

The Progressive Era

Section 1

The Origins of Progressivism

Terms and Names

progressive movement Social reform movement in the early 20th century

Florence Kelley Social reformer

prohibition Making the sale or use of alcohol illegal

muckraker Writer who exposes wrongdoing

scientific management Using scientific ideas to make work more efficient

Robert M. LaFollette Progressive Wisconsin governor and senator

initiative A way for people to propose laws directly

referendum A way for people to approve changes in laws by a vote

recall A vote on whether to remove a public official from office

Seventeenth Amendment Amendment providing for senators to be elected directly

Before You Read

In the last section, you read about popular culture at the turn of the century. In this section, you will learn about the social reforms that made up the progressive movement.

As You Read

Use a web diagram to list the organizations and people who worked for social, political, moral, and economic reform.

FOUR GOALS OF PROGRESSIVISM

(Pages 512–515)

What did reformers want?

As the 1900s opened, reformers pushed for a number of changes. Together their efforts built the **progressive movement**. The progressive movement had four major goals: (1) to protect social welfare, (2) to promote moral improvement, (3) to create economic reform, and (4) to foster efficiency.

Reformers tried to promote social welfare by easing the problems of city life. The YMCA built libraries and exercise rooms. The Salvation Army fed poor people in the cities and cared for children in nurseries. Settlement houses helped

families. One reformer, **Florence Kelley**, helped to win the passage of the Illinois Factory Act in 1893. The law prohibited child labor and limited women's working hours. The law became a model for other states.

Reformers promoted moral reform by working for **prohibition**—the banning of alcoholic drinks. Many of these reformers, called prohibitionists, were members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). The well-organized union became the largest women's group the country had ever seen.

Reformers tried to make economic changes by pointing out the great inequality between the rich and the poor.

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They pushed for better treatment of workers. Journalists called **muckrakers** wrote stories about corruption and unfair practices in business.

To help make businesses more efficient and profitable, some reformers promoted the idea of **scientific management**. The idea was to apply scientific ideas to make each task simpler. One outcome was the assembly line.

1. How did reformers try to make businesses more efficient and profitable?

CLEANING UP LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Pages 515–516)

How did progressives change city governments?

Progressives also reformed politics. City governments were sometimes corrupt. For instance, they might be run by party bosses who gave jobs to their friends and bribed people to vote for them. One answer to this problem was a new system of city government called the commission system.

In the commission system a group of experts runs the city. Each expert takes charge of a different city department. By 1917, about 500 cities had commission forms of city government.

Another reform idea was the council-manager form of government. By 1925, nearly 250 cities had managers. These managers were appointed by councils elected by the people.

Some cities had progressive mayors. They improved cities without changing their system of government. They put in such reforms as fairer tax systems and lower public transportation fares.

2. How did the commission system help clean up city government?

REFORM AT THE STATE LEVEL

(Pages 516–518)

How did state laws change?

Reformers also worked at the state level. Many states had progressive governors. These states passed laws to regulate railroads, mines, telephone companies, and other large businesses.

Robert M. La Follette, as governor of Wisconsin, led the way in regulating big business. His reforms of the railway industry taxed railroad property at the same rate as other business property. He set up a commission to regulate rates and forbade railroads to issue free passes to state officials.

Progressives also worked to improve conditions in the workplace and to end the employment of children. Factories hired children because children could do the same unskilled work as adults for less money. Often wages were so low that every member of the family needed to work.

Progressive reformers did not get a federal law to ban child labor. They did, however, get state legislatures to ban child labor. States also set maximum hours for all workers.

Progressives also won some reforms from the Supreme Court. In the case of *Muller v. Oregon*, the Court decided that a state could legally limit the working hours of women. In 1917, the Supreme Court upheld a ten-hour workday for men.

Electoral reforms at the state level gave voters more power. Oregon was the first to adopt the secret ballot, giving voters privacy. Three other reforms were

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important: (1) **initiative** gives voters themselves the right to propose a law, (2) voters could accept or reject the initiative by a direct vote on the initiative, called a **referendum**, and (3) voters got the right of **recall**, which meant they could force a government official to face another election.

Minnesota became the first state to use a mandatory statewide direct primary system. This meant that voters, instead of political machines, would choose candidates for public office through a special popular election. The direct

primary led to the passage of the **Seventeenth Amendment** to the Constitution. This amendment called for senators to be elected directly by the people instead of by state lawmakers.

3. What are three ways progressive reforms helped ordinary people?

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As you read about the era of reform, take notes about the goals, reformers, and successes of the reform movements.

Social Reforms	People and Groups Involved	Successes (laws, legal decisions, etc.)
1. Social welfare reform movement		
2. Moral reform movement		
3. Economic reform movement		
4. Movement for industrial efficiency		
5. Movement to protect workers		

Political Reforms	People and Groups Involved	Successes (laws, legal decisions, etc.)
6. Movement to reform local government		
7. State reform of big business		
8. Movement for election reform		