A Progressive Democracy Essay, Research Paper

The Progressive Era was a period in American history in which improving working conditions, exposing corruption, improving the way of life, expanding democracy, and making reforms were the objectives at hand. Many American citizens eagerly demanded a change in numerous areas such as business, labor, the economy, and an increase of democracy. Democracy flourished during the Progressive Era. Many new plans were constructed to help the American People. This was the true goal of all Progressives, to help the American society. The progressive period was marked with the arrival of three great presidents: Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. All three of these presidents fought for the common good of the people.

Teddy Roosevelt was known as the “trust buster” and that is exactly what he did to help control big business. Many large corporations had complete control of the services that they were selling. Roosevelt went in to these companies and helped to stop this type of monopoly. The biggest trust that Roosevelt busted was the one involving Northern Securities and J.P. Morgan.

Roosevelt was also a big supporter of labor he tried almost everything and anything to help the citizens of the United States. Teddy set up child protection laws, which were used to prevent children to work in factories, and it also reduced the amount of time they worked. Roosevelt also set up workman’s compensation, which is a payment that employers had to pay workers who got injured on the job. This not only helped families to keep going during a time of tragedy but also allowed to workers to have a fair time to regain strength in order to return to work.

Roosevelt tried his best to help consumers. He proposed to congress the Pure Food and Drug Act. Teddy demanded that congress pass this act because he thought the way consumers were being treated was wrong. This act was used to protect citizens from unsafe medicines and food. The Meat Inspection Act was also passed because of a book written by Upton Sinclair called The Jungle. The Meat Inspection Act regulated that all food must be inspected, prohibited the use of addictive drugs in prescription medicine, and required proper labels on food and drugs.

Taft issued a tariff called the Payne-Aldrich Tariff. This tariff put high taxes on imported goods. Taft believed that this would be good for the country and help business grow. The tariff, which he reluctantly signed in 1909, raised the tax on many products yet protected special interests. He said on his railroad tour throughout the United States that he thought it was the best bill the Republican Party had ever passed. This was a statement he would regret for a long time. His fellow party members and enraged reformers were certain he had betrayed both them and the American people by passing this act.

President Wilson also tried to help and improve the conditions for workers he did this by adding the income tax. This type of income tax is called a progressive or graduated tax that would rise with the amount of money that a person made. This really helped the poor because they were taxed less than big businessmen were. This type of taxing is still prevalent in today s society even thought it is deemed unfair by many.

Wilson helped the economy by instituting a Federal Reserve Bank. This bank was a system in which there would be twelve Federal Reserve Banks throughout the country. All national banks were required to join this system. This bank system made a compromise between private and public control. Wilson also added a tariff called the Underwood Tariff, which lowered the price on imported goods. He did this because he had an idea that if you open up your market to foreign goods then the foreign markets would open up for you.

Democracy was increased in the United States by the introduction of the referendum, initiative, and the recall. The referendum proposed legislation to be submitted to the voters. The initiative allowed a group of citizens to introduce legislation and recall allowed voters to remove elected officials from holding a special election. Also a direct primary was instituted. This was the direct election of a public official. Overall, the nation was more democratic after the time of the Progressives. They did many beneficial things for our country, most of which are still practiced today.