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DID THE PROGRESSIVES FAIL?

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The subject of Progressivism and whether it failed or succeeded is one of the key issues of historical debate. Leading historian, Richard Abrams says progressivism failed because it tried to impose values on America, and it never stood up to inequalities which still exist. Arthur Link and Richard McCormick state that Progressives did face and relieve the worst abuses that emerged in urban industrial America in the first part of the twentieth century. The Progressives failed socially and politically.

Richard Abrams said Progressivism failed in its imposition of values and not confronting the inequalities. Abrams said Progressives tried to keep the original values. Those values were bettering the immigrants, legislating against trusts, and restricting corporations for the welfare of small businesses. Progressives did not confront racism, according to Abrams. In the end, big business dominated immigrants and small farmers.

Progressivism succeeded in confronting and fixing the worst abuses, according to Link and McCormick. Muckraking was the way for the Progressives to bring up the horrendous mistreatments of America. People were made to feel guilty by the muckrakers. The Progressives did at least recognize problems, because it was too tough of a job to reform everything, Link and McCormick stated.

In agreement with Abrams, the Progressive's failure, socially, was in the racism of the country. Signs of anti-Catholicism developed because of unfulfilled expectations

that Progressives offered, stated by Abrams. Progressives had to deal with racist movies of the time that the Ku Klux Klan and even the President were enthusiastic about. In 1908, a race riot hurt blacks' chances for a share of the rewards in the American culture. Progressives again failed to curb the violence against dissenters. Labor was violently repressed. Reform was not relevant enough to meet the needs of the downtrodden. Progressives did not come through like they promised in their rhetoric.

Second of all, the Progressives failed politically. Progressives tried to narrow political discourse, with "proliferation of sedition and criminal syndicast laws." They failed in that purpose. Progressives defeated their own objectives in their hostility towards labor unions. Instead of helping the working people, they also "counterbalanced the power of collectivized capital." While fighting for better labor conditions, they disputed against expanding union power. Finally, Progressives failed by being insensitive to the lower-class immigrants, which didn't help them politically. Link and McCormick even pointed out that. Progressives were very disorganized.

Socially and politically, the Progressives were failures. Like many other reforms, Progressives had some impact, but that was small. There are many more points proving the failure of Progressives than the success of Progressives.