

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Having analyzed The Jungle and The Octopus, I conclude that both novels share similar impression about the issues of Progressivism but have different methods in solving the problems arising in that era. As what I have read in both novels, I think that the existence of Progressivism is ambiguous since it is not clear whether it is beneficial or not for the society.

Indeed, if I look once again at the word Progressivism, supposedly it refers to a development, advancement, improvement, and forward movement to a better condition of society. The word 'better' here means a corruption-free government, no discrimination toward gender and social status, and no excessive exploitation of the poor. Yet in fact, Progressivism does not entirely accomplish its purposes. What I see here, Progressivism has become a camouflage to conceal moral degradation of society in general. Society does not become better; instead, it continuously absorbs the bad values caused by Progressivism, which makes the society get worse day by day.

Thus, I think Progressivism refers to a thought that there is something wrong about the condition of American people's lives and at the same time triggers some people to put an attempt to fix it. Although the contribution of Progressivism seems vague, in my opinion, it is a point when common people start to notice that their morality is degrading bit by bit because of the malpractice of people with power and money. This awareness makes people start to think of how to build a secure and prosperous country but still able to cover the welfare of all people without harassing people who belong to the lower class and to boost up their degrading morality; hence, this Progressivism era results in the Government's further act to make new regulations and legislations to act as a police and limit people from doing harmful things.

The Octopus describes about Progressivism even though the author is very likely not aware of it. It is the very beginning era of Progressivism where the problems start to occur one by one. The major problem that happens in the novel is that many small wheat farmers have to suffer from bankruptcy due to malpractice of power by the Railroad Company. Lack of Government interference worsens the situation since there are no laws that can control the power of the Railroad Company. As a result, people start to lose their faith for the Government to save their lives from the excessive power of the Railroad and try to solve it by their own hands.

I perceive the way the farmers confront the Railroad Company as a transformation to be one of a kind as the Railroad, and that is one of the issue we can see at that time around. The farmers even use a dishonest way such bribery to have a seat in the Railroad Commission Board. I can see how desperate the farmers are since

they try to fight the Railroad by doing a bad thing like bribery. However, when the Railroad Commission cannot help them either, they become mad and lose their mind and thus, they confront the Railroad Company face to face. It is one proof that shows how personality can change and their morality has degraded to be one of a kind as the Capitalists.

In my opinion, the end of the story shows a pessimistic feeling since it looks like everything is blamed on the nature of competition and survival; just like Darwin's theory: 'Survival of the Fittest'; if you fit, you will survive or else be eliminated. I also sense that people seem to have to adapt with whatever system or value that they might have in their lives; however, I personally think that it is always worth trying to fight for what you believe in.

Unlike the way people solve their problem in The Octopus, Upton Sinclair offers a better idea in solving the problem except the problem of morality. I believe that the major character, Jurgis, acts more carefully and thoughtfully in fighting the Meat Packing Company after those misfortunes happen to him. I think that it is a good idea since there is no way for powerless man like Jurgis to confront the Company without any strategy and forbearance. Even when you point your gun to someone's head, it will be useless because in the end you are the one who will be responsible. Jurgis once uses this way in asking for justice for his wife to her boss for raping her and forcing her into prostitution, but what happens is Jurgis has to spend three months in jail for assaulting; ironically, the boss gets away without any charges.

Compared to the wheat farmers in The Octopus, Jurgis looks more patient and has more control over himself. I think it is maybe because Jurgis does not have any

business interest like the wheat farmers. Jurgis just wants to protect his family; he just wants to provide a better living for his family. However, the excessive power and exploitation of workers ruin the oneness of the family. I think that in The Jungle, The family value that is put in jeopardy.

Progressivism in The Jungle is more or less the same as The Octopus; it is a vague movement of which the benefits seem vague. However, I sense a more optimistic ending in The Jungle. People are made to believe that joining a union can solve their problems since they think that unions can force the government down to do some actions to protect their lives.

Last but not least, I think that the target of Progressivism may be accomplished in some cases but still it fails in preventing the negative issues from occurring in the society, especially in its time. Yet, with the Government's interference in limiting the power of the Capitalist, it is expected that the moral degradation can be slowed down.