



Above: Louisiana's first governor of the twentieth century, Democrat William W. Heard, ended the convict lease system.

The Progressive Movement

As you read, look for:

- the impact of the progressive movement in the state, and
- vocabulary terms **progressive movement** and **workers' compensation**.

The goal of improving the quality of life for all Americans was part of the **progressive movement**. As the new century began, reformers examined America. With industrial growth had come larger cities, and urban development led to urban problems. The progressive thinkers recognized the political, social, and economic challenges of the twentieth century. These progressives believed government—local, state, and national—was best equipped to deal with these challenges. They thought government should act to correct the problems of society. They had faith in the idea of *progress*, the belief that humans could keep improving their society to make it better and better.

Progressives worked to reform society in three main ways. First, they wanted government to fight poverty and improve the living conditions of its citizens. Progressives worked hard to reform prisons, improve working conditions, outlaw alcohol, and extend voting rights to women. Second, they wanted to break up large corporations and regulate business. Third, they wanted voters to have more influence in government.

In Louisiana, the progressives also wanted good government and social justice, but they were more traditional and conservative than the national group. However, even in conservative Louisiana, some of the reforms sought by the progressives were put in place. In 1886, laws were passed regulating the hours that women and children could work. More child labor laws were passed as concern increased.

Each of the early twentieth-century governors introduced some progressive reforms; some of the governors were more successful than others. W. W. Heard, the first governor of the new century, ended the convict lease system. The next governor, Newton Blanchard, separated juvenile lawbreakers from adult criminals by building a reform school in Monroe.

Blanchard's efforts also improved public education in the state. Education had been neglected because voters would not approve the funding needed for the schools. With Blanchard's support, a new law allowed local school boards to borrow money by selling investment bonds. With these funds, more than



Above: Governor J. Y. Sanders began a program to improve the roads before World War I.

two hundred new schools were built. The number of high schools increased from twenty-six to fifty-three.

Governor Blanchard also doubled the state budget for education. He appointed James B. Aswell as the state superintendent of education. Aswell brought qualified teachers to the schools, built new schools, and established a standard high school program. Because of his new programs, Aswell earned the title “father of modern education in Louisiana.”

Governor J. Y. Sanders led the state’s first conservation efforts to protect the environment and started a program of road improvement. When Luther Hall was governor, the state started a **workers’ compensation** program (a government insurance program for those killed or injured on the job).

Check for Understanding ✓

1. What was the goal of the progressive movement?
2. What did progressives in Louisiana do to help working children?
3. What are two ways Governor Blanchard improved public education?