

**Progressive Political Reforms
in the United States of American, from 1890 to 1921.**

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Abstract

Any society that aspires to evolve and advance for the welfare of its members needs periodical inventories that show its operation, management, successes, and failures. The purpose of these inventories is to allow people to understand how their socio-economic and political problems occurred, what their effect were, and what was done to solve them to create a society with fewer problems. At the stage when such problems are understood, the duty of the authorities is to undertake reforms that would make up for the deficiencies in the system of government and right the wrongs that infringe the rights of the citizens. This article aims at providing an example of the political reforms undertaken by the progressive ruling elite in the USA between 1901 and 1921. The importance of such political reforms lies in the fact that they were the foundations on which the future American democratic regime was built .

Key words: Progressive Movement, Political reforms, Progressive elite, American history

ملخص

الأحداث التي تسمى ب: 'الربيع العربي' أو 'الثورات العربية' قامت على أساس تغيير أنظمة الحكم في دول كتونس، مصر، ليبيا، اليمن، وحاليا في سوريا. الجانب السلبي في هذه الثورات هو أنها جاءت لإصلاح أوضاع سياسية عن طريق سفك للدماء، المخاطرة باقتصاد الدولة، والفوضى السياسية. في ظل هذه الأحداث يأتي هذا المقال لطرح إشكالية الإصلاح السياسي في ما يخص أبعاده وكيفية تحقيقه، وإعطاء نبذة عن الشخصيات التي قامت بإصلاح النظام السياسي في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية إبان الفترة المعروفة بالحركة التقدمية ما بين سنة 1890 وسنة 1921. أهمية هذه الفترة في تاريخ الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية تتلخص في أنها أرسى فيها التقدميين قواعد الدولة الأمريكية كما نعرفها اليوم، خاصة الرؤساء ثيودور روزفلت (1901-1909)، هوارد تافت (1909-1913)، وودرو ولسن (1913-1921) عن طريق إصلاحات ذات أبعاد سياسية، إقتصادية، إجتماعية. هذا المقال يركز على إظهار أهمية الإصلاحات السياسية الجادة التي تقوم بها الأنظمة الحاكمة وأثرها على تطور الأمم.

The process of reforming is a natural social phenomenon in any society that seeks perfection. To reform means to change to what is perceived to be a pure original state. It is used for any change thought to be positive and is generally distinguished from revolution¹. The latter moves toward basic or radical change, whereas to reform is no more than fine tuning, or at most redressing serious wrongs without altering the fundamentals of the system. In other words, to reform never seeks to overthrow the socio-economic and political system of the country, but to improve it. Reform is a vital source of innovation in modern societies because new

plans and ideals for living are generated through questioning what we take for granted and challenging central norms and values .

Social reform is a vital source of innovation in modern societies because new plans and ideals for living are generated through questioning what is taken for granted and challenging central norms and values. Throughout history there have been a number of influential thinkers and social reform movements that have contributed to the processes of change in society, economy, and law and government .

Therefore, any society that aspires to evolve and advance to the better of its members needs a periodical social inventory that shows its operation, management, successes, and failures. The purpose of this inventory is to allow people to understand how the social problems occurred, what their effects were, and what was done to solve them to create a society with few problems. At the stage when the social problems are understood, the duty of the authorities is to undertake reforms that would make up for the deficiencies in the system of government, and right the wrongs that infringe the rights of the citizens .

In the light of what is called the “Arab Spring” revolutions that aim at reforming mainly the existing political systems in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, through bloodshed, social unrest, economic disruption, and political destabilisation, this article comes to provide an alternative image to what is happening in the above Arab countries by studying the process of political reforms that occurred during the Progressive Era in the USA between 1890 and 1921.² In this Article, the study of the Progressive Movement in the USA takes the form of a political audit that reveals the failures and successes of the American society in its evolution. Therefore, its aim is to understand through selected political examples the domains in which the Americans were mostly interested to reform during the Progressive Era .

During the 19th Century, the USA witnessed the emergence of different reform movements instigated by social reformers, socialists, and religious and secular utopian groups. The emergence of such reform movements was due to the fact that the American society reached certain economic and social development and at the same time started gradually losing its ethics, moral codes, and values that once had been the basis for its establishment. These reform movements worked for the abolition of child labour, the exploitation of labour, and against poverty, the insalubrious living conditions, the unfair distribution of wealth, and the general social economic and political conditions that were the adverse effects of the Industrial Revolution and urban growth. They tried to find appropriate solutions to the existing problems through petitions, strikes, or providing relief. They gathered around one central idea that might oppose other associations, social groups, or the authorities .

It is undeniable that the climax of the reforms that the USA witnessed during the 19th Century was the emergence of the Progressive Movement. The latter was not bound to an individual or a group of people as in the formation of associations

or political parties, but to a general feeling that the country as a whole was going in a wrong way. The Progressives emerged from the frustration of seeing the country getting so powerful and rich, but with unequal distribution of wealth. In the vanguard of the movement there were various agrarian crusaders, such as the Grangers and the Populists, and Democrats led by William Jennings Bryan who demanded urgent and stringent railroad regulation and national control of banks and the money supply. At the same time a new generation of economists, sociologists, and political scientists was undermining the philosophical foundations of the laissez-faire state and constructing a new ideology to justify democratic collectivism. Social workers investigated big city's tenement houses and went to the slums to discover the extent of human degradation. They were backed with a growing body of politicians, religious men, and philanthropists who struggled to arouse the social concerns and consciences of the nation. In addition, journalists called "muckrakers" wrote about the dark side of the American life. Their message was to reform through mass-circulation of newspapers and magazines .

From its inception in the 1890s, differences in opinion have always existed concerning the nature and meaning of the Progressive Movement in the history of the USA. There were those who confirmed its existence not only in the period between 1890 and 1921, but also throughout time making it a permanent and constant social phenomenon. Others denied its existence thinking that there was no Progressive phenomenon since in the main it was just government actions to counter-act social evils and economic disturbances, which was the task par excellence of any government². Whatever the difference in opinion that might exist concerning the Progressive Movement, it is undeniable that the USA was passing through severe social, economic, and political crises. The latter were engendered by an unprecedented industrial and commercial expansion, during which little or no attention had been given to the problems of government. It was felt even among the laymen that government was not functioning properly and that radical changes were needed .

The Progressive Movement was different from the reform movements that had existed in the USA before its emergence. While the earlier reform movements sought to influence the authorities to endorse their demands, the Progressive Movement launched its reform programmes from the White House. The progressives started their reforms from the government. The main political goal that they focused on as a priority was the purification of government by exposing corruption and municipal abuses and mismanagement. They shared a common belief that the government, which was intended to serve the people and the country, became corrupt in the hands of tiny economic and political elite³. This belief engendered three main tendencies and plans of action that might be distinguished in the political agitation that accompanied the progressive activities from its inception in 1890 to the 1910s :

1- The removal of the minority that corrupted and influenced government at the city, state, and national levels .

2- The demand to change and modify government structure and machinery, which allowed such minority to control it, in a way to enable the majority regain its control .

3- The extension of Government constitutional prerogatives and functions to relieve social and economic distress.⁴

The coming in power of the Progressive Presidents namely Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909), William H. Taft (1909-1912), and Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) announced the end of the preparatory phase in the development of progressivism in the USA, and the beginning of the progressive presidential reforms from 1901 to 1921. This period could be divided into three phases depending on the presidential terms of each president. Since Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Howard Taft were Republicans, they gave a version of progressivism that shaped and gave form to the movement through executive decrees and legislative acts that reformed the social, economic, and political aspects of life in the country. On the other hand, President Woodrow Wilson brought reforms that had the same trend as of his predecessors, but introduced others that reflected his Democrat ideology .

With the coming of Theodore Roosevelt⁵ in power in 1901, the Progressives were no longer spectators of the national politics, but were in power and from that moment they could put into practice their reform policies. President Roosevelt's progressive policies touched nearly all fields of general public interest. Politically, the reforms that he undertook concerned three main fields of reform namely the composition and management of his administration between 1901 and 1909, the reforming of the electoral system for better representation of people's will, and the US progressive foreign policy during the same period .

President Roosevelt chose his secretaries among men of great intellectual qualifications and academic merit to carry on his policies. He was very receptive to the suggestions and solutions of the experts in political, economic, and social matters. It is very clear from the composition of Roosevelt's Administration that he appointed mainly highly educated law men to manage and put into practice his progressive policies. Such choice certainly emanated from his belief that that law men were the best fit persons to write laws efficiently, understand them, and find legislative solutions to different problems that he intended to solve .

There were two progressive tendencies as regards the reforming of government. The first was adopted by those Progressives that wanted to start with reforming the electoral system in the country by electing the Senators directly and giving suffrage to women. This meant for them that good government could be best achieved by expanding democracy in the country. The second tendency was adopted by those who believed that political reforms had to be started at the local level, i. e. reforming the city governments .

The Progressives that opted for urban reforms to start with attacked what they called the "*invisible government*" or the forces and lobbies that operated behind the political scene and corrupted the democratic process of the country.

Reforming the city government would be achieved by replacing those who occupied civil service posts without proofs of competence with professional civil service workers. Recognising the need for professional guidance and tackling local problems, elected Progressive local officials built coalitions, using university professors, engineers and other experts as advisors, and invited businessmen to cooperate in reform efforts for the public good. Elected officials did not have to run everything, but boards of commissioners and professional city and county managers were employed to provide stability and expertise as city governing became more and more complicated. This would ensure the best representation of the citizens in government at all levels and the best services for all people .

At the beginning of the 20th century, the electoral campaigns in the USA became very costly financially speaking, which pushed the candidates to government posts to seek the donations and contributions of businesses. Such practice was considered and illegal and immoral since the representatives of the people became mere puppets in the hands of big corporations and wealthy people

The federal disclosure laws or publicity laws were the first initiated reforms of the electoral system by President Theodore Roosevelt after his victory in the Presidential Election of 1904. They were introduced as a response of President Roosevelt to the allegation of the defeated Democrat candidate Judge Alton B. Parker, who declared that Roosevelt received large sums of money from big businesses to fund his campaign⁶. It was impossible to prove the verity of such allegation because there was no law that obliged the candidates to reveal their campaign financiers .

President Roosevelt waited until 1907 to initiate and help secure the passage of the *Tillman Act (1907)*⁷, after its sponsor Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina, under the title of “*An Act to prohibit corporations from making money contributions in connection with political elections.*” The Tillman Act prohibited only corporate contributions, but did not require any form of disclosure of campaign records. Nevertheless, both candidates of the Presidential Election of 1909 namely the Democrat William Jennings Bryan and the Republican William Howard Taft voluntarily agreed to publish lists of their contributors and the amounts contributed and expended, following the election. It was the first time that a complete campaign record was disclosed in federal elections. The *Tillman Act* made it illegal for the corporations and banking institutions to contribute financially in Federal electoral campaigns⁸. This Act asserted penalties for offenders but did not provide for the creation of a commission that would assure the enforcement of the Act’s provisions.⁹

However, despite the fact that this Act was currently in force, the candidates accepted contributions from financial magnates and interest groups in exchange of promised future favours. Therefore, campaign finance records tended to be incomplete and not readily available to the public. Even the reform factions within the two major parties, in which the Progressives sought to abolish this practices, relied primarily on large contributors who financed both of them at the same time regardless of party or ideology. What was important was to side with the individual

that made public policies and awarded government contracts, rather than challengers .

It is clear that President Roosevelt did not venture in undertaking deep reforms in the inherited political system for over a century, and so far was working 'well.' Apparently, it benefited and suited him, but he was more inclined to intervene in the country's economy to right the wrongs that adversely affected the US politics and the citizens .

Further demands for public disclosure of campaign finances were made by an influential lobby group known as the National Publicity Law Association. This association succeeded first at encouraging New York to adopt a disclosure law at the state level, and finally helped convince Congress to adopt the *Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1910*,¹⁰ better known as the *Publicity Act of 1910*, which was a disclosure law for the election of House committees.¹¹

Theodore Roosevelt supported Howard Taft¹² as his successor because he found in him the best man to carry out his policies. Taft won the Election of 1909 by defeating the Democrat candidate William Jennings Bryan. However, Practice revealed that President Taft drew a line of demarcation from his mentor and predecessor. He proved to be of different character and personality which was reflected in his progressive policies. Taft was more a man of law rather than a skilful politician .

He declared that he considered himself a progressive because of his deep belief in the law as the scientific device that should be used by judges to solve the problems of society. In this second section, stress is put on three themes in the political reforms of President Taft. While the first deals with the improvement of democratic government by the admission of more democratic methods that would improve its organisation and operation, the second concerns the fight against corruption and the reforming of the electoral system. The third studies Taft's foreign policy that opposed Roosevelt's 'Big Stick' diplomacy .

President Taft's Administration did not differ greatly from that of Roosevelt as far as the educational background of the men that composed it is concerned. He wrote to his newly appointed Secretary of State, Philander C. Knox, "*I need a Cabinet of as many experienced lawyers as I can get...*"¹³

As noticed in the Administration of President Roosevelt, Taft's preferred to appoint men of law to the key posts to enable his Administration to work efficiently since every measure whether political, economic, or social had to be taken within the framework of the country's laws. This view was well expressed in his speech delivered at State Fair Grounds, Macon, Georgia on November 4, 1909, where he said :

"I still insist that it is the law and the lawyer that make popular government under a written constitution and written statutes possible, because if you depart in any way from the law as it is, you enter upon a path, which, while entirely certain for one issue in your mind with respect to the higher moral aim of your own soul and that of your fellow-citizens, nevertheless leads into a wilderness, and by which

you cannot subsequently guide your steps. Therefore, let us first make the laws to accord to our desires and our ambitions, and then follow them. ”¹⁴

President Taft wanted to keep the branches of government in equilibrium and limit government intervention in order to give a free space to personal endeavour and rights. During his presidency, he did not act unless he found the power to do so in the Constitution or in law. However, he did not favour the use of the Federal Government as an agency to relieve the misery of the masses. This view was commonly shared by the preceding US Presidents.¹⁵

The *Tillman Act (1907)* was a first step towards the regulation of electoral campaign finance. Under Taft’s Presidency, additional steps were taken by Congress in the disclosure provisions of the *Publicity Act of 1910*, also known as the *Federal Corrupt Practices Act*, and the extension of the *Tillman Act* to primary elections. The *Publicity Act* and the *Tillman Act* were both amended in 1911 to add more regulation on the electoral campaigns

*The Federal Corrupt Practices Act*¹⁶ (FCPA) was enacted in 1910 to limit the influence of wealthy individuals and special interest groups on the outcome of federal elections, and to regulate spending in campaigns for federal offices.¹⁷ It also required public disclosure of campaign finances to deter abuse and to educate the electorate, and reform the electoral system so as to realise the best representation of the public in Congress .

The FCPA concerned House elections only, but in 1911 it was amended to cover Senate elections as well, and to set spending limits for all Congressional candidates. The idea behind the *FCPA of 1911*¹⁸ was to make office holders and candidates less influenced by large contributors, which would spare them the suspicion of being bought.¹⁹ Through this Act, the voters could know who was supporting which candidate and then could vote accordingly. The FCPA also required the National Committees of the political parties to file post-election reports regarding the contributions to their candidates and their expenditures by reporting receipts and disbursements to the Clerk of the House following each election. Yet again, active enforcement mechanisms were not created and the Act was rarely put into practice .

The lack of adequate enforcement of the FCPA enabled the corporations to circumvent its provisions by directing their officers or directors to make personal contributions to a candidate, a practice that was not prohibited by law. Then, the corporation reimbursed its employees for their contributions through yearly bonuses. Although the FCPA was not enforced, it constituted the cornerstone for future regulations of the electoral campaigns and reforms of the electoral system like the 17th Amendment that provided for the direct election of US Senators (passed by Congress May 13, 1912, and ratified April 8, 1913) .

The Constitution, as it was adopted in 1788, made the Senate as an assembly where the states would have equal representation. Each state legislature would elect two senators to a term of six years. Late in the 19th century, there was much debate over the election of senators when special interests or political machines gained

control over the state legislature. The Progressive reformers proposed to dismiss individuals elected by such legislatures (State legislatures or the Senate) because they were not directly elected by the people. They considered the Senators as mere puppets in the hands of interest groups .

The response to these progressive concerns was the "Oregon System,"²⁰ which utilised a state primary election to identify the voters' choice for senators while pledging all candidates for the state legislature to honour the primary results. This system was initiated by men like William S. U'Ren, Will Daly, Harry Lane, as well as the suffragette Abigail Scott Duniway. This system presented a new vision to encourage the average voter to participate in government by choosing directly the officials, which might tilt the balance of power against the corporations and interest groups. William S. U'Ren also created the People's Power League by 1905. The League aimed at introducing a series of initiatives on the ballot that included a direct primary measure to allow voters to choose State Senators even though the Federal Constitution still required their election by State Legislatures .

It was the Senate investigation of bribery and corruption in the election of Illinois Senator William Lorimer²¹ that urged a constitutional amendment mandating the direct election of Senators by state citizenry. The House of Representatives proposed legislation for the direct election of Senators in 1910 and 1911. The proposition included a 'race rider' system that barred Federal intervention in cases of racial discrimination among voters. This would be done by vesting complete control of Senate elections in state governments .

A substitute amendment was proposed by Senator Joseph L. Bristow of Kansas to provide for the direct election of Senators. This amendment was adopted on a close vote before the proposed constitutional amendment itself passed the Senate. Over a year later, the House accepted the change, and on April 8, 1913, the resolution became the 17th Amendment .

The 17th Amendment was passed by Congress on May 13, 1912 during Taft's Presidency but was finally ratified on April 8, 1913 during Wilson's first term. It is to be noted that the 17th Amendment amended Article 1, Section 3²² of the US Constitution stipulating that the Senate of the United States should be composed of two Senators from each State, who had to be elected by the people for a senatorial term of six years with one vote for each Senator. The Amendment provided that the States might empower their respective executives to make temporary appointments to fill their respective vacant seat in the Senate for a period to enable the people to elect their representative .

Progressivism was associated with the Republicans because they were in power during the period that stretched from 1893 to 1912. In the Presidential Election of 1912, the Democrats defeated both the Progressives and the Republicans when their candidate Woodrow Wilson²³ won with large comfortable majority of electoral and popular votes.²⁴ While Wilson and Thomas Marshall got 6,296,284 popular votes (41. 84%) and 435 electoral votes (81. 9%), their opponents Theodore Roosevelt and Hiram Johnson candidates of the Progressive

Party got 4,122,721 popular votes (27. 40%) and 88 electoral votes (16. 6%).²⁵ The candidates of the Republican Party namely Howard Taft and Nicholas Butler came in third position with 3,486,242 popular votes (23. 17%) and 8 electoral votes (1. 5%).²⁶

The split in the Republican Party shattered the chances of both Roosevelt and Taft in winning the presidency, and paved the way for the Democratic Party's candidate to the White House. It was the first time in the history of the Republican Party to come third in a presidential election ending a 16-year rule, and the first time that a third party came second. From the beginning of the electoral campaign, public attention was focused on Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt who ran their campaigns respectively under 'New Freedom' and 'New Nationalism' programmes .

President Woodrow Wilson had the opportunity to carry on his progressive policies and reforms with little political opposition. He was backed by his party and the Progressives, and the Democrat control of Congress both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. He inherited the 62nd Congress (1911-1913) from his predecessor Howard Taft with a Democrat majority in the House of Representatives with 228 seats against 161 for the Republicans, but with a narrow majority in the Senate for the Republicans with 51 seats against 41 for the Democrats. He got rid of the Republican majority in Senate when the 63rd Congress (1913-1915) was formed. The Democrats got the majority in Congress with 51 seats in Senate against 44 for the Republicans, and 291 seats against 127 for the Republicans in House. The Democrat domination helped greatly the President to succeed in carrying out significant administrative revisions, political reforms, and changes in the US policy as regards foreign affairs. This section is devoted to the study of President Wilson's 'New Freedom' policy, the political reforms that he realised in his two presidential terms, and his foreign policy .

He also wrote articles mainly on government, administration, separation of powers...etc. Wilson is considered as the father of public administration because of the views he expressed on the subject in his writings like the article he wrote in 1887 entitled *The Study of Administration*. In this article he wrote "... it is the object of administrative study to discover, first, what government can properly and successfully do, and, secondly how it can do these proper things with the utmost possible efficiency and at the least possible cost either of money or of energy. "²⁷ Wilson advocated in his article that the efficiency of the administration could be best achieved through the following four rules :

1. Separation of politics and administration.²⁸
2. Comparative analysis of political and private organisations .
3. Improving efficiency with business-like practices and attitudes towards daily operations .
4. Improving the effectiveness of public service through management and by training civil servants, and merit-based assessment .

It is important to note that only the first point retains much attention and debate. The separation of politics and administration has been regarded through different perspectives that revolved around this dichotomy, which contributed in the formation of the future administrations. Wilson's view on the separation of administration and politics was based on the function of each. While politics was the expression of the will of the people, administration was the execution of the will of the people. Politics should be performed by politicians, but administration should be practiced by civil servants. The politician and the civil servant were different in the way they accede to their respective appellations. The politician became a politician by his popularity, whereas the civil servant attained his administrative post by his intelligence.²⁹ He argued that civil servants were professionals through their training and selection, there was no prior training to become a politician, and election was the way to attain political posts. Finally, he further argued that while the centre of preoccupation of politicians was to capture power and retain it, the central focus for the civil servants was the successful management of the administration .

Wilson advanced further analyses of the role and purpose of the government in his book *The State* (1889), which should be to accomplish the object of organised society through constant adjustment of governmental assistance to the needs of a changing social and industrial organisation.³⁰ Through this view of the role and purpose of the government, he emphasized those aspects of progressivism which related to the creation of an efficient system free from corrupting and perverting parasites. On the other hand, this would not further empower the government, for he believed that the history of human liberty was the history of the restriction of governmental functions.³¹ This paradox in the conception of government prerogatives is found earlier in the establishment of the US Constitution. The US system of government, which was created by the Founding Fathers, was based on the philosophy of installing a government with powers and at the same time limiting them .

Wilson explained his 'New Freedom' program in his speech entitled *New Freedom* saying: "*We are witnessing a renaissance of public spirit, a reawakening of sober public opinion, a revival of the power of the people, the beginning of an age of thoughtful reconstruction, that makes our thought hark back to the great age in which democracy was set up in America.*"³² This excerpt from his speech is significantly important because it stresses two main ideas of his version of progressivism. The first idea is conveyed through the use of two words: renaissance, reawakening, and revival, which denote the rebirth of the American spirit and the power of the people that had existed but lost its strength throughout the years. The second idea is that the breeding ground of such rebirth is democracy as conceived by the Founding Fathers .

This excerpt also poses a paradox between Wilson's alleged progressivism and his conservative vision of the way to re-establish American democracy by going back to the democratic spirit of the early years of the Republic. It was mixture that combined the progressive aspirations and the conservative ideals that

gave Wilson a general consensus within all the factions in the Democratic Party in the Presidential Election of 1912, which was not the case with the candidates of the Republican and Progressive Parties. To ensure the realisation of these policies and theories, President Wilson had to choose the right man in the right place in his Cabinet .

Wilson's 'New Freedom' program was set on a theoretical basis that emanated from his intellect and contemplation of the socio-economic and political conditions that existed in the USA. His views were not unique and novel because the Progressives in other formations had relatively the same ideals and objectives. The difference between the Democrat and the Republican Progressives was mainly in the order of priority and the means to achieve their objectives .

During his two mandates, President Wilson formed his Cabinet and constituted the different State-Secretaries according to a scheme that was not totally different from his predecessors. Because of his intellectual stature and standpoints, he chose only progressive intellectuals and experts as the members of his Administration that had the task of putting his 'New Freedom' programme into practice .

In the political arena, President Wilson wanted good government at all levels. He shared with Roosevelt the belief that the presidency should be used for initiating and guiding national legislation in accordance with the will of the people. In his Inaugural Address of 1912, he announced his dedication to the task of improving the national life in all possible aspects.³³ His social, economic, and political policies were based on the promises and pledges he had made in his speeches in the presidential campaigns of 1912 and 1916. Among his progressive political reforms there were the direct election of Senators and women's suffrage which would expand democracy and honesty in public officials .

Before 1866, the suffrage movement sponsored by women associations had had the objective of spreading awareness mainly among women about their unfavourable situation through conventions and the establishment of associations. In 1866, the American Equal Rights Association, led by Lucretia Mott, was founded with the purpose to secure for all Americans their civil rights irrespective of race, colour, or sex. The first attempt to introduce a constitutional revision as regards women suffrage happened in 1867 when Stanton, Anthony, and Lucy Stone addressed a subcommittee of the New York State Constitutional Convention requesting that the revised Constitution should include woman suffrage. Their efforts failed, but the suffragists were not discouraged since two women suffrage associations were created in 1869 namely the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Henry Ward Beecher as their respective presidents .

At the federal level, suffrage was granted only to black American males as stipulated in the 15th Amendment but not to women. It was not until 1882 that the House of Representatives and the Senate appointed a Select Committee on Woman Suffrage, but without concrete measures in favour of women .

Undoubtedly, women were still in a weak position to force the state and federal legislatures to grant them the right to vote. Therefore, it was necessary to strengthen the movement in order to achieve concrete results. The suffrage movement was further strengthened by two main events. The first was the merger of the NWSA and the AWSA to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890 with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone as officers. The second was the entry of Wyoming and Utah in the Union respectively in 1890 and 1900 with state constitutions that gave women the right to vote. By 1900, women had full suffrage in Utah, Colorado, and Idaho .

The suffrage movement in the USA was given much power when the Progressives came in power during the Presidencies of Roosevelt and Taft, but without achieving the enfranchisement of women mainly in the Eastern States. Both claimed their support to the suffrage movement, but considered that it was the duty of Congress to enfranchise women first, and then the States would follow .

However, the American women had to wait until 1919 when Congress passed the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution on June 4, which gave them full suffrage. On August 26 the Nineteenth Amendment was finally adopted when Tennessee, as the last State, ratified it. The 19th Amendment stipulates that the right of the citizens of the United States to vote was not to be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.³⁴ The 19th Amendment empowered Congress to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. It cost the American legislators the effort to write only two sentences to enfranchise women after a century of struggle .

The precedent political issues that the US Government dealt with were aimed to ensure the full representation and participation of all citizens in decision making. The objective was also to make the political life in the USA more democratic than before. This philosophy was also reflected in President Wilson's foreign policy that he elaborated during his two presidential mandates. The Progressive ideology of Wilson was present during the First World War in his 14 Points that aimed to end it on fair basis .

At this level of analysis of the political reforms introduced during the Progressive Era, it is possible to draw the following conclusions. The elite of the Progressive Movement that held the political reins of the country were essentially lawmen. The movement also included men and women that worked in their respective fields such as journalists, educators, social reformers, writers... etc. The Progressives worked for the foundation of the country's politics, economy, and social life on legislative basis. The result was that the country's political and economic systems became more efficient, which had a positive impact on the social life of the citizens .

Although the political advantages such as the 'spoils system', the indirect election of Senators, the disenfranchisement of categories of society, the corporations funding of the electoral campaigns favoured the progressive political class, the Progressive Presidents resented them and actively participated in their

elimination through legislation and constitutional amendments. This shows clearly that the Progressive Presidents favoured the development of the country, and relinquished personal and Party interests. This is undoubtedly the only way to attract the public attention and faith in the ruling class, which is the way to achieve successful reforms .

The Progressive Movement of the first part of the twentieth century was an outgrowth and a fulfilment, rather than a beginning. It was not one movement, but many often viewed as fundamentally conservative in nature, as liberal in its extraordinary measures, and even radical at times. It was a peaceful and democratic evolution from corrupt and inefficient political and economic management to a system that emerged from various reforms that undertook the cleansing and preservation of the political life in the country from corruption and mismanagement and waste of public funds. It rebuilt the country's economy on a fairer basis that ensured its deliverance from the monopolies, and the redistribution of wealth that established the welfare of the lower classes of the workers and the impoverished. This was realised because the progressive reforms started from the university with intellectuals, lawmen, thinkers and philosophers, and not from the street which would have resulted in violence and bloodshed .

The Progressive Movement in the USA teaches us the verity that a group of people can have a tremendous effect on the way their country is governed. The temperance and suffrage movements, the muckrakers, the conservationists, were minorities and had no power to compel the government with their demands, but gradually and insistently made the authorities endeavour to realise them because a just cause cannot simply be denied. It is worth noting that the fact that such governments mainly the progressive ones were successful because they listened carefully to the demands of the people and did their best to realise them .

They that dig foundations deep .

Fit for realms to rise upon,

Little honour do they reap,

Of their generation .

Notes

- 1-Gale New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, USA, Charles Scribner's Sons, Vol. 6, 2005, p. 2025 .
- 2- Peter G. Filene. "An Obituary for the Progressive Movement. " In: American Quarterly. USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press. Vol. 22, N° 1. Spring 1970. p. 1. (PP. 20-34).
- 3- Benjamin Parke De Witt. The Progressive Movement, a Non-Partisan, Comprehensive Discussion of Current Tendencies in American Politics. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1915. p. 4 .
- 4- Ibid. , p. 5 .
- 5- Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) was the 26th President of the United States (1901-09), writer, naturalist, and soldier. The assassination of President McKinley made him the youngest person ever to enter the presidency at the age of 43 .
- 6- On October 1, 1904, Parker took up the Charge of The New York Times that denounced the Republican National Chairman, Cortelyou, of collecting vast sums of money from large industrial trusts by methods almost approaching blackmail and was using it virtually to purchase the election. George E. Mowry. op. cit. , pp. 178-179 .
- 7- The Tillman Act of January 26, 1907. 34 Stat. 864 .

8- Ibid .

9- It was not until 1975 that the American Congress created the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to administer and enforce the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) the statute that governs the financing of federal elections. The duties of the FEC, which is an independent regulatory agency, are to disclose campaign finance information, to enforce the provisions of the law such as the limits and prohibitions on contributions, and to oversee the public funding of Presidential elections .

10- Federal Corrupt Practices Act of June 25, 1910, ch. 392, 36 Stat. 822 .

11- Corruption in the Senate was revealed by David Graham Phillips in his book *The Treason of the Senate: Aldrich, the Head of it All*, which he published as a series of articles in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in February 1906

12- William Howard Taft (1857-1930) received his law degree from The Cincinnati Law School. Taft's political career commenced when President William McKinley appointed him as chief administrator in the Philippines. His charge was to transfer government from military to civilian rule. He served as civil governor there from 1901-1904. Taft was widely praised for his work in the Philippines, in sponsoring land reform, road building, and honest and efficient government. President Roosevelt recognised Taft's abilities by naming him Secretary of War in 1904, and then backed his candidacy for the Presidential Election of 1908 .

13- Presidential Addresses and State Papers of William Howard Taft, from March 4, 1909, to March 4, 1910. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. Vol. I. 1910. P. 237 .

14 -Ibid. , 403 .

15- This view was abandoned when Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1932-1945) came in power. The adverse effects of the Depression of 1929 forced the President, within the framework of his New Deal program, to make the Federal Government an active participant in the social issues to bring relief to the population .

16-The Federal Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), June 25, 1910. Codified at 2 U. S. C. Section 241 .

17- Jasper B. Shannon, *Money and Politics*. New York: Random House. 1959. p. 55 .

18- The Federal Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) 1911. 7 Stat. 25 .

19-Jasper B. Shannon. op. cit. , p. 65 .

20-Herbert Croly. op. cit. , p. 292 .

21- William E. Dodd. *Woodrow Wilson and His Work*. New York: Doubleday , Page & Company. 4th Edition. 1921. p. 165 .

22-Article 1, Section 3 reads as follows: "The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislatures thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one Vote. "

23- Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) tried studying law at the Virginia Law School, but withdrew. He then went to Johns Hopkins University to study politics and history. In 1890, he went back to Princeton but as a teacher. Twelve years later he was the first non-clergyman to become president of Princeton. In 1910, Wilson was invited to run for governor of New Jersey as a progressive candidate on the Democratic ticket. He resigned from Princeton and was elected. As governor he fought machine politics and built a solid reputation as reformer. Wilson was nominated by Progressive Democrats on the 46th ballot along with Governor T. R. Marshall of Indiana as vice-president .

24-The popular vote is the total number of people who voted in an election. The electoral vote is the number of points a candidate receives nationwide, but the person with the highest popular vote in a state gets the points for a state. The points are based on the population of the concerned state .

25- <http://www.presidentelect.org/e1912.html>. "1912. " *President Elect*. Ed. James R Whitson. 16 Jan. 2009 .

26- Ibid .

27- Woodrow Wilson. 'The Study of Administration. ' In: *Political Science Quarterly*. The Academy of Political Science. Vol. 2. N° 2. June 1887. p. 197. (PP. 197-222) .

28-Ibid. , p. 210 .

29- Herbert Croly. *Progressive Democracy*. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1914. p. 372 .

30-Woodrow Wilson. *The State*. New York: D. C. Heath & Co. 1918. p. 62 .

31-Herbert Croly. op. cit. , p. 17 .

32- Ibid. , p. 19 .

33-Arthur S. Link, Wilson: New Freedom. New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press. 1956. p. 13 .

34- 19th Amendment of the US Constitution. 66th Congress of the United States of America. 1st Session. May 19, 1919 .