Reconstruction & Age of American Imperialism

The primary source by Riis (2009) was primarily published in 1890. This was the beginning year of 1890s when the United States when through the severe economic depression that was sparked by the Panic of 1893. This decade is also marked by several strikes in the industrial workforce. This shows that the content of the primary source is reflecting the actual conditions of the urban poor population that constituted a large percentage of the industrial workforce which was underpaid and was living in extremely challenging situation in shackles, with lack of health and sanitation facilities. This source can be identified as the first-hand observation and witness of the causes that led to the economic depression and the workforce strikes.

Riis, in his book specifically focused on how and why the babies had to die and live in extremely grim conditions for the urban dwellers in 1890s. He reflected on the absurd living conditions where the babies often died because of lack of clean water and proper sanitation. Riis was concerned about how the industrialists and capitalists do not consider the wellbeing and living conditions of their workers by forcing them to live in extremely vulnerable and inhuman conditions. Riis also highlighted his experiences and first hand observations regarding the private organizations and communities working for the safety and security of the infants of these poor working families, working hard to provide them cleaner living conditions and basic healthcare.

The second source by Roosevelt (2009) is also of the same period. However, its publishing date reveals that it was created in the times when the American nation was getting out of the economic depression and Progressive Era was stepping in i.e.1901. This was beginning of the decade of American progress and development. Therefore, the respective primary source reflects the impacts and implications of Imperialism in America.

This second source acts as the first hand explanation of the political philosophy, ideology and developments during the era of Roosevelt. This source can be used to interpret the actual words of Roosevelt that reflected his promises and their implications on the American history. The source narrates that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was in office for twelve years and his administration became known as the “New Deal.” Roosevelt and his organization developed and implemented a series of programs that changed the federal government and its association to people in need. FDR looked for practical ways to help put an end to the Great Depression. However, Roosevelt’s programs did not end the Great Depression; this was accomplished with World War II.

Roosevelt was the first president to utilize the radio to connect to American people. The “New Deal” was part of plans to help revive the American economy and there were some aspects that had lasting effects. There were new groups of workers and farmers that could challenge the power of businesses. It helped to stabilize areas of the economy, the stock market, and the banking systems by the development of regulatory functions of the federal government. The American welfare systems created many relief programs as well as the establishment of the Social Security system.

Even though the unemployment and poverty rates were high during the New Deal era, there were millions of people who got assistance during very troubling times. The New Deal did not put an end to the Great Depression as Roosevelt had hoped, it did help in not making the economy worse.

Both of the given sources reflect on two different ends of the same decade. However, the underlying theme of these two scenarios is same i.e. industrialization, economic depression and imperialism in the United States during the 1890s. The first source i.e. by Riis (2009) reflects on the implications of these themes on the life of a middle class American who was living in poor conditions. While the second source by Roosevelt (2009) reflects on what political measures were being taken to overcome these disturbing impacts as described by Riis.

The Riis’ source explains the concept of Social Darwinism, which was the reigning ideology that called for the acceptance of economic expansion since the civil war was not humane in its effects as well as being unchristian in its implications. The Americans sort for more meaningful roles by pioneering new professions such as social work or on the other hand reinvented older ones like journalism and teaching making them more ethically meaningful. The movement of social settlement was focused in adult education, political lobbying, public health and assimilation of immigration which made women respectable in the society.

Despite the fact that early progressive era’s definition dwelled on diplomatic and political goals, the reality was that it was broad in its approach covering cultural and religious phenomenon as most of the leaders came from both Protestants and clerical families. These leaders had, from an early age, learned moral principles of Christianity hence the belief that sin was the center of social problems. Those who had sinned need to repent hence a massive revival effort put up by the journalists, professors, social workers clergy and the lawyer through seculars, sermons and the rest. For Roosevelt, he was not simply rhetoric opportunistically as he requested voters at national conventions to stand and battle for the Lord at Armageddon. This era was more awakening than before. As Debs indicates “I am opposed to every war but one; I am for the war with heart and soul, and that is the world-wide war of social revolution. In that war I am prepared to fight in any way the ruling class may make necessary, even to the barricades.”

Progressive achievements were not guided by the legislation but progressive education which remained a major legacy of the time. This is due to the fact that studies have revealed that traditional methods which promoted sheer memorization as well as outmoded morality merely stifled intelligence therefore the demand for schooling experience focused on recreating the educational impact of vanishing the rural life. Therefore, students had to work on projects that would make them familiar to fabrics, carpentry and craft and so on. Randolph and Owen when questioned by the judge if they were being used by the white socialists “We told him we believed in the principle of human justice and that our right to express our conscience was above the law”.

**References**

Primary Source A: Riis, J. (2009). Jacob Riis chronicles the struggles of the urban poor. In L. C. Hillstrom (Ed.), Defining moments: Muckrakers and the Progressive Era (pp. 165–169). Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/westerngovernors/reader.action?docID=10355663&ppg=183 (Original work published 1890)

[Reconstruction & Age of American Imperialism](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/westerngovernors/reader.action?docID=10355663&ppg=177)

Primary Source B: Roosevelt, T. (2009). President Theodore Roosevelt promises progressive reform. In L. C. Hillstrom (Ed.), Defining moments: Muckrakers and the Progressive Era (pp. 159–164). Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/westerngovernors/reader.action?docID=10355663&ppg=177 (Original work published 1901)