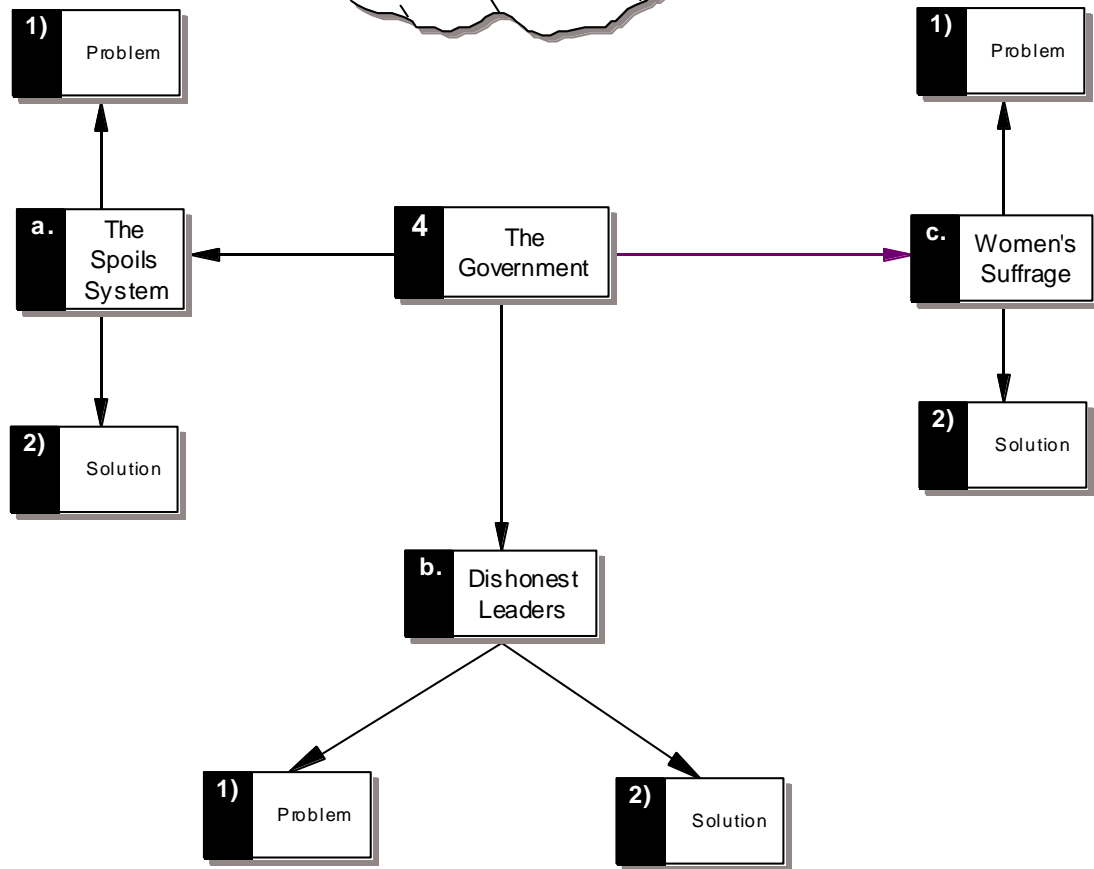


PROGRESSIVE ERA PROBLEMS

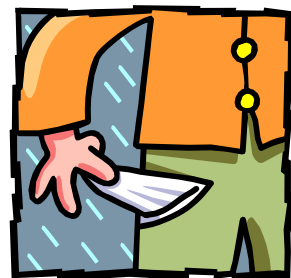


The Economy (Money issues)

Monopolies—businesses had been growing into monopolies since the late 1800's. They abused their workers, controlled the government, and used dirty tricks and illegal acts to not allow small businesses to exist. In 1890, Congress passed the ***Sherman Anti-trust Act*** to limit the power of the monopolies and trusts. The Act wasn't widely enforced until President Teddy Roosevelt came to power. Roosevelt and the Justice Department won a total of 25 cases against the monopolies, earning him the nickname "Trustbuster". Later, in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson established the Federal Trade Commission (which is still around today) to investigate corporations for unfair or illegal business acts.

Rich vs. Poor—another economic problem of the Progressive Era was the expanding gap between rich and poor (not unlike the gap that is being created today). More than any other time in American history a few people controlled most of the money. Many business owners grew very wealthy, while the assembly line workers and unemployed immigrants continued to grow poorer and poorer. To try to fight this problem, the government passed the ***16th Amendment***. Income Tax was established to even out the wealth of our country. Every citizen had to pay a certain percentage of their annual income to the federal government – for the rich industrialists this meant paying more than 50% of their annual salary in taxes!

Poverty –was probably the largest economic problem during the Progressive Era. As millions of immigrants poured in from Europe and Asia with no money or jobs, the number of needy people in America skyrocketed. Unfortunately, the only solutions to this problem were to turn to family members, charity or religious organizations such as the YMCA or the Salvation Army for help.



The Environment

Loss of Natural resources – this was one of our biggest environmental problems during the late 1800's. The factories of the east needed materials, and the railroads of the west needed space so a problem began to exist. President Theodore Roosevelt set up the ***U.S. Forest Service*** and he also pressured Congress to set aside land for National Parks and Forests that could not be touched by big businesses. Places like Yosemite National Park and Yellowstone would not have been possible without President Teddy Roosevelt.

Impure Food—another huge problem of the Progressive Era was food contamination. The muckraker Upton Sinclair exposed the problems of the meat packing industry with his novel *The Jungle*. The book told of rats, garbage and other impurities that found their way into the sausage. As a result, the ***Pure Food and Drug Act*** was passed. Food companies must now list all of their ingredients on the labels of their packages.



Society

Child Labor—As a result of the large number of people living below the poverty level, many families were forced to send their children to work. The Child Labor problem kept many children from getting an education and was very dangerous. To solve this problem, states passed laws that stated children must attend school until they are at least 12. ***Child Labor laws*** were also passed that made it illegal to hire young children or make young people work very long hours.

Alcohol—lastly, alcohol abuse was being looked at as a major problem in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Many women such as Carrie Nation had lost loved ones to alcohol related problems like liver disease or alcohol poisoning. Nation went as far as to travel from town to town destroying saloons with a hatchet! Eventually, enough pressure was put on the government by women's groups and others to gain the passage of the ***18th Amendment***. This amendment made it illegal to manufacture, buy, sell, or drink alcoholic beverages.



The Government



The Spoils System – this was a system of rewarding political supporters with government jobs (which had been in place since Andrew Jackson became president in 1829) — this was a huge problem in the late 1800's. The Spoils System existed at all levels of government and led to many problems.

Many unqualified and dishonest people would assume jobs working for the government – preventing qualified people from doing an effective job. In 1883, Congress passed a law which established the ***Civil Service Commission*** which set up competitive examinations for federal jobs. Applicants had to show their ability with this exam and thus show that they were qualified to work for our government.

Dishonest Leaders—another political problem facing the nation in the late 1800's was the corruption in many state, city, and local governments. Many corrupt politicians took bribes or illegal donations in return for voting a certain way. Tenement landlords would give huge sums of money so that city officials would look the other way when it came time to enforce the building and sanitation codes. To combat these problems, the government began what was called ***recall elections***. If politicians were found to be dishonest or just not very good, then the general public could hold another election to find a replacement. (This how Arnold Schwarzenegger became the Governor of California.)

Women's Suffrage—the last political problem of the Progressive Era was the fact that women couldn't vote. Women were finally given the right to vote with the ***19th Amendment*** in 1920. The role of women had been constantly changing after the Civil War. The westward movement proved that women could contribute outside the home in the way they fought the Native Americans, harvested crops, and took care of the family.