

① The Origins of Progressivism

MAIN IDEA Political, economic, and social change in late 19th century America led to broad progressive reforms.

As the 1900s opened, reformers pushed for a range of changes to society in a movement called Progressivism, which had four major goals:

- Protecting social welfare by easing the ills of urban society. The YMCA built libraries and exercise facilities while the Salvation Army offered the urban poor food and nursery care.
- Promoting moral improvement, especially by working to ban alcoholic beverages. Prohibitionists—many of whom were members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)—often came into conflict with immigrant groups. The saloons the reformers attacked served vital functions such as offering cheap meals in immigrant communities.
- Reforming the economy. Some criticized the vast wealth amassed by industrialists and the treatment of workers. Journalists called "muck-rakers" published stories about business corruption and unfair practices.
- Making businesses more efficient and profitable. Scientific management and the adoption of the assembly line for the manufacture of goods enabled factories to increase production.

Progressives also reformed politics at the local and state levels. Reform mayors routed corruption out of Detroit and Cleveland, among other cities. Wisconsin Governor Robert M. La Follette took steps to regulate businesses in his state. Reformers managed to pass laws in almost every state to ban child labor and limited the number of hours women could work. Reformers passed laws requiring the use of secret ballots in elections and allowing voters to remove elected officials from office. The Seventeenth Amendment allowed for voters to elect senators directly.