

# **Roosevelt's Progressivism**

## Roosevelt's Upbringing

- Theodore Roosevelt was a sickly, shy youth whom doctors forbade to play sports or do strenuous activities.
- In his teenage years, Roosevelt reinvented himself, taking up sports and becoming vigorous, outgoing, and optimistic.
- Roosevelt came from a prominent New York family and attended Harvard University, but he grew to love the outdoors.
- He spent time in northern Maine and in the rugged Badlands of North Dakota, riding horses and hunting buffalo.
- In 1884, when Roosevelt was 26, both his mother and his young wife died unexpectedly.
- Trying to forget his grief, he returned to his ranch in Dakota Territory, where he lived and worked with cowboys.
- He returned to New York after two years and entered politics.

## Roosevelt's View of the Presidency

### From Governor to Vice President

- Roosevelt's rise to governor of New York upset the Republican political machine.
- To get rid of the progressive Roosevelt, party bosses got him elected as vice president, a position with little power at that time.

### Unlikely President

- President William McKinley was shot and killed in 1901, leaving the office to Roosevelt.
- At 42 years old he was the youngest president and an avid reformer.

### View of Office

- Roosevelt saw the presidency as a platform to publicize important issues and seek support for his policies on reform.

## The Coal Strike of 1902

- Soon after Roosevelt took office, some 150,000 Pennsylvania coal miners went on strike for higher wages, shorter hours, and recognition of their union.
- As winter neared, Roosevelt feared what might happen if the strike was not resolved, since Eastern cities depended upon Pennsylvania coal for heating.
- Roosevelt urged mine owners and the striking workers to accept arbitration, and though the workers accepted, the owners refused.
- Winter drew closer, and Roosevelt threatened to take over the mines if the owners didn't agree to arbitration, marking the first time the federal government had intervened in a strike to protect the interests of the public.
- After a three-month investigation, the arbitrators decided to give the workers a shorter workday and higher pay but did not require the mining companies to recognize the union.
- Satisfied, Roosevelt pronounced the compromise a "square deal."

# The Square Deal

- The **Square Deal** became Roosevelt's 1904 campaign slogan and the framework for his entire presidency.
- He promised to "see that each is given a square deal, because he is entitled to no more and should receive no less."
- Roosevelt's promise revealed his belief that the needs of workers, business, and consumers should be balanced.
- Roosevelt's square deal called for limiting the power of trusts, promoting public health and safety, and conservation.

## Regulating Big Business

- Roosevelt believed big business was essential to the nation's growth but also believed companies should behave responsibly.
- He spent a great deal of attention on regulating corporations, determined that they should serve the public interest.
- In 1901, when three tycoons joined their railroad companies together to eliminate competition, their company, the Northern Securities Company, dominated rail shipping from Chicago to the Northwest.
- The following year, Roosevelt directed the U.S. attorney general to sue the company for violating the **Sherman Antitrust Act**, and the Court ruled that the monopoly did, in fact, violate the act and must be dissolved.

# Regulating the Railroads

- Another way to ensure businesses competed fairly was through regulation.
- Railroads often granted rebates to their best customers, which meant large corporations paid much less for shipping than small farmers or small businesses.
- To alleviate this problem, Congress passed two acts.

## The Elkins Act

- Passed in 1903
- Prohibited railroads from accepting rebates
- Ensured that all customers paid the same rates for shipping their products

## The Hepburn Act

- Passed in 1906
- Strengthened the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), giving it the power to set maximum railroad rates
- Gave the ICC power to regulate other companies engaged in interstate commerce

# Dismay Over Food and Drug Practices

## Food

- Food producers used clever tricks to pass off tainted foods:
  - Dairies churned fresh milk into spoiled butter.
  - Poultry sellers added formaldehyde, which is used to embalm dead bodies, to old eggs to hide their smell.
- Unwary customers bought the tainted food thinking it was healthy.

## Drugs

- Drug companies were also unconcerned for customer health:
  - Some sold medicines that didn't work.
  - Some marketed nonprescription medicines containing narcotics.
    - Dr. James' Soothing Syrup, intended to soothe babies' teething pain, contained heroin.
    - Gowan's Pneumonia Cure contained the addictive painkiller morphine.

# Upton Sinclair and Meatpacking

- Of all industries, meatpacking fell into the worst public disrepute.
- The novelist **Upton Sinclair** exposed the wretched and unsanitary conditions at meatpacking plants in his novel *The Jungle*, igniting a firestorm of criticism aimed at meatpackers.
- Roosevelt ordered Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson to investigate packing house conditions, and his report of gruesome practices shocked Congress into action.
- In 1906 it enacted two groundbreaking consumer protection laws.

The **Meat Inspection Act** required federal government inspection of meat shipped across state lines.

The **Pure Food and Drug Act** outlawed food and drugs containing harmful ingredients, and required that containers carry ingredient labels.

# Environmental Conservation

In the late 1800s natural resources were used at an alarming rate, and foresting, plowing, polluting, and overgrazing were common.

## Roosevelt's Thoughts

- Believed that conservation involved the active management of public land for varied uses: some preservation, some economical

## Roosevelt's Solution

- The **Newlands Reclamation Act** of 1902 allowed the federal government to create irrigation projects to make dry lands productive.
- Set aside 148 million acres of forest reserves.
- Established 50 wildlife sanctuaries and 5 national parks.