

American history: 1912 election

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The Presidential Election of 1912 was called one of the most important and memorable elections as well as one of the most dramatic events in American history. The election was remarkable because there were four candidates the representatives of four different parties that sought the presidency that year. It was William Howard Taft from Republican Party, Theodore Roosevelt representing the newly organized Bull Moose Progressives Party after the split in his own Republican Party, then Democrat Woodrow Wilson and Eugene Debs from Socialist Party.

One of the main issues of that time reflected in the Party Platforms was tariffs and anti-trust legislation. Republican Party tariff policy was aimed to protect American industries and economy. It was said in the platform “ the import duties should be high enough, while yielding a sufficient revenue, to protect adequately American industries and wages” (“ Political Party Platforms in 1912”), and only “ Some of the existing import duties are too high, and should be reduced” (“ Political Party Platforms in 1912”).

Republicans were expecting to get enough revenue to the budget and still stuck to the protectionism policy. As for the anti-trust legislation Republicans insisted on “ the enactment of legislation supplementary to the existing anti-trust act which will define as criminal offences those specific acts that uniformly mark attempts to restrain and to monopolize trade...” (“ Political Party Platforms in 1912”).

Progressive Party declared in the platform that it was necessary to reduce tariff as unjust to the citizens of the country and that the party “ is committed to the destruction of the protective system through a tariff for revenue only—a policy which would inevitably produce widespread industrial

and commercial disaster” (“ Political Party Platforms in 1912”). While discussing the anti-trust legislation during the convention the conflict aroused.

Roosevelt suggested federal regulation of the trusts but he had no support eventually this issue was deleted from the platform. Democrats considered “ the high Republican tariff is the principal cause of the unequal distribution of wealth; it is a system of taxation which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer” (“ Political Party Platforms in 1912”) thus they insisted on the reduction of the tariff and limiting the Federal Government to “ collect tariff duties, except for the purpose of revenue” (“ Political Party Platforms in 1912”).

Concerning the Anti-Trust Law democrats strived to cancel the amendments to the Sherman anti-trust law in order to re-establish it in its original version to make it more efficient. Socialists were close to the reformists and they believed in the significance of tariff revision and in the importance of anti-trust legislation. Also the goal of the platform was to struggle for equal political and democratic rights for the laboring class (Socialist Party. National Campaign Book).

The point is that it was crisis of the Republican government that had been supporting the conservative course. The country was in bad need for reforms so the government had had to change the policy. Conservative Republicans had not realized the necessity of the reformation and despite the great support William Taft had lost a chance to be re-elected for the second term. Socialists gained the extreme popularity but it was not enough to win. But

still Eugene Debs got more than 6% of the total votes and it was incredible success of the Socialist Party.

The main struggle was between Roosevelt and Wilson. Their platforms were similar so it was even a suggestion from the progressives to give up in favour of Wilson but Roosevelt refused to quit without struggle. Woodrow Wilson won by getting about 42% of the total votes. Together Taft and Roosevelt get more than 50% of the total votes it means that Roosevelt had a real possibility to be elected had he been the Republican party nominee for the presidency. Personally I would have voted for Roosevelt because he was charismatic personality and the great leader.

He was more flexible than Wilson in the policy and was smart enough to comprehend the importance of the changes. The history would have changed if Theodore Roosevelt had been elected for his third term.

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