

Profiles of Positively Praiseworthy Progressive Presidents -- #1

Teddy Roosevelt's "Square Deal" for the Common Man

"We demand that big business give the people a "square deal"; in return we must insist that when anyone engaged in big business honestly endeavors to do right he shall himself be given a square deal." – Theodore Roosevelt

Theodore Roosevelt--Background & Rise:



The **Square Deal** attempted to ensure that the "common man" would receive fair treatment in its dealings with big business.

- The importance of the Progressive Era is not only the many reforms that came into being but also the precedent begun by Roosevelt for an ACTIVIST PRESIDENCY. Think "**Bully Pulpit**"!!!!

Modern Presidency & "Bully pulpit":



- Roosevelt took office and, unlike past Presidents, set the national agenda (the goals for the country).
- Roosevelt expanded the responsibilities of the presidency as described in the Constitution. (For example, Roosevelt established a federal role in arbitrating labor disputes -- trying to solve the problem by bring the two sides together.)
- There was little precedent for involvement by the federal government in domestic matters.

Examples of Roosevelt's efforts to give people a "Square Deal":

1. Trust-busting and Regulation of Business

Roosevelt did not believe that all trusts were harmful, but he wanted to stop the actions of the trusts that hurt the public interest.

Trust, Trustbusting & Northern Securities Company:



2. Government Involvement in Labor Disputes

Roosevelt, like many progressives, believed that disputes could be settled in an orderly way with the help of experts. He was also concerned that some strikes could threaten the public welfare and thus the federal government needed to get involved

1902 Coal Strike:



3. **Federal Regulation of Foods and Drugs**

Roosevelt's work and concerns also led to laws and policies that dealt with both the public health and the environment.

Meat Inspection Act 1906:

Pure Food and Drug Act 1906:

4. **Conservation of Natural Resources**

Before Roosevelt, the federal government had paid very little attention to the nation's natural resources. The government had been standing by as private interests (businesses) were taking more and more of the wilderness.

John Muir (preservation):

Gifford Pinchot (conservation):

Profiles of Positively Praiseworthy Progressive Presidents -- #2

William Howard Taft Fumbles as a Progressive President

"I am afraid I am a constant disappointment to my party. The fact of the matter is, the longer I am President the less of a party man I seem to become."

- Taft was much more cautious when it came to progressive type reforms. Taft agreed with many of Roosevelt's objectives, but not with his interpretation of presidential authority.
- Theodore Roosevelt selected William Howard Taft to be his successor and gave him vital support during the presidential campaign of 1908.
- Taft might have been regarded as a truly progressive leader if he had followed a president other than Teddy Roosevelt. Taft was a totally different personality. His successes in trust-busting, civil service reform and railroad reform were blotted out by his bland personality and his failures with the tariff and conservation.
- During the Taft administration, the number of antitrust suits that were started were twice as high than under Roosevelt. By 1911, Taft began to back away from his efforts to tathe trusts. He was influenced in part by his conservative advisors, who wanted the government to give free rein to the giant businesses. Taft also feared that trustbusting was beginning to have a negative impact on the overall economy.

1. **Tariffs – Payne-Aldrich Tariff**

- He pledged tariff reform during the campaign of 1908 and appeared initially to pursue that goal. In the end, however, he refused to fight for his convictions and lamely accepted the Payne-Aldrich Tariff. This was a compromise between two bills (Payne Bill: lowered rates on imported manufactured goods, & Aldrich Bill: made fewer cuts and increased many rates.
- Reform-minded Republicans felt betrayed.

Tariff:

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2. **Conservation – Ballinger-Pinchot Controversy**

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(It left the impression that Taft was not interested in preserving the nation's natural treasures. In fact, he made a very good appointment to succeed Pinchot as chief forester and thousands of acres of natural wilderness were added to the reserves.)

3. Republican Party Problems & Election of 1912

There was a split between types of Republicans (progressives who sought change and conservation and the conservatives who did not.)

Election of 1912:

