

FROM UTOPIAN RADICALISM TO BULL MOOSE LIBERALISM:
AN ANALYSIS OF "PROGRESSIVE" POLITICAL THOUGHT

by

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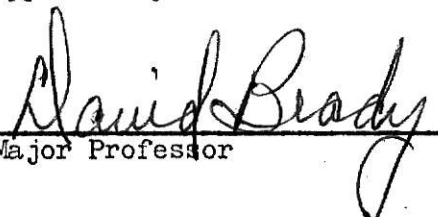
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INTRODUCTION

Ten years prior to the Civil War, America was a rural and largely nonindustrialized nation. In fact, it is hard even to describe the United States as a nation. That there was a federal government cannot be disputed, but that it was a real force in people's lives can be.¹ For the most part Americans lived in isolated island communities; in these communities they depended upon one another for their livelihood, their security—both physical and economic, for their education, and for their culture, such as it may have been. The communication between inhabitants of a small town in the Mid-West was usually limited to the inhabitants of that town; rarely did they communicate with the inhabitants of even another small town in a neighboring state. Even in the urban areas (which needless to say were much smaller than the urban centers of today), people lived in neighborhoods. The feeling of isolation that is common in society today was not so prevalent in the 1850's. The pace of life in America was slow, and industrialization with all its progress and its problems had not yet become a major factor in American society.

By the end of the Civil War, and certainly by the 1870's, the face of America had changed drastically. Industrialization had come with its progress and the concomitant problems had surfaced. It was becoming apparent that with the vast quantities of public land being given to the railroads by

¹See Lucian W. Pye, Politics, Personality, and Nation Building: Burma's Search For Identity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), for a more complete discussion of what constitutes a nation.

Congress that there was no longer an unlimited supply of good farmland for homesteading. A little more than thirty years after the first Homestead Act was passed Frederick Jackson Turner would write that the frontier was closed; ten years earlier during the droughts in the Great Plains many homesteaders discovered that, at best, their land was only marginally productive. At the same time the urban centers with their neighborhood sentiments changed drastically. Large influxes of new immigrants landed on our shores and vastly accelerated the deterioration of neighborhoods and the emergence of ghettos which had begun with the Irish prior to the Civil War. Without money and without skills they tried to make a living and believed as most Americans did that upward mobility and security in society was a dream that was attainable. They came to the United States looking for a better life than they had known before, but the illusionary quality of that better life was soon recognized.

As recent studies by social historians have demonstrated, the belief in social mobility during the decades following the Civil War was simply a myth. The vast majority of the people were unable to substantially improve their economic condition within their lifetime.² As the years passed the dream of security faded before the eyes of the people. They lived at subsistence level always from hand to mouth and while a few of them did gain some measure of security, the great mass of these new Americans lived a precarious existence from day to day. Whatever security they may have achieved was undermined by the periodic depressions which plagued the American economy during this period.

²One of the best examples of this new research can be found in Stephen Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress (New York: Atheneum, 1969).

At the same time, some men became rich and richer at the expense of what was becoming the dispossessed middle class. At first glance (during the decade of the 1880's), it seemed as though there were three classes: the very rich possessing great power at the top, smaller businessmen, professional people and white-collar workers in the middle, and the great mass of wage earners and farmers below. Actually there were only two classes: established wealth fought each other and the middle class until there existed only those who were rich and powerful at the top and those who were poor and powerless at the bottom.³ The small capitalist faced tremendous economic difficulties. He could not successfully compete with giant corporations and trusts which held so much control over the means of production and the distribution of goods. The general trend in one business after another was for the small independent operator to give way to the large corporation.

The prevailing popular philosophy of Social Darwinism did nothing to alleviate the social and economic problems facing American society. In fact, Social Darwinism as presented by its leading proponent William Graham Sumner expressed approval of the American condition. Sumner noted that although many economists were worried about the economic distress and misery of the great mass of people, unfettered competition would bring about the best society. Speaking about these concerned economists Sumner commented:

They do not perceive that here "the strong" and "the weak" are terms which admit of no definition unless they are made equivalent to the industrious and the idle, the frugal and the extravagant. They do not perceive, furthermore, that if we do

³Robert H. Weibe, The Search For Order (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 13. The middle class referred to here is a middle class consisting of small shop-keepers and petite bourgeoisie, not the new middle class of semi-professionals and professionals who would form the basis of the Progressive movement in the twentieth century.

not like the survival of the fittest, we have only one possible alternative, and that is the survival of the unfittest. The former is the law of civilization; the latter is the law of anti-civilization.⁴

It was in this atmosphere that the dispossessed middle class and some of the poor began to search for new alternatives from the philosophy of Social Darwinism and the economic conditions it sanctioned. Given this climate it was not surprising that radical reformers and utopian thinkers flourished. The utopian writers found a receptive audience for their ideas, but although it would appear that conditions in America had deteriorated badly, the utopias these radicals hoped for never did appear. Some of their ideas for change, however, were incorporated into the American psyche by those who followed the utopians, the men associated with the Progressive movement. Many historians and political scientists have analyzed the Progressive movement and given this movement praise for its radical tone and the changes it wrought. The primary focus of this thesis however will be to show that the Progressive movement was not radical at all; that in fact it perverted the ideals of the radical reformers and utopians in order to preserve the status quo.

The reader may well ask: What is the purpose of studying a philosophy and movement long since gone? What relevance does it hold for those of us living in the present? In an article in The Yale Law Journal David Riesman answers this question most satisfactorily.

A revival of the tradition of utopian thinking seems . . . one of the important intellectual tasks of today. Since we live in a time of disenchantment, such thinking, where it is rational in aim

⁴William Graham Sumner, Essays of William Graham Sumner, ed. by Albert G. Keller and Maurice R. Davie, II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), p. 56. For a full discussion of Social Darwinism and its influence on American philosophy see Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955).

and method and not mere escapism, is not easy; it is easier to concentrate on programs for choosing among lesser evils, even to the point where these evils can scarcely be distinguished, one from the other. For there is always a market for lesser-evil thinking which poses immediate alternatives; the need for thinking which confronts us with great hopes and great plans is not so evident. Yet without great plans, it is hard and often self-defeating to make little ones.⁵

While Social Darwinism with its deterministic approach to political life was the prevailing philosophy of the nineteenth century, twentieth century man would generally say that the future is not predestined. If we believe this, then we must believe in at least a limited ability to foresee future events. The political scientist then, can use historical knowledge as a tool in order to establish a framework for future action. As Ortega Y. Gasset has observed:

Historical knowledge is a technique of the first order to preserve and continue a civilization already advanced. Not that it affords positive solutions to the new aspect of vital conditions . . . but that it prevents us committing the ingenuous mistakes of other times. But if, in addition to being old and, therefore, beginning to find life difficult, you have lost the memory of the past, and do not profit by experience, then everything turns to disadvantage.⁶

This thesis deals specifically with past attempts to predict events in the future and the results of these predictions. The purpose, then, is to discover the environmental conditions that led to utopian thinking and to show where and why the utopians failed as predictors. The need to study this specific type of thinking and behavior is obvious; prediction is the stock and trade of the political scientist. Bertrand de Jouvenal sees the political scientist as an expert in the field of prediction: he should have the ability

⁵David Riesman, "Some Observations on Community Plans and Utopia," The Yale Law Journal, LVII (n.d.), 173.

⁶Ortega Y. Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses (London: Unwin Books, 1961), p. 69.

to foresee trouble; to obtain this foresight political behavior must be studied; and "the political scientist should [be able to] foretell the adjustments suitable to improve the adequacy of the institutional system to cope with changing circumstances."⁷

The purpose, therefore, is to study the past so that we may better understand and deal effectively with the future. Even the most democratic governments are likely to come to a bad end unless they become at least as responsive to the basic needs of all their citizens as they are to the most insistent demands of the various articulate and influential groups and parties.⁸

The purpose of this thesis is to show that the radical reformers and utopians studied in the following pages had this end in sight. That environmental conditions occurred which altered the fully receptive climate they might have received is important. What is more important is that their disciples altered their proposals, but more basically their ideals, so that the individual living in the American society that exists today lives on a mountain top of precariously arranged "reform" pebbles, which threatens to crumble with the slightest breeze. It appears that what we need now is less reform and as Riesman noted a return to utopian thinking and "the making of great plans" so that our society no longer will be predicated on so precarious an existence.

⁷Bertrand de Jouvenal, "Political Science and Prevision," American Political Science Review, LIX (March, 1965), 33-8.

⁸Christian Bay, "Politics and Pseudopolitics: A Critical Evaluation of Some Behavioral Literature," American Political Science Review, LIX (March, 1965), 40.

The following statement by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., humorously describes the United States during the time period prior to the Civil War to the present.⁹

Dear Cousin, or whoever you may be —

Congratulations on your great good fortune. Have fun. It may increase your perspective to know what sorts of manipulators and custodians your unbelievable wealth has had up to now.

Like so many great American fortunes, the Rosewater pile was accumulated in the beginning by a humorless, constipated Christian farm boy turned speculator and briber during and after the Civil War. The farm boy was Noah Rosewater, my great-grandfather, who was born in Rosewater County, Indiana.

Noah and his brother George inherited from their pioneer father six hundred acres of farmland, land as dark and rich as chocolate cake, and a small saw factory that was nearly bankrupt. War came.

George raised a rifle company, marched away at its head.

Noah hired a village idiot to fight in his place, converted his saw factory to the manufacture of swords and bayonets, converted the farm to the raising of hogs. Abraham Lincoln declared that no amount of money was too much to pay for the restoration of the Union, so Noah priced his merchandise in scale with the national tragedy. And he made this discovery: Government objections to the price or quality of his wares could be vaporized with bribes that were pitifully small.

He married Cleota Herrick, the ugliest woman in Indiana, because she had four hundred thousand dollars. With her money he expanded the factory and bought more farms, all in Rosewater County. He became the largest individual hog farmer in the North. And, in order not to be victimized by meat packers, he bought controlling interest in an Indianapolis slaughterhouse. In order not to be victimized by steel suppliers, he bought controlling interest in a steel company in Pittsburgh. In order not to be victimized by coal suppliers, he bought controlling interest in several mines. In order not to be victimized by money lenders, he founded a bank.

And his paranoid reluctance to be a victim caused him to deal more and more in valuable papers, in stocks and bonds, and less and less in swords and pork. Small experiments with worthless papers convinced him that such papers could be sold effortlessly. While he continued to bribe persons in government to hand over treasures and national resources, his first enthusiasm became the peddling of watered stock.

When the United States of America, which was meant to be a Utopia for all, was less than a century old, Noah Rosewater and a few men like him demonstrated the folly of the Founding Fathers in one respect: those sadly recent ancestors had not made it the law of the Utopia that the

⁹Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater: or Pearls Before Swine (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 10-15.

wealth of each citizen should be limited. This oversight was engendered by a weak-kneed sympathy for those who loved expensive things, and by the feeling that the continent was so vast and valuable, and the population so thin and enterprising, that no thief, no matter how fast he stole, could more than mildly inconvenience anyone.

Noah and a few like him perceived that the continent was in fact finite, and that venal office-holders, legislators in particular, could be persuaded to toss up great hunks of it for grabs, and to toss them in such a way as to have them land where Noah and his kind were standing.

Thus did a handful of rapacious citizens come to control all that was worth controlling in America. Thus was the savage and stupid and entirely inappropriate and unnecessary and humorless American class system created. Honest, industrious, peaceful citizens were classed as bloodsuckers, if they asked to be paid a living wage. And they saw that praise was reserved henceforth for those who devised means of getting paid enormously for committing crimes against which no laws had been passed. Thus the American dream turned belly up, turned green, bobbed to the scummy surface of cupidity unlimited, filled with gas, went bang in the noonday sun.

E pluribus unum is surely an ironic motto to inscribe on the currency of this Utopia gone bust, for every grotesquely rich American represents property, privileges, and pleasures that have been denied the many. An even more instructive motto, in the light of history made by the Noah Rosewaters, might be: Grab much too much, or you'll get nothing at all.

And Noah begat Samuel, who married Geraldine Ames Rockefeller. Samuel became even more interested in politics than his father had been, served the Republican Party tirelessly as a king-maker, caused that party to nominate men who would whirl like dervishes, bawl fluent Babylonian, and order the militia to fire into crowds whenever a poor man seemed on the point of suggesting that he and a Rosewater were equal in the eyes of the law.

And Samuel bought newspapers, and preachers, too. He gave them this simple lesson to teach, and they taught it well: Anybody who thought that the United States of America was supposed to be a Utopia was a piggy, lazy, God-damned fool. Samuel thundered that no American factory hand was worth more than eighty cents a day. And yet he could be thankful for the opportunity to pay a hundred thousand dollars or more for a painting by an Italian three centuries dead. And he capped this insult by giving paintings to museums for the spiritual elevation of the poor. The museums were closed on Sundays.

And Samuel begat Lister Ames Rosewater, who married Eunice Eliot Morgan. There was something to be said for Lister and Eunice: unlike Noah and Cleota and Samuel and Geraldine, they could laugh as though they meant it. As a curious footnote to history, Eunice became Woman's Chess Champion of the United States in 1927, and again in 1933.

Eunice also wrote an historical novel about a female gladiator, Ramba of Macedon, which was a best-seller in 1936. Eunice died in 1937, in a sailing accident in Cotuit, Massachusetts. She was a wise and amusing person, with very sincere anxieties about the condition of the poor. She was my mother.

Her husband, Lister, never was in business. From the moment of his birth to the time I am writing this, he has left the manipulation of his assets to lawyers and banks. He has spent nearly the whole of his adult life in the Congress of the United States, teaching morals, first as a

Representative from the district whose heart is Rosewater County, and then as a Senator from Indiana. That he is or ever was an Indiana person is a tenuous political fiction. And Lister begat Eliot.

Lister has thought about the effects and implications of his inherited wealth about as much as most men think about their left big toes. The fortune has never amused, worried, or tempted him. Giving ninety-five per cent of it to the Foundation you now control didn't cause him a twinge.

And Eliot married Sylvia DuVrais Zetterling, a Parisienne beauty who came to hate him. Her mother was a patroness of painters. Her father was the greatest living cellist. Her maternal grandparents were a Rothschild and a DuPont.

And Eliot became a drunkard, a Utopian dreamer, a tinhorn saint, an aimless fool.

Begat he not a soul.

Bon voyage, dear Cousin or whoever you are. Be generous. Be kind. You can safely ignore the arts and sciences. They never helped anybody. Be a sincere, attentive friend of the poor.

The letter was signed,

The late Eliot Rosewater

When the United States of America, which was meant to be a Utopia for all, was less than a century old, Noah Rosewater and a few men like him demonstrated the folly of the Founding Fathers in one respect: those sadly recent ancestors had not made it the law of the Utopia that the wealth of each citizen should be limited. This oversight was engendered by a weak-kneed sympathy for those who loved expensive things, and by the feeling that the continent was so vast and valuable, and the population so thin and enterprising, that no thief, no matter how fast he stole, could more than mildly inconvenience anyone.

—Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 11.

CHAPTER I

THE PROGRESSIVES: RADICAL REFORMERS AND UTOPIAN THINKERS

Those radical reformers and utopian thinkers who constituted the progressives to be discussed in this chapter are not the familiar names of the Progressive movement. It is important that this be understood; for the former are decidedly different—in character, in philosophy, and in actions from the latter, who are, as I shall show, in reality not progressive at all. What is needed at this point is some criteria to define these progressives.

The progressives were men of various backgrounds and held a variety of different ideas, especially in the realm of means, but what they all agreed on was a common objective: that individuals should not be ensnared by institutions and/or governments which make life poor (both economically and spiritually), and that the concern of government should be for the care and culture of mankind. The following propositions summarize the points to which the progressives subscribed:

1. It is considered proper for progressives to either theorize or act, or both, but at the same time it was not deemed necessary that everyone engage

in practical politics.

2. The utopians (which many of the progressives were) believed in a "potential reality" that was neither dream nor reality, but a realistic proposition.
3. They were primarily interested in moral principles; although some of them welcomed each small piece of reform legislation they were mainly concerned with the ends to which legislation pointed.
4. They believed in moral standards thereby shunning the rule of expediency; justice was a necessary condition whatever the cost.
5. These progressives shared a common view of the middle class to which they belonged and to which they directed their arguments. They directed themselves to the petite bourgeoisie, which as has been stated earlier, was almost extinct during the last decade of the nineteenth century.¹

In short, what separated the progressives from the other literate and well-known men of their time and made them so distinct was their rejection of the thesis of Social Darwinism. This theory subscribed to the notion that only the "fittest" have the right to survive; that this is the only way that the United States could become a strong nation; and that furthermore it was desirable that poverty exist so that the "unfit" could be weeded out of society. All of this was an anathema to the progressives. The deterministic tenets of Social Darwinism they rejected totally; this fact in itself made them distinctive and productive. Unlike other concerned scholars they were not content to sit on their hands and wait for better days. Richard Hofstadter commenting on this situation relates the following incident:

¹See Daniel Aaron, Men of Good Hope (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. xii-xiii; also David Riesman, "Some Observations on Community Plans and Utopia," Yale Law Review, LVII, pp. 172-75.

Acceptance of the Spencerian [the major sociological popularizer of Social Darwinism] philosophy brought with it a paralysis of the will to reform. . . .

Youmans in Henry George's presence denounced with great fervor the political corruption of New York and the selfishness of the rich in ignoring or promoting it when they found it profitable to do so. "What do you propose to do about it?" George asked. "Nothing! You and I can do nothing at all. Its all a matter of evolution. We can only wait for evolution. Perhaps in four or five thousand years evolution may have carried men beyond this state of things."²

The progressives to be discussed here, Henry George, Edward Bellamy, William Dean Howells and Henry Demarest Lloyd, were not content with Youmans reply. That nothing was being done to alleviate the causes of misery was obvious, that nothing could be done was not an acceptable answer. This then, was the impetus for the progressives: contemporary life is beset by poverty but the situation can be remedied. Each of the progressives was fully prepared to work for a better life and society than the one that existed, and each fully believed that a more perfect society could be realized. The rest of this chapter will discuss the individual utopian progressives and the ideas expressed in their major works.

Henry George: The Single Tax

The mass of people in the late 1870's were adversely affected by the economic depression which occurred in that decade. Because Social Darwinism advocated the economic doctrine of laissez-faire, it was unable to offer any remedies to the depressed population and economy. Factories and workers remained idle, men roamed the country, crime became a problem and national attention focused on the violent strikes that occurred.

²Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 47.

In this atmosphere, Henry George was very much a man of his time. In his youth and early life he lived either in or on the border line of poverty. Although lacking an extensive formal education, he soon began to see the political and moral implications of his poverty. Writing home in 1861 he observed that "the want of a few dollars . . . keeps us separate . . . forces us to struggle on so painfully . . . crushes down all the noblest yearnings of the heart and mind."³ In 1868, he wrote, "Those who have only their own labor will become poorer, and find it harder to get ahead."⁴

In 1868 George finally found employment on the San Francisco Times and with this employment came the self-discovery that he was developing a philosophy and had the ability to express it well in print. He crusaded actively for reforms of all sorts in the following years, but by 1877 his philosophy had become more systematized. California was suffering from another periodic depression when George decided to write a magazine article on the problem of poverty.⁵ What started out to be a magazine article became a book, his masterpiece Progress and Poverty.⁶ In his text George outlined the major problems in the economic system.

1. Although one would tend to believe that industrialization and its companion, material progress, would substantially improve the economic condition of the mass of people, just the opposite had occurred. Industrialization seemed to unleash forces which are difficult to control.

2. George accepted completely the theory of classical economists that competition is good and that a high degree of mobility existed between capital and labor. He also recognized that not only laborers, but capitalists as well can suffer from periodic economic depressions.

³Quoted in Aaron, p. 61. ⁴Aaron, p. 62. ⁵Ibid., p. 65. ⁶Ibid.

3. He believed that land on rent tends to absorb the gains that are made by material progress; this kept both interest and wages at the subsistence level. He based this theory on Ricardo's Law of Rent which can be defined as the difference between that which is produced on fertile land over that produced on marginal land, given the same inputs of capital and labor. Continued production increases require that poorer land be brought into cultivation and urban land therefore increases in value. What determines rent is the difference between the value of urban land and rural land, and the difference in productivity between fertile land and marginal land. When rent increases too quickly, little is left for wages and interest.
4. The major ethical point that George made was that private ownership of land was unethical for two reasons: first, if all men are created equal then they must have an equal right to the gifts of Nature; and second, because the only justification for private property comes from labor, only things which are produced by labor should be privately owned. Since land is produced by Nature it is therefore excluded from the realm of private property.⁷

As he stated:

And for this reason, that which a man makes or produces is his own . . . to enjoy or to destroy, to use, to exchange, or to give. No one else can rightfully claim it, and his exclusive right to it involves no wrong to anyone else. Thus there is to everything produced by human exertion a clear and indisputable title to exclusive possession and enjoyment, which is perfectly consistent with justice, as it descends from the original producer, in whom it is vested by natural law.

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If we are all here by equal permission of the Creator, we are all here with an equal title to the enjoyment of his bounty—with an equal right to the use of all that nature so impartially offers. This is a right which is natural and inalienable; it is a right which vests in every human being as he enters the world, and which during his continuance in the world can be limited only by the equal rights of others. . . . There is on earth no

⁷Steven B. Cord, Henry George: Dreamer or Realist? (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), pp. 23-24.

power which can rightfully make a grant of exclusive ownership in land. If all existing men were to unite to grant away their equal rights, they could not grant away the right of those who follow them. For what are we but tenants for a day?⁸

George did not propose that the government appropriate all private land; rather he argued that a tax should be placed on it which the government would collect. Hence the name "single tax" is applied to his proposal. This single tax on land would benefit society in a number of ways. It would make land speculation unprofitable, which would have eliminated one of the causes of economic depression. Land prices would drop due to the collection of the tax, thereby making it possible for people to have more access to the land and also cutting down on unemployment. Since the ownership of land produces great wealth and privileges, the single tax would bring an end to economic inequality by making it unprofitable to own more land than is necessary for survival. With the money collected from the land tax the government could begin to undertake welfare programs that would benefit the mass of people.⁹ He did not see the single tax as an end in itself, but as a beginning toward a more humane society and a better life for the mass of wage earners.

Although George wrote Progress and Poverty with an eye towards the problems of the lower economic classes in society, he did not expect them to read his book in any great numbers. The publication of his book was meant to reach the minds of the middle classes, for these were the people whom he believed (like the other progressives of his day) could bring about change. Progress and Poverty not only provided a theory on how to eliminate poverty, but was also a lesson on survival tactics. He tried to convey to the middle

⁸Henry George, Progress and Poverty (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1916), pp. 336-37.

⁹Cord, p. 26.

class that the existing economic and social order had to change (he hoped without a violent revolution), and that the middle class had a stake in evolutionary reforms.

George did succeed in reaching the public; his book was reviewed both by the magazines that were circulated among the middle class and the academic journals. William Lloyd Garrison, the former abolitionist, reviewed Progress and Poverty for The Arena. He commented:

The advocates of the single tax believe that the true cause of social wrong, so generally considered inscrutable is the unjust misappropriation of land or natural opportunity. . . . Nor is this conviction peculiar to the followers of Henry George. It has been forced upon human consciousness since the days of the Bible. . . . But the remedy had not been perceived before the publication of "Progress and Poverty," in which it was made plain. Our mission is to urge the trial of the remedy, and to persuade people that justice is the greatest solvent in the world; that the power to perpetuate practical slavery, which the control of land confers upon the landlord, has in it no element of justice or equity.¹⁰

Not only was Progress and Poverty reviewed enthusiastically by some of the liberal periodicals, but it was also analyzed in academic journals.

Charles Spahr made the following statement in the Political Science Quarterly concerning the single tax: "The attacks which have been made upon the doctrines of Henry George have almost all proceeded upon the assumption that Mr. George is an apostle of socialism. . . . In fact he is the most extreme of individualists."¹¹

Spahr went on to say that he felt that the "logical outcome" of the single tax would be the impoverishment of society "by depriving it of the part-ownership which it now holds in every form of wealth, and enrich property

¹⁰William Lloyd Garrison, "Ethics of the Single Tax," The Arena, XXI (Jan., 1899), p. 52.

¹¹Charles B. Spahr, "The Single Tax," Political Science Quarterly, VI (March, 1891), p. 625.

owners by relieving them of the public duties now recognized as being binding on them. . . . The only good end which the single tax . . . would attain—the freeing of propertyless masses from indirect taxes might be attained . . . by rigorously carrying out the American principle that taxation should be in proportion to wealth.”¹²

While the idea of the single tax was never realized, George's book deeply affected American society. What accounted for the tremendous success of his book was that he dealt directly with deeply felt problems of his time: poverty and depression. However, the single tax would not have been the panacea for the American economy that George claimed it would be. There are a number of reasons why this was so. In the first place both poor and rich people own land; at the same time many people of wealth own no land. Given this state of affairs, poor people owning land would be forced to pay taxes, while the wealthy who owned no land would be exempt from paying taxes. Richard T. Ely, for example, opposed the land tax because he found it inelastic.¹³ He did not believe that the amount of tax that could be collected from land owners would necessarily meet the demand of funds needed by the government to carry out social welfare programs. Charles B. Spahr contended that farmers would be made to suffer at the expense of the great majority of people.¹⁴ Although not much research has been done in this field, it appears that farmers who make large capital investments in machinery or livestock would not suffer as much as the farmer whose main investment is in land.

¹²Ibid., pp. 633-34.

¹³Richard T. Ely, Outline of Economics (New York: The McMillan Company, 1908), p. 460.

¹⁴Spahr, p. 634.

Although his proposal of the single tax would not have brought about the perfect society George dreamed of, the importance of his contribution lay in his personal philosophy rather than in his economic thesis. He stimulated the trend toward municipal control of public utilities and as Sidney Sherwood commented, pointed out the folly of granting municipal franchises to companies without adequate compensation. This was a part of George's anti-monopoly program and he performed a great service to society by advocating public ownership of public values.¹⁵

George did not believe in a socialist economy. What links him with the other progressives was his ethic. Poverty was condemned not just because it brings physical suffering, but also because it brutalizes the soul. As he stated, "The wrong that produces inequality; the wrong that in the midst of abundance tortures men with want or harries them with fear of want; that stunts them physically, degrades them intellectually and distorts them morally, is what alone prevents harmonious social development."¹⁶ This was the central value which defined the progressives: a genuine concern for their fellow men—and it is this that makes them so distinctive in our own times.

Edward Bellamy: Looking Backward—A Nationalist Utopia

When Bellamy had completed his utopian novel Looking Backward (1887) he sent the book to Ticknor, a Boston publisher. Ticknor, after receiving the manuscript asked Bellamy for an autobiographical sketch that could be published along with the text. Edward Bellamy, being a rather modest person,

¹⁵Sidney Sherwood, Tendencies in American Economic Thought (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1897), p. 607.

¹⁶Quoted in Aaron, p. 71.

sent off the following notice to describe himself to his future readers.

Born at Chicopee Falls [near Springfield, Massachusetts] 1850, direct line of descent from Dr. Joseph Bellamy the brimstone divine . . . for a short time of Union College but not a graduate; after college a year in Germany; educated as a lawyer but never a practitioner; by occupation a journalist and fiction writer; 1871-2 outside Editorial contributor to the N. Y. Evening Post; for half-year after that editorial writer and Lit. critic on staff of Springfield Daily Union; 1876-7 . . . Voyage for health to Sandwich Islands; subsequently one of the founders of Springfield Daily News; published four books, some dozens of stories . . . several barrels of editorials.¹⁷

Looking Backward was a fantastic success; it could claim millions of readers. Some years after its publication, Bellamy was asked how he came to write a utopian novel. William Dean Howells related the following incident: "I recall how, when we first met, he told me that he had come to think of our hopeless conditions suddenly, one day, in looking at his own children, and reflecting that he could not place them beyond the chance of want by any industry or forecast or providence; and that the status meant the impossibility for others, which it meant for him."¹⁸

While it is probable that a concern for his children's future encouraged him to write Looking Backward, it does not appear to be likely that this incident was his prime source of motivation. In an article written for The Ladies Home Journal in 1894, Bellamy revealed more accurately the conditions which aroused him to write a book of the nature.

Up to the age of eighteen I had lived almost continually in a thriving village of New England, where there were no very rich and very few poor, and everybody who was willing to work was sure of a fair living. At that time I visited Europe. . . . It was in the great cities of England . . . that my eyes were first fully opened to the extent and consequences of man's inhumanity to man. . . . I distinctly recall the innumerable debates, suggested by the piteous sights about us, . . . as to the possibility of finding some great remedy for poverty, some plan for equalizing human

¹⁷Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁸William Dean Howells, "Edward Bellamy," The Atlantic Monthly, LXXXII (August, 1898), p. 256.

conditions. Our discussions usually brought up against the same old stump: who would do the dirty work? We did not realize, as probably few do who lightly dismiss the subject of social reform with the same query, that its logic implies the condonation of all forms of slavery. Not until we all acknowledge the world's "dirty work" as our common and equal responsibility, shall we be in a position . . . to consider, . . . a just and reasonable way of distributing and adjusting the burden. So it was that when I returned home, for the first time aroused to the existence and urgency of the social problem, but without as yet seeing any way out.¹⁹

The thesis of nationalism, expressed in Looking Backward, becomes the "way out" of the bad society into a good one.

Bellamy called Looking Backward a utopian romance and although romance does exist in the book it is peripheral to the political, economic and social ideas expressed. Julian West who is the hero of the novel goes to sleep at the hands of a mesmerist in an underground vault, and awakens in the perfect vigor of youth after the lapse of more than a century to find a new and better Boston. In this regenerated world, pauperism is unknown; crime has almost entirely disappeared—the rare remaining manifestations of evil purpose are being treated as atavisms; wars have gone, and with them the fleets and armies; politics have altogether ceased to be, and corruption is unknown. Squalid poverty is absent due to the fact that every citizen is part of the industrial army and is paid an amount equal to that of all other citizens, in a manner that will provide for his needs comfortably. This is the society of Looking Backward in the year two thousand and one.²⁰

Looking Backward was a great success for two reasons. It bore a sense of urgency, which was easily communicated to its readers for they were living

¹⁹Edward Bellamy, "How I Wrote Looking Backward," Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! (Kansas City: The Peerage Press, 1937), pp. 217-18. Reprinted from The Ladies Home Journal, II (April, 1894), pp. 1-3.

²⁰This is but the barest sketch of a book containing a complex social structure. Bellamy wrote a more detailed explanation of the important points in Looking Backward which may be found in the Appendix.

in critical times; smoke from the great strikes of 1885, 1886, and 1887 still hung over American society and no one knew whether the troubled times were ending or just beginning. More importantly, the novel suggested a way out of the chaotic conditions threatening the lives of most people in a manner that did not alienate them. In Looking Backward, Bellamy avoided associating his program, nationalism, with the program of socialism. Shortly after publication of the book he wrote to Howells, commenting: "Every sensible man will admit that there is a big deal in a name. . . . In the radicalness of the opinions I have expressed I may seem to out socialize the socialists yet the word socialist is one I could never stomach. It smells to the average American of petroleum, suggests the red flag and all manner of sexual novel-ties, and an abusive tone about God and religion. . . . Whatever German or French reformers may choose to call themselves, socialist is not a good name for a party to succeed in America."²¹

Keeping in mind the definition of utopia, that it is not unrealistic and within the realm of possibility, Bellamy fully expected that his social state would be a working reality by the time of the next generation, if not in his own. He realized also that the good society would not just appear, but expected that it would take effort on the part of a good many people to bring his ideas into reality. Being of a rather modest disposition he declined to lead a political movement of nationalism and turned down hundreds of invitations to speak publically. But this, however, did not prevent him from trying to realize his own ideals in the medium in which he was most comfortable—the printed word.

²¹Arthur E. Morgan, Edward Bellamy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 193.

Shortly after the publication of Looking Backward, Cyrus Field Willard, a Boston journalist, wrote to Bellamy and suggested the formation of Nationalist Clubs to promote his ideas; Bellamy responded enthusiastically. The membership of the First Nationalist Club included a number of impressive people. Everett Edward Hale, minister of the Unitarian Church, joined and brought along William Dean Howells and Colonel Higginson (writer, poet, and abolitionist orator), and Hamlin Garland. Colonel Higginson interested Julia Howe (writer of the Battle Hymn of the Republic) and her daughter. Other members were Frances E. Willard, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Miss Willard brought Mary A. Livermore, the noted women's rights advocate. Among the twenty-five women members were: Anna Whitney, the sculptress; Abby Morton Diaz, president of the Boston Women's Christian Temperance Union; Constance Howell, an English writer; Lucy Stone, editor of the Women's Journal; and Helen Campbell, author of Prisoners of Poverty. Among the male members were: Sam Walter Foss, poet and editor of the Yankee Blade; Thaddeus B. Wakeman, publicist; Michael Lynch, author of A Workingman's View of Nationalism and a plasterer; Solomon Schindler, a rabbi; Laurence Gronlund, author of The Co-operative Commonwealth; and John Boyle O'Reilly, editor of The Pilot, organ of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston.²² Bellamy had succeeded in reaching those people he felt were necessary to produce social change. Writing to Willard, Bellamy wished him success with the Nationalist Club and approved of Willard's efforts to convert the "cultured and conservative class. That was precisely the special end for which Looking Backward was written."²³

²²Ibid., p. 250.

²³Quoted in Morgan, p. 249.

While Nationalist Clubs sprang up all over the nation, the First Nationalist Club of Boston began publication of The Nationalist, a small journal, to promote Bellamy's ideas. Nationalism had become a nationwide movement and Bellamy writing for The Nationalist stated the movement's objectives in the following manner: "The progressive nationalization and municipalization of industries by substituting public control for the public advantage, in place of already highly centralized forms of corporate control for corporate advantage, is at once the logical and the inevitable policy of nationalism."²⁴

It should be understood, however, that the Nationalist Clubs had no cohesive party organization. Bellamy had welcomed flexibility, but soon came to feel that many of the so-called Nationalists were too non-political. What he wanted was an organization that would be a "party mouthpiece devoted to the discussion of the industrial and social situation, from the moral and economic point of view."²⁵

Dissatisfied with The Nationalist as a propaganda organ, Bellamy decided to establish his own publication, The New Nation. In this new journal he tried to further the ideals of nationalism so as to enable the movement to gather a larger following. Ironically, the economic crises that had enabled nationalism to become such a popular movement were ending, and The New Nation lost many of its subscribers. Eventually, due to lack of funds, Bellamy had to cease publication, but he felt that The New Nation had not been a complete failure for it had attracted the attention of many who had never heard of nationalism previously.

²⁴Morgan, p. 253, quoting Bellamy from The Nationalist (Dec., 1889).

²⁵Aaron, p. 106.

While many prominent people were favorably impressed with the ideas expressed in Looking Backward, some were opposed. Henry George, for example, attacked nationalism on the grounds that it represented collectivism, and therefore an unnecessary extension of the state and an infringement on individuality and personal freedom.²⁶ In an article in the Atlantic Monthly, Francis Walker criticized Bellamy's program generally; specifically he argued against Bellamy's institution of the industrial army and sought to analyze the analogy drawn between war and industry. Walker felt that the purpose of war is to destroy, while the purpose of industry is to create. One of the major problems of war is to gain a great concentration of men and energy subject to military discipline so that certain objectives may be achieved. The soldier must give up his freedom of movement, his power of choice and his individuality but under threat from the outside, he does this willingly. Since there is no comparable threat in industry, men will not give up their individuality freely.²⁷

Walker's criticism is probably more understandable to today's public than it was in his own time, for in a very real sense the concept of the industrial army smacks of totalitarianism. The concept of the industrial army was a contradiction in Bellamy's utopia. Even though Bellamy advocated the end of economic competition, feeling assured that this would lead to a better life not only physically, but spiritually, we are left with the inconsistency of his promoting non-economic inequality. He would even arouse non-economic competition to a higher level. "The rewards of authority, of social rank and

²⁶Morgan, p. 393.

²⁷Francis A. Walker, "Mr. Bellamy and the New Nationalist Party," Atlantic Monthly, LXV (Feb., 1890), pp. 257-58.

and public prominence, are held out to workers as the prize of diligence, in a manner in which they never have been brought to bear upon human nature under any social system before. . . . The only incentives which are eliminated under the national plan are the desire of inordinate wealth and the fear of poverty."²⁸

Bellamy did not seem to have given much thought to the risky procedures involved in the national state—procedures that could lead to authoritarianism. He exaggerated the efficiency of central government and bureaucracy. These are serious problems; however, they do not destroy in toto the feasibility of Bellamy's model for reform. His thesis remains a plea for individual fulfillment²⁹ and encourages society to partake of the higher, cultural activities of life. This is the moral principle that he strove for and which placed him directly in the progressive tradition. He was concerned about poverty not for its own sake, but because it made society brutish and prevented man from pursuing higher forms of intellectual endeavor.

William Dean Howells: The Altrurian

William Dean Howells who is often referred to as the Dean of American Letters was both a literary man and a progressive who sought to enlighten the American middle class to the plight that surrounded them. He expressed his views concerning American society in the "Editor's Study" column of Harper's Monthly Magazine. Shortly after assuming his duties at Harper's he read Tolstoy's short story "The Cossacks" which modified his thinking radically.³⁰

²⁸ Bellamy, "Looking Backward Again," Edward Bellamy Speaks Again!, p. 187.

²⁹ Aaron, p. 127.

³⁰ Clara Marburg Kirk, W. D. Howells, A Traveler From Altruria (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1962), p. 15.

Formerly he had been a Republican, but the influence of Tolstoy's writing caused him to look towards Christian Socialism as a means of attaining an ethical society.

Just one month after this profound change of philosophy, news of the Haymarket Square riot spread across the nation. After the eight anarchists had been sentenced to death, Howells wrote a last minute letter to the New York Tribune appealing for clemency. The following week, however, four of the eight anarchists were hanged. This act, which he felt was a blatant miscarriage of justice, set Howells on the track of social reform.

Out of this need to express himself on the political problems of his day, Howells created his utopian novel, A Traveler From Altruria. Writing to William James, he commented: "I should hardly like to trust pen and ink with all the audacity of my social ideas; but after fifty years of optimistic content with 'civilization' and its ability to come out all right in the end, I now abhor it, and feel that it is coming out all wrong in the end, unless it bases itself anew on a real equality."³¹

In A Traveler From Altruria, Howells introduced as his main characters Aristides Homos, an Altrurian³² visiting the United States, and Mr. Twelvemough his American host. A Traveler From Altruria was a utopian novel in the same vein as Looking Backward, though Howells' book was not nearly as comprehensive nor complex as Bellamy's. Mr. Twelvemough introduced Mr. Homos to a stereotype version of American characters: a banker, a lawyer, a minister, a manufacturer, a farmworker and a middle class woman. Each dialogue illustrated

³¹Ibid., p. 3.

³²The name Altruria is derived by Howells from the word altruistic, meaning the sinking of self in the interest of the group.

the contradictions of American society which Mr. Homos plainly saw while Mr. Twelvemough remained blind to the problems surrounding him.

Unlike Bellamy, Howells was not afraid to directly confront his readers with socialism. He found no need to disguise it by creating a new name for basically old ideas. For example, in one of the dialogues Mr. Homos discussed the question of violence used by both the capitalists and the workers, with the banker, Mr. Bullion. Mr. Bullion told Mr. Homos that violence would be avoided when workers learned the power of the vote. Mr. Twelvemough ventured the idea that the un-American Socialists stirred up the workers to strike. Mr. Bullion, however, disagreed: "As far as I understand it, the socialists are the only fellows among them who propose to vote their ideas into laws, and nothing can be more American than that. . . . I'm not talking of anarchists, mind you, but of socialists, whose philosophy is more law, not less, and who look forward to an order that cannot be disturbed."³³

Howells believed that the solution to social problems lay in the vote, aided by labor arbitration, unionism, and the ethics of Christian Socialism. Ultimately the thesis of his reform rested in economic security; without it all the forms of democratic society were just forms without substance. In an essay on "The Nature of Liberty" he argued, "Till a man is economically independent, he is not free. . . . He may have the right to speak freely, print freely, pray freely, vote freely; but he cannot manfully use his right, though warrented it in it [sic] by the Constitutions and the statutes of the States, if he is afraid another man may take away his means of livelihood for

³³William Dean Howells, A Traveler from Altruria (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894), p. 226.

for doing so."³⁴ In this same essay he defines a man's liberty as being based upon "security from want and the fear of want."³⁵

Howells' great desire, ultimately, was for social equality; he saw political and economic equality as a means to achieve this end. In Altruria complete democracy reigned. Women had full political privileges. Elected officials who controlled all the means of production and distribution governed the nation. There was no money in Altruria; everyone "bought" his way by working three hours a day at required tasks. The remainder of the time the people were left to their leisure. Most activities were done communally and responsibility to others was encouraged. Finally, the socialism of Altruria came about as a result of evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, change. This in itself placed him very much in the progressive tradition; violence, no matter what the cause, was abhorred.

In keeping with Howells' great desire for social equality was his position on the question of race. In An Imperative Duty Olney, the major character, was a stout defender of the Negro's right to social equality. He commented that the rejection of Negroes by white people "strikes me as one of the most preposterous, the most monstrous things in the world."³⁶ Olney was not in favor of intermarriage "but short of that I don't see why one shouldn't associate with them."³⁷ Although it is not surprising that Howells should have taken this view (it can be assumed that Bellamy did not regard racism as

³⁴William Dean Howells, "The Nature of Liberty," The Forum, XX (Dec., 1895), p. 407.

³⁵Ibid., p. 404.

³⁶William Dean Howells, An Imperative Duty (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1893), p. 26.

³⁷Ibid., p. 27.

having a place in his utopia), he was the only one of the progressives to explicitly state his position on the problem of racism.

An unknown reviewer commenting on A Traveler From Altruria argued: "What do we all live for, except to struggle and fight and develop our souls so as to fit them to continue the wonderful, everlasting conflict in worlds to come? If all men were equal, all men might as well be dead."³⁸ Howells did not think the everlasting conflict was wonderful, and was more inclined to the idea that if society did not change its basic tone of inequality, then all men might be better off dead. Howells turned to socialism, not primarily because it was a better economic system (although he believed that it was) but because he felt it was more humane and ethical in a manner that acquisitive capitalism could never be. Capitalism deprived men of enlightenment and fulfillment of their human potential—and it was this factor which led him to the path of socialism.

Henry Demarest Lloyd: Professional Reformer

Daniel Aaron referred to Henry Demarest Lloyd as a professional reformer,³⁹ but he was more than that; he was a crusader for human rights and justice. He set himself in vehement opposition to the strangle-hold on society held by various interest groups. His first battle was a small one: a campaign for opening the New York public library on Sundays. Next he attacked the Tammany Hall machine in an uphill political battle that caused his opponents some damage. This was just the beginning of his career as a professional reformer but it was auspicious.

³⁸New York Times (June 4, 1894), p. 3.

³⁹Aaron, p. 136.

After working as a journalist in New York on the Free Trade Association's publication, he left for Chicago. There his marriage to Jessie Bross turned out to be a very important factor in his career. His father-in-law was William Bross, a pioneer of Chicago, and a part owner of the Chicago Tribune. This relationship with Bross enabled Lloyd to secure an influential position on the Tribune. In 1875 he became the financial editor and from this post began his career as an anti-monopolist crusader.

In his role as financial editor, Lloyd faced certain temptations. Speculators depended partially on calculations made by Lloyd on trends in produce and securities. If he had given these speculators advance notice of his analysis he would have been cut in on their profits. But he was not to be seduced by such manipulators. If he was to crusade for ethics in business, he had to remain free of any such liaisons.

As financial editor he was forced to master the technical aspects of finance and this he accomplished. In his column he not only analyzed the condition of the market, he editorialized as well; his subjects included the railroads, agriculture, mining, and land and stock speculation. He actively campaigned against the lack of ethics in the business world, "stressing its injurious effects upon morals."⁴⁰ He argued for custom house reform and tariff reduction which he believed would have benefited the farmers and wholesalers of Chicago.

Lloyd's crusades almost always placed him in opposition to the powerful interests who were responsible for the abuses he exposed in his column. The free silver campaign pitted him against the Wall Street bankers and orthodox economists. His campaign for railroad reform placed him at odds with William

⁴⁰Charles MacArthur Destler, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the Empire of Reform (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), p. 95.

Vanderbuilt and Jay Gould, two of the most powerful men in the late 1870's. His opposition to the railroads also led him to abandon laissez-faire capitalism, both for economic and ethical reasons.

Anti-railroad riots occurred in Chicago and other parts of the nation in 1877. The new owners of the Tribune (his father-in-law had been ousted from the Board of Directors, but still continued to hold stock in the paper) came out strongly against labor, labeling it Communistic and anarchistic. Lloyd courageously took a stance publically against his employers; in an editorial he demanded national arbitration of railroad disputes. With this action he alienated himself from his employers and his father-in-law and in 1885 after a few more years of conflict, he left the Tribune.

Although his resignation from the Tribune left him without an established public forum from which to air his views, Lloyd did not remain silent—if anything he became even more militant. After the Haymarket anarchists were hanged in 1887, he pledged to continue his work against the powerful interests for the benefit of those who were weak. As he stated, "I am on the side of the underdog. The agitators on that side make mistakes, commit crimes, no doubt, but for all that theirs is the right side. I will try to avoid the mistakes and the crimes but I will stay by the cause."⁴¹

Lloyd continued with his journalistic crusade against unethical business practices and monopoly, contributing to a number of periodicals such as Harper's and the Atlantic Monthly. Like Bellamy and Howells, he too wrote a utopian novel, No Mean City. The distinguishing factor in this book was that it offered no solutions which had not already been applied satisfactorily to social problems elsewhere. However, the essence of his political thought

⁴¹Quoted in Aaron, p. 143.

was embodied in his major work Wealth Against Commonwealth (1894).

Lloyd wrote Wealth Against Commonwealth in the hopes that it would sway the intellectuals and the middle class to demand reforms. He stated his purpose clearly in the opening pages:

The men and women who do the work of the world have a right to the floor. Everywhere they are rising to "a point of information." They want to know how are labor and the gifts of nature being ordered by those whom our ideals and consent have made Captains of Industry over us; how it is that we, who profess the religion of the Golden Rule and the political economy of service for service, come to divide our produce into calculable power and pleasure for a few, and partial existence for the many who are the fountains of these powers and pleasures. This book is an attempt to help the people answer these questions.⁴²

Wealth Against Commonwealth described the abuses of one of the biggest trusts of that era—John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. However, it was more than a mere muckraking tract. The book was a program for the average citizen. It described what the citizen had lost by giving away his control of the economy to men such as Rockefeller, and how he could regain that control once more. Cooperation, not competition, was the basic feature of Lloyd's program. As he pointed out: "The new self-interest will remain unenforced in business until we invent the forms by which the vast multitudes who have been gathered together in modern production can organize themselves into a people there as in government. Nothing but this institutionalization will save them from being scattered away from each other again, and it can be achieved only by such averaging and concessions and co-operation as are the price of all union."⁴³

Wealth Against Commonwealth established Lloyd as the first great publicist of a progressive policy. As shall become obvious later on in this

⁴²Henry Demarest Lloyd, Wealth Against Commonwealth (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894), p. 7.

⁴³Ibid., p. 535.

study Lloyd was closer to the men of the Progressive movement than any of the other men already discussed. This probably resulted from his formulation of a social welfare philosophy that continued to exert influence well into the twentieth century. His crusading journalism established much of the basic theory for the emerging Progressive movement and its emphasis on the need for state intervention. By espousing the doctrine of limited state intervention and the need for social justice he was able to introduce the ideas of non-Marxian Fabianism into the social protest of American reformers. He advocated a positive reorientation of democratic theory so as to insure the survival of democracy. He rejected semi-utopian techniques such as the single tax and concentrated instead upon practical methods of achieving reform. What he wanted was a positive regulatory, corrective statism.⁴⁴

What made Lloyd a progressive was his direct appeal to moral considerations and ethics. He pounded away at the shell of self-protection the middle class had formed to cover their own humanitarianism, so that they would help him do battle with the enemies of American society—the robber barons.

Lloyd is significant because he was the "abominable snowman" of his time. He was the link between the progressive tradition of which he was very much a part (the tradition which includes George, Bellamy and Howells) and the Progressive movement which owed much to Lloyd in the way of theory and methodology. He anticipated Walter Lippman by three decades⁴⁵ in Lippman's attempts to formalize the theory of the Progressive movement. At the same time he gave guidance and support to the American public of the last decades of the

⁴⁴Destler, p. 126.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 128.

nineteenth century in their efforts to achieve justice and equality. He proved to the American public that collectivism and democracy can walk hand in hand—just as the other progressives who shared the same traditions with him had contended.

What the nineteenth century progressives shared was a deep concern for the quality of life. Each of these men expressed their concern by developing various proposals for restructuring society. Bellamy's nationalism, George's single tax proposal, and Howells' and Lloyd's humanitarian socialism, though different in form all sought to achieve the same ends, namely the reordering of society along socialist lines to alleviate the social and economic distress of the mass of the people. All agreed that only by equalizing the economic relationship of people in society could social justice become a reality instead of a dream.

CHAPTER II

THE DECLINE OF RADICALISM AND THE BIRTH OF THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

The progressives, contrary to the opinion held by many scholars, were not just dreamers. Although some political analysts have considered utopian writers as people who shunned the real world in favor of a world of fantasy, this was not the case with these men. Utopias, as has already been established, are realistic possibilities. The progressives who formulated these utopias were pragmatic in their philosophy; nothing they suggested was beyond the realm of possibility. Each in his own way tried to actualize his reform or utopia through the standard American methods of political processes. Because they directed their appeal to a middle class that no longer existed the utopian progressives did not achieve political success. This chapter will discuss the political activities of the utopians and analyze the reasons for their failure.

The Utopians as Politicians

Two years after the publication of Progress and Poverty, George had become a well-known figure but the people whom he had converted were not organized in any form. He realized the necessity of being seen by the public and therefore accepted a number of speaking engagements. George also recognized, however, that being heard was not enough. A political movement had to be structured.

In 1884 he tried to organize a workingman's crusade for the single tax, but never quite succeeded.¹ He came closest to his goal of founding an organized political movement based on the theories he described in Progress and Poverty when he ran for mayor of New York City on a third party ticket. He lost the election, but did fairly well, outpolling one of his opponents, Theodore Roosevelt, by a sizable margin. One historian, John R. Commons, even believed that George had won the election, but that the corrupt Tammany machine had tampered with the ballot boxes and illegally denied him victory.²

The mayoralty campaign garnered much support for George and in 1887 he ran for the position of Secretary of State in New York. This time he did poorly; the socialist party diverted some of the support that might have been his, and improved economic conditions reduced the discontent among the middle class. In these political campaigns George changed the emphasis of his program from that of over-riding ethical considerations to the more mundane matter of what would be the effects of his single tax. Even though the single tax was never adopted into the tax system anywhere in the United States, many of the leaders of the Progressive movement claimed that they owed their interest in reform to Henry George.³

While George traveled one road in pursuit of his goals, Bellamy followed another. Although a few of the Nationalist Clubs remained too non-political for Bellamy, he succeeded in establishing a more militant tone on the part of most of the clubs by continuously writing articles for a Nationalist program.

¹ Steven B. Cord, Henry George: Dreamer or Realist? (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), p. 36.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The Nationalists began to make progress at the local level first. Their first victory came in May 1891 when the Massachusetts General Court (the state legislature) passed a statute which gave cities and villages the right "to own and operate their own electric and gas utility systems."⁴ A year later they engineered the enactment of a similar law giving cities and villages the right to own and operate their own coal yards.⁵ The Nationalists, however, incurred a setback when the conservative Massachusetts Supreme Court declared that the latter bill was unconstitutional. The Nationalists pressed on for their program nevertheless. The Nationalist Club of Chicago supported the municipal ticket of the Socialists, and in 1890 the Nationalists of the Sixth District of California nominated a candidate for Congress. Michigan also ran a Nationalist candidate for Congress and a number of Nationalist candidates won office in various state legislatures.

Eventually, the Nationalist movement became broader in scope. By the spring of 1891 third party mutterings were heard around the nation and there grew a demand for a national organization. A national conference of third party reform elements was opened in Cincinnati on May 19, 1891, and continued for two days. The delegation from Massachusetts were largely Nationalists; eight Nationalists were seated on the platform committee. Among the planks in the platform that was adopted were the following demands:

- (1) the right to make and issue money is a sovereign power belonging to the people;
- (2) the establishment of a postal savings bank to be used also for deposit and exchange;

⁴Arthur E. Morgan, Edward Bellamy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 276.

⁵Ibid.

- (3) government ownership of all means of transportation and communication;
- (4) the exclusive importation, manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages to be controlled by the government;
- (5) a system of industrial training to be established in the public schools; and
- (6) women's suffrage.⁶

After the conference was over, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch observed: "Mr. Bellamy has . . . given the subject of socialism or nationalism as he calls it, more systematic thought than any of the farmers of the country, but their conclusions are the same. . . . He has sown the seeds of socialism in the rich soil of discontent, and the first practical manifestation of the socialistic spirit is the platform of the People's Party."⁷

On July 4, 1892, the national convention of the Populist Party opened in Omaha. General James B. Weaver of Iowa was nominated as the presidential candidate with a platform similar to the one adopted by the Cincinnati convention. Although the Populists did not win the national election they had accumulated twenty-two votes in the electoral college and were seen by the established parties as a force to be reckoned with.

What broke the back of the Populists was the desire on the part of some of its lesser figures to become more powerful; because of them some of the planks of the party were discarded and Bellamy's economic propositions were retired. In the next presidential election, William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate supported by the Populists, laid the dying Nationalist cause to rest by perverting the Nationalist and Populist ideals. Bryan took

⁶Ibid., p. 277.

⁷Ibid., p. 280.

Bellamy's words "I have seen humanity hanging on the cross"⁸ and turned it into his famous "Cross of Gold" speech. He used his famous oratorical power to divert Bellamy's disciples into the "sterile desert of free silver, and to futility."⁹

Bellamy recognized the need for reformers to aid each other in their quest to alter the existing social system. Soon after the publication of A Traveler From Altruria Bellamy commented: "It is surely a most significant sign of the present trend of thought in this country, and of the manner in which the hope of the near and radical social transformation is taking hold of the best minds among us, that the leading novelist of our times should have turned aside from the conventional types of polite fiction to give his countrymen this drastic arraignment of the way we live now, and this growing exposition of a nobler, better life which beckons us on."¹⁰

William Dean Howells remained actively involved in reform until his death. He continued the ethical theme of A Traveler From Altruria in his novel Through the Eye of the Needle, but his main vehicle for expressing himself was the "Editor's Easy Chair" column of Harper's. From this pulpit he advocated the following reforms:

- (1) government loans to farmers and government subsidies to farms;
- (2) nationalization of monopolies such as the railroads, the express lines, telegraph lines, and gas and water works;

⁸Quoted in Morgan, p. 284.

⁹Morgan, p. 284. For a more complete analysis of the betrayal of Populist ideals in 1896 see Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 103-43.

¹⁰Edward Bellamy, untitled editorial, The New Nation (Oct. 14, 1893), p. 458.

(3) government ownership of natural resources such as the forests and maintenance of national parks; and

(4) the imposition of a graduated income tax to check accumulated wealth.¹¹

In later years most of the reforms advocated by Howells were incorporated into the political system by the men of the Progressive movement and later by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. In the years that Howells proposed these reforms, they were considered socialistic and a threat to the existing social order. Ultimately, however, his influence was far reaching and his ideas germinated the philosophy and actions of many who followed him.

In 1902 he proposed yet another reform — a world government, which he hoped would end all strife.¹² He continued sporadically to write about the subject of world unity and by 1914 he devoted a column in Harper's to this specific subject: "What we are contending for in all this universality, the identity of men in their human characteristics, and not in their racial, national and ancestral peculiarities."¹³ Only a few years later, he would see this position argued for, with some alterations, by President Woodrow Wilson, who insisted that the League of Nations would form a deterrent to aggressors and would promote world peace.

Because of his influential position, his reputation as a "man of letters," and his literary connections, Howells aided the cause of reform not only in his own literature, but in the literature of others. He was directly responsible for the publication of two of Henry Demarest Lloyd's significant

¹¹Robert L. Hough, The Quiet Rebel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), p. 102.

¹²Ibid., p. 106.

¹³William Dean Howells, "The Editor's Easy Chair," Harper's, CXXIX (Nov., 1914), p. 960.

works, Wealth Against Commonwealth and "Story of a Great Monopoly." In January, 1888, Bellamy's Looking Backward was selling poorly, but in June of that year following an enthusiastic review written by Howells, the sales of the book picked up to the extent that it could be called a run-away best seller.

Although Howells did not become actively involved in politics as did George and Bellamy, his participation in the struggle for reform was no less meaningful, and he exerted an influence that remained powerful long after his demise.

Henry Demarest Lloyd's contribution to practical politics, like Howells', was mainly limited to journalism. Lloyd contended that laissez-faire economists ignored the fundamental facts of economic life. The conclusions they arrived at were without validity because they were based on the assumption of the existence of free competition, whereas the actual reality of the age was not competition. "When combination comes in at the door, this political economy of competition flies out the window."¹⁴ In this spirit, he devoted a large portion of his journalistic career to the exposure and condemnation of economic monopolies.

After the defeat of the Populists in 1896, Lloyd became disillusioned with third party politics; he felt that the reform movement would die unless its leadership became much more systematized in their philosophy and political behavior. He was attracted to the Socialist Labor Party even though he could not accept completely their doctrine of the class struggle.

In 1896, Lloyd called for a conference to stimulate economic and social reform. He proposed a new money policy which would be based upon a

¹⁴Henry Demarest Lloyd, Lords of Industry (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1910), p. 61.

weighted commodity index.¹⁵ He felt that the solution to the money problem should rest upon enforcement of the Golden Rule in social relations, should assist laborers to command a living wage and farmers a decent price for their products, and should destroy monopoly finance. He also proposed the insurance of bank deposits by a national agency,¹⁶ an idea which later would be embodied in the F.D.I.C. In New York he carried on a campaign opposed to private construction of the subway system.

In the area of international affairs Lloyd was initially swept off his feet by the destruction of the battleship Maine and supported the Spanish-American War. After his initial impetuosity receded he became opposed to the war because he realized it muzzled "all reformers."¹⁷ Lloyd advanced to a position of anti-imperialism and rallied around him the other reformers of his day.

During the McKinley era Lloyd contributed to the spirit of reform that laid the foundation for the Progressive movement. He broadened the scope of reform issues by becoming involved with anti-trust and compulsory arbitration movements and campaigning for academic freedom. Ultimately, he felt that all social problems were "problems of union. The significance of the social settlement is in its essay to re-establish union in communities grown so large that all social connections are endangered, domestic as well as civic."¹⁸ He realized that a rootless populace had no feelings of responsibility and for

¹⁵Charles MacArthur Destler, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the Empire of Reform (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), p. 427.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 428.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 449.

¹⁸Quoted in Daniel Aaron, Men of Good Hope (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 163.

this reason he agitated for local government which would provide itself as a training ground for democracy.

Finally in 1903, Lloyd tentatively joined the Socialist Party. Although disapproving of their strategy of class warfare (albeit non-violent), he came to the conclusion that the Socialists were the only party that was not liable to sell-out the interests of the people it represented (as had the Populists) to those with money and power. Lloyd felt obliged to support them until another party more to his liking esthetically should come along.

Lloyd's major influence can be traced directly to the muckraking journalists of the next generation. They used Lloyd's journalistic techniques to uncover abuses, but, except for Upton Sinclair, none displayed the same moral vigor that Lloyd had evolved in his own writing. His effect on liberal and radical reformers of his day was immense; he was able to rally around him a number of influential people to support a variety of reforms without alienating anyone save those he reviled—the "thieves of society." Lloyd more than any of the progressives ushered in the tide that was to become the Progressive movement.

The Rise of the Progressive Movement

What is most striking to the analyst of the Progressive movement is its paradoxical relationship in terms of growth to the theories and practices of the radical reformers and utopian progressives. William Allen White commented that the Progressive movement plagiarized the program of the Populists and made it respectable. The Progressives "caught the Populists in swimming and stole all of their clothing except the frayed underdrawers of free silver."¹⁹

¹⁹Quoted in Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 132.

In this statement White was only partially correct. By the time the Populists had nominated Bryan as their candidate, the theoretical basis for a radical reform of American society had already been sold down the river. In another sense White was correct, however. Prior to the nomination of Bryan, the Populists were indeed a radical political party, and in fact it was due mainly to this radical posture that radical reform and the utopian progressives were unsuccessful in their attempts to alter American society drastically. The failure of radical reform and the rise of the Progressive movement is linked directly to the changes and problems that occurred within the American middle class.

Radical reform failed in essence for two reasons. Although the nineteenth century progressives championed reform of a radical nature, the political methods they employed to attain their revolutionary aims were neither radical nor revolutionary. Instead they worked within the standard political system. Their political activity was directed towards bringing public pressure to bear on legislators and electing their candidates to public office.

Secondly it failed because of fear. Although some reform legislation had been passed prior to the Progressive era, such as the Interstate Commerce Act (1887) and the Sherman Anti-trust Act (1890), and although there had been campaigns for municipal reform, this did not basically alter the political and social situation in the United States. Rather than being the beginnings of radical change, these small alterations were the labor pains of the Progressive movement. As Hofstadter argued:

These were the timid beginnings of a movement that did not become nationwide until the years after 1901. One important thing that kept them from going further during the nineties was that the events of that decade frightened the middle classes so thoroughly that they did not dare dream of taking seriously ideas that seemed to involve a more fundamental challenge to established ways of doing things. The Progressive appeal was always directed very largely to people who felt that they did have something

to lose. Populism, which was widely portrayed as "menacing socialism in the Western States," the Homestead and Pullman strikes with their violence and class bitterness . . . seemed like the beginnings of social revolution; . . . Hence there was a disposition among the middle classes to put aside their own discontents and grievances until the time should come when it seemed safe to air them.²⁰

There was, however, another factor that caused the failure of radical reform. Bellamy, Howells, George, Lloyd—all held the same basic assumption that the middle class was the only viable social vehicle for reform. The problem, however, is the fact that during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, the concept of the middle class was nebulous at best. Those people who lived in "island communities"²¹ as Wiebe defined them no longer had the power they had held prior to the Civil War. The myth, that power still resided with a middle class, continued to perpetuate itself not only among the radical reformers, but within the vanishing middle class itself. This middle class did not vanish in economic terms (not totally, although monopolies tended to wipe out small businesses); what they lost was power and in political terms this made them a vanishing species. Unable to come to terms with their loss of power and prestige they refused to be part of a movement that might very well have saved the very things that were slipping through their fingers like so many grains of sand.

Probably one of the major factors in the decline of middle class power in the nineteenth century was urbanization. "Urbanization results in transformation of interpersonal relations, which become less familial and personal as

²⁰Ibid., p. 165. The reluctance of the middle class to involve themselves with radicals in reform movements is apparent even today. Today's middle and lower middle classes are also hesitant to join with blacks, hippies, and student activists to push for radical reform, even though they suffer from many of the same social problems as these radical groups.

²¹Robert H. Wiebe, Search for Order (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968). Chapter 1 contains a full explanation of the meaning of the island communities.

the size of the community increases. The large metropolitan areas are the scene of anonymity—neighbors do not know one another, families decrease in size and in importance for the individual. The number and superficiality of personal relations grows as their intimacy and meaningfulness for each participant declines."²² The island communities had ceased to exist and for all practical purposes the middle class suffered the same fate.

Unlike the period of the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the Progressive era (except for the depression of 1907) was generally a period of prosperity. If economic distress did not pose a cause and effect relationship for Progressive reform, what did? Although it was little noticed during the crisis of the nineties, a new middle class was gaining strength rapidly. As Wiebe defined it, "the new middle class was only a class by courtesy of the historian's afterthought. Covering too wide a range to form a tightly knit group, it divided into two broad categories. One included those with strong professional aspirations in such fields as medicine, law, economics, administration, social work and architecture. The second comprised specialists in business, in labor, and in agriculture awakening both to their distinctiveness and to their ties with similar people in the same occupation."²³

Around the turn of the century this new middle class was still in the minority within their own professions and occupations. These people were moving towards the new mainstream of American life—industrialization and urbanization—and they welcomed this new order of society. The urbanized, industrialized society needed the skills the new middle class possessed, and they responded accordingly because "identification by way of their skills gave

²²Seymour M. Lipset and Reinhard Bendik, "Social Status and Social Structure," The British Journal of Sociology, II (June, 1951), p. 168.

²³Wiebe, p. 112.

them the deference of their neighbors while opening natural avenues into the nation at large. Increasingly formal entry requirements into their occupations protected their prestige through exclusiveness."²⁴ Of all the various aspects of the new middle class their commitment to bureaucracy was to have the most far reaching effect on all forms of American society.

In 1877, Henry George had been invited to lecture to the students and faculty of the University of California at Berkeley, with the possibility that he might be appointed to the faculty to teach political economy. In his lecture he made the following argument:

For the study of political economy you need no special knowledge, no extensive library, no costly laboratory. You do not even need text-books nor teachers, if you will but think for yourselves. . . . All this array of professors, all this paraphernalia of learning, cannot educate a man. . . . Unfortunately, they are plenty—who pass through the whole educational machinery, and come out but learned fools, crammed with knowledge which they cannot use—all the more pitiable, all the more contemptible, all the more in the way of real progress, because they pass, with themselves and others, as educated men."²⁵

Needless to say, his remarks guaranteed that any chance there might have been for receiving the appointment were lost. What is interesting about this incident was that he was considered for the position at all. Not only was he not trained as an economist, he did not have a competent formal education. Twenty-five years later, the possibility of George being offered the appointment would have been non-existent, for the next emphasis on bureaucracy started within the professions and skilled occupations by the new middle class was designed to protect themselves from upstarts as exemplified by George.

In almost every occupation and profession that required skill the bureaucratic method sank its roots, first limited in scope—specific

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Henry George, Jr., Life of Henry George (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1900), p. 276.

professions, and then within a larger scope—the municipal and state governments and later the national government. One of the major purposes of the formation of this bureaucratic system was to enable the new middle class to attain some measure of power. Prior to the twentieth century college professors had always been hired hands; they were forced to act as individuals in regards to their employers. One of the grievances of the professors was that professional affairs were controlled by boards of trustees whose members frequently were the very businessmen under attack by these same professors. In 1915 this rising self-consciousness was expressed in the formation of the American Association of University Professors.²⁶ This new association gave the professors leverage in dealing with college administrators and it served another function as well—no longer would a person with political or social influence find himself a home in the university; the association set up its own guidelines as to what constituted an academic professional and thereby forced administrators to hire only those who met specific qualifications. A good many of the members of the American Association of University Professors joined the ranks of the Progressive movement.

The law profession also organized itself. By the late nineteenth century it was well recognized that the independence and dignity of the bar had been greatly impaired. The successful lawyers were corporation lawyers; they were not their own bosses; their principle function was defending, legalizing and maintaining the exploitive development of big businessmen and corporations.²⁷ Henry Stimson commented: "It has always seemed to me, in the law from what I have seen of it, that wherever the public interest has come

²⁶Hofstadter, Age of Reform, p. 155.

²⁷Ibid., p. 159.

into conflict with private interests, private interest was more adequately represented than the public interest."²⁸ Stimson left private practice and became a United States federal attorney in order to get away from the lack of ethics practiced on corporate law. The standards for the legal profession changed about the turn of the century. Where formerly one needed only to read the law and then pass the bar exam, the professional requirements became more rigid. It became almost mandatory to attend law school in order to meet the standards of the profession.

Labor also began to experience bureaucratic development. Where it had been radical and at times violent in the late nineteenth century, it became sedate and middle class in the early twentieth century. The American Federation of Labor represented the skilled workers and within this organization a new development arose—business unionism. As Wiebe observed: "Where the term [business unionism] had once connoted the efficient management of a union's affairs, it now implied a full interpretation of organized labor's position in industrial society. . . . It contained a binding set of business values—the inviolability of contracts, the inevitability of industrial concentration . . . [these] fundamentally conditioned the nature of the labor movement. . . . [They] wooed doubters by appearing to ask so little that no decent citizen could deny them."²⁹

The same conditions repeated themselves in agriculture. With the spread of industrialization and urbanization, the farmer was no longer the honored and glorified American he had once been. In order to turn the tide of specialization in their favor farmers began to organize and educate themselves.

²⁸Ibid., p. 162.

²⁹Wiebe, p. 125.

Their organizations eventually evolved into the American Farm Bureau which acted as an agent for the farmers with their legislators. In education they demanded and received aid from the agricultural specialists trained at the Morrill land grant colleges.

From these various occupations and professions came the masses of the Progressive movement. Once having organized themselves in a bureaucratic fashion they turned outward and applied the same methods to the organization of society. They turned their attention to social reform because no further gains could be made within the small framework of their own organizations. They would only be able to change society by working towards the same goals in the larger social system, just as they had done in their own social sub-systems. Some of the impetus for the new middle class Progressives came from the muckrakers. Faced with a disorganized society suffering from moral decay and inefficiency, the Progressives embraced the muckrakers new exposes of social injustice.

These muckrakers, however, were not of the same ilk as those of the nineteenth century such as Henry Demarest Lloyd. While Lloyd was concerned with exposing the evils of society in general and of the trusts in particular, he was also intensely interested in healing the wounds of his troubled society. The twentieth century muckrakers were of a different breed entirely. More college trained people became engaged in journalism. While the center of attention had once focused on the editor of a newspaper or magazine (Bellamy, Howells and Lloyd were all editors), the reporter now became the center of attention. With human interest stories and exposes of corporation evil he commanded center stage. Although the muckraking reporter appealed to morality, he was in reality appealing to business—that business being his own; reporters' salaries increased greatly in this era. Theodore Dreiser described the

atmosphere very distinctly.

While the editorial office might be preparing the most flowery moralistic or regionalistic editorials regarding the worth of man, the value of progress, character, religion, morality, the sanctity of the home, charity, and the like, the business office and the news room were concerned with no such fine theories. The business office was all business, with little or no thought of anything save success, and in the city news room the mask was off and life was handled in a rough and ready manner, without gloves. . . . Pretense did not go here. Innate honesty on the part of anyone was not probable. Charity was a business with something in it for somebody. Morality was in the main for public consumption only.³⁰

The Progressive minded middle class consumed the morality of the muckrakers like so many men on a desert finally finding water and throwing themselves at it frantically. Now they had a cause to work for; bureaucracy they were convinced would end the chaotic social conditions and bring social well-being and harmony. All would benefit from this bureaucratic order, but none would benefit as much as the new middle class—the bureaucrats themselves.

While political labels (being a Democrat or Republican) became less important, political activity on the part of the Progressives steadily gained in importance. During the birth of self-consciousness the political ambitions of the Progressives centered around occupational and professional autonomy.³¹ Doctors, teachers, and lawyers set up their own standards which involved legal sanction to judge the proficiency of those persons entering the professions. In the academic world, the professors controlled the degrees and appointments to the faculty; in this manner they enjoyed similar privileges to those of the other professions without having need for legislation. As Wiebe notes, however, "Business and farming groups, however, discovered that effective

³⁰Theodore Drieser, A Book About Myself (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), pp. 151-52.

³¹H. H. Gerith and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 180-84.

self-regulation required more than an empowering statute. With increasingly elaborate plans for stable prices, coordinated marketing and reliable, expensive data, they looked as well to a variety of government bureaus and agencies that would provide the technical services their specialized needs demanded. In almost every case, these groups depended upon the government for the means of independence, from all intruders, including the government itself."³²

This corresponded nicely to the needs of a new breed of social scientists that had arisen and who had a special interest in the reforms of the Progressive movement. Here they found a niche for themselves. The new regulatory legislation required the skills of the social scientists to write legislation and staff administrative agencies. A new respect for the knowledge of these specialists grew. As Hofstadter observed: "Reform brought with it the brain trust. In Wisconsin even before the turn of the century there was an intimate union between the La Follette regime and the state university at Madison that foreshadowed all later brain trusts."³³ Thus the basis of most Progressive reform legislation was the establishment of government agencies or bureaus to be manned by middle class professionals. The ultimate result of Progressive reform, therefore, was the establishment of government bureaucracy.

The Political Influence of the Radical Reformers on the Progressive Movement

One is tempted to trace a very direct link between the radical reformers and the Progressive movement; to do so however would be fallacious. Though the Progressive movement followed closely on the heels of the radical

³²Wiebe, pp. 129-30.

³³Hofstadter, Age of Reform, p. 155.

reformers, the circumstances of their birth, their constituency, and their goals are more striking in their differences than in their similarities.

They did share some common ideals, however. Alan Grimes pointed out that: "In essence . . . [both] rejected extreme individualism with its Spencerian corollary in economics, biology and sociology; its theological emphasis on personal responsibility and personal guilt; and its diffident assumption that political action in the economic order would upset the laws of nature and of God. In place of an emphasis upon individualism . . . [they] turned to the social institutions, social responsibility and social action. In place of an ethic of competition and its accompanying assumption of inequality, . . . [they] stressed cooperation and equality."³⁴ Although their ideals may seem to contain a certain sense of continuity between the two movements, it is important that they be analyzed more closely before making any definitive statements about the heritage of the Progressive movement.

While it is true that both the radical reformers and the Progressives looked towards government--what they looked for in government was radically different. The radicals wanted to change the social system entirely; they wanted government to enforce economic equality from which social equality would be a natural outgrowth. Finally, in their scheme, once economic and social equality had been achieved the role of the government would be vastly reduced; its function would be to maintain the orderly social system, and politics as we conceive of it would just not exist.

The Progressive movement had an entirely different vision of the role of government. They, like the radical reformers, saw the interrelatedness between politics and economics. As Hofstadter noted: "The close relationship

³⁴Alan Pendleton Grimes, American Political Thought (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1955), p. 335.

of political values and economic circumstance which the progressives emphasized, made clear the fact that most vital political issues were equally economic ones. If government had always represented economic interests . . . if government intervention in the economic sphere had been the rule rather than the exception, then the fundamental question was not whether the government should intervene in economic activity, but rather to whose advantage it should intervene."³⁵ The answer from the Progressives was that government intervention should benefit themselves mostly. This is not to say that they were not interested in the problems of the lower classes—for they were, and recognized the validity of their grievances. But they did not intend for their new found gains to go up in the smoke of revolution and so they worked for reforms both for humanitarian reasons, and to disarm the more revolutionary elements of society.

By and large the reforms the Progressives championed were similar to those of the radical reformers. Both groups sought legislation in child welfare, labor, compulsory education, minimum wages and anti-trust laws. For the radical reformers legislation such as this was merely the beginnings of their program. These reforms were simply designed to help the lower classes and thereby gain support for the larger step—establishing the equality of society as a whole. For the Progressives, however, reform legislation was an end in itself. They did not want a revolutionary change in American society; rather they were interested in maintaining the inroads they themselves had made. They realized nevertheless that their own achievements could only be maintained if the lower economic and social classes were permitted some gains as well.

³⁵Hofstadter, Age of Reform, p. 171.

Both groups expressed a belief in democracy, and yet for each it meant something different. They worked for the same goals—referendum and recall, direct election of senators, and other reforms of the political system, still for the radical reformers these again were to be but the beginnings, while for the Progressives these reforms were an end in themselves. What the radical reformers aspired to was true democracy—a society where everyone would be equal; what the Progressives aspired to was a more democratic society, changing some of the forms of government while leaving its substance intact. The Progressives wanted to preserve the social distinctions which separated them from the lower classes. For them democracy required only some measure of equality of opportunity so that the elite of the lower classes would be able to achieve both the privileges and responsibility of the middle class.

The radical reformers and the Progressives used similar techniques to achieve their goals (muckraking, for example), but they employed these techniques for different ends. Henry Demarest Lloyd saw muckraking as a call to arms, a way of gathering support to change the abuses of the society; for the Progressives muckraking was beneficial in itself, financially for those who pursued it as a career, and politically as a justification for the bureaucratic system that would curb the most flagrant abuses of social ethics.

As we have seen the utopian progressives did not limit their activity to political speculation. They actively involved themselves in attempting to restructure society along the lines they had envisioned in their works. Bellamy attempted to turn the Nationalist Clubs into an effective political force, George campaigned for public office, and Howells and Lloyd worked for political change as journalists seeking to create public support for social change. The radical reformers failed, however, partly because the political methods they employed were not suited to their revolutionary aims, but mainly

because a new middle class had arisen. This new middle class which formed the basis of the Progressive movement feared radical change. Reflecting their needs, the Progressive movement sought moderate reform instead of a radical restructuring of society.

In the final analysis, it appears that the link between the radical reformers and the Progressive movement was one of style more than substance. Ultimately, the conclusion that is reached is that the Progressive movement arose as a negative response to the ideals and traditions of the radical reformers and utopian thinkers. Basically the Progressive movement desired to maintain the status quo in the form of capitalism, but they wanted to secure some measure of government regulation to protect themselves from its abuses. Thus they established a new bureaucracy to protect themselves from unscrupulous big business, but more importantly from the radical left which was demanding a socialist social order. By proposing liberal reform legislation they hoped to mollify the discontent of the lower classes and consolidate their own gains through bureaucracy. The social and philosophical ideals of the radical reformers were discarded in favor of minor gains that would ultimately prove to be both elusive and of negative value.

CHAPTER III

REVISING SOCIAL THEORY

Unlike the radical reformers and utopian progressives of the late nineteenth century, Herbert Croly, Walter Weyl, and Walter Lippmann did not prepare the intellectual groundwork for the Progressive movement of their time. Instead these men stood at the apex of a movement that had begun before they had started their own careers as Progressives and molders of public opinion. What these three publicists were aiming for was the development of a theory for a movement that had started without their guidance. It would be unfair to intimate that Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann were merely audible followers—for they were more than that; their goal was nothing less than the formulation of a new political and social theory which would embrace the Progressive movement and indeed the entire society. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the political philosophy of Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann, to demonstrate how they differed from the radical utopians, and to show how their theories met the needs of the new middle class.

Just as the progressives of the nineteenth century attempted to form a philosophy that would answer the questions posed by the problems of their times, the three Progressive journalists or the Bull Moose trio, as they came to be known, tried to develop a philosophy that would deal with the problems of the twentieth century: industrialism, class divisions, economic crises, and the polarization of power in the hands of (what they felt at times) were irresponsible businessmen and labor leaders.

Herbert Croly posed the question facing American society in his book The Promise of American Life. All three men felt that the "promise of American life" had been the increasing social, moral, and economic welfare of the mass of people. With the massive problems that became apparent in the twentieth century, Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann had to deal with the continuation of that "promise" as a meaningful concept in society.

In trying to formulate a philosophy for their times, they placed themselves consciously in the forefront of their intellectual milieu. They drew upon the latest ideas of scientific and philosophic thought both in the United States and abroad for insight with which to probe and analyze the revolutionary changes taking place in society. What they saw was that man possessed one tool that would enable him to master his environment: science. Applied to the study of society, science became social science, a discipline whose purpose was to enable man to discover how he could arrange social relationships to attain "the transcendent humanitarian goal."¹ For Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann this "transcendent humanitarian goal" meant a mystically perfect democracy—what Croly was to call "democratic nationalism." Democratic nationalism was to be the positive philosophy upon which the United States would build for the future.

All three men felt that the basis for America's problems rested on a faith that progress was negative, inevitable, individualistic, and legalistic. Democratic nationalism would solve the problems of twentieth century America by illustrating that progress was not inevitable and that the individualistic conceptions of man's relation to society were not outmoded in an industrial

¹This goal can be found in Herbert Croly, The Promise of American Life, reprinted ed. (New York: Archon Books, 1963); Walter Weyl, The New Democracy (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1927); and Walter Lippmann, A Preface to Politics, reprinted ed. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1965).

age. Industrialization would force the nation to realize that "no democracy is possible in America except a socialized democracy, which conceives of society as a whole and not as a more or less adventitious assemblage of myriads of individuals."²

Although each of these three men used different terms to define their goals (i.e.: democratic nationalism and socialized democracy), it is necessary to understand that while the words employed were different, all were in essential agreement on both the goals they desired and the methods by which these goals might be reached. Each of the members of the Bull Moose trio believed that progress towards a democratic society depended upon: (1) the ability of man's environment to change, (2) the social nature of man, (3) the use of science as a tool to change man's environment, and (4) the impetus imposed by industrialism. Finally, however, they all believed that the necessary element for producing change would be to awaken the American middle class to the possibility that change could occur in society and that the change should be directed towards democratic nationalism.

By appealing to the middle class, these Progressives were following in the tradition of the radical reformers and utopian thinkers. The similarity between these two groups ends right here for the Bull Moose trio completely disavowed the legacy of tradition and philosophy left to them by the old progressives. They totally disclaimed any relation to what they felt were static utopias of the past. Walter Weyl stated that position for the three of them when he wrote: "Opposed to such Utopias our present ideal of a socialized democratic civilization is dynamic. It is not an idyllic state . . . not a state at all but a mere direction."³

²Weyl, p. 162. ³Ibid., p. 354-55.

Yet, though disavowing the old progressives, the appeal of the three publicists to the middle class was reminiscent of the nineteenth century radicals. Croly recognized that the bureaucratic system had taken hold in American society. He saw the separate organizations of labor, teaching, law, and medicine as dangerous to the democratic tradition of America and observed: "By the social problem is usually meant the problem of poverty; but grave inequalities of wealth are merely the most dangerous and distressing expression of fundamental differences among the members of a society. . . . In its deepest aspect, . . . the social problem is the problem of preventing such divisions from dissolving the society into which they enter—of keeping such a highly differentiated society fundamentally sound and whole."⁴ What is seen in this statement appears to be a desire to keep society together, to enable humane relations to solve the "social problem" much in the same manner as the nineteenth century progressives wanted the "social problem" solved.

While for Bellamy and his contemporaries the solution to the social problem ended in a socialized state, the Progressives, although frequently using the term socialism, never desired it in the Marxian sense or utopian sense. Unlike the utopians, Croly rejected social equality. He argued that the solution to the social problem lay not in a socialized democracy where each man is truly equal to his fellows but in a nationalized democracy:

A democracy cannot dispense with the solidarity which it imparted to American life, and in one way or another such solidarity must be restored. There is only one way in which it can be restored, and that is by means of a democratic social ideal, which shall give consistency to American social life, without entailing any essential sacrifice of desirable individual and class distinctions.⁵

⁴Croly, p. 139.

⁵Ibid.

Croly and his colleagues' desire to continue class distinctions while at the same time progressing the democratic ideal further than the radical reformers was clearly a perversion of the spirit of nineteenth century reform. But a further factor must be mentioned, and that is that the democratic philosophy of Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann diverged drastically from that of the nineteenth century progressives.

For Bellamy and his contemporaries an ideal democratic state was one where each man was equal and the government was an agent for the will of an equal people. But for Croly and his colleagues the ideal democratic state was one in which there was not too much inequality and where the government made decisions in the best interest of its citizens so that inequality would not reach drastic proportions. This was what Croly meant when he used the term democratic nationalism. Eventually the problems that inevitably arose between a nationalistic philosophy and a democratic philosophy came to haunt Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann because they could not set up a coherent system that would embody both those values while finding the entire nation as its constituency.

The Revisionists of Social Theory

Herbert Croly

Of the three men who comprised the Bull Moose trio, Herbert Croly was probably the most influential. In later years when the New Republic was born, Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann shared evenly in the philosophy of the journal and its accompanying responsibilities and duties. Croly seems, nevertheless, to have been the principle originator of their shared philosophy. In his first book The Promise of American Life where he espoused the philosophy of democratic nationalism, he used the term "new nationalism" once, synonymously with democratic nationalism. When Theodore Roosevelt made his famous Osawatimie

speech in Kansas and used the phrase "new Nationalism" it was believed by contemporaries that Roosevelt had been so impressed with Croly's book that he had fully adopted both the name and the tenets of Croly's philosophy. Although the belief was partially erroneous, it enhanced Croly's reputation tremendously and both men profited from the assumption.

At Harvard, where he majored in philosophy, the famous George Santayana writing in Reason in Society expressed a theory of politics that Croly later echoed in his own writings. Santayana believed (and Croly agreed with him) that the ideal social order would be "a government of men of merit" bound together by a patriotic spirit. Santayana used the term "socialistic aristocracy" for the society he advocated.⁶

Both Croly and Santayana wanted rule by a non-heredity elite, an emphasis on motives of virtue and patriotism over those of profit, The power of their elite was to rest on excellent example rather than on riches or inherited privilege. While Croly argued that all men in the country would benefit from his nationalized society, Santayana, . . . conceded that "the glory and perfection of the state . . . would not be a benefit to anyone who was not in some degree a philosopher and a poet."⁷

Influenced in this manner by George Santayana, Croly came to favor a nationalistic democracy which would be guided by an elite. By nationalization he meant the process whereby "in its application to American political organization . . . political power shall be distributed among the central, state, and municipal officials in such a manner that it can be efficiently and responsibly exerted in the interest of those affected by its action."⁸ For all intents and purposes the theory which Croly desired then already existed. But although he gave the above definition as his meaning of

⁶Quoted in Charles Forcey, The Crossroads of Liberalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 19.

⁷Forcey, p. 19.

⁸Croly, p. 274.

nationalization, this was clearly not his goal. What he favored was a strong central government with very broad powers at its disposal. He felt that the Jeffersonian concept of a "non-interfering government" (or as little interference as possible) was a bankrupt social and political theory. He argued that a strong federal government is necessary to enable constructive discrimination to take place.

Placing himself within the Progressive movement, Croly at first glance appears to have diverged from its course in the development of schemes and systems to better the American political system. While most of the Progressives desired trust-busting, laws restraining the activities of labor unions, and more voice in state government (i.e.: the initiative and referendum) Croly was opposed to these reforms. He charged that these Progressives were working in a manner which would bring about a higher species of conservatism.⁹

When progressives launched massive assaults against the boss and the machine or the tycoon and his trust, they were attacking the very organizations that kept modern society from flying apart. Concentration of political and economic power was necessary and inevitable in a maturing capitalistic economy. Bosses and tycoons were actually unrestrained exponents of new social forces in themselves desirable.¹⁰

When Croly called for constructive discrimination, what he desired was a strong central government that would continually discriminate first against one side, then the other (i.e.: labor and business), and in this way maintain a see-saw effect of inequality that would benefit all of society.

Both Croly and the mainstream of thought in the Progressive movement desired state government reform. But while the Progressive middle class agitated for more democracy, Croly argued for less. What he desired in fact was to limit very extensively the powers of state legislatures and strengthen

⁹Ibid., p. 275.

¹⁰Forney, p. 27.

the office of the governor. While it would appear that these two proposals were diametrically opposed to one another, they both arose from the same grievances. The state legislatures had increasingly become the tool of corrupt politicians and unscrupulous big business. His objective, therefore, was to limit the power of the legislatures to such a degree that it would not be worth the trouble of the reactionary elements in society to "buy" the legislatures. This solution, however, left the governor with the power. Couldn't he be bought? For Croly the answer was no. His government administered by the elite would be incorruptible; the elite of society would not fall prey to the reactionary elements as had the legislatures.

Whereas it appears that Croly was following a separate path towards reform than that of his fellow Progressives, such was not really the case. His call for a ruling elite paralleled very closely the feelings and attitudes of the new middle class. Their belief that specialized training and education was a necessary element for the formation of "good" bureaucratic government coincided very closely with his ideas concerning the qualifications of his elite class. "The power of . . . [Croly's] elite was to rest on excellent example rather than on riches or inherited privileges."¹¹

Croly's position on economic equality, however, more clearly diverged from the view of most Progressives. While the Progressives were championing the idea of a graduated income tax, he felt that equalizing (to some extent) the differences in wealth could best be brought about by instituting a graduated inheritance tax. Croly's thinking ran along these lines: wealth per se was not bad, and in fact the man who became wealthy was probably more intelligent and skillful than his fellow men. The self-made wealthy used

¹¹Ibid., p. 19.

their money wisely (in most cases) and usually for the benefit of society as a whole. Those who inherited wealth, on the other hand, were frequently corrupted by it, and used it to the disadvantage of society generally. Therefore, he argued it was not only unfair, but unwise as well, to institute a tax on earnings because such a tax penalized the very people who were among the most capable and productive in society.

In the late 1890's and the early part of the twentieth century the specter of the rising labor unions startled and frightened the American public. As an initial step towards their respective utopias, the old progressives advocated bits and pieces of legislation to ameliorate the economic and social conditions of American labor. By the early twentieth century, the new middle class squeezed, on one side by the powerful industrialists and on the other by the young labor unions, conceded that legislative reforms concerning labor were necessary both to alleviate some of the major grievances of the workers and to enable themselves to continue to make progress towards gaining power. Croly, however, went much further than the Progressive mainstream in defining the place of labor in the American system.

Croly argued for federal recognition of labor unions on the basis of his theory of constructive discrimination. "So far as we declare that the labor unions ought to be recognized, we declare that they ought to be favored; and so far as we declare that the labor union ought to be favored, we have made a great advance towards the organization of labor in the national interest."¹² In essence, what he desired was a "company union," with the federal government representing the company. In part, he believed that organized labor had helped alleviate the worst social conditions of labor and

¹²Croly, p. 387.

therefore deserved official recognition. His main reason for desiring such a labor system, however, rested upon two factors: (1) If labor was recognized, labor violence would diminish and eventually cease; the revolutionary labor leaders would lose their grip on the labor movement, and the elite of the workers would attain power. Once this occurred, government elite would be dealing with labor elite and the elites would always be in agreement with each other as to what constituted the common good. (2) Since nationalism was Croly's goal labor must be taken into the system of government so that it might be properly controlled.

But Croly did not call his program nationalism; he used the term democratic nationalism to describe his philosophy. Where was the democracy in this system? There was none. In fact it was in this area that he carried his theory of constructive discrimination to its ultimate end and clearly demonstrated how far he had come from the ideas of freedom and democracy championed by the nineteenth century utopians. He contended that:

As a type the non-union laborer is a species of industrial derelict. He is the laborer who has gone astray and who either from apathy, unintelligence, incompetence, or some immediately pressing need prefers his own individual interest to the joint interests of himself and his fellow laborers. From the point of view of a constructive national policy he does not deserve any special protection. In fact, I am willing to go farther and assert that the non-union industrial labor should in the interest of a genuinely democratic organization of labor, be rejected; and he should be rejected emphatically, if not ruthlessly, as the gardener rejects the weeds in his garden for the benefit of fruit- and flower-bearing plants.¹³

Feeling hedged in by corporations and monopolies the Progressive middle class urged trust-busting and government regulation. By advocating these reforms the middle class felt that the consumer would benefit because unscrupulous businessmen would have to limit their acquisitions and account

¹³Ibid.

for their business activities. Croly again went one step further. He too argued that the federal government should exercise control over industry but in a fundamentally different manner than the Progressive middle class suggested. He believed:

Wherever the tendency in any particular industry continued to run in the direction of combination, and wherever the increasingly centralized control of that industry was associated with a practical monopoly, which would be impolitic and dangerous to leave in private hands. In all such cases some system of public ownership and private operation should, . . . be introduced.

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In the case of a luxury like tobacco, either a government monopoly might be created, or the state might be satisfied with a sufficient share of the resulting profits.¹⁴

What Croly needed to attain his desired results was a strong executive. He not only felt the necessity of strengthening the office of the executive, he believed that the president himself must be a very strong and able leader. As Forcey noted, "He called again and again for some 'national reformer . . . in the guise of Saint Michael' or 'some democratic Saint Francis . . . some imitator of Christ' to lead America toward 'national regeneration.'"¹⁵

In an analysis of Croly's philosophy it is impossible to ignore his emphasis on the nationalistic ideal in his democratic nationalism. What he proposed was nothing less than a corporate state, and although he protested that it would be democratic, his political theory just does not meet the test of democracy. Croly could be forgiven for not foreseeing the rise of fascism, but that does not exonerate his philosophy. In fact, in addition to being elitest and undemocratic, his philosophy contained within it a very noticeable contradiction. At one and the same time he argued for a system of interest

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Forcey, p. 40.

group politics, with one group of society pitted against another for constructive discrimination (and often survival: economic, social, and political), and for a system of collective effort on the part of the American society as a whole.

Although Croly argued for a government that met the peoples' needs while at the same time remaining responsive to their will, it seems unlikely that had his system been implemented the government would have remained responsive. Rather it appears that Croly's government by elite would have legislated in the "interest of the people" without having any clear notion of what that interest was.

Byron Dexter commenting on Croly's philosophy stated:

The collective effort must be disinterested. And that assumed, he concluded, . . . that it could be achieved only if the apparatus of government was deliberately used to "put the collective power of the group at the service of its ablest members." Americans could realize their personal aims only by losing themselves in a "sovereign national will."¹⁶

To put it precisely, Croly would substitute authority for liberty.

A people are saved many costly perversions, in case the official schoolmasters are wise, and the pupils neither truant nor insubordinate; but if the lessons are foolishly phrased, or the pupils refuse to learn, the school will never regain its proper disciplinary value until new teachers have arisen, who understand both the error and its consequences, and who can exercise an effective authority over their pupils.¹⁷

It might well have been scientific and efficient government, but that it would have been democratic is questionable.

Croly's program has never been instituted into the American political system, but he and his colleagues along with the Progressive middle class have left us a legacy. They formulated the idea of interest group politics and

¹⁶ Byron Dexter, "Herbert Croly and the Promise of American Life," The Political Science Quarterly, LXX (June, 1955), p. 214.

¹⁷ Croly, p. 287.

when they did so they not only left the progressives of the nineteenth century behind them forever, they left the succeeding generations to struggle with the conflicts imposed by their legacy.

Walter Weyl

Unlike Croly and Lippmann, Walter Weyl did not incline towards a mystical concept of American government. In his book The New Democracy, Weyl laid out the plans for a new broad definition of democratic government. After publication of the book, he took great pleasure in the fact that Roosevelt in a speech had called the "Promise of Amer. Life & New Democ. . . . the true books of the [Progressive] movement."¹⁸ There are, however, some major differences between these two books and the men who wrote them.

While Croly was taken with the concept of a strong national leader with charismatic personal qualities, Weyl wrote not one word on this subject. By this very omission, it can be assumed that he did not place great value on Croly's ideal. Although Weyl found himself in general agreement with the "new nationalism" of Croly, Theodore Roosevelt, and the Progressive Party, he did not view Roosevelt as "the" saviour of the nation. When Croly and Lippmann were often at the point of sacrificing some of their convictions to promote Theodore Roosevelt as the mystical leader of the Progressive Party, Weyl assumed the role of "conscience" for the New Republic and often demanded that the magazine take a stand that did not march to the beat of Roosevelt's drums.

Probably this streak of independence in Weyl exposed a basic difference in disposition and thinking between himself and Croly and Lippmann. While Croly and Lippmann had attended Harvard and majored in philosophy, Weyl

¹⁸Quoted in Forcey, p. 53.

had received his education at the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Commerce and Finance. There, he majored in economics, and took minor fields in history and politics. This more practical education in a large public university made Weyl the more pragmatic member of the Bull Moose trio.

In The New Democracy he proposed essentially the same political reforms as did Croly. What differentiated the two was Croly's emphasis (as has been stated previously) on a strong executive, and an underlying "religious" principle that enshrouded his entire philosophy of the "new nationalism."¹⁹ Weyl did not cloak his political philosophy with mystical intent; instead he spoke plainly to the problems of his day and tried to forecast the new democracy of the future which he saw unfolding before his very eyes.

What Weyl envisioned was a liberal socialized state. He recognized much more clearly than Croly that economic considerations were probably the most important social relationships in society. Sounding very much like Edward Bellamy, he noted that

To-day the chief restrictions upon liberty are economic, not legal, and the chief prerogatives desired are economic, not political. It is a curious, but not inexplicable development, moreover, that our constitutional provisions, safeguarding our political liberties, are often used to deprive us of economic liberties.²⁰

Like Bellamy, he recognized that until the people achieved some measure of economic equality that would provide not only the necessities but some of the luxuries of life, political liberty was merely fiction. He, however, did not propose to change American society as radically as did Bellamy.

What Weyl desired in the economic sphere ran clearly within the mainstream of Progressive political thought. He concluded that while the

¹⁹Charles Forcey describes this religious aspect of Croly's philosophy in Chapter 1 of The Crossroads of Liberalism.

²⁰Weyl, p. 164.

record of the trusts was criminal, it was not sufficient to muckrake abuses—something had to be done to alleviate the problem.

The trusts are teaching us—as we are teaching them—that the end of it all must be production on the largest scale compatible with efficiency, but a production so regulated as to ownership, stock, issues, dividends, prices, wages, and profits as to safeguard the whole community. Unless we are to take the saltum mortale of a complete and immediate governmental ownership and operation of all large industries, we must work out a more perfect system of corporation control in the interests of society.²¹

Specifically, Weyl recommended a broad economic policy of conservation and socialization. He believed that the former policy of the national government which gave public land, mineral rights and water power away to individuals not only imposed an economic plutocracy upon the nation, but also provided the seeds of bankruptcy for our natural resources. In the future the government should use much more discrimination in handing over the nation's resources to private individuals and should keep most of the resources under its own control.

Weyl advocated various forms of socialization regarding industry. He believed that the government should completely socialize the express business. He felt it was within the province of the federal government to build dams and engage in the sale of water to farmers. The government might or might not own the means of transportation; it would depend upon whether or not regulation of the railroads proved successful. The same choice was presented in all the fields of industry—that of regulation or outright ownership. How the government would decide which method is more effective would be determined by answering the question: Which brought about the greatest efficiency? The question of efficiency played a central role in Weyl's thesis, for efficiency brought about a surplus of goods and currency and it was with this surplus that the economic condition of Americans could be improved.

²¹Ibid., p. 94.

Like Croly, Weyl advised that labor unions be recognized as a positive element within society. Unions provided efficiency which was the most necessary element in the industrial society. More importantly, labor unions were educators, and this factor made them a progressive force in society. Education was the primary element that allowed a democracy to change and change wisely. Without education he feared for the stability and endurance of the new democracy because the people would possess much more power than ever before.

Weyl advocated the standard reforms of the Progressive movement such as: (1) minimum wages; (2) maximum hours of labor; (3) the regulation of industry to ensure that it provided sanitary conditions for labor; (4) widespread educational opportunities from kindergarten to college, and the provision of scholarships for those who could not afford to be unemployed while attending school. All these efforts in the economic and social spheres were directed at attaining a political democracy.

The attainment of this goal would provide the American people with a political power that no other people had ever possessed. Weyl maintained that to secure political control the nation had to follow along five paths: "(1) the democratic control of parties and party nominations; (2) the democratic control of elections; (3) the democratic control of representatives already elected; (4) direct legislation by the people; (5) increased efficiency of the democratized government."²² To achieve these goals Weyl recommended the following Progressive reforms: (1) direct primaries; (2) the recall; (3) the referendum; (4) the initiative; (5) proportional representation.

²²Ibid., p. 298.

The thesis of Weyl's entire proposal for the attainment of a new democracy rested on two major premises: first, that once a decent standard of living was reached by all the people they would have both the time and inclination to take part in the democratic process; and, second, the new bureaucratic middle class was sufficiently skilled and educated to allow the government to regulate and control a much larger portion of the life of the nation than it ever had previously.

Of the three publicists, Weyl was the only one who recognized that the economic, political and social condition of the Negro was an affront to democratic principles. Unlike Croly, he did not feel that Negroes were an inherently inferior species, and like William Dean Howells he advocated an end to racial discrimination.

We may not, however, presume to make the negro an "underman," to offer him a subhuman or subcivilized life. For as he grows, the Negro, if he be not given, will take. Even as we advance, hoping perhaps that the democracy won and wrought by whites will descend as an easy heritage to the reenfranchised Negroes, we are oppressed by the dread of what may occur. There may arise a Negro consciousness, a dark sense of outraged racial dignity. There may come a stirring of a rebellious spirit among ten, or as it soon will be, of twenty or thirty, million black folk. We cannot build upon an assumed superiority over these black men, who are humble to-day, but who to-morrow may be imperious, exigent, and proudly race conscious.²³

Much more pragmatic than his two companions, less inclined towards philosophical mind trips, Weyl spoke in 1912 not only to the problems of his time, but to the problems of our own age.

Although Croly and Lippmann did not consider themselves utopians, they were planners of great schemes. Weyl, the more liberal of the three, did not make plans, and in this approach he more closely paralleled the aspirations of the new bureaucratic middle class than either of his colleagues. Unlike Croly

²³Ibid., pp. 343-44.

and Lippmann, he was able to explain his conception of democracy in one sentence; where his fellow editors rambled on about a mystical spirit of democracy, Weyl stated "In the final analysis, however, it may be clothed in legal rights and political immunities, democracy means material goods and the moral goods based thereon."²⁴

Walter Lippmann

Of all the literature written describing Walter Lippmann, John Reed probably best characterized the young publicist in a short poem he wrote soon after they had both left Harvard.

. . . Lippmann,—calm, inscrutable,
Thinking and writing clearly, soundly, well;
All snarls of falseness swiftly piercing
 through,
His keen mind leaps lightening to the True;
 . . .
Our all unchallenged Chief! But . . . one
Who builds a world, and leaves out all the
 fun,—
Who dreams a pageant, gorgeous, infinite,
And then leaves all the color out of it,—
Who wants to make the human race and me,
March to a geometric Q. E. D.²⁵

Nothing else that has been written about Lippmann captures his spirit of bland omniscience as well as this verse.

When Croly asked Lippmann to join the editorial board of the New Republic, Lippmann although barely twenty-five years old had already published his first book A Preface to Politics. Lippmann commented on the nature of his first book in its introduction: "There are, . . . no assumptions put forward as dogmas. It is a preliminary sketch for a theory of politics, a preface to thinking."²⁶ Perhaps this is what he was trying to achieve, but the treatise

²⁴Ibid., p. 194.

²⁵Quoted in Forcey, p. 89.

²⁶Lippmann, p. 5.

is not free from dogmatic thinking. While Lippmann only suggested certain Progressive reforms, he appears to be adamant in presenting his political philosophy to the reader.

Very much like Croly, Lippmann's book smacked both of an elitism and a belief in the power and usefulness of intuition and mysticism. For a young man who had been the leading light of the Harvard Socialist Club it is interesting to note his references to both Nietzsche and Georges Sorel, both of whom are recognized today as having laid the intellectual groundwork for Fascism.²⁷ In the years between 1909 when he had graduated from Harvard and 1913 when A Preface to Politics was published, Lippmann's political philosophy had altered radically.

Probably, the event which most affected Lippmann's thinking was his experience as an assistant to the socialist mayor of Schenectady, New York. He was only in the post a few months before quitting in bitter disillusionment. It was not that he believed that the Socialists were inherently evil; he perceived that the problem in Schenectady was that the voters had voted for the local socialist government without really being aware of the philosophy of the socialist movement. Due to this fact, the mayor had to continue compromising his philosophy in order to meet the needs of his constituents who were not socialists. As Lippmann watched the effectiveness of the socialist movement decrease his respect for the intelligence of the people also decreased. With a bitter taste in his mouth he left Schenectady, turned his back on socialism as a political philosophy worthy of consideration, and turned towards

²⁷For a more complete discussion of the political theory of Nietzsche and Sorel see George Sabine, History of Political Theory (New York: Holt, 1937), pp. 755-58.

a vague, ill-defined elitest theory of politics.²⁸

When Lippmann lost his faith in the intelligence of the people, he lost his belief in the validity of traditional political philosophy. As he observed, "Now whoever has followed political theory will have derived perhaps two convictions as a reward. Almost all thinkers seem to regard their systems as true and binding, and none of these systems are."²⁹ Because he did not believe that the mass of people could be educated sufficiently to develop a feeling for the general welfare, he turned to the idea of the great statesman as the vehicle for political reform.

Statesmanship cannot rest upon the good sense of its program. It must find popular feeling, organize it, and make that the motive power of government. If you study the success of Roosevelt the point is re-enforced. He is a man of will in whom millions of people have felt the embodiment of their own will. For a time Roosevelt was a man of destiny in the truest sense.³⁰

What he wanted was a government ruled by a powerful executive who was a charismatic leader. However, he did not believe that the statesman alone was capable of listening to the people and forming policy based on their needs. To solve this problem he proposed that a union of power be forged between the statesman, and the intellectuals. By forming this alliance the "intellectual . . . could master the material, and the statesman . . . could master the public."³¹

²⁸For a further discussion of Lippmann's experiences in Schenectady see Forcey, pp. 105-06, and Lippmann, pp. 46, 139.

²⁹Lippmann, p. 155.

³⁰Ibid., p. 166.

³¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Walter Lippmann: The Intellectual v. Politics," Walter Lippmann and His Times, edited by Marquis Childs and James Reston (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1959), pp. 194-95.

Unlike Croly and Weyl, Lippmann while recognizing the need for specialists in government was fearful of their influence. He felt that the detailed preparations of the new middle class, skilled in the new social sciences, would bring about "a government by men divorced from human tradition."³² What Lippmann appeared to be aiming for was a humane democracy, but his distrust of the people placed him in the odd position of championing an executive who would use his charisma to charm the people into Progressive reform.

Within the framework of the Progressive movement, Lippmann proposed basically the same reforms as Croly and Weyl. Reflecting the needs of the Progressive Party he expressed his dislike for the two party system because he felt it was too rigid and did not always perform its stated function: that of offering the people a meaningful choice in leadership. Many of his political proposals seem to indicate inconsistency and contradiction in his thought. He believed that the enactment of the initiative and referendum, for example, would be beneficial because it would aid the voters in selecting a candidate while rejecting specific legislation. On the other hand due to his innate distrust of the intelligence of the voters he proposed the separation of municipal, state, and national elections in time. This measure would enable and perhaps even encourage the voters to split the ticket instead of voting blindly for one party. While denouncing the Socialists he incorporated one of their ideas in his Progressive reform. He would like to see a national legislature that represented people not only by geographical districts, but by their occupational interests (this form of legislature is termed Interessenvertag by the Germans). This proposal would enable people to vote both as

³²Lippmann, p. 138.

consumers and as producers instead of forcing them to make a choice between these two roles.

In A Preface to Politics Lippmann continued to see-saw between the idea of democracy and faith in an elite leadership. Unfortunately he never seemed to resolve this problem. Probably he was closest to the nineteenth century progressives when he insisted that means are as important as ends.

The reformer bound up in his special propaganda will, . . . object that "to get something done is worth more than any amount of talk about new ways of looking at political problems." What matters the method, . . . provided the reform be good? Well the method matters more than any particular reform.³³

Lippmann's principle that achievement should be measured in human happiness was also reminiscent of the ideals of Bellamy and his contemporaries. He tried to tell us, as did Bellamy, that a particular reform was not the answer to the problem, rather that we must learn to deal with problems by using a broad vision of what we desire the nature of life to be in the society.

Lippmann was saying that as a nation we should formulate great plans. "But as there is not prospect of a time when our life will be immutably fixed, as we shall, therefore, have to go on inventing, it is fair to say that what the world is aching for is not a special reform embodied in a particular statute, but a way of going to all problems."³⁴ Through the confusion of Lippmann's ideas, we can still make out this principle theme: there is a need for foresight and planning in politics. Ironically, Lippmann himself failed to fulfill this need.

Although Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann have been considered by many historians as radical political theorists, from the hindsight of fifty years it is discernable to the student of modern politics and political theory that

³³Ibid., p. 56. ³⁴Ibid.

this is a false assumption. Charles Forcey entitled his book about these three men The Crossroads of Liberalism. What he meant to convey by this title was that the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century faced a critical point in political thought.

Following the decline of the Progressive era in the United States, it was obvious to most serious students of politics that the Progressive movement had been a failure. Even before the Progressive era had ended, Walter Weyl expressed his concern for the American political system; as Forcey noted, "Weyl had begun to suspect that only socialism within nations and an economic internationalism between nations could save the world."³⁵

Conclusion

This thesis was concerned with the development of American "progressive" political thought from its beginnings in the late nineteenth century to its culmination in the twentieth century Progressive movement. The first chapter discussed the political philosophy of the nineteenth century utopian radicals. These men, Edward Bellamy, Henry George, William Dean Howells, and Henry Demarest Lloyd shared a vision of an egalitarian society. Through their plans they hoped to alleviate the social inequalities of nineteenth century American society. These men were not content with mere reform. They advocated a radical restructuring of society along socialist lines.

The utopian progressives were not just idle dreamers. The second chapter examines their attempts to implement their theories through political action. Their efforts failed in part because they misunderstood the aspirations of the middle class. During the last decades of the nineteenth century

³⁵Forcey, p. 286.

a new middle class had arisen which saw its political hopes fulfilled in the establishment of a bureaucratic government rather than in the dreams of the utopians. They feared a radical reorganization of society. This new middle class was concerned more with establishing social justice and stability than with creating an egalitarian society. They formed the basis of the Progressive movement.

The third chapter examines the philosophy of the Progressive movement as reflected in the thought of its three principal spokesmen, Herbert Croly, Walter Weyl, and Walter Lippmann. These three men sought to perfect American society without radically altering its structure. Unlike the radical reformers, they rejected utopian thinking. Their ideal was not a society in which all men were equal, but one in which a continual balance between various interest groups would be maintained. To achieve this they advocated a strong central government dominated by an elite which would govern in the interests of all the groups in society. Even though their demands were less radical than those of the utopians, the Progressives also failed to present us with a viable model for government.

In essence what occurred during the period encompassing the Progressive era could have been and was forecasted before it had ever begun. During the late nineteenth century the utopian thinkers and radical reformers recognized that American society had reached a turning point. The political system had to choose between three alternatives: first, to continue a laissez-faire policy that had proved both morally wrong as well as dangerous, for it seemed to lead to conditions conducive to violent revolution; second, that society make some concessions to the people in the worst economic plight and appropriate a small amount of power and wealth from the upper class; and, third, that society would take the road towards a non-violent radical

socialist type of revolution itself, and thereby alter the American political system drastically. For the nineteenth century progressives the only logical and moral choice was the third. No other system but a form of socialism would bring about increased welfare, productivity, harmony and happiness in the society.

Like the radical reformers of the nineteenth century, the Progressives of the twentieth century realized that the first choice would be a bankrupt policy. Even if they had wanted to they could not stem the tide of disillusionment with a laissez-faire system of government. However, even as Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann spoke of harmonizing interests and the formation of a nationalist spirit, they, like the new middle class whose hopes they reflected, feared taking a path that would lead to a socialist society. So they opted for the second choice: amelioration of some of the ills of society without changing the basic structure of the system itself.

Most of the reforms that the Progressive movement, with Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann as its spokesmen, championed were incorporated into the American system of government. We now have laws concerning the welfare of children and working women, minimum wages, maximum hours of labor, and political reforms such as the initiative, referendum and recall. But even with these small gains we have lost much more. While we still believe in the myth of individuality, we have lost it in the machinery of a bureaucracy that has become more entrenched and encompassing with each succeeding year. Even the smallest reforms must jump the hurdle of the bureaucratic system, and most never make it through the jungle of red tape.

Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann who inately distrusted the mass of American people would allow society to keep and even encourage various interest groups because the charismatic leader would be able to guide the vying

interest groups into some sort of harmony. The weaknesses of this line of thinking were best exemplified in Croly's theory of nationalism.

Although Croly claimed that his desire for nationalization was an effort to equalize the position of one man in society to another, and to promote homogeneity in American society, his program of constructive discrimination provided us instead with a social and political system where each group continually vied for favors and privileges from the government at all levels. While the radical reformers and utopian thinkers envisioned a society of harmony, the Progressives envisioned a society of differing interests that had to be accommodated with each other via the bureaucracy and a strong central government. The problems we see today in American society are the products of Progressive thought. What we need is to rethink, re-evaluate, and plan anew for a society that is both egalitarian and individualistic and which at the same time promotes a common bond between its citizens.

APPENDIX

The following is an article written by Edward Bellamy to describe the program he developed in Looking Backward. It is not, of course, fully comprehensive, but it has the benefit of having been written by the author himself. The article was first published in the Christian Socialist magazine, the Dawn, September 15, 1889. Arthur Morgan reprinted it in his biography of Edward Bellamy: that is where this copy comes from.¹

Looking Backward is chiefly devoted under the form of a romance, to a description of the state of society supposed to exist in the United States in the year 2000.

The labor question, so-called, and all problems growing out of the division of labor and its results, have been solved by the union of the entire nation into a general business partnership, in which every man and woman is an equal partner. The conduct of the industries, commerce and general business of the country is committed by the national firm to a so-called army of industry, which includes all the able-bodied citizens, men and women, between the ages of 21 and 45, the intellectual and professional services being rendered by associated corps. All persons choose their occupations in the army of the industry, according to natural tastes and gifts, provided, of course, when there are too many volunteers for the needs of a particular branch that the fittest are taken. In order to equalize the attractiveness of different occupations, the hours of work in those which are more laborious or otherwise unattractive, are shortened as compared with the easier and more attractive trades. The conditions of a trade which does not attract volunteers are lightened until the necessary force is attracted, and on the other hand a persistent excess of volunteers for a particular trade is taken to indicate that its conditions are unfairly easy. The intellectual pursuits are as open to all as the industrial, on the sole condition that the fittest find preference.

In view of the fact that most women marry and become mothers, and in view also of the comparative weakness and uncertainty of their health, the feminine half of the army of industry is organized under exclusively feminine control, and is altogether devoted to the lighter classes of occupations, the discipline being in all ways adopted to feminine conditions.

¹Arthur E. Morgan, Edward Bellamy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 230-35.

There is also an invalid corps attached to the industrial army, in which the sickly and feeble who still desire and are able to do something, are enabled to undertake what they safely can for the common wealth.

At the age of 45 both men and women are discharged from further service, and remain absolutely free to occupy themselves as they will for the remainder of life.

That is to say, the industrial duty of citizens has been placed upon the same basis on which their military duty now rests. As it is at present held to be the duty of all citizens to fight for their country, so then it is held their equally obvious duty to work for it, and it is considered self-evident that to be efficient, working requires system and unity of action quite as much as fighting. The people stand shoulder to shoulder, not as now, to resist the foreign foe (for that peril is no longer known), but against hunger, and cold, and nakedness, and every wrong and every want that human valor can repel; an invincible square of men, with the women and the children, the sick, the aged and the infirm in the centre.

As all the members of a nation of to-day, whether able to fight or not, share equally in the protection of the army and the prosperity it insures, so the nation of the year 2000, all alike, whether men or women, strong or weak, able-bodied or defective, share in the wealth produced by the industrial army, and the share of all is equal. This share varying only with the general prosperity of the national business, is the sole income and means of maintenance of all, whether during active industrial service or after discharge from it.

Owing to the method of organizing industry upon the mutual obligation of citizen to nation, and nation to citizen, duty has wholly taken the place of contract, as the basis of industry and the cement of society.

The only exception to the rule of equality of portions is made in the case of children. While these are regarded as equally partners in the national concern, and are by no means left dependent upon the caprice of parents for any part of their support, the pension allotted them is naturally less than that of adults, their needs being less.

If any question could be supposed to arise as to the comparative claims upon maintenance at the nation's table of the able-bodied and the defective, it would be the latter who would come first, for it is an ethical axiom in the year 2000, that every generation receives the common inheritance of organized society subject to certain liens and charges, and that the first and most sacred of these charges is an ample provision for the care of those who are dependent on account of weakness of mind or body.

But indeed no one in that age would think of demanding an accounting for his personal services, rather than his share as partner, were it only for selfish reasons. It is recognized that ninety-nine one-hundredths of the value of any person's work, and often the very possibility of the work itself, is created by the social organization, which is the joint and indivisible inheritance of all, so that even if any body of metaphysicians and mathematicians were able to determine the element in the value of an individual's work which he had himself absolutely originated and independently created, it would doubtless be a pittance too beggarly to support life. The royalty, that is to say, which society would have to claim from an individual for permission to use the social organization for his personal enrichment would be so large as to be in danger of leaving him in debt.

But while as regards the part each has in the annual product of the nation, it is share and share alike; the honors and distinctions, the offices of rank and authority in the army of the industry and in the nation, are allotted to men and women according to their comparative diligence or brilliancy or achievement, to the end that the fittest may lead and rule, and all be encouraged by the hope of honorable distinction to do their best. While for example a man receives no more rations of bread and meat or changes of clothing for doing twice as much work, as the artisan at his side, he does unfailingly win promotion in authority and position, with the social rank such promotion brings in a community in which no other basis of distinction is recognized. As to the rule of equality in the shares of all workers, whether more or less skillful, it is merely the extension to all trades of the rule of uniformity of wages practically enforced in particular trades by the trade unions of to-day.

Owing to the fact that the relation of work and maintenance is directly between the nation and each individual, no man's livelihood is dependent upon the favor or patronage of any other or group of others, nor any woman's upon a man, nor can a child suffer privation. All citizens consequently enjoy moral independence, and are free from social or personal dictation or pressure as to belief, speech or practice, so far as they infringe upon no others rights. The development of a robust and unfettered individuality, which is rendered so difficult to-day by the partial or complete dependence of nearly everybody upon others for support or business patronage, is thus open to all.

Owing to the fact that all forms of capital are held in trust by the nation for the people, and all commodities produced by the nation, it follows that everything the individual needs can and can only be procured directly from the nation. That is to say, there is no buying or selling or trade of any sort, among individuals. Therefore there is no use for money and no money. The citizen is credited with his annual dividend of the product of the great partnership, and receives vouchers, upon presentation of which at the public stores he obtains what he wants, at such times and in such quantities as he pleases, whether his tastes run to renting a fine house, having a fine table, or wearing fine clothes. These vouchers are good only for the year for which they are issued, and cannot be accumulated beyond that, whatever is not taken up being turned over to public surplus. Spendthrifts becoming public burdens are placed under guardianship as to their expenses. The portions of children are also, of course, expended for them.

While the nation undertakes and controls all public business, smaller groups of citizens co-operate at will, as now, for social, religious, political or other semi-private purposes, and are able, substantially as at the present time, to raise common funds for such ends, by contributions from their private credits.

Crime has shrunk to almost imperceptible proportions. Robbery, theft and fraud of every sort are without a motive in a society where all have abundance, where covetousness is not stimulated by different degrees of luxury, and where equality of resources is annually renewed. Not only fraud, but even falsehood, is almost unknown, owing to the fact that none are dependent for their livelihood or for any advantage upon the favor of their fellows, and having nothing to fear or hope from them, are without temptation to prevaricate. As to crimes of violence, the universal refinement of manners which results from a general high education has tended to

reduce them to the same small proportions in which they now occur among the educated classes. As for corruption among public officials, there are no corporate or personal interests opposed to the public interests to create a motive for bribery, neither is there any wealth to bribe with nor poverty to be bribed.

Owing to the equality of wealth, marriages are based always solely upon personal preference, and never upon sordid or prudential calculations. The unhindered operation of the principle of sexual selection in marriage has exerted a marked effect upon the physical, intellectual and moral character of the race.

The general wealth of society is represented as vastly greater in the year 2000 than it is now. This is owing in part to the continuance for another century of the scientific progress which has already enriched the world of today as compared with the world of the eighteenth century. Quite as much, however, it is owing to the vast positive gains and negative savings in the use of labor resulting from the substitution of the scientific methods of an organized and unified industrial system for the wasteful struggle of the present competitive plan with its countless warring and mutually destructive undertakings.

The account of the manner in which the change was made from the industrial system of to-day to that of the year 2000 represents it as resulting from the development to its logical conclusion of the tendency now observable to the consolidation of entire trades under the single management of great corporations, syndicates and trusts. As individual ownership and control of great business enterprises has already almost wholly given place to corporate management, and as corporate management is now before our eyes giving place to the still larger concentrations of the trusts or syndicates, so, it is represented, the syndicates and trusts in due time realized their manifest destiny by the absorption in the great trust of the nation, the universal partnership of the people.

The enthusiasm of the people of the United States when they began to foresee the manner in which their salvation was thus to be wrought out, and to realize the greatness of it, is described to have been paralleled and to have resulted in a popular uprising, peaceful because irresistible, without precedent in history.

While the condition of society in the year 2000 is described as being in all ways vastly improved upon that of the present day, it is represented that the people of that epoch by no means rested satisfied in it or considered it anything more than a single step in the infinite progression of humanity toward the divine. In looking back upon our time their sentiment was chiefly one of amazement that the race should have been so slow to apply to industrial organization principles at once so obviously just, and so economically advantageous.

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FROM UTOPIAN RADICALISM TO BULL MOOSE LIBERALISM:
AN ANALYSIS OF "PROGRESSIVE" POLITICAL THOUGHT

by 7214

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This thesis is an analysis of two opposing political philosophies: the late nineteenth century utopian writers and radical reformers, and the early twentieth century Progressive movement with Herbert Croly, Walter Weyl, and Walter Lippmann as its theorists and publicists.

Ten years prior to the Civil War, America was a rural and largely nonindustrialized nation. Some twenty years later, American society had changed drastically. What had once been seen as a method of equalizing the status of people in society—the giving away of land to individuals—was no longer possible in what had become an industrialized nation. The industrialization process brought not only progress, but also increased poverty and its close relative, inequality.

The utopian writers and radical reformers of the late nineteenth century, recognizing the inefficiency and perceiving immorality in a laissez-faire political theory which allowed the government to avoid coming to terms with the social problems arising out of the new industrialization, tried to respond to the needs of society by formulating new plans for existence. Edward Bellamy and William Dean Howells, both utopian writers, found a large audience for their political novels which dealt with the formation of a humane socialist society. Henry George and Henry Demarest Lloyd, the radical reformers, also conceived of great plans for changing society.

However, while these men were planning for change, change (of an unexpected nature) was occurring. A new middle class came into its own; a class of skilled and semi-skilled people who desired some reforms in the social system, but did not wish to alter it entirely. In the midst of this

new middle class, the great plans of the nineteenth century progressives fell upon deaf ears.

The new middle class squeezed on the one side by massive trusts and corporations, and on the other side by swelling labor unions, demanded a government that would alleviate some of the economic deprivation of the poorer class and appropriate some of the wealth of the upper class. They, therefore, turned towards a more pragmatic, bureaucratic type of reform.

In this political atmosphere the Progressive movement in America began to gain strength. It was aided partially by its own skill and partially through the Progressive media which was most aptly represented by Herbert Croly and his colleagues. No makers of great plans were these men. In fact, if anything, the first two decades of the twentieth century were later to be recognized as a critical point in the American political system. Because Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann failed to have the vision of the nineteenth century progressives, we live with the results of their lack of foresight.