

# Theodore roosevelt's domestic policy



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**Introduction**

Theodore Roosevelt was born on October 27, 1858 in New York City. He entered history books as the youngest person to serve as the president of the United States of America. Roosevelt has been known by many as a champion of a strenuous life. As a young man, Theodore or ‘Teddy’ as he was known was haunted by chronic asthma attacks. However, despite all these he voraciously fought his condition and devoted most of his early life to study. Theodore Roosevelt displayed authority, combined with an enigmatic personality. He revolutionized and modernized the American presidency by championing justice. His profound popularity gave him political mileage that perfectly complimented his “Get action, do things,” attitude in all the endeavors (The Presidents para. 1).

Many people had perceived Theodore Roosevelt as an unlikely candidate for what we may term as a reform president. He had been born into a wealthy family and this gave him the privilege of enjoying his youth at a level that was beyond of most of his peers. He was able to tour most parts of the world, was taught by private tutors, and spent most of his life in a mansion in New York. Roosevelt had obtained his education from Harvard. His social circle contained the upper crust. On contrary however, Roosevelt’s interests were vested in working class Americans rather than the affluent corporates. This was a riot against the very society that had brought him up (The Presidents para. 2).

**The square deal**

It was in 1901 when Roosevelt entered the White House, he had inherited a federal government sided the big business against the working Americans.

During this time, Wall Street was experiencing a financial shake-up. Being wise enough he momentarily restrained his progressivism. In early 1902, Roosevelt embarked on his square deal plan to launch an offensive against the powerful corporate trusts. Ideally, President Roosevelt was one of the most audacious Progressive luminaries of his time (The Presidents para. 1).

In most cases; his domestic policies capitalized on fighting corruption and injustice in major industries all this in the name of helping the common man. The Square Deal was meant to improve living standards of the American people and to exert more regulation over large corporations or trusts. In response to these actions, most businesses termed Roosevelt as a socialist and a demagogue. In his defense the president adamantly brushed off these accusations. As a matter of fact, Roosevelt had regard for big business, and was aware of the trusts contribution in increasing the standards living of the American people. The president's dislike arose from the fact that the common American had very little control of these corporations. As a balancing act, Roosevelt feared surrendering too much power to labor (Spark notes para. 2).

### **Sherman Anti-Trust Act**

Roosevelt's approach ran into a major huddle in 1902. This includes the 1902 Coal Strike when 140, 000 miners went on strike in eastern Pennsylvania t. there was great panic in the whole nation since coal was a major source of energy in America in that era. The coal miners' union demanded higher wages coupled with improved working conditions. The owners of the mine, failed to agree with the miners. Mitchell-a representative of the miners

proposed to the president that an independent arbitration council would work (Spark notes para. 2)

However, both the miners and the company rejected arbitration. Pressure was mounting; Roosevelt therefore devised a plan to replace the miners with ten thousand army men, as an emergency plan to step in if consensus was not reached. Fortunate enough, the disaster was averted through independent arbitration. This was after the Secretary of War; Elihu Root worked with banker J. P. Morgan to convince the parties involved to accept independent arbitration. This was victory for Roosevelt in the eyes of the American people. In the year 1902, financiers on Wall Street received a screamer. This was when President Roosevelt decided to approve the government's lawsuit against Northern Securities, -a large and newly merged western railroad company, for violating the so called ' Sherman Anti-Trust Act'. The financier of the project, J. P. Morgan, who had arranged the merger and even invested in Northern Securities, suffered the consequences (Spark notes para. 2)

The company together with its sympathizers cried foul and accused the president of witch hunting. On the other hand, the American people admired their president's brevity and boldness in handling the tenacious trusts. To seal this victory, Roosevelt went ahead to nominate Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., to take the place of Justice Horace Gray on the Supreme Court. Holmes in his tenure as Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court had been strongly against industry and railroads in similar suits. The government's victory translated into the disintegration of Northern Securities into smaller

companies. It has been documented that during his tenure, President Roosevelt brought about forty-three lawsuits trusts. (Spark notes para. 3)

### **The 1902 Reclamation Act**

We also look at this Act as a major component of Roosevelt's domestic policy. Roosevelt had great passion for the environmental conservation. His idea of conservation was revolutionary and unconventional at the time. The idea was to save the land for posterity as opposed to mere preservation. This resulted in the purchase of about 150 acres of land that was to be conserved. This Act also resulted into consortiums with very knowledgeable environmentalists of that time including the likes of Gifford Pinchot and John Muir. The byproduct of this relationship was the establishment of various wildlife preservation parks and reserves. (Spark notes para. 6)

In fact, the order and organization in forest reserve services was attributed to this policy. The National Forest Service was streamlined, adding to it were National Parks which were created for purposes of recreation and conservation. The enactment of these acts was not without opposition. Most of those against the Act including members of Congress had vested interests in the land that was being preserved. However, the grievances of some antagonists (white Settlers) were soothed when the 1902 Reclamation Act was enacted thus allowing dry, unlivable land to be irrigated, converting it into productive land. (Spark notes para. 6)

### **The Hepburn Bill**

In the year 1906, the Hepburn Bill was drafted and passed. This bill was to bring reforms in the way rate evaluations were calculated and further cut on excessive rebates that were designed to eliminate competition by firms. The <https://assignbuster.com/theodore-roosevelts-domestic-policy/>

bill also encouraged interstate commerce which was regulated by the Feds. The bill was a major blow to several companies that previously engaged in excessive rebate-issuing such as the railroads. (Spark notes para. 3)

### **The Meat Inspection Bill and Food and Drug Administration.**

In 1906, a distinguished author by the name Upton Sinclair's in his novel 'The Jungle' explicitly painted the picture of the state of affairs of Chicago stockyards and meatpacking industry. This brought to light the dilapidated working conditions of these industries prompting Roosevelt to take action. What disgusted the head of state was the description by Sinclair about a worker who was operating the meat grinder and apparently fell into the meat grinder, was crushed and canned for sales to the public. The president immediately ordered an investigation into the matter and not only packinghouses in Chicago but also in the entire nation. The detailed report from the inquiry confirmed Sinclair's sentiments. This led to the drafting of the Meat Inspection Bill and later the formation of an organ known as creation of the Food and Drug Administration (Spark notes para. 4)

### **The 1907 financial crisis**

In 1907, the United States experienced financial tremors. This was initiated by the collapse the Knickerbockers Trust Company in New York. The effect also spread to many other banks. Accusing fingers were pointed at Roosevelt for the economic downturn. President Roosevelt in his defense cited plutocracy (the governing of the society by the wealthy class) as the source the troubles. At this juncture it was not really clear who to blame, but it was later established that the problem was global. Major firms including the large brokerage of Moore and Schley were at the verge of going under.

However, the federal government intervened and bailed them out of the financial stalemate. Government intervention brought about stability thus averting crashing of the stock market. Working with corporates such as Morgan, the president managed to evade the global economic depression during his era (Spark notes para. 3)

### **Conclusion**

President Theodore Roosevelt model of leadership is unique and noteworthy. Putting aside the challenges he faced, this frail man rose to be one of the world's greatest leaders. His style of leadership is worth emulating. Theodore Roosevelt once said, " No man who is corrupt, no man who condones corruption in others can possibly do his duty by the community" (Montalván 54).

### **References**

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