

Impact of the federal government on ordinary citizens' lives during the progressi...

[War](#), [World War 2](#)



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Introduction

The Progressive Era gains its name dating back to the era of the Progressive party in 1912–1924. The concept of progressive era is also rooted to the general feeling witnessed at the period and in successive histories which the early years of the 20th century were fixated on a comprehensible body of reforms on democracy which brought about tremendous changes on the American political system. The Progressive Era has experienced numerous changes in its interpretations. Early histories and autobiographies emphasized the return to prevalent control over partisan actions and the regular shift from local authority to state and finally to federal authority. The subsequent generations emphasized on continuity points between reforms caused by the progressive era and the outcomes of New Deal Era in a plausible protest towards a modest welfare nation.

Historians emphasized the “ status resentment” of reformers falling in the middle-class who had enacted laws acting to preserve the economic system with the fear of losing social power. The same historians consequently ridiculed the degree of Progressivism's reform attainment and emphasized

on its conservative state. The succeeding historians instead kept their focus on professionalization and bureaucratization. The civil war on the other hand brought about many changes in the American government which saw tremendous impact in the fight to end the great depression witnessed in U. S. The wartime led to the mobilization of thousands of U. S. citizens to engage in World War II which reduced the unemployment rate. This paper discusses the impact of federal government on US citizen during the progressive era, the new deal and World War II.

Progressive era and New deal

At the end of the 1880s, a major number of women with the support of their male friends concluded that Social Darwinism, the controlling ideology which had justified the economic expansion, had inhumane effects and non-Christian implications (Reagan, 2000). In an effort to seek more rational vocational options other than those presented by the order of the day, these women spear headed the development of new professions such as social work, or re-modeling of older professions such as journalism and teaching in order to be ethically meaningful. Following the examples of Toynbee Hall in England, Ellen Gates and Jane Addams opened Hull House, Chicago in 1889, in a discreet way kick-starting the era with a solid achievement (Reagan, 2000). The movement of social settlement with its exertions on public health, adult education, immigrant assimilation and political lobbying earned women some respect or reputation in the society.

However, the real impact came in with the shift in attention to the national following Theodore Roosevelt's inauguration as president in 1901 (Reagan,

2000). As a former civil service commission member and New York City police commission member, he was well conversant with corruption and crime and was also understanding towards reform journalists.

Temperamentally a moderate reformer, Roosevelt had much sympathy towards journalism. Roosevelt supported struggles to end large trusts, control railways, sanitize food and drugs, and safeguard public lands from private infestation. After the Roosevelt's government came to an end came William Taft. William Taft gave way to Wilson's government which lowered tariffs, increased the economic regulation of businesses, aided agriculture, education, and labor. This government also enacted the Federal Reserve act which was seen as a long overdue measure. This act proved to be the most enduring reform to be undertaken under the Progressive era. During these progressive, the local reformers also adopted measures such as the referendums, recalls and initiatives allowing voters to start the legislation process, endorse legislative acts, and impeach public officers who desecrated their trust. Some states such as Oregon, Wisconsin and California acted in a friendly way in endorsing these reform activities.

The early Progressive Era interpretations seemed to dwell on diplomatic and political objectives, but in the real sense, the movement was a much of a religious and cultural phenomenon. President Roosevelt as a progressive administrator with a Christian background was not simply rhetorically opportunistic when he urged voters at conventions to obey God and follow His command(Reagan, 2000). In intellectual life, Progressive reforms reshaped the university and church. Most Protestant denominations established Social Gospel versions which were closely related to the

socialism concepts of the British and the entire continent. A true Christian was perceived as an individual with a moral obligation to do what is good for the world instead of distancing himself or herself from the society to pursue personal salvation. Having been declared politically classless in 1920, the progressive era continued on shaping the American society in a number of ways until the World War II (Reagan, 2000). Progressivism shaped the debates on interior foreign policy, since there were conflicts between the progressive internationalists and isolationists. Some Progressive individuals fought against the materialistic and nationalizing propensities of the New Deal, as others peacefully adapted.

World War II

The mobilization of American citizens to engage in the war did not only earn a victory in the battlefield but it also brought an end to the great depression in U. S. This dual victory explains why the Second World War was a good War for millions of American people. In the year 1939, the rate of unemployment stood at depressing levels, however as mobilization progressed, the rate of unemployment declined greatly (Reagan, 2000). Thousands of American men and women were recruited into the military, moving to colossal, newly built and swiftly expanded military barracks for training. However, many more Americans went to work in factories, making themselves good money and frequently with many overtime hours to increase their regular. With government support and motivation, industrial workers acquired new skills, better jobs, and fused into the unions in masses. It is in these struggles that blue-collar workers attained new reputation and status.

The rise in employment opportunities led to a rise in the living standards and fresh opportunities. As the demand for products grew and as the millions of men were recruited in the armed forces, employers under the encouragement of the government turned to the elderly, women and the minority groups which had limited roles before the war to fill in positions with relatively high pay and status. New employment opportunities in secretarial, clerical and industrial sectors were now available for women.

The wartime provided the minority groups with a perfect time to protest over against the discriminatory treatment they are subjected to when gaining employment and salary increment in the military industries(Reagan, 2000). Many youths as a consequence were privileged with jobs, training and experience in the armed forces. And at the time the Second World War came to an end, the enactment of GI bill provided American citizens with home ownership, educational, health and other benefits. Since the U. S government had only dedicated 40% of its gross national product to the mobilization of the war, national expenditure on consumer goods and services in reality improved during the Second World War despite rationing, shortages, inflation, and higher taxes (Reagan, 2000).

References

Reagan, P. D. (2000). Designing a new America: The origins of New Deal planning, 1890 - 1943. Amherst, Mass: Univ. of Massachusetts Press.