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The Machine Age (1877–1900)

THE AGE OF INVENTION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

In 1876, **Thomas A. Edison** built his workshop in Menlo Park, New Jersey and proceeded to produce some of the most important inventions of the century. Edison's greatest invention was the **light bulb**. Edison's pioneering work in the development of **power plants** also proved immensely important. His advances allowed for (among other things) the extension of the workday (which previously ended at sundown) and the wider availability of electricity. With that wider availability, Edison and other inventors began to create new uses for electricity, both for industry and the home. The last quarter of the nineteenth century is often called the **Age of Invention** because so many technological advances like Edison's were made. These advances, in turn, generated greater opportunities for **mass production**, which then caused the economy to grow at a tremendous rate. Not surprisingly, the people known as the "captains of industry" to their fans (and the "robber barons" to others), who owned and controlled the new manufacturing enterprises, became extremely rich and powerful during this period.

Industrialization, Corporate Consolidation, and the Gospel of Wealth

As more and faster machines became available to manufacturers, businessmen discovered that their cost per unit decreased as the number of units they produced increased. The more raw product they bought, the cheaper the suppliers' asking price. The closer to capacity they kept their new, faster machines running, the less the cost of labor and electricity per product. The lower their costs, the cheaper they could sell their products. The cheaper the product, the more they sold. That, simply put, is the concept of **economies of scale**.

The downside of this new business practice was that it required employees to work as efficiently, and repetitively, as machines. **Assembly line production** had begun to take hold when Eli Whitney developed interchangeable parts, but reached a whole new level in Ford's plants in the early twentieth century. This type of production required workers to perform a single task over and over, often (before labor reform) for 12 to 14 hours a day. Factories were dangerous; machine malfunctions and human error typically resulted in more than 500,000 injuries to workers per year.

The overriding concern for businessmen, however, was that profits continued to increase by huge margins. Although government made some efforts to regulate this rapid growth, these were tentative. Furthermore, the government remained uncertain as to how to enforce regulations, and widespread corruption existed among those bureaucrats charged with enforcing the regulations. Finally, the courts of the era (especially the Supreme Court) were extremely pro-business. With almost no restraint, businesses such as railroad companies followed the path that led to greater economies of scale, which meant larger and larger businesses. This was known as **corporate consolidation**.

One new form of business organization was called a **holding company**. A holding company owned enough stock in various companies to have a controlling interest in the production of raw material, the means of transporting that material to a factory, the factory itself, and the distribution network for selling the product. The logical conclusion is a **monopoly**, or complete control of an entire industry. One holding company, for example, gained control of 98 percent of the sugar refining plants in the United States. (This is discussed briefly on the next page.) While the company did not control the entire sugar industry, it did control one very important aspect of it.

The most common forms of business consolidation at the end of the nineteenth century were **horizontal** and **vertical integration**. One is legal; one is not; both were practiced by "captains of industry" during the Gilded Age. For all intents and purposes, horizontal integration created monopolies within a particular industry, the best-known example being Standard Oil, created by John D. Rockefeller. In horizontal integration, several smaller companies within the same industry are combined to form one, larger company, either by being bought out legally or by being destroyed through ruthless business practices such as cutthroat competition or pooling agreements. Many of these business practices are illegal today because of antitrust legislation passed at the turn of the last century. Vertical integration remains legal, however, provided the company does not become either a trust or a holding company, but rather allows other companies in the same industry to survive and compete in the marketplace. In vertical integration, one company buys out all the factors of production, from raw materials to finished product. For example, Swift Premium might control the stockyards, the slaughterhouse, and the processing and packaging plants but still compete with Oscar Mayer or Hebrew National.

Numerous problems arose because of this consolidation of power. First, rapid growth required lots of money. Businessmen borrowed huge sums, and when their businesses occasionally failed, bank failures could result. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the United States endured one major financial panic per decade. Although irresponsible investors caused the panics, the lower classes suffered the most, as jobs and money became scarce. Second, monopolies created a class of extremely powerful men whose interests clashed with those of the rest of society. As these businessmen grew more powerful, public resentment increased, and the government responded with laws to restrict monopolies (which the courts, in turn, weakened). The back-and-forth battle among the public, the government, and the courts is best exemplified by the **Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890**. Public pressure led to the passage of this law forbidding any "combination...or conspiracy in the restraint of trade."

Unfortunately, the wording of the Sherman Antitrust Act was ambiguous enough to allow the pro-business Supreme Court at the time to interpret the law as it saw fit. For example, in 1895 the Court ruled that E. C. Knight, a company that controlled 98 percent of the sugar refining plants in the United States, did not violate the Sherman Antitrust Act because local manufacturing was not subject to congressional regulation of interstate commerce. (*U.S. v. E. C. Knight Co.*, 1895.) On the other hand, labor unions were often found to be "in restraint of free trade" and declared illegal. This loophole was closed during Wilson's administration in 1914 with the passage of the Clayton Antitrust Act, which made allowances for collective bargaining.

Another response to public pressure for reform came from industrialists themselves. Steel mogul **Andrew Carnegie** promoted a philosophy based on the work of Charles Darwin. Using Darwin's theory of evolution as an analogy, Carnegie argued that in business, as in nature, unrestricted competition allowed only the "fittest" to survive. This theory was called **Social Darwinism**. Aside from the fact that Carnegie's analogy to Darwin's theory was at best dubious, it also lacked consistency; while Carnegie argued against government regulation, he supported all types of government assistance to business (in the form of tax abatements, grants, tariffs, etc.). Carnegie further argued that the concentration of wealth among a few was the natural and most efficient result of capitalism. Carnegie also asserted that great wealth brought with it social responsibility. Dubbing his belief the **Gospel of Wealth**, he advocated philanthropy, as by building libraries, but not charity. Some of his peers were as generous; others were not.

FACTORIES AND CITY LIFE

Manufacturers cut costs and maximized profits in every way they could imagine. They reduced labor costs by hiring **women** and **children**. In cities, where most factories were located, manufacturers hired the many newly arrived **immigrants** who were anxious for work. Because manufacturers paid as little as possible, the cities in which their employees lived suffered many of the problems associated with poverty, such as crime, disease, and the lack of livable housing for a rapidly expanding population. As mentioned before, factories were dangerous, and many families had at least one member who had been disabled at work. Insurance and workmen's compensation did not exist then, either.

The poverty level in cities also rose because those who could afford it moved away from the city center. As factories sprung up, cities became more dirty and generally less healthy environments. Advances in **mass transportation**, such as the expansion of railroad lines, streetcars, and the construction of subways, allowed the middle class to live in nicer neighborhoods, including bedroom communities in the suburbs, and commute to work. (The growing middle class was made up of managers, secretaries, bureaucrats, merchants, and the like.) As a result immigrants and migrants made up the majority of city populations. Starting around 1880 the majority of immigrants arrived from southern and eastern Europe. (Prior to 1880 most immigrants to America came from northern and western Europe.) Prejudice against the new arrivals was widespread, and many immigrants settled in **ethnic neighborhoods** usually in dumbbell tenements. Worse off still were **black** and **Latino** migrants. Many employers refused them any but the worst jobs.

Municipal governments of the era were not like those of today. In fact, such governments were practically nonexistent. Most Americans expected churches, private charities, and ethnic communities to provide services for the poor. However, many of those services were provided instead by a group of corrupt men called **political bosses**. Bosses helped the poor find homes and jobs; they also helped them apply for citizenship and voting rights. They built parks, funded auxiliary police and fire departments, and constructed roads and sewage lines. In return, they expected community members to vote as they were instructed. Occasionally, they also required "donations" to help fund community projects. Political bosses—whose organizations were called **political machines**—rendered services that communities would not otherwise have received. However, because the bosses resorted to criminal means to accomplish their goals, the cost of their services was high. The most notorious of these bosses was "Boss" Tweed of Tammany Hall in New York City (mentioned in Chapter 11).

Widespread misery in cities led many to seek changes. Labor unions formed to try to counter the poor treatment of workers. Unions were considered radical organizations by many, and the government was wary of them; businesses and the courts were openly hostile to them. Hired goons and, in some cases, federal troops often broke strikes. Before the Civil War, the few unions that existed were small, regional, or local and represented workers within a specific craft or industry. One of the first national labor unions was the **Knights of Labor**, founded in 1869 by Uriah Stephens, a Philadelphia tailor.

The Knights organized skilled and unskilled workers from a variety of crafts into a single union. Their goals included: (1) an eight-hour workday; (2) equal pay for equal work for men and women (this would not become a federal law until 1963); (3) child labor laws, including the prohibition of working under the age of 14; (4) safety and sanitary codes; (5) a federal income tax (not enacted until the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment in 1913); and (6) government ownership of railroad and telegraph lines.

Although the Knights advocated arbitration over strikes, they became increasingly violent in efforts to achieve their goals. By the 1880s, after a series of unsuccessful strikes under the leadership of **Terrence Powderly**, the popularity of the Knights began to decline. The American public began to associate unions with violence and political radicalism. Propagandists claimed that unions were subversive forces—a position reinforced in public opinion by the **Haymarket Square Riot**. During an 1886 labor demonstration in Chicago's Haymarket Square, a bomb went off, killing police. Many blamed the incident on the influence of radicals within the union movement, although no one knew who set off the bomb.

Many early unions did indeed subscribe to utopian and/or socialist philosophies. Later on, the **American Federation of Labor**, led by **Samuel Gompers**, avoided those larger political questions, concentrating instead on such "bread and butter" issues as higher wages and shorter workdays, an approach that proved successful. Gompers also realized that his union could gain more power if it excluded unskilled workers; the AFL was formed as a confederation of **trade unions** (i.e., unions made up exclusively of workers within a single trade). The history of early unions is marred by the fact that most refused to accept immigrants, blacks, and women among their memberships.

Charitable middle-class organizations, usually run by women, also made efforts at urban reform. These groups lobbied local governments for building-safety codes, better sanitation, and public schools. Frustrated by government's slow pace, their members also founded and lived in **settlement houses** in poor neighborhoods. These houses became community centers, providing schooling, childcare, and cultural activities. In Chicago, for example, **Jane Addams** founded Hull House to provide such services as English lessons for immigrants, day care for children of working mothers, childcare classes for parents, and playgrounds for children. Addams also campaigned for increased government services in the slums. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her life's work in 1931.

While the poor suffered, life improved for both the wealthy and the middle class. Increased production and wealth meant greater access to luxuries and more leisure time. Sports, high theater, vaudeville (variety acts), and, later, movies became popular diversions. It was also during this period that large segments of the public began to read **popular novels** and **newspapers**. The growth of the newspaper industry was largely the responsibility of **Joseph Pulitzer** and **William Randolph Hearst**, both of whom understood the commercial value of bold, screaming headlines and lurid tales of scandal. (Prior to Pulitzer and Hearst, papers were stodgy and looked like the *Wall Street Journal*.) This new style of sensational reporting became known as **"yellow journalism."**

Jim Crow Laws and Other Developments in the South

Most of the advances made during the machine age affected primarily Northern cities. In the South, agriculture continued as the main form of labor. The industrialization programs of Reconstruction did produce some results, however. Textile mills sprang up around the South, reducing cotton farmers' reliance on the North. Tobacco processing plants also employed some workers. Still, the vast majority of Southerners remained farmers.

Postwar economics forced many farmers to sell their land, which wealthy landowners bought and consolidated into larger farms. Landless farmers were forced into **sharecropping**. The method by which they rented land was called the **crop lien system**; it was designed to keep the poor in constant debt. Because these farmers had no cash, they borrowed what they needed to buy seed and tools, promising a portion of their crop as collateral. Huge interest rates on their loans and unscrupulous landlords pretty much guaranteed that these farmers would never overcome their debt, forcing them to borrow further and promise their *next* crop as collateral. In this way landlords kept the poor, both black and white, in a state of virtual slavery.

The advent of **Jim Crow laws** made matters worse for blacks. As the federal government exerted less influence over Southern states, towns and cities passed numerous discriminatory laws. The Supreme Court assisted the states by ruling that the Fourteenth Amendment did not protect blacks from discrimination by privately owned businesses and that blacks would have to seek equal protection from the states, not from the federal government. In 1883 the Court also reversed the Civil Rights Act of 1875, thus opening the door to legal (*de jure*) segregation. In 1896 the Supreme Court ruled in ***Plessy v. Ferguson*** that "separate but equal" facilities for the different races was legal. In so doing, the Court set back the civil rights gains made during Reconstruction.

In this atmosphere integration and equal rights for blacks seemed to most a far-off dream. **Booker T. Washington** certainly felt that way. A Southern black born into slavery, Washington harbored no illusions that white society was ready to accept blacks as equals. Instead, he promoted economic independence as the means by which blacks could improve their lot. To pursue that goal he founded the Tuskegee Institute, a vocational and industrial training school for blacks. Some accused Washington of being an **accommodationist** because he refused to press for immediate equal rights. Others believed that Washington simply accepted the reality of his time when he set his goals. In his "Atlanta Exposition," a famous speech delivered in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1895, Washington outlined his view of race relations. Washington's more aggressive rival W. E. B. Du Bois (see Chapter 13) referred to the speech, which he deemed submissive, as "The Atlanta Compromise."

The Railroads and Developments in the West

On the western frontier, **ranching** and **mining** were growing industries. Ranchers drove their herds across the western plains and deserts, ignoring property rights and Native American prerogatives to the land. Individual miners lacked the resources to mine and cart big loads, so mostly they prospected; when they found a rich mine, they staked a claim and sold their rights to a mining company.

The arrival of the **railroad** changed the West in many ways. The railroads, although owned privately, were built largely at the public's expense, through direct funding and substantial grants of land to the railroads. Both federal and local governments were anxious for rails to be completed and so provided substantial assistance. Although the public had paid for the rail system, rail proprietors strenuously objected to any government control of their industry, and it took years for railroad rates to come under regulation. Until they were regulated the railroads would typically overcharge wherever they owned a monopoly and undercharge in competitive and heavily trafficked markets. This practice was particularly harmful to farmers in remote areas.

As railroad construction crawled across the nation, rail companies organized massive hunts for buffalo (considered a nuisance). Railroad bounty hunters hunted the herds to near extinction, destroying a resource upon which local Native Americans had depended. Some tribes, such as the Sioux, fought back, giving the government an excuse to send troops into the region. While Native Americans won some battles (notably at **Little Big Horn**, where George Custer met his death), the federal army ultimately overpowered them.

The railroads brought other changes as well. Rails quickly transformed depot towns into vital cities by connecting them to civilization. Easier, faster travel meant more contact with ideas and technological advances from the East. Developments in railroad technology had applications in other industries and so accelerated the industrial revolution. In addition, "railroad time," by which rail schedules were determined, gave the nation its first standardized method of time telling with the adoption of time zones.

As the rails pushed the country westward, settlers started filling in the territory. By 1889 North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and Montana were populous enough to achieve statehood; Wyoming and Idaho followed in 1890. The result of the 1890 census prompted the Progressive historian Frederick Jackson Turner to declare that the American frontier was gone, and with it the first period of American history. Turner argued that the frontier was significant in: (1) shaping the American character, (2) defining the American spirit, (3) fostering democracy, and (4) providing a safety valve for economic distress in urban, industrial centers by providing a place to which people could flee. Historians refer to these ideas collectively as the **Turner** or **Frontier Thesis.**

In the Great Plains, farming and ranching constituted the main forms of employment. New farm machinery and access to mail (and mail-order retail) made life on the plains easier, but it was still lonely and difficult. The government, realizing the potential of the region as the nation's chief agricultural center, passed two significant pieces of legislation in 1862—the **Homestead Act** and the **Morrill Land Grant Act**. Anxious to attract settlers to develop the West, the federal government offered 160 acres of land to anyone who would "homestead" it (cultivate the land, build a home, and live there) for five years. Of course, the government was giving away land that belonged to Native Americans. Furthermore, private speculators and railroad companies often exploited the law for their own personal economic gain. The Morrill Land Grant Act set aside land and provided money for agricultural colleges. Eventually, agricultural science became a huge industry in the United States.

The big losers in this expansionist era, of course, were Native Americans. At first, pioneers approached the tribes as sovereign nations. They made treaties with them, which the settlers or their immediate successors broke. The result was warfare, leading the government to try another approach. The new tack was to force Native Americans onto reservations, which typically were made up of the least desirable land in a tribe's traditional home region. The reservation system failed for a number of reasons, including the inferiority of the land, the grouping of incompatible tribes on the same reservation, and the lack of autonomy granted the tribes in managing their own affairs. Moreover, some Westerners simply ignored the arrangement and poached on reservation lands. Helen Hunt Jackson's book *A Century of Dishonor* detailed the injustices of the reservation system and inspired reformers to push for change, which came in 1887 in the form of the **Dawes Severalty Act**.

The Dawes Severalty Act broke up the reservations and distributed some of the land to the head of each Native American family. Similar to the Homestead Act, the allotment was 160 acres of land. This time, however, it was required that the family live on the land for 25 years, after which time the land was legally theirs. And the grand prize was American citizenship! The Dawes Act was intended as a humanitarian solution to the "Indian problem"; its main goal was to accelerate the assimilation of Native Americans into Western society by integrating them more closely with whites. Native Americans, naturally, resisted. Furthermore, poverty drove many to sell their land to speculators, leaving them literally homeless. By the time the policy set by Dawes was reversed in 1934, the Native American nations were decimated.

National Politics

Mark Twain dubbed the era between Reconstruction and 1900 the **Gilded Age** of politics. Gilded metals have a shiny, gold-like surface, but beneath lies a cheap base. Twain's point was that politics looked good, but just beneath the surface lay crass corruption and patronage. Political machines, not municipal governments, ran the cities. Big business bought votes in Congress, then turned around and fleeced consumers. Workers had little protection from the greed of their employers because the courts turned a deaf ear to worker complaints. In other words, Twain was right on the money.

The presidents of this era were generally not corrupt. They were, however, relatively weak. (The president is only as powerful as his support allows him to be; thus popular presidents, such as Andrew Jackson and Franklin Roosevelt, were able to accomplish so much.) As a result we barely remember **Rutherford B. Hayes** (except his connection to the Compromise of 1877), **James A. Garfield**, **Chester A. Arthur**, **Grover Cleveland** (both times), or **Benjamin Harrison**.

In response to the outcry over widespread corruption, the government made its first stabs at regulating itself and business. Many states imposed **railroad regulations** because railroads were engaging in price gouging. In 1877 the Supreme Court upheld an Illinois state law regulating railroads and grain elevators in the case of *Munn v. Illinois.* This was a surprising decision, given that railroads crossed state lines and only Congress can regulate interstate commerce. The Court argued that states had the power to regulate private industry that served the "public interest." Although the Supreme Court would reaffirm Congress's authority nine years later in the *Wabash* case, when it ruled that states could *not* establish rates involving interstate commerce, an important precedent for regulating business in the public's interest had been established.

In 1887, just one year after the *Wabash* decision, Congress passed the first federal regulatory law in U.S. history. The **Interstate Commerce Act** set up the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to supervise railroad activities and regulate unfair and unethical practices. (The ICC wasn't disbanded until the 1980s under the Reagan administration, when, in attempts to save money, the federal government deregulated many forms of transportation.)

Although these acts demonstrated the government's good intentions, they were ineffective; the railroads challenged them and usually won in the business-friendly courts. **Civil service reform** came with the **Pendleton Act**, which was passed in response to charges of patronage in the awarding of government jobs. The Pendleton Act created the **Civil Service Commission** to oversee examinations for potential government employees.

It was also during this period that **women's suffrage** became an important political issue. **Susan B. Anthony** led the fight, convincing Congress to introduce a suffrage amendment to the Constitution. The bill was introduced every year and rarely got out of committee, but the fight had begun in earnest. Meanwhile, organizations such as the **American Suffrage Association** fought for women's suffrage amendments to state constitutions. By 1890 they had achieved some partial successes, gaining the vote on school issues. (Women finally gained the right to vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, fifty years after male suffrage became universal.)

The Silver Issue and the Populist Movement

In the period after the Civil War, production on all fronts—industrial and agricultural—increased. Greater supply accordingly led to a drop in prices. For many farmers, lower prices meant trouble, as they were locked into long-term debts with fixed payments. Looking for a solution to their problem, farmers came to support a more generous money supply. An increase in available money, they correctly figured, would make payments easier. It would also cause inflation, which would make the farmers' debts (held by Northern banks) worth less. Not surprisingly, the banks opposed the plan, preferring for the country to use only gold to back its money supply.

The farmers' plan called for the liberal use of silver coins, and because silver was mined in the West, this plan had the added support of Western miners along with that of Midwestern and Southern farmers. Thus, the issue had a regional component. Because it pitted poor farmers against wealthy bankers, it also had elements of class strife. Although a complicated matter, the money issue was potentially explosive.

The "silver vs. gold" debate provided an issue around which farmers could organize. They did just that. First came the **Grange Movement**, which by 1875 had more than 1 million members. The Grangers started out as cooperatives, with the purpose of allowing farmers to buy machinery and sell crops as a group and, therefore, reap the benefits of economies of scale. Soon, the Grangers endorsed political candidates and lobbied for legislation. The Grangers ultimately died out due to lack of money, but they were replaced by **Farmers' Alliances**. The Farmers' Alliances were even more successful than the Grange movement, and they soon grew into a political party called the **People's Party**, the political arm of the **Populist** movement.

The People's Party held a convention in 1892. (The platform it drew up presented many of the ideas that would later be championed by the Progressives.) Aside from supporting the generous coinage of silver, the Populists called for government ownership of railroads and telegraphs, a graduated income tax, direct election of U.S. senators, and shorter workdays. Although their 1892 presidential candidate came in third, he won more than 1 million votes, awakening Washington to the growing Populist movement.

As Cleveland took office in 1893, the country entered a four-year financial crisis. Hard economic times made Populist goals more popular, particularly the call for easy money. (Most people at the time, after all, had no money at all.) Times got so bad that even more progressive (some would say radical) movements gained popularity; in 1894 the **Socialists**, led by **Eugene V. Debs**, gained support. By 1896 the Populists were poised for power. They backed Democratic candidate **William Jennings Bryan** against Republican nominee **William McKinley**, and Bryan ran on a strictly Populist platform; he based his campaign on the call for **"free silver."** He is probably best remembered for his "Cross of Gold" speech (a typical multiple-choice question). He argued that an easy money supply, though inflationary, would loosen the control that Northern banking interests held over the country. He lost the campaign; this, coupled with an improved economy, ended the Populist movement. The election of 1896 is notable for a significant political realignment. It is from this point forward that the Republican party becomes associated with its pro-big business stance.

An easy way to remember the Populists is through the book *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. The novel is reportedly a political allegory, with Dorothy representing the common man, her silver shoes (the movie changed them into ruby slippers) representing the silver standard, the scarecrow representing the farmer, and the Tin Man representing the industrial worker. William Jennings Bryan was the model for the Cowardly Lion.

FOREIGN POLICY: THE TARIFF AND IMPERIALISM

Before the Civil War most Americans earned their living by farming. By 1900, however, the United States had become the leading industrial power in the world. It is difficult for us to imagine the enormous controversy surrounding the issue of the tariff throughout U.S. history. Remember that there was no federal income tax until the Sixteenth Amendment was adopted in 1913. Clearly, the most infamous tariff was the **Tariff of Abominations** (1828). This ultimately triggered the nullification crisis during Jackson's first administration. Following the Civil War, the tariff came to dominate national politics, as industrialists competing in an international market demanded high tariffs to protect domestic industries. Farmers and laborers, on the other hand, were hurt by high tariffs. Generally, Democrats supported lower tariffs while Republicans advocated high, protective tariffs.

In 1890 Congress enacted the McKinley Tariff, which raised the level of duties on imported goods almost 50 percent. Certain products, however, like raw (unprocessed) sugar were put on a duty-free list. Then, in 1894, Congress passed the Wilson-Gorman Tariff, which essentially resembled the schedule established by the **McKinley Tariff**, despite heated debate between members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The tariff issue not only dominated congressional debate, it also had a tremendous impact on foreign relations (see below). For example, the Wilson-Gorman Tariff is usually considered one of the causes of the **Spanish-American War**.

Throughout the machine age, American production capacity grew rapidly. As we have already discussed, not every American had enough money to buy the products he or she made at work. America began looking overseas to find **new markets**. Increased **nationalism** also led American business to look for new markets. America's centennial celebration in 1876 heightened national pride, as did awareness that the country was becoming a world economic power. As Americans became more certain that their way of life was best, they hoped to spread that around the globe. This philosophy led American influence to expand into a number of new arenas.

First, **William H. Seward**, secretary of state under Lincoln and Johnson, set the precedent for increased American participation in any and all doings in the Western Hemisphere. In particular, Seward engineered the purchase of Alaska and invoked the Monroe Doctrine to force France out of Mexico. In the following decade, American businesses began developing markets and production facilities in Latin America, and gradually they gained political power in the region.

As long as America moved into regions to do business, it was practicing **expansionism**, which most Americans supported. When the United States took control of another country, however, it was exercising **imperialism**, a more controversial practice. A book by naval Captain Alfred T. Mahan, called *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890), piqued the government's interest in imperialism. Mahan argued that successful foreign trade relied on access to foreign ports, which in turn required overseas colonies, and colonies in turn required a strong navy. The book popularized the idea of the **New Navy**, and after the United States invested in upgrading its ships, it turned its attention to foreign acquisitions.

The search for a port along the trade route to Asia attracted the United States to **Hawaii**. The United States had been involved in Hawaii since the 1870s when American sugar producers started trading with the Hawaiians. Due in large part to American interference, the Hawaiian economy collapsed in the 1890s. The United States had allowed Hawaii tariff-free access to American markets. Then, when Hawaii became dependent on trade with the United States, the government imposed high tariffs (the McKinley Tariff mentioned above), thereby greatly diminishing Hawaiian exports. The white minority overthrew the native government, and, eventually, the United States annexed Hawaii. Japan was outraged; more than 40 percent of Hawaii's residents were of Japanese descent. That anger would resurface during World War II.

Another opportunity for American expansion arose when Cuban natives revolted against Spanish control. The revolution in **Cuba**, like the Hawaiian revolution, was instigated by U.S. tampering with the Cuban economy (by imposing high import tariffs, as discussed above). A violent Cuban civil war followed, reported in all its gory detail in the sensational Hearst newspaper (see "yellow journalism," earlier in this chapter). McKinley waited for an opportune moment, which came when an American warship, the ***Maine***, exploded in the Havana harbor because of a faulty bailer and not, as was thought at the time, sabotage. But the United States assumed Spain was responsible and declared war. In the ensuing war the United States not only drove Spain out of Cuba, but also sent a fleet to the Spanish-controlled **Philippines** and drove the Spanish out of there too. In the **Treaty of Paris**, Spain granted Cuba independence and ceded the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam to the United States. Remember that Hawaii was acquired the same year, but not because of the Spanish-American War. Also, note that this was the third Treaty of Paris that matters in U.S. history. The first ended the French and Indian War in 1763, while the second ended the Revolutionary War in 1783.

Despite the Teller Amendment, in which the United States claimed it would not annex Cuba after Spain's departure from the island in 1898, U.S. troops remained in Cuba for another few years. Then, in 1901, Cuba was compelled to include a series of provisions in its new constitution. The United States made it quite clear that its troops would not leave unless Cuba agreed to these provisions, collectively known as the **Platt Amendment.** The United States was basically given control over Cuba's foreign affairs. Under the guise of protecting Cuba's political and social stability and thus its independence, the following terms were established: (1) Cuba was not permitted to sign any foreign treaty without the consent of the United States, (2) the United States could intervene in Cuban domestic and foreign affairs, and (3) the United States was granted land on which to build a naval base and coaling station. The Platt Amendment was ultimately repealed in 1934 during **FDR**'s administration as part of his **Good Neighbor Policy.** The United States continues to operate a naval station at Guantanamo Bay, however. (Yes, *that* Guantanamo Bay.)

Control of the Philippines raised a tricky question: Should the United States annex the Philippines, or should it grant the country the independence its people sought? Proponents of annexing the Philippines argued that if the United States granted the island's independence, the island would simply be conquered by another European nation, with the only result being that the United States would lose a valuable possession. Perhaps most compelling, and certainly the best-known rationale for U.S. annexation of the Philippine Islands, was the belief that the United States had a moral obligation to "Christianize and civilize" the Filipinos, who were unfit to rule themselves, apparently. This concept came to be known as the "white man's burden," from the title of a poem written by Rudyard Kipling in response to the United States' annexation of the Philippines. Opponents felt that the United States should promote independence and democracy, both noble national traditions. To control the Philippines, they argued, would make the United States no better than the British tyrants they overthrew in the Revolutionary War. In the end the Senate voted to annex the Philippines. Filipino nationalists responded by waging a guerrilla war against the United States. Although the United States eventually gained control of the country, the Philippines remained a source of controversy for decades. The United States granted the Philippines independence in 1946.

As the United States acquired an overseas empire, a fundamental question arose as to the legal status of the native population living in these territories: "Does the Constitution follow the flag?" In other words, were colonial subjects entitled to the same protections and privileges granted to U.S. citizens by the Constitution? The Supreme Court settled this issue by a series of rulings known collectively as the **Insular Cases** (1901–1903). The Court ruled that the Constitution did *not* follow the flag; Congress was free to administer each overseas possession as it chose, depending on the particular situation in any given foreign territory.

Finally, America hoped to gain entry into Asian markets. To that end McKinley sought an **Open Door Policy** for all Western nations hoping to trade with Asia. The European nations that had colonized China were not so keen on the idea; to their way of thinking, they fought for those markets and planned to keep them. When Chinese nationalists (known as the Boxers) rose against European imperialism and besieged the Beijing legation quarter, the United States sent troops to help suppress the rebels. In return, Germany, France, and England grew more receptive to America's foreign policy objectives.

American imperialism would continue through Theodore Roosevelt's administration. We'll discuss that period in the next chapter.