

Definition and Summary of the Progressive Movement

Summary and Definition: The Progressive Movement encompassed a variety of different ideas and activities of reformist pressure groups. The Progressive Era was the period in the history of the United States that was dominated by reform ideals from 1890 - 1920. The Progressive Movement covered social reform issues relating to female suffrage, education, working conditions, unionization, the problems of urbanization, industrialization and child labor. The Progressive Movement called for political reforms attacking bribery and corruption, the political machines and the regulation of Big Business and corporations and reducing the power of the Robber Barons and unfair business practices.

What caused the Progressive Movement?

What caused the Progressive Movement? The Progressives believed that the government should take a more active role in solving the problems of society, restoring order and protecting the welfare of Americans by conservation and environmental reforms. The causes of Progressive Movement were extremely wide ranging and included in the following list. We recommend that reference is made to following articles that provide facts, information about:

Urbanization in America
Rise of Big Business and Corporations
US Labor Unions History
US Immigration Laws History
Industrialization in America
Women's suffrage
Black Populism
Social Darwinism

Causes of the Progressive Movement

Causes of the Progressive Movement: Bribery and Corruption in politics that had been encouraged by the [Spoils System](#)

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The Political Machines that controlled the towns and cities

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The Negative impact of Industrialization that led to the emergence of poor working conditions in the factories

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The rapid Urbanization in America and lack of planning that led to appalling housing and squalid living conditions in the towns and the cities

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The economic system of Free enterprise and the concept of 'Laissez-Faire' by which private businesses operated in competition and largely free of state control.

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The Rise of Big Business and Corporations and the greed and unchecked and unethical practices of the [Robber Barons](#)

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The crusade against Alcohol, its effects on society and the call for prohibition

Causes of the Progressive Movement: Discrimination and inequality on the grounds of race, religion and ethnic background

Causes of the Progressive Movement: Discrimination against women - refer to [Women's suffrage](#)

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The rise of crime in the cities during the Urbanization in America

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The call for banking reform to help small businesses and the farmers

Causes of the Progressive Movement: The call for labor reform relating to wages, working conditions and unionization

Causes of the Progressive Movement: Protests against the use of [Child Labor](#) and the need for improved education

Causes of the Progressive Movement: [The Conservation Movement](#) and the [Environmentalists](#) fought to protect and end the waste of natural resources, the destruction of wildlife and against pollution

Progressive Movement Goals

The Goals of the Progressive Movement were to:

- To curb power of the Trusts, Big Business and Corporations and regulate business
- To eliminate the bribery and corruption of the political machines
- To bring about political reform
- To address the issues of social injustice and inequality and bring about reform
- To raise awareness of social injustices such as child labor, and the effects of illiteracy, alcohol abuse and crime
- To improve the lifestyles, living and working conditions of Americans
- To establish Health and Safety codes
- To conserve and protect natural resources

Progressive Movement: Who were the Progressives?

The Progressive Movement was led by male and female Progressives from all walks of society including:

- Members of the Republican and Democrat political parties
- Well educated middle-class Americans
- Poorer Americans, often union activists
- Crusading Journalists, photographers and authors, also known as Muckrakers
- Teachers and Educators
- Members of the clergy

Progressive Movement: Names of the Leaders of the Progressive Movement

The list of names of famous Progressive Leaders, who consisted of reform activists, politicians and 'muckrakers', included Jacob Riis, John Dewey, Lester Frank Ward, Frank Norris, Ida Tarbell, Thomas Nast, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Robert La Follette, Henry Demarest Lloyd, David Graham Philips, Upton Sinclair, Charles Edward Russell, Alice Paul, John Spargo, Eugene Debs, Lincoln Steffens, Ray Stannard Baker, Jane Addams, Booker T. Washinton, W.E.B. DuBois, Theodore Dreiser, Walter Rauschenbusch and Ida B.Wells. Many of these men and women were labeled as [Muckrakers](#). Theodore Roosevelt was the most influential of all the leaders of the progressive movement and his presidency and focused on efficiency and fairness.

Robert La Follette and the Progressive Movement

One of the famous leaders of the Progressive Movement was Robert La Follette (1855 – 1925) aka "Fighting Bob" who started his political career as an American Republican and later became a Progressive politician who initiated the [Wisconsin Experiment](#). Robert La Follette became a rallying point of many of the progressives in the diverse sectors of the Reformist Movement. Robert La Follette, "Fighting Bob", fought against corporate monopoly in America and imperialism abroad. As a Socialist he believed that major industries, run by Big Business and corporations, should be owned and controlled by the government rather than by individual people and companies. The ideals of Socialism are based on a democratic, non-racist, classless and feminist socialist society in which working people had control over their lives and Robert La Follette, "Fighting Bob", fought for all these issues. His radical, left wing political views, attracted women, organized labor movements, minority groups including many African Americans and farmers. His militant, Progressive platform earned him the nickname of "Fighting Bob" and the admiration of the working classes and the fear of the establishment. He called for the government takeover of the railroads and the coal industry and fought for the rights of workers and unions and the abolishment of child labor. Robert La Follette ran for President on the Socialist platform in 1924 and gained 5 million votes.

Progressive Movement Accomplishments

The accomplishments of the Progressive Movement were as follows:

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The 1887 Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) was an early example of Progressive Reforms and other helpful laws followed (refer to the timeline below)

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: Laws were passed to protect the public's health and welfare

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: Anti-trust legislation was passed to prohibit monopolies

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: Big Business and corporations were regulated as the process of arbitration was included in the negotiation process

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The Unionization of all the important industries

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The commission system of local government, replacing the mayor, city council and political machine was introduced

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The crusading 'muckrakers' raised awareness of social issues which led to the formation of pressure groups and reform

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The federal government started to act as mediators between opposing sides

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The number of hours that children were allowed work were limited, and education improved

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: Laws were passed to protect the environment and address pollution

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The 17th amendment to the Constitution was ratified to counter Senate corruption

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The 18th Amendment was passed prohibiting the sale and manufacture of alcohol

Progressive Movement Accomplishments: The 19th Amendment was passed that gave women the right to vote - refer to [Women's suffrage](#)

Accomplishments of the Progressive Movement

For additional facts refer to the articles detailing the [Progressive Era Timeline](#) and the [Progressive Reforms](#) that were introduced at city, state and federal levels.

Progressive Movement: The Limits of Progressivism

The progressive movement addressed social problems, passed laws, amendments and reforms to protect workers and regulate the economy and big business but there were limits of Progressivism. The most conspicuous limit to progressivism was its failure to address African-American reform and racial issues. African-American progressives therefore took action themselves and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ([NAACP](#)) was formed in 1909.

Progressive Movement Ending

The nation's problems regarding the economy, racism, immigration and labor unrest following WW1 heralded the end of the progressive movement and the Progressive Era. Warren Harding, the Republican candidate called for a return to 'normalcy' and the simpler way of life before all of the Progressive reforms. Americans agreed with his sentiments and Warren Harding won a landslide victory in the presidential election.

Progressive Movement:- President Theodore Roosevelt

The article on the Progressive Movement provides detailed facts and a summary of one of the important events during his presidential term in office. The following video will give you additional important facts and dates about the political events experienced by the 26th American President whose presidency spanned from September 14, 1901 to March 4, 1909.