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Political and Social Reforms in Progressive Era

# Introduction

In the late 19th century, social injustice was prevailing in American society. Majority of people and ethnic minorities in the United States were suffering due to pervasive inequality. At that crucial time, there was an immense need to address the growing concerns regarding social injustice in the US. The fear of corruption in American politics and the growth of large corporations in the US encouraged many leaders to address the impact of modernization. It is important to mention that progressive reformers shared a common goal to establish the tone of American politics. Progressive reformers wanted to wield federal power to develop a comprehensive range of economic, political, and social reforms. Progressive reformers developed a framework to achieve environmental conservation and to minimize corruption in politics. Here, the focus is to determine the impact of progressive movement regarding political and social reforms.

**Discussion**

The period from the 1890s to the 1920s in the United States is considered as the progressive era as it aimed to provide a better society for each individual in America. Social injustice was a prevailing issue at that time, so progressive reformers wanted to eliminate unfair and unethical practices in the business domain. It was critical to address the dominant issue of corruption to improve political establishment in society. The progressive movement was started to cater the issues regarding political corruption, industrialization, and immigration (DeWitt 17). It started as a social movement, but with the passage of time it turned into a political movement. The progressive movement worked to attain specific rights for women in American society. The issue of the right to vote was highly considerate in American society after the civil war. The progressive movement proved to be effective to work alongside the National Women’s Party and National American Women Suffrage Association to acquire the right to vote. Furthermore, before 1880, the number of female workers in the US was 2.6 million, which dramatically increased during the progressive era up to 7.8 million. Progressive leaders worked hard to provide women with the right to own property and to control their earned money.

In the 19th century, child labor was a growing issue as more than 2 million children were forced to work in terrible conditions in the US. Significant attempts were made through progressive movement to restrain the exploitation of children. Efforts of progressive leaders compelled Congress to pass the Keating-Owen Act in 1916. The implication of that act restricted factory owners to practice child labor. Furthermore, progressive leaders made efforts to control the interests of liquor distillers. The major aim behind this prohibition was to control the influence of liquor distillers over corrupt politicians in American society (Stromquist 39). Many corrupt politicians were getting an advantage through the illegal business of alcoholic beverages. In response to the efforts of progressive leaders, Congress prohibited the manufacturing and sale of alcoholic beverages. The election in the US was usually influenced by the state legislatures as they were responsible for electing senators before 1880s. Progressive leaders wanted to end the election of senators by the state legislatures. Business interests had a significant potential to influence the election of senators. Therefore, progressive leaders pushed for the amendment in this regard to allow the general population to select the senators of the US.

**Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the progressive movement brought political and social reforms in response to major changes that were brought by modernization in the US. Progressive movement enhanced the scope of the federal government to protect American society from social injustice. Critical consideration of progressive era proved that it was an era of political and social reforms in the US. Efforts of progressive leaders offered equal rights to women and eliminated corruption from US politics.

Works Cited

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Stromquist, Shelton. *Reinventing “The People”: The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism*. University of Illinois Press, 2010.