

American Lives: The Progressives

The four sessions of this class on the Progressives presents some prominent and not-so-prominent representatives of this broad political and social movement, usually two per lecture. **Lecture I** will look at the journalist and rural sage William Allen White, and then at the life of the Wisconsin Progressive Robert La Follette, perhaps the most important Progressive political figure. In **Lecture II** I introduce the “muckraker” journalists Lincoln Steffens and Ray Stannard Baker. **Lecture III** deals with two of the most prominent public servants of this era: Henry Stimson and Gifford Pinchot. These two men had careers that extended into the interwar years and even, in the case of Stimson, into service in the World War II cabinet of Franklin Roosevelt. Finally, in **Lecture IV**, I look at an academic and a social reformer: Richard T. Ely, social worker Jane Addams, and prominent pundit Walter Lippmann. The point here is to appreciate the broader meaning of progressivism and to see how it lost its appeal during World War I and then into the highly conservative 1920s.

Introduction and Overview

Progressivism was a multifaceted reform movement that swept the United States in the early 1900s. Progressives were not the same as Populists, although they had many of the same objectives. The Populists of the 1890s were a largely rural protest movement with real grass roots support in the farming areas of the West and the Middle West. Populism also affected primarily the Democratic Party, since after 1896 that party absorbed much of the populist program and electorate. Progressivism, on the other hand, was city-based and most of the Progressive leaders were not people who had suffered themselves from economic hardship and disruption. In fact, many of them were well-to-do people whose intention was to reform government and the economic system in order to make it more honest and efficient. While advocates of progressivism were found in both major political parties as well as in the new Progressive Party which was established before the 1912 election, most Progressives were Republicans and found in Theodore Roosevelt their spokesman and hero. For most people – Progressive – with a capital “P” means the Progressive Party of Robert La Follette and Theodore Roosevelt, who received the Party’s nomination in 1912, after which it became known as the “Bull Moose” Party in honor of its presidential candidate. After Roosevelt’s loss in the 1912 election, the baton of the progressive movement (small “p”) passed to the Democratic Party victor, Woodrow Wilson. With the outbreak of war in 1914, and especially after U.S. entry into the war in April 1917, progressivism lost much of its momentum, with men such as La Follette opposing U.S. entry into the fighting, while others, like Roosevelt, stoked the nationalist fervor for war. The Progressive Party reemerged on the ballot in 1924 when La Follette finally made a run for president and took 16.6 per cent of the popular vote, but carried only the state of Wisconsin. Its final incarnation came in 1948, with Henry Wallace’s third party (or fourth party, actually) bid for the presidency, in which this one-time Republican and eventual New Deal liberal garnered a mere 2.4 per cent of the popular vote and no electoral votes.

Progressivism also had roots in academia and the media, with places like the University of Wisconsin and later Columbia University, producing many proposals for political changes to increase democratic participation in the political process – direct primaries, referendum and recall, for instance – and in the newspapers and particularly the new mass circulation magazines. Progressives supported consumer rights against abuses by big corporations and other businesses. They also lobbied for anti-trust legislation to break up the large, monopolistic businesses that dominated the steel and petroleum industries, among others. Behind all of these measures was the belief that a strong, democratic government was needed to rein in corporate abuses and to ensure the supremacy of democratic politics over monopolistic capitalism.

Social issues like factory safety legislation and health reforms in the major cities, where slum life seemed destined to produce a population of permanently deprived people, were another area where the progressives sought reform. Here “Muckraking” journalists like Jacob Riis and Upton Sinclair wrote

articles and published books (*The Shame of the Cities* by Riis and *The Jungle* by Sinclair) that revealed the shockingly unhealthy and downright dangerous conditions in big city tenements and in meat packing plants.

The early progressives vigorously opposed existing big-city political machines and the resultant corruption. Municipal reform, including the adoption of the city manager system of government, became major progressive causes. Machines also operated at the state level, such as the Smith organization in New Jersey that Woodrow Wilson combated as governor before going on to the presidency. Here again Muckraker journalists like Lincoln Steffens and Ray Stannard Baker played an important role in arousing public opinion to demand reform.

Many progressives supported the right to vote for women and the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. Progressives were as likely to share the racist views of other white Americans as more conservative politicians. It is notable, however, that few progressives emerged from the Southern states, where the Democratic Party remained in control during this period.

Historians advance various theories as to why progressivism came into existence when it did. The “closing of the frontier” in the early 1890s and the economic depression from 1893 to 1897 are cited as possible proximate causes for the drive for reform that started in earnest after 1900. But already in the period before 1900 the campaign for municipal reform had spread to many cities. Hofstadter cites a “status revolution” in which formerly respected professional elites – clergymen, lawyers, doctors – saw their places as the top of the social scale challenged by the new class of wealthy businessmen and often-corrupt politicians. This perceived or (often) real social decline supposedly motivated them to lend their support to reforms that would rein in their nouveau riche competitors while also restoring moral and financial probity to the upper reaches of American society.

Progressivism had deep roots in American history and can be traced back to the general uplifting doctrines of universal public education, religious Perfectionism – the unrelenting effort to live a sin-free life – the movement for the abolition of slavery and for women’s rights. These New England-based social movements were supplemented in the post-Civil War period by the teachings of “social gospel” preachers, mainly centered in old-line Protestant denominations, but including many Lutheran ministers. Another source of progressivism is found among the pre-industrial upper classes of New England and other eastern states. Henry Adams is often cited as an example of a scion of an old New England family who could not abide the crass materialism of the Gilded Age and unleashed a scathing critique of the era in his book *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907). But progressivism also can be found in the works of Theodore Roosevelt, who despised Adams and other effete snobs, but still embraced a measured program of reform that would make him – the President – the main arbiter of political life, rather than the so-called Captains of Industry, like J.P. Morgan or John D. Rockefeller.

Many of the personal qualities and actual causes of the heyday of progressivism continue to resonate with left-of-center political figures of the present day. During the 1930s, many of the ideas formerly championed by the progressives were taken up by Roosevelt’s New Dealers, who adopted the label “liberal” for their political philosophy in order to distinguish themselves from the old progressive politicians and reformers, many of whom were members of the Republican Party. Roosevelt traced his own progressive ideas back to Woodrow Wilson, in whose administration he served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Wilson himself had been a late-comer to politics and to progressive thought. He won the New Jersey governorship in 1910 as an anti-machine reformer after serving as president of Princeton University. He only affirmed his progressive views in response to a query from three-time losing Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. Bryan asked the four leading candidate for the 1912 Democratic presidential nomination whether they considered themselves progressives. After much thought, Wilson decided to embrace the label and proceeded to enact a very

progressive program after becoming president following the Democrats watershed victory in both the presidential and congressional elections that year. His embrace of progressivism meant Wilson had to walk-back his oft-stated attachment to the Jeffersonian belief in small government, a typically Democratic Party ideal in those days, especially among Southern politicians and those with Southern roots like Wilson.

Conservative commentators today often use the term “progressive” or “progressivism” in a derogatory way to characterize what they consider to be costly and impractical proposals from the Left that, the commentator’s claim, will not only be ineffective, but will drastically curtail precious American freedoms. George Will is a major proponent of this view.

In this connection, it needs to be stated that the Progressive movement of the early 1900s grew out of the nation’s great industrialization and urbanization surge in the post-Civil War period. Its proponents were the product of a unique historical period and despite the continued use of the term “progressive,” these activists and the conditions they sought to reform no longer exist. The progressives, like the abolitionists, saw many, if not most, of their reforms eventually enacted – direct election of senators, the income tax, direct primaries to nominate presidential candidates, municipal reform, civil service reform, progressive income tax, etc. With the passage of time, the progressive program became so rooted in the American way of life, that almost everyone accepted the main tenets of the movement. Eisenhower called himself a “progressive Republican” and Nixon supported environmental protection measures which simply enlarged upon the earlier progressive concern for the conservation of natural resources and the safeguarding of the nation’s endangered wilderness places. While our politicians and political commentators continue to battle over “liberalism” and “conservatism,” and even “socialism” and “fascism,” they do so while standing on a platform of progressive reforms enacted one hundred years ago and more.

Thus, although progressivism went on to inspire the liberalism of the New Deal, just as the fervor of the abolitionists could be said to have inspired the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, for our purposes, there are no longer any progressives any more than there are abolitionists. It should also be remembered that progressivism ran its course during a period of unprecedented prosperity in the United States, from roughly 1900 to 1920. Unlike the New Deal reforms of the 1930s, the Progressive program was advanced largely by middle and upper class Americans who disliked the toxic byproducts of rapid industrial and urban growth; many of the reforms can be traced to the “good government” and “civic reform” movements of the late 1800s, and sought to combat corruption while strengthening the state to cope with burgeoning social problems. The New Deal, on the other hand, due to the emergency nature of the situation, was brought forth by Washington “brain trusters” and imposed on the nation in a top-down fashion, with many of the key elements coming seemingly from nowhere, like the creation of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The New Deal liberalism of the 1930s also differed from the old Progressivism in that it sought to widen its base, including in its coalition party bosses and their immigrant constituents who had been antagonists of the progressives. These men and groups would have been rejected by Woodrow Wilson’s nativist progressive Democrats as corrupt and disreputable. FDR’s “liberalism,” in other words, saw “hyphenated Americans” as a crucial element in the construction of a successful party of reform. This move from small town provincialism to big city politics had already been foreshadowed by the presidential candidacy of Al Smith in 1928. But Smith himself was a product of the rising immigrant tide – Catholic and Irish – and proved to be less interested in reform than in self-advancement. Roosevelt, a man who had already “arrived,” actually had more sympathy than Smith had for the plight of the unemployed and desperate working class. Roosevelt definitely fit the pattern of the aristocratic reformer so dear to his cousin Teddy.

One indicator that the progressives were unlike today’s liberals (or small “p” progressives) can be found in their anti-immigrant mentality. Progressives tended to blame much of the big city corruption on the

huge influx of eastern and southern European immigrants arriving in the U.S. between 1890 and 1914. They were considered dirty, uneducated, and subject to exploitation by politicians who could harvest their votes at election time in return for small favors like unskilled labor jobs and free drinks at the local Irish-run saloon. Rural progressives often reflected the anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant impulses found among the formerly Populist population of small town America. In this respect, however, progressives were no more racist in their views than the average native-born American. What was left of the progressive movement supported most of the immigration restrictions put in place by the Republican administrations of the 1920s.

The Progressives did vigorously support “Americanization” programs for the new arrivals. They had to learn English, first of all, and be taught how to take care of themselves so they would not be a burden on the community and unable to raise self-sufficient families. Little thought was given to preserving their native cultures or celebrating their diversity, although in this respect Jane Addams of Hull House fame in Chicago made a concerted effort to help new arrivals maintain their old traditions while acquiring life skills needed for successful adjustment to America. This was the era of the “melting pot” and, in general, progressives assumed that the new immigrants would shed their Old World ways and quickly join the American mainstream. The social workers and the settlement houses sought to inculcate cleanliness and a solid work ethic in their charges. In a sense, these people had to be “re-educated” in order to be real Americans. Needless to say, these early efforts were far from successful, and the process of assimilation would take generations rather than a few years.

Progressivism also embraced the “professionalization” of the public sector, starting with the expansion of the career civil service and an end to the old patronage system at the local and state levels as well as in Washington. By extension, this movement for professional management of American institutions can be seen in the development of schools of business and public administration, and even in the emergence of professional social workers, such as Jane Addams and Harry Hopkins. Woodrow Wilson’s path breaking work at Princeton, where he was a professor of political science before assuming the presidency of the university, raised the study of public administration to a higher level, embracing the notion expressed by Alexander Pope in the 1700s that good administration equals good government. Progressives embraced scientific solutions to social problems, eschewing the laissez faire individualism that had dominated the post-Civil War “Gilded Age.” There was actually some overlap between the moderately left of center political progressives and people such as “time and motion” study pioneer Frederick Taylor, or the engineer turned politician, Herbert Hoover. In all these cases, the belief prevailed that efficient organization and the application of rational analysis should replace the old hit or miss, seat of the pants management style of the early years of the industrial boom. Scientific management, free of individual whims and boss-style corruption, was required to reform both the private and the public sectors, according to these progressive figures. The term “technocrat” best describes the progressive ideal of public administrator. He is a person divorced from the left-right political fray whose sole motivation is public service and whose methods are based on the latest scientific and technological thinking. This non-ideological, pragmatic approach to problem solving became a characteristic of Roosevelt’s New Dealers, who eschewed the moralistic platitudes of the progressives, whose attempts at moral uplift had had many good points, but also led into the dead end of the Prohibition movement. The New Deal had no interest in outlawing alcoholic beverages and promptly repealed the 18th Amendment which had been one of the last achievements of the Progressive Era.

The same spirit of professionalism swept through the medical and legal professions, where higher standards were promulgated and objective certification procedures put in place to ensure that practitioners actually had mastered their fields of endeavor. Medical schools and law schools became the sole avenue, in most cases, for those wishing to engage in those professions. This process repeated in the private sector what the new Food and Drug Administration sought to enforce in the public realm: the protection of the public from incompetent and dishonest practices of all sorts.

Louis Brandeis, one of the architects of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom program, told Brown University graduates in 1912 that "business is a profession," and, like other professions, its practitioners had higher motives than just making money. They wanted to do meaningful work and make a contribution to the nation's social and economic advancement. This creed also underlay the establishment of the three men's (now men's and women's) service clubs founded in the Progressive Era: The Rotary Club in 1905, the Kiwanis Club established in 1915 and the Lions Club in 1917. All three clubs brought small businessmen and various professionals together to do good works and endorse a code of behavior that, as in Brandeis formulation, transcended the mere making of money. Community involvement became an antidote to what many perceived to be a ruthless striving for pecuniary advancement at all costs as personified by the wealthy owners of the giant corporations. Of course these were not anti-capitalist radicals, and the small businessman did not disapprove of the corporate capitalist, as such. He may even have envied him his success. But, at the same time, he felt the need to protect his own small business and community from the ravages of unbridled big business.

Brandeis and Wilson saw government action against the trusts and monopolies in general as the best way to combat the consolidation of business into fewer and fewer hands, with adverse consequences for small businesses and consumers. Wilson's first administration created the Federal Trade Commission to investigate allegations of anti-competitive business practices and greatly enlarged the anti-trust division at the Department of Justice to prosecute cases against business concentration. This simply extended and institutionalized the Taft Administration's prosecution of anti-trust cases against Standard Oil and U.S. Steel. Teddy Roosevelt, now out of power and embittered after being defeated in his run for the presidency in 1912 as a Bull Moose candidate, sharply criticized Wilson's attempts to increase competition by breaking up the large, monopolistic corporation. He preferred a form of "regulated capitalism" in which the government would police these large business entities but would not seek to break them up, believing that in the modern era such large corporations were inevitable and actually more efficient than many competing smaller companies.

The opponents of progressive reform – whether of the Roosevelt or Wilson variety -- ranged from local political bosses to multi-millionaire industrialists, who combated the reformers as un-American and socialistic. By seeking to regulate every aspect of daily life, the captains of industry contended, the progressives would end up creating a monstrous state bureaucracy that would choke the life out of American economic enterprise or, in the case of the bosses, would bankrupt the nation while rewarding well-connected special interests at the expense of the urban masses. Instead of rewarding the hard working individual of the sort portrayed in Horatio Alger's stories of "pluck and luck," the professional bureaucrats (never "technocrats") would close the doors to personal advancement for those seeking to move up from the bottom of society. Progressivism did indeed have a large element of elitism in its make-up. It honored and rewarded expertise, while disdaining the traditional American amateur inventor or entrepreneur (Thomas Edison and Henry Ford were never progressive heroes).

The tension between large, efficient, and often monopolistic capitalism – recognized and accepted by Teddy Roosevelt in his New Nationalism platform in the 1912 election – and the anti-trust platform of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom, brought out the contradictions inherent in the competing visions of America's future. Both Roosevelt and Wilson could lay claim to the "Progressive" title, but, at least until America's entry into World War I brought a decisive victory for the Roosevelt vision of a corporate economy regulated by a giant federal bureaucracy, the appeal of the nostalgic "small town business model" remained strong. In fact, the longing for a return to a simpler, more honest and compassionate America, even if this America never really existed, continued to be a staple of American politics and popular culture well into the middle of the 20th century. In this sense, progressivism can be seen as anything but "progressive," coming across instead as a reaction against modernization and change. Or,

more positively, it could be seen as an attempt to fashion a modern, free market economic system that preserves and protects the nobility of the individual citizen.

One final observation: the progressives stood for the supremacy of the state; of public interest over private interests. The state – or the nation, if you prefer – is permanent, whereas private businesses come and go. The economic system is constantly evolving, as we now recognize, and even the mightiest industrial or financial institution may collapse or be absorbed by some other entity. The state, however, is permanent and exists over and above our day-to-day lives. Servants of the state should be dedicated to their jobs to an extent similar to the devotion of a religious official to his sacred tasks. No one expects businessmen to take a vow of loyalty to their employer or to the company that they direct. They are clearly in it for the money and for a personal sense of accomplishment. Progressivism recognized and exalted service to the state as a call of a higher order. This is the fundamental fact of the progressive philosophy of public service. It is also the reason that progressivism, properly understood, does not degenerate into socialism, since socialism conflates the state with economic activity, whereas the true progressive believes the state must stay clear of and above the economic fray, regulating it (like a referee), but never actually playing the game.

Session I: Thursday, April 11

William Allen White (1868-1944)

William Allen White was a Kansas Progressive, editor of the Emporia *Gazette*, and a close friend of Theodore Roosevelt. He made his name in 1896 with an editorial entitled "What's the Matter with Kansas?" in which he laid into the Populists, decrying their radical ideas and mocking the harebrained leadership of the Populist-Democratic Party of William Jennings Bryan. Ironically, fifteen years later, White was a leader of the Progressive Republicans, who split with the GOP in 1912 to form their own party and nominated Theodore Roosevelt for President. White's "Kansas progressivism" following the "Wisconsin progressivism" of Robert La Follette, brought into the Republican Party many of the same ideas that William Jennings Bryan's Populism brought into the Democratic Party. In fact, in 1912, White hoped that the left wing of the Republican Party and the left wing of the Democratic could merge to form a new Progressive Party. This would be a third party that championed government ownership of the railroads, an income tax, direct primaries, and legislation ensuring workers a fair share of the country's ever-expanding GNP. The Democrats did not oblige, however, and after being spurned by the Republicans, White and La Follette and a few other "Western Progressives" remained in maverick status on the fringes of the Republican Party throughout the inter-war years.

Conservative Republicans succeeded in thwarting the Roosevelt "insurgency" and, even at the expense of losing the 1912 election, preserved the GOP as a bastion of big-business-friendly conservatism. White and his fellow Republican Progressive Robert La Follette of Wisconsin remained "men without a party" after the 1912 debacle. Meantime, the Democratic Party enacted much of the defunct Progressive Party's platform, which, in turn, had taken over much of the defunct Populist Party program. Reform, in other words, transcended party labels and appealed to men and women on both sides of the traditional political divide.

White, like many Progressives, was unselfconsciously racist, preferring white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants and their supposed values over other strains of Americans. In this regard he did not differ from his hero Theodore Roosevelt. However, in the 1920s, when the Ku Klux Klan achieved unprecedented influence in states like Kansas and Indiana, he expressed his total rejection of their anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic, not to mention anti-Black views. In 1924, the Klan virtually took over the Kansas Republican Party and nominated one of their own for governor. At that point White opted to jump into the governor's race as an independent and made his only run for office. He came in second to the Republican (Klan) candidate, but ahead of the Democrat. Fortunately, in that era the governor's term was only two years and in the 1926 election a more acceptable Republican replaced the Klansman. The experience profoundly shocked White, however, and caused him to take his distance from the Republican Party and party politics in general. By this point, Progressivism had pretty much run out of steam as a movement. Robert La Follette mounted an independent campaign for president in 1924, garnering 16.6 per cent of the popular vote, but only carrying his home state of Wisconsin. Small town America, the ideal place in White's scheme of things, had fallen into disrepute as more and more Americans moved into the big cities. The "small town" values of the Midwestern Progressives like White and La Follette, had soured into prejudices against those who enjoyed a drink and, tragically, showed growing support for those who burned crosses and wore white cloaks. In the 1930s, Progressives would be some of the leading figures in the isolationist movement, with its distrust of foreign entanglements and foreigners in general. White himself, of course, was far more urbane than the typical small town newspaperman. A world traveler, he had been to Europe numerous times and would eventually travel all over the Far East, talking to world leaders and gathering material for his newspaper column, which was syndicated throughout the United

States. Ultimately, White could not sustain the fiction of “small town sage,” however, and became increasingly irrelevant by the time of his death in 1944.

Robert La Follette (1855-1925)

Born on a Wisconsin farm in 1855, La Follette moved to the state capital of Madison in 1872 after the death of his relatively well-to-do stepfather. There he enrolled in the University of Wisconsin, graduating in 1879. He went on to the study of law and was admitted to the state bar in 1880. He almost immediately won election as the state’s attorney for Dane County and immediately came to the attention of the leaders of the local Republican Party. He soon became aware of the corruption eating away at the party when he was offered a bribe by a party office holder to try to influence his brother-in-law, who was a judge. After this incident in 1891, La Follette fought the old guard of the Wisconsin Republican Party, seeking to make the party an instrument of reform. He believed that the only way to do this was to break the hold of both parties on the electoral process, and that the way to achieve this end was to essentially trash the party machine and turn the nomination of candidates over to the people via the adoption of the “direct primary” system. The primary competition we see today in the two major parties dates from the early 1900s when the Progressive insurgents sought to overthrow the conservative party leadership by appealing directly to the party’s rank-and-file members. Once adopted in Wisconsin, it led to the Republican nomination and election of La Follette as governor and then Senator (still elected by the state legislatures). He served as the leading voice of Republican progressives in the U.S. Senate from 1906 until his death in 1925. The direct primary nomination process had been adopted by a number of states before World War I, but not enough to ensure Teddy Roosevelt’s control of the Republican Convention in 1912, when he challenged incumbent president William Howard Taft. The Convention disqualified most of the delegates Roosevelt had picked up in the primaries and seated instead Taft delegates nominated by state party conventions or other “traditional” means. The direct primary system of nominating presidential candidates has gradually come to totally dominate the nomination process, making state and national party conventions largely superfluous.

La Follette’s “Wisconsin Idea” had many different aspects, but the overall thrust was toward “direct democracy,” as opposed to the more indirect form of democracy practiced at the state and national levels up to that time. The indirect election of senators was one of the major impediments to direct democracy and both Bryan’s Populist/Democrats and La Follette’s Progressive Republicans championed a constitutional amendment to place the election of senators directly in the hands of the people, a reform finally adopted in April 1913 with the ratification of the 17th amendment to the Constitution. The primary election also achieved a greater degree of democracy, by removing the nomination of candidates from the political parties and handing it over to the whole electorate, or at least that part of the electorate that claimed a particular party allegiance.

La Follette was treated as a crank and a fanatic (at first) by the establishment Republicans in Washington, and by President Theodore Roosevelt. The Wisconsin reformer believed the way to achieve change was not by compromising, but by relentlessly pursuing changes, even if attempts to enact the necessary laws were repeatedly defeated by the Stand Pat majority in the Senate. Roosevelt, on the other hand, even when he sought progressive changes (such as passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act), preferred to reduce his demands until he got agreement from the representatives of big business or the railroads. He definitely believed “half a loaf was better than none”, a position that La Follette rejected.

When Roosevelt failed to win the Republican nomination at the party’s 1912 convention in Chicago, hundreds of Republican Progressives abandoned the GOP and ended up nominating Teddy for president at a separate convention, also held in Chicago, in August 1912. When the Democrats subsequently nominated Woodrow Wilson as their candidate for president, La Follette essentially abandoned the Republican Party and endorsed Wilson, whose progressive program was similar to that of the Wisconsin

senator. Wilson welcomed La Follette's support and that of other disillusioned Republican Progressives, some of whom could support neither Taft nor Roosevelt, the former being too conservative and the latter viewed as a shameless opportunist.

Session II: Thursday, April 18

Lincoln Steffens (1866-1936)

Investigative journalism can be said to have been invented by the so-called “muckrakers,” Teddy Roosevelt’s disdainful term for men like Lincoln Steffens, Jacob Riis, and Upton Sinclair, and for a woman like Ida Tarbell, all of whom dedicated themselves to uncovering the seamy side of American life and publicizing it in the new mass circulation magazines like *Colliers* and *McClure’s*. Although these journalists tried to report “the facts,” they could not help but include their own views in their articles. They thoroughly disapproved of political machines that had done so much to corrupt politics on the state and local levels, and they also inveighed against the “malefactors of great wealth,” another one of Roosevelt’s memorable coinages.

Steffens came to journalism after a long period of self-searching which took him to Europe, where he studied philosophy in Germany and France, and then back to New York, where he received an ultimatum from his wealthy father to either get a job or to prepare to go hungry. After years of supporting his errant son, the elder Steffens had decided the young man (born in 1866, he was 26 when he was cut off by his father) had to fend for himself if he was ever to amount to anything. And fend he did. Steffens was no ne’er-do-well. In fact, he was a talented writer in search of a subject.

Through his father’s influence, Steffens was hired as a reporter by the New York *Evening Post*, a venerable, conservative daily led by publisher E.L. Godkin. He started covering business news, but soon moved to reporting on crime and the corrupt police department. Soon after taking over the police desk at the paper, he met Jacob Riis, a reporter for the New York *Sun* and well-known for his 1890 book *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis, in turn, introduced Steffens to Theodore Roosevelt, the newly appointed head of the police board of commissioners. Both Riis and Steffens became admirers of Roosevelt, whose colorful tenure as police commissioner gave the journalists ample material for their readers, who lapped up stories about this reforming whirlwind of a man. Both Riis and Steffens were smitten by Roosevelt and remained his boosters even after he became president and disappointed them by his often tepid reformism. Steffens called himself a “mugwump” in the 1890s, a name given to reformist Republicans, and as long as Roosevelt remained the head of the GOP, Steffens identified with the progressive wing of the Republican Party. For his part, Roosevelt used Steffens and the other reform-minded journalists as mouthpieces for his agenda, recognizing their usefulness in reaching a wider public and their ability to increase his credibility with that public.

Steffens next took a position as editor of the stodgy New York *Commercial Advertiser*. He quickly turned the newspaper into the best-written daily in the city. He hired fresh young reporters out of top Ivy League schools and told them to unearth human interest stories in the big city. The vivid writing of these new, young newsmen did not do much to increase the paper’s circulation, but Steffens claimed credit for keeping it alive in the highly competitive New York newspaper market.

His obvious talent as a writer and editor caught the attention of S.S. McClure, the owner and publisher of America’s premier magazine, the eponymous *McClure’s*. In 1901 at the age of 35, Steffens took command of this thriving enterprise with a circulation of 400,000 paying subscribers. On the staff were two of the most famous journalists of the era: Ida Tarbell and Ray Stannard Baker. In a further stroke of luck, Steffens’s close ties with Teddy Roosevelt, who ascended to the presidency also in 1901 after McKinley’s assassination, gave the editor access to the man every reader could not get enough of. By this time Roosevelt had moved on from serving as New York Police Commissioner, to Assistant Secretary of

the Navy, head of the Rough Riders, to Governor of New York, and then Vice President starting in 1901. Roosevelt's meteoric rise stunned the Republican machine in New York State, and the conservative business Republicans led by McKinley's close adviser Mark Hanna. The ambitious Roosevelt enthralled Steffens, but, as a critical newspaperman, he saw in the Rough Rider a man who could do much good, but whose motives were suspect. He came to understand that Roosevelt was not a true reformer, but actually a political compromiser who (in a later coinage) sought to "triangulate" between the conservative Republican establishment, and the militant reformers such as La Follette who wanted to see the Party battle the big interests and their minions in the corrupt U.S. Senate. During his days covering New York's police corruption, Steffens's eyes had been opened to the fact that the policeman on the beat and even the police department supervisors were actually passing along much of the bribe money they received to higher ups in the party, and that both parties were equally corrupt. The rot, in other words, started at the top, among high-level elected officials and the party bosses, and much of the pay-off money ended up in their pockets. Roosevelt never confronted the fact that "respectable" Republican Party leaders benefited from the system as much or more than the ward heelers of Tammany, or the public officials who owed their jobs to New York Republican boss, Senator Tom Platt.

In a series of articles for *McClure's* in 1902 and 1903, Steffens reported on municipal corruption in St. Louis, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia. He concluded that corruption in all these cities looked much the same and depended on a "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" kind of interplay between machine politicians and the local business community. He then wrote articles on Chicago and New York, which, he found, had successfully installed reform administrations, but, in fact, they were not all that popular with the electorate. In New York, the reform mayor, Seth Low, former president of Columbia University, proved to be both effective at rooting out corruption, and ineffective at making himself popular with the electorate. He failed of re-election in a race with a Tammany Hall-sponsored candidate. Steffens concluded that reformers, for all their selfless service to the community, tended to lack the human touch, whereas many of the machine politicians gave people the impression that they really cared about their welfare. "Good government" crusaders were even derisively called "goo-goo's" by the beneficiaries of the system and their mouthpieces in the so-called "yellow press." Corruption, in other words, even when downright blatant, did not necessarily wreck a politician's career if he also had a genial personality. Needless to say, this was a disillusioning conclusion for Steffens.

Steffens reached the peak of his influence in the 1903-1904 period when his collected exposes on municipal corruption were published in a book entitled *The Shame of Our Cities*. It sold relatively few copies, given that most of the material had appeared earlier in the magazine, but it cemented his position as the foremost "muckraker." The term itself was from 17th century English preacher John Bunyan's book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and came into common usage in the U.S. after President Roosevelt's April 1906 speech defending the Senate from charges of corruption. The journalists so identified wore the moniker with pride, but their critics claimed they had gone too far in their unearthing of corrupt practices, leading Americans to believe that their institutions – both big business and government – were irretrievably bad. The defenders of the status quo acknowledged there was much to reform, but that one had to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. In effect, it was argued, those who make a business out of exposing corruption posed a threat to the prosperity and well-being of the country and gave ammunition to radicals who wished to overthrow America's capitalist democracy and replace it with a socialist tyranny.

Steffens was challenged by his critics to apply his searching journalistic talents by examining the work of the famous Wisconsin Progressive, Robert La Follette, Jr., who had revolutionized the state's politics by overthrowing the corrupt Republican leadership and instituting a whole series of reforms aimed at giving the state back to the average citizen. Steffens, who had not yet met LaFollette, approached the task with his usual attempts at scientific objectivity, but was soon won over by the Wisconsin reformer and his wife Belle. In his October 1904 *McClure's* article on La Follette, Steffens practically oozed praise. He not

only endorsed the Progressive agenda in Wisconsin, but became a close, life-long friend of the LaFollette family. He concluded that, unlike some other Progressives, La Follette was really a “man of the people,” who genuinely liked the common man, with all his faults, and had faith in the good sense of the average voter. It soon became clear, however, that Roosevelt could not stand La Follette and considered him not only a phony and a radical, but a threat to his brand of moderate reform Republicanism. Their two varieties would come head-to-head when Roosevelt decided to run for president again while La Follette, who went from Wisconsin’s governor to its U.S. Senator in 1906, still retained a hold on Progressive Republicans.

Steffens left *McClure’s* in early 1906 after a falling out with the owner, who was fearful that the continued assault on corruption threatened to alienate potential readers as well as powerful figures in Washington and in the business world. The eccentric S.S. McClure also wanted to turn his successful magazine into a springboard to media dominance, even envisioning the creation of various businesses like a life insurance company, a bank, and even a university catering to the needs of the American masses. Steffens saw disaster, however, and together with other determined muckrakers from *McClure’s* and a few other idealists, Steffens helped found *The American Magazine* as a new weapon in the continuing battle against those undermining American democracy. Writing for the new magazine, Steffens reported on a huge timber sale scandal in Oregon, in which almost all the Republican congressmen and the Republican governor were found to be taking bribes in return for selling vast swaths of public timberland at bargain prices to unscrupulous lumbering interests. His final big expose for *The American Magazine* brought him back to his native California where, this time, he reported on a complicated and violent graft scheme that enriched the city’s Democratic Party mayor and various labor leaders. It turned out that the main source of corruption was a businessman who paid off the local politicians in order to gain control of the city’s street railway system. Beyond that, money poured into political coffers from the Southern Pacific Railroad, which supported almost all the state’s politicians – Democrats and Republicans; local, state, and national. By 1910, Steffens decided he had had enough of working for others and parted company with *The American Magazine*. He began his slow migration to the left, which would eventually place him among the country’s major socialist voices in the post-World War I era. Independently wealthy as a result of his munificent earnings at *McClure’s* and then *The American Magazine*, where he often received two to three thousand dollars per article (and all expenses paid), Steffens decided that capitalism inevitably subverted and corrupted democratic governments and that socialism (or even communism) was the only solution.

Operating as a free lancer in 1910, Steffens took on one last writing assignment for *Everybody’s* magazine, an investigation of big business and how it corrupted the American political system. Hardly an original subject, Steffens’s probing investigative journalism prompted in unexpected ways the opening of a Congressional investigation by Representative Arsene Pujo of Louisiana. Over the years 1912 to 1914, Pujo’s subcommittee of the House Banking and Currency Committee grilled J. P. Morgan and other mega-capitalists about their business dealings. The findings of the subcommittee, influenced in part by Steffens’s earlier articles in *Everybody’s* magazine, contributed to the creation of the Federal Reserve System as a way to remove the banks from the control of private interests. Interestingly, Steffens sought a recent Harvard graduate to aid him with research for these articles and hired a young Walter Lippmann, fresh out of college for the job. Lippmann later credited Steffens with being the greatest influence in the formation of his formidable career as America’s premier journalistic pundit from the 1920s through the 1960s.

Lippmann and Steffens were among the founders in 1914 of *The New Republic*, a periodical that appealed to a more intellectual readership than the mass circulation magazines like *McClure’s* and *Colliers*. The small circulation of *The New Republic* included many political decision-makers and the magazine (which still exists) had an outsize influence among members of the Wilson Administration.

Ray Stannard Baker (1870-1946)

Born in a small town in Wisconsin, Ray Stannard Baker was the eldest in a family of six children. His father made a good living as the local agent for large Eastern landowners in Wisconsin. He had graduated from the University of Wisconsin and Baker's mother had graduated from a small college in Michigan, making them two of the best educated people in the small town of St. Croix Falls. The Bakers were religious people and enforced a strict code of morality on their sons. Ray's father was a Republican and Ray himself gravitated toward the Republican Party, although by his 20's he had ceased to identify with either of the two major parties. Ray attended Michigan State Agricultural College (now Michigan State) where he took a curriculum heavy in sciences, including the latest findings in applied agricultural science. After receiving his bachelor's degree, he spent a year back in St. Croix Falls helping with his father's business, but soon realized he was not cut out for that sort of work. He persuaded his father to send him back to Michigan, this time to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where he enrolled in the law school. But after a few months, instead of delving into his legal volumes, he signed up for classes in the English Department, including one in "rapid writing." This was not a class in stenography, but instead aimed to prepare students to take notes on newspaper articles and then "rapidly" rewrite them according to the professor's methods.

Baker knew immediately that he had found his career: journalist. While there were no actual schools of journalism in the U.S. at that time, his course at Michigan turned out to be the perfect introduction to this profession. Baker had developed a passion for scientific "facts" while at Michigan State, and now he found he had a talent for capturing the facts rapidly and putting them into a newspaper format. With his father's grudging approval, he dropped out of the law school at Michigan and headed for Chicago, where he landed a job as a reporter for the *Chicago News-Record* in 1892. As the son of relatively well-to-do people from a small Middle Western town, Baker did not differ much from the upper to upper middle class background of the other Muckrakers and Progressives. He wrote many "human interest" articles while at the *Record*, covering the crime and degradation of the big city. The depression of the mid-1890s struck Chicago hard and unemployed men camped out in waste areas around the city, living off charity and whatever part time work they could find. Baker was assigned by the paper to accompany the so-called "Coxey's Army" of the unemployed which set out from Massillon, Ohio in March 1894 to march to Washington and demand pensions from the federal government. He marched alongside the men and reported on their progress over the six weeks of the march. His reports were not particularly sympathetic to their cause, but he had perfected the human interest angle and used it to capture the stories of many of the more colorful marchers until their disorderly dispersal by the police at the U.S. Capitol, where Coxey himself was arrested for trespassing. He next reported on the 1894 Pullman strike in Chicago which soon spread throughout the country when the American Railway Union led by socialist Eugene Debs called for its members to refuse to move Pullman sleeping and dining cars. Baker's reporting showed sympathy for the striking workers, whose salaries had been severely cut by the Pullman Company, while those who lived and shopped in Pullman-owned facilities saw their costs actually go up. He then reported on the nomination of William Jennings Bryan as the Democratic candidate for president at the party's convention in Chicago in June 1896. In his memoirs, Baker related how favorably impressed he was by the young Bryan's sincerity and his rousing oratory.

Then, in 1898 at the age of 27, he submitted a series of articles to *McClure's* magazine, hoping to break into the longer-format type of journalism this publication had made popular. Much to his surprise and joy, his work gained the approval of the magazine's editor John S. Phillips (McClure himself was traveling in Europe) and within weeks Baker found himself in New York starting a new life writing for the country's premier mass-circulation periodical. Baker remained at the magazine until the breakup of 1906, when he, along with Steffens and Ida Tarbell left the magazine, eventually reuniting for a time at *The American Magazine*. Baker left his traditional Republican roots in 1912 to back Woodrow Wilson for president and went on to become one of his most avid admirers. Wilson and Baker shared a highly

moral, almost prim, sense of duty. Neither man ever doubted his own probity. As progressives, they saw their role as improving the world around them, while recognizing the essential fallibility of the human race.

Indicative of Baker's "good government" philosophy was a series of articles he did in 1895 for the magazine *Outlook* in which he praised the Civic Federation of Chicago for its accomplishments in combating gambling houses, race tracks, "massage parlors," and other places of "unmentionable bestiality." The Federation also directed its reforming zeal at shortcomings in street cleaning, the local meat and dairy supply, and electoral dishonesty. Baker wrote that the Federation's actions were "simply wonderful." (Bannister, p. 56) This is an example of the benign reformism that this straight-laced young reporter took pleasure in bringing to the reading public's attention. A similar point of view would characterize his later articles for *McClure's* and, following that, *The American Magazine*.

Baker's sympathies lay with the "deserving poor," who he felt were being ground down by the "undeserving rich." In 1903 he covered a major coal miner's strike in Pennsylvania. Unlike earlier moralizing or polemical reports on such conflicts, Baker assumed an objective, fact-based attitude and the results were revolutionary. In this early example of muckraking journalism, Baker filled his articles with facts about the mining conflict, "a wealth of detail unrivaled in earlier treatments of economic and political questions," according to his biographer. But behind the apparently objective reporting, Baker had a definite bias. As he wrote in his journal in 1904: "The highest utility of the corporation lies in the fact that it enables reputable people to participate in the profits of disreputable business enterprises without disturbing their moral complacency." (Bannister, pp. 94-95) In effect, owning stock in a big business allowed an investor to enjoy both limited economic and moral liability.

Baker also broke new ground in his articles on lynching and the condition of blacks in the South. Although hardly sympathetic toward the victims of this awful scourge, Baker did at least bring his passion for facts into play once again. He eventually pulled all of his articles on race relations in the South together into a book entitled *Following the Color Line* (1908). Taking a rather clinical approach, Baker concluded that the black population of the South suffered from an "unfavorable environment" which explained why they appeared to be prone to crime and shiftlessness. Instead of condemning lynching, he sought to explain it. By today's standards, he gave aid and comfort to the racists, but at least he brought the subject out into the open. (Bannister, pp. 126-128)

Baker, like the other journalists at *McClure's*, enjoyed access to President Roosevelt, and frequently conducted interviews with him and exchanged letters. This cozy relationship ended in April 1906 after Roosevelt's famous speech denouncing the "muckrakers." The party affiliation of the muckrakers, like the progressives generally, seemed to start as moderate Republican and then, by 1908 or so, move in the direction of Insurgent or Progressive politicians. Baker was no different in this respect, although he preferred to be known as an "independent." Still, as the stand-off between Teddy Roosevelt and the Republican Old Guard represented by President Taft came to a head between 1909 and 1912, Baker's articles in *The American Magazine* and elsewhere placed him clearly on the side of the reformers. He wrote favorably about Roosevelt's Ossawatimie speech of August 1910, usually cited as the beginning of the New Nationalism phase of his one-time hero's career. Unlike Roosevelt, Baker still maintained cordial relations with Robert La Follette. When the Progressive Party platform of 1912 came out, Baker declared "I can accept the planks nearly every one." (Bannister, p. 141) But this support for the platform did not equal support for Roosevelt, whose basic dishonesty he had come to dislike intensely. He recorded in his Journal that Roosevelt had tried to convince him that his friend Henry Cabot Lodge (a mainstay of the Old Guard) was actually a "progressive." His conclusion was that Roosevelt "believes in trusting the people, provided he is around to tell them what to do." (Bannister, p. 143) Baker ended up

voting for Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and soon became a devoted follower of the new Democratic president.

Wilson's election and the period of major reforms during his first two years in office opened a new phase in Baker's life. While he did not like some of Wilson's appointments, and disapproved of the policy of racial segregation which Wilson brought to Washington, he was willing to overlook these failings in the hope that this high-minded man might pursue a progressive agenda.

With the coming of the war in 1914 and the U.S. entry into the fighting in 1917, Baker became a full-blown Wilson partisan. He went on to serve as Wilson's spokesman during the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, and, eventually, became the author of an 8-volume biography of the president, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1940. Looking back on his career in a 1937 entry in his *Journal*, Baker wrote that he had always thought of myself as a Progressive, verging on radicalism, but concluded that "Now, it seems, I am a Conservative." Like William Allen White and some of his other progressive colleagues of the pre-World War I period, Baker had become disillusioned with the human race and had lost much of his optimistic hopes for reform. He had an alter ego named David Grayson, a pen name he used for a series of popular books starting in 1910 about a rural philosopher/farmer. The "David Grayson" series sold more than two million copies during his lifetime. Grayson mouthed a sort of mystical pantheistic philosophy, verging on transcendentalism, and represented the part of Baker's brain that saw the only hope for a healthy, happy life in escape from the grim reality of our everyday existence.

Session III: Thursday, April 25

Henry Stimson (1867-1950)

“He personified . . . the contradictions of the Progressive Movement, led as it was by aristocratic reformers and capitalistic trustbusters like him.”

His biographer Godfrey Hodgson’s characterization of Henry Stimson could serve as well for many of the other wealthy men who devoted themselves to public service at this time. These individuals could have easily lived lives of comfortable luxury, but instead, like their hero Teddy Roosevelt, strove to test themselves physically, and dedicated themselves to public service.

While the journalistic muckrakers had a major impact on the Progressive Movement, they could not implement the reforms or do the cleaning up of corruption. That job had to be performed by elected officials and honest public servants dedicated to the public interest and not beholden to powerful capitalists. Stimson’s long career in various high offices (twice Secretary of War and once Secretary of State) make him one of the most important figures who fit this description. Stimson never succeeded in attaining elected office, although in 1910 he ran for the governorship of New York on the Republican ticket. Like Roosevelt, he came from a wealthy background and amassed even greater wealth than he inherited through his position as a partner in a prestigious New York law firm. But like his friend and mentor, he aspired to a life of public service, and, after his unsuccessful run for governor, he accepted appointment as William Howard Taft’s Secretary of War, the office Taft himself had held for a time under Roosevelt. Also like Taft, Stimson later served as Governor General of the Philippines (appointed by President Calvin Coolidge in 1927). By that time, he had already shown a marked ability in the field of foreign affairs and would go on to serve as Herbert Hoover’s Secretary of State (1929-1933) and Franklin Roosevelt’s Secretary of War (1941-1945).

Stimson’s career raises the interesting question of whether the Progressives had a “foreign policy,” as well as a domestic agenda. Teddy Roosevelt’s progressivism at home came paired with a sort of “aggressive-ism” overseas, where he carried the symbolic “big stick.” But, as would become clear during and after World War I, Progressive figures like Robert La Follette could easily embrace pacifism (LaFollette was the only senator to vote against the U.S. declaration of war in April 1917), and during the Interwar Years, some of the nation’s most isolationist voices were Progressive Republican senators like William Borah of Idaho, Hiram Johnson of California, and George Norris of Nebraska. Stimson’s New York patrician background doubtless had much to do with his openness to U.S. engagement with the wider world. Unlike the “prairie Progressives,” (which, to a certain extent, also included a much more urbane figure like William Allen White of Kansas), Stimson’s background and education brought him into contact with men who engaged in international business and finance. He became a leading advocate of the Open Door in China during the Taft Administration, and pushed for sanctions against Japan in 1931 (after its invasion of Manchuria) when he was Herbert Hoover’s Secretary of State. This willingness to resort to forceful action against foreign aggressors probably explains why Franklin Roosevelt brought the elderly Stimson into his cabinet a few months before the 1940 election, once again as Secretary of War. Progressive Republicans remained allies of the New Deal on domestic affairs, but like much of the country, they split into interventionists and isolationists when faced with foreign threats to the nation’s security.

What all Progressives shared was a dedication to public service and to the idea of American exceptionalism. Stimson’s first public office came with his appointment as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York by Theodore Roosevelt in 1902. In this position, perhaps the most important Justice Department job after that of Attorney General, he prosecuted the American Sugar

Refining Trust successfully and put at least one millionaire financial speculator behind bars for fraud. In an era when “white collar crime” was just becoming recognized as a major national issue, Stimson managed to represent American corporations as a private attorney and then, upon appointment as a U.S. Attorney, to prosecute other companies that were violating anti-trust laws. Unlike the more ideological Progressives coming out of the Populist tradition – men like William Jennings Bryan and Robert La Follette – Stimson could entertain rich businessmen at his country estate on Long Island one week and prosecute cases against them or their businesses on the following week. Like Teddy Roosevelt, he believed that American business had to uphold high standards of honesty and fair dealing or it risked encouraging radical reformers and their schemes to use heavy handed government regulation to rein in abusive practices. He believed in both the essential moral value of high business standards while also seeing that a perception of honesty insulated big business against irresponsible radical reformers.

In foreign affairs, Stimson dealt with Latin American and Asian governments on the basis of benign imperialism, mixed with genteel racism. He viewed the various factions in Nicaragua (where he had been dispatched in the 1920s by Coolidge to settle a civil war that threatened U.S. interests) and the restless independence forces in the Philippines as sometimes naughty children, or at least adolescents, who required American tutelage to help them run their domestic affairs. The fact that American business interests in these places stood to profit from stable, pro-American governments doubtless motivated this policy. The pervasive racism of the era permeated all classes of white Americans. Retired General Leonard Wood, who preceded Stimson as Governor General of the Philippines, told him when he arrived to take over that the Filipinos with “Spanish blood” were educable, but the mass of “Malay blood” natives had to be treated like lesser human beings. The general made the same observations with regard to the peoples of Cuba and Puerto Rico, where he had also served as U.S. proconsul: the Spanish-origin upper class could be treated as on a par with white Americans, but the Indian and African-origin population remained incapable of self-government; ditto for the indigenous peoples of Central America. In general, the Progressives shared the racial prejudices of most other white Americans.

Starting as Hoover’s Secretary of State in 1929 and continuing through the 1930s, Stimson served as a progressive Republican voice favoring American involvement in world affairs. He opposed isolationism as short-sighted, both in our dealings with Japan, and later in the decade in our attempts to curb Mussolini’s and Hitler’s seemingly limitless ambitions. As the war clouds gathered in Europe in the late 1930s, Stimson called for a rebuilding of American military power. Like his mentor Teddy Roosevelt, he was a soldier at heart and was called “Colonel” by his friends after his service in Europe in World War I, when he wrangled an army appointment as an artillery officer even though he was well into his 40s at the time. FDR’s brilliant move to appoint Stimson as his Secretary of War and his fellow Republican progressive Frank Knox as Secretary of the Navy in June 1940 underscored the importance of a bi-partisan foreign affairs team as the country prepared for war.

Stimson’s long public career (he lived from 1867 to 1950) is often cited as a perfect example of America’s growth from quaint isolation into the preeminent world power: He went from riding his horse from his Woodley Park home to the office as Taft’s Secretary of War in 1910, to signing off in 1945 as Truman’s Secretary of War on the decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

So, was there such a thing as a progressive foreign policy? Hodgson concludes that it all depends what you mean by “progressive.” To many people, progressives like Teddy Roosevelt, and eventually Wilson, were first and foremost “nationalists.” They believed in a strong national state that acted effectively to deal with both domestic and foreign affairs. This meant creating and maintaining a strong military. We might qualify this somewhat by coining a term -- “anti-isolationist” -- to describe Stimson’s foreign policy views. Even before the threat to the world democratic order posed by the dictators in the 1930s, Stimson had been urging his Republican colleagues to adopt a strong, internationalist foreign policy. He had to fight against old progressives like William Allen White, who wanted at all costs to stay out of the

conflict in Europe, but both Stimson and White were miles ahead of the Party's right wing, where men like Senator Robert Taft and even Hoover and Alf Landon, continued to insist that the United States should raise the draw bridge and become, essentially, Fortress America.

Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946)

Like Stimson, Gifford Pinchot came from a wealthy, Eastern family. The historian Douglas Brinkley summed up the man in a single sentence: "Independently wealthy, using the family fortune to help promote western reserves, almost British in demeanor, Pinchot saw himself as the Exeter- and Yale-trained advocate, press agent, and spokesperson for a new forestry movement." (*Wilderness Warrior*, p. 342). Growing up on his father's estate "Grey Towers" in rural Pennsylvania, Pinchot saw from an early age the devastation wreaked by unregulated logging in his home state. He became one of the first graduates from Yale with a concentration in forestry and spent a year in France learning the latest techniques in forestry conservation and management. Teddy Roosevelt turned to Pinchot almost immediately after his inauguration as New York governor in 1899, appointing him head of the state's forestry department. Like the governor, Pinchot was a dedicated outdoorsman, who saw the protection of the nation's natural resources as almost a religious calling. In addition, like Roosevelt, he had a profound belief in the utility of scientific expertise as the proper basis for environmental management.

Brinkley quotes Pinchot's high praise of Roosevelt's respect for expertise, in which the forester explains that "Men of small caliber in public office find scorn of expert knowledge a convenient screen for hiding their own mental barrenness. So true is this that one of the best measures of his own breadth and depth of mind is the degree to which a public man acknowledges the value of expert knowledge and judgment in fields which he himself, in the nature of things, cannot be familiar." (quoted in Brinkley, pp. 411-412)

In this respect, he joined the other Progressives, who believed that experts made the best public administrators (and patronage appointees, the worst). But the obverse was also true: Progressives made some of the worst politicians, being often impractical and unable to compromise. Pinchot and Stimson both suffered also from a certain myopia when it came to judging other people, often mistaking surface geniality for genuine friendship and honesty. The term *conservation*, which will eventually become the key word in Pinchot's vocabulary, also served as a rebuke to the rampant capitalism of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Progressives, in general, thought of themselves as the "adults in the room," and saw their role as imposing order and good sense on a country that seemed intent on eating through its natural resources and its human resources, as well, in a mad rush of greed and gluttony. Only a strong and effective national government, staffed by able public servants (not "bureaucrats") could rein in the potentially self-destructive impulses of bumptious capitalists and their hired legislators.

New York State under Roosevelt, like Wisconsin under La Follette, and, somewhat later, New Jersey under Woodrow Wilson, became showcases of progressive reform. Both Roosevelt and Wilson carried their reforming zeal with them to the White House and brought Progressive civil servants along with them from their state administrations to help them devise and implement their plans for better government.

When Roosevelt unexpectedly assumed the presidency in September 1901 after the assassination of William McKinley, he turned to Pinchot almost immediately to help him carry out his wide-ranging plans for conservation and expansion of the national parks and national forests. Environmentalism – called conservation at the time – assumed its central place in national policy during the administration of Teddy Roosevelt, with Gifford Pinchot serving as the president's implementation agent. Pinchot already headed the small forestry division of the Department of Agriculture under McKinley, but under Roosevelt his authority greatly expanded. A masterful bureaucratic maneuverer, Pinchot persuaded Roosevelt to remove the national forests from Interior Department control and move them to a new Forest Service in the Agriculture Department. He then hired dozens of new graduates from the country's expanding

forestry schools. Pinchot worked to “professionalize” forestry management and used his wealth to help establish one of the nation’s first forestry schools at Yale University, his alma mater. This was yet another example of how Progressive reformers set out to replace amateurs and political patronage job fillers with highly qualified specialists in their fields of endeavor.

Next, Roosevelt used his executive authority to add millions of acres to the national forest system, doing so just before signing a bill that would have greatly limited his power to do so. Pinchot saw forestry management as a way to use this valuable resource without destroying it. Managed lumbering was his goal, not the preservation of the wilderness areas in their natural state. He clashed with wilderness advocates like John Muir over the proper approach to forest conservation, and eventually with Roosevelt’s successor, William Howard Taft over conservation policy. Taft fired Pinchot in 1910, provoking Roosevelt’s ire and further stoking his determination to replace his one-time protégé.

The initial push to bring federal lands in the West under Forestry Service control had been prompted by the uncontrolled grazing of millions of sheep and cattle on the fragile grasslands along the slopes of the Rocky and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Pinchot, with Roosevelt’s backing, was able to buck the powerful congressional representatives from these states and to reserve these areas for public use and enjoyment. In effect, what had previously been “open range” where ranchers could use public lands without cost to raise their herds now became a regulated system, where grazing rights could be purchased, but only in areas the Forest Service had designated as sustainable for this purpose. Pinchot obtained enforcement power under new legislation and federal forest rangers had legal power (and firearms) to arrest and levy fines on offenders. Similar regulation enforcement placed the national forests under strict federal control. Despite the howls of protest from private lumbering and livestock raising interests and their congressional representatives (and state governments), Pinchot and Roosevelt established the fact that these millions of acres of public land belonged to all the American people, not just those who happened to live adjacent to them.

Today, when critics decry the heavy hand of “big government,” it is important to remember that much of the federal regulatory apparatus owes its existence to Republican Progressives of the early 1900s. More importantly, the very philosophy which underlay the federal government’s long regulatory arm stems from the conviction of men like Stimson, Pinchot, and Roosevelt (all prominent Republicans) that America needed national policies, both domestically and internationally, in order to prosper and grow. Local, provincial interests, in other words, had to give way to larger concerns and longer range visions. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, as well as Alexander Hamilton, would have agreed.

After being fired by Taft in early 1910 due to his unbridled attack on Secretary of the Interior Ballinger for supporting the sale of government coal lands in Alaska to a large financial group owned by the Morgan-Guggenheim mining syndicate, Pinchot drew even closer to Teddy Roosevelt. Both men had become totally disenchanted with President Taft, who they felt had betrayed Roosevelt’s program of broad national interest government in favor of giving special favors to private interests. In August 1910, back from his long safari in Africa, Roosevelt passed through Kansas after a trip to the West, and stopped at a commemoration for the martyred abolitionist John Brown in Osawatimie. Here in 1858 Brown had gunned down pro-slavery militants. Roosevelt’s address on the occasion had been written largely by the intellectual publicist Herbert Croly and reflected a new and much more radical form of Progressivism called the *New Nationalism*. Croly’s fiery rhetoric had been toned down somewhat by Pinchot and others, but the speech still carried a highly controversial endorsement of strong state action to combat special interests and to return power to the people of America. Many of Roosevelt’s ideas were later included in the new Progressive Party’s 1912 platform.

In the event, Roosevelt and the Republicans lost the 1912 election to Woodrow Wilson, who had his own progressive policies. Pinchot reemerged after World War I as Republican governor of Pennsylvania from

1922 to 1926. During his tenure he and his activist wife Cornelia put over a rousing series of progressive reforms in the state, including the creation of the first state “environmental protection agency,” called the Sanitary Water Board (SWB). Pinchot and the Republican-dominated legislature were responding to the wide-spread clear cutting of the state’s forests, which had left the hillsides susceptible to erosion and the stream and rivers full of silt. Resulting flooding threatened serious material and human losses. The SWB was also empowered to stop the polluting of rivers and streams by the many heavy industrial users in the state. These 1920s era anti-pollution regulations were some of the first such government actions in the nation and marked the beginning of a national concern with industrial degradation of the air, water and soil of America. From forest conservation, Pinchot had moved on to a more comprehensive view of the ecosystem and man’s place in it.

Although he lived until 1946, Pinchot’s final taste of political power came with his second election as Pennsylvania governor in 1930, just as the state and the nation were sinking into the worst years of the Great Depression. Like his fellow governor in New York, Franklin Roosevelt, Pinchot looked in vain to Hoover and the national government to address the growing distress of the unemployed. Also like Roosevelt, he used his state’s limited resources (in most states deficit financing was not an option) to put the unemployed to work building roads. He even decreed that heavy equipment should not be used, since this would reduce the number of people employed. The men worked for a meager salary plus food and lodging. Some 15,000 were put to work in the years before the incoming Roosevelt Administration established the nationwide work relief programs such he CWA, the CCC, and the WPA. Pinchot and especially his wife Cornelia also became solid supporters of the state’s miners and other workers in their struggles with their employers. Cornelia went down to the picket lines outside mines on strike and declared to the men that she and the governor were with them. Pinchot also ensured that the state police and national guard, not the private thugs of the mine and factory owners, kept order.

The situation Pinchot faced differed greatly from the prosperous years earlier in the century when Teddy Roosevelt was the standard bearer of progressivism. But, in a way, the championing of conservation by the two men took on a greater meaning as time passed. The recognition of the interconnections between man and nature and man’s duty to preserve the environment for future generations while enjoying its current benefits served as a paradigm for the larger meaning of the progressive cause. In his biography of Pinchot, Char Miller makes this connection:

That the forest could be studied and known, that its problems could be analyzed and presumably fixed, was precisely analogous to the tack urban reformers such as Jane Addams and Jacob Riis took when they wrote about immigrant life. . . . (Miller, p. 330)

In a telling anecdote, Miller relates how Pinchot took office space in New York in the 1890s when he started work as a consulting forester and chose to locate in a building housing the National Consumers League, the National Housing Association, the National Child Labor Committee, and other social service organizations.

Pinchot readily mixed with these reformers, who shared his faith in the people’s capacity to better the environment – both natural and human. It was then that he came into contact with Jane Addams and joined with her in her work on child welfare. (Ibid, p. 330)

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As already noted, the Progressives believed in the efficacy of a strong national government, staffed by trained professionals, and backed by the latest in scientific information, including a growing body of social science research. The impact of university professors and liberal intellectuals in devising new government programs and in analyzing the nation's problems cannot be overstated. What came to fruition in the New Deal had been in preparation at least since the beginning of progressive reform in the 1890's. While progressive/populist politicians like William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Robert La Follette, and Woodrow Wilson were indispensable in winning control of the national and state governments, the actual work of reform was performed by an army of dedicated professionals. They wrote the laws and regulations and created the government agencies (hated by conservative Republicans) that sought to safeguard the nation's environment and its citizens from the ill effects of untrammelled industrialism.

Richard T. Ely (1854-1943)

Richard Ely grew up on a farm in western New York, the eldest son of a pious father and a doting mother. He attended Columbia University (then College) as a scholarship student and then went abroad to study in Germany. Initially he pursued a PhD in philosophy, but under the influence of another American graduate student he met there (John R. Commons, later a leader in the American economics profession), he transferred into a program of study leading to a PhD in "political economy." Ely's strong religious groundings led him to reject the brutal Social Darwinist views of the classical economists beginning with the invisible hand of the free market imagined by Adam Smith and passing through the "survival of the fittest" ideology of Herbert Spencer. Instead, he subscribed to the German school of "historical economics" in which the economy was seen as an adjunct of the growth of the society from one of free contract and unlimited competition, to a more modern system of cooperation and state control. Back in the U.S. in the 1880s, Ely joined the faculty of Johns Hopkins University and soon developed an avid following among young men seeking advanced degrees in economics. Hopkins, at this time, was the premier American graduate university, which educated, among others, future president Woodrow Wilson, who went on to become a professor of political science and public administration at Princeton. Wilson took courses at Hopkins from Ely.

As part of his effort to build a school of thought that would counter the long-dominant classical economists, Ely was instrumental in founding the American Economic Association in 1884 and serving as its secretary until 1891. He was a highly prolific writer, whose textbook on the *Outlines of Economics* became the best selling college text on the subject until about 1950 (when it was overtaken by the Keynesian economist Paul Samuelson's textbook). Altogether, Ely's textbooks sold over one million copies during his lifetime, bringing him over \$7,000 annually in royalty payments through the 1930s.

In 1892, Ely moved to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he became head of the small economics department. Ely's influence in Wisconsin and nationally highlighted the growing influence of university professors in American life. Ely himself had to fight a bruising battle at Wisconsin to defend "academic freedom" when, in 1893, politically-motivated officials at the University tried to fire him due to disagreements over his economic views. He won the case and went on to eventually help found the American Association of University Professors in 1915, which remains the most powerful representative of university faculty in the United States, and one of the strongest advocates of academic freedom.

More a social reformer than a modern economist, Ely (along with John R. Commons who followed Ely to Wisconsin) became, in Richard Hofstadter's view, a sort of secular clergyman, who sought to put his Christian values into practice by devising ways to lessen social inequality. He also represented another example of the "professionalization" of the various branches of learning. Whereas not many years before,

college education in the United States was dominated by those trained as ministers in the nation's many Protestant denominations, men like Ely and Commons infused higher learning with a new scientific spirit, even while (in some cases) dedicating themselves to the service of God and country. Ely sought to show how competition had to give way to cooperation, and how man's social nature had been slighted by those theorists who saw him strictly as a factor of production. Labor, he insisted, could not be equated with land and capital as one of the components of economic activity. The individual worker's existence transcended his life on the job, since he actually composed the substance and purpose of all production (even, it should be noted, according to Adam Smith). Ely did not take the next step, however, and identify the worker as also the end user of all production, as the consumer. He did not point to Smith's dictum that the purpose of all production is consumption and that satisfying the consumer's need stood as the supreme purpose of all economic activity. According to Smith's way of thinking, any economic system that failed to achieve that end would surely collapse, whether it was based on socialist or free market principles.

Ely also advocated public ownership of so-called "natural monopolies," such as water, gas, and even railroads and tram lines. Sometimes referred to as "municipal socialism," the belief that such public services worked best if owned and operated by the local government represented a direct challenge to the free market economists, who insisted that public ownership always resulted in less efficient operation. His ideas reinforced Populist and then Progressive Party calls for the public ownership of the nation's railroads, whose private owners, he wrote, engaged in wasteful competition, on the one hand, and criminal collusion, on the other. By offering "rebates" to large shippers, the railroads helped to ensure the dominance of the biggest corporations in any industry by allowing them to move their products at a lower cost than smaller producers. The Standard Oil Company was the prime example of the market distorting power of such collusion.

Ely's public ownership ideas stemmed in part from his studies in Germany, where the government owned the railroads and, eventually, the electric power industry. Progressives used Ely's studies to reinforce their calls for public ownership, both on the local and national level.

At Wisconsin, Ely worked tirelessly to expand the reach of his Department of Political Economy and Sociology. He brought in speakers such as Jane Addams and Jacob Riis to give public lectures on the terrible conditions in the big city slums and what could be done about it. But he also made clear his belief that only an enlightened upper class could be trusted with the management of the new, progressive state he had in mind. "Reform, Ely had always insisted, must not come primarily from the working class or farmers but from the superior classes, those with talents and an understanding of their ethical obligations." (Rader, p. 132) In this respect he echoed his hero Teddy Roosevelt and the author of *The Promise of American Life*, Herbert Croly, who propounded much the same philosophy of "upper class reform."

Ely, like other progressive intellectuals, including John Dewey, believed that personality was formed largely as a result of environment. Improve the environment, through government action if necessary, and you can bring about a more upstanding and successful citizenry. In Ely's case, the idea was to help legislators achieve social reforms through studies on labor and living conditions in Wisconsin. Ely and his colleagues John R. Commons and the sociologist (and former Ely student) E.A. Ross pioneered the "think tank," which worked closely with state legislators to create the laws and regulations that made Wisconsin, for a time, the leading state in the nation in terms of progressive reforms: job safety legislation, health and welfare regulations in the state's urban and rural areas; the creation of data bases on such things as contagious illness, mortality, child abandonment, etc. that could be used to take remedial steps informed by factual information. Ely also took a continuing interest in land economics, aiming to use the state taxation system to encourage the socially beneficial use of public lands, much of which had been clear-cut by forestry companies like Weyerhaeuser and required extensive public money

to reforest. Ely and his associates showed how the lumbering interests and railroads could be taxed to provide the necessary revenue to ameliorate the public cost of these industrial activities. (Compare to today's idea of a "carbon tax" to encourage polluting industries to use non-hydrocarbon energy sources.)

Ely's close association with Teddy Roosevelt placed him in opposition to Wisconsin's Senator La Follette, whose own presidential aspirations lay in ruins following Roosevelt's nomination as the Progressive Party candidate in 1912. Ely, a life-long Republican up to this point, realized that Roosevelt had no chance to win election due to the split in the Republican vote and, instead, voted for Woodrow Wilson, whose progressive reform program included many items that Ely had long supported. Ely also parted company with La Follette on the proper role for the United States after the outbreak of war in Europe. Like Roosevelt, Ely firmly believed Americans had a role to play in international affairs and he strongly supported U.S. involvement in the war. La Follette espoused a pacifist policy and voted against the declaration of war in April 1917. Even before this, however, Ely had pulled back from more extreme progressive positions, largely due to threats to his burgeoning academic empire from a growing conservative majority on the University's Board of Regents. Ever the academic politician, Ely quickly adapted to the changing political winds and firmly eschewed any remaining socialist sentiments he might have earlier expressed, in lectures and in writing. By the 1920s, he had landed in the Big Business camp and supported the private ownership of the rapidly expanding electric utility industry, while reaping contributions for his center from the Insull power interests (the future Commonwealth Edison Company in Chicago).

Progressive Disillusionment and Disintegration during and after World War I

In the years before and after World War I, racism had not really become identified as a problem by Progressives and many otherwise sophisticated and well-educated Progressives harbored intensely racist views, certainly by today's standards. Since most of the nation's African-American population remained confined to the South before 1920 (where Progressives were few and far between, and Populists were unashamedly racist), the focus of racism during these years was on the newly arrived immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Perhaps racism is too strong a word, since these European immigrants were in fact white. But they might as well have been brown or black-skinned as far as many Progressives were concerned. The other major prejudice was against Japanese and Chinese immigrants, whose enterprise and rather clannish ways infuriated California natives and others along the West Coast.

Hofstadter in his *The Age of Reform* focuses on anti-immigrant sentiment among academics like E.A. Ross, John R. Commons, and Edward Bemis, all friends and associates of Ely and men who had lost teaching jobs due to their radical writings on labor conditions in America. Even Samuel Gompers, long time head of the American Federation of Labor, opposed unrestricted immigration, fearing the newcomers would undercut the wages of union members. Nativism, in other words, was pervasive. It finally reached its culmination in the Immigration Act of 1924, which essentially closed down immigration for people from Asia, but also reduced arrivals from Eastern and Southern Europe drastically. This discriminatory legislation passed with only nine dissenting votes in the Senate and a similarly small number of nays in the House of Representatives. The sponsors of the legislation were indeed conservative Republicans: Senator David Reed of Pennsylvania and Congressman Albert Johnson of Washington, but Progressive voices in or out of Congress – including those of Robert La Follette, Jane Addams, and William Allen White – were not raised in opposition to the Act, except to protest the violation of the "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan, concluded before World War I, in which the Japanese Government agreed to limit emigration in return for eventual citizenship for Japanese currently living in the U.S. Even the head of the American Jewish Committee, Rabbi Stephen Wise, accepted the need to limit immigration from Eastern Europe, including a large number of Jews, due to growing anti-Semitic sentiment in the U.S., such as that launched by the resurgent Ku Klux Klan. In fact, Progressive Jews like Wise and legal

scholar Felix Frankfurter saw the influx of poor Jews from the ghettos of Russia and Eastern Europe as a threat to the status of the country's largely German-Jewish population. Similarly, *New Republic* founder Walter Lippmann conscientiously avoided coming to the defense of his fellow Jews from "the East." Lippmann did not want to be thought of as a Jew, in fact, and saw himself as a man focusing on issues of American national interests and foreign policy (similar to what Henry Kissinger would later personify). He did not want to be drawn into defending Jews against anti-Semitic attacks.

In his anti-immigrant screed published in 1914 entitled *The Old World in the New*, sociologist and colleague of Ely at Wisconsin, E.A. Ross, expressed disdain for the new immigrants and their "pigsty mode of life." As had Gompers of the AF of L, he charged the new arrivals with undercutting labor standards and serving as scabs who would break strikes. But beyond that, he insisted these largely Catholic and Jewish immigrants threatened to pollute the Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority in the country through eventual intermarriage. As Hofstadter noted: "Ross's book was an expression by an articulate and educated man of feelings that were most common among the uneducated and among those who were half ashamed to articulate them." (*Age of Reform*, p. 180). "But", deep down, Hofstadter noted "the typical Progressive and the typical immigrant were immensely different, and the gulf between them was not usually bridged with much success in the Progressive era." (*Ibid*, p. 131) This would continue to be true through much of the 1920s until the emergence in the Democratic Party of Al Smith and in the Republican Party of Fiorello LaGuardia. By the 1930s, of course, Progressivism in the U.S. had found a new and broader base. It had not yet expanded to include the nation's large black minority – still largely disenfranchised in the South -- but at least within the Democratic Party the program of progressive reform depended on a growing number of "ethnic" politicians. The "hyphenated Americans," who in 1924 a conservative Republican like Albert Johnson had more or less excluded from any active role in American life, now started to make their presence felt.

The Progressives of the early 1900s were, however, intent on Americanization of the new immigrants and their assimilation into the mainstream through the public schools. Jane Addams, whose Hull House in Chicago became a famous entry point for new arrivals and their progeny, noted in 1909 that when "entertaining immigrants" at the settlement house, she sought to "preserve and keep whatever of value their past life contained and to bring them in contact with a better type of Americans." (Addams, p. 153). But during and after the First World War, this enlightened approach to assimilation of the newcomers gave way to an overwrought emphasis on "Americanism," in which immigrants of almost any variety outside the favored "Nordics," were considered undesirables. Addams found herself in a shrinking minority of Progressives by the 1920s, who believed that America was enriched by immigrants and that they did not pose an ethnic or security threat. Many otherwise progressive public figures embraced the pseudoscience of eugenics, which held that "lower races" were genetically inferior to the old-line, Americans.

Addams and her friend and fellow social activist John Dewey, believed education – public education – was the answer to many of society's problems. Addams saw her settlement house as supplementing the work of the schools. "The public schools in the immigrant colonies deserve all the praise as Americanizing agencies which can be bestowed upon them," she wrote in her book about Hull House (p. 167). While the schools had long been assigned the task of instilling a strong work ethic and moral values in their pupils, with the great influx of new immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the schools also became the site of civic and social education. "Progressive education," the term often used to describe Dewey's "hands on" approach to instruction, had as a primary goal the attachment of the young to the society in which they lived. More than just individual instruction, the children of America had to be made aware that they lived in a large, organic society in which the various members worked together for the common good. This objective quite consciously sought to counteract the turbulent individualism that normally characterizes the young, but also to send a message that life in society

required more than just the pursuit of personal advancement. Such ideas did not necessarily find reinforcement in the era's "survival of the fittest" social dogma.

Unlike the pacifist Addams, Dewey supported U.S. entry into World War I, although he never succumbed to the rabid nationalism that afflicted people like Theodore Roosevelt. According to his biographer Alan Ryan, "Dewey was not an aggressive nationalist, but he was a nationalist of sorts. His emphasis on education and on the education of the immigrant was unabashedly an emphasis on the Americanization of newcomers. It was not a simple 'melting pot' theory that he held, but Dewey wanted to see newcomers both made to learn English and helped to learn English by being given free classes at convenient times. He was less ready than Miss Addams to serve people as he found them; he also wanted to turn them into good Americans, public spirited citizens, and members of the 'great community.'" Ryan concludes that "He was a benign, mild, and good-natured nationalist, but he was a nationalist." (Ryan, p. 153)

Their friendship almost disintegrated as Addams and Dewey gravitated to opposite sides of the pro-war and anti-war spectrum. Addams went on to become president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and after the War a tireless advocate for international reconciliation. She eventually became the first woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

Walter Lippmann, the young acolyte of Lincoln Steffens and one of the founders of *The New Republic* reflected in his writings during and after World War I the mutation of progressive thought from optimism about America, to realism about the American people. Looking at the results of the 1920 election, which brought the unqualified but photogenic Warren G. Harding to the presidency, and the wave of anti-labor and anti-immigrant feeling that swept the country in the wake of World War I, Lippmann published two books – *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public* -- that questioned the old progressive belief in the basic wisdom of "the people." Given the growing influence of the mass media and advertising, Lippmann expressed serious doubts about the ability of the average voter to make informed decisions regarding matters of public policy. Echoing sentiments similar to those expressed a few decades earlier by Richard Ely, Lippmann and other disillusioned progressives wondered if American democracy could only succeed if and when the affairs of state were turned over to an educated and sophisticated elite that could guide the country safely through the stormy seas of international competition and domestic class struggle. The people, Lippmann believed, were too apt to be manipulated by powerful economic and political players to be relied upon to make sound decisions at election time. Unfortunately, if a democracy is to remain a democracy, there is nowhere else to turn, even if "the people" prove to be unequal to the task of self-government. Only public spirited leadership of the sort personified by men like Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Stimson, or even Gifford Pinchot, can ensure that a democratic government remains the true guardian of the long-term national interest.