

Compare the work of the Progressives at the local and state levels.

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# Thesis

- ◆ The reforms of the Progressive Era helped to make America a modern nation, one that lived up to the Puritan ideal of a “city on the hill”, a nation that would be an example to all. Indeed, it was the desire to allow all Americans an equal chance at success that pushed the middle class men and women who were the Progressives to act. They were driven to improve our government, our economy and our way of life because those changes would be to the benefit of all.

# Progressivism

Progressivism is an umbrella label for a wide range of economic, political, social, and moral reforms that took place at local, state, and national levels. 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.

# State level

On a state level, progressivism gained a strong voice in the White House when Theodore Roosevelt became president in 1901. He believed that strong corporations were good for America, but he also believed that corporate behavior must be watched to ensure that corporate greed did not get out of hand. The progressive era effectively ended with World War I when the horrors of war exposed people's cruelty and many Americans associated President Woodrow Wilson's use of progressive language ("the war to make the world safe for democracy") with the war.

The publication of Upton Sinclair's book, *The Jungle*, exposed unsanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry, generating widespread public support for federal inspection of meatpacking plants. The Department of Agriculture disclosed the dangers of chemical additives in canned foods. A muckraking journalist named Samuel Hopkins uncovered misleading and fraudulent claims in non-prescription drugs. To deal with these problems the federal government enacted:

The Meat Inspection Act (1906), mandating government enforcement of sanitary and health standards in meatpacking plants;

# Local level

Reformers turned to state politics, where progressivism reached its fullest expression. Robert La Follette's term as governor of Wisconsin (1901–6) was a model of progressive reform. He won from the legislature an anti lobbying law directed at large corporations, a state banking control measure, and a direct primary law. Taxes on corporations were raised, a railroad commission was created to set rates, and a conservation commission was set up. In state after state, progressives advocated a wide range of political, economic, and social reforms. They urged adoption of the secret ballot, direct primaries, the initiative, the referendum, and direct election of senators. They struck at the excessive power of corporate wealth by regulating railroads and utilities, restricting lobbying, limiting monopoly, and raising corporate taxes. To correct the worst features of industrialization, progressives advocated worker's compensation, child labor laws, minimum wage and maximum hours legislation (especially for women workers), and widows' pensions.

# Conclusion

- ◆ In conclusion progressivism is almost the same at the both the state and local level. One of the only differences was that at the local level the things passed were more focused on a smaller area to help benefit the individual while the state level focused on the community on a whole.