

**URBAN AMERICA AND
THE PROGRESSIVE
ERA, CHAPTER 21
NOTES**

Progressivism

- ⦿ Progressive Era: 1890s to WWI
- ⦿ The Progressive movement was a varied collection of reform communities, uniting citizens in a host of political professional and religious organizations
- ⦿ Political aspects:
 - Ending political corruption
 - Bringing businesslike methods to governing
 - Offering a compassionate legislative response to the excesses of industrialism

Unifying Themes

- ⦿ Anger at the excesses of industrial capitalism and urban growth
- ⦿ Social cohesion and common bonds as a way of understanding how modern society and economics actually worked
 - individualism is not accurate
 - Social Darwinism is not accurate
- ⦿ The need for citizens to intervene actively (both politically and morally) to improve social conditions

Female Dominion

◎ Settlement House Movement

- An alternative to traditional concepts of private charity and humanitarian reform
- Settlement House work provided educated women with an alternative to teaching, nursing, or library science
- In 1889, Jane Addams founded Hull House in Chicago—it had a day nursery, a dispensary for medicines, a boardinghouse, an art gallery, and a music school
- New female-dominated occupations, such as social work, public health nursing, and home economics, allowed women to combine professional aspirations with the older traditions of female moral reform

Urban Machine

- ⦿ Democratic Party machines, usually dominated by first- and second-generation Irish, controlled the political life of most large American cities
 - Why did machines succeed?
 - Disciplined organization
 - Delivery of essential services to both immigrant communities and business elites
 - Recent immigrants were unemployed, sick, and discriminated against
 - Machine politicians offered services to their constituents in exchange for votes

- ⦿ Businessmen saw staying on the machine's good side as a cost of doing business
- ⦿ Businessmen routinely bribed machine politicians
- ⦿ George Washington Plunkitt defended “honest graft”—making money from inside information on public improvements

Political Progressives and Urban Reform

- ① Political progressivism originated in the cities
- ① Reformers blamed machines for urban ills (such as poor water quality and sanitation)
- ① Reformers revised city charters in favor of stronger mayoral power and expanded use of career civil servants

Progressives in the South and West

- ◎ Example: Robert La Follette
 - Progressive Republican from Wisconsin
 - Served three terms as governor (1900-1906) and served as a US Senator until 1925
 - Advocated tougher corporate tax rates, direct primary, civil service code, and a railroad commission to regulate freight charges
 - He used faculty experts to help research and write his bills

Innovation

- ◎ In the early 1900s, Oregon voters approved constitutional amendments designed to strengthen direct democracy:
 - Initiative—allowed a direct vote on specific measures put on the state ballot by petition
 - Referendum—allowed voters to decide bills referred to them by the legislature
 - Direct primary—allowed voters to cross party lines
 - Recall—gave voters the right to remove elected officials by popular vote
- ◎ These measures were copied throughout the West and intentionally weakened political parties

- ① Western progressives targeted railroads, mining and timber companies, and public utilities for reform
- ① Southern progressivism was for whites only
- ① Southern progressives believed in segregation—with African Americans removed from political life, the direct primary system of nominating candidates would give white voters more influence
- ① Between 1890 and 1910—poll taxes, literacy tests, and property qualifications prevented voting by blacks

Muckraking

- ◎ Jacob Riis—1890—How the Other Half Lives— a portrait of New York City's poor
- ◎ S.S. McClure—1893--McClure's—the first large-circulation magazine
 - Imitators: Munsey's, Cosmopolitan, Collier's, Saturday Evening Post
 - These magazines quickly surpassed more staid and expensive magazines such as the Atlantic Monthly and Harper's
- ◎ Upton Sinclair—1902—The Jungle

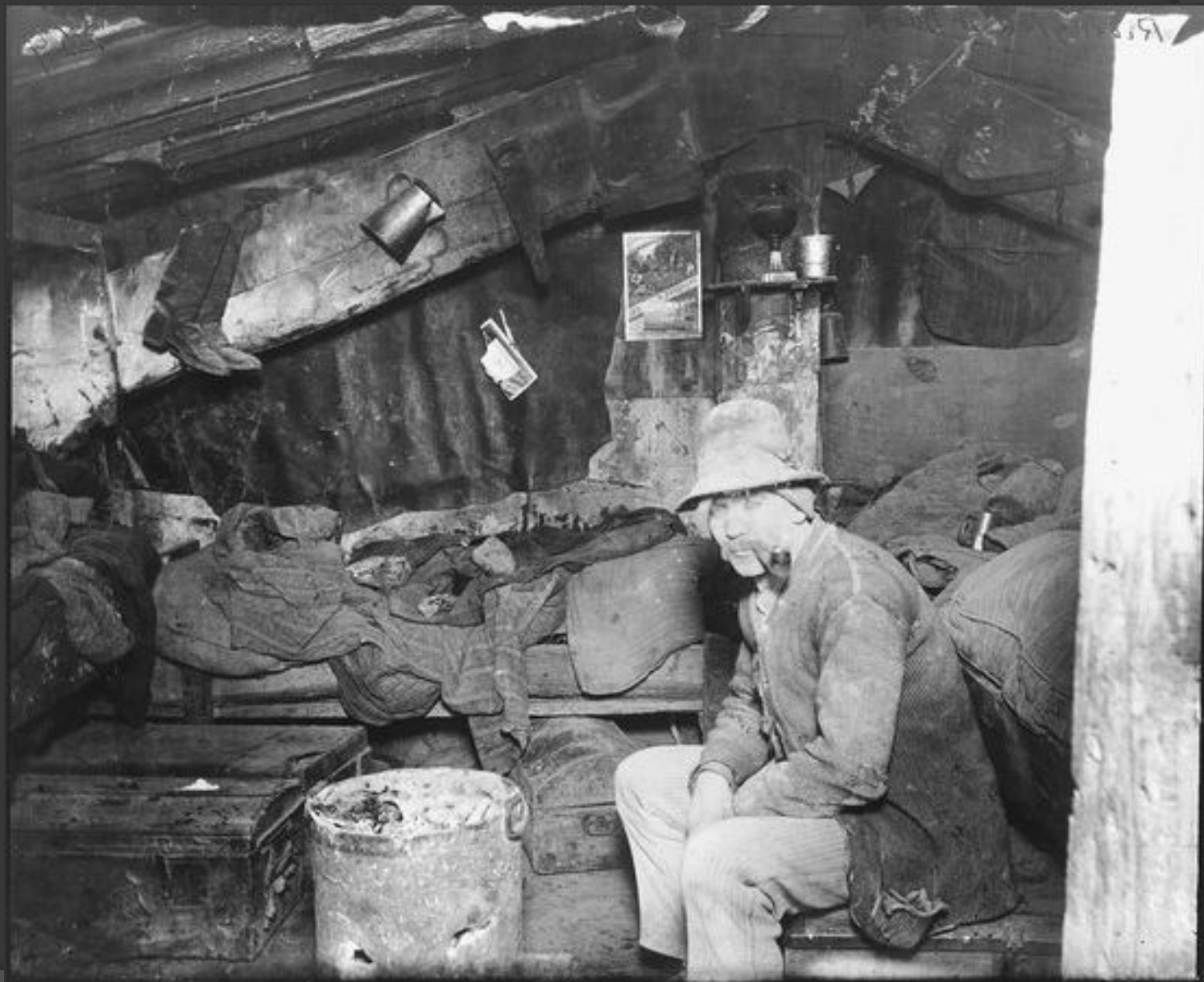








1914



- David Graham Phillips wrote a series for Cosmopolitan called “The Treason of the Senate” and argued that many conservative senators were merely mouthpieces for big business
- Theodore Roosevelt disagreed and called people like Phillips “muckrakers” who “raked the mud of society and never looked up”

Challenges to Traditional Thought

◎ Sociology

- Lester Frank Ward in *Dynamic Sociology* (1883) was a critique of social Darwinism

◎ Education

- John Dewey in *The School and Society* (1899) and *Democracy and Education* (1916) said that schools should develop creativity
- Public school was the primary agent of “Americanization”—making the immigrants assimilate into American society

◎ Law

- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. believed that law should take into account social conditions and rejected the conservative “hands-off business” approach of most of the Supreme Court
- Louis Brandeis—used statistical, sociological, and economic data instead of just the law—called the “Brandeis Brief”

Prohibition

- There was a battle to ban Alcohol, led by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon League

Prostitution: “The Social Evil”

- Efforts to eradicate prostitution became intense between 1895 and 1920
- Male business and civic leaders joined with feminists, social workers, and clergy to eradicate “commercialized vice”
- Mann Act—made it a federal offense in 1910 to transport women across state lines for “immoral purposes”

Redemption of Leisure

- Commercialized leisure frightened some progressives and traditionalists
- By 1908, movies were the most popular form of cheap entertainment
- For 5 or 10 cents, “nickelodeon” theaters offered movies of varied subject matter
- 1909—National Board of Censorship was formed and reviewed movies—local censoring committees nationwide subscribed to the board’s weekly bulletin
- NBC reviewed 95% of the nation’s films

Working Class Communities

- In 1900, 16 million people worked at industrial occupations and 11 million worked on farms (28.5 million total)
- By 1920, 29 million worked in industry and 10 million worked on farms (42 million total)
- New immigrants in the early 1900s lacked industrial skills and entered industry in the bottom ranks
- Immigrant communities used ethnicity as a collective resource to get jobs—they took care of their own

- ◎ Most new immigrants were men, and they did low-paid, backbreaking work in basic industry
- ◎ Mexican immigration grew—providing a critical source of labor for the West's farms, railroads, and mines
 - 1900 (100,000 people of Mexican descent)
 - 1914 (300,000 people of Mexican descent)
- ◎ By 1920, immigrants and their children made up almost 60% of the population of cities over 100,000

Garment Workers

- Garment workers operated in a system where time equaled money, and working conditions were cramped, dirty, and poorly lit
- Garment workers gained support of the Women's Trade Union League in 1909
- Hundreds of strikers in November of 1909 were arrested and beaten by police

Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

- March 25, 1911—a fire raced through three floors of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company
- Exit doors were locked from the outside
- Fire escapes were not present
- 146 people died within half an hour
- Women progressives joined with Tammany Hall leaders to create a New York State Factory Investigation
- Led by Frances Perkins, the commission led to a series of state laws that improved safety conditions and limited working hours for women and children

Company Towns

- ⦿ Immigrant industrial workers and their families often established communities in a company town, where a large corporation was dominant
- ⦿ Modern machinery and industrial discipline meant high rates of injury and death
 - Non-English speakers in Gary, IN suffered twice the accident rate of English-speaking employees
 - Companies sometimes dominated the life of their workers

Unions

- AFL (American Federation of Labor) was the strongest and most stable organization of workers
- Samuel Gompers had recruited skilled labor into unions organized by craft, and membership climbed from under 500,000 in 1897 to 1.7 million by 1904
- But, some trade unions barred non-whites and women

IWW

- In response to brutal strikebreaking in the West, many Western Federation of Miners leaders embraced socialism
- WFM, Socialist Party and radical groups founded the Industrial Workers of the World (members were called “Wobblies”) in 1905
- The movement was content with practical gains, but expressed militant rhetoric and talked about a socialist revolution

The New Woman

- ◉ Women's club movement combined an earlier focus on self-improvement and intellectual pursuits with newer benevolent efforts on behalf of working women and children
- ◉ "Birth control"
 - The phrase was coined by Margaret Sanger around 1913
 - Sanger campaigned to provide contraceptive information and devices for women
 - Her mother had died at the age of 49 after bearing 11 children
 - She was jailed for violating obscenity laws and for offering birth control information without a physician present

Racism

- By 1900, 4/5 of the nation's 10 million African Americans still lived in the South, where most worked in agriculture
- Racial Darwinism held that blacks were a “degenerate” race that could not compete with whites
- Popular culture and political debate was also racist—blacks were caricatured as creatures of pure appetite for food, sex, alcohol, and violence
- Southern progressives assumed the innate inferiority of blacks but believed that black progress was necessary help the economy

Early efforts to organize

- ◎ Niagara movement (1905)
 - Founded by W.E.B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter (an editor)
 - Group of educated black men
 - Created to oppose Booker T. Washington's views and protest legal segregation
- ◎ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—founded in 1909
 - Interracial organization
 - Du Bois was the only black officer at the beginning

Theodore Roosevelt

- Took an active role in finding solutions to economic and social inequality
- He directed the Justice Dept. to begin prosecutions under the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1902
- Roosevelt did not believe that all large companies were bad, but he did believe in government regulation

- ⦿ Hepburn Act—authorized the Interstate Commerce Commission to set maximum railroad rates and inspect financial records
- ⦿ Pure Food and Drug Act—1906
 - Established the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
 - Meat Inspection Act—empowered the Department of Agriculture to inspect and label food and drugs

Conservation, Preservation, and the Environment

- Roosevelt believed in the need for government regulation of the natural environment
- US Forest Service—1905—led by conservationist Gifford Pinchot
 - The service managed US timber and forest reserves
 - Allowed some development instead of keeping all lands for wilderness
- Sierra Club—founded by John Muir in 1892—took the position that land should not be spoiled by development

Taft

- Roosevelt's Secretary of War, William Howard Taft was chosen by Roosevelt to be his successor
- Roosevelt kept his promise to retire after a second term, and he did not run in 1908
- Taft easily defeated William Jennings Bryan in 1908

Election of 1912

- ◎ Republicans were divided
 - Roosevelt challenged Taft in 1912
 - Why?
 - Taft and Roosevelt disagreed on how to handle tariffs, antitrust issues, and conservation policies
 - Roosevelt jumped into the race in 1912 and lost the Republican nomination fight
- ◎ Roosevelt ran in 1912 as a Progressive Party (Bull Moose) candidate, leaving Republican vote divided

Wilson Elected

- ◎ Woodrow Wilson was elected president in 1912
 - Wilson: 6.3 million votes
 - Roosevelt: 4.1 million votes
 - Taft: 3.5 million votes
 - Eugene V. Debs (Socialist): 900,000 votes

Wilson's First Term

- ◎ Wilson was a progressive and he used the Democratic-controlled Congress to his advantage to enact reforms
 - Underwood-Simmons Act (1913)—reduced tariff duties on goods
 - 16th Amendment allowed Congress to impose the first graduated income tax
 - Federal Reserve Act—gave central direction to banking and monetary policy
 - Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914—exempted unions and forbade federal courts from issuing injunctions against strikers
 - Federal Trade Commission (FTC)-1914-regulatory authority over corporations