

17.037/17.038 American Political Thought
Spring 2004

4/27/04 Student Lecture Notes

The Death of Freedom?

- Progressive Era, 1898-1912
 - Who were the Progressives, and what did they stand for?
 - Centrist progressives: T. Roosevelt, Croly, Wilson, Booker T. Washington
 - Left progressives: Dewey, Addams, Kallen, DuBois
 - Differed on ideas of economic policies and issues of citizenship and American civic identity.

- Student presentation

- W. E. B. DuBois
 - Flirted with communism later in life
 - Influenced by German philosophers, including Hegel (argued that history driven by conflict of ideas) and Herder who believed in a theory of history that is linear in progress
 - Also, influenced by evolutionary theory.
 - Believed that source of inequity in American was due to social and economic conditions.

- Progressive Era
 - Spanish-American War (1898) marked the beginning.
 - Response to Gilded Age – new confidence of progressives.
 - Roosevelt – US can order the world.
 - 1912 presidential election – all 4 major candidates claimed some progressive ideals
 - Progressives believed that United States would lead world and that the country shared a homogenous national identity.
 - Inspired by Lincoln's republican liberalism.
 - Professionalism and scientific approach to management; rational organization.
 - Pragmatism seen as important.
 - Collectively, supported democratic control of government.

- Centrist progressives:
 - Influenced by Sumner
 - Emphasis on scientific management.
 - Envisioned role for government, almost a corporatist vision.
 - Institutionalized reform – increase popular control through direct elections, primaries, secret ballots, initiatives and referenda.

- Challenged laissez-faire market (e.g., regulation to protect worker safety).
 - o Lochner Era
 - Supported laissez faire – regulation seen as violation of economic liberty, and the rights of individuals to enter into contracts.
 - Curtailed progressive reforms.
- Regarding issues of citizenship
 - o Feared “dangers” of immigration
 - o Argued for Anglo-Saxon dominance; cultural homogeneity.
 - o Against black suffrage
 - o Argued for strong national government.
- Croly (political theorist at time):
 - o Supportive of American imperialism.
 - o Government should not be neutral.
 - o Makes case for American nationalism.
 - o Viewed history as march of Christian Americanism
 - o Bias toward organized, powerful, and large organizations (industries, and unions).
- Booker T. Washington:
 - o Blacks must prove fitness before demanding more political and economic rights.
 - o Blacks need to work their way up.
 - o Acquiesces to segregation and lack of political rights.
- Left progressives:
 - More inclusive than centrists.
 - Dewey:
 - o Argued for smaller government and more local participation; more Jeffersonian.
 - o Rejected ascriptive doctrines.
 - DuBois:
 - o Accepted race as unit of division in society.
 - o Racial differences spiritual and mental. Racial essentialist to some extent?
 - o Believed that races must develop as distinct peoples.
 - o Argued for equal opportunity for Blacks, but also thought that races should live and develop separately.
 - o Skeptical of the masses; believed that Blacks needed to be led by elites – the “Talented Tenth”