**18.3. Addressing the Effects of Industrialization**



Rapid industrialization gave rise to a number of problems in American society, including unsafe products, environmental damage, and corruption in public life. The three progressives in the White House—Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson—sought to correct these negative effects. As Roosevelt put it, "The man who holds that every human right is secondary to his profit must now give way to the advocate of human welfare." The progressive presidents worked to reduce the harmful effects of industrialization, starting with the power of the trusts.

**Busting Trusts** Roosevelt began the progressive trustbusting movement. To regulate monopolies, he used the Sherman Antitrust Act. This law made illegal "every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce." The law had been passed in 1890 but had been ineffective. Its language was vague, and enforcement was weak.

Roosevelt believed that government should regulate monopolies to make sure they operated for the good of the nation. Sometimes he had to break up trusts rather than regulate them. Such actions gained him a reputation as a trustbuster. However, he was not opposed to big business. "We do not wish to destroy corporations," he said, "but we do wish to make them subserve the public good."

In addition to breaking up J. P. Morgan's Northern Securities Company, Roosevelt limited the power of railroads to set rates and stifle business competition. In 1906, he signed the Hepburn Act, which gave the federal government the authority to set maximum rail shipping rates.

Under Taft, the Justice Department brought 90 lawsuits against trusts—more than twice the number under Roosevelt. Taft supported a stricter interpretation of the Sherman Act. Roosevelt distinguished between good and bad trusts, trying to break up only trusts created specifically to squash competition. In contrast, Taft did not think a court could determine a trust's motives, so he prosecuted any trusts that had the effect of limiting trade, regardless of intent.

Wilson took even stronger action by helping to push the Clayton Antitrust Act through Congress. Passed in 1914, the Clayton Act extended the power of the Sherman Act by laying out rules that made it harder for trusts to form and to squeeze out competition. For example, the law made it illegal for a company to lower prices in one market but not others to try to force out local competitors.

The Clayton Act also protected labor unions from antitrust regulation. Courts had ruled that unions could be prosecuted for restraining commerce under the Sherman Act, but the Clayton Act made unions exempt from antitrust laws. Congress also created the Federal Trade Commission in 1914 to enforce the Clayton Act's provisions.

Progressives who wanted to eliminate trusts were displeased that the antitrust reforms left many trusts intact. Meanwhile, pro-business conservatives thought that the government should not have interfered at all with businesses. Nevertheless, the moderate reforms that were typical of progressivism produced real benefits for society.



**Protecting Consumers and Workers** In addition to busting trusts, the progressive presidents tried to protect consumers. Two key laws were passed in 1906 during Roosevelt's presidency: the Meat Inspection Act and the **Pure Food and Drug Act**.

The Meat Inspection Act required the Department of Agriculture to inspect packaged meat. This law was a response to muckraker accounts of unsanitary meatpacking plants. For example, one passage in Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* described how rats often became part of the ground meat: "The packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together." Sinclair later said of reaction to his book, "I aimed at the nation's heart, but hit it in the stomach."

The Pure Food and Drug Act established a new agency, the Food and Drug Administration, to test and approve drugs before they went on the market. This law addressed the calls for the regulation of patent medicines. These nonprescription medicines often promised magical cures, but many contained little more than alcohol or opium.

Roosevelt also helped improve working conditions for coal miners. In 1902, he pressured coal mine owners and the striking United Mine Workers to submit to **arbitration**, a legal process in which a neutral outside party helps resolve a dispute. A government commission decided that the miners should have higher wages and shorter hours. However, it also declared that the owners did not have to recognize the union or hire only union workers. This arbitration pleased Roosevelt and many other progressives, who believed that government should be impartial in labor disputes and stronger than either big business or unions.

Taft and Wilson expanded worker protection. Under Taft, the Department of Labor established the Children's Bureau to "investigate and report upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children." Wilson went further to push for a ban on child labor. In 1916, he signed the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act, which prohibited companies involved in interstate commerce from hiring workers under 14 years of age. Although the law protected fewer than 10 percent of children in the labor force, it set minimum protections and a precedent for future action.

Taft and Wilson also supported an eight-hour workday—at least for some workers. For years, companies had resisted this demand by unions. Under Taft, the eight-hour day became the rule for government employees. Wilson later helped secure the same benefit for railroad workers.

**Protecting the Environment** Progressives also wanted to protect the natural environment. They saw how industry and urban growth had polluted the air and water and devastated the landscape. They believed that government should remedy these problems, but they sometimes disagreed on the solutions.

Some progressives supported **preservation**, the protection of wilderness lands from all forms of development. John Muir, a preservationist who co-founded the Sierra Club in 1892, believed that the government must preserve the environment. "Any fool can destroy trees," he wrote. "God. . . cannot save them from fools—only Uncle Sam can do that."

Other progressives supported **conservation**, the limited use of resources. Conservationists believed that government should take a middle position between preservation and exploitation. They wanted to preserve some wilderness while also allowing some use of natural resources.

The progressive presidents, especially Roosevelt, were sympathetic to the preservationist view. Roosevelt, a great outdoorsman, once commented, "We are prone to think of the resources of this country as inexhaustible. This is not so." In practice, however, the government tended to favor the more moderate conservationist approach.

In 1905, Roosevelt backed the creation of the U.S. Forest Service. Its mission was to protect forests and other natural areas from excessive development. Roosevelt appointed Gifford Pinchot, a noted conservationist, to head the Forest Service. Like Roosevelt, Pinchot advocated a "wise use" policy of balancing the demands of economic development with the need to conserve the natural environment. Under Roosevelt, the federal government set aside nearly 150 million acres of national forests.



Taft added 2.7 million acres to the National Wildlife Refuge System. However, he angered Roosevelt and many conservationists by firing Pinchot for criticizing the government's sale of some wilderness areas in Wyoming, Montana, and Alaska.

In 1916, Wilson supported the creation of the National Park Service (NPS). Congress had founded the first national park, Yellowstone, in 1872. Later, more lands were set aside for national parks. The NPS was created to manage all these parks for preservation and public use. This mandate reflected a shift in preservationist thinking. Preservationists no longer argued that all wilderness areas should be left untouched. Instead, they accepted the idea that tourism, and thus economic development, could help protect the natural landscape.

**Student Notebook Activity:**

**For each part of Section 3, summarize what each president did to address the effects of industrialization. Start with the subsection “Busting Trusts,” and explain what each president did to bust trusts. Then continue with the subsections “Protecting Consumers and Workers” and “Protecting the Environment.”**

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|  | **Theodore Roosevelt**  **1901-1909** | **William Taft**  **1909-1913** | **Woodrow Wilson**  **1913-1921** |
| **Busting Trusts** |  |  |  |
| **Protecting Consumers and Workers** |  |  |  |
| **Protecting the Environment** |  |  |  |