Progressive Era Timeline

The Progressive Movement began in the late 19th century and continued until World War I. It was a time of great social change, when people began to address their concerns about rampant corruption in the U.S. government and ills of society. Muckrakers, or journalists who worked to expose abuses of corporate power, helped to gather public support for regulation and reform during the Progressive Era. Below is a timeline of important events in the Progressive Movement.

Timeline of the Progressive Movement

1874: **Woman's Christian Temperance Union founded**
   The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was founded in 1874 by women who were concerned that the consumption of alcohol was having negative effects on American society. The women who joined this group pledged not to drink alcohol at all and publicly proclaimed their opposition to alcohol. Leaders like Carrie Nation protested saloons and destroyed bar windows.

1886: **Samuel Gompers founds the American Federation of Labor**
   Samuel Gompers founded the American Federation of Labor (AFL), a union made up of skilled workers. The AFL was one of many labor unions that sprang up in the late 1800s as workers fought to improve wages and working conditions in factories and businesses across the United States. Labor unions fought for the eight-hour workday, improved wages, and an end to child labor.

1889: **Jane Addams opens Hull House**
   Jane Addams, a prominent Progressive leader, supported the Prohibition movement and many other social reforms. Addams opened Hull House in Chicago, a settlement house that helped poor immigrants that lived in the slums. Hull House became an important part of the community for immigrants and the poor.

1890: **Sherman Antitrust Act is passed**
   Congress passed the Sherman Antitrust Act to prevent monopolies and trusts in American industries, specifically in the railroad and steel industries. It was the first law to deal with monopolies and trusts and, along with the Interstate Commerce Act, was one of the first acts to regulate Big Business.

1890: **Jacob Riis exposes conditions in tenements**
   Photojournalist Jacob Riis published the book *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, which exposed the horrible conditions faced by immigrants living in the slums of New York. By using photographs, drawings,
and written descriptions, Riis's book included images of sweatshops, child labor, and overcrowded and unsanitary tenements. Riis used his book to advocate social reform.

1892: Sierra Club is founded
The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 by John Muir as an environmental organization. The goals of the group were defined as protection of the wilderness, the responsible use of natural resources, and education regarding the benefits of conservation.

1892: Homestead Strike
The Homestead Strike took place in 1892 when iron and steel workers who belonged to the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers struck the Carnegie Steel Company in Homestead, Pennsylvania, to protest a proposed wage cut. The company's manager hired 300 Pinkerton detectives to protect the plant and the strikebreakers who were still working. In an armed battle between the workers and the detectives, several men were killed or wounded. The governor called out the state militia, and the nonunion workers stayed on the job, ending the strike.

1895: U.S. v. E.C. Knight & Co goes to Supreme Court
In 1892, the American Sugar Refining Company acquired the E.C. Knight Company, creating a 98% monopoly of the American sugar refining industry. The U.S. government sued the E.C. Knight Company, arguing that this monopoly violated the Sherman Antitrust Act. The Supreme Court ruled the manufacturing of sugar could not be regulated by Congress because it was a local activity.

1900: Carrie Chapman Catt becomes president of the National American Women's Suffrage Association
Carrie Chapman Catt was a notable leader of women's suffrage. She was the president of the National American Women's Suffrage Association in 1900-1904, and again from 1915-1920. Because of the efforts of Catt and other suffragists, women finally gained the right to vote in 1920.

1901: Theodore Roosevelt becomes president
Theodore Roosevelt supported many progressive reforms. He was also a strong supporter of the conservation movement. He expanded the amount of land that was used for national parks and national forests. He realized that natural resources, especially forests, needed to be managed in a way so that they would not be depleted. Roosevelt also worked to ensure that ordinary citizens got a "square deal." He did not want people to be mistreated by big corporations. He supported government regulations of the railroad industry, and he expanded the government's role in protecting consumers.

1902: Anthracite Coal Strike occurs
In May, coal workers in Pennsylvania's anthracite fields struck, demanding higher wages, union recognition, and an eight-hour workday. Anthracite coal was necessary for heating homes. President Theodore Roosevelt met with coal workers in October, five months after the strike began, to help resolve the strike. It was the first time the president personally intervened in a labor dispute.
President Theodore Roosevelt's administration, the government played a more active role in regulating Big Business and was able to use its power in a more effective manner.

1902: Beginning of Election Reform
Many progressives sought to reform U.S. politics to give citizens more direct power over the government in order to circumvent political bosses or corruption. In 1902, voters in Oregon approved a ballot measure that created the initiative and referendum processes for citizens to directly introduce or approve proposed laws or amendments to the state constitution, making Oregon the first state to adopt such a system. These measures were further expanded in 1908 with the passage of an amendment giving voters the power to recall elected officials and the popular election of U.S. Senators. In 1911, California governor Hiram Johnson established the Oregon System of "Initiative, Referendum, and Recall" in his state, viewing them as good influences for citizen participation against the historic influence of large corporations on state lawmakers. These Progressive reforms were soon replicated in other states, including Idaho, Washington, and Wisconsin.

1904: Muckraker Ida Tarbell writes The History of the Standard Oil Company
Beginning her research into the company in 1900, Tarbell pieced together public documents from across the country to find instances of Standard Oil's aggressive approach to putting down its rivals. Organized into a coherent history, these documents became a stark portrayal of the company's policies and of big business in general. As a result, Standard Oil was exposed as a monopoly, and Tarbell's work eventually led to the breakup of the company.

1904: Northern Securities v. U.S. goes to Supreme Court
In 1904, the U.S. sued Northern Securities Company, a holding company made up of several railroad companies. The U.S. argued that Northern Securities violated the Sherman Antitrust Act. The Supreme Court ruled that Northern Securities was in violation of the act and ordered the company to break up. This marked a change to a more aggressive enforcement of the Sherman Antitrust Act than in earlier court cases.

1906: Meat Inspection Act and Pure Food and Drug Act are passed
The Meat Inspection Act set sanitary standards for the meat-packing industry. It was passed the same year that Upton Sinclair's book The Jungle was published, as The Jungle had gained the country's attention over the poor conditions in slaughterhouses. The Pure Food and Drug Act, which required merchants to label their food and drugs correctly, was passed during the same time.

1909: Payne-Aldrich Tariff is passed
This act, passed during a special session of Congress called by President Taft, was the first change in tariff laws since 1897. The tariff changed over 650 tariff schedules, but it was not as aggressive as some members of Congress had hoped.

1910: Mann-Elkins Act is passed
Congress passed this act to strengthen the Interstate Commerce Act, which
required railroad rates to be "reasonable and just." The law did not specify what "reasonable and just" meant, so the act was not effective in regulating rates. Under the Mann-Elkins Act, railroad companies were required to prove that their rates were reasonable.

1911: American Tobacco v. U.S. goes to Supreme Court

The U.S. sued the American Tobacco Company in 1911 for violating the Sherman Antitrust Act. It was the first case brought against a tobacco company. American Tobacco was found in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act by the Supreme Court and broke up into several major companies.

1911: Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

A fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City resulting in the death of 146 garment workers who were unable to escape from the upper floors of the building. The fire had spread quickly because of the flammable textiles that were located throughout the factory. Workers were unable to escape because doors had been locked to prevent workers from stealing materials. Fire ladders were not tall enough to reach the trapped workers on the upper floors. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire brought attention to the unsafe conditions that many workers faced in sweatshops. The International Ladies' Garment Workers Union began advocating reforms to improve working conditions for the garment industry, which led to new safety regulations.

1912: Woodrow Wilson is elected president of the U.S.

In 1912, the Progressive Party entered the presidential race. First, Robert La Follette tried to win the Republican nomination with his platform of progressivism. La Follette was a Wisconsin governor who advocated for the direct primary election and for income tax reform. Theodore Roosevelt, former president and another progressive, received more support than La Follette and also tried to win the Republican nomination. The Republicans renominated President Taft, and so progressive Republicans who supported Roosevelt formed the Progressive Party, also known as the Bull Moose Party, and nominated Roosevelt for president. Woodrow Wilson was the nominee from the Democratic Party. He had successfully passed several progressive reforms as governor of New Jersey, and he promised a series of reforms he called the New Freedom. Woodrow Wilson defeated Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Eugene Debs and won the election.

1913: 16th, 17th Amendments Ratified

In 1913, both the 16th and 17th Amendments were ratified. The 16th Amendment created a federal income tax. The 17th Amendment changed how senators were elected. It gave the people the power to elect senators in direct elections, rather than having senators appointed by state legislatures.

1913: Federal Reserve Act is passed

Congress passed the Federal Reserve Act in 1913, which created 12 regional Federal Reserve banks to be supervised by a Federal Reserve Board. The Federal Reserve System is the central banking system of the United States, and it is still in existence today.
1914: **Clayton Antitrust Act is passed**
Congress passed the Clayton Antitrust Act to act as an amendment to the Sherman Antitrust Act. This act prohibits exclusive sales contracts, local price cutting (to freeze out competitors), and interlocking directorates in corporations with capital of $1 million or more. This act was used to clarify the Sherman Antitrust Act.

1916: **Alice Paul forms the National Women's Party**
Alice Paul was a suffragist leader in the early twentieth century. She formed the National Women's Party in 1916, which worked hard to gain a constitutional amendment allowing women the right to vote. She was well known for leading protests and hunger strikes.

1919: **18th Amendment is passed**
Due to pressures from members of the Temperance Movement, many state governments passed state-wide prohibition in the early 1900s. Responding to this growing support, Congress passed a resolution in 1917 regarding nation-wide prohibition to be presented to the states for ratification. The 18th Amendment was ratified on January 16, 1919, banning the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcohol. This began the Prohibition Era, which lasted until the passage of 21st Amendment in 1933.

1920: **19th Amendment is passed**
In 1920, Congress passed the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. This amendment gave all women who were citizens of the United States the right to vote in local, state, and federal elections in the U.S.