CHAPTER 23

FROM ROOSEVELT TO WILSON IN THE AGE OF PROGRESSIVISM

SUMMARY
Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson all espoused the progressive spirit of reform in the legislation that they championed and in their view of the federal government’s role in the life of the nation. Despite trying to continue with Roosevelt’s basic policies and directions, Taft’s presidency was far from smooth, and a bitter rift developed between the two men and within their party opening the door for Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

The Spirit of Progressivism
Despite philosophical differences and divergent concerns, progressives held to several basic tenets. They were optimistic about human nature as they sought to humanize and regulate big business and politics. They believed in the necessity of direct intervention in people’s lives. They wanted the government at all levels to take an active role in manifesting reform. They were driven by their Protestant morals to reform the nation using the techniques of science. And finally, Progressivism touched the entire nation in one way or another.

The Rise of the Professions
Between 1890 and 1920, national societies and associations emerged among accountants, architects, teachers, ministers, doctors, lawyers, social workers, and others. These professionals were part of a new middle class that was educated, active, and assertive, dedicated not only to improving their respective professions, but also to bettering living conditions on all levels of society. They provided the leadership for much of the progressive reform that occurred during the period.

The Social-Justice Movement
Groups of concerned professionals put pressure on cities and businesses to dramatically improve housing, recreational, and health conditions in urban areas. These social-justice reformers were interested in social cures, not individual charity. They collected data on urban conditions, wrote books and pamphlets, and sought recognition of social work as a distinct field within the social sciences.

The Purity Crusade
Many reform-conscious women dedicated themselves to the crusade to abolish alcohol and its evils from American life. Promoted by superb organizational efforts under the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League, these reformers succeeded in winning passage of the Prohibition Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which they thought was a major step in eliminating social instability, poverty, and moral wrong. Many prohibitionists also worked to eliminate prostitution in society.
Woman Suffrage, Woman Rights
With more women now college-educated and becoming reform-conscious, numerous organizations and groups were started to promote the rights and welfare of American women. Women progressives also worked to regulate child and female labor. African-American women, who were often excluded from mainstream groups, formed their own associations to address their concerns. Driven by the need to influence public officials, many women in the social-justice movement dedicated themselves to winning the vote. After long delays, the suffragists succeeded in gaining passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

A Ferment of Ideas: Challenging the Status Quo
Stressing the role of the environment in shaping human behavior and a more pragmatic approach to knowledge, a new generation of thinkers demanded reform. John Dewey pioneered a pragmatic revolution in education, decrying rote learning and simple memorization. Louis Brandeis pioneered a movement of “sociological jurisprudence” which recognized the motivations behind crime and the role of the environment in shaping those motivations. Socialists, led by Eugene Debs, attacked the abuses of capitalism and formed the Socialist party of America, which doubled in membership between 1904 and 1908 and elected many local officials.

Reform in the Cities and States
Progressive reformers wanted to utilize the government at every level to effect change. To do so, they tried to limit the influence of “special interest” groups by supporting political reforms like the direct primary and direct elections of senators to make government more accountable to the people. They also believed that reform should be in the hands of experts rather than politicians who could be easily influenced. Through their efforts, a multitude of special commissions and agencies staffed by experts emerged to regulate everything from railroad rates to public health.

Interest Groups and the Decline of Popular Politics
Due to various factors, voter turnout dropped sharply in the quarter century after 1900. Many people turned to interest groups and professional and trade associations to promote their respective concerns.

Reform in the Cities
Stressing efficiency and results, substantial reform movements within city governments spread across the nation. Using new corps of experts, city officials constructed model governments, relatively independent from the state legislature’s control, that pushed through scientifically based policies that reformed everything from the tax code to municipal ownership of public utilities to the regulation of corrupt electoral practices.

Action in the States
Finding that many problems were “bigger” than the cities, progressive reformers looked to state governments for action. States across the nation formed commissions to regulate businesses, especially the utilities, insurance, and transportation. Through these
commissions, progressives hoped to eradicate corrupt alliances between politicians and business leaders. They also pushed for political reforms like the initiative, recall, and referendum to make politicians more accountable to the people and less allied with business leaders. Progressives also pushed state legislatures to pass laws to improve and regulate labor conditions, especially for women and children, and to dedicate more state money to the improvement of mental and penal institutions and universities. The most famous reform governor of the Progressive Era was Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin. Under the “Wisconsin Idea,” LaFollette improved education and workers’ compensation, lowered railroad rates, and brought forth the first state income tax.

**The Republican Roosevelt**

As McKinley’s successor, Roosevelt brought a new spirit of enthusiasm and aggressiveness to the presidency. He believed that the presidency was a “bully pulpit” for reform. Early in his administration, Roosevelt appeared to support racial progress but later retreated in the face of growing criticism and his own belief in African-American inferiority.

**Busting the Trusts**

Distinguishing between “good” and “bad” trusts, Roosevelt sought to protect the former and regulate the latter. To regulate corporations, Congress created the Department of Commerce and Labor with a Bureau of Corporations. The president also pursued regulation through antitrust suits, most notably against J. P. Morgan’s Northern Securities Company and the American Tobacco Company. Roosevelt was not a trustbuster, however. For the most part, he used antitrust threats to control and regulate business.

**“Square Deal” in the Coalfields**

Viewing the federal government as an impartial “broker” between labor and management, Roosevelt pressured the coal companies to settle their differences with the United Mine Workers, even bringing both sides to the White House for a conference. When the coal companies failed to compromise, Roosevelt threatened to use the army to seize control of the mines, forcing them to settle. Roosevelt was neither pro-labor or pro-business; he pursued a middle-of-the-road approach to curb abuse and enlarge individual opportunity.

**Roosevelt Progressivism at Its Height**

Easily winning in his bid for reelection in 1904 with 57 percent of the vote, Roosevelt readied himself for more reform.

**Regulating the Railroads**

Roosevelt moved into other areas of reform in his second term including railroad regulation, employers’ liability for federal employees, greater federal control over corporations, and laws regulating child labor and factory inspections. Winning a major victory in the regulation of railroads, the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission were strengthened by passage of the Hepburn Act.
Cleaning up Food and Drugs
The Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act answered the public demand for regulation of the food and drug industry inspired by Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. These laws significantly increased the safety of the nation’s food and drug supply.

Conserving the Land
The president significantly broadened the concept and policy of conservation of natural resources. He increased the amount of land in preserves from 45 million acres to almost 195 million acres and pushed for national parks and forests.

*The Ordeal of William Howard Taft*
William Howard Taft, who unlike his predecessor disdained the limelight, succeeded Roosevelt as president in 1908. Though initially supported by Roosevelt, he lacked Roosevelt’s zest for politics and his faith in the power of the federal government to intercede in the public arena. Facing tension within his own party and a number of troublesome problems, Taft’s years in the White House were not happy, and he suffered by comparison to both his predecessor, Roosevelt, and his successor, Woodrow Wilson.

Party Insurgency
Republicans were divided over many issues, the tariff being one of the most important. An attempt to lower the tariff that was stalled in the house by protectionists put Taft in the middle between progressives and protectionists. Taft tried to compromise, eventually supporting the Payne-Aldrich Act, which angered progressives. Discredited in their eyes, he leaned more on party conservatives. Among progressive Republicans there was a growing desire for a Roosevelt revival.

The Ballinger-Pinchot Affair
The conservation issue caused more problems for Taft when he supported the attempt by Secretary of Interior Ballinger to sell a million acres of public land that Gifford Pinchot, the chief forester, had withdrawn from sale. When Pinchot protested and leaked information to the press, he was fired from the Forest Service, and conservationists were furious.

Taft Alienate the Progressives
Though progressives were interested in increased railroad regulation, they found some elements of Taft’s Mann-Elkins Act, intended to further strengthen the Interstate Commerce Commission, problematic. When Taft made support of the bill a test of party loyalty, the progressives resisted, leading Taft to openly oppose them in the midterm elections of 1910. With progressive and democratic gains in those elections, Taft lost ground. Despite his difficulties, he successfully supported several important pieces of legislation, including the Sixteenth Amendment authorizing income taxes, the creation of a Children’s Bureau in the federal government, and laws mandating employer liability and an eight-hour work day. Taft was also active in initiating antitrust suits, supporting the court’s use of the “rule of reason” against unfair trade practices by corporations. As
his presidency continued, Taft further alienated himself from his former mentor Roosevelt, and the former president decided to seek the presidency in 1912.

**Differing Philosophies in the Election of 1912**
Taft controlled the party machinery and captured the Republican nomination. Roosevelt, promoting his program of New Nationalism organized progressive Republicans into the Progressive Party. The Democrats, in nominating the scholarly Woodrow Wilson and his program of New Freedom, took advantage of the wounded Republican party and won the presidency. Wilson’s New Freedom emphasized business competition and small government while still supporting the social-justice movement. Though both Roosevelt and Wilson saw the nation’s economic growth and its effects on individuals and society as the main problem for the nation, they disagreed as to the solution. Where Roosevelt welcomed the centralization of federal power, Wilson distrusted it.

**Woodrow Wilson’s New Freedom**
Wilson announced his New Freedom program and called for a return to business competition and an end to special privilege. Often a moralist, Wilson was able to inspire Americans with his ideas, his graceful oratory, and his passionate belief in his causes.

**The New Freedom in Action**
Despite his lack of political experience, Wilson seized the progressive initiative and pushed landmark legislation through Congress. Days after his inauguration, Wilson called Congress into special session and successfully pushed through the Underwood Tariff substantially reducing rates and levying a modest income tax to make up for the lower tariff. Taking advantage of a new unity in the Democratic party, Wilson also successfully supported the Federal Reserve Act, which centralized banking and created the Federal Reserve Board to regulate interest rates and the money supply, and the Clayton Antitrust Act, which brought about much needed improvements in regulating trusts, outlawed interlocking directorates, and created the Federal Trade Commission. Wilson saw these laws as the completion of his New Freedom program, which angered some progressives.

**Wilson Moves Toward the New Nationalism**
Despite measured successes during 1914 and 1915 in labor, child labor, banking, business, and farming reforms, Wilson’s New Freedom was a disappointment to women and African Americans. Partially motivated by the upcoming election, in 1916 Wilson began pushing for a multitude of reforms. Included were the Federal Farm Loan Act, the Adamson Act, the Keating-Owen child labor law, and support for women’s suffrage. After 1916, Wilson accepted much of Roosevelt’s New Nationalism, supporting greater federal power and regulation. But as America neared military intervention in the war in Europe, the reform experiment came to an end.

**Conclusion: The Fruits of Progressivism**
Though the progressives were extremely successful in some respects—regulatory commissions, child labor laws, direct primaries, and city improvements—there were many social problems they did not solve. Some problems like race, they failed even to address. Despite this, the actions of Roosevelt and Wilson significantly expanded the
powers of the presidency, and government at all levels began to accept the responsibility for the welfare of society. The onset of World War I, however, cut short the progressive spirit of reform.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Determine specifically what progressivism meant at the city and the state level (especially the reform efforts under LaFollette).

2. Explain what Roosevelt meant by the “bully pulpit” and how he applied this to his administration.

3. Analyze Roosevelt’s attitude toward the trusts and the role of the federal government in trade issues and labor disputes.

4. Summarize the progressive measures of the Roosevelt presidency, with emphasis on railroad regulation, food and drug regulation, and conservation.

5. Contrast Taft’s approach to executive leadership with Roosevelt’s, specifying their different attitudes toward reform.

6. Determine the issues that adversely affected Taft’s relationship with progressives and influenced his downfall in 1912.

7. Determine the political effects of Taft’s handling of the Ballinger-Pinchot affair and his support for the Payne-Aldrich Tariff.

8. Reveal the specific disappointments of African Americans, farmers, and women to Wilson’s first-term policies.

9. List and briefly explain the major reforms of Wilson’s second term.

10. Discuss the six or so major characteristics that defined and shaped progressivism.

11. Examine the participation of women in the social-justice movement and in the efforts to bring about prohibition and women’s suffrage.

12. Summarize the impact of new ideas such as pragmatism and environmentalism on progressive reform.

13. Discuss the issues involved and the reasons for Wilson’s success in the 1912 election.

15. Outline the major components of the Underwood Tariff, the Federal Reserve Act, and the Clayton Antitrust Act.

GLOSSARY

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms:

1. **peonage** a condition of compulsory servitude to a property holder or service because of a debt. "He denounced lynching and ordered the Justice Department to act against peonage."

2. **protectionist** one who believes in high protective tariffs to shield domestic manufacturing. "... passed a bill providing for lower rates, but in the Senate, protectionists raised them."

3. **rule of reason** discretionary standard applied by the courts to determine whether a corporation is in violation of antitrust laws. "... established the 'rule of reason' which allowed the Court to determine whether a business was a 'reasonable' restraint on trade."

4. **interlocking directorates** companies that are united by common directors or trustees. "... through 'interlocking directorates,' controlled companies worth $22 billion ..."

5. **antitrust** of or relating to laws protecting industry and commerce from unfair or illegal business practices. "Taft thought the decisions gave the Court too much discretion, and he pushed ahead with the antitrust effort ..."

6. **suffragist** one who advocates the right of women to vote. "After three generations of suffragist efforts, the Nineteenth Amendment ..."

7. **workers compensation** state laws that guarantee monetary compensation to workers injured on the job, paid in part or full by the employer. "Maryland passed the first workers' compensation law in 1902."

8. **referendum** a device (usually implemented at the state level) that allows voters to accept or reject an existing statute at the ballot box "... the referendum, which allowed them to accept or reject a law ..."

9. **conservationist** one who believes in preserving natural resources such as forests and wildlife. "He established the first comprehensive national conservation policy."

10. **insurgency** an aggressive or rebellious attitude. “There was growing party insurgency against high rates.”
11. **pragmatism** the belief in that which is practical, measurable, or useful. “A new doctrine called pragmatism emerged in this ferment of ideas.”

12. **progressivism** the movement for political, economic, and social reforms. “Finally, progressivism was distinctive because it touched virtually the whole nation.”

13. **environmentalism** the belief that moral and intellectual differences between individuals or groups are largely shaped by environmental factors. “a reform sociologist, called in *Sin and Society* (1907) for pure environmentalism.”

14. **methodology** a set of methods or procedures for regulating a discipline. “social workers discovered each other’s efforts, shared methodology.”

15. **anarchic** favoring the overthrow of political authority usually through random acts of terrorism. “Modern business was an anarchic struggle for profit.”

**IDENTIFICATION**

Briefly identify the meaning and significance of the following terms:

1. Northern Securities Company ________________________________

2. social-justice movement______________________________

3. Madame C.J. Walker ________________________________

4. General Federation of Women’s Clubs______________________________

5. “Square Deal” ________________________________

6. pragmatism ________________________________
7. New Freedom

8. “rise of the professions”

9. Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)

10. “Brandeis Brief”

MATCHING

A. Match the following public figures with the appropriate description:

_____1. Gifford Pinchot   a. reform governor of Wisconsin who campaigned for federal control of railroads

_____2. Upton Sinclair   b. leader of the NAACP who proposed a National Race Commission

_____3. Oswald Garrison Villard   c. conservation activist and head of the Forest Service under Roosevelt

_____4. Richard Ballinger   d. writer who exposed “hideous” conditions and practices within the meatpacking industry

_____5. Robert LaFollette   e. Taft’s secretary of the interior who offered for sale a million acres of land to private concerns

   f. progressive and first Jewish justice of the Supreme Court, appointed by Wilson
B. Match the following federal laws with the appropriate description:

_____1. Hepburn  
_____2. Payne-Aldrich  
_____3. Underwood  
_____4. Clayton  
_____5. Mann-Elkins

a. established a sound, flexible currency system  
b. outlawed interlocking directorates and unfair pricing policies  
c. lowered tariff rates an average of 15 percent and authorized the first graduated income tax  
d. placed telephone and telegraph companies under ICC supervision  
e. empowered the ICC to fix reasonable maximum railroad rates  
f. conservative tariff law that discredited Taft and split the Republican party

COMPLETION

Answer the question or complete the statement by filling in the blanks with the correct word or words.

1. Because he believed that the presidency should be the primary institution for leadership and activity, Roosevelt called it the ____________________.

2. The executive department created by Roosevelt to investigate corporate and business practices was the Department of ____________________.

3. The direct primary and the direct election of Senators along with the ____________________, the ____________________, and the ____________________ were among the political reforms achieved by the progressives.

4. Republican progressives and conservatives split after 1909, mainly because of congressional passage of the ____________________.

5. In the 1912 presidential campaign, Roosevelt called for a national approach to U.S. problems and called his program the ____________________.

6. The ____________________ was influential in the enactment of the eighteenth amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors.
7. Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* caused Roosevelt to demand an investigation of the meat-packing industry and led to the passage of the ____________________________.

8. The social-justice movement had the most success in passing state laws which ____________________________ for women.

9. For Woodrow Wilson, the most important issue of the 1912 campaign was an economy that was not planned, but was ____________________________.

10. In pursuing reform objectives, the progressives displayed ____________________________ about human nature.

**TRUE/FALSE**

Mark the following statements either T (True) or F (False):

_____ 1. “A crime equal to treason,” as one newspaper put it, was Roosevelt’s invitation to Booker T. Washington to lunch at the White House.

_____ 2. Roosevelt’s intervention in the Anthracite Coal Strike revealed his solid and consistent pro-labor stance in disputes against ownership.

_____ 3. Roosevelt believed that all trusts, whether good or bad, should be broken up.

_____ 4. Progressives tended to emphasize reforming the individual more so than reforming the environment.

_____ 5. Women in the social-justice movement cared more about their moral influence than in influencing legislation.

_____ 6. Roosevelt brought suit against the Northern Securities Company because he felt it violated the Sherman Antitrust Act.

_____ 7. Under Daniel De Leon and Eugene Debs, American socialists supported a more militant brand of socialism than that which characterized European socialism.

_____ 8. The Payne-Aldrich Tariff was a victory for the free trade advocates.

_____ 9. The Federal Reserve Act was designed to blend public and private control of the banking system.

_____ 10. Historians now see progressivism as being successful in bringing disparate groups together in working for reform rather than competing against each other.
MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the one alternative that best completes the statement or answers the question.

1. According to Roosevelt, the role of the federal government in labor issues should be to
   a. pursue a middle ground to curb corporate or labor abuses.
   b. side with labor in practically all matters.
   c. support ownership unless it is in violation of the Sherman Act.
   d. remain completely outside or above the issue.

2. The most accurate statement revealing Roosevelt's attitude toward the trusts would be that
   a. some controls were necessary, but large-scale industrial growth and production were natural and beneficial.
   b. trusts represented the corporate abuses and worker exploitation by the "malefactors of great wealth."
   c. a return to smaller scale corporate development and increased competition among more producers was necessary.
   d. large trusts were desirable as long as the owners recognized the unqualified right of unions to organize and represent their workers.

3. The Hepburn Act
   a. created the Interstate Commerce Commission.
   b. required the burden of proof of railroad company abuses upon the courts.
   c. established the Department of Commerce and the Bureau of Corporations.
   d. broadened the jurisdiction and increased the powers of the ICC, allowing it to establish maximum railroad rates.

4. Concerning reform, Taft differed from Roosevelt in that he
   a. believed the federal government should take responsibility for all social and economic reforms.
   b. saw the principal responsibility as lying with the states.
   c. distrusted the government's ability to impose reforms or improve individual behavior.
   d. thought the president should be a stern, aggressive executive and take charge when improvements were needed.
5. The result of the Payne-Aldrich Act in terms of political fallout was that  
   a. the Republican party was perceived for the first time to oppose wholesale tariff reduction.  
   b. the progressive Republicans were alienated from Taft and increasingly turned to Roosevelt for leadership.  
   c. the power of “Uncle Joe” Cannon as Speaker of the House was strengthened, stifling further reform impetus.  
   d. most congressional Democrats supported the act, improving the position and image of that party in future elections.

6. The New Nationalism supported  
   a. stronger antitrust legislation to prevent large concentrations of labor and capital.  
   b. a retreat from progressive reforms—a new conservatism in other words.  
   c. a stronger president, efficiency in government and society, and additional reforms to protect workers, women, and children.  
   d. significant tariff reduction and establishment of sound, flexible currency.

7. The two groups that were conspicuously ignored by Wilson's progressive reforms in his first term were  
   a. labor and farmers.  
   b. Jews and bankers.  
   c. women and African Americans.  
   d. income-tax supporters and downward tariff revision advocates.

8. The “Wisconsin Idea” under La Follette consisted of  
   a. industrial commissions, improved education, public utility controls, and lowered railroad rates.  
   b. the first statewide use of property taxes to fund new programs.  
   c. the “busting” of large corporations that violated the public trust.  
   d. lower taxes of all kinds.

9. Judge Ben Lindsey  
   a. worked for playgrounds, slum clearance, public baths, and technical schools.  
   b. argued that criminals were made by their environment.  
   c. sentenced youthful offenders to education and good care rather than jail.  
   d. all of the above

10. Wilson’s position regarding the labor movement was that he supported  
    a. retreat from the previous two administrations’ policies of consideration for labor reforms.  
    b. business over labor categorically.  
    c. balance between business and labor, union recognition, and collective bargaining.  
    d. the use of military force to quell labor disturbances rather than negotiations.
11. As the leading educational progressive, John Dewey stressed
   a. children’s individual needs and capabilities and the changed social situation.
   b. rote memorization and authoritarian teaching methods.
   c. that education was directly related to inherited and racial factors.
   d. strict common standards that all students should meet.

12. Dr. Alice Hamilton was involved in the efforts to
   a. eradicate the evils of alcohol.
   b. educate prostitutes to the dehumanizing aspects of their trade.
   c. organize the American Medical Association.
   d. alert state leaders to the problems of occupational diseases.

13. Progressives were united in the faith that
   a. the rights of women and minorities were more important than other concerns.
   b. legislative reforms were usually inadequate in meeting the prominent needs for
   social change.
   c. humans possessed the capacity to achieve a better world.
   d. most reforms should be addressed at local and regional levels rather than
   national.

14. Wilson could be best described personally as
   a. slow and amiable.
   b. moralistic and prone to self-righteousness.
   c. practical and down-to-earth.
   d. personable and compromising.

15. In the 1910 congressional elections,
   a. Republicans lost control of the House and Senate.
   b. most Republicans were reelected, indicating popular support for Taft’s policies.
   c. most progressive candidates were defeated by conservatives.
   d. there was very little change in either Republican or Democratic membership.

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

To check your understanding of the key issues of this period, solve the following problems:

1. How would you explain Roosevelt’s attitude toward trusts, the labor movement, and
   conservation?

2. Despite his good intentions and prior success as an administrator, Taft in his
   administration was plagued by problems and, as the public perceived, numerous
   failures. How do you account for this?
3. Wilson’s administration revolutionized the role of the federal government in regulating banking, business, and trade. To what extent were the reforms of the New Freedom permanent, and to what extent do they affect American society today?

4. What problems were left unsolved or even unaddressed by progressive reformers and progressive presidents?

5. What new view of government and its roles and responsibilities did most progressives have?

6. What basic views united progressives? Were progressives accurate in their appraisal of human nature?

7. How would you describe the conditions from which women suffered in the early twentieth century?

8. Roosevelt believed that the president should exhibit strong, active executive leadership as well as initiate reforms. How do you think his administration measured up to those standards?

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Using material in Chapter 23 of the text and the primary sources provided below, please answer the questions that follow the documents.

Booker T. Washington, *The “Atlanta Compromise”*
W.E.B. Du Bois, *Organizing for Protest*
Anna Garlin Spencer, *Women Citizens*

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, THE “ATLANTA COMPROMISE”

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board of Directors and Citizens:

One-third of the population of the South is of the Negro race. No enterprise seeking the material, civil, or moral welfare of this section can disregard this element of our population and reach the highest success. I but convey to you, Mr. President and Directors, the sentiment of the masses of my race when I say that in no way have the value and manhood of the American Negro been more fittingly and generously recognized than by the managers of this magnificent Exposition at every stage of its progress. It is a recognition that will do more to cement the friendship of the two races than any occurrence since the dawn of our freedom.

Not only this, but the opportunity here afforded will awaken among us a new era of industrial progress. Ignorant and inexperienced, it is not strange that in the first years of our new life we began at the top instead of at the bottom; that a seat in Congress or the state legislature was more sought than real estate or industrial skill; that the political convention or stump speaking had more attractions than starting a dairy farm or truck garden.

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, “Water, water; we die of thirst!” The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” A second time the signal, “Water, water; send us water!” ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River. To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly
relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are”—cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection, it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man’s chance in the commercial world, and in nothing is this Exposition more eloquent than in emphasizing this chance. Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life; shall prosper in proportion as we learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamental gewgaws of life and the useful. No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labour wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South. Casting down your bucket among my people, helping and encouraging them as you are doing on these grounds, and to education of head, hand, and heart, you will find that they will buy your surplus land, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories. While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one. In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

There is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all. If anywhere there are efforts tending to curtail the fullest growth of the Negro, let these efforts be turned into stimulating, encouraging, and making him the most useful and intelligent citizen. Effort or means so invested will pay a thousand per cent interest. These efforts will be twice blessed—“blessing him that gives and him that takes.”

There is no escape through law of man or God from the inevitable:

“The laws of changeless justice bind
Oppressor with oppressed;
And close as sin and suffering joined
We march to fate abreast.”

Nearly sixteen millions of hands will aid you in pulling the load upward, or they will pull against you the load downward. We shall constitute one-third and more of the ignorance and crime of the South, or one-third of its intelligence and progress; we shall contribute one-third to the business and industrial prosperity of the South, or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic.

Gentlemen of the Exposition, as we present to you our humble effort at an exhibition of our progress, you must not expect overmuch. Starting thirty years ago with ownership here and there in a few quilts and pumpkins and chickens (gathered from miscellaneous sources), remember the path that has led from these to the inventions and production of agricultural implements, buggies, steam-engines, newspapers, books, statuary, carving, paintings, the management of drug stores and banks, has not been trodden without contact with thorns and thistles. While we take pride in what we exhibit as a result of our independent efforts, we do not for a moment forget that our part in this exhibition would fall far short of your expectations but for the constant help that has come to our educational life, not only from the Southern states, but especially from Northern philanthropists, who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement.

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

In conclusion, may I repeat that nothing in thirty years has given us more hope and encouragement, and drawn us so near to you of the white race, as this opportunity offered by the Exposition; and here bending, as it were, over the altar that represents the results of the struggles of your race and mine, both starting practically empty-handed three decades ago, I pledge that in your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which God has laid at the doors of the South, you shall have at all times the patient, sympathetic help of my race; only let this be constantly in mind, that, while from representations in these buildings of the product of field, of forest, of mine, of factory, letters,
and art, much good will come, yet far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that, let us pray
God, will come, in a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and suspicions in a determination to
administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of law. This, coupled with our
material prosperity, will bring into our beloved South a new heaven and a new earth.

W.E.B. Du Bois, Organizing for Protest

The men of the Niagara Movement coming from the toil of the year’s hard work and pausing a moment from
the earning of their daily bread turn toward the nation and again ask in the name of ten million the privilege of a
hearing. In the past year the work of the Negro hater has flourished in the land. Step by step the defenders of the rights
of American citizens have retreated. The work of stealing the black man’s ballot has progressed and the fifty and more
representatives of stolen votes still sit in the nation’s capital. Discrimination in travel and public accommodation has so
spread that some of our weaker brethren are actually afraid to thunder against color discrimination as such and are
simply whispering for ordinary decencies.

Against this the Niagara Movement eternally protests. We will not be satisfied to take one jot or tittle less
than our full manhood rights. W[ith] nastiness the new American creed says: Fear to let black men even try to claim for
ourselves every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil, and social; and until we get these
rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America. The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone but
for all true Americans. It is a fight for ideals, lest this, our common fatherland, false to its founding, become in truth the
land of the thief and the home of the Slave—a by-word and a hissing among the nations for its sounding pretensions
and pitiful accomplishments.

Never before in the modern age has a great and civilized folk threatened to adopt so cowardly a creed in the
treatment of its fellow-citizens born and bred on its soil. Stripped of verbiage and subterfuge and in its naked [form]
rise lest they become the equals of the white. And this is the land that professes to follow Jesus Christ. The blasphemy
of such a course is only matched by its cowardice.

In detail our demands are clear and unequivocal. First. We would vote; with the right to vote goes everything:
Freedom, manhood, the honor of your wives, the chastity of your daughters, the right to work, and the chance to rise,
and let no man listen to those who deny this.

We want full manhood suffrage, and we want it now, henceforth and forever.

Second. We want discrimination in public accommodation to cease. Separation in railway and street cars,
based simply on race and color, is un-American, undemocratic, and silly. We protest against all such discrimination.

Third. We claim the right of freemen to walk, talk, and be with them that wish to be with us. No man has a
right to choose another man’s friends, and to attempt to do so is an impudent interference with the most fundamental
human privilege.

Fourth. We want the laws enforced against rich as well as poor; against Capitalist as well as Laborer; against
white as well as black. We are not more lawless than the white race; we are more often arrested, convicted and mobbed.
We want justice even for criminals and outlaws. We want the Constitution of the country enforced. We want Congress
to take charge of Congressional elections. We want the Fourteenth Amendment carried out to the letter and every State
 disfranchised in Congress which attempts to disenfranchise its rightful voters. We want the Fifteenth Amendment
enforced and no State allowed to base its franchise simply on color.

The failure of the Republican Party in Congress at the session just closed to redeem its pledge of 1904 with
reference to suffrage conditions [in] the South seems a plain, deliberate, and premeditated breach of promise, and
stamps that party as guilty of obtaining votes under false pretense.

Fifth. We want our children educated. The school system in the country districts of the South is a disgrace
and in few towns and cities are the Negro schools what they ought to be. We want the national government to step in
and wipe out illiteracy in the South. Either the United States will destroy ignorance or ignorance will destroy the United
States.

And when we call for education we mean real education. We believe in work. We ourselves are workers, but
work is not necessarily education. Education is the development of power and ideal. We want our children trained as
intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls
simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people. They have a right to know, to think, to aspire.

These are some of the chief things which we want. How shall we get them? By voting where we may vote, by
persistent, unceasing agitation, by hammering at the truth, by sacrifice and work.

We do not believe in violence, neither in the despised violence of the raid nor the lauded violence of the
soldier, nor the barbarous violence of the mob, but we do believe in John Brown, in that incarnate spirit of justice, that
hatred of a lie, that willingness to sacrifice money, reputation, and life itself on the altar of right. And here on the scene
of John Brown’s martyrdom we reconsecrate ourselves, our honor, our property to the final emancipation of the race
which John Brown died to make free.

Our enemies, triumphant for the present, are fighting the stars in their courses. Justice and humanity must
prevail. We live to tell these dark brothers of ours—scattered in counsel, wavering and weak—that no bribe of money
or notoriety, no promise of wealth or fame, is worth the surrender of a people’s manhood or the loss of a man’s self-
respect. We refuse to surrender the leadership of this race to cowards and trucklers. We are men; we will be treated as men. On this rock we have planted our banners. We will never give up, though the trumpet of doom find us still fighting.

And we shall win. The past promised it, the present foretells it. Thank God for John Brown! Thank God for . . . all the hallowed dead who died for freedom! Thank God for all those today, few though their voices be, who have not forgotten the divine brotherhood of all men, white and black, rich and poor, fortunate and unfortunate.

We appeal to the young men and women of this nation, to those whose nostrils are not yet befouled by greed and snobbery and racial narrowness: Stand up for the right, prove yourselves worthy of your heritage and whether born north or south dare to treat men as men. Cannot the nation that has absorbed ten million foreigners into its political life without catastrophe absorb ten million Negro Americans into that same political life at less cost than their unjust and illegal exclusion will involve?

Courage, brothers! The battle for humanity is not lost or losing. All across the skies sit signs of promise. The Slav is rising in his might, the yellow millions are tasting liberty, the black Africans are writhing toward the light, and everywhere the laborer, with ballot in his hand, is voting open the gates of Opportunity and Peace. The morning breaks over blood-stained hills. We must not falter, we may not shrink. Above are the everlasting stars.

Anna Garlin Spencer, Women Citizens (1898)

Government is not now merely the coarse and clumsy instrument by which military and police forces are directed; it is the flexible, changing and delicately adjusted instrument of many and varied educative, charitable and supervisory functions, and the tendency to increase the functions of government is a growing one. Prof. Lester F. Ward says: “Government is becoming more and more the organ of the social consciousness and more and more the servant of the social will.” The truth of this is shown in the modern public school system; in the humane and educative care of dependent, defective and wayward children; in the increasingly discriminating and wise treatment of the insane, the pauper, the tramp and the poverty-bound; in the provisions for public parks, baths and amusement places; in the bureaus of investigation and control, and the appointment of officers of inspection to secure better sanitary and moral conditions; in the board of arbitration for the settlement of political and labor difficulties; and in the almost innumerable committees and bills, national, State and local, to secure higher social welfare for all classes, especially for the weaker and more ignorant. Government can never again shrink and harden into a mere mechanism of military and penal control.

It is, moreover, increasingly apparent that for these wider and more delicate functions a higher order of electorate, ethically as well as intellectually advanced, is necessary. Democracy can succeed only by securing for its public service, through the rule of the majority, the best leadership and administration the State affords. Only a wise electorate will know how to select such leadership, and only a highly moral one will authoritatively choose such . . .

When the State took the place of family bonds and tribal relationships, and the social consciousness was born and began its long travel toward the doctrine of “equality of human rights” in government, and the principle of human brotherhood in social organization; man, as the family and tribal organizer and ruler, of course took command of the march. It was inevitable, natural and beneficent so long as the State concerned itself with only the most external and mechanical of social interests. The instant, however, the State took upon itself any form of educative, charitable or personally helpful work, it entered the area of distinctive feminine training and power, and therefore became in need of the service of woman. Wherever the State touches the personal life of the infant, the child, the youth, or the aged, helpless, defective in mind, body or moral nature, there the State enters the “woman’s peculiar sphere,” her sphere of motherly succor and training, her sphere of sympathetic and self-sacrificing ministration to individual lives. If the service of women is not won to such governmental action (not only through “influence or the shaping of public opinion,” but through definite and authoritative exercise), the mother-office of the State, now so widely adopted, will be too often planned and administered as though it were an external, mechanical and abstract function, instead of the personal, organic and practical service which all right helping of individuals must be.

Insofar as motherhood has given to women a distinctive ethical development, it is that of sympathetic personal insight respecting the needs of the weak and helpless, and of quick-witted, flexible adjustment of means to ends in the physical, mental and moral training of the undeveloped. And thus far has mother-hood fitted women to give a service to the modern State which men cannot altogether duplicate. . . .

Whatever problems might have been involved in the question of woman’s place in the State when government was purely military, legal and punitive, have long since been antedated. Whatever problems might have been involved in that question when women were personally subject to their families or their husbands, are well-nigh outgrown in all civilized countries, and entirely so in the most advanced. Woman’s nonentity in the political department of the State is now an anachronism and inconsistent with the prevailing tendencies of social growth. . . .

The earth is ready, the time is ripe, for the authoritative expression of the feminine as well as the masculine interpretation of that common social consciousness which is slowly writing justice in the State and fraternity in the social order.
1. Describe the progressive view of human nature and the course of human history.

2. Given that view, why did they avoid issues of African Americans and women?


4. Which of the two views worked best during the Progressive Era? Would the same views have worked well in the 1950s and 1960s?

5. Evaluate the views of the anti-suffragists and those of Anna Garland Spencer. Which do you think best promoted the interests of women?