

Next week, we will look at the presidency of Teddy Roosevelt (1901-1909). Roosevelt took office after the strikes we examined in the strikes activity last week. His policies represented a change in the attitude of the government both with regard to business and unions. Read the article that follows and complete the following on a separate sheet of paper:

1. Make a one page outline of the article.
2. Then, on the back, answer the following questions:
 - A. We have been talking about the ideology of Laissez Faire. Define this ideology in your own words.
 - B. Based on the article, do you think Teddy Roosevelt believed in laissez faire or not? Support your answer with at least two well-explained examples from the article.
 - C. In our conversations about unions and strikes, we agreed that the government, prior to 1900, almost always sided with the owners and against striking workers. Based on the article, does Roosevelt continue this policy or change it? Support your answer with at least one well explained example from the article.
 - D. Based on the article, what was a muckraker? Provide and explain one example of a muckraker from the article. What was the relationship between Roosevelt and the muckrakers
 - E. List and explain two examples of Roosevelt's conservation policy.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT: DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

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When Theodore Roosevelt took the oath of office in September 1901, he presided over a country that had changed significantly in recent decades. The population of the United States had almost doubled from 1870 to 1900 as immigrants came to U.S. cities to work in the country's burgeoning factories. As the United States became increasingly urban and industrial, it acquired many of the attributes common to industrial nations—overcrowded cities, poor working conditions, great economic disparity, and the political dominance of big business. At the turn of the twentieth century, Americans had begun to look for ways to address some of these problems. As chief executive, Roosevelt felt empowered by the people to help ensure social justice and economic opportunity through government regulation. He was not a radical, however; TR believed that big business was a natural part of a maturing economy and, therefore, saw no reason to abolish it. He never suggested fundamentally altering American society or the economy to address various economic and social ills. In fact, he often stated that there must be reform in order to stave off socialism; if government did not act, the people would turn to more extreme measures to seek remedies. In addition, TR was a politician who understood the need to compromise in order to implement his ideas. Coming into office following William McKinley's assassination, Roosevelt pledged to maintain the fallen President's policies so as not to upset the nation in a time of mourning. And even when he began to chart his own course, Roosevelt knew that he had to work with congressional Republicans to get the G.O.P. nomination for President in 1904.

The Great Regulator

One of Roosevelt's central beliefs was that the government had the right to regulate big business to protect the welfare of society. However, this idea was relatively untested. Although Congress had passed the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890, former Presidents had only used it sparingly. So when the Department of Justice filed suit in early 1902 against the Northern Securities Company, it sent shockwaves through the business community. The suit alarmed the business community, which had hoped that Roosevelt would follow precedent and maintain a "hands-off" approach to the market economy. At issue was the claim that the Northern Securities Company—a giant railroad combination created by a syndicate of wealthy industrialists and financiers led by J. P. Morgan—violated the Sherman Antitrust Act because it was a monopoly. In 1904, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government and ordered the company dismantled. The high court's action was a major victory for the administration and put the business community on notice that although this was a Republican administration, it would not give business free rein to operate without regard for the public welfare.

Roosevelt then turned his attention to the nation's railroads, in part because the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) had notified the administration about abuses within the industry. In addition, a large segment of the population supported efforts to regulate the railroads because so many people and businesses were dependent on them. Roosevelt's first achievement in this area was the Elkins Act of 1903, which ended the practice of railroad companies granting shipping rebates to certain companies. The rebates allowed big companies to ship goods for much lower rates than smaller companies could obtain. However, the railroads and big companies were able to undermine the act. Recognizing that the Elkins Act was not effective, Roosevelt pursued further railroad regulation and undertook one of his greatest domestic reform efforts. The legislation, which became known as the Hepburn Act, proposed enhancing the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission to include the ability to regulate shipping rates on railroads. One of the main sticking points of the bill was what role the courts would play in reviewing the rates. Conservative senators who opposed the legislation, acting on behalf of the railroad industry, tried to use judicial review to make the ICC essentially powerless. By giving the courts, which were considered friendly to the railroads, the right to rule on individual cases, the ICC had less power to remedy the inequities of the rates. When Roosevelt encountered this resistance in Congress, he took his case to the people, making a direct appeal on a speaking tour through the West. He succeeded in pressuring the Senate to approve the legislation. The Hepburn Act marked one of the first times a President appealed directly to the people, using the press to help him make his case. The passage of the act was considered a major victory for Roosevelt and highlighted his ability to balance competing interests to achieve his goals.

Square Deal

Roosevelt believed that the government should use its resources to help achieve economic and social justice. When the country faced an anthracite coal shortage in the fall of 1902 because of a strike in Pennsylvania, the President thought he should intervene. As winter approached and heating shortages were imminent, he started to formulate ideas about how he could use the executive office to play a role—even though he did not have any official authority to negotiate an end to the strike. Roosevelt called both the mine owners and the representatives of labor together at the White House. When management refused to negotiate, he hatched a plan to force the two sides to talk: instead of sending federal troops to break the strike and force the miners back to work, TR threatened to use troops to seize the mines and run them as a federal operation. Faced with Roosevelt's plan, the owners and labor unions agreed to submit their cases to a commission and abide by its recommendations. Roosevelt called the settlement of the coal strike a "square deal," inferring that everyone gained fairly from the agreement. That term soon became synonymous with Roosevelt's domestic program. The Square Deal worked to balance competing interests to create a fair deal for all sides: labor and management, consumer and business, developer and conservationist. TR recognized that his program was not perfectly neutral because the government needed to intervene more actively on behalf of the general public to ensure economic opportunity for all. Roosevelt was the first President to name his domestic program and the practice soon became commonplace, with Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, and Harry S. Truman's Fair Deal.

Conservation

Roosevelt was the nation's first conservationist President. Everywhere he went, he preached the need to preserve woodlands and mountain ranges as places of refuge and retreat. He identified the American character with the nation's wilderness regions, believing that our western and frontier heritage had shaped American values, behavior, and culture. The President wanted the United States to change from exploiting natural resources to carefully managing them. He worked with Gifford Pinchot, head of the Forestry Bureau, and Frederick Newell, head of the Reclamation Service, to revolutionize this area of the U.S. government. In 1902, Roosevelt signed the Newlands Reclamation Bill, which used money from federal land sales to build reservoirs and irrigation works to promote agriculture in the arid West. After he won reelection in his own right in 1904, Roosevelt felt more empowered to make significant changes in this domain. Working with Pinchot, he moved the Forest Service from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. This gave the Forest Service, and Pinchot as head of it, more power to achieve its goals. Together, Roosevelt and Pinchot reduced the role of state and local government in the management of natural resources, a policy that met with considerable resistance. Only the federal government, they argued, had the resources to oversee these efforts. Roosevelt used his presidential authority to issue executive orders to create 150 new national forests, increasing the amount of protected land from 42 million acres to 172 million acres. The President also created five national parks, eighteen national monuments, and 51 wildlife refuges.

Roosevelt and the Muckrakers

The emergence of a mass-circulation independent press at around the turn of the century changed the nature of print media in the United States. Instead of partisan publications that touted a party line, the national media was becoming more independent and more likely to expose scandals and abuses. This era marked the beginning of investigative journalism, and the reporters who led the effort were known as "muckrakers," a term first used by Roosevelt in a 1906 speech. One of the best examples of Roosevelt's relationship with the muckrakers came after he read Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which described in lurid detail the filthy conditions in the meat packing industry—where rats, putrid meat, and poisoned rat bait were routinely ground up into sausages. Roosevelt responded by pushing for the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. Both pieces of legislation endeared him to the public and to those corporations that favored government regulation as a means of achieving national consumer standards.

Roosevelt was the first President to use the power of the media to appeal directly to the American people. He understood that his forceful personality, his rambunctious family, and his many opinions made good copy for the press. He also knew that the media was a good way for him to reach out to the people, bypassing political parties and political machines. He used the media as a "bully pulpit" to influence public opinion.

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