**An Introduction to the Progressive Era**

By the beginning of the twentieth century, muckraking journalists were calling attention to the exploitation of child labor, corruption in city governments, the horror of lynching, and the ruthless business practices employed by businessmen like John D. Rockefeller.

At the local level, many Progressives sought to suppress red-light districts, expand high schools, construct playgrounds, and replace corrupt urban political machines with more efficient systems of municipal government. At the state level, Progressives enacted minimum wage laws for women workers, instituted industrial accident insurance, restricted child labor, and improved factory regulation.

At the national level, Congress passed laws establishing federal regulation of the meat-packing, drug, and railroad industries, and strengthened anti-trust laws. It also lowered the tariff, established federal control over the banking system, and **enacted** legislation to improve working conditions.

Four constitutional amendments were adopted during the Progressive era, which authorized an income tax, provided for the direct election of senators, extended the vote to women, and prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages.

Progressivism is an umbrella label for a wide range of economic, political, social, and moral reforms. These included efforts to outlaw the sale of alcohol; regulate child labor and sweatshops; scientifically manage natural resources; insure pure and wholesome water and milk; Americanize immigrants or restrict immigration altogether; and bust or regulate trusts. Drawing support from the urban, college-educated middle class, Progressive reformers sought to eliminate corruption in government, regulate business practices, address health hazards, improve working conditions, and give the public more direct control over government through direct primaries to nominate candidates for public office, direct election of Senators, the initiative, referendum, and recall, and women's suffrage.

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