

A PROGRESSIVE RANCHER OPPOSES THE NEW DEAL: DAN CASEMENT, EUGENICS,
AND REPUBLICAN VIRTUE

by

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Abstract

Whether as a “progressive” or an anti-New Dealer, Casement was always primarily concerned with creating a stable business climate for the beef industry—even though his ideas on methodology changed. Beginning in the 1920s, he argued for the preservation of republican virtue through the language of eugenics. Eugenics may be broadly defined as “the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding.” During the Progressive era, Casement primarily supported structural reforms such as conservation and federal regulation of industry. After WWI he became increasingly concerned with the moral direction of the country and believed that stricter individual responsibility—encouraged by limited government—along with eugenic-inspired reforms were necessary to restore the country’s republican virtue. In Casement’s view, the New Deal inaugurated a governmental takeover of private property through unfair taxes for wealth redistribution and production controls that sapped individual initiative, thereby weakening an already weakened populace—especially in the agricultural sector.

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Dedication

For Gayle

Introduction

“Modern liberalism has departed so far from the methods and purposes of the original progressives that, were the dear old colonel [Theodore Roosevelt] with us today, the President [Franklin Roosevelt], I’m sure, would be constrained to denounce him as the world’s most dangerous and vociferous ‘Tory.’”¹ Dan Casement, a Kansas rancher and nationally renowned livestock breeder, penned this criticism of the New Deal in 1938. In the early twentieth-century, he had actively supported Progressive era reforms, yet now he balked at almost all New Deal legislation. And yet throughout the 1930s, he still referred to himself as a “progressive.” That a “progressive” could oppose the New Deal sounds contradictory, which led to the central question regarding this study: why and how could a “progressive” reformer oppose the New Deal? At heart, this question concerns the relationship between the Progressive era and the New Deal and the definition of American liberalism.

Historians debate whether the New Deal served as a break from progressive reform or a continuation of it. For instance, in *Atlantic Crossings*, Daniel T. Rodgers recognizes the “departures” of the New Deal but concludes that “it is far more accurate to see the New Deal as a culmination: a great gathering in from the progressive political wings of a generation of proposals and ideas.”² On the other hand, in *An Encore for Reform*, Otis L. Graham, Jr. located a discontinuity between the two reform eras, suggesting that a majority of former “progressives” eventually opposed the New Deal. The case of Dan Casement suggests that we should emphasize discontinuity more than continuity when assessing the relationship between Progressive era and New Deal reforms.³

Dan Casement's public life also sheds light on the origins of modern conservatism by revealing a eugenic component inherent in opposition to the welfare state. The genesis of the modern conservative movement is a matter of ongoing debate. Some historians view it as primarily a reaction to the cultural radicalism of the 1960s. In this vein, a backlash against the sexual revolution, the civil rights movement, and Vietnam drove many Americans into the Republican Party. Other historians emphasize the breakdown of the liberal consensus that had prevailed during the middle decades of the twentieth century, a consensus that accepted a limited welfare state and viewed government spending as a legitimate way to offset recessions. Still others, such as Kim Phillips-Fein, insist that modern conservatism has very deep and coherent roots that date all the way back to the New Deal era. More specifically, Phillips-Fein claimed in *Invisible Hands* that the modern conservative movement was initiated by the relatively few businessmen who opposed the New Deal.⁴ This study of Dan Casement supports Phillips-Fein's argument that modern conservatism sprung up as a reaction to the New Deal.

In order to understand how the career of Dan Casement exemplifies the discontinuity between Progressive era and New Deal reforms, it is necessary to establish his credentials as a progressive reformer in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Casement supported social and industrial justice through his advocacy of women's suffrage, child labor laws, and labor's right to organize and bargain collectively. He favored state regulation of business and natural resources in order to bring order, efficiency, and stability to the economy. Federal bureaucracy, in his mind, would quell destructive competition and assuage rugged individualism. In addition, he helped organize the Colorado Progressive Party and acted as one of its most zealous promoters.

An important shift in Casement's thinking took place around 1919, one that helped define his political ideas for the duration of the 1920s. His shift in thought was partly in reaction to the Red Scare and partly shaped by a new found respect for business. After 1919, he still desired social and industrial justice and economic stability, but he thought that these goals could best be achieved under the guidance of big business rather than the federal government. To this end, he advocated limited government and lower taxes, yet also supported government cooperation with business. Casement's political economic philosophy resembled Herbert Hoover's associationalism in almost every respect. Associationalism envisioned a "private government" in which professional and trade associations along with labor organizations would collaborate in determining business decisions such as wages and prices. According to Hoover's vision, the "private government" would place the public good above group interest. In the associationalist model, according to historian Ellis Hawley, the federal government "would act only as a clearing house, inspirational force, and protector of international rights, not as a trader, investor, or detailed regulator." Associationalists wanted to have their cake and eat it too. They coveted the order and stability that arises from "scientific rationalization and social engineering" while retaining "the energy and creativity inherent in individual effort." According to Hawley, Hoover avowed that voluntary cooperation would "raise living standards, humanize industrial relationships, and integrate conflicting social elements into a harmonious community of interests."⁵ Associationalism held the promise of fulfilling Casement's progressive reform goals of social and industrial justice, as well as economic stability, efficiency, and order. Casement continued to endorse associationalism during the New Deal era. Casement departed from associationalism (during both the 1920s and 1930s) only in regard to agriculture. While Hoover counted farmers as key participants in associationalist endeavors, Casement deliberately left

them out. He contended that too much prosperity for farmers would weaken their republican virtue.

Casement opposed the New Deal because, in his mind, government intervention in the economy would eventually destroy the country morally, economically, and politically. In public, Casement remained relatively silent on the New Deal until implementation of the corn-hog program of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). The corn-hog reduction program offered a subsidy—financed through a tax on processors—to farmers who reduced their corn acreage and hog numbers. Vehemently opposed, Casement presumed that any government assistance to farmers would annihilate their republican virtue. Furthermore, he supposed that production controls designed to boost commodity prices hampered the natural function of the market and imperiled the American economy. Finally, he concluded that government intervention in the economy was socialist and would lead the country down a slippery slope toward communism. Although initially he only criticized the AAA and the corn-hog reduction program, he eventually opposed the entire New Deal on virtually the same grounds.

However, in order to understand Casement's New Deal opposition it is first necessary to understand the Progressive era. Undoubtedly, a multitude of progressive reform movements flourished between 1900 and 1917. Despite the variety of reforms, as historian Robert Wiebe demonstrated, certain characteristics linked the majority of reformers: they were middle class and shared a desire to organize society based on the principles of order, efficiency, and science. In order to accomplish their goals, they looked to enlarge the power of the federal government to regulate the economy and check the power of the emerging large corporations. Many reformers were university trained professionals. Others were experts who sought to reform their own

professions. Even while encountering fierce resistance from proponents of individualism and localism, reformers sought order and efficient management in almost every field of endeavor.⁶

Having broadly defined who the reformers were, it is also possible to make three useful distinctions between them. In *The Great Campaigns*, Otis L. Graham Jr. identifies three types of “progressives”: structural, social, and moral. Structural progressives worked to organize society in a rational manner through “centralization, integration of systems . . . coordination, and efficiency.”⁷ Social progressives strove to alleviate the hardships of the poor caused by industrialization, and moral progressives wanted to impose nineteenth-century morality on modern society. Moral progressives tended to define nineteenth-century values as hard work, self-reliance, and sobriety, which they imagined was enshrined in small family farm life.⁸ Their romantic conception of nineteenth-century farm values is often referred to as “republican virtue.”

New Deal reformers, for the most part, were unconcerned with the romantic conception of republican virtue. In the face of a national crisis, they sought mostly practical solutions (many of which would speed up the industrialization of the American farm). Given this indifference to republican values, structural and social progressives often viewed the New Deal as a continuation of progressive era reforms, but moral progressives frequently did not. In *Encore for Reform*, Graham noted that New Deal and the progressive era reformers shared a “common enemy” in “private economic power unrestrained either by adequate laws or sense of responsibilities,” and that both wanted to “restore the balance between public good and private gain.” Moreover, both sought to achieve their goals “through enlargement of the state,” and they mostly abandoned their “devotion to laissez-faire.” Still, Graham also identified discontinuities. For example, the New Deal ignored Progressive era bugaboos of prohibition, boss rule, and prostitution—largely moral problems—and was guided by “a different political and moral style,”

one based on “pragmatism and tough-mindedness.” Quite a few moral progressives sought to maintain what they perceived as America’s republican virtue. Finally, he concluded that some New Deal measures, like the AAA, had “only the faintest roots” in Progressive era reforms.⁹

The Agricultural Adjustment Act was, in fact, different from any Progressive era conservation measures or farm laws. During the Progressive era, conservation helped shape the beef industry, especially through grazing policy. Casement was a proponent of Gifford Pinchot’s brand of conservation, often referred to as “wise use.” Gifford Pinchot was the first head of the Forest Service under Theodore Roosevelt and popularized the conservation ethic of “the greatest good for the greatest number.” Wise use sought to use the federal government to actively manage the public lands by limiting access to natural resources. Progressive era reformers were only concerned with the conservation of natural resources, but, as Sarah T. Phillips points out in *This Land, This Nation*, New Deal reformers sought to conserve rural populations as well as natural resources. Specifically, they “hoped to preserve the family farm by modernizing it.”¹⁰ Casement wanted to save the family farm, too, but not by modernizing it. He thought that government aid to farmers would sap their republican virtue.

Casement himself did not run a small family farm. He was first and foremost a rancher, who farmed only to provide feed for his cattle and hogs. Casement took considerably more interest in ranching than he did in politics. Of course, politics and ranching often overlapped, but he was mainly concerned with organizing the livestock industry to make it as efficient as possible for its continued profitability. Casement owned and operated the Juniata Ranch on nearly 3,000 acres near Manhattan, Kansas, where he also bred Hereford cattle to compete in stock shows. He also owned the Unaweep Ranch in Mesa County, Colorado, and a small farm in Ohio that he inherited from his father. By the 1920s, he was nationally renowned in the livestock

industry for his award-winning purebred Herefords and his colorful personality. Throughout the decade, he was an editor of and frequent contributor to *The Breeder's Gazette*, a nationally circulated livestock journal.

Whether as a “progressive” or an anti-New Dealer, Casement was always primarily concerned with creating a stable business climate for the beef industry—even though his ideas on methodology changed. Beginning in the 1920s, he argued for the preservation of republican virtue through the language of eugenics. Eugenics may be broadly defined as “the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding.”¹¹ Eugenics gained popularity during the Progressive era and was institutionalized in the 1920s. Eugenicists in the 1920s sought “racial purity” through interracial marriage bans, sterilization, and immigration restriction. During the Progressive era, Casement primarily supported structural reforms such as conservation and federal regulation of industry. After WWI he became increasingly concerned with the moral direction of the country and believed that stricter individual responsibility—encouraged by limited government—along with eugenic-inspired reforms were necessary to restore the country’s republican virtue. In Casement’s view, the New Deal inaugurated a governmental takeover of private property through unfair taxes for wealth redistribution and production controls that sapped individual initiative, thereby weakening an already weakened populace—especially in the agricultural sector. Casement would have viewed the security offered by the emergence of a limited welfare state as supporting the “weak.”

Although Casement never considered or referred to himself as a eugenicist, his ideas reveal eugenically inspired thought. Eugenics conveniently allowed Casement to connect private property rights with human fitness. Eugenic concepts allowed him to blame the people for society’s problems, rather than the political economic system. Even though his eugenic ideas did

not manifest themselves until the late 1920s, he had, nonetheless, been influenced by eugenic thinking before then. Eugenic ideas slowly, and perhaps imperceptibly, permeated Casement's thinking in the 1920s and 1930s. My study reveals how Casement employed the language and principles of eugenics to justify his anti-New Deal political ideology, especially his opposition to New Deal agricultural policy. Interestingly, scholars are just now starting to think about the relationship between eugenics and farm policy. However, some historians, such as Derek S. Hoff in *The State and the Stork*, contend that the prevalence of eugenic thought in America is overblown.¹² My study seeks to shed some light on the connection between eugenics and farm policy.

Despite not belonging to any eugenic organizations or referring to himself as one, Casement advocated a eugenic solution to the farm problem. He imagined that only certain people had the right characteristics for farming and he proposed removing the "unfit" farmers and re-populating the countryside with people "fit" to be farmers. "Fitness" meant different things to different people. Eugenicists usually recognized an environmental as well as a hereditary component in better breeding. For Casement, an unencumbered right to private property formed the environmental component while the "fit" individual assumed the characteristics of the romantic idea of republican virtue.¹³ These characteristics, Casement maintained, were largely genetic. Contrary to most eugenicists of the 1920s, the issue of race is conspicuously absent from Casement's eugenic ideas. However, given some of his earlier works, he probably assumed that "fitness" excluded African-Americans.

A surprisingly large number of Progressive era conservationists were also eugenicists.¹⁴ Casement fits this stereotype as both a conservationist and a nationally renowned livestock breeder. Furthermore, he shared eugenicists' fears that the United States was degenerating

rapidly in the 1920s. Indeed, his stance on eugenics became more rigid from the progressive era through the New Deal era.

In illustrating how Casement employed the language and principles of eugenics to justify his anti-New Deal political ideology, the first chapter shows Casement equally zealous in bringing order to the cattle industry and in reforming society during the 1910s. In both efforts he looked to the federal government to foster order and reform. To this end he battled states' rights advocates and anti-conservationists alike. Moreover, he supported women's suffrage, prohibition, child labor laws, organized labor, and he worked actively in Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party from 1912 until WWI. He was primarily a structural reformer whose efforts were focused on bringing order and efficiency to the economy. His experience in WWI did not dampen his reformist zeal, but it did cause him to regard big business rather than the federal government as the better agent to bring order and efficiency to society.

The second chapter illustrates how Casement's trust of big business deepened after the war. The postwar Red Scare against communists only confirmed his belief that business—not government—was the best choice to lead the reform of society. During the 1920s, he saw a revolution in morals in the emerging youth culture and the flagrant disregard of prohibition, and he interpreted these as signs of the degeneration of American society. In Casement's mind, the only solution lay in a return to supposed nineteenth-century values of hard work, sobriety, and self-reliance by developing the "fittest" people. His 1924 campaign in the Republican primaries for Congress reveals his shifting thought. Here he advocated limited government, extremely low taxes, and absolutely no subsidies to anybody. His idea of fitness rested on character more than race, as evidenced by his opposition to the Klan. However, he still supported immigration restriction and segregation. According to Casement, the epicenter of the moral crisis in America

was the farm sector. Government assistance to farmers, even in the middle of the postwar farm recession, would destroy the moral fiber of the country. Casement differed from many mainstream Republicans who also opposed aid to farmers in his advocacy of replacing “weak” farmers with “fitter” individuals. He differed from other farm state Republicans simply by opposing farm relief. He believed that farmers could be saved by scientific management, new technologies, and better methods. At the same time, Casement continued to call for an associationalist arrangement in the livestock industry between producers and meatpackers, with government support in the form of tariffs. Finally, Casement firmly held that even during hard times the government should not redistribute wealth. The poor and unemployed should rely on voluntary efforts; if those failed, the poor would just have to suffer through it.

The final chapter details Casement’s opposition to the New Deal. According to Casement, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal inappropriately interfered in private property rights and thereby imperiled the survival of the nation and the character of its “best” people. He joined like-minded groups such as the American Liberty League (ALL) and the Farmer’s Independence Council of America (FIC). He was President of the FIC and a close friend of its organizer, Stanley Morse. As the head of the FIC, he convinced himself that the New Deal was communist, revealed that he had lost faith in the farmers of America, and concluded that America was morally doomed. He still considered himself a progressive well into FDR’s second term, but by the end of the 1930s he had altered some of his long-standing beliefs. For instance, he now opposed women’s suffrage, he believed the Constitution should never be changed, and he began advocating negative eugenics as well as positive.

Chapter 1 - The Progressive Years: Conservation and Social and Industrial Justice

In 1913, Mesa County, Colorado, was still the wild West in many ways. It was ruled by cattle rustlers, and residents were too terrified to testify against them. Indeed, even though crimes involving livestock abounded, before 1914 there had never been a conviction for cattle stealing in Mesa County. However, a few people—all recent arrivals—were determined to bring law and order to Mesa, and make it safe for private property. Dan Casement was one of those new arrivals. He had recently acquired the UnawEEP ranch in the canyon of the same name and, aware of the danger posed by the rustlers, decided to stand up to the rustlers.

Nobody's property was safe in the county. For instance, in 1910 a woman from an urban area back east bought some land on Pinon Mesa in Mesa County to raise goats. She treated the goats like children, taking the utmost care in protecting each and every one of them. One night, a group of men gagged and bound the shepherd and destroyed hundreds of the goats. The men were part of a cattle rustling syndicate and wanted the pasture for their illegal operation. According to John Otto, a local park ranger, many of the goats "were killed—mutilated; their legs broken; their shoulders, their backs heavily bruised; with their tongues sticking out left there suffering."¹⁵ Sheepmen from Utah immediately took over the lands on Pinon Mesa. Otto believed that these sheepmen killed the woman's goat herd and then bribed the Chief of Police of Grand Junction, the "Mayor's Chief."¹⁶

In December, 1913 rustlers stole 24 head of Casement's cattle. As they led the cattle over a thick blanket of snow through UnawEEP Canyon they were spotted by two trappers along a creek. Puzzled at the site of men moving cattle in the dead of winter, they approached the mounted men to investigate. Two of the rustlers on horseback quickly galloped away, leaving the

cattle behind. As they watched the men depart, the trappers were startled by the sudden appearance of a third mounted man. The third man explained that he had been trailing the cattle. After a long conversation with the man on horseback in which he contradicted himself, the trappers began to suspect that he helped steal cattle from the Unaweep ranch and they informed Casement.¹⁷ The evidence provided by the trappers was the only lead in the disappearance of Casement's cattle.

Casement hired fellow progressive reformer Benjamin Griffith as his attorney. From 1911 to 1912 Griffith, a Republican, served as Colorado's state Attorney General, but while up for re-election he bolted for the Bull Moose Party.¹⁸ In 1914, as they waited for the next session of court, Griffith and Casement both ran for office on the Progressive ticket: Griffith for Senate and Casement for Congress. They were supported by the pen of John Otto the eccentric conservationist who lived as a hermit in Monument Valley. Otto was a conservationist "muckraker" whose op-ed pieces, broadsides, and newspaper advertisements served to drum up public sentiment against the corrupt politicians and general lawlessness of the county.¹⁹

Casement and Griffith doggedly pursued leads and sought help from other reform-minded groups and people. They learned that the cattle rustling syndicate stole cattle from Colorado ranches, changed the brands, and traded them in Utah for cattle stolen in from Utah. They then altered the brands of the Utah cattle and brought them to Colorado where they sold them to obliging merchants. One of the merchants involved in the syndicate was Clyde Shropshire, co-owner and manager of a cold storage company. He was one of the prime suspects in the Casement rustling case. In moral terms, Casement urged his allies to observe "a distinct line between the honest men . . . and those who are on the other side." Witnesses feared for their

lives, one fled to Oregon, one was severely injured in a rockslide and began carrying a gun for protection.

The key lead came when Casement learned that Gross-Kelley grocers in Trinidad, Colorado, purchased over two hundred hides from Shropshire. Unfortunately, the hides were mixed in a pack of over a thousand other salted hides in the basement of the store and were about to be shipped to Boston. Casement and the local inspector for the State Board of Livestock Inspection Commission rushed to the store to inspect the hides. They discovered the Casement brand on twenty hides. Even though he was clearly implicated, Shropshire fought back. He began a public smear campaign against Casement, who was running for Congress at the time. Shropshire spread rumors about Casement, claiming that Casement had ordered a hit on a Shropshire ally. Shropshire repeatedly visited witnesses and tried to turn them against Casement.”²⁰

In the end, only three of the rustlers were convicted. Shropshire went free for the time being, but the trial helped secure property rights in Mesa County. After the trial, Benjamin Griffith explained how the case helped save private property, writing, “I know that public sentiment has finally been aroused against cattle stealing, and that in the future we may well expect cattle men will be protected in their rights.”²¹ Casement echoed Griffith’s sentiment, stating, “I feel that a successful prosecution of the case . . . is really a most essential move toward making property in cattle secure in our country and in relieving the county from the odium of the former notorious conditions. . . . I urge this as an owner of property keenly interested in its security under the law.”²²

This chapter shows that during the Progressive era, Dan Casement was primarily a structural progressive concerned with stabilizing the cattle industry, but he also advocated moral

and social reforms as well. After earning a degree in civil engineering, he was converted to public reform by Teddy Roosevelt, even if ranching remained his passion. His scientific training greatly informed his quest to stabilize the beef industry. As a conservationist in the mold of Gifford Pinchot, he thought that only the federal government could help stabilize the beef industry. As a social reformer he supported women's suffrage, child labor laws, and labor unions. As a moral reformer he strongly supported prohibition. However, his experience in WWI convinced him that efficiency and stabilization in the beef industry could best be achieved through the cooperative efforts of ranchers and packers and that the federal government should play a limited role in the economy.

Dan Casement was born on the family farm in Painesville, Ohio in July 1868 to Jack and Francis Casement. Jack, the son of Scottish immigrants, found work as a young man on the railroads. A hard worker and a natural leader, Jack soon became a foreman for track layers on an Ohio Railroad. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted in the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry as a major, but was quickly elevated to brevet Brigadier General. Ever after he was simply known as "the General." Dan's mother, Francis Casement, was a model of "tolerance, sympathy and human understanding," according to Dan. Her involvement in the women's suffrage movement led to long lasting friendships with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.²³

Dan's father oversaw the construction of various railroads, mostly in the West, so the family moved often. Notably, Jack Casement oversaw the construction of the Union Pacific line between Omaha and Promontory Point, Utah. However, the general was too free with his money and either gave it away or sometimes made purchases on a whim. One such purchase was Juniata Farm in Manhattan, Kansas, which would become Dan Casement's permanent abode. The

general acquired it when Dan was ten years old, and Francis immediately fell in love with it. The general kept it and deeded it to Dan on his twenty-first birthday.²⁴

On paper Dan followed the trajectory of the new professional class. The general, though loose with money, maintained the family's middle class status and sent Dan to secondary school at Western Reserve Academy in Ohio, followed by college at Princeton. After receiving a degree in civil engineering Dan enrolled in graduate school at Columbia earning a Master's degree in political science. However, unmotivated by ambition or by becoming an expert, he pursued the master's, in his words, to prolong his boyhood. At Princeton he was involved in many extra-curricular activities: he played short stop on the baseball team; was the president of the baseball association; was captain of the second football team; president of the junior class; editor of the school newspaper, and a member of the tug-of-war team.²⁵

Casement met one of his closest friends, Charles A. Otis, Jr. while a graduate student at Columbia. They were roommates and inseparable companions. While the boys were at Columbia, their fathers acquired a joint interest in a ranch in the Uncompaghre Mountains of Colorado called UnawEEP. Charles and Dan retired to the UnawEEP every summer vacation to ranch. After graduation, they spent more time on the ranch and only returned to New York for big social events. Charles Otis later became a newspaper owner and owner of a steel company.²⁶

1897 was a momentous year for Casement because he got married and he left for Costa Rica, where he lived for six years. He met his future wife, Olivia Thornburgh, through a mutual friend. She was the daughter of a Union Army officer and had attended schools on the east coast and in Paris. He was so taken by her that he asked her to marry him after knowing her for three days. They were married on the first of December, and two days later they headed for Costa Rica, where Dan's father had agreed to oversee construction of a railroad. According to Dan, his

father took the job because he ran out of money, but on this occasion he made his son Dan a partner. For six years they labored there constructing 60 miles of track. The work was grueling and dangerous, but when it was completed Dan walked away a wealthy man.²⁷

Casement and his wife, now with a new baby girl, returned to the states in 1903. For the next few years the young family toured the United States, going wherever they desired, but soon Casement realized his money was running out, and he decided to settle down. The family moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, since it was halfway between Juniata and Unaweep. In Colorado, they counted many of the state's elite as their friends. As part of the new middle class that was university trained and scientifically minded, Casement was comfortable with the upper echelons of society as well as with the poor farmhands back in Mesa County.²⁸

Casement was not interested in politics until he met President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903. Casement greatly admired the colonel. In 1944, Casement stated that one of his greatest regrets was not being able to join the Rough Riders during the Spanish American War as many of his friends did. Casement could not join because he was busy overseeing the railroad construction in Costa Rica at the time. He met Roosevelt a few times. The first meeting took place as soon as he returned from Costa Rica when his friend and later secretary of the interior James R. Garfield introduced him to Roosevelt. The next meeting, sometime between 1908 and 1910, was through his Princeton roommate Rock Channing. According to Casement, Channing distinguished himself as a Rough Rider and had the president's ear because of it. Of the meeting, Casement stated that it "strengthened [his] former admiration for [Roosevelt]. The personal qualities of this man awakened my interest in politics and inspired me to participate to some extent thereafter in public affairs."²⁹ Casement met him again in 1910 at Cheyenne Frontier Days, and then dined with him in Denver a few days later. In 1912, Casement was a delegate to

the Republican National Convention and witnessed Roosevelt break with the Republicans. Dan became a committed Progressive after the convention.

Robert Wiebe, Otis Graham, Burton Bledstein, and other historians note that reformers of this period focused on rationalizing their own professions. In this way, many reformers had single track minds. Above all, Casement fit this mold in that he was concerned with his one industry cattle ranching, professionalizing it, making it more efficient, and ensuring its continued profitability through conservation.³⁰

To ensure the long term viability of western ranching, Casement supported federal conservation efforts through the Forest Service, as opposed to giving public lands to the states. He also tried to educate western ranchers about the perils of unregulated grazing, which led to several economic, social, and ecological problems. In the late nineteenth-century, “chaos and anarchy” ruled the public range as ranchers went to “war” with rivals over access to common lands. At the same time ranchers allowed their cattle and sheep to consume nutritious perennials too early in the season, thus killing off these plants and replacing them with weeds. Plus, oftentimes the number of cattle on the range exceeded its carrying capacity. Furthermore, western farmers advocated for more homesteads, which further diminished range lands. By 1900, large, stable, and more efficient cattle ranchers asked the federal government to regulate the range. They asserted that individual states were too prone to corruption to administer the public range. President Theodore Roosevelt and his chief forester Gifford Pinchot publicly supported range conservation in the form of issuing permits to use the Forest Service land for a fee in 1906. Large cattle operations applauded the measure but farmers, small ranchers, and states’ rights advocates strongly objected to it. The fight over control of the range lands raged for years. Casement began publicly supporting federal conservation efforts in 1911.³¹

As a conservationist, Casement shared Gifford Pinchot's "wise use" philosophy. By the time of Casement's support for the movement in 1911, historians identify two slightly different philosophies of land use and protection centered on two men: John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. Even though these two men had more in common than usually supposed, their philosophies serve as useful classifications. Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, emphasized the sacredness of nature, but he was not totally opposed to development. His philosophy is often referred to as "preservation" whereas Pinchot's is called "conservation." Casement, as well as Pinchot, also appreciated nature for its beauty.³² For Pinchot, "wise usage" meant using natural resources to secure the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Wise usage supported industrialism, materialism, and commercialism. "Wise use" sought federal regulation of natural resources for sustainability. Casement shared Pinchot's definition of conservation as wise usage, and he tailored it specifically to the stockmen of the open range when he stated, "true conservation for the stock-man consists in the fullest possible use of natural resources compatible with their preservation and continued usefulness."³³ Pinchot and Casement both understood conservation as "a scientific movement." Historian Samuel P. Hays correctly identified this sentiment by defining conservation as "rational planning to promote efficient development and use of all natural resources."³⁴

When some ranchers objected to federal conservation efforts, Casement vociferously defended the Forest Service as the only entity that could preserve western rancher's property. In January 1911, Casement wrote to the *Breeders Gazette* in reply to an editorial from a stockman in Arizona who had criticized the Forest Service. The rancher from Arizona echoed the rugged individualist belief that conservationists wanted to keep livestock off the range and that the Forest Service prevented the cattlemen of the west from prospering. Casement's response to this

editorial revealed his belief in the scientific management of the public lands and his belief that federal control of the range was in the cattlemen's best interest. Reflecting his wise use philosophy, Casement believed that the sustainability of ranching on the public range depended on sharing them with other users. He stated that "efficient administration in the interest of all users is the only thing that can secure [ranchers] permanent and profitable enjoyment" of the public domain.³⁵ The argument between Casement and the Arizona rancher illustrates Casement's position that only the federal government could protect ranchers' property rights.

Casement held that the western stockman was "dependant [sic]" on the Forest Service "and that its [the Forest Service's] control of a large share of our ranges came none too soon to serve the best interests of the men that graze them." The Forest Service, he continued, protected the property of the stockman by giving him exclusive use of the land. Without the Forest Service, the cattlemen had no legal claim to any piece of land that encouraged them to use the forage as quickly as possible before a rival got to it. Casement essentially explained to them the concept we call today the tragedy of the commons — "freedom in a commons brings ruin to all."³⁶ Casement cautioned the western cattlemen that "he had far better turn his attention toward co-operation with the Federal authorities, who are trying to give him permanent grass and something dependable to build a real business on." Free grass, he explained, only induced cattlemen to use it up quickly. He thought that the Forest Service promoted conservation of the grazing land because it encouraged stock raisers to build homes, nurturing a vested interest in the long term viability of the land. Through greed and necessity, the stockmen of the west wasted natural resources, and Casement understood that range sustainability was at stake. He declared that "under the use that the law of the open range encourages, something besides the grass is taken annually, and that is its ability to produce as abundantly in the years to come."³⁷ For

Casement, only the federal government could guarantee ranchers' property.

Casement viewed the states' right argument against federal conservation as a way for the Colorado democratic machine to profit from the land. Casement faced an uphill battle. According to historian Alvin Steinel, a majority of Colorado stockmen opposed "regulation by bureau." Colorado stock raiser and democratic governor of Colorado from 1913 to 1915 Elias M. Ammons was the leading national voice opposing federally administered range conservation. As an anticonservationist and a firm believer in states' rights, Ammons argued that the Forest Service lacked the constitutional authority to make or enforce laws. He also thought the agency's personnel were the evil minions of a power hungry government fixed on stealing the lands from homesteaders. Casement, on the other hand, found every Forest Service employee he had ever met to be "manly, decent and earnest men."³⁸ Casement believed the state Democratic political machine favored state controlled conservation only to profit from the despoliation of its natural resources.

Contrary to Ammons, Casement praised federal administration of the forest reserves for protecting ranchers' property rights. Casement, in response to a speech by Governor Ammons, wrote an editorial praising the Forest Service for the *Colorado Springs Gazette* in 1913. In it he explained that the best guardian of the Colorado range was the "impersonal and incorruptible" national government personified by the Forest Service. He praised the "honest purpose of the forest administration, which has been adhered to as closely as can reasonably be expected with the average human instruments at its command." The Forest Service, he claimed, also kept the lumbermen from creating "complete deforestation." In short, he believed that the Forest Service saved the common lands from private greed. The cattle industry, Casement continued, was saved only when "a government wiser than ourselves took a hand and gave the more fortunate of us in

the form of supervised and restricted grazing permits, real permanence to our industry, real assets for our balance sheets, real prosperity, mutual rights and needed protection in the enjoyment of these rights against our own greed and that of our neighbors.” Not only did he think the Forest Service protected private property, but that the livestock industry desperately needed regulation.³⁹

Although ranching and conservation occupied much of his time, Casement still thought of himself as part of a larger community of reformers who brought order to society, and he actively supported them through his involvement with the Progressive Party. In 1912, Casement bolted the Republican Party along with other insurgents to create the Colorado Progressive Party. In fact he helped organize the new party at the state level. In 1911, just before they bolted the party, the progressive Republicans’ declaration of principles stated that they aimed at the “purification of the Republican party.” They were against the state political machines and against the big corporate and special interests in the state. They supported a “public utilities commission with regulatory and supervisory powers . . . eight hour laws, and a corrupt practices act.” Casement himself favored prohibition and said that he wanted “cleaner and better politics.”⁴⁰

Casement identified himself and his state Progressive Party as part of an idealistic nationwide movement of reformers. In op-ed pieces he wrote for the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, Casement explained that he supported the Progressive Party on “principle.” Moreover, he left the Republican Party because the Taft delegates refused to seat the Roosevelt delegates. With soaring idealism he pronounced that the Republican Party failed to enact the “social and industrial reforms” that the country needed. According to Casement, the world looked to the United States “most hopefully . . . to set the course of human betterment.”⁴¹ Even more idealistically, in 1914 he stated that “if ever there was crying need for a new deal in Colorado the

time is now.” He linked Colorado’s progressive candidates (Edward Costigan, Hiram Johnson, Henry J. Allen, James R. Garfield, and Benjamin Griffith) to a nationwide progressive crusade, stating that “Costigan fights the same fight here that Johnson wages in California, that Allen fights in Kansas, and Garfield in Ohio, Griffith is touching shoulders today with Pinchot. . . .”⁴² To Casement, reforming society took on the air of a crusade.

Casement remained in the Progressive Party even as its increasingly radical platform of 1914 forced other progressives to re-join the Republican Party. These Progressives returned to the Republican fold mainly because of the Progressive Party’s support of the Colorado miners’ strike against the Colorado Fuel and Ironworks (CF&I) company owned by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

The CF&I, one of the largest corporations in the state, employed 10 percent of the Colorado workforce. Under Rockefeller, “sociological and medical programs were trimmed,” and a third of the workforce were laid off. Also notorious for political corruption, CF&I officials forced immigrant mine workers to vote for company sponsored local candidates. According to CF&I, they “voted every man and woman in its employ, and even mine mules if they had names.”⁴³ Because of these changes, in September 1913, CF&I miners, led by the United Mine Workers, went on strike in Ludlow, Colorado.

The demands of the striking miners echoed prevailing Progressive demands for laborers: an eight-hour day, more safety regulations, and a pay increase. CF&I refused to recognize the United Mine Workers, refused to negotiate, and the strike turned violent. The National Guard fought the striking miners, resulting in what became known as the Ludlow Massacre. Southeastern Colorado was in a state of chaos. Governor Ammons called in the state militia to quell the violence and bloodshed. Squeamish Progressives returned to the Republican Party

because they protested the labor violence. After Ludlow, only the staunchest progressives defended the miners. Ammons called for federal troops to restore order, as strikers burned company property and killed more people. Meanwhile Ammons, CF&I representatives, Secretary of Labor William Wilson, and labor representatives tried to negotiate a deal. Only President Wilson sympathized with the miners. Therefore, the miners saw the upcoming gubernatorial elections as their only hope.⁴⁴

Casement vigorously supported the Progressives in the 1914 election. The Progressive Party platform for that year “demanded recognition of labor’s right to organize and bargain collectively,” desired “a constitutional amendment to make coal mining a public utility subject to state regulation of prices and working conditions, and called for an experiment in state ownership and operation of coal mines.” The platform called for other such measures as state ownership of certain industries, insurance resembling social security, and federal control of conservation. Casement zealously promoted Progressive ideas and candidates during the 1914 election cycle. For example, he organized an auto tour campaign for a few progressive candidates, one of which was Edward P. Costigan, the leader of the Colorado Progressive Party as well as defense council for the United Mine Workers in the Ludlow dispute. They traveled from Denver to Greeley stopping in several towns along the way. Many people witnessed what Casement called a “novel undertaking [which] heralds a new era in political methods.” Casement also ran for Congress as a Progressive in 1914.⁴⁵

Casement supported other social progressive causes besides labor. He strongly supported women’s suffrage and child labor laws. By 1914, most progressives supported women’s suffrage. The 1912 Progressive party platform endorsed universal women’s suffrage. Most people who supported women’s suffrage however, did so assuming that women would not stray

from the woman's sphere. Men tolerated women in positions of authority in occupations they considered extensions of the home, such as education and social work. For instance, women headed organizations that promoted children's welfare.⁴⁶ In 1914, Casement wrote an article intended for the *Woman's Journal*—but never published—disputing the claim that women's suffrage in Colorado was detrimental to women and to the state. He explained that women's suffrage was a “measure in which I deeply believe” and which greatly benefited the state.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, he also endorsed the idea that women had a special sphere, one centered in the family.

Casement's endorsement of women's suffrage reveals a contradiction in his thinking about women's role in society. He argued on biological grounds that there was no reason why women should not vote, yet at the same time he assumed women would remain part of a socially separate sphere. For example, he stated that “the women of Colorado are of the same flesh and blood and moral fiber as the men.” It was just as illogical, he intoned, to believe that a woman would “possess moral and mental superiority” to a man as it was to believe the opposite. Yet at the same time, he believed women would be concerned with those issues “that most nearly touch them locally and that affect directly their immediate family and home surroundings.”⁴⁸

Casement also supported child labor legislation. He was chosen by Colorado Governor Elias Ammons to represent the state at the Eleventh Annual National Child Labor Committee. Formed in 1904, the committee fought exploitative child labor practices. Florence Kelley and Jane Addams were members of the Board of Directors. They were successful in raising public awareness and outrage on the issue, and influenced many states to reform child labor. In early 1915 they promoted a bill that would use the commerce clause to regulate buying and selling across state borders of items made through child labor. It is not clear whether Casement accepted

this appointment, but it is safe to assume that he agreed with the ideas of the NCLC. NCLC reformers believed that child labor ruined children's morals and they called on the federal government to end it. They also claimed that child labor was inefficient and that their labor "wasted the nation's resources."⁴⁹ For Casement, using the federal government to promote social justice and efficiency sometimes went hand in hand.

Unfortunately for the Progressives, their vision of social justice and efficient administration did not win the day, at least measured by electoral victories. In 1912, at their climax, nearly all Progressives placed second. In 1914, weakened by factional disputes, most of the Progressive Party candidates finished third. The Colorado Progressive Party had all but fizzled out by 1917, and, by that time, Casement had already moved the family to Kansas. In 1915, he realized that Colorado Springs was too expensive for him, so he sold his house and moved the family to Juniata Farm in Kansas. He stated that "in order to preserve character and self-respect" he would take better care of his business and live in a "less luxurious home." Food Administrator Herbert Hoover later chose him "to mobilize the livestock industry of the nation." Shortly thereafter, he joined the Army as a captain of an artillery unit. He was forty-nine years old and had to get a special deferment to enlist. At first, Casement joined the unit formed by Teddy Roosevelt, but President Wilson did not accept Roosevelt's unit, so instead Casement enrolled in an officers training camp. He trained at Fort Sheridan, Illinois.⁵⁰

After training, Casement and his unit set sail for Europe on the ill-fated *Tuscania*—a cruise ship converted into a troop carrier. Loaded with 2,179 American GI's, the *Tuscania* made its way to Europe in February 1918, but just off the Irish coast, near Belfast, torpedoes from German U-boats rocked the *Tuscania*. As the ship sank, survivors descended to the sea in life boats; a nearby British warship butted up to the sinking *Tuscania* so men could swing over on

ropes. Survivors arrived at multiple Irish ports, unaware of the fate of their comrades. By all accounts, 28 officers remained on board until all enlisted men were removed from the ship. Casement was the second to last person to leave the ship. The Irish people and the American Red Cross worked around the clock providing the survivors with all the comforts of home. The local Irish would not allow the soldiers to pay for anything. As the soldiers marched to the trains bands played, men and women cheered them in the streets, and officials praised their efforts in speeches. Unfortunately, 210 soldiers died in the sinking. The war ended before Casement saw combat in Europe.⁵¹ The voluntary aid offered by the Irish people and the Red Cross must have impressed Casement.

WWI is often cited by historians as marking an end to the progressive movement in America, the war did not completely dampen Casement's progressive impulse; it redirected it. Before the war he looked to the federal government as the only entity capable of ensuring order, justice and efficiency in society; after the war he thought big business should carry out that role. Casement returned from the war with a new found confidence in big business and a new faith in the voluntary cooperative ability of Americans.

Just weeks after returning from Europe and a little over a year since the *Tuscania* sinking Casement delivered an address to the Kansas Livestock Association that highlighted his new found faith in big business and voluntarism. However the address also illustrates that he continued the same progressive crusade of bringing order and efficiency to the cattle industry.⁵² He demonstrated the same optimism, stating that "the world is clearly on the threshold of that 'New Democracy' that Mr. Wilson has been talking about for seven years." Out of the chaos of the war he thought would come a new era and that "if we here in America get started in the right direction, toward the right objective and with the right spirit, we can reasonably hope for the

prompt arrival of social and industrial conditions that will be a great improvement over those we have hitherto known.” Brimming with satisfaction, Casement proclaimed that the war finally put an end to individualism. He looked forward to a new era of cooperation, yet in eulogizing individualism he revealed a sense of admiration for that way of life. Individualism, he opined, gave us “wonderful accomplishments” especially “in the field of industry.” Even though years earlier he supported Costigan and the miners of Ludlow against the CF&I on this occasion he excused these very captains of industry, stating that individualism “fostered the most remarkable group of courageous, far-sighted and forceful captains of industry that the world ever saw. Present-day standards might find them unscrupulous. By the standards of the day they served they were honest and broad-minded. Their courage, their vision, and their energy developed our country as by a miracle. They built our railroads; they mined our metal and fuel; they butchered our beef.” This marks an important step in Casement’s shift toward associationalism. He began to perceive business as the best hope for organizing and ordering the economy rather than the federal government.

His understanding of the War Industries Board (WIB) along with his war experience soured him on federal regulation. Even though he was an apostle of cooperation he opposed federally directed cooperation as socialistic and inefficient. During the war, the federal government took unprecedented control of the economy as a war measure, creating the War Industries Board. Casement’s interpretation of the WIB was that “the public itself, through government, had to take a hand in running the railroads, in mining coal, in producing and manufacturing food, in drafting fighters, in short, in every form of activity on which the winning of the war depended.” Although he believed in the necessity of the WIB and its success he nonetheless deplored it because it “was clumsy and wasteful and inefficient.” Casement spoke

from experience since he served in the food administration and his best friend Charles Otis, was the national chief of the Resources and Conversion Section of the WIB.⁵³ He could simultaneously condemn and excuse the WIB stating that “the necessities of a great world crisis have dictated the use of the socialistic make-shifts that government has adopted during the last year for the purpose of winning the war. We must now get back to a normal basis.” He recognized the benefits of a centrally directed economy, but interpreted it as an aberration and anticipated Harding’s return to normalcy. The WIB taught Casement that America’s future progress and individual property rights could best be safeguarded by big business and cooperation.

According to Casement the WIB experience converted many big businessmen into reformers. The captains of industry who previously worked only for themselves, he explained, through the WIB worked for the good of the country during the war. Before the war, these titans of industry worked only for selfish reasons, but Casement believed that the experience of working for the good of others during the war inspired a new selflessness among the captains of industry. He wholeheartedly believed that their ten months of service “were the happiest of their lives” that “a sense of duty done . . . could be their only reward.” Essentially, Casement believed that the war changed everybody in America, even the wealthy corporate titans. He urged Americans to learn from the lessons of the war of voluntary cooperation rather than competition and a spirit of selflessness. Casement boldly proclaimed a “new standard” in America which “will judge men in the service of their fellows rather than by the extent of their possessions.” However he still believed that the federal government should punish those who did not help during the war. In this case he favored government compulsion at the expense of private

property, stating that “there is about to be an extended open season on large fortunes . . . and a penalty on big incomes and extravagant living.”⁵⁴

Casement even urged cooperation between ranchers and big meat packers. During the Progressive era ranchers and big meat packers were inveterate foes. For decades the big meat packing companies especially Swift, Armour, and Morris, colluded to maintain a low purchasing price. In 1916, members of the Kansas Livestock Association were upset with the packers’ inflated prices and they demanded a federal investigation of them. Passions were so high that what ensued became known as the “war on the packers.”⁵⁵ In 1919, the Federal Trade Commission issued a report based on an investigation of the big meatpacking companies, confirming the producers’ fears that the big five meatpackers “control at will the market in which they buy their supplies, the market in which they sell their products, and hold the fortunes of their competitors in their hands.”⁵⁶ The findings of the investigation convinced Congress to pass the Packers and Stockyard Act of 1921 which regulated the packing industry. Needless to say, many stockmen were more upset than ever with packers, but Casement urged cooperation with the packers anyway in an address to the Kansas Livestock Association. A reporter for the *Hutchinson News* called it the “spectacle of a Kansas cowman defending the packers” and even Casement understood it as the “rankest kind of heresy.”⁵⁷

Casement believed that packers sincerely desired to cooperate with producers. Casement’s vision of cooperation between producers and packers basically meant that packers would stop price gouging the livestock raisers and, in return, livestock raisers would support the packing companies in their quest to vertically integrate their operations by owning stockyards and railroad cars, and possibly to form trusts. This, in Casement’s mind, would stabilize the beef industry leading to increased profits for producers and packers alike. Before the war, he

explained, he had opposed the meatpackers because he had suspected them of manipulating the market, but the industry's behavior during the war changed things. A close reading of the packer's testimony before the FTC convinced Casement that while the FTC findings were correct, they were tainted because the agency was prejudiced against the packers. Looking back to the war he applauded the patriotic service of the meatpackers in charge of beef distribution in the WIB. And he claimed that, while overseas, his unit always had plenty of the highest quality beef. The beef department, he stated, had been the most efficient of any branch of the WIB's Food Administration during the war. That Armor and Morris were "now, apparently, eager to openly explain and defend their position is, to my mind, the most hopeful result of the trade commission's investigation." He urged packers and producers to stop the negative attacks. He praised Morris for stating that "equality of opportunity" is more important than the "entire packing industry" and that the packers only wanted a "square deal."⁵⁸

The packers could look forward to a square deal from Casement because he thought packer efficiency would save money for producers. At the time, Congress debated the Kendrick Bill, which would have forbidden packers from owning and operating refrigerator cars. Casement opposed the Kendrick Bill. In his view, first, the bill unfairly attacked bigness, not behavior. He asserted that "we should not fear to permit power; we should not destroy it; our only legitimate job is [to] provide that it shall not be abused." Second, he explained the advantages both parties would derive from cooperation, such as stabilizing the beef industry and guaranteeing future profits. By stabilization, Casement meant ending the animosity between producers and packers. Furthermore, he explained how producer and packer "interests are dependent on each other and confidence and friendliness should prevail in our mutual dealings."

Most importantly, he instructed fellow stockmen that divesting packers of their stockyards and their rail cars would only result in inefficiency, which would harm producers and packers alike.

Finally, Casement elaborated on his vision of cooperation between packers, producers, and the federal government. According to Casement, selfishness and unrestrained competition created animosity between packers and producers. In the new order that he envisioned, “the proper function of government” was “to regulate and control [meat packers and other big corporations] with fairness.” Casement believed that minimal government oversight would allow packers and producers to reap the benefits of individualism without the risks of completely unfettered markets. In conclusion he stated, “corporate ownership and administration, held on the track by honest and intelligent government supervision, should preserve the valuable initiative and energy that distinguished the old order, while making industrial ethics conform to the demands of the new. It is no time to indulge in . . . revenge, or hatred if we are now to profit by the lessons of the war and embody them in our national policies and aspirations.” Basically, he wanted sufficient government oversight to eliminate destructive competition, while still making it profitable for businesses to continue to innovate, reduce costs, and expand. Inflamed with idealism after the war, Casement believed that “the time has come for producers and packers to approach their mutual problems with revised ideas and visions unclouded by the wrongs and contentions of the past.” The war, he stated, taught him “wisdom in the common interest.”⁵⁹

Inflamed with a zeal for reform, Casement advocated order and efficiency for the livestock industry and for industrial/labor relations in order to make private property more secure. He was not only interested in efficiency and private property; he also supported various moral and social reforms. During the Progressive era he looked to the federal government as the greatest help in securing these reforms, but after WWI he viewed big business as the greatest

reforming agent in the country, he saw cooperation as the primary method of reform, and urged cooperation between producers and meatpackers. Casement maintained these new ideas during the nineteen-twenties and even added to them. In the 1920s, as the next chapter shows, Casement supported limited government and developed eugenic ideas, but he still continued to advocate for greater efficiency in the livestock industry.

Chapter 2 - Associationalism and Republican Virtue

Although still a structural progressive in the 1920s, Casement increasingly supported moral reforms, as well. However, he made no distinction between the two. According to Casement, efficiency and the defense of private property were moral imperatives best maintained through eugenics and limited government. After the war, Casement still advocated efficiency in agriculture, especially as a means for farmers to survive the farm depression. The Red Scare soon after the war reinforced Casement's anti-communist sentiment, and he now opposed even modest forms of redistribution. Due to what he perceived as revolution in morals that took place in the United States in the twenties, Casement began advocating a return to what he saw, perhaps romantically, as nineteenth-century values. The nineteenth century-style family farm, according to Casement, had fostered and transmitted traditional values; accordingly, he opposed any government assistance to farmers and advocated reinstating the small family farm stocked with "fit" individuals. Surprisingly, "racial purity" only mildly concerned him. Separately, during the 1920s, he doggedly worked for the realization of collective action in the livestock industry by promoting cooperation between the federal government, ranchers, and packers. Limited government would not only increase profits but also human virtue, in the opinion of Casement.

Shortly after the war, prices for agricultural produce plummeted, prompting a national debate about agricultural policy. By the mid-1920s, almost all American farmers agreed there was a farm problem, but they differed on the level of federal intervention necessary to solve the problem. The basic issue was that American farmers and ranchers produced too much, driving down prices. Although solutions varied by region and by commodity, in general, small-scale

producers favored more government intervention, while business-minded, larger operations favored less government involvement.⁶⁰

One solution involving more government intervention than Casement could stomach was the McNary-Haugen plan (1924). This plan called for the federal government to sell excess produce — based on projected domestic consumption — on the world market. McNary-Haugenites hoped that they would receive parity prices, that is, the same purchasing power they enjoyed from 1909–1914, for their domestic sales. To make up for the loss the government would take when they would sell the surplus on the world market they would charge farmers an “equalization fee.” Even with the fee, supporters conjectured, farmers would, in the end, still end up with parity prices. The McNary-Haugen plan always had broad support, and even passed Congress in 1927 and 1928, but was twice vetoed by President Coolidge. Farther in the government intervention camp, some farmers wanted the federal government to pay farmers not to produce.⁶¹

By the late 1920s, under the Hoover administration, even economic conservatives accepted some form of federal assistance for agriculture. President Herbert Hoover advocated an associationalist solution to the farm problem when he supported the Agricultural Marketing Act (1929). Agricultural historian R. Douglas Hurt explains that according to the marketing plan, the federal government would “help organize and support” various “commodity associations.” The act allowed the state to loan money to cooperatives, which in turn would loan money to individual farmers to see them through while they withheld their crops from the market. One of the main goals of the marketing plan was to avoid “swamping the market” with produce. The Agricultural Marketing Act also created the Federal Farm Board which purchased surplus commodities. Ever a proponent of voluntarism, Hoover asked farmers to reduce “Grow Less,

[and] Get More.”⁶² Casement agreed with Hoover on voluntarism, but he broke with Hoover on the marketing plan. Casement considered even this modest amount of government intervention too much.

In response, Casement advocated not strong governmental action but simply the use of more efficient methods and new technologies in farming. During WWI, crop prices remained high, and the WIB’s Food Administration continually urged for increased production. Even more record levels of production, farmers and ranchers generally recorded great profits during the war. Casement shared in the wartime prosperity. In 1916, Casement’s ranches brought in a profit of \$16,000; in 1918, they cleared a profit of \$10,000.⁶³ In 1920, with the lifting of wartime price controls on agriculture, most crop prices initially remained stable. However, from the spring of 1920 to the following spring, crop prices dropped by a third. Kansas wheat farmers, for example, lost on average 43 cents per acre. By 1921, corn prices declined to a degree that “production costs were 50 per cent above selling prices.” With corn so much cheaper than coal, the Department of Agriculture even urged Kansas farmers to burn corn. Cattle prices from 1919 to 1921 nosedived from over \$1600 per hundred weight to a little over \$700. Kansas livestock prices in 1921 marked a fifteen year low. In 1920, Kansas wheat growers declared that \$2.80 a bushel was the “minimum living price,” but by summer 1922 wheat dropped to 83 cents a bushel.⁶⁴ The Juniata ranch reflected state and national trends showing “a slight loss” in 1919, “a cash loss of \$2,000 and an inventory loss of \$10,000” the following year, and by 1921 only a “loss of \$300 in inventory.”⁶⁵ Kansas farmers and ranchers experienced a sharp recession.

By 1923, however, agricultural prices rebounded back to their prewar levels, but their overall purchasing power was lower. Compounding the issue, a significant number of farmers overextended during the wartime boom. They went heavily into debt by purchasing tractors and

more land in order to expand production. With the onset of the post-war recession, these farmers found it next to impossible to make their loan payments.⁶⁶ Casement, on the other hand, expanded his operation during the war, but did not incur a huge debt. He blamed the overextended and indebted farmers for the farm recession. He referred to them as “speculators,” because he assumed they only cared about making money, not about the vocation of farming.⁶⁷ Furthermore, he reasoned that the speculator farmers were the ones clamoring for government intervention in the farm economy. Throughout the 1920s, Casement made a personal crusade out of demonstrating that a farmer/rancher could survive the depression without government aid. He worked hard at making his ranch/farm an efficient business, especially emphasizing the application of agricultural experiment station findings, the use of the latest technology, and precise record keeping. Sometimes he referred to his approach as progressive ranching.

Casement’s progressive ranching was similar to what historian John T. Schlebecker calls “pasture farming.” In the early twentieth century, competition for forage on the public domain increased as more land on the plains was put under dry farming. In reaction to this, a small number of cattlemen reluctantly adopted a rudimentary scientific management of their operations. Schlebecker calls them “ranch farmers.” Ranch farmers supervised their cattle, grew winter feed, and rotated the location of cattle on the range. Most ranch farmers looked to scientific management, that is, the production of feed-crops, better care of animals, and range management, as a temporary solution until they could return to letting their cattle range freely. Schlebecker notes that, “the old style ranchers, and even some of the ranch farmers, refused to call the change progress.” By the 1920s, more ranchers had adopted “pasture farming.” Pasture farmers embraced scientific agriculture, while ranch farmers at most reluctantly practiced it. As a pasture farmer, Casement used less of his range than ranch farmers and usually owned more land

than them. Indeed, “most pasture farmers embraced grassland farming, supplemental feeding, advanced breeding, and pasture management as profitable goals in themselves.”⁶⁸

Armed with a faith in pasture farming, Casement embarked on a crusade to educate the livestock industry about it. Many ranchers enjoyed the lifestyle associated with free range ranching and they feared that pasture farming would convert them into farmers. At a livestock convention in 1911, he asked the assembled ranchers to abandon the “old methods” and “keep step with the new order.” He promoted the business outlook of the “cow-camp” over the “hay-ranch.” Hay, according to Casement, increased costs but cut down on risk. It was “simply the insurance that modern conditions compel every legitimate business enterprise to carry.” Because using more hay would necessarily increase the cost of production, ranchers, would have to increase the quality of their beef in order to justify the increased market price. Grass was the real commodity according to Casement, and he pleaded with cattlemen to recognize this natural resource as the key to their profitability.⁶⁹

Casement positioned himself at the forefront of scientific farming and ranching even referring to himself as one of the “progressive breeders.” For example, Casement often collaborated with the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station, offering his ranch for experiments. Agricultural agents from Kansas State University tested how well different feeds fattened hogs on Casement’s ranch. They also performed a grazing experiment that sought to improve “native pasture land by a deferred and rotation system of grazing” on his land.⁷⁰ “Juniata Farm,” claimed the *Kansas City Star*, “is one of the meccas for persons interested in livestock production and a highly developed agricultural plant.” The *Star* highlighted his “modern methods” in an article about his unique achievement of winning two grand champions at the American Royal Livestock Show in 1929. The winning “calves were grown under the new

practice in beef production—creep feeding.” Creep feeding was the practice of supplementing a nursing calf’s diet with hay. This method had been introduced in 1926, and Casement used it by 1928, if not earlier. The reporter also noted that his “modern methods also extended to the crop production, corn being handled with tractors, 4-row planters, and cultivators among the newest of labor saving machines.” People even knew him for “always wearing the latest styles in cattlemen’s togs [clothing].” Casement felt a sense of pride as a leader in the rationalization of the livestock industry.⁷¹

In Casement’s worldview, individual effort, increased efficiency, and utilization of the latest technologies and agricultural methods constituted the essentials of progressive ranching. He shared this view with his friend William M. Jardine, the President of Kansas State Agricultural College, who claimed that “increasing efficiency on the farm is the only method of relieving the present economic difficulty in our agricultural territory.” Jardine also criticized any sort of government subsidy for farmers and advocated the use of better crop varieties and scientific methods of farming and ranching.⁷² Casement spread this same gospel of farm efficiency to fellow ranchers in different public forums: speeches at livestock gatherings, articles in trade publications, and talks at agricultural colleges. He probably thought that ranchers, seeing the success of his operation, would want to emulate it. As a supporter of ranchers as well as the Forest Service, he was a logical choice by that agency to review a report (1924) that proposed an unpopular increase in federal grazing fees.⁷³

As Casement made his property into an efficient business he would have perceived the institution of private property threatened by “Bolshevik radicals” who he may have believed allied with labor unions during the Red Scare (1919–1920). The November 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and the Bolsheviks desire to overthrow capitalism, horrified many

Americans. Indeed, many feared the export of Bolshevism or “radicalism” to the United States, which led to the first Red Scare. Three events more than any others fanned the flames of the hysteria that was the Red Scare: a general strike in Seattle, the May Day Bombs, and the May Day Riots of 1919. In early February, Seattle laborers called a general strike closing scores of businesses yet leaving essential services running. The press reported the strike as a dress rehearsal for a nationwide communist revolution. Even though the unions relented within a few days the strike excited the nation to fever pitch over the perceived “radical” threat of unions. Then in early May, the postal service uncovered a plot to send mail bombs to 36 different anti-radical public figures. Fortunately only one of them exploded, severely injuring the maid who opened it, the rest, except for one, were discovered before they were delivered. On May 1, violence ensued as labor protestors clashed with police and “patriots.”⁷⁴ With a new found faith in cooperation and big business, Casement would have read these stories with growing apprehension about the legitimacy of unions.

Flamed by a sensationalistic press, many leading Americans created patriotic organizations to oppose the red threat. While Dan Casement probably did not belong to one of these groups, he did belong to the American Legion, which espoused the same message of “100 Per Cent Americanism.”⁷⁵ In addition, what today we would call economic conservatives branded all unions with the label of “radical” due to the Red Scare. They connected unions to Bolshevism and viewed both as threats to private property. Due to this fear, many business leaders, conservative politicians, and market-oriented theorists, including Casement, believed that the United States should do whatever it could to fight the forces of radicalism and protect private property.

During the Red Scare hysteria, Casement's support for labor dwindled. For instance, he praised Coolidge's suppression of a Boston Police strike of September 1919. Sensational media reports portrayed the Boston Police strike as "Bolshevist," "radical," and even hinted at the beginnings of a communist revolution in the United States. It is hard to imagine that these stories did not negatively influence Casement's views on labor.

In reality, the Boston policemen were not Bolsheviks. The policemen of Boston worked long hours and received little compensation. The police commissioner denied their requests for shorter hours, better pay, and affiliation with the American Federation of Labor (AFL).⁷⁶ Against the wishes of the commissioner the policemen joined the AFL, which prompted the commissioner to find 19 of the police ringleaders guilty of disobedience, even though he would suspend their sentence. Shortly after, for no apparent reason except that he knew that the public supported him, the commissioner revoked some of the suspensions causing the policemen to strike. With Boston virtually unprotected, the ne'er-do-wells looted stores, committed acts of vandalism, and harassed pedestrians. Even though after three nights without professional police protection the total damage to the city was minimal. Volunteer policemen and the State Guard restored order. However, the media asserted that the Boston police were led by Bolshevik radicals. Newspapers compared Boston to Petrograd during the Russian Revolution. When policemen ended the strike, the commissioner barred them from returning to the force. Massachusetts Governor Calvin Coolidge supported the commissioner's decision. Coolidge earned Casement's admiration when he famously telegraphed, "there is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere any time."⁷⁷ In his campaign for the Republican nomination, Casement specifically endorsed Coolidge's handling of the Boston Police strike, stating that "no man has a right to strike against his country."⁷⁸

In May 1924, Casement entered the Republican primaries to represent the fifth Congressional District in Kansas. He positioned himself in total support of President Coolidge and his policies of government efficiency, all the while considering himself a progressive. In contrast to his campaign in Colorado as a member of the Progressive Party, Casement now counseled limited government, reduced government spending, and lower taxes. Although Casement considered himself a “progressive,” he never mentioned the reemergence of the Progressive Party, this time led by Wisconsin Senator Robert M. La Follette Sr. La Follette reconstituted the Progressive Party in 1924 and enjoyed the support of many former Bull Mooser’s. However, rather than support La Follette, Casement now supported Coolidge. Coolidge’s Treasury Secretary believed the government “should be run on business principles,” and he sought reduced taxes for the wealthy. The Casement-Coolidge Club in Manhattan, Kansas, formed by some of the rancher’s supporters in Riley County, endorsed wholeheartedly the “Mellon tax reduction plan.” The club’s members tried to establish other clubs across the district, but it is unclear how many, if any, were created.⁷⁹ His friends, possibly the Casement-Coolidge Club, described him as “a two-fisted farmer,” “a radical-for justice,” and “Roosevelt and Coolidge rolled up in one big bristling package of red blooded humanity.”⁸⁰

Despite the administration’s hands off policies — for example, Coolidge’s appointee for the head of the FTC stated that the FTC’s regulatory power was “an instrument of oppression” and a “publicity bureau to spread socialistic propaganda” — Casement viewed Coolidge as a progressive.⁸¹ In his acceptance speech in Manhattan, Casement identified himself as the “Coolidge candidate for Congress,” and he compared Coolidge to Lincoln and Roosevelt. Total unwavering support for the President guided the Casement campaign. For example, his campaign slogan simply ran “I endorse the Coolidge position, ‘government extravagance must stop.’” The

Manhattan Mercury described Casement as “an enthusiastic proponent of the progressive principles laid down by the late Theodore Roosevelt and is a leader of that type.”⁸²

Like Coolidge, Casement opposed farm relief because, in his opinion, it required too much federal intervention in the economy. Casement most likely agreed with Coolidge’s statement on farm relief that “farmers have never made money. I don’t believe we [the federal government] can do much about it.”⁸³ Proposals for farm relief abounded in the early twenties. By 1924, many Congressmen supported the McNary-Haugen Bill, and so did Secretary of Agriculture Henry C. Wallace — to the extreme displeasure of Coolidge. The McNary-Haugen plan sought the creation of an agricultural export corporation controlled by the federal government that would purchase surplus crops and store them in a warehouse or sell them overseas. Although many farmers supported this type of marketing, many more favored direct aid, such as price supports and payments for not producing. Because the government would absorb losses under the McNary-Haugen plan, Coolidge and many other Republicans opposed it. However, the McNary-Haugen plan, in theory, would have restored agricultural commodity prices to pre-war levels and provided immediate relief to farmers struggling to break even ever since the end of the war. In support of Coolidge, Casement stated that farmers would benefit more from a “tax reduction” than the McNary-Haugen Bill.⁸⁴

Separately, Casement’s opposition to the so-called “bonus” bill of 1924 highlighted his dislike of government aid. In its final form, the Adjusted Compensation Act, or bonus bill, “permitted holders of insurance policies to borrow on them up to about one-fourth of their face value.”⁸⁵ Coolidge vetoed it, but Congress overrode his veto. Incensed at Congress for this, Casement gave two reasons for his rejection of “the principle of a soldiers bonus.” He opposed it because funding for bonus payments would come from his taxes, and he believed it was immoral

to make payments to veterans for serving their country because it would “cheapen” patriotism. The American Legion, of which Casement was a member, led the veterans’ lobby in support of a bonus bill. In June 1924, a month after passage, Casement dramatically resigned from the Legion in protest. The local paper reprinted parts of his resignation speech. In explanation he recounted that “in my conception, when we, who had acceptable bodies, offered them and our lives to the country we simply fulfilled a pressing obligation and accepted a real privilege. As I view it, this opportunity which came to us brought with it a striking advantage—spiritually at least—over those less favored ones prevented by age, infirmity, or other circumstances from offering the supreme sacrifice.” Sounding much like his idol Teddy Roosevelt, Casement believed the bonus bill would destroy the virtue of “favored ones” who fought for their country.⁸⁶ For Casement, government spending interfered in private property rights and even degenerated the “best” members of American society.

Degeneration, for Casement, meant moving away from supposedly nineteenth-century values. However, his condemnation of America’s moral shifts lacked specificity. Casement might have read about the new flapper sensation made famous in large part by rural Kansas native Louise Brooks. The flapper was, according to historian Nathan Miller, the “symbol of the sexual revolution” and “challenged gender roles and defied the double standard.”⁸⁷ Casement may have read about the new sexual attitudes of teenagers and young adults as well as the high living of Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Miller explains that “the nation’s youth rather than the nation’s elders set the standards for American society.”⁸⁸ In any event, Casement sensed a breakdown of the traditional moral order. In 1924, he declared “today we are in a critical time . . . the nation has suffered a moral as well as a material slump.”⁸⁹ He linked the “moral” and the “material.” However, he did not link them in religious terms, in the sense that God materially

punished society for moral transgressions, but in the sense that a disordered youth culture led to economic disorder.

Unlike fundamentalists, Casement criticized the new morality from a scientific and economic standpoint. On one of the few instances during which he praised puritanism, he specifically linked it to economic order. In support of Coolidge, Casement stated, “the country needs a double dose of New England puritanism, economy and thrift.”⁹⁰ The 1920s cultural conflict featured a youth culture on one end and a revivalist movement on the other. It also pitted fundamentalism against science (most famously in the Scopes trial). Casement firmly believed in evolution and likely opposed fundamentalists on the science versus creationism controversy (though the record does not reveal him commenting on the matter). Even though he shared with fundamentalists a belief in the moral decline of the country, he differed with them on principle. As a self-styled “joyous pagan,” he held a deep faith in science.

Although Casement and fundamentalists both supported prohibition, they did so from radically different motives. Linking puritanism with economy and thrift, Casement supported prohibition for economic reasons. As a candidate in the Republican primaries he supported enforcement of the law, and as a teetotaler he served as a good example for the public. He tolerated alcohol consumption among friends and family, but considered it detrimental for the nation as a whole. Casement ran for Congress on a “law and order” platform, which suggests that he supported prohibition for reasons of efficiency.⁹¹

Many people who supported a return to nineteenth-century values also had strong nativist (anti-foreign born) beliefs, but Casement held only mildly racist views. Casement did not promote Anglo-Saxon superiority as his hero Theodore Roosevelt did. Neither did he follow the lead of the many Kansans who swelled the ranks of the KKK desirous to “defend” traditional

values. In fact, he fought the Klan. Even though Casement supported segregation, immigration restriction, and a belief in African-American inferiority, he nonetheless displayed somewhat progressive racial and cultural attitudes in that he fought the Klan.

During the 1924 campaign, Casement publicly opposed the powerful Ku Klux Klan. His campaign manager warned him against going public with his opposition to the KKK, advising him to secretly inform Catholic priests about it. Rather than acquiesce, Casement made it a key issue in the campaign. In a public debate in front of three hundred people—both black and white—he proudly proclaimed that he did not belong to the Klan and “opposed their ideals.” Then he challenged his opponent, Representative James George Strong, a lawyer from Blue Rapids, Kansas, to declare his position on the KKK.⁹² Prevaricating, Strong stated that he represented all Kansans, be they Klansmen or Catholics, and besides, he added, he could not judge something that he knew nothing about. Outraged by the absurdity of Strong’s claim, Casement walked off the stage stating he was “utterly disgusted.”⁹³

As an opponent of the Klan, it is not surprising that Casement only mildly supported immigration restriction. According to historian Michael E. Parrish, opposition to immigration mainly came from “businessmen, middle-class professionals, and veterans’ groups” driven by a belief in Teutonic superiority and a fear that foreigners would bring radical ideas like socialism. Although a rancher, Casement belonged to all three of these groups; he was middle class, a member of the American Legion (until his falling out), and he considered himself a businessman. Eugenics also greatly supported immigration restriction.

After WWI, Congress passed a series of restrictionist immigration laws culminating with the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924. Largely crafted by “two militant eugenicists,” the law sought the “defense of racial purity” in the United States.⁹⁴ The Johnson-Reed Act

specifically restricted “eastern and southern Europeans” and especially the Japanese. Casement referred to the law only once in his campaign. Agreeing with the aim of Johnson-Reed, he criticized its method. Referring to it as the “Japanese Exclusion Act,” he called it “an example of pig-headed and ill-considered legislation.” He explained that “it would have been easily possible to have used diplomacy and secured the same results without offending a proud nation and one that can work us incalculable harm in [the] future.”⁹⁵

Casement revealed his ambiguous perspective on African Americans in an undated speech commemorating of Lincoln’s birthday. Here he praised Lincoln, especially for his emancipation proclamation, but he praised only two African-Americans, Paul Laurence Dunbar and Booker T. Washington. He also seemed to imply that these were the only two great African Americans, stating that, “a race which can produce two such men can and will produce others.” The speech was only one page long but, tellingly, the only direct quotation he used was from Booker T. Washington’s famous call for appeasement in his Atlanta Address: ‘in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.’⁹⁶

In the end, Casement did not secure the Republican nomination, but he performed well in the race. He lacked the name recognition of Strong, the incumbent, and yet he lost by merely 409 votes in the primary. His opposition to the Klan angered nativists but gained support of Catholics, while his support of prohibition irked Catholics but elated many Protestants. After losing he returned full time to pasture farming and breeding cattle, but within a year he was touring the West on behalf of the Forest Service.⁹⁷

In 1924, the Forest Service issued a revised schedule of grazing fees for National Forests based on the idea that public land grazing fees should be commensurate with private land grazing

fees. The Forest Service regulated livestock grazing on the National Forests by controlling access through the issuance of permits. Although the permits allowed grazing, the Forest Service determined the herd size. The permit fee had been controversial ever since its implementation in 1906 because many ranchers thought they had a right to unfettered use of the public lands. Thus every proposed fee increase usually provoked new rounds of protests.⁹⁸ Accordingly, in 1924, when the Rachford Report, compiled by Assistant Forester C. E. Rachford, revised the grazing fees based on private land values, it created a large measure of discontent in the ranching community. Historian Karen Merrill claims that the stockmen held that the Forest Service should “provide for cheap forage.” Ultimately, the Forest Service bowed to pressure and agreed to have a third party review Rachford’s work. Secretary of Agriculture William M. Jardine chose Dan Casement as the reviewer.⁹⁹

Reappraising the Rachford Report gave Casement the opportunity to promote cooperation between the federal government and ranchers. In the spirit of associationalism, Casement viewed the role of the federal government as an assistant to the ranchers in their quest for profit. Surprisingly, Casement never explicitly referred to then Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. Over a period of six months, Casement visited stockmen in almost all of the western states and compiled data on private versus public grazing fees. In June 1926, he presented his findings to Agriculture Secretary Jardine in what has become known as the Casement Report.

The Casement Report illustrated Casement’s belief that the federal government should help industry profit by maintaining reduced grazing fees and conserving the public range. First, as a permittee of the National Forests, he acknowledged the goodness of the mission of the Forest Service. Furthermore, he praised Forest Service employees for their nonpartisanship and expert administration, and he touted the success of the agency’s conservation program in regenerating

forage. He even maintained that the federal government could rightfully charge full commercial value for forage on the national forests. However, as a matter of prudence, he cautioned against pushing this right too quickly. Given the current social and economic conditions, and based on the original intent of the Forest Service — which he construed as offering ranchers reduced fees — he concluded that demanding full value for the grazing privilege was premature. In the same breath that he praised the Rachford team’s impressive methodology and sound conclusions, he also claimed that because the Forest Service served the general public, it could never serve the stockmen as best as stockmen could serve themselves.¹⁰⁰ Casement believed that the Forest Service should be attentive to rancher’s needs.

Finally, the Casement Report revealed that he doubted the possibility of a truly scientific calculation of the grazing fee. He questioned the possibility of ever setting grazing fees based on the fluctuations of nature. Nature made it impossible to set a true value on the range based on rainfall and “palatability and density of grasses and browses.” He feared the subjectivity involved in determining grazing fees.¹⁰¹ The Casement Report hinted that the complexity of range ecology could keep grazing fees low indefinitely.

After completing his report, Casement, the self-styled “progressive producer,” continued to promote cooperation within the livestock industry to ensure its profitability. He continued to favor an arrangement similar to associationalism, promoting cooperation between the federal government, trade associations of producers, and the meatpackers. Even though cattlemen prospered between 1926 and 1929, several trends threatened the livestock industry, such as the long-standing antagonism between packers and beef producers. Also, Americans were eating less beef on average than they had in the previous decade. Between 1926 and 1928, consumption

dropped by a little more than thirteen pounds per capita per year. However, prices remained high due to an expanding population.¹⁰²

Aware of the signs of weakness in the cattle industry, Casement overflowed with Hooveresque solutions in 1928. Casement wanted to increase beef consumption in America through a national advertising campaign. In Omaha, cattlemen heard him acclaim, “we, as successful beef makers, must follow the fashion in beef as closely as the Style Shop follows the fashion in skirts, silk stockings and step ins.” The public, according to Casement, wanted 1,000 pound steers instead of 1,500 pounders because they wanted smaller cuts of meat. Casement compared the larger cows to outdated “petticoats and unrevealing frocks.” Most stockmen, he intoned, still produced a product the consumer did not want.¹⁰³

In 1928, Casement took part in a meeting of ranchers in Denver that demanded government aid for the cattle industry in the form of tariffs and marketing support, if not outright subsidy. Fearing that Latin American producers would undersell American producers in foreign markets, these ranchers demanded increased tariffs on “dressed beef,” “live cattle,” “canned beef,” and “hides.” Desiring inclusion in the then pending McNary-Haugen Farm Relief bill, they submitted their proposal to the House Ways and Means Committee. Casement still opposed McNary-Haugenism in general, but since the beef industry could benefit from it, he supported it in this case. Casement compromised on his earlier stand against McNary-Haugen because he wanted higher tariffs for beef. Interestingly, the one-time “Coolidge candidate for Congress” found himself at odds with the President. Coolidge, true to form, denounced the farm relief bill as “repugnant to the spirit of our institutions.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, Casement was eager to get something into the bill that would “work to our advantage.” He even persuaded other ranchers to accept it.¹⁰⁵

The Denver meeting also proposed a strong national beef organization that would exercise a great deal of regulation over the livestock industry. Casement supported this proposal, illustrating that he favored a strong central authority run by private industry, but not one run by government. Casement agreed with his colleagues at the meeting who sought “collective, organized action” and an organization financed by a “contribution” of a dollar per carload from each producer. These “contributions” would finance beef marketing and a lobby for “national beef policy.” This organization would also include meat packers and processors on “terms of confidence and equality.” Casement described a plan that excluded packers as “stupid and harmful to ourselves.”¹⁰⁶ For Casement, coercion and centralization emanating from the private sector equaled progress, but he would equate the same plan administered by the federal government as socialist.

Casement also supported an additional idea discussed at the meeting called the Thorne plan. This plan would stabilize the livestock industry through centralization and stricter controls administered by a National Live Stock and Meat Board, which would exercise authority over other types of meat besides cattle. It is unclear whether the Thorne plan advocated for a new National Live Stock and Meat Board or a revision of the existing one. Under this plan, meat packers would be required to pay “two to ten cents per head” to the non-governmental Meat Board. Casement looked forward to “the complete and close organization of the industry on a national scale.” He hinted at voluntary production controls when he stated that “ably administered [the board?] could direct and stabilize [sic] production.” Later, in the New Deal era, Casement would criticize the corn hog reduction plan as not truly voluntary, yet he praised the theoretical Meat Board for its ability to “enforce an orderly movement to market of our product.”¹⁰⁷

Overall, Casement held contradictory opinions about the centralization and regimentation of the livestock industry. Even though he claimed the stockmen's "natural conservatism and innate individualism" was an obstacle to progress, he also thought of it as having a "unique social value." However, progress still trumped nostalgia. Casement still railed against cattlemen who persisted in using primarily the public range, stating that compared to "modern methods," their "vocation now resembles more a gambling game with God than a safe and sound commercial undertaking." Then, almost sounding like FDR, he stated that grazers should discard useless traditions and adopt modern methods. His budding nostalgia for the individualism of the open range rancher paled in comparison to his eugenic desire for preserving his vision of farm values and the farm economy.¹⁰⁸

Casement inconsistently advocated collective action for ranchers yet called for the exact opposite for the farmers. He attempted to resolve this contradiction by asserting that farmers were better exemplars than ranchers of republican virtue. According to Casement, the small family farm produced values such as hard work, thrift, sobriety, and self-reliance. And, if conditions on the farm changed (whether through state support or macroeconomic evolution), then the character of the farmer would change for the worse. Accordingly, government subsidies or "artificially" supported farm prices would weaken the American farmer. He reasoned that government intervention in the economy led the country closer to communism. Therefore Casement resented the Farm Bureau and other advocates of government assistance, which represented the takeover of agriculture by weak and inefficient farmers. Casement's answer to preserving the small farm resided in eugenics. Making better farmers would make better farms.

Casement was so anti-statist that he even spurned more conservative federal farm programs like the Federal Farm Board. Created in mid-1929 by the Agricultural Marketing Act,

the Farm Board, a federal agency, attempted “to control the flow of commodities to the market,”¹⁰⁹ withholding surpluses from the market. As explained by historian R. Douglas Hurt, the Farm Board created “stabilization corporations for wheat and cotton to bail out the cooperatives that had purchased too much of these commodities at high prices.”¹¹⁰ Inconsistently, Casement supported the McNary-Haugen bill in 1928 and, a year later, opposed the Farm Board. Both of these farm relief plans advocated state purchase and marketing of excess produce, albeit through different means. The big difference for Casement was that the McNary-Haugen bill offered protection for beef producers.

Although most associationalists supported the Federal Farm Board, Casement considered it the first step in the total regimentation of agriculture. The government, Casement asserted, lacked the constitutional authority for the Farm Board and besides, he continued, it failed to support prices anyway. The Farm Board, he stated, involved the government in grain speculation and made it a “loan agent” for farm organizations. Casement held that the conservation of the family farm was the only solution.¹¹¹

As he sought to preserve the family farm, he also desired the conservation of individualistic virtues. As he stated, the farmer, “almost alone, still conserves our precious ideal of independence.” The farmer, Casement believed, exemplified the best American traits, but preserving these traits meant keeping the farmer free from government aid. Farming, he claimed, had “made intangible contributions to our social fabric far more important than those material elements of our wealth.” According to Casement, the nation benefitted from farming as a “way of living” rather than as an “industry.” Recognizing that he was resisting modernization, he even proposed that agriculture remain purposefully inefficient and farms purposefully small because those conditions promoted rugged individualism.¹¹²

Casement believed that prosperity hampered the cultivation of republican virtue. Even though he opposed the “consolidation, incorporation, and intensive organization” of farms, he supported the very same thing for the beef industry. He was sure that “consolidation, incorporation, and intensive organization” would “maintain prices” and bring stability if not prosperity to the farmers, yet he still opposed them. He reasoned that the material benefits of keeping farms small would not outweigh the social cost. As he put it, the material benefits would be “counterbalanced by a further decline in our most important national asset, the social sanity and security which is mainly based on that priceless institution, the farm family.”¹¹³ He desired an environment conducive to developing farm values.

However, preserving farm values required more than the right environment, Casement believed it required eugenically “fit” people as well. He believed that strenuous farm life demanded more effort than most contemporary farmers could muster. The answer for him lay in cultivating especially suited individuals that could withstand the strenuous life. These individuals had to have “a sound body, special knowledge on many subjects, and above all, an abiding love for the out-of-doors.” These select few would find time for “contemplation” and ample time for sport. Casement’s idea of sport—“shooting, hunting, and polo”—had more in common with the European bourgeoisie than with a typical western Kansas farmer. The farmer, he mused, needed a classical liberal education because the farmer had more time for reflection while performing his or her routine manual tasks.¹¹⁴

Historians usually classify eugenics into “positive” and “negative.” Historian Daniel Kevles defined positive eugenics as “foster[ing] more prolific breeding among the socially meritorious and negative eugenics” as “encourage[ing] the socially disadvantaged to breed less.” Although contemporary proponents hardly distinguished between the two, positive and negative

still serve as useful classifications. Casement leaned toward positive eugenics, but occasionally came close to advocating negative eugenics.¹¹⁵ At the same time, it is worth mentioning, some historians, such as Derek Hoff, argue that we have exaggerated the eugenics movement.

The eugenics movement has a long history in Kansas. In 1894, a medical doctor named Hoyt Pilcher was illegally castrating boys he deemed unfit at his clinic in Winfield, Kansas. By 1913, Kansas had passed its first sterilization law. The law asked physicians to identify “unfit” individuals and refer them to the state court which would then determine whether or not the individual should be sterilized. Casement did not endorse these negative eugenic sterilization laws. Instead, his ideas about preserving republican virtue were in keeping with positive eugenics. One of the most famous examples of positive eugenics in Kansas from this period was the “Fitter Families for Future Firesides” contest. Created by the Red Cross—of which Casement was a member—in 1920, these contests took place at the state fair and continued into the 1930s. At these fairs “Grade A’ individuals” received a medal.¹¹⁶

Casement’s nostalgic view of farm life was widely shared in Kansas in the 1920s. In *Farm Boys and Girls* (1912), Kansas State Agricultural College philosophy professor William McKeever offered eugenic insistence on inborn characteristics. McKeever held, “the great masses of humanity are constituted of what we mean here by the talented. That is, as described above, at birth they possess a large and abundant stock of potentialities of learning and achievement.” Reflecting the classism of eugenics of the 1920s, he claimed that this inherited ability resided in the “great middle classes” and was only realized through “stimulus and opportunity.” Furthermore, he claimed that the rural home provided a better environment than the urban in which to raise a boy because of its “conditions contributory to self-reliance and independent thinking.” Lamenting that few farmers raised their children in this manner, he urged

“that parents make the same careful study of their children as they do of farm crops and livestock.”¹¹⁷ Casement’s solution to the farm problem mirrors McKeever’s ideas and parallels Water’s ideas on it. Casement’s eugenic thinking really came to fruition in the 1930s.

While Casement’s solution to the farm problem rested on social engineering on a grand scale, his solution to the labor problem had associationalist roots. In 1932, all Kansas counties struggled financially. Neither local, nor state, nor private charities kept up with the demand for relief. Times were so tough that Kansas elected a Democratic governor — Henry Woodring — who asked President Hoover for federal aid in July through the recently enacted Emergency Relief and Construction Act.

Casement, meanwhile, continued to espouse Hoover-esque themes of voluntarism and local charity. Two months before passage of the Emergency Relief Act, he had led a collective relief effort for the needy people of Manhattan.¹¹⁸ Thus even as late as 1932 Casement could proudly proclaim that “we strive for social justice.” He explained that social justice “will be a reality when capital shares profits with labor. This should require no legislative decree. A powerful motive no less universal than enlightened selfishness should recommend it to every employer who hankers for true happiness and to every workman with vision enough to detect and resent a racket.”¹¹⁹ Aside from making substantial financial contributions to charitable funds for the area poor and giving annual bonus checks to his ranch hands, he also chaired the Riley County Red Cross which actively collected relief for the poor. For instance, it sponsored a women’s house to house drive in which local women asked homeowners to donate a day’s worth of earnings for the poor. By January 1933, the houses to house drive had collected over six thousand dollars for unemployment relief.¹²⁰

Casement was also chosen by the Chamber of Commerce as the general chairman of a new entity called the Civic Emergency Committee (CEC), which was the brainchild of the local Chamber of Commerce. Through a massive ad campaign, the CEC enticed homeowners and business owners into taking advantage of the depression-induced low cost of construction materials. A core of volunteer “minute men” canvassed area houses asking people to take a “prosperity pledge.” By taking the pledge, a homeowner agreed to spend money on home improvements. As of June 25 pledges totaled roughly \$84,000. With this money Casement hoped to provide jobs for the tradesmen and craftsman of Manhattan. According to one newspaper, Casement “unqualifiedly endorsed the program and describe[d] it as a most constructive, comprehensive, and helpful plan” and he hoped many people would volunteer.¹²¹

The Civic Emergency Committee illustrated Casement’s belief in cooperation for the benefit of private property. Like the Forest Service that served all forest users, the CEC ostensibly benefitted the entire community. In this case, individuals of the community helped one another by spending money. Equating mass consumption with justice, Casement stated that one who failed to purchase amply was “helping to deprive all these persons and agencies of a living wage.” For Casement, consumers benefitted because a “new suit, a new car, new tires, new furniture give [people] personal satisfaction.” Everyone benefited from the CEC because, he claimed, it helped property owners by increasing property value, helped laborers by providing income, and finally benefitted the whole city by promoting “civic beautification.”¹²²

Casement’s associationalism anticipated the early New Deal, and in particular the National Recovery Administration, which, through industry-wartime “codes” of business practices, sought to rationalize the American economy. Casement’s CEC aided labor through the means of a voluntary private arrangement protecting laborers from excessive competition by

asking “laborers to get together to fix a wage scale for three months.” The CEC itself consisted of “representatives of labor, banks, contractors, and retailers,” similar to the representatives of industry, labor, and consumers in the later NRA. More importantly, he displayed flexibility in his free market beliefs through his willingness to curtail competition in the interest of fairness. The “prosperity pledges” also required people to hire construction workers for capital improvements.¹²³

Chapter 3 - Farm Crusade: Merging Eugenics and Farm Policy

Hoover's farm policies contrasted starkly from President Franklin Roosevelt's. Hoover envisioned the government as, in the words of Hurt, "the coordinator of marketing programs and as a partner with cooperative organizations."¹²⁴ While Hoover's marketing based solutions were quite interventionist for the time, they paled in comparison to the New Deal's direct subsidies for voluntary production controls. For example, the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) paid farmers, through a tax on processors, to grow less while the Resettlement Administration sought to relocate destitute farmers onto better land. With the failure of Hoover's marketing reform, many farmers were eager for more direct federal intervention.

Dan Casement's opposition to the New Deal — especially to the Agricultural Adjustment Act — centered on some core yet nebulous beliefs. Deep down, Casement believed that the AAA was wrong, but he wanted metaphysical explanation for why it was wrong. Rather than turn to organized religion, he discovered an explanation in his own beliefs based on science and nature. When writing a work entitled "What my Religion Means to Me," he finally uncovered an appropriate noun for a formal cause for the universe, finally settling on "the INTELLIGENCE." This intelligence, he believed, "designed and operates" the universe. "My religion," he pronounced, "appears to be a faith—an unreasoned acceptance of the universe." Grounded on empiricism and a love of nature, he stated, "my senses apprise me of the reality of my environment—the earth, the sea, the sky[,] and of the life that inhabits them." Yet he still believed in some mysterious "plan." From these beliefs he derived the following commandment: people should "strive to harmonize their thoughts and actions with the observable and plainly

determinable rules whereby the universe is run. It is in this effort that man develops his moral concepts and finds the good life.” This brief theological statement provided the foundation for his argument against the AAA. For Casement, the AAA contradicted nature, the law of supply and demand, and evolution. The farm problem and the New Deal forced this progressive to define his progressive beliefs.¹²⁵

According to Casement, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal inappropriately interfered in private property rights and thereby imperiled the survival of the nation and the character of its “best” people. In opposing the New Deal, he joined like-minded groups such as the American Liberty League (ALL) and the Farmer’s Independence Council of America (FIC). As president of the FIC beginning in 1935, he equated the New Deal with communism, lost faith in the farmers of America, and lamented the degeneration of America. Even into FDR’s second term he considered himself a progressive, but by the late thirties he began to alter some of his progressive era beliefs. For instance, he opposed women’s suffrage, he believed that the Constitution should never be changed, and he increasingly advocated negative eugenics as well as positive.

Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in March 1933 and shortly thereafter prompted Congress into passing the famous first New Deal legislation of the “hundred days.” Casement remained rather silent about most of the legislation. Significantly, he did not speak out against the National Recovery Administration (NRA). The NRA sought fair profits, prices, and wages through the cooperation of the federal government, consumers, capital, and labor. Under the NRA, industries were allowed to set codes for companies, such as production quotas, that were monitored by the government. They also agreed to a forty-hour maximum work week, a minimum wage, and they recognized labor’s right to bargain collectively. Casement may very well have supported the NRA since it was similar to Hoover’s associationalism, it resembled

Casement's Manhattan Civic Emergency Committee, and it was favored by many big businesses. If it were not for its agricultural policies, Casement may not have become an outspoken critic of the New Deal.¹²⁶

In fact, only one piece of New Deal legislation really provoked Casement to opposition: the Agricultural Adjustment Act. Mainly he opposed just one feature of the AAA: its corn-hog reduction program (more on this program in a moment). He achieved a degree of national notoriety, beyond agricultural circles, with the publication of "Hog Latin" in the *Saturday Evening Post* (1935). He received letters of support from average people all over the country, as well as from meat processors.

In May 1933, Congress passed the AAA, containing the corn-hog reduction plan, which was radically different from what Casement wanted. Casement asserted that all ranchers should suffer through the depression and wait for better times. As the Dust Bowl and the Depression lingered, hog prices plummeted while hogs themselves proliferated. Corn prices also plummeted. As half of the corn grown in the U.S. became pig feed, any government program that aimed at fixing hog prices would necessarily have to fix corn prices as well. The voluntary corn-hog reduction plan called for farmers to slaughter surplus hogs and plow under surplus corn. Reducing the supply of corn and hogs would raise the price of both.¹²⁷

The corn-hog reduction program was promulgated by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. This voluntary program created a hog scarcity by removing pigs off the market. The federal government purchased the surplus hogs and used many of them for lard and fertilizer. Because the administration intended to reduce the number of hogs, Wallace encouraged ranchers to slaughter baby pigs and pregnant sows. After implementation, the total number of pigs killed reached 6 million. Expressing uneasiness with the destruction of food, Wallace even

remarked that these were not the actions of “any sane society.” According to Casement, ranchers viewed the corn-hog program with suspicion, but they acquiesced because they perceived it as their civic duty to follow the government program. The *Kansas City Star* claimed that Casement was the only dissenting voice among Kansas ranchers.¹²⁸

After the initial killing of hogs, the USDA paid ranchers to raise fewer hogs. The USDA derived the payment from a processing tax. All companies that slaughtered, cut, and packaged hogs paid the tax. Needless to say the meat packers engendered a distinct hatred for this program, even though the tax was ultimately paid by the consumer. However, consumers bought fewer pork products than before due to the higher price for pork.¹²⁹

The corn-hog reduction program serves as a representative of other AAA programs. Other commodities like wheat, tobacco, and cotton faced similar reductions. These voluntary programs paid farmers not to grow on their land or to grow fewer crops on their land than they had grown in years past. Higher prices overruled any misgivings farmers may have harbored about these programs.¹³⁰

Upset with the corn-hog program, Casement wrote an article, “Hog Latin,” which appeared in the March 1935 *Saturday Evening Post*. Here Casement railed against any “agency of government” that would “control my individual effort and assume my personal responsibility.” Furthermore, he intoned that “the state has inaugurated a plan to substitute its energy, its will, for my own in the conduct of my personal affairs.” The government, he explained, would not help someone who lost money in the stock market, so neither should the government help the farmers who lost money farming. Again he promoted the desirable traits that came with farming; “intangible virtues” like self-reliance and a spirit of sacrifice. He continued to think of farmers as two distinct groups: the real farmer and the false one. To this effect, he stated that “practically

none of our most intelligent, industrious, self-reliant farmers” wanted AAA type legislation. He even referred to the real farmers as “progressive.” The unsuccessful farmers, he stated, led by Henry A. Wallace, had never stopped clamoring for government help since the early 1920s. He called these farmers “blatherskites.” To Casement, the New Deal government assumed the risk in farming eliminating the virtues derived from it.¹³¹

“Hog Latin” further explained that the Agricultural Adjustment Administration acted contrary to reason. Sitting in a meeting hall in Kansas one evening, he had listened to farm leaders defend the AAA — and then voiced his dissent. To his consternation, however, many of his fellow farmers relented to the government program. They recognized its folly, Casement claimed, and they knew it contradicted common sense, but they agreed anyway, more out of self-preservation than anything else. They knew that if they resisted the program, as Casement did, they would lose money, but if they followed the government quota system they would receive at least some income.¹³²

With impassioned pen, Casement outlined how the AAA contradicted natural law as well. The AAA farm program allowed hog raisers three-fourths the amount of hogs as their average annual number the previous two years. But what if a farmer’s sows were more prolific the next year? Would he have to terminate the newborns? He asked how the AAA theoreticians would account for changing weather patterns, drought, heavy rain, or disease. Casement opposed not only the tax but also the killing of hogs, which he equated with wanton, purposeless slaughter. He described the gut-wrenching scene as he watched “sleek, sturdy, bright-eyed little fellows trotting cheerfully” to the cutting block. He lamented that these pigs would not reach their destiny . . . “healthy 200 pounders!”¹³³

Aside from publishing his personal opposition to the AAA, he also sat on the advisory

council for the most well-known New Deal opposition group — the American Liberty League (ALL). Created by a right wing group of wealthy industrialists, they opposed any hint of redistribution of wealth. Officially chartered in August 1935, the League’s greatest support came from General Motors and Du Pont. A veritable who’s who of wealthy capitalists, the Liberty League’s members included John J. Raskob, former Democratic National Chairman and financier for du Pont and General Motors, the du Pont brothers, Alfred P. Sloan, president of General Motors, J. Howard Pew, president of Sun Oil, and Edward F. Hutton, chairman of General Foods, just to name a few. The League also contained some notable democratic politicians such as John W. Davis, the Democratic nominee for president in 1924, and Al Smith, the Democratic candidate for president in 1928. The ALL also consisted of corporation lawyers, conservative scholars, and other businessmen.¹³⁴ Its stated purpose was to “teach the necessity of respect for the rights of persons and property . . . and . . . the duty of government to encourage and protect individual and group initiative and enterprise, to foster the right to work, earn, save and acquire property, and to preserve the ownership and lawful use of property when acquired.”¹³⁵ The organization defended rugged individualism and equal opportunity. Even with no admission fee, its nationwide membership only topped off at 150,000.¹³⁶ Although registered as a nonpartisan organization, the ALL was clearly organized for the sole purpose of opposing FDR in 1936.

Historian Frederick Rudolph outlined the philosophy of the Liberty League, emphasizing that undercurrents of racism and social Darwinism undergirded its conservatism. Rudolph demonstrates the racist founding of the League through a letter exchange between R. R. M. Carpenter, a retired du Pont vice president, and John J. Raskob, then vice president of du Pont. Carpenter complained of the New Deal to Raskob, stating, “five negroes on my place in South

Carolina refused work this spring Saying they had easy jobs with the government.”¹³⁷ The ALL “supported with worshipful intensity the Constitution of the United States; it placed itself on the side of the individual and of liberty in opposition to an encroaching government bureaucracy;” it maintained a high degree of respect for the founding fathers; and “it defended the American right to enjoy the sweat of one’s own labor and the rewards of one’s ability.”¹³⁸ The FIC shared all of these beliefs, even Rudolph’s conclusion that the League “sincerely” believed in what they preached but horribly misjudged the congregation and the times. The League as well as the FIC, “tried to save a people who would not be saved.”¹³⁹

The League also incorporated social Darwinism and eugenic thought. In a speech, one of the members of the League claimed that “the democratic ideal has already determined the predominance of the weak.” Furthermore, this member explained that “the only way to obviate the disastrous predominance of the weak is to develop the strong. . . . Today the weak should not be artificially maintained in wealth and power. . . . Each individual must rise or sink to the level for which he is fitted by the quality of his tissues and of his soul.” Although Rudolph used this to illustrate the ALL’s opposition to egalitarianism, it serves well as an example of the positive eugenics behind the philosophy of the League.¹⁴⁰

The ALL’s desire for a subsidiary farm organization most likely led to the creation of the Farmers Independence Council. Historian James C. Carey aptly demonstrated the connection between the two organizations. Stanley Morse, a South Carolina rancher and agricultural advisor to the ALL, officially chartered the FIC in April 1935. Although ALL and FIC leaders denied a connection between the two groups under oath during an investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, the evidence suggests that they lied. For example, Carey notes that the FIC paid Morse while he organized the FIC. Furthermore, the FIC and the League shared

the same Washington, D.C. address for a time and FIC “officers later charged telegraphic expenses to the account of the Liberty League.”¹⁴¹ Morse claimed not to have begun work on the FIC until he finished his work with the ALL in May 1935. However, as early as November 1934, a man named Walter Chappell busily organized a farmer’s organization for Morse, most likely in Kansas.¹⁴² If the FIC did not maintain a physical connection to the League, it nonetheless shared an almost identical ideology.

Stanley F. Morse, founder of the FIC, was an ardent southern nationalist, conspiracy theorist, and defender of the (imagined) southern way of life. For example, Morse supported Dixiecrat Senator Strom Thurmond, corresponding with him for over a decade. Morse’s “non-partisan” Grass Roots League (1951–1954) sought to link the civil rights movement with communism. The Grass Roots League had a “research department” which supposedly revealed these connections. Morse reported some of their findings to Thurmond, such as that the “Communist negro [sic] drive was started in the United States in 1920” and that “the Commies are making sure that [Martin Luther] King operates according to their plan.”¹⁴³ He founded or co-founded at least four different organizations that promoted ultra conservative principles. Before all of this, however, Morse’s conspiracy thinking and apocalyptic do or die rhetoric influenced Casement to a great degree.¹⁴⁴

Casement inclined toward Morse’s extremist thinking, ultimately accepting Morse’s invitation to join the FIC rather than work with the moderate and well established Farm Congress. In May 1935, just as Morse created the FIC, another farm group, the American Farm Congress, decided on a proper course of action for disseminating their views on the farm problem. The Farm Congress also opposed the AAA. After a year of discussion, the Farm Congress decided to change its name to the American Agricultural Institute, and change the name

of its publication, the *Agricultural Review*, to the *New Agricultural Review*. The purpose of this reorganization was to “assemble organized support of a policy which will preserve the independence and self-respect of agriculture as an industry, and of those who are engaged in it.” W. I. Drummond, managing director and chairman of the Board of Governors of the Farm Congress, wrote to Casement with the hope that “those who believe as we do could unite.” For this purpose, Drummond sought Casement’s help in formulating a declaration of principles.¹⁴⁵

While the Farm Congress/American Agricultural Institute shared many beliefs with the FIC, the former eschewed moderation and optimism while the latter eschewed extremism and pessimism. For example, Morse wanted Casement’s “militant help,” and on another occasion Morse bragged about an FIC supporter as a “militant farm leader.” Meanwhile Drummond wrote about “go[ing] ahead safely and with confidence.” Morse wanted the FIC to appear as if it were a grassroots organization. The Farm Congress/American Agricultural Institute history dated back 25 years, whereas the FIC still lacked incorporation papers. Both organizations were nominally non-partisan, yet Morse claimed that “the only way to change or abolish the AAA . . . must be by voting the Republican ticket.” Drummond defended the sincerity of the American Agricultural Institute by writing to Casement that “I feel that we should not let [it] be understood that this movement is begun solely for the purpose of making a fight on the New Deal. As a matter of fact it was started before the AAA got under way.” Drummond also made it clear that he did “not share [Casement’s] general pessimism.”¹⁴⁶ Drummond sensed something wrong with the FIC and tried to warn Casement against it.

A comparison of both organizations declarations of principle reveals ideological similarities. The FIC wanted to “reestablish and encourage the old-fashioned virtues of industry, self-reliance and thrift upon which America was founded, which have made America a great

nation . . .” It also wanted to “protect the freedom of every farmer to operate his farm according to his own judgment and to insist that the Government shall not by law, by regulation or by subsidy regiment or attempt to control any farmer in the management of his own farm.” Furthermore they insisted that federal and state governments “be operated efficiently, economically and impartially.” The principles of the Farm Congress echoed those of the FIC. It called for the “sacred protection of personal liberty and property rights, and the rejection of everything savoring of State socialism, paternalism or communism,” the “restriction of Governmental activities to their legitimate functions; keeping the government out of business,” and “adequate tariff protection for agriculture.” The Farm Congress, unlike the FIC, addressed conservation. The Farm Congress called for the “avoidance of waste in natural resources” and a “modern national policy of reforestation.”¹⁴⁷ The Farm Congress embraced a range of different issues while the FIC did not.

By mid-May 1935, Casement had chosen to join the burgeoning FIC over the American Agricultural Institute. In a final letter to Casement, Drummond urged cooperation between the two groups, but to no avail. Drummond agreed with the soundness of FIC principles, but based on his many years of experience, he warned of the hardships involved in creating a new organization. Creating “a nation-wide organization, with state and local units, within the time allotted” seemed impossible to him and he added “certainly this would cost a very large amount of money.” The “machinery” for running such an operation “would take years, and cost a lot of money.” The Agricultural Institute had the machinery and a “magazine with recognized national standing.” Finally, Drummond disagreed with the methodology of the FIC, stating that “it is not necessary to get all the farmers, or other people, into an organization as actual members in order to make them see the light. It is more a matter of educational publicity—the solid and consistent

hammering home of fundamentally correct principles.” He cautioned Casement to “be practical.” Even though the Farm Congress seemed to be the rational choice, he still joined the FIC, perhaps because of its militancy.¹⁴⁸

From the outset, the FIC attracted crusaders and idealists, with Stanley Morse as the fountainhead of this mentality. Morse demanded a high level of dedication from all members. As Morse told a prospective vice president, “our feeling is we are working for a cause and not for the money, and that this must be the spirit of our organization.” Morse self-financed much of his work with the FIC.¹⁴⁹ Morse never fully trusted one member after he asked to be reimbursed for 200 days of work, and he demanded that “all those connected with the F. I. C. be actuated by patriotic motives and not those of personal gain or self-advancement.”¹⁵⁰ He maintained a spirit of self-sacrifice among the members. Casement must have initially agreed with Morse’s idealism given he chose the FIC over the American Agricultural Institute.

Morse’s grand idea from the beginning involved the FIC in many different methods of publicity, but when this proved impossible, he settled on developing Casement into a radio star. In June Morse’s plan for the FIC consisted of a “constant stream of press releases, magazine [sic] articles, editorials and the like” and enticing “speakers to address meetings of farmers and a radio campaign.” He proposed holding a series of farm rallies in the northern plains states to drum up support with speeches from local chapter leaders—if they could create local chapters in time. He wanted these speeches broadcast over the local radio stations. To attract as many people as possible to the rallies, Morse wanted to provide a “picnic or other eats” and “entertainment,” such as “barn dancers” or a “troupe of comedians.” The Kansas meeting for Morse would serve as the “curtain-raiser for the whole movement.” Finally, he wanted to “gradually build [Casement] up until we get him established as a national radio figure.”¹⁵¹

Morse noted that the financial backers for the FIC and “those interested” greatly supported making Casement into the next “Father Coughlin [or] Huey Long.” Father Coughlin, the “radio priest” supported the New Deal early on, but by 1934 denounced it as a tool of Wall Street, while Huey Long, Democratic Senator from Louisiana, promoted his “share our wealth” program. The financial backers most likely did not agree with the politics of Coughlin or Long, but simply thought Casement could build up the same large-scale and loyal following that each man enjoyed. Morse described Casement as “colorful, forceful, and courageous enough to put this over.” In the radio broadcasts, Casement would focus on the “preservation of freedom and liberty,” common sense, sound economic principles, and the fundamental virtues of thrift self-reliance and hard work.”¹⁵² By July, the FIC had abandoned attempts at attracting members and decided to focus “mainly on a radio campaign.” Speaking almost solely about the AAA, Casement would deliver talks once a week for six months. But Casement, however, was not quite up to the task. In an unsent letter he explained how he felt a “mild mental discomfort” and that it took away from his “complete freedom to go and come at will.”¹⁵³

The FIC never became the grassroots farm movement that Morse wanted desired. It remained a front for attacking the New Deal, partnered with special interests, and not concerned with what most farmers actually wanted. Morse and Casement were both afraid that Roosevelt’s policies were ushering in communism and or socialism. Morse believed that “The AAA scheme is just one link in the chain for socializing America.”¹⁵⁴ Casement also looked forward to an “aggressive fight against the further socialization or sovietization of American Agriculture.” Morse’s political partisanship was frequently exposed. For instance he stated that “the New Deal will not be licked until it is licked. The election . . . will be a real fight.” Focused on the 1936 election, he lectured Casement that “our job and your duty to help save the nation will be vital

until Roosevelt is ousted. There must be no let-up in our fight.”¹⁵⁵ Later that summer he explained, “As I see it, we must just keep fighting with the unswerving determination that Roosevelt shall not serve another term as president” which he signed as “hellraisingly yours.”¹⁵⁶ Even according to financial records, the goal of the FIC was to campaign against FDR in the upcoming election. In mid-June Morse prepared a “fifteen month” budget to get them to about mid-September 1936—only a month and a half before the election.¹⁵⁷

The FIC treated the farmers paternalistically. Since the 1920s, Casement had identified two types of farmers: the few “real” ones, and the rest, who wanted government assistance. Morse also held the majority of farmers in low esteem. He wrote Casement “that the farmers of the Mid-West are going to be the last group to grasp the truth about the new deal. If they do not awaken in time, it will be too bad for the Republicans.”¹⁵⁸ Yet while he believed that the farmers lacked the sense to grasp the truth about the New Deal, he nonetheless wanted “our movement [to] grow from among the farmers themselves instead of being a central movement from a big city.” So the FIC would have the appearance of a grass roots farm movement but not the substance.¹⁵⁹

Meatpackers also influenced the FIC. Morse and Casement colluded on a regular basis with William Whitfield Woods, president of the Institute of American Meatpackers in Chicago. Morse mentions Woods as a financial backer, and refers to him in numerous letters. In one letter to Casement, Morse felt he should deny that the meatpackers had any influence whatsoever in the FIC. He was adamant that whatever financing they received had “no strings attached.” However, within two weeks he was already having lunch with Woods to “discuss the F. I. C.”¹⁶⁰ Most likely the meatpackers were the main supporters of Casement’s prospective radio career. Morse mentions how Woods eagerly supported Casement’s radio career, and Casement, when he

was having second thoughts about radio, wrote directly to Woods about it. Morse cautioned Casement that “Woods and his crowd do not want to appear in this or any other activity of the F. I. C.”¹⁶¹

The FIC began hinting that it opposed the New Deal based on private property rights. While still committed to fighting the AAA, Morse began denouncing the entire New Deal and President Roosevelt with more frequency. Although Casement mainly opposed the AAA, he was willing to stay with the FIC after the processing tax was declared unconstitutional in early 1936 because he believed that the New Deal would destroy private property rights.¹⁶²

Reminiscent of Casement’s reaction to the first Red Scare, he and the FIC viewed themselves as patriots saving America from Bolshevism. The FIC always needed financial support, and around mid-August they sent an appeal letter for that purpose. Playing on the fears of their prospective donors, the brief letter claimed that the FIC “may prove to be the deciding factor in saving America from communism.”¹⁶³ As one of their purposes stated they “vigorously support[ed] the principles of Americanism as opposed to destructive radicalism, in whatever form it may appear.” Morse denounced the New Dealers “socialistic plans” and identified President Roosevelt as “our No. 1 bunco man,” and believed that the FIC “must give him Hell in a subtle way.”¹⁶⁴

Casement was anti-communist, but his main concern was maintenance of his imaged eugenically superior “real” and efficient farmer. In a press release he declared that the FIC sought “to bring back to the farmer the freedom which has been guaranteed to him by the Constitution and which the acts of the A.A.A. unquestionably will take from him if the people of this country do not call a halt to the despotic practices already instituted.” Denouncing the inefficiency of the AAA, Casement stated that “the policies being pursued are forcing the farmer

to sacrifice his self-respect and requiring him to run his business with the constant unwanted aid of a government wet nurse.”¹⁶⁵

Casement and the FIC trusted that the “real” farmers would abandon the AAA once they learned of its un-American character. Most progressive reformers thought that if people only had the facts about any given issue, they would vote correctly. The FIC had the same trust in the educability of the farmers—most likely only the “real” farmers. Morse wrote to Casement that they could “convince” the farmers “by the systematic presentation of facts, figures, and logic plus the moral and socialism issues over a period of several months.”¹⁶⁶ Once the farmer had the facts, reasoned Morse, they would join the FIC crusade. For the farmers benefit the FIC drew up a constructive farm program.

Their farm program reflected their respect for private property and efficiency, but also demonstrated concern with more than just farm problems. Echoing the Coolidge platform, they called for economy in government, a balanced budget, and lower taxes. Not surprisingly, they also called for an end to New Deal programs so that consumers would have more money for purchasing farm products. They promoted efficiency through the “principles of self-help and cooperation among the farmers” and by “instruction in commercial rural home handicraft industries” for poor farmers on sub marginal lands. Still, they were not totally opposed to government assistance, as they supported the government’s agricultural extension service, “grading and inspection of farm products,” “weather records and forecasting,” and other “necessary regulatory activities.” They also called for “practical special research to develop the commercial utilization of farm products and by-products” with the goal of increasing farm output.¹⁶⁷

In early January 1936, the Supreme Court declared the AAA processing tax

unconstitutional in a six to three decision. This decision almost killed the FIC. Casement thought that “since the AAA was dead there [was] nothing left to do,” and Morse feared that many other members would feel the same way. Even though Casement wanted almost after the Supreme Court’s ruling, Morse easily persuaded him to stay.¹⁶⁸

After the Supreme Court decision the FIC revamped its efforts not only to oppose agricultural legislation but also to convince the farmers to fight the entire New Deal based on economic and moral grounds. In his letter to Casement, Morse stated that “our fight and opportunity for usefulness has only just begun.” Morse drafted a memo titled “Our Job” for circulation among all FIC members that explained why they should continue as an organization after the Supreme Court nullified the AAA. In the memo he explained that the FIC should provide “strong, constructive leadership for the farmers of America whose interests must be safeguarded.”¹⁶⁹ The FIC believed they knew what the farmers wanted better than the farmers themselves. The idea that the farmers need to be lead is a recurring theme within FIC correspondence. About a month later, Morse told Casement that the FIC could “exert strong leadership on many farmers.”¹⁷⁰ In one case Morse even likened farmers to animals. In a letter to Casement he stated that “many farmers have been so deluded by New Deal propaganda and checks and are so devoted to it that they can be weaned away only by a systematic campaign of education done in a non-political way.” Furthermore, he stated that if farmers sense a political motive behind the FIC’s “education” efforts “they become as stubborn as mules.”¹⁷¹ With little respect for the farmers, they nonetheless sought to lead them.

In the memo Morse made it clear that the FIC opposed the entire New Deal because of the threat it posed to private property. In the beginning of the memo, Morse stated, in vague terms, the need for a constructive farm program. He mentioned the need to analyze all new farm

legislation in order to warn the farmers it. He also stressed the need to continue their campaign to educate the farmers. More importantly he condemned the “administration radicals who are determined by hook or crook to change our form of government to communism.” He feared that these “radicals” would “attempt to modify the constitution.” To safeguard against these threats Morse cautioned that “we must be militantly on guard against the Tugwells, Frankfurters and other subversive bureaucrats, and must keep the farmers posted as to their movements.” Casement must have endorsed Morse’s views since he never criticized them and he remained President of the FIC. In apocalyptic language reminiscent of the first Red Scare, Morse stated that “while it is perhaps true that this radical group is being weakened nevertheless we must drive harder than ever to help achieve their complete destruction.”¹⁷²

By the 1936 elections, Casement had changed some fundamental beliefs since his progressive days. He now viewed the constitution as an almost sacred protection of private property that should never be changed. He adopted a more traditional view of women based on the separate sphere and his eugenic ideas also became more pronounced.

Casement feared the changes wrought by the New Deal and became reactionary — even promoting ideas contrary to his earlier progressive ones. Although Casement claimed that the progressive cause had been hijacked by new dealers, he himself did not maintain the same core beliefs as he did in his progressive days. He changed drastically his view on the Constitution. He went from believing the Constitution needed reform to believing that it should never be amended. In 1911, for example, he said that “the Fathers by no means finished the job and that there is abundant work for us to do.” He then compared the work of the founding fathers to inventions that continuously need to be updated concluding, “how quickly then must even the wisest kind of legislation be outstripped and made obsolete by the constant growth and change

that is a natural and inevitable law.” Later, during the New Deal era, with a tinge of American Exceptionalism, he stated that the Constitution should not be changed “to suit the circumstances of modern life” because it was based on “man’s inherent nature.” To make it clearer he explained that “the Constitution applies to our lives today with the same truth and force that it held for its authors and their contemporaries. To deny this fact is as absurd as to proclaim that the truths of Christ's teachings are now obsolete.” In 1935, he even called for a third party calling it the “Constitutional” Party.¹⁷³

Morse echoed Casement’s new regard for the Constitution. This type of “cold hearted constitution worship” was also a major feature of the ALL.¹⁷⁴ In a statement to the farmers, Morse proclaimed that “we believe in the political sagacity of the constitutional fathers in designing the Supreme Court as the final authority on the meaning of the Constitution and as the permanent guardian of that instrument against the assaults of self-seeking or irresponsible agitation.” Presumably, these self-seekers desired the redistribution of wealth through the AAA. In this document, Morse also explained the FIC’s purpose as defending private property and limiting the powers of state.¹⁷⁵

The welfare state and the people it helped upset Casement so much that he nearly advocated negative eugenics. In 1935, Casement wrote an article called “Pig Politics” in which he criticized the AAA and the Republicans for their lack of interest in a farm program. In this article he also revealed his eugenic way of thinking about people, explaining how his third party would simply defend the old order. According to Casement, if the nation returned to the old order and “the old virtues of thrift and dogged industry, there promptly will be occupation for all the unemployed in this country, who are worth their salt.” And those not worth their salt, the

remaining unemployed, he stated “their existence . . . was always a constant threat to government.” How they were a threat or what to do with them he left unstated.¹⁷⁶

Casement also modified his views on the role of women, now constructing them as moral exemplars of society. Despite his former appeals to biology and science (which suggested the rough equality between men and women), Casement now stated that women had a “truer sense of patriotism than men.” Twenty years earlier he had believed it ridiculous to claim that one sex was any more moral than the other. By the New Deal era, however, he had come to believe the opposite (and yet offered no biological explanation for his shift). The switch was rooted in electoral politics as much as gender ideology. He had faith that women would vote in great numbers to defeat FDR in the 1936 election, in the process demonstrating that they were the moral backbone of the country.¹⁷⁷

The FIC continued its promotion of the protection of private property in a way that reflected their eugenic understanding of the farmers. For Casement and the FIC, New Dealers endangered private property because of farm subsidies which redistributed the wealth. Morse and Casement believed “handouts” to the farmer would make the farmer weak, and thereby weaken the entire country. Through subsidies weaker farmers would remain on the farm, when, according to nature, they should have been driven off. Their only solution was for the farmers to become more efficient and also suffer through the economic downturns. Only “real” farmers possessed the necessary stamina and work ethic. Casement and the FIC nonetheless directed their efforts at the “weak” farmers, whom they believed the New Deal misled. This explains the FIC’s attempts to lead the farmers rather than listen to them and it explains their contempt for the “weak” farmers they were trying to lead. In a final attempt to convince these weak farmers, the FIC stooped to scare tactics.

The FIC began a campaign to “educate” the farmer about the New Deal through scare tactics, linking the New Deal with a communist takeover of the United States. In February 1936, Morse outlined a national propaganda campaign that aimed at sending two articles per week to the 2,200 newspapers in the country, one article per week to “at least” 1,000 different journals, and “correspondence” with editors. This massive campaign also called for a one-page article in various magazines until the election that would explain how the new deal tried to “control agriculture, destroy freedom, buy the farmer vote . . . and otherwise strive to emulate the exploits of Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler, so far as freedom is concerned.”¹⁷⁸ However, Morse may have genuinely believed that the New Deal represented a communist takeover. For example, in a letter to Casement titled “confidential,” he asked, “Are you aware of the sinister significance of the firearms registration bill now placed on Congress’ ‘must’ list by the administration?” Morse explained “that a government contemplating a dictatorship by force first takes steps to disarm its enemies. Also the communists favor disarming of American citizens.” Morse seemed to live in an air of fear and conspiracy. He ended by warning that “we should act quickly to kill this legislation before it is too late.”¹⁷⁹ Months later Morse was still concerned about a vague threat of violence, warning Casement that “we must eliminate Roosevelt and the New Deal or be prepared to resist a determined attempt to establish communism in America. It is preferable to maintain our American form of government with ballots rather than bullets and to that end we must dedicate our efforts.”¹⁸⁰

In the final FIC letter to members, a couple weeks before the election, Morse gave agricultural problems a back seat to the coming socialist apocalypse that he thought would surely come if Roosevelt were re-elected. He began by asking, “Shall we head for communism, inflation, civil war, CHAOS . . .?” He explained how the “unfaithful administration” already

spread communism through the WPA and the CCC. He stated that even though FDR disavowed communist ties plenty of communist bureaucrats were waiting until after the election to foist their system on the United States. Rumors, he stated, were circulating that the New Dealer would use any subversive measure to steal the election in the cities. In truly apocalyptic rhetoric he claimed Henry Wallace was “bringing about the millennium.” He concluded by telling the members that “you had better pray as well as work.”¹⁸¹ The FIC increased their end of the world rhetoric because they believed the less fit farmers might not understand an argument about principles but would definitely understand an attempted coup.

The eugenic assumption of fit and unfit farmers permeated the FIC. For instance, Lee E. Palmer, executive vice president of the FIC, in a letter to Morse, referred to the FIC as a “real farmers council.” Palmer suggested that the FIC develop a constructive farm program because “many others of our best farmers” have noticed that the FIC is only critical not constructive.¹⁸² However, the full force of this dichotomous belief did not surface until after FDR’s landslide victory over Kansas governor Alf Landon. A couple weeks after the election, Morse sent a letter to members explaining what the election meant. In his view, it was “not a triumph for democracy.” He explained his shock at “the realization that there are so many people in the United States who have become so mentally and morally demoralized that they can be bamboozled, browbeaten, and bought to re-elect the un-American New Deal.” In eugenic terms he described how the “moral fibre has been degenerated by prosperity and soft living” and how Americans “lack the courage and manhood to meet disaster bravely, [and] hence, turn to their government for help.” He spoke on the theme of “regeneration by suffering.” Casement and Morse desired a nation of pioneer toughness — and the only way to achieve that, they thought, was through hardship. The “law of nature” according to Morse, “develops strong character and a

virile people by making them undergo hardships.” According to Morse and Casement, the American people needed a “period of suffering.”¹⁸³

In the same document, Morse also praised the fitter farmers. He lamented that the “false farm leaders . . . do not represent the sound views of their most intelligent followers.” He also pointed out that the 16 million people that voted against the New Deal “consists largely of our most substantial and useful citizens—creators of progress and real producers of basic wealth.”¹⁸⁴ Morse could have chosen other terms besides “most intelligent” or “useful” to illustrate his point, but these terms have a distinctly eugenic flavor to them.

Casement, Morse, and the FIC assumed the fittest farmers were the most efficient farmers. In March 1936, the FIC got close to proposing a national farm policy. One point held that “farmers should be responsible for efficient production methods resulting in low costs and a fair margin of profit over a period of years.” Another point averred that “the government should not be expected to compensate farmers who are unable to produce economically by reason of poor management, location on unproductive land or crop or livestock failures.”¹⁸⁵

In the end, the FIC failed to alter the farm vote, and Roosevelt’s unprecedented electoral victory did not usher in a communist revolution. Morse all but disbanded the FIC just days before the election, but he resurrected the organization for a brief time during FDR’s court packing debacle. This was when FDR tried to add justices to the Supreme Court to obtain rulings favorable to New Deal measures. Before he quit the FIC, however, Morse began organizing a new group called the American Rural Foundation, which would ostensibly encourage cooperation between city and country, but would also reduce manufacturing costs by way of reducing laborers wages so that farmers could afford manufactured goods. Casement returned to ranching and continued to oppose the New Deal albeit at the local level.

During Roosevelt's second term, Casement refined his thoughts on the New Deal and the Agricultural Adjustment Act. Branding himself a true progressive in contrast to the New Deal, Casement showed that he believed social Darwinism was a key component to progressivism. For him, true progressives sought "equity," which was not part of the natural law but was not prohibited by it either. By equity he meant equal opportunity. "Zealots" misled modern progressives, who had no concept of hard work due to their privileged upbringing and lack of "common sense." Zealots also misled modern progressives into viewing nature's plan as unjust. They thought they could bring about equity by contradicting nature. Furthermore, he claimed that "modern liberalism has departed so far from the methods and purposes of the original progressives that, were the dear old colonel with us today, the President, I'm sure, would be constrained to denounce him as the world's most dangerous and vociferous 'Tory.'" Essentially, Casement opposed FDR's welfare state because, in his view, it rewarded the lazy.¹⁸⁶

Casement further refined his reasons for opposing the AAA: it was against economic law, it contradicted nature, and it was against evolution. He thought humanity should always maximize production. Anyone denying this natural law "contradicted the scheme of creation and disregarded the immutalbe [sic] quality of human nature." No one, he stated, could "become richer by destroying wealth." He viewed price control as impossible and "in disregard of the law of supply and demand." The wealthy, by continuously producing in abundance, would raise the standard of living for the poor. However, he also recognized that the elite may not share its profit in the form of increased wages or employment. Nonetheless, he had faith that more and more of the elite would realize the benefits of enlightened self-interest.¹⁸⁷

The AAA contradicted nature, Casement explained, because "man is powerless to control the caprices of nature." Since nature contained so many variables, he wondered, how could the

state ever set quotas for produce? Of course, it is ironic that he opposed an attempt to control nature when the profitability of his stock farm relied on the continued rationalization of his operation. In other words, controlling nature is what he did as a farmer. He thought the crop reductions owed their success to the drought more than to the cooperative farmers.¹⁸⁸

According to Casement, the AAA opposed evolution in that it contributed to the survival of the inefficient. Claiming that only the least efficient farmers signed the AAA, he called non-complying farmers “real farmers” and complying farmers “incompetent.” According to Casement, 35 percent of the farmers produced 80 percent of the farm output in the 1920s. The lower 65 percent he regarded as lazy, ignorant, and impulsive. People like them, he thought, assumed debt during the boom years of WWI, trying to get rich quick, while real farmers carefully and efficiently moderated their economic growth. These same 65 percent of farmers asked for government assistance throughout the 1920s while he was actively promoting efficient agricultural methods. In conclusion, the AAA, according to Casement, rewarded the weak and lazy for their weakness and laziness.¹⁸⁹

Even though the ALL and the FIC ceased functioning after 1936, in the late 1930s and into the war years, Casement continued to oppose the New Deal and further deepened his eugenic thought. He lamented that social and industrial justice only led to “hopeless efforts to rehabilitate biological derelicts.” Much later, reminiscing about the FIC, he stated that they tried saving their “form of government.” He blamed the loss on “the majority of the people [who] are too moronic and debauched to want to be saved. They have no realization of their situation. Until they awaken in anguish nothing constructive can be done.” The terms “moronic” and “debauched” carried definite eugenic connotations. Casement’s idea of “saved” meant saved from government intervention in the economy. Even though he believed the country was

doomed, he still thought “it [would] take some time to destroy our freedom, our property and our lives.”¹⁹⁰

The development of Casement’s eugenic way of thinking is evident also in his address to the American National Live Stock Association in Fort Worth, Texas. Speaking about the American Quarter Horse, he conflated human and animal breeding. Referring to a rancher of “English berth [sic] and breeding,” he lauded horse and rider alike, stating that “almost equally with the great race of men who rode him this horse should share the glory of subduing the west to the uses of civilization.” Even though he referred to the Quarter horse, his use of the terms “blood” and “purity” had distinct eugenic connotations. Moreover, he stated that the Quarter horse Association should aim at the “preservation of the blood of the true Quarter horse in a maximum state of purity. Fortunately, the prepotency of that blood has so firmly fixed its dominant qualities in all true descendants of the strain that its presence is always unmistakable.” His idea of “blood” in reference to animals could just as easily apply to his idea of “real” farmers. *The Cattleman* magazine reprinted Casement’s address, but left out some passages that remained in Casement’s personal copy. In his original he stated, “may I point out that in horses, as in humans, character and personality are the foundations which underlie all exceptional ability. These are the outgrowth of heredity and environment.” He went on to insist that “the reason, like all truth, has a biologic basis.”¹⁹¹

Casement further conflated animal and human breeding in an interview with author Jennie Small Owen. Speaking about a family friend, Casement stated that “the Russel’s are one great old American family which has not run out.” Perhaps he alluded to the “purity” of their “blood.” Owen continued, stating that “Dan Casement, who has the good fortune to be well bred, believes that the effectiveness of any man may be traced, as with animals, back through

environment into the intricacies of his breeding. But he is only interested in the heredity of sound health and sound tendencies . . . Illustrious ancestors and pedigrees that have run out have no appeal to this cattleman who builds ideas into living flesh and blood.” According to Casement, in the science of breeding the same principles applied to humans as well as animals.¹⁹²

In an address he called “The Real Danger,” given to Army Officer Candidate School graduates at Fort Leavenworth, he offered a glimpse into how much his thinking had changed since his progressive days. Speaking of the New Deal, he stated “in quest of this chimera we misinterpreted and amended our constitution.” He explained that “the 16th amendment empowered government to destroy the freedom and initiative of the individual by forcibly confiscating the product of his labor and by suppressing the incentive for thrift, one of the basic virtues of a moral people.” According to Casement, then, by taking private property, the income tax weakened the American people. Furthermore, given his support for women’s suffrage during the progressive era, he stated that “it were better in my opinion if the 17th and 19th had never been passed.” The seventeenth amendment established the direct election of senators while the nineteenth gave women the right to vote. His opposition to the seventeenth amendment most likely stemmed from a distrust in the lower classes. He also reversed his opinion of prohibition, believing that the eighteenth amendment was a mistake as well. He claimed that it denied the people free will.

Conclusion

Progressive anti–New Dealer seems like a contradiction in terms, and yet this is exactly how Dan Casement thought of himself. In his mind, New Dealers were false progressives. He even sided with the “economic royalists” and believed that the New Deal was socialist or even

communist. During the Progressive era Casement supported many reforms such as conservation, women's suffrage, and organized labor's right to organize and bargain collectively. Even in the 1920s, when he advocated limited government, he considered himself a "progressive." He was somewhat progressive on race for his time. Yet, he agreed with evangelicals that America needed to return to the values of the small family farm such as self-reliance, thrift, and hard work.

Casement's evolution speaks to the discontinuity between Progressive era reforms and those of the New Deal. Couched in the language and principles of eugenics, his New Deal opposition sheds light on the nascent conservative movement. Interestingly, Casement's evolution also uncovers a connection between farm policy and eugenics.

Casement was most at home with Hoover's associationalism. As a rancher Casement was concerned with organizing the livestock industry, under private auspices, but perhaps aided by a dash of state support, to make it as efficient as possible for its continued profitability. In his quest for collective action in the livestock industry he opposed states' rights proponents, anticonservationists, as well as rugged individualists. Originally opposing the big meatpackers during the progressive era, he advocated cooperation with them after WWI. His experience in the War Industries Board convinced him to seek an associationalist arrangement in the livestock industry. Then with the coming of the New Deal, Casement feared that the AAA would destroy agriculture.

To Casement, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal inappropriately interfered in private property rights and thereby imperiled the survival of the nation and the character of its "best" people. Casement had primarily supported structural and social reforms, such as conservation and labor's right to form unions, and to a lesser degree moral reforms, during the Progressive era.

Increasingly concerned with the moral direction of the country after WWI, he now believed in the 1930s that stricter individual accountability along with eugenic inspired reforms were necessary to restore the country's republican virtue. The New Deal, according to Casement, inaugurated a governmental takeover of private property via taxes, price controls, and production controls that exhausted individual initiative, thereby weakening an already weakened populace—especially in the agricultural sector. To Casement, the emergence of a limited welfare state appeared to support the “weak.”

Casement's thinking revealed eugenically inspired thought. Even though he never referred to himself as a eugenicist, the science of eugenics allowed Casement to connect private property rights with human fitness. The unencumbered right to private property formed the environmental component while the “fit” individual assumed the characteristics of a Jeffersonian yeoman. Casement could have blamed social problems on the political economic system but instead he blamed the people. Toward the end of his life Casement held definite eugenic ideas. However those ideas had a long incubation period. By the 1930s, Casement employed the language and principles of eugenics to justify a political ideology.

Surprisingly Casement did not belong to any eugenic organizations. Many eugenicists developed their eugenic beliefs through their conservation work and/or through work on animal breeding. Casement was both a conservationist and a nationally renowned livestock breeder. Casement also shared with eugenicists an apprehension that society was degenerating.

In illustrating this argument, the first chapter showed Casement equally zealous in bringing order to the cattle industry and in reforming society with the help of the federal government. He supported women's suffrage, prohibition, child labor, and labor laws, and he

tirelessly promoted the Progressive Party. Primarily a structural reformer, he focused on securing private property in time and space. After WWI he looked to big business rather than the federal government for taking the lead in bringing order to society and making it more efficient.

The second chapter illustrated how Casement continued to trust big business and gravitate toward supporting moral reforms. The Red Scare only confirmed his belief that business—not government—was the best choice to lead the reform of society. He feared the degeneration of American character after WWI, especially in light of the beginnings of a revolution in morality also taking place. His solution was a return to nineteenth-century values of hard work, sobriety, and self-reliance—and his method was developing the “fittest” people. He supported limited government, extremely low taxes and absolutely no subsidies to anybody. His idea of fitness rested on character more than race as evidenced by his opposition to the Klan and his mild support for immigration restriction and segregation. For Casement, government assistance to farmers, even in the middle of the postwar farm recession, destroyed the moral fiber of the country. His solution was to replace “weak” farmers with “fitter” individuals. Scientific management, new technologies, and better methods could help farmers survive the recession. Casement continued to organize the livestock industry based on efficiency, collective action, and government partnership. Against any redistribution of wealth Casement believed the poor and unemployed should rely on voluntary charity.

Chapter three demonstrated that Casement’s increasing conservative views and action against Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, which, he insisted, inappropriately interfered in private property rights, imperiled the survival of the nation and the character of its “best” people. He joined like-minded organizations like the American Liberty League and the Farmers’ Independence Council of America. Considering himself a progressive well into FDR’s second

term, he began to alter some of those beliefs by the 1930s. For instance, he opposed women's suffrage, he believed the Constitution should never be amended, and he began advocating negative eugenics as well as positive.

Dan Casement's political trajectory from a progressive reformer to a committed opponent of the New Deal reveals a discontinuity between progressive era reforms and those of the New Deal. Thus Dan Casement's life sheds new light on the nature of American liberalism. This study suggests that the New Deal served as a break with progressive reform tradition.

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¹³⁴ Sheldon Richman, “A Matter of Degree, not Principle: The Founding of the American Liberty League,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 6 (Spring 1982): 145–67; Frederick Rudolph, “The American Liberty League, 1934–1940,” *American Historical Review* 56 (Oct. 1950): 9–33; Robert E. Jakoubek, “A Jeffersonian's Dissent: John W. Davis and the Campaign of 1936,” *West Virginia History* 35 (1974): 145–153.

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¹³⁶ Rudolph, “The American Liberty League.”

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¹³⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 23.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴¹ Carey, James C. The Farmers' Independence Council of America, 1935–1938,” *Agricultural History* 35 (Apr. 1961): 71

¹⁴² Walter Chappell to Stanley Morse, 21 June 1935, Casement Papers; Carey, “The Farmers’ Independence Council;” While Carey marvelously details the connection between the ALL and

the FIC, he never mentioned the letter exchange between Chappell and Morse which shows Morse was trying to start a farm organization five months prior to Carey's earliest concrete date.

¹⁴³ Jack Bass and Marilyn W. Thompson, *Ol' Strom: An Unauthorized Biography of Strom Thurmond*, (Atlanta, Ga.: Longstreet, 1998), 178.

¹⁴⁴ Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948–1968*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004). Berlet and Lyons note that the ALL may have been involved in planning a coup d'etat against FDR in: Chip Berlet & Matthew Lyons, *Right Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁵ W. I. Drummond to Casement, 6 May 1935, Casement Papers.

¹⁴⁶ Morse to Casement, 28 May 1935, Casement Papers. Carey mentions that the FIC “made little effort to work with older established farm movements.” This exchange with Drummond highlights a specific example. Drummond to Casement, 19 May 1935; Drummond to Casement, 18 May 1935, Casement Papers.

¹⁴⁷ Farmers’ Independence Council of America, Declaration of Principles, Casement Papers. The American Farm Congress, Declaration of Principles, Casement Papers.

¹⁴⁸ Drummond to Casement, 19 May 1935, Casement Papers.

¹⁴⁹ Morse to Dr. C. W. Burkett former director of the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station, 15 June 1935, Casement Papers.

¹⁵⁰ Morse to Casement and others, 22 June 1935, Casement Papers.

¹⁵¹ Morse to Dr. C. W. Burkett, former director of the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station, 15 June 1935, Casement Papers.

¹⁵² Morse to Chappell, 16 June 1935, Casement Papers.

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- ¹⁵³ Casement to William Woods, 22 July 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁵⁴ Morse to Casement, 18 July 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁵⁵ Morse to Casement, 24 July 1935; Drummond to Casement, 18 May 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁵⁶ Morse to Casement 5 August 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁵⁷ Morse to Casement, 15 June 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁵⁸ Morse to Casement, 5 August 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁵⁹ Morse to Dr. C. W. Burkett, former director of the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station, 15 June 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁶⁰ Morse to Casement, 24 July 1935, Casement Papers. Although his full name is not used in FIC correspondence, historian James C. Carey identified “Woods” as William Whitfield Woods, President of the Institute of American Meatpackers in Chicago.
- ¹⁶¹ Morse to Casement, 10 July 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁶² Theodore Saloutos, *The American Farmer and the New Deal*, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982), 130–131.
- ¹⁶³ FIC Statement of Principles, 14 August 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁶⁴ Morse to Casement 16 September 1935; Morse to Casement 30 September 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁶⁵ Morse to Casement, 12 August 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁶⁶ Morse to Casement, 13 November 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁶⁷ “Suggestions Outlining a Constructive Agricultural Platform,” 16 September 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁶⁸ Saloutos, *The American Farmer and the New Deal*, 136; Morse to Casement, 8 January 1936, Casement Papers.

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- ¹⁶⁹ “Our Job,” 9 January 1936, Casement Papers.
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- ¹⁷¹ Morse to Casement, 8 February 1936, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁷² “Our Job,” 9 January 1936, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁷³ *A Kansas Farmer Surveys the National Scene*, no date probably written around 1935, Casement Papers; *The Grass that Belongs to us All*, April 1911, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁷⁴ Rudolph, “The American Liberty League.”
- ¹⁷⁵ Statement of FIC to farmers, summer 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Pig Politics*, 1935, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Corn-Fed Philosophy*, no date, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁷⁸ Morse to Casement, Memo, 14 February 1936, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁷⁹ Morse to Casement, 25 February 1936, Casement Papers.
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- ¹⁸¹ FIC letter to members, 20 October 1936, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁸² Lee E. Palmer, executive Vice President FIC, to Morse, 2 March 1936, Casement Papers.
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- ¹⁸⁶ *Corn-Fed Philosophy*, 1938, Casement Papers.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
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¹⁹¹ Dan Casement, "The Quarter Horse," *The Cattleman* (September 1942): 29–33; "The Quarter Horse," Casement Papers.

¹⁹² Jennie Small Owen, "Kansas Folks Worth Knowing: Dan Casement," *Kansas Teacher* (June 1939).