



Roosevelt wanted to make sure that big corporations stopped breaking antitrust laws, which made it illegal for one company to control a whole industry. Roosevelt and his administration also tried to make business owners settle problems in ways that were fair to workers. For example, in 1902, Roosevelt took steps to end a long strike against the coal industry. He set up a board to listen to both sides of the story—the workers' side and the industry leaders' side. He then made the industry leaders follow the board's

As 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt (left) brought Progressive ideas to the White House. He believed in equal justice for the rich and poor.

"biggest business man in the country conform squarely to the principles laid down by the American people."

To cut back the power of big business, Roosevelt's administration took some companies to court.

recommendations. The workers won higher wages and shorter hours. The Roosevelt administration also supported laws to keep children from working long hours, laws to protect women workers, and laws to clean up

The Muckrakers

For some working-class Americans in the early 1900s, eating dinner could be dangerous. Was meat on the menu? There was no telling if it was fresh or clean. It may have been processed in dirty surroundings and doctored up to look fresh. How about some milk? If a family was lucky, the milk was *only* watered down. Many dealers added chalk or plaster to give the milk they sold a better color, and some dairy farmers sold milk from cows too sick to stand without help. Other store-bought foods were also impure. Butter was sometimes mixed with mashed potatoes or rotting animal fat.

Coffee might be full of ground peas, nutshells, or flour. Nothing was "guaranteed" safe for eating.

In 1906, Americans were horrified by what they read about Chicago's meat-packing factories in Upton Sinclair's book *The Jungle*. They read about filthy cutting rooms and sick workers. Sinclair wrote: "There were those who made the tins for the canned meat. . . . Their . . . hands were a maze of cuts, and each cut represented a chance for blood poisoning. There were men who worked in the cooking rooms, in the midst of steam and sickening odors. . . . In

these rooms the germs of tuberculosis might live for two years, but the supply was renewed every hour."

Descriptions like this made readers sick. They also made readers angry. Later that year, Congress hurried to pass the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act.

Upton Sinclair was one of many writers and journalists who fought for social and political reform. President Theodore Roosevelt called them "muckrakers." Their goal was to dig up and expose the "dirt" and dishonesty in American business and government.