

**Progressivism****Lesson 1**

# The Origins of Progressivism

## Key Terms and People

**progressive movement** Social reform movement in the early-20th century

**Florence Kelley** Social reformer who worked to help women and children

**prohibition** Making the sale or use of alcohol illegal

**muckraker** Writer who exposes wrongdoing

**scientific management** Using scientific ideas to make work more efficient

**Henry Ford** Changed manufacturing with the introduction of the Model T automobile and the use of assembly lines

**Robert M. La Follette** Progressive Wisconsin governor and senator

**initiative** The procedure by which citizens can propose a law

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

## As You Read

Use a chart to list the organizations and people who worked for social, political, moral, and economic reform and the successes they achieved.

### FOUR GOALS OF PROGRESSIVISM

#### 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

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alcoholic drinks. Many of these reformers, called prohibitionists, were members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). The WCTU saw much growth under the leadership of Frances Willard. The well-organized union became the largest women's group in the country.

Some temperance groups, such as the Anti-Saloon League, found themselves in conflict with immigrant groups. After all, immigrant customs often included the use of alcohol. Even so, the Anti-Saloon League had much political influence. The work of their members led to the banning of alcohol in many states. A large number of towns, city wards, and rural areas also voted to outlaw alcohol.

Reformers tried to make economic changes by pointing out the great inequality between the rich and the poor. They pushed for better treatment of workers. Some Americans questioned the capitalist economic system and supported socialism. Labor leader Eugene V. Debs helped found the American Socialist Party and spoke out about the power of business.

Journalists called **muckrakers** wrote stories about corruption and unfair practices in business. One such journalist was Ida M. Tarbell. Other muckraking journalists exposed dangerous working conditions, such as child labor and unsafe products.

To help make businesses more efficient and profitable, some reformers promoted the idea of **scientific management**. Scientific management was the brainchild of Frederick Winslow Taylor, who wanted to find ways to make industry more efficient. The idea was to apply scientific ideas to make each task simpler. One outcome was the assembly line.

Inventor and businessman **Henry Ford** introduced the assembly line, and this greatly changed American manufacturing. Ford used an assembly line to efficiently produce his Ford Model T automobile. Ford kept his car simple and identical so that it could be easily mass-produced. Such mass production made the cars cheaper to make and therefore more affordable to the general public.

The assembly line had drawbacks as well as benefits. The new system of manufacturing required people to work like machines. Not all workers could work at the same rate. At a fast pace, some workers became overtired and injured themselves on the job. Ford tried to keep workers happy by reducing the workday and paying workers five dollars a day. Workers seemed willing to accept the hardships of working on the assembly line for the attractive pay.

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

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## **CLEANING UP LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### ***How did Progressives change city governments?***

Progressives also reformed politics. City governments were sometimes corrupt, 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.

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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. For example, progressive mayor Hazen Pingree served in Detroit and Tom Johnson led Cleveland. They improved cities without changing their system of government. They put in such reforms as fairer tax systems and lower public transportation fares.

- How did the commission system improve city government?

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## REFORM AT THE STATE LEVEL

### **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. He worked hard to ensure that the voters rather than business leaders controlled government. 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.

Other governors also worked to limit the role of big business. These governors included Charles B. Aycock of North Carolina and James S. Hogg of Texas.

Progressives also helped improve working conditions and end child labor.

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.

A group called the National Child Labor Committee investigated the harsh working conditions of children. Their efforts helped ensure passage of the Keating-Owen Act, which prohibited goods produced through child labor from being transported across state lines.

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

Progressives also won some reforms from the Supreme Court. In the case *Muller v. Oregon*, the Court decided that a state could legally limit the working hours of women. Attorney Louis D. Brandeis successfully argued this case. In 1917 the Supreme Court upheld a ten-hour workday for men in its *Bunting v. Oregon* decision.

Electoral reforms at the state level gave voters more power. William U'Ren led his state of Oregon to become the first to adopt the secret ballot, giving voters privacy. Three other reforms of the times were 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

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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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Complete the chart about the goals, reformers, and successes of the reform movements.

<b>Social Reforms</b>	<b>People and Groups Involved</b>	<b>Successes (laws, legal decisions, etc.)</b>
1. Social welfare reform movement		
2. Moral reform movement		
3. Economic reform movement		
4. Movement for industrial efficiency		
5. Movement to protect workers		
<b>Political Reforms</b>	<b>People and Groups Involved</b>	<b>Successes (laws, legal decisions, etc.)</b>
6. Movement to reform local government		
7. State reform of big business		
8. Movement for election reform		