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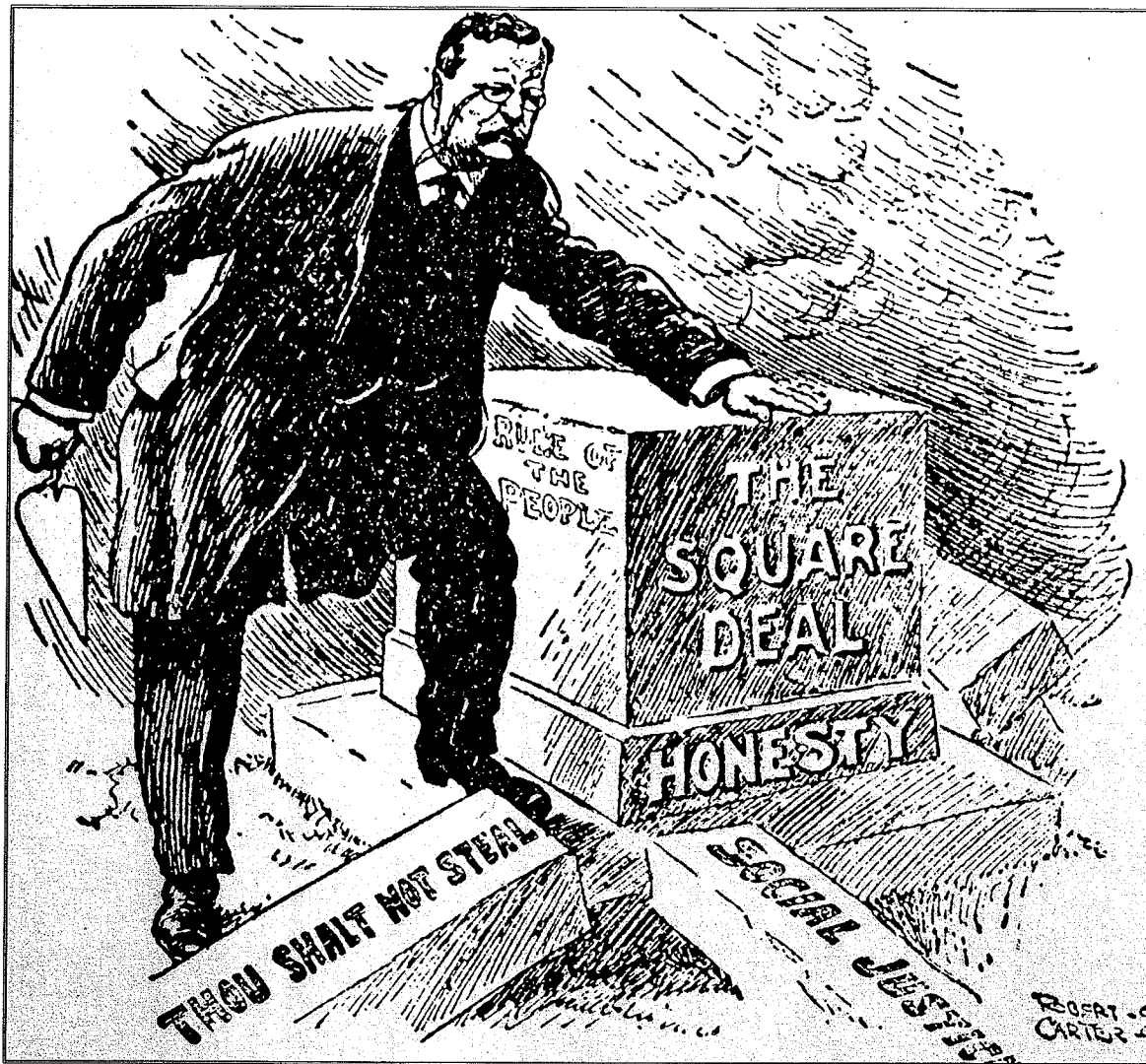
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A Young President Faces a Changing Nation



As the late summer sun glared in the sky, the booming voice of Vice President Theodore Roosevelt filled the air during his address to the Vermont Fish and Game League. No sooner had he finished speaking than word came that President William McKinley had been shot while attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

Upon McKinley's death eight days later, on September 14, 1901, forty-two-year-old Theodore Roosevelt became what was then the youngest president of the United States. Faced with a rapidly industrializing nation under the control of a handful of rich and powerful men, Roosevelt sought a "square deal," where government would ensure fair play by businesses and equal opportunity to working people.



In February 1902, he began dealing with big business by filing an antitrust suit against financier J.P. Morgan's Northern Securities Company, a monopoly that dictated western railroad shipping rates. The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 forbade companies to merge in an effort to destroy competition. Even though decisions in all similar court cases had favored big business, Roosevelt went to the Supreme Court. In 1904, Northern Securities was ordered dissolved. This decision enabled Roosevelt to take stands against other unjust trusts, earning him the nickname "Trust-

Buster."

In May 1902, coal miners in Pennsylvania went on strike for decent working conditions and higher wages. After five months and with winter drawing near, the president threatened to send in federal troops to run the mines. The threat succeeded, and the strike was settled.

To regulate business further, the president added the Department of Commerce and Labor to his cabinet. Within the new department was the Bureau of Corporations, established to "keep an eye on" business.

Roosevelt often said that the best course of action was to "speak softly and carry a big stick." This was true in foreign as well as domestic policy. In December 1902, Germany and England sent warships to Venezuela to force repayment of European loans. When Germany tried to provoke fighting, Roosevelt moved the U.S. fleet nearby,

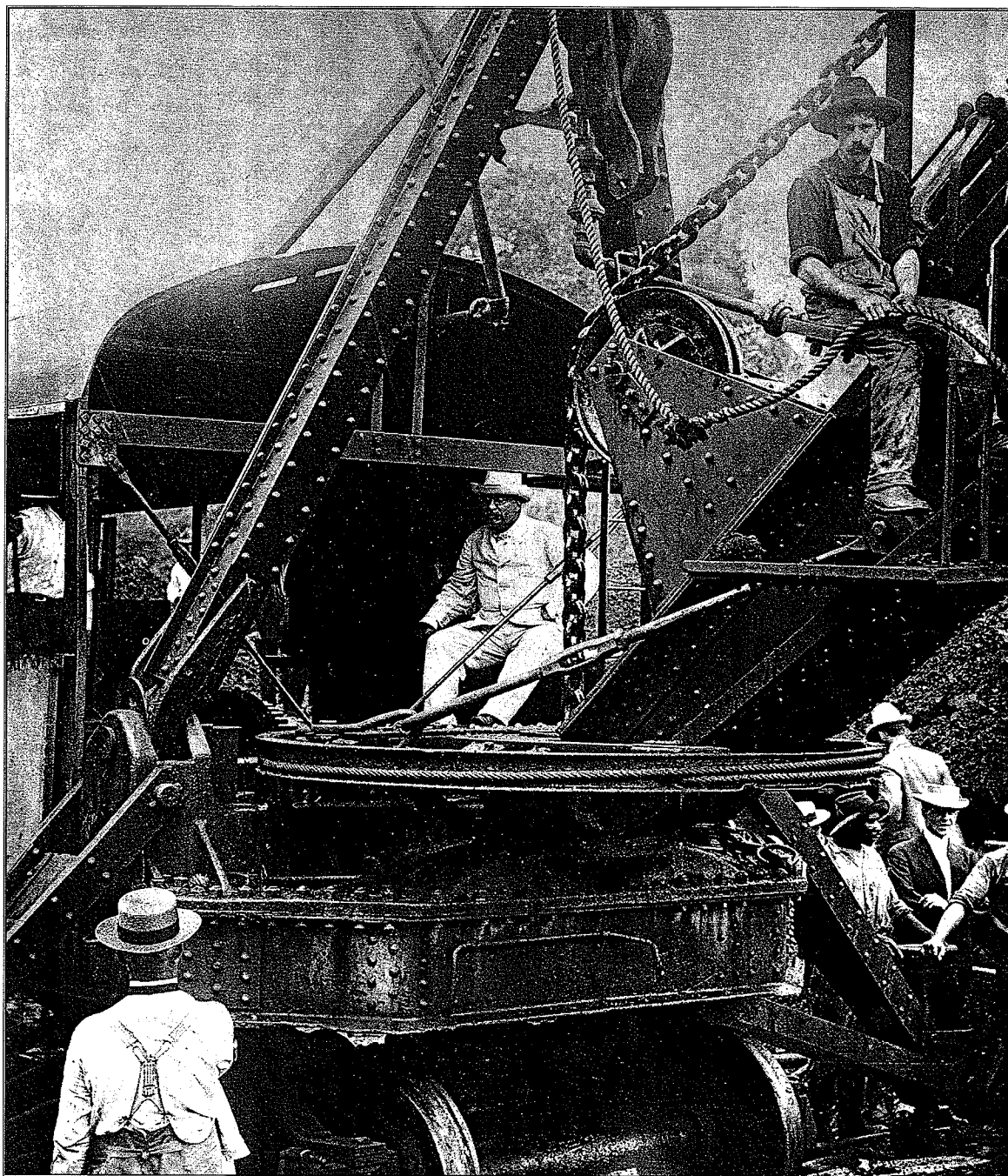
and Germany backed down.

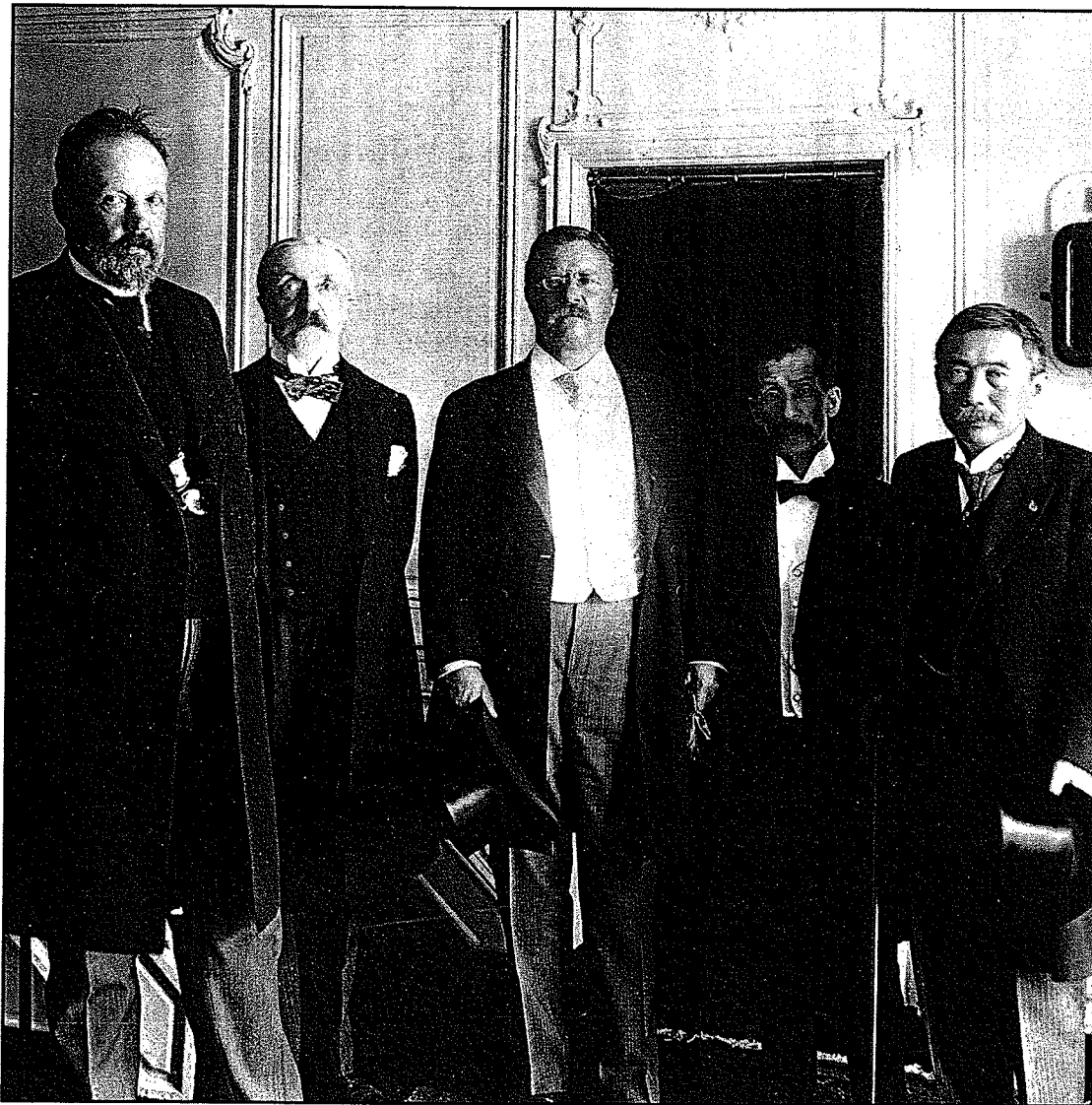
With the growing importance of the United States as a world naval power (and to improve travel and trade), Roosevelt sought to build a canal to link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The best location for the proposed waterway was Panama. Although the people of Panama agreed with the proposal, the land belonged to Colombia. Colombia wanted more money than the United States was offering for the canal rights. On November 3, 1903, the people of Panama revolted against Colombian rule. Roosevelt sent gunboats to Panama as a show of support. Panamanian independence was achieved with the loss of only one life, and construction of the canal was soon under way.

Those who objected to Roosevelt's

"gunboat" diplomacy were further angered by the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. (The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 guaranteed U.S. aid to Latin

Opposite: This political cartoon from 1904 depicts Roosevelt's commitment to equal opportunity for all. **Below:** Roosevelt was the first president to leave the United States while in office. Here he is at the Panama Canal.





aboard the presidential yacht *Mayflower*. There he brokered long and difficult negotiations into the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth on September 5, 1905. Because of his efforts, he was awarded the 1906 Nobel Peace Prize, making him the first American to win a Nobel Prize.

In 1904, Roosevelt ran for president and was

American nations if European countries tried to colonize them.) Roosevelt's 1904 corollary said that the United States would "exercise...international police power" if any nation attempted to take over any Latin American nation on the pretext of debt repayment.

Although Roosevelt was a man of forceful action, he also became known as a man of peace. After several months of stalemate in the Russo-Japanese War (begun in 1904), Roosevelt invited representatives from both countries

returned to office by a landslide. He continued his work against unfair business practices by supporting the 1906 Hepburn Act, which imposed new regulations on the operation of railroads, specifically regarding freight and passenger rates and allowing the inspection of corporation financial records.

Author Upton Sinclair's book *The Jungle* brought the unhealthy conditions in the meat-packing industry to Roosevelt's attention. His campaigning pressured Congress into enacting the

Pure Food and Drug Act and a meat inspection law.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of Roosevelt's presidency was the preservation and development of America's natural resources. Beginning in 1902, he fought for conservation legislation, protecting millions of acres of land by setting them aside as national reserves.

Roosevelt's last show of American might began in 1907, when he sent the U.S. fleet (painted white for peace) around

the world. This left no doubt in the minds of foreign leaders that the United States would be a force to reckon with in the twentieth century. ✱

Opposite: The more peaceful side of Roosevelt was evident when he negotiated a treaty between Russia and Japan. Here, in 1905, he stands between members of the two delegations. Below: Roosevelt's gun-boat diplomacy upset some people but established the United States as the overseer of the Western Hemisphere.

