**What is known as the Progressive Era?** I.e. mainly the period betwen 1900 and World War I. What history calls Progressivism are massive efforts in the social and political life to introduce reforms which would correct the evils and abuses that had risen in the governmental policies and in big businesses since the Civil War. That preceding period has been called the Gilded Age, which meant unprecedented and fast economic (mainly industrial) development and boom

The main targets of reforms were, in general, the misuse of power, economic and political, exploitation of labor and the inhibition of free competition by monopolies. The goal of Progressives was to correct the system so that the rapid growth of industries and cities would bring prosperity more socially just and balanced and less conflicting. Progressives did share a certain optimism. **Essentially, the United States remained, in the estimation of Progressives, a model to inspire the world.** The basis for their optimism, the belief that through good will improvements might be attained, was in the international triumphs of the United States and in an upswing in the economy. Within two decades, Progressivism touched nearly every aspect of American life: the structure of city government, the conduct of corporations and trade unions (controlling the rise of socialist mood in the latter), the legal regulations improving working conditions and hours, the prohibition of child´s labor, the education of children, the conservation of natural resources, the social work among the poor and importantly new immigrants, the status of women, the quality of food and the content of magazines.

However, Progressive efforts to reform humankind included questionable policies: restricting the consumption of alcoholic beverages, limiting the number of immigrants, and intervening in the political affairs of peoples in other parts of the world.

Progressivism was a complex of many different movements with different priorities. Most Progressive leaders recruited from the urban Protestant middle class. **New ideas of social scientists and philosophers were used.** Among them there was a pursuit of less selfish individualism, and the creation of a strong national state with the federal government assuming a major responsibility - called also New Nationalism (inspired by Herbert Croly and his influential book *The Promise of American Life*, 1909). This strong state would use professional expertise and social planning - actually there was a strong support for "social engineering" by an able and properly trained elite (e.g. "rescuing" the poor, a wider distribution of national income...)

An influential source of ideas was *Principles of Scientific Management* , 1911, by Frederick Winsow Taylor (i.e. management of society as a whole).

There was also a support from Protestant clerics who preached the **Social Gospel**.

The relation of Progressivism to socialism was interesting - basically quite a few proposed reforms in the form of new legislation were meant as a protection against socialism the appeal of which was growing and broadening in the early 20th century. (More than 300 public offices held by them in the cities by 1912; Eugene Debs, the socialist presidential candidate reached the vote of 900 000, i.e. 6 percent of the electorate, in 1912.) Many journalists got involved in the Progressive movement through their investigative journalism whose goals were to disclose social and political evil, in corporations, city politics, the banks, the police or the medical profession, the food processing industry. These so called **muckraking** practices of journalists were not new - reporters had written stories of the kind for many years. Their new stronger impact was enabled by popular, heavily illustrated magazines that started to sponsor the investigation and, because they were selling at about 10 cents a piece, reached nationwide audience: *Hampton's, Everybody's Arena, Cosmopolitan*; even conservative periodicals such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Saturday Evening Post* were forced by the social atmosphere to follow similar lines... These journalists were named - quite ambiguously - muckrakers by the future "Progressive" president Theodore Roosevelt who used a comparison with John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: "you may recall the description of ... the man who .... was offered the celestial crown for his muckrake ... but continued to rake the filth on the floor." (Roosewelt sought less provocative ways in pursuing reform and appeasing public.)

Examplesof muckraking : Lionel Steffens's series on corruption in the cities was probably the greatest accomplishment for muckraking journalism. Ida Tarbell's disclosed the methods how the huge combine of Standard Oil was built. Novelist David Graham Phillips wrote for *Cosmopolitan* a lively series of articles called "The Treason of the Senate" exposing that governmental body as a millionaire's club acting for special interests. The purpose of muckrakers was rather the disclosure itself than seeking the solution - they probably hoped they would stir the public will and initiative that would pursue the remedy. Some became bitter and pessimistic about the results: disclosures and campaigns did in some cases lead to legislative changes, but often the new legislation was not enforced efficiently by authorities. That is why L. Steffens and Charles Edward Russell (wrote on a beef trust...) turned finally to socialism: "I couldn't keep it up," R. said of his muckraking, "it was too fierce, the conditions, the facts, and what was worse, I couldn't understand them. I'd form a theory, then go out and find that the theory was all wrong. I'd set up another theory, see it blow up, and so think again and again, till I couldn't stand it. I joined the Socialist Party. I had to have something to believe."

**Upton Sinclair** was a socialist writer (in those times) whose novels starting with *The Jungle*, 1906, were very powerful exposés of social evils of the time, and therefore he was counted among the muckrackers. Later, however, he became a conservative thinker and writer.

The significance of **Chicago** at the beginning of the 20th century was growing, it was the 2nd biggest city at that time after N.Y. City, competing with it economically as well as culturally: **Chicago in literature** was soon becoming an epitome of new, modern urban vitality that captivated the poetry of Carl Sandburg, (who proved his kinship with Whitman as well as with European poets fascinated by the pace of modern civilization); it became a setting of Th. Dreiser's ***Sister Carrie*** of 1900, in the vein of literary naturalism; it also became unmistakenly the epitome of a violent capitalist jungle for Bertolt Brecht who made it a setting of his early play, ***In the Jungle of the Cities*** (the 1920's), dramatizing the disintegrating morals; and it was also the place of capitalist crime in the name of maximum profits that was disclosed and condemned by Upton Sinclair's (1878-1968) ***The Jungle*** (1906), one of the most remarkable writings of the so called muckraking literature [half-journalistic, half-literary efforts before the Depression of the 30's]. In Sinclair's *The Jungle*, the violators were meat processing companies hiring crowds of immigrant workers - the main hero is a Lithuanian immigrant Jurgis -, exploiting them and firing for still cheaper labour - besides them, the violated are also consumers being offered meat processed in stockyards with horrible hygienic conditions. The book provoked a public scandal and the government had to take steps for remedy. Not only *The Jungle*, but other novels by Sinclair in the same vein of criticism, ***Oil!***, 1927, ***Boston***, 1928, were translated very early into Czech, popular with left-wing avantgarde already before WW II.

Real **results** were seen **in city politics, in state governments, in social legislation, in party politics and, of course, also on the level of national politics.** In **city politics**, the attacks were aimed at the corruption of management, at bossism of political parties' bosses and powerful economic interests controlling the cities. The search for remedies had different forms. In some cases (Johnson, mayor of Cleveland 1901, Ohio), they were (temporarily successful) attempts to **put real democracy in practice,** i.e. to interest the electorate in the public involvement, in its own welfare - the mayor persuaded conscientious men to work in the city government. In Toledo, Ohio, the reformist process even acquired a form of realized social utopia: the mayor (Samuel M. "Golden Rule" Jones, 1899-1904) tried to reorganize the society on "collective basis", establish the "Cooperative Comonwealth": opened free kindergartens, free golf course and playgrounds, organized free concerts. But in a less utopian manner, he reorganized the police system of the city: policemen's light canes were replaced with heavy clubs; however, he ruled out arrests based just on suspicion and jailing people without proveable charges. An objective shared by many cities' authorities became to gain independence of the state control, to reach a sort of "home rule". Also, however, more reformist efforts were concerned rather with professional efficiency in the city managemnet than with democracy - by 1914, over 400 of mostly middle-sized cities had adopted the commission form which meant that a commisson of experts ran the city on - originally - nonpartisan basis. Gradually though (after 1914), the pure professionality ignoring social-political public concerns became an unacceptable contradiction: commissioners became politicized again - and had to be elected. Efforts to strengthen democratic principles in government on one hand, and expert management based, in fact, on a corporate model on the other got into conflict.

In **state politics**, the institutions of **initiative**, **referendum**, **recall** were introduced. The initiative was a reform that permitted public to propose legislation; the referendum enabled voters to approve or reject measures passed by the legislatures; the recall made possible a recall of public officers through popular votes before their terms expired. Several states passed laws which established these institutions, however, they were rarely or never used.Also, a direct election of senators representing the state in the Senate was a big concern of Progressives. So far the Constitution provided for their election by state legislatures which might be controlled by party machines or private interests.The 17th Amendment, passed by Congress in 1912 and ratified by May 1913, marked the change that should democratize the election to the Senate. However, results still were disputable - in the new way, party funds were unavailable to those who wanted to run for the office and thus wealthy candidates got logically an important advantage in campaigning.

Even though implementation of new measures was lagging, depending on Progressive enthusiasm, many held that at least more democratic possibilities were established and the power of political machines and private interests - i.e. corporations such as e.g. railroad companies or other public utilities, or industrial companies - could be better controlled. They became subject to laws as other "persons". Naturally, the progressive spirit in the society must have affected **the course of national politics** - also because a proclaimed goal was to create a strong state on the federal level, too. Thus the **President** had to be a person who shared the progressive commitment. Namely two of three presidents of the first two decades of 20 c. (**Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson**) were remarkable political personalities who were greatly inspired by Progressivism: Republican Theodore Roosevelt and Democrat Woodrow Wilson.  **Theodore Roosevelt** was a personage of colorful style that excited the public, a popular hero of the Spanish-American War.He came to symbolize Progressive reforms though he was, in fact, a reluctant reformer. He saw the need to confront the abuses of the social and industrial system in such a way that "radicalism [would] prosper under conservative leadership", in such a manner "that the progressive people will not part company with the bulk of the moderates". While Woodrow Wilson (who succeeded Republican Taft in 1912) was for regulated competition and held that "monopoly can be broken up", Roosevelt was still for regulated monopoly.

Th. Roosevelt became President after his predeccessor, McKinley, was assasinated in 1901, and he then served two terms in the office (proceeded to the presidential office from the position of the governor of New York). His major achievements were in **railroad regulation** (under the antitrust law called the Sherman Antitrust Act he initiated the dissolution of a major company created by the country's greatest bankers to combine the holdings of the railroad barons - the Northern Securities Company), **in the protection of consumers** (see U. Sinclair), and, relatively early in American history of **conservation**, he achieved some protection of natural resources: he himself was an amateur naturalist, had a taste for natural beauty. Thanks to his efforts, the Forest Reserve Act was passed in 1891 which set aside almost 150 million acres in Alaska and the Northwest for the purpose of studying mineral and water resources in those areas. His main theme was the so called **Square Deal** (just, fair): This expression which he found after he mediated a settlement between coal-mine workers from Pennsylvania being on strike for months in 1902 (protesting against the conditions in the mines and in the company-owned towns), and the managers of the coal-mine company backed by coal barons - J.P. Morgan among them. (In the battle, however, trade unions failed to gain recognition as labor's bargaining agent and the miners were prohibited to strike for another three years). After that Th. Roosevelt made "a square deal to all sides" (i.e. justice for all law-abiding citizens, whether rich or poor) a hallmark of his presidency - his main purpose was to prevent a socialist action. Thanks to **Taft**, the **16th Amendment**, first time establishing the federal income tax, was passed (1913). A new course in policies was introduced by **Woodrow Wilson** who was elected President from the post of Progressive democratic governor of New Jersey in 1912. (Wilson - born in Virginia, he came from a family of rigid Presbyterian beliefs, a great moralist, but at the same time of strong racial prejudice; was known as educational reformer). In that election, popular vote for of over 900 000 for Socialists and their candidate Eugene V. Debs was so far their greatest achivement (no electoral votes, however). Wilson coined a concept of **"new freedom"** - i.e. more rightful possibilities for an individual which were, in his opinion, more improtant than a square deal controlled by the government. Wilson proceeded with elaborating on the federal tax mechanisms, introduced financial reform, established the Federal Reserve system with a network of Federal Reserve banks across the country, private, but supervised by the government - this was supposed to strengthen the financial and economic stability, and did. He also managed to create the Federal Trade Commission which was authorized to investigate alleged violations of the antitrust law (under his administration, 379 cease-and-desist orders were issued against prohibited practices and a few dissolutions of trusts were initiated), and he initiated the second antitrust law, the Clayton Act, which was passed in 1914. It prohibited price discrimination that might lessen or destroy competition and other practices of big trusts such as interlocked interests in the directorates in corporations and banks over a specified size (measured by profit). This act awarded some rights to trade unions as well, included legislation controlling child labor, and some measures towards the securing of 8-hour working day of railway workers. Many of these measures however, were not effectively enforced (badly written; administrative neglect; hostility of the courts...) Two groups of population especially **did not profit** much from Wilson's reforms: **women** (because of his conservative Southern views of the role of women) fighting for suffrage during the time of his administration, and **blacks** - African-Americans. ---------------

**American women** proposed a right of women to suffrage, among other rights, since the 1840's (a relatively small guard then, under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton). In 1889, they organized the General Federation of Women's Clubs, which by the turn of the centuries grew into a millitant organization fighting for women's suffrage, but also for birth control. At that time a growing number of women and children were active labor force (according to the census of 1900, 5 million women and 1 million children) - this being especially the result of fast and large-scale industrialization and continuing immigration.

A strong argument in the debate about women's right to vote, on women's part, was their participation in business - by 1910 nearly 8 million women were working in offices, stores, and factories. There were two organizations differing in their radicalism which organized the efforts in the campaign: the American Women Suffrage Association (Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe) and a more millitant one, the National Woman Suffrage Association (Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton). By 1914, women had won the franchise in eleven states (Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming among the first). Women however intensified the campaign and concentrated on the federal amendment. They used different strategies (a huge petition to the Congress and an opened lobby in Washington; dramatic demonstrations and **picketing** advocated by Alice Paul following the pattern of English women), and eventually, even President Wilson - whose election in 1912 in the light of his conservative Southern views on the place of women in society was a setback for women's cause - **conceded** and changed his position. Also, the important saving role of women in American economy during WW I gained them many new male supporters. In 1919, the Congress, by a narrow margin, passed **the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote**. It was ratified in August 1920.

From the point of view of black Americans (**African Americans**), the era of Progressivism coincided with the worst period of race relations in the nation's history. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the South moved systematically to **disenfranchise** and segregate its black population. Although the Progressive movement was strong in the South, the blacks were excluded - racism and Progressivism went often hand in hand. Both black Americans and "new" immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were considered second-rate citizens and that was why measures even in form of legislation were taken to deprive them of citizens' rights. New scholarly approaches such as in anthropology, psychology and sociology supported these public racist assumptions trying to prove, for instance, the lack of capacity, in black people, to become intelligent and useful citizens.

Also popular culture reinforced racist public opinion - the influence of the sensationally successful movie***The Birth of a Nation*** was immense (based on the novel of Thomas Dixon; W. Wilson after seeing it at a private showing in the White House said that it was "history written in lightning"). It discriminated among American ethnicities, favoring Anglo-Saxons, and graphically portrayed blacks as depraved, lustful, dangerous people who should be prevented from attaining social and political equality on the South.

Self-affirmative policies and strategies of black (African) Americans in those times: **Booker T. Washington (in the South), W.E.B. DuBois (in New York, Harlem Renaissance** with its peak in the 1920's**)...**

The year of 1920 meant the end of President Woodrow Wilson's era, also the unsuccessful **end of his ideological reasoning**, that pushed through the American participation in WW I. WW I - the war between the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany) and the Allied Powers (Great Britain, France and Russia; later, in 1915, also Italy which was promised some new territory in exchange for its participation on the Allies' side). America remained outside the conflict at the beginning, it was even Wilson's policy (that helped to win his re-election in 1916) to stay out of war - yet both the Central Powers and the Allies sought American support. However, soon after his re-election Wilson changed the course of his policy and asked the Congress for a declaration of war. From the beginning, Wilson had sympathized with the Allies, but he insisted on the USA's neutrality. It was threatend especially by **the "War at Sea":** when in 1914, Britain started to treat the North Sea as a military area and mined it so that it became impossible for neutral vessels to cross it freely; in response, the German government started a war area around the British Isles and sent submarines there which actually could not discriminate between American vessels and the enemies vessels at all. The big shock was the attack on the unarmed British liner***Lusitania*** in 1915 (carrying rifle cartridges though) which sank, with many Americans as passengers on board. It raised anti-German mood among Americans; Wilson finally began to theorize about the need for Americans to participate in the European conflict - only after that, in 1917, in fact, it became a world war. Wilson was actually able to explain the American action in his usual moralistic language claiming it was the People's War, a war for freedom and justice and self-government for all the nations of the world; a war to make the world safe for the peoples who live upon it. Americans did lose their doubts about the conflict, a volunteer enrollment in the army was common, there was even a euphoria about the possibility, on American part, of helping the world to establish conditions for its democratic future. The major American writers of the after-war decades, E. Hemingway, J. DosPassos, e.e. cummings went to fight in the European conflict with high expectations. The worse was there disillusionment, disappointment and disgust felt face to face the cruelties and irrationalities of the war:

Basically, the resulting American understanding of WW I (the Great War) was that they had been cheated, deluded into fighting in the war that was not theirs. This notion and also the crisis of all values that the war shattered was also expressed in the cultural attitudes of the so called post-war "Lost Generation" of American writers. It was, however, different with President Wilson. When it came to constructing a peace, Wilson was still driven by strong moral considerations. He was convinced that moral principle would triumph and the world would be made safe for democracy. He designed the so called **Fourteen Points** which he proposed, in the role of a peacemaker that he took upon himself, as the basis of the peace treaty. His idea was "peace without victory"; however, it was too idealistic and it ignored secret treaties among the Allies that had prepared territorial readjustments, in a sort of reward, and demanded enormous indemnities (compensation) from the defeated enemy, Germany especially. Wilson's first five points contained general principles aimed at removing the fundamental causes of conflict, among others, free use of the seas by all nations, economic barriers to free trade removed, armaments reduced, the conflicting interests of colonial powers settled so that they would reflect the interests of the native peoples. The eight important points dealt with territorial readjustments based on the the principle of self-determination along "historically established lines of nationality". They included "autonomous development" for the peoples of Austria-Hungary and the establishment of independent Poland. This is where Wilson's peacemaking policies, **in fact not truly liked by the Allies** (and less and less supported by Americans who started to think that Europe should not be their business any more), **became crucially important for small European nations like Czech and Slovaks.(Austro-Hungarian Empire dismembered: it was Wilson's support that enabled the creation of Czechoslovakia, and Wilson became a real hero, if not for Americans, then for many common people all over the world** affected by WW I. *Remember Wilsonovo nádraží.*)

The 14th point of the treaty, the most important in Wilson's eyes, would establish "a genral association of nations" to guarantee "political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike". Actually, this was the idea of the later United Nations Organization, first established as the League of Nations. Finally, in the Versailles Treaty, the Allies denied Wilson the just peace that he sought (remember harsh conditions for Germany, which almost guaranteed that Germany would make every effort to break the agreement when it felt strong enough… remember WW II).Wilson made concessions to secure the League of Nations in which he suceeded. (It functioned till 1939, legally abolished in 1946; in 1945, the succeeding UNO was established in San Francisco.) **The USA did not join he League of Nations.** Paradoxically, Wilson was not able to persuade the Congress to ratify the treaty, and thus adopt the League Covenant. America was already more concerned with its own problems (unemployment and inflation most burning) than with global visions, and Wilson was growing more and more stubborn and refused to make any compromises. The League started to operate without the USA, Wilson suffered a serious stroke that left him half-paralyzed.