them, such as Woodrow Wilson, pushed the segregation even further. Some Progressives also promoted American imperialism and forcefully extended American sphere of interest by creating protectorates throughout the Caribbean. It is the concern of this thesis to elaborate on why, when and by whom various Progressive reforms were brought about and what their consequences were.

# 1 CONCEPT OF PROGRESSIVISM

Progressivism is a multifaceted concept based on the Idea of Progress. In other words, Progressivism strives for inroads in various spheres, such as economy and social development, which are deemed to be of the utmost importance for continuous improvement of the human life. The Idea of Progress stems from the Age of Enlightenment and largely relies on the notion that empirical evidence, also referred to as sense experience, is essential for a development of a civilized society.<sup>1</sup>

Progressivism is an integral part of the American history dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It emerged around 1890s and continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with its highest point between 1910 and 1917. Progressivism came as an answer to a rapid decline of the living conditions in the US against the backdrop of a massive industrialization and immigration during the period after the Civil War in 1865. Progressivism comprised an assortment of people across the American political spectrum, including both the Democrats and the Republicans. Members of the Progressive movement advocated a myriad of reforms. That included remedies for the widening gap between labor and capital, and strict curbs on corporations inherent in laissez-faire capitalism.<sup>2</sup>

The American Progressive movement was promoted by a variety of people. The major figures of the Progressive movement are referred to as "the "big four": William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Robert M. La Follette, and Woodrow Wilson."<sup>3</sup> Not only did the Progressive movement merely involve high ranking politicians, but many state politicians, journalists and social reformers also participated, such as Jane Addams.<sup>4</sup> Progressivism emerged at around the same time as Socialism in the US. Although agendas of Progressives overlapped with those of Socialists to a varying degree, the opinions of Socialists and Progressives diverged on the issue of capitalism. While Socialists called for an abolishment of capitalism, Progressives were proponents of capitalism, yet utilizing the government to keep business in check by federal laws and commissions

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Mach, *Enlightenment Phantasies: Cultural Identity in France and Germany 1750-1914* (New York: Cornell University Press), 157.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

## 2 PRELUDE TO PROGRESSIVISM: THE GILDED AGE

The term Gilded Age itself was coined by Mark Twain, who used it as a title for his novel *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*. The Mark Twain's term described "the United States as a nation with a beautiful, shiny exterior in hiding decadent, filthy insides"<sup>5</sup>

Dating of the Gilded Age is difficult to pin down, as historians diverge on this issue. T. Adams Upchurch claims that "some historians package the Gilded Age neatly between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the beginning of the Spanish-American War in 1898."<sup>6</sup> There are other historians who claim that the Gilded Age runs from the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865 to the assassination of William McKinley in 1901.<sup>7</sup>

However, according to T. Adams Upchurch, the beginning of the Gilded Age dates back to 1869. He claims that "1869 marks a symbolic turning point in the history of Reconstruction..."<sup>8</sup> In that year, five important changes occurred. First, the nation's attention shifted towards the economic and political problems of the North owing to the Black Friday Scandal. Second, the transcontinental railroad was completed, facilitating economic growth and westward expansion. Third, the American Woman Suffrage Association emerged and the first group of women could cast a vote in Wyoming. Fourth, the Knights of Labor, an important labor union was formed. Fifth, "professional" baseball league was put together, impacting the American society in the long term, as it kickstarted consumerism of American sports and became a favorite pastime in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

As for the ending date of the Gilded Age, T. Adams Upchurch maintains that the Gilded Age ran its course in 1899 when "railroads, electricity, telephone, corporations and trusts in business...wealthy tycoons... had ceased to be a novelty"<sup>10</sup> He also asserts that not only had it ceased to be a novelty, but the nation started the backlash against it.<sup>11</sup>

During the Gilded Age, the United States of America experienced a period of serious social problems. Before 1880 the American society was comprised of people who either produced or distributed things.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Adams Upchurch, introduction to *Historical dictionary of the Gilded Age* (Lanham (Etats-Unis): Scarecrow Press, 2009), xxvi.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

“Farmers produced grain, cotton, and livestock; skilled craftsmen built houses and shod horses; manufacturers produced nails and rails; shopkeepers sold them.”<sup>12</sup> “Generally, there were no large producers and no one was extremely rich before 1880s.”<sup>13</sup>

The reconstruction of the South after the Civil War and taming of the West transformed the United States from a decentralized agrarian country into a major industrial nation. A huge demand of goods and services created new openings for people, luring in millions of immigrants from foreign countries, particularly from China.<sup>14</sup> The census of national population in 1880 revealed that the population rose by 25 percent to 63 million over the last 30 years. Both urban and rural population rose rapidly during 1880s, however, the number of the urban population rose twice as fast as the amount of rural settlements.<sup>15</sup>

The boom of immigrants provoked national sentiments throughout the American society, particularly in California with the highest number of Chinese immigrants. A new California constitution was drafted in 1879 encompassing various anti-Chinese regulations, such as prohibiting them from owning land or working in certain fields of work. Courts also declined any testimony from Chinese immigrants. By 1880 the population of Chinese immigrants amounted to over 100,000 on the West Coast. Consequently, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was passed, the first major law restricting immigration into the United States. The bill was passed by the Congress despite the veto from President Chester A. Arthur under the pretext that American jobs had to be protected and white racial purity was to be maintained.<sup>16</sup>

Chinese, however, were not the only American whose civil rights were infringed during the Gilded Age. In the 1890s southern states began to pass Jim Crow laws - laws on the state and local level mandating racial segregation in all American public facilities, including restrictions of voting. An unknown black woman from Alabama described the racial discrimination in a newspaper’s article.<sup>17</sup>

I am a colored woman, wife and mother. I have lived all my life in the South... I know of houses occupied by poor negroes in which a respectable farmer would not keep his cattle. It is impossible for them to rent elsewhere. All Southern real estate agents have white property and colored property... Many colored women... could take their little children... to the parks; but this is denied to them.

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<sup>12</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> David E. Shi and Holly A. Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 51.

<sup>15</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 86.

<sup>17</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 21.

No negroes allowed on these grounds except as servants. Two years passed before a single woman spoke to me... A colored woman is lower in status than the white prostitute...<sup>18</sup>

The high ratio of immigration into the United State is attributed to the advent of interstate railroad network, the telegraph system and other utilities during the Gilded Age. The trade across the entire US was facilitated and spawned large corporations with many vacancies. For instance, between 1865 and 1898 production of wheat increased by 256%, coal by 800% and miles of railway track by 567%.<sup>19</sup> However, many entrepreneurs, having been driven by possible profits in the national market and influenced by the theory of Social Darwinism, took to eliminating their competitors, gouging customers, and keeping their employees in difficult living conditions.<sup>20</sup> According to historian Steve Fraser, this industrial “progress—that is, capital accumulation—had created a nation of haves and have-nots.”<sup>21</sup> Steve Fraser also claims that:

Multimillionaires (another invention of the Gilded Age) accounted for 0.33 percent of the population but owned one-sixth of the country’s wealth. The richest 1 percent owned 51 percent of all real and personal property, while the bottom 44 percent came away with 1.1 percent. Most workers earned less than \$800 annually, which wasn’t enough to keep them out of poverty. And most of them had to toil for nearly sixty hours a week to make even that much.<sup>22</sup>

Another Gilded Age’s problem was a so-called patronage system, also known as the spoils system.

In patronage, someone donates large sums of money to help ensure the election of a candidate. That candidate repays the favor by making job appointments or by passing and proposing legislation that safeguards the interests of the business or person who donated the money.<sup>23</sup>

A point in case is George Washington Plunkitt, a member of the Democratic Party and a district leader of Tammany Hall, who vehemently defended the patronage system and the system of bribery, claiming that:

Everybody is talkin’ these days about Tammany men growin’ rich on graft, but nobody thinks of drawin’ distinction between honest graft and dishonest graft... Just let me explain by the examples. My party’s in power in the city, and it’s going to undertake a lot of public improvements. Well, I’m tipped off, say, that

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<sup>18</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 95.

<sup>19</sup> P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Hyman, 1988), 242.

<sup>20</sup> Shi and Mayer *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Steve Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Organized Wealth and Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Rebecca Valentine and Lawrence W. Baker, *Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (Detroit: U-X-L, 2007), xxvi.

they're going to lay out a park at a certain place. I see my opportunity and I take it. I go to that place and buy up all the land I can in the neighborhood. Then the board of this or that makes its plan public, and there is a rush to get my land, which nobody care particular for before. Ain't it perfectly honest to charge a good price and make a profit on my investment and foresight?<sup>24</sup>

The spoil system sparked off protests across the US and led to the foundation of the National Civil Service Reform League in 1881, which helped push through Congress the Pendleton Civil Service Act - a reform which established a federal commission tasked with scrutinizing applicants for a variety of government positions by means of competitive exams.<sup>25</sup>

The Pendleton Act, however, was effective only in agencies such as the post office and more reforms had to be enacted to do away with the patronage system still existing within the political circles.<sup>26</sup>

During the late nineteenth century, American industry expanded rapidly, albeit benefiting only the upper-crust of the American society at the expense of the working class. The gulf between the labor and capital widened. Combined with a high rate of immigration and expansion of large cities, the living standards rapidly declined.<sup>27</sup>

A social commentator Josiah Strong published *Our Country*, a critique of an urban settlement. According to Josiah Strong the city is “is the storm center. The city has become a serious menace to our civilization... It has a peculiar attraction for immigrants...The rich are richer, and the poor are poorer.”<sup>28</sup>

The ills of unchecked capitalism in the United States gave life to labor unions, a collection of small craftsmen that tried to fight with monopolies on local markets. The most important was the Knights of Labor alliance, which gained a tremendous popularity in the early 1880s. The Knights motto was “the union of the producing classes”<sup>29</sup> and they were widely known for their strikes against huge railroad corporations. The Knight's agenda was based on the joint effort of farmers and industrial workers, particularly in the South and West and lay base for a significant political movement - Populism.<sup>30</sup>

While workers suffered from the low living conditions in the rapidly expanding urban settlements, the life of farmers in the rural areas was full of hardships as well.

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<sup>24</sup> William L. Riordon and George Washington Plunkitt, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics* (New York, NY, U.S.A.: Penguin Group, Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1991), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 85.

<sup>26</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Josiah Strong and Austin Phelps, *Our Country: Its Possible future and its Present Crisis* (London, England: Forgotten Books, 2015), 128-43.

<sup>29</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*. 18.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

From the 1860s to 1910, over 11 million Americans left rural areas and settled in American cities. Consequently, the American agriculture was confronted with a so-called boom-bust cycle - falling prices, lack of currency, growing indebtedness and high cost of credit.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, farmers in the remote areas in the west were to pay higher shipping costs, which resulted in a higher mortgage, indebtedness and the high cost of credit in the farming areas.<sup>32</sup>

The crucial problem was lacking currency in circulation. If the currency supply had been abundant, the money would have been cheaper and the produce could be sold for a higher price, thus more cash would be available to pay mortgages and shipping costs.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, farmers, shopkeepers and manufacturers had to face the hideous practices of newly emerged corporate businesses, particularly in the form of railroad monopolies, which charged horrendous amounts of money for their services. Mary E. Lease, later an ardent proponent of The Populist party, raised the issue, saying:

[t]he great common people of this country are slaves, and monopoly is the master. Money rules... The parties lie to us and the political speakers mislead us. We went to work and plowed and planted... Then the politicians said we suffered from overproduction... The main question is the money question... Kansas suffers from two great robbers, the Santa Fe Railroad and the loan companies.<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, farmers took to forming various alliances. There were several major farmer's alliances, such as the National Farmer's Alliance and Southern Alliance. Members of the Alliances held meetings and provided lectures on the unfairness of the system, asking the government for any improvement of the situation, since it was cheaper to use corn as fuel during winter in certain regions than to sell it underpriced. The first to respond were various states, such as Illinois, which passed a law regulating the railroad fees.<sup>35</sup>

However, in 1886 Pacific Railway Company sued the state of Illinois for violation of the clause in the constitution that the federal government is the only body that can control interstate travel. The court agreed with Pacific Railroad company and the Illinois laws were considered to be unconstitutional.<sup>36</sup> This court case sparked reaction in Congress, which decided to pass federal laws regulating interstate travel. The first was the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887, demanding that the railroad rates "be reasonable and just"<sup>37</sup> and mandating that

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<sup>31</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 86.

<sup>32</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 86.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth N. Barr, "The Populist Uprising," in *History of Kansas, State, and People 2008*, ed. W.E. Connelly (Topeka: Lewis Publishing Co., 1928), 2:1167.

<sup>35</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-20.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

large shippers cannot exist in the form of trusts. Four years later, public pressure prompted Congress to pass yet another bill regulating corporations. In July 1890, Congress passed Sherman Anti-trust law, regulating not just railroads but any trust or corporations. However, both acts were not effective. Ellis W. Hawley states that:

[t]he Interstate Commerce Commission, in fact, found it virtually impossible to win a case in the federal courts. And the Sherman Act, while it forbade all monopolies and all attempts to monopolize, was laxly enforced, narrowly interpreted, and effective only against loose combines, not against such tight combinations as holding companies and mergers.<sup>38</sup>

A good example is the case of U.S. vs E.C. Knight Company, which was dismissed, as the court did not deem manufacturing to be commerce even though Knight Company controlled 90% of the market.<sup>39</sup>

In June 1890, all the regional alliances joined forces in Topeka, Kansas and formed a third national political party the People's Party of Kansas, usually referred to as the Populists.<sup>40</sup> The members of the National Farmer's Alliance comprised the core of the party, later augmented by the Knights of Labor and other unions and alliances. Populists agenda made inroads particularly in the West and South regions of the US. The heavily black areas, such as North Carolina and Texas, favored the populists agenda too, terrifying the white establishment that an interracial coalition in the South would be imminent. Consequently, in the 1890s, states in the South begun passing the Jim Crow laws, which excluded the blacks from voting.<sup>41</sup>

July 1892 marks the first national convention of the Populists in Omaha, where the Populists ratified the so-called Omaha Platform.<sup>42</sup> The platform stipulated that:

[t]he conditions which surround us best justify our cooperation; we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling places to prevent universal intimidation and bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled... homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalist. The urban workmen are denied the right to organize for self-protection, imported pauperized labor beats down their wages, a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down.... The fruits of the toil of millions are stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few... Silver has been demonetized to add to the

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<sup>38</sup> Ellis Wayne. Hawley, *New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016),6.

<sup>39</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 86.



purchasing power of gold...We seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of the “plain people,” with which class it originated...We believe that the power of government-in other words, of the people-should be expanded<sup>43</sup>

The People’s party ideas were met with great interest within the social and political circles across the country. The populist’s ideas represented a myriad of reforms, however, the core of this party revolved around three planks. First major point was related to “...free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1”<sup>44</sup>, as Populists argued that a massive coinage of silver would inflate the money supply, thus increasing the prices for farm commodities, making credit cheaper, and relieving debtors. Another important point of the Omaha platform pertained to the issues of the transportation. Populists maintained that “...the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people”<sup>45</sup>. Lastly, the populist agenda concerned the land, as in the natural resources. According to Populists, “The land is the heritage of the people, and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, and alien ownership of land should be prohibited.”<sup>46</sup>

Despite the fact that the majority of members were farmers, the party was not centered solely around agricultural issues. In general, the Populists fought for two major axioms. Firstly, they proposed the political theory that power should rest with the people, not corporations. Secondly, the Populists demanded that wealth should return to farmers and workers. In 1892, the Populists managed to field their presidential candidate, James B. Weaver, but his run for presidential office was not successful.<sup>47</sup>

Following the 1893 economic crisis, many populist ideas were adopted by the Democratic party and later in 1896, Democrats and Populists joined forces.<sup>48</sup>

1896 was significant in terms of the presidential elections. The Republican nominee promoted the conservative platform adhering to the traditional gold standard, while the Democrats were faced with two possibilities. The Democrats could either go with the traditional gold standard or uphold the free-silver coinage preferred by the Populists. At the Democratic convention in Chicago in 1896, William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska, a staunch proponent of free silver coinage, addressed the 15,000 delegates. His dramatic speech was very convincing

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<sup>43</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

and won him nomination for the presidency for the Democratic party.<sup>49</sup> Bryan stressed the importance of farms, claiming:

There is scarcely a state here today asking for the gold standard which is not in the absolute control of the Republican party...the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, your cities will spring up again as if by magic, but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.<sup>50</sup>

Despite his strenuous efforts, Bryan lost the 1896 elections to William McKinley of Ohio, a devoted Republican, which meant that “[c]onservatism— meaning encouragement rather than regulation of railroads, manufacturers, and other corporations—was more firmly at the nation’s controls than ever.”<sup>51</sup>

In terms of foreign affairs, Americans rarely paid attention to any non-domestic affairs until 1890s. In 1889 Massachusetts Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge stated that “our relations with foreign nations today fill but a slight place in American politics, and excite generally only a languid interest.”<sup>52</sup> Americans were more absorbed in the domestic affairs following the Civil War, especially in the industrial development and its inherent problems.<sup>53</sup>

The shift in foreign policies, however, did occur in 1890s. Intervention of the American government in Cuban War of Independence marked the first step of the United States towards imperialism. Initially, President William McKinley strove to resolve the situation in a diplomatic manner, however, following the mysterious sinking of the American battleship Maine in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, members of the Republican party, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, demanded direct military action against the Spaniards. William Jennings Bryan called for a military intervention as well, claiming that “the time for intervention has arrived. Humanity demands that we shall act.”<sup>54</sup> President McKinley, however, remained calm and asked for a proper investigation of the sinking of the Maine battleship. On March 27, 1898, the investigation revealed that the battleship was sunk by an external explosion, making people believe that the Spanish troops were to blame. McKinley did not hesitate and sent the Spanish government an ultimatum.

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<sup>49</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 106.

<sup>50</sup> William Jennings Bryan, *The first battle; a story of the campaign of 1896* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), 199-206.

<sup>51</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge, *George Washington* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1970), 129-130.

<sup>53</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 111.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

The Spanish could either give way to a Cuban independence or engage in conflict with the USA.<sup>55</sup> Spain refused to give up on Cuba and, consequently, McKinley declared war on Spain on April 11, 1898, explaining that:

The present revolution is but the successor of other similar insurrections which have occurred in Cuba against the dominion of Spain.... each of which during its progress.... caused enormous losses to American trade and commerce, caused irritation, annoyance and disturbance among our citizens... the capital invested by our citizens in Cuba has been largely lost... The only hope of relief... is the enforced pacification of Cuba. In view of these facts and of these considerations I ask the Congress to authorize and empower the President to take measures to secure a full and final termination of hostilities between the Government of Spain and the people of Cuba, and to secure in the island the establishment of a stable government... insuring peace and tranquility and the security of its citizens... and to use the military and naval forces of the United States as may be necessary for these purposes.<sup>56</sup>

Republican John Hay referred to the clash as “the splendid little war”<sup>57</sup>, since the conflict lasted only 113 days. America secured a decisive victory, seizing Cuba and turning it into an American protectorate. The US territorial gain did not include Cuba only. There were other territories that expanded the American sphere of influence, including Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands, Guam and Wake Island.<sup>58</sup>

Following the Spanish-American war in 1898, the McKinley administration focused on China. China was a significant market in Asia, so far being under a Japan and Russian sphere of influence. McKinley administration wanted America to get into the Chinese market, while trying to curb the involvement of other nations. In 1899 Secretary of State John Hay issued the *Open Door Note*, a circular letter sent to all nations commercially involved in China. That included the Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia. The letter proposed the commercial equality of all involved nations trading in China.

The US also intervened during the Boxer Rebellion in China, which confronted all foreign nations on the Chinese soil. The American government dispatched a rescue expedition, including 2,500 troops to protect American nationals, since it was afraid that the unstable situation shatter the American influence in China.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 111.

<sup>56</sup> James D. Richardson, *Messages and papers of the Presidents* (Washington, D.C: Bureau of National Literature, 1897), 10:139-50.

<sup>57</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 112.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 121.

During the Gilded Age period, first problems caused by an unregulated capitalism surfaced. The political and business circles were corrupt and adhered to the elitists patronage system. The attempted remedy of the government by enforcing the Pendleton act was not successful. Moreover, the Chinese immigrants were suffering from a racial prejudice under the pretext of taking job opportunities from the Americans. The consequent Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited Chinese from working in certain jobs, owning land and testifying before the court. The blacks were discriminated as well after the implementation of the Jim Crow laws. The major issue, however, was related to a non-existing regulation of monopolies, which squeezed laborers and farmers. The discontent of the lower classes gave rise to farmer and worker alliances. The dissatisfaction culminated with alliances joining forces and forming the People's party, which became a third major party in the American politics. Following an improvement of economy after the financial crisis in 1888, the Populist movement lost its momentum and faded away.

As for foreign affairs, the Gilded Age marks the turning point in the American foreign policies. The shift occurred with the American engagement in Cuban War of Independence. The splendid little war extended the American influence substantially. Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands, Guam and Wake Island fell under American dominion. The McKinley administration also took to focusing on foreign affairs in Asia, predominantly on the Chinese Market.

### 3 PROGRESSIVISM EMERGES

As T. Adams Upchurch claims “[t]he Populists started the backlash but it would be left to the Progressives to finish it.”<sup>60</sup> The progressive movement was a multifaceted reformist agenda fighting the social and economic ills of the Gilded Age. Progressivism was comprised of a variety of people from the wide spectrum of the American society, including local, state and federal officials. While there was consensus on some issues, such as regulation of questionable policies of entrepreneurs, there were also rifts related to foreign policies and regulation of tariffs. The progressive fever sprung up in various regions at the beginning of the 20th century and was promoted by an assortment of people with varying motives, such as religion, humanitarianism and efficiency.<sup>61</sup> However, “[t]he consistent conviction of virtually all Progressives was that a public interest or common good existed.”<sup>62</sup> There were many figures engaged in the progressive movement, but the most important were William Jennings Bryan, Robert La Follette, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. The Progressive movement took from the Omaha Platform and believed in the premise that the power should rest with people, meaning that the government should put the interests of the people first. More specifically, the Progressives were in favor of more rigid regulations of business, dissolution of huge monopolies, better working conditions and conservation of the environment. On the other hand, the Progressive movement omitted the racial issues and let the discrimination of minorities that emerged during the Gilded Age era run its course.<sup>63</sup>

A substantial improvement of the American education on the background of the progressive sentiment played an important role. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, new research universities were established, such as the University of Wisconsin. Already existing universities, including Harvard and Yale, took to reshaping their curriculum so as to include various social sciences. The overhaul of the American education resulted in the emergence of a cadre of experts who provided necessary expertise and ideas for social reforms and control commissions. Graduates of these new programs were adept at sociology, economy and history, considering empirical evidence to be of the utmost importance. Using the German model of sociology, they looked at the society as organism, a collection of people that were not isolated from each other.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Upchurch, introduction to *Historical dictionary of the Gilded Age*, xxix.

<sup>61</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 125.

<sup>64</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 58.

These social experts decided to intertwine their ideas with religion, calling themselves Social scientists, as the expression Socialism was, and has always been, generally frowned upon by the Americans. This led to the emergence of the Protestant movement called The Social Gospels. The basic idea of this movement revolved around a collective sin, meaning that sin was not a matter of individual but the whole society and sins, such as prostitution and alcohol addiction compared to the poverty and horrid working conditions.<sup>65</sup>

A major Social scientist was a Baptist pastor Walter Rauschenbusch. Being disgusted by the social inequality, he decided to write a book *Christianity and the Social Crisis*. His book appealed to all Christians to remedy the social and economic situation as soon as possible, instead of leaving it up to the generations to come. He wrote:

To repent of our collective social sins, to have faith in the possibility and reality of a divine life in humanity, to submit the will to the purposes of the kingdom of God, to permit the divine inspiration to emancipate and clarify the moral insight—this is the most intimate duty of the religious man who would help to build the coming Messianic era of mankind.<sup>66</sup>

The recently emerged experts contributed to numerous local reforms. A point in case is the Wisconsin Idea, a program devised by Wisconsin Governor Robert M. La Follette. Using the new cadre of experts, he began promoting a variety of reforms, ranging from stopping the racial segregation to women suffrage. La Follette managed to pass a railroad taxation and direct primary measures on the state level, appealing also for establishing of railroad commission. The reforms La Follette championed did not all become law immediately, however, they were brought up at various Progressive rallies and later crystallized in the form of Progressive amendments.<sup>67</sup>

The Wisconsin idea became a model which other states attempted to follow. For instance, Oregon favored the Progressive reforms as well and the reform coalition with William S. U'Ren behind the helm devised the Oregon System – a series of progressive reforms. U'Ren's coalition managed to push through referendum law in 1902 with direct primary law two years later. In 1908 direct election of US senators was passed as well and in 1912 Oregon became the seventh state to pass the bill giving women the right to vote.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 58-59.

<sup>66</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, Benjamin E. Mays, and Charles Howard Hopkins, *A Gospel for the Social Awakening: Selections from the Writings of Walter Rauschenbusch* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 122.

<sup>67</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 63.

<sup>68</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 63

During the early 20th century, voices for suffrage resounded across the American society. Several women expressed their view on women suffrage, including Rose Schneiderman, a Polish immigrant working in a cap factory. She reacted to a New York state senator who decried the voting rights for women by saying “Get women into the arena of politics with its alliances and distressing contests-the delicacy is gone, the charm is gone, and you emasculate women.”<sup>69</sup> Rose Schneiderman responded that the women’s suffrage was needed so that laws improving working conditions could be passed, saying:

It seems to me that if our Senators really represented the people of New York State, they ought to know the conditions under which the majority of the people live. Perhaps, working women are not regarded as women, because it seems to me, when they talk all this trash of theirs about finer qualities and “The delicacy and charm of women being gone,” they cannot mean the working women. We have women working in the foundries, stripped to the waist... because of the heat. Yet the Senator says nothing about these women losing their charm.<sup>70</sup>

At the turn of the century, dangerous and unhealthy working conditions also became a major concern of the progressive movement. The state legislature of Oregon decided in 1908 to pass a law mandating that women should not work more than ten hours a day. The law sparked a protest among the conservatives, who deemed it to be infringement of free enterprise. Curt Muller, an owner of a laundry business, sued the state of Oregon for a violation of the right of contract. Attorney Louis Brandeis, however, presented a persuasive evidence describing the effects of long working hours on women. The court considered the evidence compelling and held that the limit of working hours was justifiable. This court hearing marked a first glimmer of a legal support for the needs of workers.<sup>71</sup> The court concluded that:

woman’s physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence is obvious. This is especially true when the burdens of motherhood are upon her. Even when they are not, by abundant testimony of the medical fraternity continuance for a long time on her feet at work, repeating this from day to day, tends to injurious effects upon the body.<sup>72</sup>

One of the very first Progressive step is attributed to settlement houses established by Progressive reformers. Settlement houses provided social services and rudimentary education for the underprivileged Americans. The early example is Hull-House in Chicago, founded in

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<sup>69</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 125.

<sup>70</sup> Rose Schneiderman, *Miss Rose Schneiderman, Cap Maker, Replies to New York Senator on Delicacy and Charm of women* (New York: Wage Earners Suffrage League, 1912), 1-8.

<sup>71</sup> Shi and. Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 133.

<sup>72</sup> Nancy Woloch, *Muller v. Oregon: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

1889 by Jane Addams. Jane Addams was a prominent social reformer who strove to fight the urban poverty. Having been touring Europe and closely studying the ways the urban poverty was managed there, Jane Addams decided to form a settlement house called Hull House in Chicago modeled on Toynbee Hall in London. Hull Houses served as a social center for immigrants and the poor, helping them with education and fighting for progressive reforms on city, state and federal level. Hull Houses were staffed predominantly by middle- and upper-class young people who deemed it necessary to act against the widespread poverty of the working class.<sup>73</sup>

Hull House, which was Chicago's first Settlement, was established in September, 1889 ... in the belief that the mere foothold of a house, easily accessible, ample in space, hospitable and tolerant in spirit, situated in the midst of the large foreign colonies... would be in itself a serviceable thing for Chicago. Hull House endeavors to make social intercourse express the growing sense of the economic unity of society. It is an effort to add the social function to democracy. It was opened on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal.<sup>74</sup>

Progressivism had a tremendous number of supporters across the United States from all walks of life. However, not only did this broad range of reform movements need followers, but leaders were equally important<sup>75</sup>. As Walter Nugent claims:

[t]he growing army of settlement house workers, crusading journalists and pastors, academics and trade unionists—many of them women—all helped weave the many early strands of reform that would coalesce later into mature Progressivism. But it all needed a weaver-in-chief<sup>76</sup>

Walter Nugent attributes the major role of a weavers-in-chief to Theodore Roosevelt, claiming that “It is difficult to see how Progressivism could have matured without TR to convert the skeptics, harass conservatives, and lead the weaving.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 129.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



### 3.1 THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Vice President Theodore Roosevelt (TR) became 26<sup>th</sup> president of the United States on September 6, 1901, following the assassination of president McKinley.<sup>78</sup> TR made foray into politics through the New York city assembly while studying Columbian Law College.<sup>79</sup> As a member of the assembly, having pledged allegiance to the Republican Party, he displayed his moral standards and progressive ideas as an opponent of the spoil system and widespread corruption in New York.<sup>80</sup> For his loyalty to the Republican party, Roosevelt gained appointments in various government organizations prior to his presidency. That includes Civil Service Commission, New York Police Commission and The U.S. Navy.<sup>81</sup>

Roosevelt breathed a new wave of Progressive model into the American politics, making even the old conservatives give way to change. Young and vigorous, he completely differed from his predecessors who maintained business-can-do-nothing wrong attitude. TR's first presidency marked a fundamental change in the policy towards interfering with the Laissez-faire outlook on the American business<sup>82</sup>. Roosevelt distinguished between the goods trusts that promoted the public interest, and the bad ones that acted in a selfish manner.<sup>83</sup> This differentiation was explained in his first annual message to Congress, when Roosevelt claimed that:

[t]he captains of industry who have driven the railway systems across this continent, who have built up our commerce, who have developed our manufactures, have on the whole done great good to our people... The mechanism of modern business is so delicate that extreme care must be taken not to interfere with it in a spirit of rashness or ignorance... Yet it is also true that there are real and grave evils... and a resolute and practical effort must be made to correct these evils.<sup>84</sup>

Roosevelt deemed the trust issue to be an economic problem and in his first annual congress message he called for a Square Deal - a reform agenda that encompassed several new laws and a stricter enforcement of existing ones regarding the regulation of trusts. In his message, Roosevelt claimed that:

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<sup>78</sup> Serge Ricard, *A Companion to Theodore Roosevelt* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 270, 9.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 35.

<sup>83</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 145.

<sup>84</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: C. Scribners Sons, 1923), 87-93.

The large corporations, commonly called trusts, though organized in one State, always do business in many States, often doing very little business in the State where they are incorporated. There is utter lack of uniformity in the State laws about them, and as no State has any exclusive interest in or power over their acts, it has in practice proved impossible to get adequate regulation... Therefore, in the interest of the whole people, the nation should, without interfering with the power of the States in the matter itself, also assume power of supervision and regulation over all corporations doing an interstate business.<sup>85</sup>

One of Roosevelt's hallmarks was a so-called trust-busting.<sup>86</sup> Roosevelt demanded a stricter control of trusts in order to prevent complete monopoly. During his first tenure as president, he used the Sherman Anti-Trust act to dissolve trusts. For instance, TR brought case against the Northern Securities Company, a trust that was formed by several prominent railroad and financial businessmen. It would have achieved a complete monopoly, if it had not been for Roosevelt's intervention. The court ruled for the government in the end and the trust was eventually dissolved.<sup>87</sup>

During his second tenure in the presidential office, TR proposed even stronger regulation of commerce, moving gradually to the left. In his annual message to Congress in 1904, Roosevelt proposed a law allowing the Interstate Commerce Commission to set railroad rates, later passed as the Hepburn Act, saying that this approach:<sup>88</sup>

does not represent centralization. It represents merely the acknowledgment of the patent fact that centralization has already come in business. If this irresponsible outside business power is to be controlled in the interest of the general public it can only be controlled in one way—by giving adequate power of control to the one sovereignty capable of exercising such power—the National Government... There are many sincere men who now believe in unrestricted individualism in business, just as there were formerly many sincere men who believed in slavery.<sup>89</sup>

One of the most important reforms that Roosevelt was acclaimed for regarded the situation in the meatpacking plants. In 1906, Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, a novel about a Lithuanian immigrant working in a meat-packing plant. The story depicted the horrendous conditions the laborers were to work in. Below is an excerpt from the book, which outlines the working conditions of hundreds of laborers.<sup>90</sup>

There were men who had worked in the cooking rooms, in the midst of steam and sickening odors, by artificial light; in these rooms the germs of tuberculosis might live for two years, but the supply was

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<sup>85</sup> Roosevelt, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, 87-93.

<sup>86</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 45.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

renewed every hour. There were the beef lugers, who carried two-hundred-pound quarters into the refrigerator cars... that wore out the most powerful men in two years... Worst of any, however, were the fertilizer men, and those who served in the cooking rooms - for the odor of a fertilizer man would scare any ordinary visitor... as for the other men, who worked in the tank rooms full of steam, and in some of which there were open vats near the level of the floor, their peculiar trouble was that they fell into the vats; and when they were fished out, there was never enough of them left to be worth exhibiting - sometimes they would be overlooked for days, till all but the bones of them had gone.<sup>91</sup>

The publication of the novel provoked a reaction in the political circles and Roosevelt urged Congress to pass the Meat Inspection Act in effort to address the issues of food production in the US.<sup>92</sup> Roosevelt also urged Congress to pass The Federal Employer's Liability Act, generally known as the FELA. This law protected and, if necessary, compensated injured employees of railroads in the District of Columbia. It was a local reform, applying to a relatively small group of workers, however, it was a reform nonetheless and it strengthened the Progressive sentiment.<sup>93</sup>

TR was also very progressive in his environmentalist attitude. He augmented the nation forest reserves by over 17,000,000 acres, angering a great number of businessmen who wanted to appropriate these areas for their own interest. TR also formed new national parks, wildlife refuges and national monuments in great numbers, consolidating administration of these areas into the Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture. Conservation of the American land became a hallmark of his second tenure as a president. Moreover, Roosevelt vehemently supported the Newlands Reclamation Act – a law that allowed to fund irrigation of the arid lands in the American West. Many historians consider the Newlands Act as a vital legislation for the American West, as it greatly increased farming possibilities.<sup>94</sup>

In the late 1890s, the United States underwent a rapid shift from isolationism to a global world power. When Theodore Roosevelt assumed presidency in 1901, the extent of American influence begun growing. Theodore Roosevelt believed in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon and being afraid of European powers taking advantage of the situation in the Latin America, he came with an addition to the Monroe Doctrine - the Roosevelt Corollary.

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<sup>91</sup> Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Middletown, DE: SnowBall Classics Publishing, 2017), 100-102.

<sup>92</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 131.

<sup>93</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 43-44.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

This policy asserted that all nations are not equal in stature, and those states unable to manage their own country must be supervised by powers.<sup>95</sup> The Roosevelt Corollary stipulated that:

[c]hronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States... to the exercise of an international police force.<sup>96</sup>

Adhering to this policy, Roosevelt supported establishing of protectorates throughout the Caribbean. The first vassal state was Cuba. Although Cuba proclaimed its independence in 1903, the US still oversaw the Cuban foreign affairs, finances and public order, as the American government made sure that the Platt Amendment – congressional action from 1901 that allowed to control Cuba – was incorporated within the Cuban constitution. Moreover, in order to facilitate the construction of the Panama Canal, Roosevelt supported Panamanians rebels who wanted to secede from Columbia.<sup>97</sup>

In line with his foreign policy, TR was in favor of augmenting the US navy. He managed to extend assets of the US Navy twice - during his appointment as a Navy Assistant Secretary and later with the help of Congress in his second term as a president. In 1907 TR sent the new navy forces, referred to as “Great White Fleet”, on the voyage around the world in order to show the status of the US as a great power.<sup>98</sup> TR also attempted to meddle in the foreign policy more actively than his predecessors. For instance, he offered to settle the Russo-Japanese war by inviting both parties to meet in Portsmouth. The conflict was resolved – Russia took the northern half and Japan gained the south<sup>99</sup>. Roosevelt was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize for the settlement of this conflict.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 123.

<sup>96</sup> James D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington, D.C: Bureau of National Literature, 1897), 14:6923ff.

<sup>97</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 53.

<sup>98</sup> Ricard, *A Companion to Theodore Roosevelt*, 270.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 318

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 311

### 3.2 PROGRESSIVE INTERLUDE

Despite Roosevelt's popularity in the USA, he decided against running for election in 1908, considering two terms for a president to be the limit. The 1908 election pitted against each other two candidates – William Howard Taft and William Jennings Bryan. Taft was picked by Roosevelt as his possible successor for being a capable governorship of the Philippines. Taft emerged victorious in the election, with the majority of Progressives republicans winning seats in Congress. Roosevelt believed that Taft would follow his reform agenda. However, shortly after Taft began his presidency, they became political adversaries, as Roosevelt felt that Taft went against the Progressive movement.<sup>101</sup>

Roosevelt was firstly infuriated by the Ballinger-Pinchot scandal which related to the General Land Office. Prior to his presidency, Taft promised to keep the Roosevelt's administration of the General Land Office. However, in 1909 Taft replaced the former administration with Richard A. Ballinger. Roosevelt was unpleasantly surprised, particularly when Ballinger made some area of public domain land available for a private enterprise.<sup>102</sup> The second blow came when Taft passed the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act, which substantially increased tariff rates on imported goods. Roosevelt was disgruntled with Taft's agenda, regretting not running for his third office in 1908.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, Roosevelt remained active in the American politics and in 1910 he gave a speech which he referred to as The New Nationalism. Roosevelt elaborated on his agenda in this speech, calling for various reforms, including federal law abolishing child labor, graduated income taxes and so on. But above all, he stressed the importance of federal regulation of all corporations, stating that "every man holds his property subject to the general right of the community to regulate its use to whatever degree the public welfare may require it."<sup>104</sup>

In 1912, Roosevelt announced his candidacy for the elections under the Republican party, but the Republicans decided to give their nomination to the incumbent president William Howard Taft. Consequently, Roosevelt left the Republicans and with the help of the reformist Republicans, he gave birth to the Progressive Party, also known as the Bull Moose Party. That same year, the progressives convened to draw the Progressive party platform, modeled on the Roosevelt's New Nationalism.

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<sup>101</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 50-10.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>104</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 88.

It set forth a broad range of social and political reforms, including a National Health Service, Social insurance and women's suffrage.<sup>105</sup>

In the end, although gaining more popular votes than William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt lost to Woodrow Wilson, who won the elections by a wide margin of electoral votes.<sup>106</sup> Following the defeat, Roosevelt kept running the Progressive party until 1916 election, when he declined the presidential candidacy and left the party, effectively ending the Progressive Party. Consequently, the former members of the Progressive party wanted to return to the Republican party, however, their readmittance was declined. Since then, the Republicans never leaned toward any Progressive ideas and remained strictly conservative.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.3 WOODROW WILSON

Thomas Woodrow Wilson, a 28<sup>th</sup> President of the United States in the years 1913 to 1921, was a major progressive figure, as his reforms were unparalleled until the New Deal in 1933. Wilson was a widely-acclaimed scholar, writer and an educator prior to taking the presidential office. Wilson openly argued that “the president – as the highest elected official of the land – had the authority to set the political agenda of the nation.”<sup>108</sup>, criticizing the checks and balances of the constitution. In other words, he felt that Congress exercised too much influence and felt that they it was the major issue in the government administration, stating that:

The ‘literary theory’ of checks and balances is simply a consistent account of what our Constitution makers tried to do; and those checks and balances have proved mischievous just to the extent which they have succeeded in establishing themselves.<sup>109</sup>

During the presidential run, Wilson campaigned on a platform called the New Freedom. In contrast to the New Nationalism proposed by Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson vehemently assaulted on trusts and considered them to be inherently bad, favoring a competitive market of small businesses over large corporations. Wilson's platform also called for strengthening of antitrust laws, new banking system and reduction of tariffs.<sup>110</sup> In his campaign speeches, Woodrow Wilson claimed that:

I take my stand absolutely, where every progressive ought to take his stand, on the proposition that private

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<sup>105</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 92.

<sup>106</sup> Roger Matuz and Lawrence W. Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook* (Detroit: UXL, 2001), 967.

<sup>107</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 98.

<sup>108</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 959.

<sup>109</sup> Ronald J. Pestritto, *Woodrow Wilson and the Roots of Modern Liberalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 124.

<sup>110</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 967.

monopoly is indefensible and intolerable.... You know, of course, how the little man is crushed by the trusts. He gets a local market. The big concerns come in and undersell him in his local market, and that is the only market he has; if he cannot make a profit there, he is killed... Thus their competitors can be put out of business, one by one... America stands for opportunity. America stands for a free field and no favor... Our purpose is restoration of freedom. We propose to prevent private monopoly by law, to see to it that the methods by which monopolies have been built up are legally made impossible...<sup>111</sup>

As soon as he took the presidential office, he called a special session of Congress, setting forth his political agenda. After giving the speech, the media widely covered his New Nationalism agenda with a positive public reception. The first crucible of Wilson's agenda concerned laws which would reduce tariffs. Farmers and laborers had been calling for tariffs reduction for a long time, since high tariffs allowed business monopolies to keep prices of consumables very high. However, the legislation on tariffs was stalled by Congress and the Senate. Wilson decided not to give back and addressed Congress personally, which led a great commotion. No American president had addressed Congress since Jefferson's presidency, as it resembled the British administration, which was considered non-democratic. Wilson was successful in Congress, however, the Senate declined his reform strongly. Thus, Wilson called a spontaneous press conference, criticizing lobbyists in the Senate.<sup>112</sup>

The public response prompted congressmen not to stall the legislation and pass the Underwood Tariff Act, also known as the Revenue Act of 1913. This act drastically reduced tariffs and slashed down the price of consumables. It was the first major and early success of Wilson's administration. Conservatives proposed constitutional amendment enacting tariff reform in the hope that the reform would never be ratified by three-fourths of the states. Much to their dismay, the amendment was ratified, taking effect on February 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>113</sup>

During his term in the presidential office, Wilson managed to pass other important progressive laws, the most important of which included Federal Reserve Act, Federal Trade Commission Act, the Clayton Antitrust Act. The Federal Reserve Act was a response to the 1907 Wall Street financial panic, which occurred under the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. The Wall Street was on the verge of collapsing the nation's banking system at that time and Theodore Roosevelt was forced to allow a take-over of the Tennessee Coal & Iron Company by J.P. Morgan in order to ensure stabilization of the prominent Wall Street banks. The coal company price was dramatically slashed down and the whole process of takeover defied anti-

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<sup>111</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), 172.

<sup>112</sup> Zinovij Moisejevič Geršov, *Woodrow Wilson*, (Nakladatelství Svoboda Praha, 1983), 67.

<sup>113</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 85.

trust laws. The financial crisis, however, was resolved. Consequently, the public demanded national control of banks, instead of leaving the control of banks to the hands of irresponsible businessmen. Thus, in 1913 Wilson deemed it appropriate to pass the Federal Reserve Act, which created a hybrid system that spawned a chain of regional banks. Regional banks were still owned by the non-government affiliated businessmen, however, there was a federal reserve board appointed by the Senate and the president, which supervised the running of the federal banks. Moreover, the regional reserve banks would issue currency backed by the federal government and exercised authority to provide member banks with funds should financial crisis occur.<sup>114</sup>

The Federal Trade Commission Act gave rise to the Federal Trade Commission, a replacement of the Roosevelt's Bureau of Corporations. This act was signed in 1913 alongside with the Clayton Antitrust Act, which supplemented the Sherman Anti-Trust Law and empowered the government to investigate any merger movement, including non-monopolistic. Having replaced the Bureau of Corporations, the Federal Trade Commission was granted broadened authority and flexibility to control the commerce operating under the Clayton Antitrust Act.<sup>115</sup>

Four major amendments were ratified during Wilson's presidency. The Sixteenth Amendment related to an income tax. The American population was debating about an income tax for a long time. "[T]he most telling argument in favor was that those with the greatest ability to pay, those whom society most highly rewarded, should pay the highest tax rate".<sup>116</sup> The Sixteenth amendment was passed in 1913<sup>117</sup> and Walter Nugent claims that this reform was "the first, and some say the most fundamental reform of the entire Progressive era."<sup>118</sup> A few months later, Congress passed the Seventeenth Amendment, allowing popular election of U.S. senators and putting an end to election by state legislatures.<sup>119</sup> According to Walter Nugent:

It was a popular reform, part of the strong democratizing urge of Progressivism, and a victory (to use Progressive language) of "the people" over "the interests" who were suspected, as muckrakers had made clear, of having corrupted state legislatures.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Geršov, *Woodrow Wilson*, 69-70.

<sup>115</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 103.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>117</sup> Geršov, *Woodrow Wilson*, 71.

<sup>118</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 82.

<sup>119</sup> Geršov, *Woodrow Wilson*, 71.

<sup>120</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 90.



Wilson's presidency also marks another victory for the Progressive movement - 19th amendment that gave women the right to vote. Although Wilson was initially against giving women the right to vote for his dogmatic upbringing in a religious Southern family.<sup>121</sup> However, after various protests, Woodrow Wilson gave a green light to woman suffrage in January 1918. The amendment was stalled by the Senate, which provoked various pro-suffrage groups to stage another protest in front of the White House. Consequently, the American government bowed to the pressure and the Amendment was ratified in 1920.<sup>122</sup>

On the other hand, Wilson's presidency is infamous for the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, which banned liquor. Following the declaration of war on Germany, the American society experienced a wave of anti-liquor mood. Various Progressives strove to prohibit alcoholic beverages for more than two decades, considering alcohol as a destroyer of family ties and a major contributor to poverty and social vices. When the US embarked upon military actions in the Great War, the war contributed to the prohibition of alcohol. Beer was generally considered as a German product and the American war machinery needed all supplies available. Thus, in December 1917, Congress passed 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment which banned alcohol. The law came in a nationwide effect in January 1920.<sup>123</sup>

There were other Progressive reforms, which Woodrow Wilson managed to push through. That includes the Adamson Act and Workmen's Compensation Act. The former limited a day shift of railroad workers to eight hours, since statistics showed that longer hours led to more accidents on the job. The latter guaranteed federal workers compensation for on-the-job accidents.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Geršov, *Woodrow Wilson*, 73.

<sup>122</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 116.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

Wilson's domestic agenda in the first term came to an abrupt stop and never gained the momentum again halfway through the second year of his term, as Wilson was prompted to focus on foreign affairs. In terms of foreign policies, Wilson rejected the philosophy "of eighteenth-century republicanism, which had emphasized the importance...of operating within the international balance of power"<sup>125</sup> and "developed the ideology of Wilsonianism"<sup>126</sup>, which:

means the approach to foreign matters that seeks to spread—or if necessary, impose—American virtues such as democracy, freedom, public morality, and the rule of law in other places—fine ideals, but not always suited to those places.<sup>127</sup>

A point in case is Wilson's handling of the situation in Mexico during his presidency, when general Victoriano Huerta seized power in 1913 after murdering his predecessor. Wilson did not recognize Huerta's new government and, having learnt that Germany sent supplies to Huerta's troops, he decided to send the US Navy vessels to the port of Veracruz in order to stop the docking of the German ship. In 1914, tension escalated as some American sailors were briefly arrested on the Mexican shore, including one sailor aboard an American ship, thus on the American territory. Roosevelt was angered and ordered a complete blockade of all Mexican ports. The situation calmed as Colombia and Argentina offered a mediation of conflict. However, Mexican rebels started making bandit raids across American borders into the US territory, ransacking New Mexico and Columbus. Wilson dispatched General John J. Pershing to intercept the rebel troops. The intervention did not resolve the situation. On contrary, Mexico fell into a deep state of civil war and the situation stabilized as late as in 1920 without Wilson's intervention.<sup>128</sup>

Woodrow Wilson's presidency also overlapped with the Great War. Initially "Wilson called for Americans to remain neutral in thought and in actions."<sup>129</sup> However, "Germany's submarine warfare posed the most direct threat and eventually provoked the United States to intervene."<sup>130</sup> In 1915 Germany imposed blockade on the British Isles, waging a submarine warfare against transatlantic ships. Wilson was angered and expressed that the German government would be accountable if any American lives were lost. In May 1915 Lusitania vessel was sunk. Wilson did not want to plunge into war right away and wanted to resolve the

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<sup>125</sup> Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy in American foreign relations* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 27.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>127</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 109.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>130</sup> Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy in American foreign relations*, 33.

situation diplomatically, asking the German government for a compensation and not to sink other ships. The Germans compensated for the sunk vessel and the friction between the two governments eased. However, Wilson predicted that the US cannot avoid the war, saying “I can’t keep the country out of war... Any little German lieutenant can put us into war at any time by some calculated outrage”<sup>131</sup>. Thus, a rapid military preparation ensued.<sup>132</sup>

While the US was still neutral during the Great War, Wilson “articulated the principle of national self-determination and the closely related concept of collective security.”<sup>133</sup> In 1916, Wilson stated that:

every people has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live .... Second, that the small states of the world have a right to enjoy the same integrity that great and powerful nations expect and insist upon. And, third, that the world has a right to be free from every disturbance of its peace that has its origin in aggression and disregard of the rights of peoples and nations.<sup>134</sup>

Lloyd E. Ambrosius states that „Wilson used this ideology to advocate American entry into the war against Imperial Germany.”<sup>135</sup> Moreover, in January 1917, British intelligence service decoded a secret message from the German foreign secretary to the German ambassador in Mexico. The message said that the German government would renew the submarine blockade and attack transatlantic convoys. Americans broke off diplomatic relations with Germany and a period of a calm before the storm followed. Throughout March, Americans lost five navy vessels, which was the last straw for the American government. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1917, Wilson declared war on Germany.<sup>136</sup>

“The principle of national self-determination and the closely related concept of collective security”<sup>137</sup> culminated in Wilson’s fourteen-point plan following the declaration of war on Germany in 1917. Walter Nugent claims that Wilson’s plan “was an unmistakably Progressive document, Wilson-idealist variety”<sup>138</sup>, as it included a great number of Progressive ideas, such as “Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas“; „equality of trade conditions “, reduction of armaments and “impartial adjustment of all colonial claims”<sup>139</sup>. Furthermore, his

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<sup>131</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 162.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 161-162.

<sup>133</sup> Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy in American foreign relations*, 20.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 162.

<sup>137</sup> Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy in American foreign relations*, 20.

<sup>138</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 113.

<sup>139</sup> Avalon Project - President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, accessed June 19, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp).

plan „favored restoration or creation of nation-states in Europe, including Russia.“<sup>140</sup> In other words, his plan „should reshape the world in accordance with American ideals.“<sup>141</sup>

Wilson’s fourteen-point plan would later become “the framework of the peace treaty”<sup>142</sup> in Paris in 1919 after the end of the Great War. At the Paris Peace Conference, Roosevelt called for inclusion of the fourteen-point plan in the form of the Covenant of the League of Nations to become a part of the peace treaty. Wilson stated that “[t]here must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace.“<sup>143</sup> considering the League of Nations to be “an international community of this kind under U.S. hegemony“<sup>144</sup>, which would „preserve world peace through collective security or international social control“<sup>145</sup>

However, Wilson did not account for the fact that international problems involve self-interests and rifts that date back to hundreds of years, particularly in Europe.<sup>146</sup> As Lloyd E. Ambrosius states „There was no universal consensus among nations.“<sup>147</sup> and „Foreign nations still served their own interests rather than accept his particular vision of interdependence“<sup>148</sup> Wilson’s plan was thus doomed to failure.

Moreover, Wilson’s plan was met with opposition on the American soil. Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge stated:

I object strongly to having the policies of the United States turn upon disputes where deep feeling is aroused but in which we have no direct interest. It will all tend to delay the Americanization of our great population, and it is more important...than it is to determine that some piece of territory should belong to one European country<sup>149</sup>

Wilson did not intend to back away and attempted to raise the public awareness about the issue at stake. He decided to tour the country, traveling 8,000 miles in twenty-two days. However, he suffered a stroke from exhaustion and remained incapacitated. The tour itself proved unsuccessful and the senate rejected his proposal, which was the end of the treaty and subsequently the end of Wilson’s political career.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy in American foreign relations*, 23.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>142</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short*, 114.

<sup>143</sup> Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy in American foreign relations*, 27.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>146</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 161.

<sup>147</sup> Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy in American foreign relations*, 23.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>149</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 179.

<sup>150</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 979.

## 4 DECLINE OF PROGRESSIVISM AND ITS LEGACY

Following the Great War, American population was tired of any progressive and war related policies. Progressivism gradually faded away with the American nation turning to conservatism and isolationism. According to Walter Nugent:

The Progressive agenda explicated by Bryan, Roosevelt, Wilson, and La Follette was now exhausted. Reform was not, nor were revisions to industrial capitalism, but they needed a few years of breathing space. The Progressive urge, Progressive faith (damaged in many ways by the events of 1919), and Progressive leadership, needed to take a deep breath.<sup>151</sup>

Walter Nugent attributes this shift to postwar recession, during which “consumer goods continued to rise in 1919, while wages and earnings stagnated<sup>152</sup>” and “The prices that farmers...dropped by more than half in 1919.”<sup>153</sup> Moreover, not only did American experienced combat casualties during the war, but a flu epidemic struck the whole country, killing about 600,000 Americans<sup>154</sup>

This sentiment reflected on the 1920s election, when pro-business Republican Warren G. Harding won the election in a landslide, calling for a “return to normalcy”<sup>155</sup>, which meant that Progressive reforms were to be abandoned and pro-business orientation was revived. Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover followed Harding’s suit, promoting “reduced government spending, lower taxes, and higher tariffs”<sup>156</sup>. According to Ellis Wayne Hawley, by adhering to conservatism:

[t]hey concentrated economic and political power in the hands of a business-financial elite that was less altruistic and far less prescient than was generally assumed; and the result was not utopia but economic breakdown, a system that accentuated maldistribution, encouraged speculation, piled up excessive savings, destroyed its own markets, and plunged the nation into the worst depression in its history.<sup>157</sup>

In 1929 a great number of strikes erupted. During World War I, supplies of military clothing were in great demand and many Southern textile mills rapidly expanded. Wages rose with the increased production, however, when the war ended, demand for fabric lowered and wages plummeted. This situation prompted many laborers to protest.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 116.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>155</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 200.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Ellis Wayne. Hawley, *New deal and the problem of monopoly* (New Jersey: Princeton University Pres, 2016), 11.

<sup>158</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 200-203.

Herbert Hoover was “most able of all the Republicans during the twenties”<sup>159</sup>. He responded to the chain of protest in the south by working

“closely with business leaders to create benefits for workers so as to reduce the appeal of trade unions. He also established new government initiatives to help mediate disputes between labor and management and thereby avert strikes and boycotts”<sup>160</sup>

Apart from the glimmer of Progressivism during Hoover’s office, Progressivism was dead on the federal level. Nevertheless, Progressive sentiment remained in the realms of social issues and education on the state and local level. As Walter Nugent states:

the Progressives were instrumentalists—and to many of them the most effective instrument of progress was government, at all levels. In this way they agreed with the Populists who preceded them in the 1890s. This belief nurtured urban liberals like Alfred E. Smith, New York’s governor in the 1920s.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 204.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>161</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 126.

## 5 FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

One of these persistent urban reformists was also Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). In 1910, taking advantage of his name recognition and wealth, Franklin D. Roosevelt decided to run for a state senator in 1910 under the Democratic party. Winning in most Republican districts, he took to challenging pro-business laws, woman suffrage and state control of energy industry. In 1912 election, FDR backed Woodrow Wilson with his New Freedom campaign in the Eastern US. After Wilson's victory, Roosevelt was appointed an assistant secretary of Navy for his loyalty.<sup>162</sup> In 1920 election, FDR was chosen as the Democratic vice presidential running mate of Ohio governor James M. Cox for his service in the Wilson administration. Unfortunately, the Democrats failed in the election owing to the widespread disenchantment of the Progressive reforms. In 1921 FDR suffered polio, which completely paralyzed his legs. As much as serious his health status looked, Roosevelt managed to overcome the illness and strove to rally the Democratic Party, which was in complete shambles after the Great War, saying that “progressivism with the brakes on”<sup>163</sup> is still better “than conservatism with a move on”.<sup>164</sup> In 1928, FDR successfully ran for New York governorship by appealing to rural and urban groups.

Roosevelt proved himself as a capable governor, supporting progressive reforms, such as a state control of the energy industry, state-financed pension, unemployment insurance and regulated working hours. In order to gain popularity, he used the new mass medium – the radio. Roosevelt engaged in a so called “fireside chats”<sup>165</sup> broadcasts, in which he informed New Yorkers about issues and policies. When an economic crisis struck the Wall Street in October 1929 and the US plunged into the Great Depression, Roosevelt took to looking for measures by consulting possible solutions with various academics. FDR tried to focus on “the forgotten man”<sup>166</sup>, as in the people who had lost their livelihood during the crisis. His bold persistent experimentation in terms of the economic crisis solution crystallized into the New deal program that helped him gain voters in 1932 election. His agenda and vigorous personality, coupled with incumbent president Hoover's cautious approach to dealing with the crisis, brought FDR victory in the 1932 presidential election and secured large Democratic majorities in Congress.<sup>167</sup>

The situation in the US was desperate owing to the Great Depression that struck in 1931. One month prior to Roosevelt’s inauguration, an unemployed bricklayer Giuseppe Zangara

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<sup>162</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1126-1130.

<sup>163</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1131.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1133.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 1131-1133.

made attempt on Roosevelt, shouting “Too many people are starving to death”<sup>168</sup>. More than thirteen million people were unemployed and a great deal of people lived in makeshift camps referred to as Hoovervilles.<sup>169</sup> In 1930, roughly 1,300 banks were closed with over 2,300 collapsing a year later, as people started withdrawing and a substantial amount of banks did not have any reserves. Birth rate plummeted at the beginning of 1930, while suicide rate increased by 30 percent between 1929 and 1933. People lost their homes and livelihood and started living on the margin of society.<sup>170</sup> The situation was so desperate that Roosevelt received over fifteen million letters from Americans asking for better living condition. One letter is excerpted below:

I am a boy of 12 years...My father hasn't worked for 5 months...We haven't paid a month's rent... We haven't paid the gas bill and electricity bill, haven't paid grocery bill for 3 months... My father is staying at home. All the time he's crying because he can't find work... <sup>171</sup>

As soon as Roosevelt assumed presidency, he had to draw a specific program to remedy the worsening situation. In his inaugural speech on March 4, 1933, Roosevelt stated:

Values have shrunken to fantastic levels, taxes have risen, our ability to pay has fallen, government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailments of income... farmers find no markets for their produce, the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone. More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence... Our greatest primary task is to put people to work...It can be accomplished by the Government itself...We must frankly recognize the overbalance of population...by engaging on a national scale in a redistribution... The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products... It can be helped by national planning...there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investment.

As Roosevelt promised, he took immediate action to remedy the economic and social issues. Following his inaugural address, Roosevelt begun with his reform program, the period known as The First Hundred Days of his presidency. He immediately called a special session of Congress, asking for new laws to be implemented. The first reform was the Emergency Banking, passed and signed by FDR in one day. The Act gave power to the Federal government to confront the banking crisis and increased the authority of the Federal Reserve board, which oversaw banking activity in the whole United States.<sup>172</sup> More specifically, the Federal government closed immediately all banks and controlled the currency. When all banks reopened

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<sup>168</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1135.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 200.

<sup>171</sup> Robert S. McElvaine, *Down and out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2008), 117.

<sup>172</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1135.



sometime later, people gained trust and started depositing again.<sup>173</sup> A great deal of legislation was passed during his presidency. In summary, Roosevelt's major New Deal reforms are usually referred to as the three R's – relief, recovery and reform measures.<sup>174</sup>

Relief measures were to immediately improve the situation by using funds or employing people during the worst period of the Great Depression. One of the relief measures was Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which provided large grants to financial institutions, railways and public agencies. This act was chiefly funded by the Economy Act, which reduced federal worker's salaries and pension and thus freed funds for states in the form of grants and as a relief for unemployed workers. Another important relief measures included Work Progress Administration, Civil Works Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, which established a platform for creating new jobs, such as road repairs and building of schools and libraries.<sup>175</sup>

Recovery measures were acts designed to revive business and provide more work for unemployed. It includes Public Works Administration (PWA), National Recovery Administration (NRA) and Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). PWA concerned massive construction program of public buildings, such as large dams, irrigation and flood-control structures. NRA's task was to assist the business by creating fair competition rules and guarantees to workers, such as a minimum wage and limited hours. AAA dealt with overproduction of crops by purchasing surplus crops and paying farmers to reduce production. The act helped farmers to deal with debts. Unfortunately, NRA and AAA were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1935 and 1936 respectively.<sup>176</sup>

Reform measures were intended to stabilize the situation and prevent further economic problems. The major reforms were represented by Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Reciprocal Trade Agreements, US housing authority, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Social Security Act (SSA). FDIC provided insured saving deposits in banks. The reason was that banks invested the money people deposited. During the recession, people wanted to withdraw their savings, but the banks had invested large sums and could not comply. FDIC ensured that deposits would be always available.<sup>177</sup>

U.S. Housing Authority helped with rebuilding slums and construction of low-cost

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<sup>173</sup> Ivan Brož, *Roosevelt: Čtyřikrát prezidentem USA* (Praha: Pražská vydavatelská společnost, 2010), 40.

<sup>174</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1138.

<sup>175</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1138.

<sup>176</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1138.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

houses. It was a first direct involvement in building houses for people by the federal government. TVA oversaw dams, flood control and transportation within the area of seven states in the eastern part of the country. SSA established unemployment insurance and old-age pension. Other Reform measures were generally related to employee-employer relation. For instance, National Labor Relations Act allowed workers to organize without penalty from employer and gave rise to National Labor Relations Board, which monitored relations between employers and labor. Lastly, the Reform agenda included the Fair Labor Standards Act, providing a minimum wage system and limited number of working hours.<sup>178</sup>

In terms of foreign affairs, Roosevelt endeavored to stimulate the American economy by proposing “free international trade.”<sup>179</sup> To that end, Roosevelt tried to improve relations with Latin American states and Russia, saying that “in the field of world policy, I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbor.”<sup>180</sup>

His efforts resulted in the Reciprocal Trade Agreement of 1934, which allowed “the United States and other nations to work out a reciprocal exchange of goods which could increase world commerce without compelling nations to put out cash they did not have”<sup>181</sup>. According to Roosevelt, this agreement would “save American farmers from buying in a protected market and selling in a competitive one.”<sup>182</sup>

Roosevelt was also the first president to “discuss current United States policy in the Hemisphere with Latin diplomats.”<sup>183</sup> Roosevelt explained that he “had absolutely no desire to intervene” and “seeking every means to avoid intervention.”<sup>184</sup> Thus, the US forces were withdrawn from Haiti and new treaties with Cuba and Panama were passed to abrogate the Platt Amendment, abolishing America’s right to intervene in Cuba’s affairs.<sup>185</sup>

Moreover, Roosevelt maintained that “a realistic improvement in world conditions required normalization of Soviet relations with the United States.”<sup>186</sup> Thus, Roosevelt embarked on a series of negotiations with the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov about legal and religious rights of the US citizens in the USSR, and about the unpaid debt owed

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<sup>178</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1138.

<sup>179</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 38.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

by the USSR to the United States.<sup>187</sup> On November 15, 1933 Roosevelt and Litvinov worked out a “gentleman’s agreement.” By striking this agreement, Roosevelt put an end to 16 years of non-recognition of the USSR.<sup>188</sup>

On the backdrop of Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor policies, the situation in Europe and Asia was becoming very volatile. In 1931, Japan launched invasion of Manchuria and in 1933 Adolf Hitler was named chancellor of Germany. The tension in the world escalated, prompting Congress to pass Neutrality Acts throughout 1930s.

The Neutrality Act “placed an embargo on shipping armaments to warring countries”<sup>189</sup>, including the Axis and Allied countries. However, when Japan stepped up their efforts in China in 1937, Roosevelt decided to circumvent the Neutrality Acts, stating that:

government-owned ships would not be allowed to transport munitions to China or Japan, that other ships flying the American flag would conduct such trade at their own risk, and that the question of applying the Neutrality Act would remain open<sup>190</sup>

The very same year, Roosevelt gave a Quarantine speech, calling for a containment of aggressive nations, since America would be sooner or later attacked anyway. He stated that:

[w]hen an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease. . . There must be positive endeavors to preserve peace<sup>191</sup>

In 1938, following the Munich Conference, Roosevelt claimed that the deal would bring “a new order based on justice and law”, however, he “principally saw Munich as an interlude between threats in which the democracies must rearm”. When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, Roosevelt asked for a revision of neutrality law, which would allow victims of aggression to purchase armaments from the US, but Congress declined.<sup>192</sup> A few months after Congress declination, Germany invaded Poland. Roosevelt wanted to keep the US out of war, but he rejected “strict neutrality“. In one of his fireside chats, he said:

This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral has a right to take account of facts. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or his conscience.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 81.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 1147.

<sup>190</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932*, 147.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>192</sup> Brož, *Roosevelt: Čtyřikrát prezidentem USA*, 54.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Feeling the danger of the Nazi German, Roosevelt called again for a revision of Neutrality Acts<sup>194</sup>. He appealed for “the sale of weaponry to belligerents on a cash-and-carry basis”, which stipulated “all purchases to be made in cash, and all cargoes to be carried in the purchasers’ own ships, at the purchasers’ own risk.”<sup>195</sup> However, the law allowed Roosevelt to sell or loan armaments only with a consent from chiefs of staff, who had to proclaim the purchase was necessary for the security of the United States. Following the fall of France in 1940, Churchill wanted to purchase navy vessels from the US to fend off German submarines. Roosevelt managed to circumvent the law and swapped the vessels for two British bases in Newfoundland and Guyana.<sup>196</sup>

Roosevelt felt also threatened by a continuous Japanese invasion in Asia and decided to place embargo on Japan in 1940, cutting them from steel and iron scrap. At the same time, Roosevelt authorized financial aid to China. When Japan absorbed the remaining Indo-China territory in 1941, Roosevelt cut off Japan from oil, thus Japan lost about 95 percent of its oil supply.

Roosevelt needed to circumvent the neutrality laws and prohibition of providing loans to the countries that had not yet paid the loans dating back to World War 1. Thus, Roosevelt came with the Lend and Lease program, which allowed the victim states to borrow the necessary armaments and supplies for their defense efforts and give them back after the war.<sup>197</sup>

It was met with opposition in Congress, however. Senator Burton Wheeler was angered that this program would “plow under every fourth American boy“.<sup>198</sup> Roosevelt responded that Wheeler’s attitude was “the damnedest thing said in a generation“.<sup>199</sup> Roosevelt kept promoting his program and used various analogy to push through his land lease program. For instance, he stated that:

Suppose my neighbor’s home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose four or five hundred feet away. If he can take my garden hose and connect it up with his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now, what do I do? I don’t say to him before that operation, “Neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you have to pay me \$15 for it.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932*, 203.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 303

<sup>196</sup> Brož, *Roosevelt: Čtyřikrát prezidentem USA*, 59

<sup>197</sup> Brož, *Roosevelt: Čtyřikrát prezidentem USA*, 65.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>200</sup> Richard Snow, *A Measureless Peril: America in the fight for the Atlantic, the Longest Battle of World War II* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2011), 115

The Lend-Lease program was eventually passed by Congress on May 1941 and it allowed to supply Allied countries with armaments, including the Great Britain, China and later the Soviet Union.

Later in August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill met to discuss American efforts to help Britain with war struggles against Germany. They discussed principles of their new alliances which came to be known as the Atlantic Charter. This charter followed many ideas of Woodrow Wilson's fourteen-point plan, including condemnation of aggression, the right to self-determination and principles of collective security.<sup>201</sup> All adherents of the Atlantic Charter signed the Declaration of the United Nations in 1942. It included 26 governments who pledged to fight against the Axis powers by any means necessary and prevented them from negotiating any treaties with the Axis powers. The Declaration of the United Nations became the basis for the United Nations established in 1945.<sup>202</sup>

There was no doubt that America would enter war when on December 7, 1941 Japanese struck Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt labeled December 7 as “a day which will live in infamy”<sup>203</sup> and declared war on Japan and its allies - Germany and Italy. As soon as the war started for the US, Roosevelt began with a tremendous buildup of navy and army, pulling the US out of the great depression.

The American war machinery generated tremendous amount of jobs and unemployment dropped to roughly 1 percent in 1944.<sup>204</sup>

In 1942, the American Navy defeated Japanese forces at the Battle of Midway and assisted with the invasion of North Africa. The same year, Red Army managed to stop German forces and took the initiative on the Eastern front. On June 6 1944, Allies opened another front in France and victory over Nazi Germany was expected soon. However, Roosevelt did not see the end of the war. Following his fourth inauguration in 1945, Roosevelt went to Yalta conference to discuss the situation in the postwar Europe with Churchill and Stalin. Having returned to the US, Roosevelt left for his vacation home in Warm Springs, Georgia on March 30. On April 12, 1945 Roosevelt was found dead of a cerebral hemorrhage.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 264.

<sup>202</sup> "1942: Declaration of The United Nations," United Nations, accessed June 25, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/history-united-nations-charter/1942-declaration-united-nations/>.

<sup>203</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1150.

<sup>204</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1152.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 1152-1154.

## 6 EVALUATION OF THE PROGRESSIVE EFFORT

Many historians date the Progressive era from September 1901 when Theodore Roosevelt assumed presidency. Theodore Roosevelt is widely regarded as a Progressive president, as his policies marked a sharp turn from those of his predecessors during the Gilded Age. According to Walter Nugent, Progressivism would not have matured without him taking the presidential office. As for his actual reforms, Roosevelt's list of achievements during his first administration is not very long. Roosevelt focused predominantly on curbing trusts and monopolies. The Department of Justice Roosevelt established prosecuted up to forty-four anti-trust suits.<sup>206</sup> During his second term, Theodore Roosevelt focused on American railroads and empowered Interstate Commerce Commission to set railroad rates in order to put a stop to horrendous rates set by railroad monopolies. Moreover, Roosevelt also improved quality of food and drugs by passing the Pure Food and Drug Act.<sup>207</sup> He is also noted for his conservation of environment, since he created over 150 national forests. 5 national parks on over 17,000,000 acres of public land.<sup>208</sup>

On the other hand, Roosevelt was proponent of American imperialism. He was in favor of creating protectorates over some Caribbean republics, such as Cuba and Panama. Furthermore, Roosevelt adhered to the theory of the Anglo-Saxon superiority, thus distinguishing between immigrants from the Western and Eastern Europe. In terms of African Americans, Roosevelt actions toward this group is mixed. He wanted to end black peonage in the South, however, he also punished a black army unit that was falsely accused of desertion. Nevertheless, he wasn't segregationist to such a level as his successor Woodrow Wilson.<sup>209</sup>

As for Woodrow Wilson, major Progressive amendments were ratified, including woman suffrage, primary elections and graduate income tax. Wilson also contributed to a new banking system, which were to prevent any financial crisis down the line. His domestic agenda, however, came to a stop when the Great War erupted in Europe. His fourteen-point plan, which later became the basis for the League of Nations, was met with strong opposition on the domestic front as well as in the international circles. Although Woodrow Wilson is considered to be a Progressive, he went back on his promise to provide support for the black minority by supporting segregation of federal workers. A great deal of Wilson's unrealized ideas were later revived during the Great Depression by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

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<sup>206</sup> Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*, 36

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was Wilson's supporter during his campaign and Wilson himself influenced FDR's life. When FDR assumed the presidential office, the country was suffering from the Great Depression. As mentioned above, FDR embarked on implementing reforms to slash down unemployment, which was reduced from its high of 24,9% in 1933 to 14% in 1937. It rose again to 19% during the second recession in 1938, however, the unemployment rate gradually dropped to 1.9% in 1943.<sup>210</sup> On the other hand, Roosevelt was lambasted for some of his reforms, either attempted or implemented. For instance, Roosevelt focused on the US Supreme Court in his second term, since the court declared many of his reform programs unconstitutional. Thus, Roosevelt strove to restructure the supreme court by adding more pro-New-Deal judges. The plan was met with a stern opposition even among the Democrats.<sup>211</sup> Dorothy Johnson, a widely-known journalist of Washington Star, stated:

This is the beginning of pure personal government. Do you want it?. When it happens we will have a one-man Government. It will all be constitutional. So, he claims, is Herr Hitler. Leave the personality and the intentions of the President out of the picture... he may have the liberties of the American people deeply at heart. But he will have a successor who may be none of these things...<sup>212</sup>

However, some historians claim that Roosevelt's reforms actually deepened the Great Depression. First and foremost, all New Deal reforms were financed from taxes, which increased "from \$1.6 billion in 1933 to \$5.3 billion in 1940."<sup>213</sup> The wholesale increase of taxation, including higher personal income taxes, higher Social Security taxes and higher business taxes, meant "there was less capital for businesses to create jobs, and people had less money in their pockets".<sup>214</sup> Not to mention the fact that the most important source of revenue were taxes from consumables, such as food, cigarettes and liquor. In the end, the recovery reform was financed predominantly by the poor and the middle class.<sup>215</sup> Not only did the government gain funds to pay wages from taxes, but it also borrowed from banks.

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<sup>210</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *No. HS-29. Employment Status of the Civilian Population: 1929 to 2002*, (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2003), 50-51. Accessed June 20, 2017. <http://websupport1.citytech.cuny.edu/Faculty/pcatapano/US2/US%20Maps/HS-29%20Employment%201929-2002.pdf>

<sup>211</sup> Shi and Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History of America*, 245.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Jim Powell, "How FDR's New Deal Harmed Millions of Poor People," Cato Institute, December 29, 2003, accessed June 20, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/how-fdrs-new-deal-harmed-millions-poor-people>.

<sup>214</sup> Jim Powell, introduction to *FDRs folly: how Roosevelt and his New Deal prolonged the Great Depression* (New York: Random House, 2005), x.

<sup>215</sup> Jim Powell, "How FDR's New Deal Harmed Millions of Poor People," Cato Institute, December 29, 2003, accessed June 20, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/how-fdrs-new-deal-harmed-millions-poor-people>.

Government borrowing, however, made it difficult for private sector to recover, as banks denied loans to private businessmen. Moreover, high business taxes and Social Security taxes stunted the growth of various enterprises and discouraged hiring.<sup>216</sup> Jim Powell concludes that “[t]his is a classic case of the seen versus the unseen — we can see the jobs created by New Deal spending, but we cannot see jobs destroyed by New Deal taxing”<sup>217</sup>

According to historian Garry Wills, Roosevelt “understood the importance of psychology - that people have to have the courage to keep seeking a cure, no matter what the cure is”<sup>218</sup>, however, Jim Powell argues that “We should evaluate government policies according to their actual consequences, not their good intentions.”<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Jim Powell, "How FDR's New Deal Harmed Millions of Poor People," Cato Institute, December 29, 2003, accessed June 20, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/how-fdrs-new-deal-harmed-millions-poor-people>.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Matuz and Baker, *Complete American Presidents Sourcebook*, 1140.

<sup>219</sup> Jim Powell, "How FDR's New Deal Harmed Millions of Poor People," Cato Institute, December 29, 2003, accessed June 20, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/how-fdrs-new-deal-harmed-millions-poor-people>.



## CONCLUSION

This work concerns the Progressive movement in the United States of America from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 1930s. The first chapter deals with the concept of Progressivism and its basic description. Progressivism is defined as an endeavor towards the improvement in various spheres by stressing empirical evidence. The second chapter covers the Gilded age era and its various ills, which gave rise to the actual Progressive movement. The most prominent reasons include unregulated capitalism, low living standards of workers and nefarious business practices. The third chapter provides the information about the Progressive movement itself and lists out its most prominent members. It covers the improvement of the American education that trained a cadre of Progressive academics. Moreover, it lists out the first Progressive reformists, such as Jane Addams with her settlement houses, and Robert M. La Follette, who implemented various Progressive reforms on a state level.

The third chapter also elaborates on the very first Progressive president – Theodore Roosevelt. Theodore Roosevelt's presidency marked a sharp turn from his Gilded Age predecessors. He made effort to curb the unregulated capitalism by prosecuting various corporations under anti-trust acts. Theodore Roosevelt also contributed to the improvement of food and drugs quality with his reforms. To cap it all, he also established many national parks and areas throughout the US. Woodrow Wilson is mentioned as well. His presidency is considered to be crucial, as during his presidency, major progressive reforms were ratified as amendments, such as woman suffrage, primary elections and referendum laws. Woodrow Wilson also set minimum working hours for some workers and passed a law that guaranteed on-the-job injury compensation. The following chapter covers the period of Progressive decline, which is attributed to the postwar sentiment and disillusionment after the Great War. The last but one chapter covers Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his broad presidential authority he exercised to combat the Great Depression and the Axis Powers. It also elaborates on his new outlook on foreign policies. The very last chapter provides analysis of the major Progressives and examines pros and cons of their policies.

## RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá progresivismem ve Spojených státech amerických od konce 19. století po druhou světovou válku. Tuto mnohotvárnou filozofii přijmulo a podporovalo mnoho osob z širokého spektra americké společnosti. Ať už republikáni, či demokraté, všechny spojovala určitá myšlenka pokroku, jež vzešla z nespokojenosti se stavem americké společnosti v průběhu druhé poloviny 19. století, někdy taktéž nazývaném jako pozlacený věk.

První kapitola této práce poskytuje definici progresivismu čili jisté filozofii, která je založena na pokroku v různých oblastech společnosti, např. věda, či technika. Tato filozofie zdůrazňuje, že k pokroku je nutno užití empirických poznatků a jedině tak se dá změnit společnost k lepšímu. Kapitola dále nastiňuje důvody, proč je progresivismus pro Spojené státy důležitý a jaké osobnosti zahrnuje.

Druhá kapitola této práce se soustřeďuje na tzv. pozlacený věk. Jedná se o období po občanské válce v USA, kdy se ve značně velkém měřítku rozmohla průmyslová výroba. Taktéž v tomto čase proběhl rozmach železnic, elektrifikace a zejména korporací. Všechny tyto aspekty značně změnily americkou společnost, která byla před rokem 1880 plná malých podnikatelů, kteří se vzájemně doplňovali. Avšak v průběhu pozlaceného věku tuto rovnováhu narušily takzvané korporace a trusty, které získaly monopol na americkém trhu a začaly malé podnikatele vytlačovat. Společně s rozvojem průmyslu přišla vlna imigrantů, zejména čínských, což způsobilo masivní urbanizaci. Lidé ve městech však živořili kvůli nízkým platům a nemohli nijak reagovat na jejich trudnou situaci, jelikož odbory nefungovaly a jakékoliv stávky byly násilně potlačeny federálními silami. Lidé na venkově, tedy osoby živící se farmařením, taktéž nežili bez problémů. Jejich problémy byly spjaty s nedostatkem financí v oběhu, nízkými prodejními cenami a vysokými poplatky za dopravu. V některých místech byla situace tak špatná, že pro farmáře bylo výhodnější svými produkty topit, než je prodávat.

Výše zmíněné problémy daly za vznik několika odborářským organizacím, které se snažili tyto problémy vyzdvihnout před americkými politiky. Jako jeden z prvních zareagoval na tuto situaci stát Illinois, který schválil zákon umožňující zasahovat do ceny převozu zboží. Avšak společnost Pacific Railway podal na stát Illinois žalobu a soud uznal zákon za nekonstituční. Vzhledem k tomu, že výsledek soudu vyvolal nevole, rozhodl se kongres schválit dva federální zákony regulující mezistátní převoz a samotné korporace. Nicméně interpretace těchto zákonů byly překrucována a ve výsledku korporace soudy opětovně vyhrávaly.

Snahy odborových organizací vyústili v zformování politického hnutí Lidová strana Kansasu, rovněž označována jako Populisté. Roku 1892 se členové této strany sešli a vytvořili tzv. Omahskou platformu, ve které mimo jiné požadovali zvýšení oběhu peněz za užití stříbrných mincí, státní vlastnictví železnic a zákaz prodeje pozemků. Mnoho členů této strany se později spojilo s demokraty v čele s William J. Bryanem, který roku 1896 souperil o úřad prezidenta. W. J. Bryan však volby prohrál a v čele prezidentského úřadu stanul konzervativní republikán William KcKinley.

V průběhu pozlaceného věku se neměnila pouze domácí americká sféra. Změnu zaznamenala i zahraniční politika, jelikož Amerika se v čele s McKinleyem snažila ve značné míře poprvé zasahovat do záležitostí cizích zemí. Prvním případem byla intervence během kubánské války za nezávislost. Američané se spojili s Kubánci a Španělské síly porazili, avšak z Kuby se stal protektorát Spojených států. Američané se soustředili i na asijský kontinent ve snaze proniknout na zdejší trh, který byl v té době pod nadvládou Ruska a Japonska.

Kapitola třetí popisuje počátky samotného progresivismu a popisuje události na pozadí pozlaceného věku, které se stali pro progresivismus nezbytným. Mezi tyto události patří rozvoj amerického školství, které bylo rozšířeno o nové předměty, jako např. společenské vědy. Tato modernizace školství byla velmi důležitá, jelikož poskytla nezbytné odborníky, kteří dále poskytovali rady rozličným státníkům v oblasti progresivních reforem. Jedním z těchto státníků byl guvernér státu Wisconsin Robert M. La Follette, který dokázal na přelomu 19. a 20. století schválit mnoho progresivních reforem, mezi něž patří danění železnic, primární volby a ženské volební právo. Stát Wisconsin dále posloužil jako modelový příklad pro ostatní státy s progresivními státníky.

Jedním z dalších progresivních skutků bylo založení ubytoven pro chudé, jež se označovaly v anglickém jazyce „settlement houses“. Tyto ubytovny sloužily jako domov pro velmi chudé lidi a poskytovaly určitý stupeň vzdělání. Progresivismus v této době nabíral oprátky, nicméně stále progresivnímu hnutí chybělo vedení.

Podkapitola třetího punktu se zabývá prezidentem Theodorem Rooseveltem, který poskytl progresivním náladám nezbytnou podporu. Theodore Roosevelt přezval úřad po smrti prezidenta William McKinleyho a okamžitě započal s progresivními reformami. V průběhu jeho prvního období se Roosevelt soustředil na ničení trustů a regulaci mezistátní dopravy. Jeho snahy vyústily k vytvoření komise, která disponovala pravomocemi upravovat poplatky za mezistátní dopravu.

Další jeho důležitou reformou byl zákon týkající se zlepšení kvality jídla a léku, který Roosevelt schválil po přečtení knihy Džungle od Uptona Sinclaira. Neméně progresivní byl jeho postoj k ochraně přírody. Theodore Roosevelt založil mnoho národních parků a chráněných oblastí.

Druhá podkapitola třetího bodu popisuje úpadek progresivních reforem, jelikož následník Roosevelta, prezident Taft, byl zastáncem konzervatismu a některé Rooseveltovy reformy anuloval. Roosevelt se tedy rozhodl opětovně kandidovat v roce 1912, ovšem ne za stranu republikánu, nýbrž za svou politickou partaj progresivistů. Svou kandidaturu založil na programu zvaném Nový nacionalismus, v němž vyzdvihnul nezbytnost státem dotované zdravotní péče, sociálního pojištění a právo žen volit. Roosevelt však volby prohrál proti progresivistovi Woodrow Wilsonovi.

Třetí podkapitola se tudíž zabývá Woodrow Wilsonem, který se stal prezidentem roku 1913. Woodrow Wilson byl velmi sečtělým a byl toho názoru, že kongres disponuje zbytečnou autoritou. Ihned po zvolení se Wilson rozhodl, že před kongresem osobně vystoupí, aby upevnil svůj prezidentský vliv. Mezi jeho nejznámější reformy patří zákon o snížení cla. Kongres se původně rozhodl jeho reformu pozdržet. Wilson se však využil novináře a svolal tiskovou konferenci, během níž vyjádřil svou kritiku vůči lobismu. Kongresmani posléze obdrželi mnoho dopisů od svých voličů a pod tlakem veřejnosti tento zákon schválili. Wilson se rovněž zasadil o reformu bankovního systému, aby předešel ekonomické krizi, která nastala roku 1907. Mezi jeho další reformy patří rozšíření protitrustových zákonů a taktéž poskytnutí více pravomocí komisi, která kontrolovala podnikatele. Během Wilsonova prezidentského období byly taktéž ratifikovány čtyři důležité dodatky v americké ústavě. Jedná se o zavedení daně z příjmu, právo žen volit a přímé volby senátorů. Dále mezi ně taktéž patří nechvalně proslulý zákon o zákazu alkoholických nápojů.

V oblasti zahraničních vztahů je s Wilsonem spjata tzv. ideologie Wilsonismu. Wilson odmítal staré zahraniční postupy, které kladly důraz na rovnováhu sil, a započal novou éru amerických intervencí do záležitostí ostatních států pod záminkou šíření amerických hodnot, tj. demokracie, svobody a práva. Nebyl však vždy úspěšný. Např. situace v Mexiku se po americkém zásahu roku 1914 zhoršila a ustálení proběhlo až po několika letech bez americké pomoci. Wilson měl taktéž ambice založit mezinárodní organizaci, tzv. Ligu národů, která by byla schopna zachovat celosvětový mír. Snažil se zvýšit povědomí o nezbytnosti členství Spojených států v Lize národů, Wilson započal dlouho cestu vlakem napříč Spojenými státy. Během jeho propagační cesty však Wilson utrpěl infarkt a jeho prezidentské kariéra, společně s jeho plány týkající se Ligy národů skončila.

Čtvrtá kapitola se týká období po první světové válce, kdy progresivismus opět ustoupil konzervatismu a izolacionismu. Podle historiků bylo hlavním důvodem zvýšení cen spotřebního zboží a stagnace mezd. Následníci Wilsona, tudíž prezidenti Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge a Herbert Hoover byli zastánci konzervatismu, podporující snížení státních výdajů, daní a zvýšení cla. Řízení ekonomiky a politiky se tak opět dostalo do rukou bohatých vrstev, což ve výsledku, dle některých historiků, vyústilo ve Velkou hospodářskou krizi. Nicméně progresivní nálady ve společnosti přetrvávaly a jedním z progresivně naladěných státníků byl i Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt se stal 32. prezidentem roku 1933. Jeho politická kariéra započala roku 1910, kdy se stal senátorem státu New York. FDR byl příznivcem Woodrowa Wilsona a podporoval jeho volební kampaň ve východním USA. Jako odměnu za loajalitu bylo Rooseveltovi přiděleno místo náměstka na ministerstvu námořnictva. Roosevelt později dokázal sjednotit Demokratickou stranu, která byla značně rozpolcena po první světové válce. V roce 1928 úspěšně kandidoval na pozici guvernéra a projevil své progresivní postoje. Podporoval reformy jako např. státní kontrolu energií, státem dotovanou penzi a omezení pracovních hodin. Pro získání podpory z řad veřejnosti Roosevelt využíval rádio a své názory prezentoval v tzv. Rozhovorech u krbu. Když Spojené státy zasáhla Velká deprese, využil svého rádiového pořadu, v němž prezentoval své reformy pro zlepšení tehdejší situace.

Roku 1933 se Roosevelt stal prezidentem a ihned po inauguraci započal se změnami. Toto období se často nazývá jako Prvních sto dnů, během nichž Roosevelt zavedl mnoho reforem. Jako první přišla na řadu reforma bankovního systému, která umožňovala americké vládě kontrolovat měnu. Jeho reformy na domácí půdě se obecně rozdělují do tří R – relief, recovery and reform. Tedy zmírnění, obnovení a změny. Reformy týkající se zmírnění situace zahrnovali výstavbu budov a rozličných zařízení ze státních fondů za účelem snížení nezaměstnanosti. Reformy v oblasti obnovení měli postavit ekonomiku zpět na vlastní nohy. Tyto reformy se opětovně týkali výstavby budov a zařízení dotovaných vládou. Poslední část se týká změny systému za účelem prevence krizových situací, jako např. Velká deprese.

V oblasti zahraniční politiky byl Roosevelt zastáncem normalizace vztahů se sousedskými zeměmi za účelem zjednodušení obchodu. Roosevelt byl prvním prezidentem, který osobně diskutoval se zástupci jihoamerických zemí a taktéž byl prvním, kdo po 16 letech uznal Sovětský svaz. Nejdůležitější částí v oblasti zahraniční politiky však byl boj s nacismem a poválečné uspořádání světa. Roosevelt zpočátku války držel neutrální postoj, avšak postupem času začal společnost přesvědčovat o nezbytnosti vstupu USA do války.

Na začátku války v Evropě nebyl Roosevelt s to přímo podporovat své spojence kvůli zákonům o neutralitě. Využil však svých právních znalostí a přišel se zákonem o půjčce a pronájmu, který mu dovoloval vybavení pouze půjčovat. Ovlivněn Woodrow Wilsonem, Roosevelt přišel v průběhu války s Atlantickou chartou. Tento plán se týkal zejména poválečného uspořádání světa a roku 1946 na něm byla založena Organizace spojených národů.

Poslední punkt této práce se zaobírá samotným zhodnocením nejdůležitějších progresivistů. Mezi ně patří Theodore Roosevelt, který je považován za prvního progresivního prezidenta, jež dodal progresivismu potřebné vedení a důvěru. Dále je zmíněn Woodrow Wilson, který se zasadil o nejdůležitější progresivní reformy. Poslední z osobností je Franklin Delano Roosevelt, který se taktéž zasadil o mnoho progresivních reforem, a to nejen ve sféře domácí, ale i zahraniční, jelikož jeho Atlantická charta položila základy organizaci Spojených národů.

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