

The Progressive Spirit of Reform

Section 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. Political corruption was common during the Gilded Age.
2. Progressives pushed for reforms to improve living conditions.
3. Progressive reforms expanded the voting power of citizens.

Key Terms and People

political machines powerful organizations that influenced local governments

Progressives reformers who wanted to solve the problems of a fast-growing society

muckrakers journalists who exposed the corruption, scandal, and filth of society

Seventeenth Amendment a law letting Americans vote directly for U.S. senators

recall a vote to remove an official before the end of his or her term

initiative procedure allowing voters to propose a new law

referendum procedure permitting voters to approve or reject a law

Robert M. La Follette Wisconsin governor whose reforms became a model for other states

Academic Vocabulary

motive a reason for doing something

Section Summary

POLITICAL CORRUPTION

During the Gilded Age, governments were riddled with corruption. **Political machines** controlled most local politics. Illegal activities included buying votes, bribing vote counters, and stuffing ballot boxes with extra votes. Both of President Ulysses S. Grant's terms were very corrupt. Some members of Congress were involved in a railroad scandal, causing widespread public distrust.

Many of the jobs with the civil service were given to political supporters rather than to qualified candidates. Presidents Hayes and Garfield tried to reform civil service. President Chester Arthur signed an act requiring civil service tests to prove applicants were qualified.

What illegal activities did political machines use to change election results?

Section 1, *continued*

PROGRESSIVES PUSH FOR REFORMS

Progressives were reformers. They wanted to solve problems caused by the fast urban growth of the late 1800s. Journalists wrote articles about such issues as child labor, racial discrimination, and slum housing. Called **muckrakers** for the scandals they exposed, these writers encouraged reforms.

Many progressives helped the urban poor. This led to improved conditions in cities. Other progressive leaders focused on education. States passed laws requiring children to attend school. Kindergartens opened to teach children basic social skills. John Dewey was a supporter of education. His **motive** was to help children use problem-solving skills, not just memorization. Education reform also improved the medical profession.

What does the term *muckraker* mean?

EXPANSION OF VOTING POWER

Reformers hoped to expand voting power. They favored the direct primary, in which voters choose candidates directly. They also favored the **Seventeenth Amendment**. This allowed Americans to vote for U.S. senators directly. **Recall** votes removed officials before the end of their terms. In some states voters proposed laws with **initiatives**. Some states let **referendums** overrule laws.

Wisconsin governor **Robert M. La Follette** challenged the power of political machines. His reform plan became known as the Wisconsin Idea, and it was used as a model for reform in other states.

What does the Seventeenth Amendment allow Americans to do?

Who developed the Wisconsin Idea?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Make a Time Line Make a time line of the presidents who served the United States during the Gilded Age.