THE GREAT WAR AND THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF PROGRESSIVE DREAMS,
1912-1924

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By

Margaret E. Wagner, B.A.

Georgetown University
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Margaret E. Wagner, B.A.

MALS Mentor: Michael Wall, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

United States participation in the Great War of 1914-1918 constituted a defining moment in the country’s progress toward becoming a major world power. At the same time, members of the multi-faceted Progressive movement were seeking solutions for a host of bitter domestic problems resulting principally from the country’s rapid transformation from an agricultural nation to a potent industrial/economic power. By the onset of the conflict in Europe, the work of Progressive reformers had resulted in the creation of the Progressive Party as well as some hallmark domestic reforms, from the direct election of U.S. senators to limited regulation of the era’s burgeoning, and theretofore unrestrained business conglomerates. Some Progressive leaders, most notably Senator Robert M. La Follette, Sr. (R-WI), viewed U.S. involvement in the war as a direct assault on overarching Progressive aspirations for a more open and equitable American democracy. Others, including the publishers of the New Republic magazine and W. E. B. Du Bois of the recently established National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), believed that involvement in the war could transform U.S. society in a manner commensurate with this overarching Progressive dream.

Drawing from published works on the Progressive era and its major Progressive figures, particularly the eloquent but often uncompromising La Follette, this paper briefly
describes the stormy U.S. domestic atmosphere leading up to the war and the major elements of what it defines as “Progressive dreams.” Using these and other published sources, including contemporary newspaper accounts, as well as some original source material, it moves on to describe initial Progressive reactions to what is known now as World War I; the yawning divide that grew to separate what might be termed “purist” Progressives such as La Follette from those of a more conservative and/or opportunistic bent after the United States became a Great War combatant; and, finally, the impact of the war and the new divisions it created on a Progressive movement already strained by frictions among its usually complementary, but sometimes contentious elements.

What emerges is a chiaroscuro socio-political portrait of America in the early twentieth century, a portrait that reveals haunting similarities with the early twenty-first-century United States. Overtaken, then subsumed by an unprecedented worldwide military-political struggle, the U.S. Progressive movement did not suffer wholesale defeat. Yet its forward momentum suffered a blow from which it has never recovered, despite Progressivism’s brief resurgence in the New Deal programs of the troubled 1930s.
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INTRODUCTION: PROGRESSIVISM BEFORE 1912

"Progressive," "Progressivism," and the "Progressive movement" are deceptively simple terms that have tended to generate a confusion of definitions from the Progressive era to the present.¹ In 1961, noted scholar and American Studies specialist Louis Filler was moved to ask, "What does Progressivism mean to anybody—what does it suggest?"² The question appeared in an article in which Filler seemed most concerned with the increasing lack of appreciation for the importance of history in general.³ Yet it is true that the term Progressivism provokes a variety of responses—an apt reflection of its inherently complex nature. Historian Alan Brinkley wrote:

Not even those who called themselves progressives could always agree on what the word "progressive" really meant. Indeed, more than one historian has suggested that the word ultimately came to mean so many different things to so many different people that it ceased to mean anything at all. Yet if progressivism was a phenomenon of great scope and diversity, it was also one that rested on an identifiable set of central assumptions. It was, first, an optimistic vision. Progressives believed, as their name implies, in the idea of progress. . . . But progressives believed, too, that growth and progress could not continue to occur recklessly, as they had in the late nineteenth century. . . . Purposeful human intervention was necessary to solve the nation's problems. Progressives did not always agree on the form that intervention should take, but most believed that government should play an important role in the process.⁴

Some historians seem to regard Progressivism with a jaundiced eye.

"Progressivism demanded a social transformation that remains at once profoundly impressive and profoundly disturbing a century later," writes historian Michael McGerr. He goes on to define, in absolutist terms, "four quintessential progressive battles: to change other people; to end class conflict; to control big business; and to segregate society."⁵ Henry F. May tempers his assessment of the aims of American Progressives.
Heavily influenced by the Social Gospel, which accepted evolution, including economic and social progress, as part of God’s plan, American Progressives found evil, May declared:

. . . in *extreme* inequality, political *corruption*, and *ruthless* power. . . . The tubercular nine-year-old in the southern cotton mill, the garment worker burned to death in the factory fire were quite real and provided plenty of scope for indignation. Such things, to the American middle class, were horrifying in a way in which Chinese famines or, for that matter, the greater horrors of the European mid-twentieth century could never be. When the muckrakers brought them to light, cruelty and misery seemed a disgrace to America and the twentieth century. They were the product not of any innate evil either in human nature or modern society, but of the *corrupt power of a few.* [emphases added]⁶

Historian Alan Dawley underlines the pioneering roles of those still aspiring to the middle class in the development of Progressive social reforms before the turn of the twentieth century. Dawley writes:

In the absence of much in the way of social welfare the front line of defense against the rampant insecurity of the market was . . . criss-crossing networks of mutual support, which included mutual benefit clubs, sickness and burial societies, trade unions, and neighborhood associations. Together these networks offset unemployment, injury, and low wages by redistributing whatever meager resources clung to the grass roots.⁷

Vincent P. De Santis describes Progressivism without singling out any societal stratum. De Santis observes:

The Progressive movement is a major period in the history of American reform because it was such a broad response of the American people to the many problems created by the industrialization and urbanization of the country in the post-Civil War years. These problems involved the breakdown of responsible representative government in cities and states, the spread of slums, crime, and poverty in the large cities, the exploitation of women and children, the growth of industrial and financial concentration, and the emergence of trusts and monopolies in railroads, industries, and banking interests that vitally affected the lives of the people and yet were beyond their control.⁸
Such broad societal problems almost inevitably gave birth to a Progressive movement that was, in reality, many movements in one. "The complexity of the progressive movement is exacerbated by the diversity of programs it encompassed," a biographer of quintessential American Progressive Robert M. La Follette\(^9\) has written. "The spectrum of progressives ranged from those dedicated to only one pet reform (woman suffrage, for example, or conservation of natural resources) to those pressing strenuously for a full slate of reforms." La Follette, himself, the biographer reports, believed the purpose of this complex movement was simply, yet sweepingly, "to restore popular sovereignty, via modification and reform, wherever necessary including in the courts, statutes, and even the Constitution."\(^{10}\)

La Follette directed his energies primarily toward restoring popular sovereignty to the people of Wisconsin and, while in the U.S. Senate, the people of the United States. Yet he and most other American Progressives did not view the United States as an entity untouched by, or without influence upon, the rest of the world. They fully recognized that Progressivism was never a solely American phenomenon. In fact, the United States was something of a late-comer to an international movement that began in Europe. The *Oxford English Dictionary* places the first use of the term "progressive" in Britain in the 1890s. While a current website, [www.progressiveliving.org](http://www.progressiveliving.org), defines Progressivism as "the *specifically American* development of liberalism and populism that seeks social justice above all else" [emphasis in the original],\(^{11}\) Alan Dawley emphasizes "the international dimensions of this [Progressive] effort. In a world knit together by far-flung markets and the international state system," Dawley writes, "Progressives encountered social problems that crossed national boundaries, and their solutions did the same."\(^{12}\)
What is now called “globalization” has been an ongoing process since the first traders left their own communities in search of foreign markets. The industrial revolution speeded the process, and by the turn of the twentieth century international trade, with the apparent intertwining of national interests, was booming. In fact, it was booming so loudly that many turn-of-the-century Progressives believed—optimistically and, viewed with 20-20 hindsight, ironically—that it was drumming out the impulse and/or the necessity for nations to wage war.\textsuperscript{13} A movement to settle international disputes through arbitration had many subscribers, and agreements reached by arbitration seemed to indicate that this was the wave of the future.\textsuperscript{14} Perhaps this fed the optimism that historians such as Brinkley cite as one characteristic of the Progressive movement. If arbitration could end war, could not (usually) peaceful social movements ameliorate the plethora of problems that attended industrialization and globalization? Globalization, itself, and the relative ease of travel in the modern era, also would be of help. As Progressives of many nations sought to address their domestic social problems, they often looked far beyond their own borders in their search for solutions.

By 1912, an increasing number of socially conscious Americans had been investigating European social programs for nearly two decades. Before 1900, Americans, some of whom would return and become influential in the U.S. Progressive movement, had traveled for post-graduate study to Germany, where, in the early 1890s, even Germany’s militaristic emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, had briefly experimented with a “social monarchy,” actively participating in the mediation of social questions.\textsuperscript{15} By mid-decade, the kaiser’s attentions had turned to the imperial and military concerns that were a less constructive hallmark of the age. Yet the German university system continued to
provide a provoking atmosphere for many American post-graduate students who would
emerge as Progressive leaders.\textsuperscript{16} Daniel T. Rogers reports:

In Berlin, where sooner or later, the vast majority ended up, Mary
Kingsbury in 1895 and 1896 found herself in the middle of a circle of
American students that included Walter Weyl (who would be one of the
cofounders of the New Republic), Emily Greene Balch (later a professor of
economics at Wellesley and a prominent figure in the international
women’s networks), Robert A. Woods (now of the South End Settlement
in Boston), and Franklin H. Dixon (soon to become a Dartmouth professor
and expert on railway legislation).\textsuperscript{17}

Social policies adopted by heavily industrialized Britain and its faraway colony\textsuperscript{18}
of New Zealand (the latter considered “a showcase of progressive politics in the 1890s)\textsuperscript{19}
also influenced American Progressives. Jane Addams, for example, who would establish
Chicago’s Hull House in 1889, visited Britain’s influential Toynbee Hall settlement
house in 1887, 1888, and 1889. Many other U.S. Progressives made similar pilgrimages,
either on their own recognizances or while conducting official studies, as in the case of
Walter Weyl, who investigated employment conditions of European railroads for the U.S.
Department of Labor. Groups of Americans conducted studies of Progressive European
programs, including delegations from the American Federation of Labor, the National
Association of Manufacturers, the Bureau of Municipal Research, and several state
governments.\textsuperscript{20}

Traffic was not just in one direction. Britons, particularly, visited the United
States, some of them looking in on Hull House or staying at the Henry Street settlement
in New York.\textsuperscript{21} In addition, socially concerned citizens from many nations began to
come together in a variety of international conferences on topics from labor relations to
child welfare, women’s rights to city planning. Americans were among those in
attendance—though not, in the first decade of the twentieth century, in overwhelming numbers. Daniel T. Rogers notes:

Ten Americans were reported as attending the international Congress on Unemployment in Paris in 1910; 28 turned up in Vienna that same summer for the International Housing Congress. The International Social Insurance Congress would have held its meeting in New York in 1915 (the first international gathering of its sort in the United States) had the First World War not intervened.  

Such international conferences were a phenomenon of the Progressive era, as were the publications and reports they generated. Other Progressive publications, which in the United States included Paul Kellogg’s informative journal The Survey (formerly Charities and the Commons), amassed and published a huge amount of information on a wide variety of social problems and their possible solutions. Alan Dawley observes:

American reform journals . . . sent forth the most extraordinary outpouring of reform literature since the antebellum [pre-U.S. Civil War] period, keeping tabs on child labor in southern textile mills and the hazards of Appalachian coal mining, while also tracing the latest developments in health insurance in Germany, public housing in Glasgow, and minimum wages in Australia.

Louis Filler agreed with this assessment. “What was remarkable about the reform era, while it lasted, was the public hunger for information, its willingness to welcome almost any point of view,” he wrote in the early 1960s. Filler continued:

Here was true sophistication. Remember that the great muckraking exposés appeared in popular magazines, not in esoteric publications supported by a small clique or subsidy. True, these popular publications had their individual programs, and were limited by the preferences of particular editors and interests. But, seen together, they spoke for an amazingly wide spectrum of opinion to an even more amazingly large percentage of the general population. [emphasis in the original]

While the United States fully participated in this great outpouring of information, the American hunger to read and produce reports on conditions and programs both at
home and abroad did not signify that the United States was in the vanguard of the
international Progressive movement. Despite the fact that a number of American
Progressive efforts—particularly in such areas as woman suffrage, public primary
education, juvenile justice, and democracy—had lasting influences on European, and
some Asian Progressives, in the first decade of the twentieth century the United States
was regarded by many disappointed Progressives, both overseas and at home, as
something of a backward nation when it came to protecting the welfare of its rapidly
increasing population. Henry F. May reports:

A long succession of settlement workers and social investigators had
found, in America, kinds of poverty that could not easily be defended as
desirable incentives to effort. In 1904 [American sociologist and
settlement worker] Robert Hunter had found ten million Americans [out of
a population of just over 76 million] living below the level of subsistence.
Most wage-earners lived so close to the poverty line that they could be
pushed over it at any moment by illness or by industrial accident, in which
America led the world. [emphases added]

Beneath its enticing exterior, America, the agricultural and industrial wunderkind
of the Western World, continued to hide too much distress, too many powerless people
living on the edge of disaster—something evident not only to American settlement
workers and muckraking journalists of the time but also to inquisitive Progressive visitors
from abroad. During a long tour of the United States in 1911-1912, British Progressive
scholar Alfred Zimmern had been impressed by such events as the mass protest meeting
held in commemoration of the 146 people killed in the March 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist
Company fire, by observing recent-immigrant students in public schools, and by the
Progressive agenda in forward-looking Wisconsin. Yet more time and closer examination
left him distressed with the “raw unmitigated capitalism” that he found in the country,
and the many unhappy effects of this unrestrained laissez-faire economic system—effects
that included a huge income disparity between the captains of American industry, who profited from low-cost labor, and the men, women, and children who labored in their factories. Income disparity was not, of course, unknown in Great Britain—or almost any other country. Yet Zimmern saw too little will in America to narrow the appallingly wide income gap and far too little progress toward tempering America’s aggressive capitalist system and solving the problems it was creating. “I have long ago given up looking at America as the land of progress,” he wrote toward the end of his tour. “The only question left in my mind is how many years it’s behind England.” E. R. Pease of Britain’s socialist Fabian society ventured a broad-scale answer to that question: “in the things that pertain to man as a social and intellectual being, America is decades, if not centuries, behind us.” To American Progressives who agreed with this assessment, this was an embarrassment—and a blow to American pride.

American Progressivism was exceptional in that it embraced American exceptionalism, that belief, or attitude, first expressed by John Winthrop on board ship in 1630 when he urged his fellow Puritan passengers to make of their colony in the New World a shining example, a “city upon a hill,” to which the corrupt Old World would look for inspiration. Winthrop’s declaration, in that shipboard address, that “The eyes of all people are upon us,” has reverberated through almost four centuries of American history. It was blazingly present in a speech former president Theodore Roosevelt gave on August 31, 1910, in Osawatomie, Kansas. Most of the speech was devoted to outlining his own version of Progressive tenets that would become known, during his run for a third presidential term as the candidate of the Progressive Party, as the “New Nationalism” (“I stand for the square deal,” Roosevelt announced). However, the
combative Republican also spoke of America’s exceptional global role. Roosevelt declared:

... the history of America is now the central feature of the history of the world; for the world has set its face hopefully toward our democracy; and O my fellow citizens, each one of you carries on your shoulders not only the burden of doing well for the sake of your own country, but the burden of doing well and of seeing that this nation does well for the sake of mankind.34

Unfortunately, as evidenced by the nation’s multiple social problems, doing well did not necessarily go hand-in-hand with doing good. Avarice and the will to power were too rarely mitigated by a regard for the workers laboring in the nation’s mines and factories or for the overall public weal. Yet these leaders of the New World were supposed to know better. As then dean of American letters William Dean Howells wrote in 1912, a statement quoted at a banquet in his honor: “When our country is wrong she is worse than other countries when they are wrong, because she has more light than other countries, and we ought somehow to make her feel that we are sorry and ashamed for her.”35

While most American Progressives were not sorry or ashamed for the United States, almost all were outraged by America’s burgeoning social problems, which, most believed, were generated principally by economic injustice exacerbated by the rise of monopolistic business conglomerates popularly known as “trusts.” Many outraged Progressives also were frustrated by the country’s laggardness in addressing these problems.

Among the American Progressives stung by their country’s status as a laggard nation in the realm of social progress was Charles McCarthey of Wisconsin. A leading Progressive state, Wisconsin, under Governor Robert M. La Follette, had begun
implementing, from 1901 to 1906, the hallmark series of Progressive initiatives collectively known as the Wisconsin Idea, from which other Progressive state governments, and, as the movement spread, Progressives in the national government, took inspiration. At the heart of the Wisconsin Idea, which “emphasized cooperation between government, the university, and the private sector,” was the determination “to make the political machinery more directly responsive to the popular will, to promote equal rights over special privilege.” Thus, the Idea encompassed such initiatives as establishing the direct primary, passing a Corrupt Practices Act (aimed at restricting special-interest financial contributions to political parties), requiring the registration of lobbyists, developing a system of “equal and just taxation,” regulating utilities, protecting the right of working people to join unions, passing legislation aimed at protecting health and safety, and developing a sound system of general education. McCarthy’s important supporting role in the development of the Wisconsin Idea was to provide the detailed information on which La Follette insisted that regulation of business be based. In 1912, after returning from a fact-finding trip to Europe, McCarthy sounded a note of despair about the relatively slow social progress in the United States as a whole in a work he published about the Wisconsin Idea. He wrote:

Shall we always . . . “stand by the roadside and see the procession go by?” Shall we always hear the returning travelers’ tales of the improvements throughout the world with a provincial and smug spirit and be foolish enough to believe that we can learn nothing, while right in our midst are problems which have confronted every nation at some time in its history?

In the minds of La Follette and other so-called “insurgent” Republicans in Congress (those impatient with the policies of then U.S. president William Howard Taft, whom Progressives deemed too timid and conservative) the answer was a resounding
“No!” Taft’s generally conservative domestic polices (which, nevertheless, did include a number of Progressive measures\textsuperscript{39} ) were not the only problem, as far as La Follette was concerned. A particular element in the Taft administration’s international relations led the Wisconsin senator to begin reexamining his support for the expansive U.S. foreign policy inherent in such events as the 1898 Spanish-American War, which La Follette had supported.\textsuperscript{40}

Under Taft, and his diminutive corporate-lawyer secretary of state Philander Knox, the United States had adopted a policy popularly (or unpopularly, in La Follette’s case) known as “dollar diplomacy,” which the Taft administration applied principally in the Western Hemisphere as a means of insuring stability and excluding foreign influence. (Taft also tried dollar diplomacy in Liberia and East Asia, with generally unproductive results.) Countries that did not accede to what amounted to the United States assuming control of their financial infrastructure were often subjected to behind-the-scenes subversion or overt military intervention (as in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua).\textsuperscript{41}

Ruminating over dollar diplomacy from his catbird seat in the U.S. Senate, La Follette began to believe that not only was unrestrained U.S. big business a major source of domestic social problems, it unhappily dominated U.S. foreign affairs as well—to the detriment of the true interests, and reputation, of the United States. La Follette’s biographer reports:

The imperialism he had previously endorsed as the key to spreading democracy he now saw as exploitative of less economically developed nations, furthering the excess profits and powers of American multinational corporations. Dollar Diplomacy, La Follette charged, “was crude, sordid, blighting to international amity and accord,” designed to facilitate the “flow without interruption [of other countries’ wealth] into the coffers of Wall Street,” bringing “our scheme of government into disrepute everywhere in the world.”\textsuperscript{42}
La Follette's turn away from what he saw as a decidedly undemocratic, aggressively business-oriented foreign policy—one that exploited, rather than encouraged the development of "backward" nations—would later set him painfully apart from the majority of U.S. Progressives, who often argued, as Padraic C. Kennedy notes, that while "the employment of American capital abroad would benefit banking and industrial concerns . . . the development of foreign markets would lead to increased trade, higher employment, and a generally improved standard of living for the American people." In 1911, however, he was the leader of a group of Republicans whose insurgency was tied more prominently to objections over the Taft administration's domestic policies. On January 21 of that year, after having spent part of the winter stumpng through the Midwest rallying supporters to the cause of government reform, La Follette announced the formation of the National Progressive Republican League (NPRL). The result of meetings between La Follette and fellow insurgent senators Jonathan Bourne of Oregon and Joseph Bristow of Kansas, the NPRL had a charter membership that included the brilliant Progressive attorney Louis Brandeis and such leading Progressive state governors as Hiram Johnson of California and Francis McGovern of Wisconsin—but with La Follette decidedly the leading light. The new organization expressed its devotion to popular government in the following five published goals:

The election of United States Senators by direct vote of the people

Direct primaries for the nomination of elective officials

The direct election of delegates to national conventions with opportunity for the voter to express his choice for President and Vice-President

Amendment to state constitutions providing for the Initiative, Referendum and Recall
A thoroughgoing corrupt practices act

These principles were crucially important because, like most Progressives, La Follette and the members of NPRL looked toward government (municipal, state, and national) as the principle instrument of social reform. Governments of, by, and for special interests, however, would not be instruments for the public good. Thus, government reform and expansion of democracy (through, for example, the direct election of U.S. senators and achieving woman suffrage) had been major focuses of Progressive action since before the turn of the century. If government was to be relied upon to regulate business practices, destroy or restrain the trusts, and ameliorate the nation’s many social problems, it must be responsive to the needs and the will of the majority of the people. (The better educated and more widely read the electorate the better; hence the Progressive emphasis upon improving education.)

With the assistance of muckrakers such as Lincoln Steffens, whose 1904 book *Shame of the Cities* shone a revealing light on the corrupt practices of municipal political machines, much progress had been made toward state and municipal government reform. In some cities, Progressive pressure for reform became so heavy that political bosses decided to adapt so that their machine, and their own power, would not die. One example was New York’s venerable and politically ruthless Tammany Hall. Alan Brinkley reports:

Its astute leader, Charles Francis Murphy, began in the early years of the century to fuse the techniques of boss rule with some of the concerns of social reformers. Murphy did nothing to challenge the fundamental workings of Tammany Hall. But Tammany began to take an increased interest in state and national politics, which it had traditionally scorned; and it used its political power on behalf of legislation to improve working
conditions, protect child laborers, and eliminate the worst abuses of the industrial economy.⁴⁶

After the terrible 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, for example (see endnote 28), Tammany was among the groups that pressured the state to appoint an investigative committee, and two Tammany-backed state legislators, Robert F. Wagner and Alfred E. Smith, themselves sprung from laboring backgrounds, helped push the resulting reforms through.⁴⁷

Other municipal and state reforms included the development of city commissions (the first instituted in Galveston, Texas, in 1900, after the incumbent government proved incapable of dealing with the after-effects of a hurricane, tidal wave, and flood); the hiring of nonpolitical city managers (by 1923, more than three hundred cities were manager-run); and city ownership of utilities.⁴⁸ By the time La Follette and the insurgents established the NPRL, Progressivism, with its many elements and interests, was a force to be reckoned with in the United States—although it should be noted that its impact was mitigated by the movement’s lack of unity. Moreover, its programs were concentrated overwhelmingly on improving the lives of white Americans.

“Despite some achievements in civil rights, including the formation of the flagship National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,” Alan Dawley has written, “white progressives fell woefully short in pursuing racial equality.”⁴⁹ Other historians—and history, itself—agree with this appraisal. “One social question that received relatively little attention from white progressives was race,” writes Alan Brinkley.⁵⁰ Vincent De Santis, however, goes too far in apparently condemning all white Progressives for wholly disregarding, if not actively working against, the welfare of their black fellow citizens.
The progressive belief that all were capable of more participation in politics and worthy of a fuller share of the economic life of the country did not extend to African Americans. While progressives strove to purify politics and to renew and modernize the structures of government, they allowed African Americans to be eliminated from politics and to be denied the right to vote. They regarded them as ‘a permanent clot in the social bloodstream’ of the country. Instead of attempting to elevate them, progressives pushed them farther downward. They maintained that blacks had been given their chance and had failed. Hence they must be left to the devices of the dominant race in the South.51

This may describe the attitude of many, perhaps even most, middle- and upper-class white Progressives, especially in the South, Woodrow Wilson’s native region. Yet a number of white Progressives did join with black activists to promote civil rights for people of color. The history of the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) provides a case in point. This hallmark American civil rights organization was formed in 1909, partially in reaction to a vicious 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois, during which two black men were lynched, some three thousand black people were displaced, and the black section of the city was destroyed—a bitter surge of violence precipitated by a white woman’s false accusation of rape against a black handyman.52 The NAACP’s own history webpage notes:

Appalled at the violence that was committed against blacks, a group of white liberals that included Mary White Ovington and Oswald Garrison Villard, both the descendants of abolitionists, William English Walling and Dr. Henry Moscowitz issued a call for a meeting to discuss racial justice. Some 60 people, seven of whom were African American (including W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell), signed the call, which was released on the centennial of Lincoln’s birth.

This and other civil rights activity generally did take place outside mainstream local, state, and national political areas where Progressives were concentrating much of their attention. Yet there were exceptions among government figures who would later be characterized as Progressives. As president (September 1901-March 1909). Theodore Roosevelt had made some significant gestures in support of African Americans—though one of those gestures, actually dining with Booker T. Washington at the White House in 1901, raised a storm of protest from enraged white citizens that Roosevelt never forgot.54 Robert La Follette promoted civil rights for African Americans—and also fought anti-Semitism and discrimination against Asian Americans—from his early service in the U.S. House of Representatives (1885-1890), where, for example, he supported the unsuccessful Lodge Force Bill that sought to protect black voting rights, through his entire tenure in the U.S. Senate (1906-1925), where, among other measures, he supported a 1924 federal anti-lynching law. “We are one people,” he told the graduating class of Howard University Law School in 1886, “one by truth, one almost by blood.”55

It is true, however, that, in 1886 and in 1911, that was very much a minority opinion among white Americans, including white Progressives. The apex of the U.S. Progressive movement—which, for purposes of this paper, is defined as occurring between the elections of 1912 and 1924, when Progressive Party candidates participated in U.S. presidential elections—was permeated by both sanctioned and unsanctioned racial discrimination and pocked with lynchings and race riots.

The 1912-1924 period was scarred by much other violence as well: government forces joined with business management to forcefully end labor strikes, political activists and wartime saboteurs exploded bombs, police pulled suffragettes off the streets and
shoved them into prisons, government-sanctioned vigilantes attacked those suspected of wartime disloyalty or of shirking their military obligations and, later, assaulted suspected communists—and this was only at home. From the outbreak of the first Balkan War in 1912 to U.S. intervention in Honduras in 1924 during a civil conflict in that country—and especially during the stunningly destructive years of the First World War—the Progressive era was plagued by bloody international conflicts that cast a funereal pall over (though they did not kill) hopes for enduring world peace through arbitration.

Very little of this could be foreseen at the end of 1911, as Robert La Follette and his fellow insurgents of the NPRL planned for the 1912 presidential election; Teddy Roosevelt publicly denied interest in another run for the White House while, privately, he grew closer to running; and Woodrow Wilson, perhaps inspired by his experiences attempting reforms at Princeton, completed his near u-turn from his previous political conservatism and established Progressive credentials as governor of New Jersey. Remedying injustices, avoiding serious convulsions at home by instituting Progressive reforms, and divorcing Taft from the presidency preoccupied these pivotal political figures. Of the three, only former president Roosevelt also was deeply concerned with foreign affairs. In fact, he had become forcefully aware, during a recent prolonged tour of Europe that included conversations with many of its important political figures, of the building tensions that were all too likely to explode, sooner or later, into war.56

Perhaps chiefly for that reason, Roosevelt was retreating from his previous sporadic embrace of arbitration treaties. He looked out across the dangerous world and saw a future in which the United States would become the “enforcer of world peace”—with diplomacy, if possible, but with the “big stick” of military force if not.
President Taft, meanwhile, whom Roosevelt had once strongly supported, had been causing Roosevelt to gnash his teeth for many reasons during his term in the White House. Taft seemed to be bent on “signing away [America’s] strategic independence” with a wholesale reliance on arbitration, as indicated by his statement in the September 1911 issue of The Christian Herald: “I yield to no one in my love of peace, in my hatred of war, and in my earnest desire to avoid war. If I have my way and am able to secure the assent of other powers, I shall submit to the Senate arbitration treaties broader in their terms than any that body has heretofore ratified.”

Roosevelt’s own character leaned heavily toward a fondness for militarism and war (and toward privately dubbing men who shrank from things military as “aunties,” “sublimated sweetbreads,” and “the male shrieking sisterhood of Carnegies”). Yet, ever the politician and with one eye increasingly fixed on another term on the White House, publicly he made a judicious response to Taft—and to all others, including Wilson, who were indicating their belief in arbitrating the way to a world without war. The response took the form of an editorial, “The Peace of Righteousness,” that appeared in Outlook the same month as Taft’s endorsement of arbitration. Roosevelt declared:

I sincerely believe in the principle of arbitration... but I believe that the effort to apply it where it is not practicable cannot do good and may do serious harm. Confused thinking and a willingness to substitute words for thought, even though inspired by an entirely amiable sentimentality, do not tend toward sound action.  

Though addressing foreign policy, Roosevelt’s words could easily have applied as well to the drive for social change at home, where groups would intermittently abandon negotiation and political maneuvering to demonstrate in streets, outside mines, and in factory yards during the apex Progressive years—closely watched and sometimes
assaulted by police and hired enforcers. Expanding American democracy at home and expanding American economic and political influence abroad were both to become Progressive aims in the years between 1912 and 1924, and each goal was to produce friction between elements of the Progressive movement. At the end of 1911, however, Progressives seemed to evidence a great unity of purpose, having infiltrated both major political parties and set the country well on its way to achieving some fundamental Progressive goals. Even the contention in the Republican Party seemed a positive sign, as Progressives Roosevelt and La Follette drew up plans to wrest the party of Abraham Lincoln from what they believed was the too-business-oriented Old Guard and present a more democratic face to the American electorate in the 1912 presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, Democrats were searching for a presidential candidate with a less radical, yet still Progressive reputation than their previous three-times-unsuccessful candidate William Jennings Bryan. With the Republicans engaged in internecine squabbling, 1912 might be a Democratic year. At the same time, an increasing number of people were looking to the American Socialist Party and its principled leader Eugene V. Debs to bring about the major changes that Progressives of all stripes believed necessary to maintain and nurture the American Dream.
THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT 1912-AUGUST 1914

“April is the cruelest month,” Progressive-era poet T. S. Eliot wrote in his 1922 poem “The Wasteland.” In 1912, however, February proved to be the cruelest month for Robert La Follette. In the year since founding the National Progressive Republican League (NPRL), La Follette had planned and garnered support for wresting the Republican presidential nomination away from William Howard Taft and his Old Guard supporters and leading the party, and the country, into an era of expanding democracy and social reforms. He had formally declared his candidacy on June 17, 1911, and was subsequently endorsed by Republican Progressives at their first national meeting in Chicago on October 16.¹

Short of stature but filled with lofty ideals that had been only somewhat tempered by his long experience in state and national politics, La Follette was an arresting combination of everyman humility and strong ego that manifested as an air of moral superiority; stoic determination and nervous energy that sometimes resulted in overwork followed by physical collapse. His drive and his oratorical skills had become legendary as had (at least among Progressives) his dedication to a more inclusive democracy and more equal opportunities for all citizens. Yet along with his reputation as a radical among more conservative Progressives and just plain conservative voters, he had been haunted all year by the specter of his very popular fellow Republican Teddy Roosevelt, who seemed to be supporting La Follette’s quest but whom La Follette did not trust—perhaps in this case for good reason. For Roosevelt had been claiming for months, under growing pressure
from Republicans disenchanted with Taft but with inadequate faith in La Follette, that he had no interest in again being president—while managing not to deny absolutely that he was going to run.²

On February 2, 1912, an exhausted La Follette, suffering from lack of sleep and still recovering from a recent illness, bothered by the burgeoning unofficial Roosevelt-for-president movement and attendant rumors that La Follette would drop out of the race, and worried about his daughter’s pending serious surgery, fulfilled a speaking engagement at the Periodical Publishers Association banquet in Philadelphia. The speaker who preceded him, Governor Woodrow Wilson, gave a short, eloquent address that was perfectly calibrated for this crucially important audience. La Follette, fortified by one pre-speech glass of whiskey, rose and embarked on a repetitive two-hour harangue—which included an alienating interlude on the “subservience of the press to special interests”—that led to rumors of a mental breakdown and effectively destroyed any chance he might have had to become a serious contender for the 1912 presidential nomination of any party.³

Out of contention, but never out of the political fray, La Follette adamantly refused to withdraw from the race even after Roosevelt’s February 25 announcement that he was, indeed, a candidate for the presidency (a decision he had reached just before La Follette’s political debacle).⁴ The drama then moved through a variety of state primaries, where La Follette continued to have some support, and then to the Republican National Convention in Chicago, June 18-22. There, both Roosevelt and La Follette were thwarted by the Republican Old Guard, who kept the convention machinery firmly in hand and saw to it that Taft was the Republican nominee.
A few days later, on June 25, Democratic Party delegates assembled in Baltimore, and by the time they adjourned, Progressivism seemed to live more strongly in their precincts than in those of the Republicans. On the forty-sixth ballot and with the support of William Jennings Bryan, New Jersey’s Progressive governor Woodrow Wilson emerged as their candidate for president. Following what was then precedent, the nominee was not present to receive the cheers of the delegates. He formally accepted his nomination in a ceremony on August 7, more than a month after the convention ended, at his cottage at Sea Girt, New Jersey. The first paragraphs of his acceptance speech reflect the importance that all Progressives placed on this election year and on the era of crucial changes that they firmly believed they were helping, that they must help, to bring about. Wilson stated:

The audience we address is in no ordinary temper. . . . We must speak, not to catch votes but to satisfy the thought and conscience of a people deeply stirred by the conviction that they have come to a critical turning point in their moral and political development.

. . . . The nation has awakened to a sense of neglected ideals and neglected duties; to a consciousness that the rank and file of her people find life very hard to sustain, that her young men find opportunity embarrassed, and that her older men find business difficult to renew and maintain because of circumstances of privilege and private advantage which have interlaced their subtle threads through almost every part of the framework of our present law. She has awakened to the knowledge that she has lost certain cherished liberties and has wasted priceless resources which she had solemnly undertaken to hold in trust for posterity and for all mankind; and to the conviction that she stands confronted with an occasion for constructive statesmanship such as has not arisen since the great days in which her government was set up.

Plainly, it is a new age. . . .

Whether or not it was truly the beginning of a new age, 1912 was most definitely no ordinary year politically. Progressivism was on the upsurge. Indeed, to some American Progressives it had become an almost religious mission, as reflected in a
statement Roosevelt made at a pre-Republican Convention rally (and would repeat in at least one other speech): “We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord!” (In how great a religious light Roosevelt actually viewed the Progressivism of people such as La Follette and the passionately pacifist Jane Addams, even as he shouted about Armageddon, is open to question.) After the Republican hierarchy failed to recognize the Progressivist tide, Roosevelt, now firmly in charge of the rebellious Progressives, led them out of the Republican Convention to a rally at a nearby hall. On August 5, they surged right back into Chicago to formally found the new Progressive Party (popularly dubbed the Bull Moose party after a comment by TR that he felt “fit as a bull moose”)7.

The two-day founding convention was an extraordinary affair, punctuated by long speeches, loud ovations, the singing of “Onward Christian Soldiers” and “John Brown’s Body,” and the shattering of precedents.8 Women, for example, were among the delegates, and one of them, Jane Addams, later observed:

When a great political party asks women to participate in its first convention, and when a number of women deliberately accept the responsibility, it may indicate that public-spirited women are ready to give up the short modern role of being good to people and to go back to the long historic role of ministrations to big human needs.9

Addams also evoked human needs—and the relative failure of the United States in meeting them—when she broke another precedent and seconded the nomination of the man everyone knew would emerge as the Progressive candidate for president, Theodore Roosevelt. “The new party,” Addams declared, “has become the American exponent of a world-wide movement toward juster social conditions, a movement which the United States, lagging behind other great nations, has been unaccountably slow to embody in political actions.”10
After securing the nomination, with noted Progressive Governor Hiram Johnson of California as his running mate, Roosevelt, himself, broke precedent by accepting the nomination at the convention. In his speech titled “A Confession of Faith,” he called the Republican and Democratic parties “husks with no real soul . . . boss-ridden and privilege controlled . . . and neither daring to speak out widely and fearlessly what should be said on the vital issues of the day.” In the Progressive Party, on the other hand, “the people shall be supreme” and the party “shall represent . . . the cause of human rights and of governmental efficiency.” Reflecting the party platform, he called for establishment of national and state minimum wage commissions, investigations into industries “with the view to establishing standards of sanitation and safety,” workmen’s compensation, and an end to “the premature employment of children.” He supported woman suffrage (“we do not believe that with the two sexes there is identity of function; but we do believe that there should be equality of rights”); a protective tariff that favored “the interest of the whole people” rather than special interests (Progressives generally believed that protective tariffs were being used to help build U.S. monopolies), and conservation (in which Roosevelt, despite, or perhaps in part because of, his penchant for shooting large numbers of wild animals, was a national leader).11

Reflecting the country’s current preoccupation with its own troubled domestic affairs, in this long speech of approximately forty-four paragraphs, Roosevelt included exactly one on international relations. After stating that “This country should behave toward other nations exactly as an honorable citizen behaves toward other private citizens,” the man who, as president in 1907, dispatched the Great White Fleet around the world to demonstrate to other nations America’s growing military as well as economic
strength, put in a word for preparedness, a subject that would become the focus of domestic debate—and cause friction within the Progressive movement—after August 1914:

... our small army should be kept at a high pitch of perfection, ... the navy should be steadily built up; and the process of upbuilding must not be stopped until—and not before—it proves possible to secure by international agreement a general reduction of armaments.  

Roosevelt’s one paragraph was much more expansive than the very short reference to foreign affairs in Wilson’s longer acceptance speech, which dealt solely with the recently acquired Philippine Islands, of which Wilson said, “We are not the owners ... We hold them in trust for the people who live in them.”

Wilson’s relative ignorance of international affairs would later become problematic. But during the four-way presidential campaign of 1912, it caused no consternation. Roosevelt, Wilson, Taft, and Socialist Party candidate Eugene V. Debs and their surrogates campaigned on platforms reflecting domestic concerns. In truth, the campaign was between Wilson and Roosevelt. Aware of his unpopularity and apparently tired of it all, Taft made no campaign speeches after his address accepting the nomination, declaring, “I think I might as well give up so far as being a candidate is concerned. There are so many people in the country who don’t like me.” Debs’s Socialist Party was too radical for most of the American electorate. (“The Socialist party and its chosen spokesmen ... challenge the right of capitalism to longer exist,” Debs was reported as saying in October 1912, “and they boldly proclaim the program of socialism [i.e., gradual nationalization of industries and resources] as the legitimate successor of the present order.”) Yet, dangerous working conditions for hundreds of thousands, the huge disparity in incomes between the haves and have-nots, and other domestic problems had
reached such a pass that Debs did receive nearly 900,000 votes, or approximately 6
percent of the total, more than double the number that he received in his previous run for
the presidency in 1908.\footnote{17}

In his campaign, Debs also made an assertion that was, in fact, correct regarding
all the major Progressive candidates for state and national office, as well as Progressive
leaders such as La Follette:

> In this nation the politicians or statesmen of the Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson
type, who are the chosen or self-appointed spokesmen for their respective
political organizations, may have widely different convictions or opinions
upon political issues, such as direct legislation, recall of public officials,
including the judiciary, direct election of Senators, etc., \textit{but upon}
economic questions affecting the present social order they are at one.
They represent the capitalist system and they stand or fall with capitalism.
[emphases in the original]\footnote{18}

With the exception of those on what Roosevelt called the “lunatic fringe”\footnote{19}
(though Debs’s actions, as opposed to his proposals, were definitely not lunatic, nor all
that radical, as he was \textit{campaigning} for change rather advocating armed revolution), no
Progressive wanted to rock the capitalist boat that had served the country so well during
its expansion from sea to sea and into the international arena. On the contrary, the major
thrust was to make it more seaworthy.

When it came to the 1912 contest, neither Roosevelt’s New Nationalism nor the
Democratic program Wilson had dubbed the New Freedom, had any harsh words for
capitalism itself, only its excesses. In fact, each advocated such similar measures that it
was difficult for some to see any difference at all between what the two were espousing.
“Between the New Nationalism and the New Freedom,” Kansas Progressive William
Allen White quipped, “was that fantastic imaginary gulf that always had existed between
Tweedledum and Tweedledee.”\footnote{20}
Yet the apparently subtle differences that existed were significant. Roosevelt, for example, had as a chief campaign adviser Progressive intellectual Herbert Croly (later a cofounder of The New Republic) who had singled Roosevelt out for relatively high praise in his seminal 1909 work The Promise of American Life.\textsuperscript{21} Like Croly, Roosevelt viewed big business and business conglomerates as a natural outgrowth of, and a necessary component of, American industrial—and national—progress. Although Roosevelt had acquired something of a reputation as a "trust buster" during his presidency, in 1912, with Croly's book in his mind and Croly whispering in his ear, he was not aiming to bust trusts so much as to continue developing the nascent process of government regulation, which, to be as efficient as the businesses themselves, was to rely on the services of experts.\textsuperscript{22}

Wilson and the chief architect of his New Freedom, Louis D. Brandeis, on the other hand, viewed the "big" in big business with a jaundiced eye. (This was a huge change for Wilson, who, in 1908, had saluted trusts for "adding so enormously to the economy and efficiency of the nation's productive work" and condemned government regulation as "socialistic.").\textsuperscript{23} Brandeis, who had been a charter member of the National Progressive Republican League, moved over to the Democrats and declared for Wilson by stating that "He sees that true democracy and social justice are unattainable unless the power of the few be curbed, and our democracy becomes industrial as well as political." Curbing the power of the few meant curbing, though not eradicating, big businesses. The largest trusts, and the most corrupt, should be busted, and the government should thereafter enforce "a balance between the need for bigness and the need for competition."\textsuperscript{24} Moreover, Brandeis, who did adhere to the general Progressive belief in the usefulness of experts, did not believe that government action should be based
primarily on their advice. As a biographer has written, “unlike some reformers, he believed in democratic decision making, and the fact that the people could sometimes choose poorly did not trouble him.”

Whether or not these and other differences between the two Progressive candidates—such as support (Roosevelt) or lack of support (Wilson) for woman suffrage—won or lost votes was almost certainly not the deciding factor in the 1912 election (which was punctuated by the drama of the wounding of Roosevelt by a would-be assassin). With the ballot split among four candidates, and the Progressives split between the Progressive and Democratic parties—and given Taft’s unpopularity, which tainted Republican candidates across the country—it was almost a foregone conclusion that Wilson would win. Democrats also took control of the House and the Senate, giving Wilson powerful support for his own Progressive reforms after his inauguration as the country’s twenty-eighth president on March 4, 1913.

One other factor that might have contributed to the outcome was a continuation of the decline in voter turnout (58.8 percent of those eligible to vote turned out in 1912, as opposed to 65.4 percent in 1908, and 73.2 percent in 1900). Ironically, the Progressive assault on machine politics contributed to this decline (political bosses were very efficient at turning out voters). Yet the decline might also be attributed to would-be voters’ preoccupation with the country’s continuing growing pains and social upheavals, tinged, perhaps, with some skepticism about pursuing politics as usual in an era of national, and international change.

Change often was sparked by discontent. The predominantly immigrant textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, started 1912 with a bang when they surprised mill
owners and just about everybody else by protesting a reduction in their already low wages by going out on strike, first slashing threads and damaging equipment so that work could not easily proceed in their absence. A city of some 86,000—of which about 60,000 depended on income from the textile mills—Lawrence had never before been the scene of such an organized protest. It was wholly unprepared for what became a long and violence-punctuated strike that garnered arrests, injuries, activation of the Massachusetts militia, and national attention.  

In addition to recovering original wage rates, more than 20,000 striking workers demanded that the 54-hour-week, a reduction in hours recently mandated for women and children under age 18 by Massachusetts legislation, be maintained, and that they receive double pay for overtime work. Ominously, to many non-strikers, the striking workers were supported by the International Workers of the World (IWW). These labor activists, popularly known as “Wobblies,” opened their ranks to all wage workers, regardless of color or sex, and their embrace of revolutionary socialism placed them in the radical category. After the small IWW chapter in Lawrence called in some national IWW workers, both Lawrence and the Wobblies were in the national spotlight. Week after week, the strikers gained more support, some supporters going to Washington to testify before Congress. This, in turn, prompted President Taft to call for a national investigation of industrial conditions. By March, the mill owners had had enough and acceded to the workers demands.  

This was the first of several strikes to rock various parts of the United States between January 1912 and the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914. These included a huge strike in New York City’s men’s garment industry. Beginning on December 28,
1912 and lasting for nearly three months, the strike spread first to sections of the New York women’s garment industry, then to other cities, including Boston Philadelphia, Rochester, Chicago, and Baltimore. In New York City alone, nearly 150,000 people were involved in the strike (50,000 of them participating in a march through the city in its second week), and most suffered enormous hardships, ameliorated somewhat by settlement-worker assistance and donations, as they remained out of work and without income. By early spring 1913, strikers in most of the cities involved had won some concessions, including a reduction in hours (they had requested a 48-hour week, with 50 or 52 hours as fall-back positions) and modest increases in wages.32

A February strike by silk workers in Patterson New Jersey, organized by the IWW, was less successful,33 as was a march on Washington, D. C. by a ragtag group of unemployed people led by Jacob Coxey of Ohio, who had led a similar protest against the conditions faced by working people in 1894.34

Miners in the west were among the American workers suffering under the harshest conditions, as, in the words of historian Alan Dawley, “absentee owners waged economic war against their competitors over the broken bodies of their underpaid employees.”35 Conditions at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company at Ludlow, whose principal stockholder was John D. Rockefeller, drove miners to call a strike in mid-September 1913, supported by one of the country’s strongest unions, the United Mine Workers. By April 20, 1914, tensions and tempers were high, with management losing profits and the weary mine workers and their families—who were seeing out the strike in a rough tent city, having been evicted from their company housing—seeing no concessions. What happened that day was not unusual in mining labor-management
contests in the American West—except, perhaps, for the number of casualties. Dawley describes the event:

On the morning of April 20, with riflemen of the Colorado National Guard lining a ridge overlooking the tents, the commander of the Guard summoned George Tikas, a Greek mine leader, to the top of the ridge for a parlay. Angry words were exchanged, and when the commander brought down his rifle butt on Tikas’s skull, it seemed to be a signal for the shooting to begin. In a scene that resembled cavalry attacks on Indian tepees, Guardsmen raked the tent colony with indiscriminate gunfire and then hurled torches to set the colony ablaze. The grisly result was some 60 dead, mostly women and children, 11 of whom perished in a fiery pit below one of the tents where they had huddled for safety.36

Now known as the “Ludlow Massacre,” this bloody incident highlighted for sympathetic Progressives, as less prolonged and less violent strikes could not do, the plight and powerlessness of many of the country’s industrial workers—and some Progressives protested immediately and vividly. “I intend to indict you for murder before the people of this country,” muckraking writer Upton Sinclair wrote in an open letter to Rockefeller eight days after the massacre—the same day federal troops arrived belatedly at Ludlow. “The charges will be pressed, and I think the verdict will be ‘Guilty.’”37 Sinclair proceeded to lead a group of his fellow Socialists, dressed in mourning black for the Ludlow miners, in a silent protest outside the Standard Oil Building, headquarters of the Rockefeller financial empire. An additional vigil at the church where Rockefeller was participating in a prayer meeting was just as orderly but somewhat less silent. Some of the protestors, students from the Rand School of Social Science, a Progressive institution, politely entered the church, a bastion of wealth and conservatism. They stood silently until, at the end of the meeting, they tried to ask its pastor, “As a preacher of the word of God, do you think that Jesus would uphold John D. Rockefeller in his attitude towards the Colorado strikers?” They were ignored and escorted from the church.
Thereafter eighty New York City police officers, forty in plain clothes, protected the church from intrusions by protesters who asked such apparently discomfiting questions.\textsuperscript{38}

There were investigations of the Ludlow massacre. However, neither Rockefeller nor any of the men who actually ran the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company—and thus were responsible for assembling the Colorado militia, coal company guards, and hired thugs who fired on the miners—were charged with anything, much less murder. They stood fast throughout the strike, praising the open shop (i.e., not allowing their workers to join unions); denying any culpability ("it is unjust in the extreme to lay it at the door of the defenders of law and property," Rockefeller stated in June 1914, "who were in no slightest way responsible for it");\textsuperscript{39} and generally reflecting the attitude that coal and iron magnate George F. Baer had expressed sometime earlier: "The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for—not by the labor agitators, but by Christian men to whom God has given control of the property rights of the country."\textsuperscript{40} (A number of miners, were held to be culpable, however; many were arrested, and some were refused further work as coal miners.)\textsuperscript{41}

Two years later, Ethelbert Stewart of the U.S. Bureau of Labor, who had gone to Ludlow to attempt to mediate, told a \textit{New York Times} reporter, "I was in Ludlow the day the soldiers [sic] fired on the strikers and saw most of the bloodshed. I utilized every known power of mediation then and failed to bring about even a promise of arbitration from the company. It stood like adamant and finally wore out the men."\textsuperscript{42} While power resided overwhelmingly with the controllers of property, stubbornness was firmly entrenched in both capital and labor—and in his 1916 \textit{Times} interview, Stewart noted that, on labor's side, strikes were taking on a new tenor.
The strike in vogue today is a deeper matter, a more serious matter [than the short, limited strikes of a previous day]. It comes out of the big cities; it spreads over whole States and sections; it involves vast numbers of allied workers; it draws in thousands who have no grievances at all except perhaps imaginary ones. And it takes weeks and months to settle; often more than a year. It grows until it becomes practically civil war.\textsuperscript{43}

Earlier, during the Ludlow strike but before the massacre, Stewart had commented on the reasons behind the strike. Though not all industries provided company stores, his observations, made about the Ludlow strike in October 1913, remained valid as labor unrest and management resistance continued intermittently throughout the apex of the Progressive Era, and well beyond.

Theoretically, perhaps, the case of having nothing to do in this world but work, ought to have made these men of many tongues, as happy and contented as the managers claim. . . .To have a house assigned you to live in . . . to have a store furnished you by your employer where you are to buy of him such foodstuffs as he has, at a price he fixes . . . to have churches, schools . . . and public halls free for you to use for any purpose except to discuss politics, religion, trade-unionism or industrial conditions; in other words, to have everything handed down to you from the top; to be . . . prohibited from having any thought, voice or care in anything in life but work, and to be assisted in this by gunmen whose function it was, principally, to see that you did not talk labor conditions with another man who might accidentally know your language—this was the contented, happy, prosperous condition out of which this strike grew. . . . That men have rebelled grows out of the fact that they are men.\textsuperscript{44}

Even as workers continued their struggles, there was some real advancement toward Progressive goals in the legislative and judicial arenas from 1912 to the summer of 1914. (In the same period the United States, itself, expanded: New Mexico entered the Union on January 6, 1912, Arizona on February 14). On February 3, 1913, the Sixteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which had been passed by Congress in July 1909, went into effect, having finally been ratified by the requisite number of states. Twenty-first-century Americans might view this Amendment, which established the right of the
U.S. Congress to impose a federal income tax, as no particular cause for celebration. Yet turn of the century Progressives saw a graduated income tax as one way to help close the immense gap between the haves and have-nots. It also was viewed as a blow against demon rum, as it would reduce government dependence on the liquor tax, which for years had been the largest source of internal revenue.\textsuperscript{45} The income tax effected by this Amendment was far from onerous. In fact, as noted in one description, “in 1913, due to generous exemptions and deductions, less than 1 percent of the population paid income taxes at the rate of only 1 percent of net income.”\textsuperscript{46} The growth of the American economy and American world influence, as well as America’s intermittent involvement in wars—including World War I—would greatly increase the government’s reliance on income tax. In the current era (somewhat ironically given Progressives’ hopes when the Amendment was passed), the federal income tax and the comparative rates paid by the very wealthy and those not so fortunate are one point of contention in a continuing debate over a growing disparity in incomes—a debate that would not be in the least unfamiliar (though perhaps a bit discouraging) to the Progressives of 1912 to 1924.\textsuperscript{47}

March 1912 saw another small but significant chapter open in the intermittent struggle against conglomerates—in this case railroads. Unfair railroad practices in this pre-trucking, pre-air-cargo age had long been particular Progressive targets, so it was a Progressive act when the U.S. Justice Department filed \textit{United States v. Union Pacific Railroad Company} to challenge the 1901 merger of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads. The government asserted that the merger was a violation of the relatively toothless, but occasionally effective 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act.\textsuperscript{48} Though the Justice Department lost the case in the Federal Court for the Eighth Circuit, in 1913 they
appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which overturned the lower court’s ruling and declared that the merger did restrict competition and ordered the merged line to be broken up. Later that year—which was, perhaps significantly, the first year of the Wilson administration—the Court denied Union Pacific’s request to sell its Southern Pacific stock to its own stockholders, declaring that to allow that restricted sale would place both railroads under the control of a small number of people.49

A true and lasting Progressive triumph occurred on May 13, 1912, when the U.S. Congress passed the Seventeenth Amendment, which modified Article 1, Section 3 of the Constitution to allow voters to directly elect U.S. senators (who had previously been selected by state legislatures). Perhaps not surprisingly, this Amendment zipped through the ratification process much more rapidly than did the income tax amendment: it became effective on April 8, 1913. American voters cast their first ballots for senators in the elections of 1914.

For women, voting rights were slowly expanding, at least at the state level. In 1910, Washington state broke a fourteen-year period of inaction on that front (the last states to allow women to vote had been Utah and Idaho in 1896) when it granted women the vote—and apparently set a Progressive trend. In 1911 California followed suit, and in 1912 Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon did as well. In 1913 the trend crossed to the east side of the Mississippi River for the first time when Illinois allowed women to vote. In large measure this trend reflected the strong roles women were playing in the Progressive movement, from settlement work and muckraking to ongoing campaigns against prostitution and demon rum. The campaign for woman suffrage, itself, as Alan Brinkley notes was “perhaps the largest single reform movement of the progressive era, indeed one
of the largest in American history.” Supported by men as well as women, it had not reached its ultimate goal by August 1914—but it was clearly gathering momentum.

As soon as Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated, he rolled up his sleeves, at least metaphorically, and got to work on his own Progressive agenda. Among the first imperatives was lowering the protective tariff for the first time in decades by passing the Underwood-Simmons Tariff, which became law in October 1913. Supported by such stalwart (if insurgent) Republicans as Robert La Follette, this act, Progressives believed, “provided cuts substantial enough . . . to introduce real competition into American markets and thus to help beat the power of the trusts.”

On June 23, 1913, this first president since John Adams to personally address Congress declared to a joint session, “It is absolutely imperative that we should give to the businessmen of this country a banking and currency system by means of which they can make use of the freedom of enterprise and of individual initiative which we are about to bestow upon them.” Exactly six months later, on December 23, Wilson signed what has been deemed by some historians the most important piece of domestic legislation of his presidency: the Federal Reserve Act. Aimed at stabilizing the economy and making it impossible for speculators to wreak havoc, the Act created the Federal Reserve System that remains in place today. Yet it was viewed by some Republican Progressives, including La Follette, as too tepid in tempering the power of investment bankers, and they were distressed (and in La Follette’s case, increasingly distrustful of Wilson’s Progressivism) when all their attempts to strengthen the bill were voted down. This, to La Follette and his Progressive Republican colleagues was an ominous sign; and as
Wilson became more involved in international affairs, his Progressivism and that of La Follette and like-minded colleagues began to differ substantially.

La Follette was already deeply disturbed by Wilson’s attitude toward civil rights. Though a long-time resident of New Jersey, Wilson was born in Virginia had deep southern roots. He not only quickly forgot campaign promises made to black churchmen to press for civil rights, he also supported the reimposition of segregation in federal agencies and did nothing to prevent the firing of black federal employees in the South. Both La Follette and his activist wife Belle criticized Wilson. Belle did so in the pages of La Follette’s Weekly Magazine, a publication her husband had established in 1909 to promulgate his Progressive agenda—and keep his name before the public. Although Wilson would partially reverse government segregation because of pressures from the La Follettes and others, he would never become a champion of civil rights.

Nor was he, during his first term in office, all that much in favor of woman suffrage. That this attitude was shared by many American men became evident in the wake of one of the most shocking tragedies of the pre-Great-War period. In April 1912, the world’s largest and most luxurious ocean liner, RMS Titanic—which, despite its British registry, was owned by a shipping trust headed by American banking magnate, J. P. Morgan—hit an iceberg and went down in the freezing waters of the North Atlantic. The sinking of the supposedly unsinkable ship, with the loss of more than fifteen hundred lives, “brought into sharp focus,” according to one historian, “many of the burning questions of the progressive age.” Though a number of eminent and wealthy people went down with the vessel (among them President Taft’s close aide, Major Archibald W. Butt), casualties were disproportionately high among steerage (third class) passengers,
including fifty-three of the seventy-six children traveling in steerage as opposed to one out of the twenty-nine children traveling first class.\textsuperscript{60} Was this not a reflection of the value apportioned to human beings based solely on their financial worth, a warped view based on the worship of profit in the modern corporate age?

"When a woman talks woman’s rights," a certain W. C. Rickster (presumably male) wrote in a letter to the St. Louis \textit{Post-Dispatch} after the tragedy, "she [should] be answered with the word Titanic - just Titanic" — one of a number of sneers springing from the "women and children first" tenet that resulted in more women than men surviving the sinking (including all but four of the women in first class).\textsuperscript{61} If women craved special treatment in times of danger, the sneerers suggested, they should be satisfied, overall, with their traditional roles in society. This argument brought quick ripostes from a number of women. U.S. journalist, suffragist, and social worker Rheta Childe Door even took "Women and Children First" as the title of an article she published in the May 4, 1912 \textit{Woman’s Journal} (a little over a year after the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire) recalling her days in a Brooklyn sweatshop, where non-wealthy women received treatment that was especially bad. "The law of the sea: women and children first," Dorr concluded. "The law of the land—that’s different."\textsuperscript{62}

The very existence of the \textit{Titanic} and thousands of other passenger and cargo ships crossing the oceans was a reminder of the ever shrinking and increasingly interdependent world. Progressives who believed that this would mean an end to warfare among developed nations were too dismissive of the fact that the age also was one of imperialism by nations powerful enough to be imperial and of fervent nationalism,\textsuperscript{63} or tribalism, almost everywhere. And, while the major European powers were not, in 1912,
at each other’s throats, the planet was not free of wars, both between nations and within them.

Americans, Progressives and conservatives alike, had generally been pleased when a revolution that broke out in fall 1911 in China seemed to turn that country toward democracy. (Thomas Edison placed the Chinese revolution at the top of his list of important events of that year.) Yet, in January 1912, with violence continuing, prudence dictated that U.S. troops be sent to China to join the international peacekeeping force in protecting American and other foreign interests. American troops would stay in the country for years.

In June 1912, the U.S. government also dispatched some 1,500 troops to Cuba, long a focus of deep U.S. interest, to protect American property during an uprising that was effectively crushed without American assistance. In July, continuing U.S. involvement in Nicaragua included a dispatch of troops to protect American property during a revolt by the president-elect, Luis Mena, against the American-backed incumbent, Adolfo Diaz. American troops remained in the country until 1925.

In Mexico, a country dear to American investors, a revolution had been boiling since May 1911, when longtime dictator, Porfirio Diaz was overthrown by Francisco Madero, who drew his support from the lower and middle classes. Under Diaz, foreign investment had been encouraged to such an extent, and with such uneven benefits, that Mexican nationalists complained that Diaz had made their country a “mother to foreigners and a stepmother to her own children.” Indeed, historian George Herring writes:

Americans came to view Mexico as a ‘second India, Cuba, Brazil, Italy, and Troy all rolled into one.’ U.S. capital poured across the border into
railroads, mines, and oil, totaling $500 million by 1900, transforming Mexico into a virtual satellite of the United States.68

The fact that Madero instituted a parliamentary democracy might ordinarily have been viewed in a positive light by the U.S. government. However, he also continued a policy, recently initiated by Diaz, of encouraging European, particularly British investment and influence in Mexico. That did not sit well with many influential Americans, including U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson (no relation to Woodrow), who actively worked to undermine Madero. To what extent Ambassador Wilson bears responsibility for Madero’s overthrow in February 1913 by General Victoriana Huerta, and Madero’s subsequent murder, is open to question.69 Such was the still-volatile situation when Woodrow Wilson entered the White House.

Mexico was Wilson’s first foreign policy challenge, and he brought to it the stern Presbyterian righteousness that would flash strobe-like throughout his presidency. One week after his March 4, 1913, inauguration he declared that his administration would not recognize the Huerta regime—or any government that owed “its origin to the physical force or intrigue of politicians at the head of revolutionary armies.”70 (Less diplomatically, he stated that he would not “recognize a government of butchers.”)71 Then followed a year of diplomatic haggling and paternalistic declarations characteristic of white Anglo-Saxon leaders of the Progressive era—and beyond: Wilson wanted to teach Mexico and other U.S. neighbors to “elect good men”; Mexico should accept U.S. advice “for her own good.” Wilson also dispatched to the United States’ southern neighbor two trusted advisors who knew no Spanish and nothing at all about Mexico to meddle in Mexican affairs—with the predictable result of offending both Huerta and the leader of his opposition, Venustiano Carranza.72
By April 1914 (as the strike at Ludlow Colorado was about to explode into violence), an incident at Veracruz between U.S. sailors and local authorities quickly escalated into a crisis that resulted in exchanges of fire that killed more than two hundred Mexicans and nineteen Americans—and caused anti-United States demonstrations throughout Mexico. Wilson, meanwhile, went to Congress, seeking, and after debate, receiving, approval for further use of force in Mexico “in such ways and to such an extent as may be necessary to obtain from General Huerta and his adherents the fullest recognition of the rights and dignity of the United States.” He went on to disclaim any base motives for further intervention:

There can in what we do be no thought of aggression or of selfish aggrandizement. We seek to maintain the dignity and authority of the United States only because we wish always to keep our great influence unimpaired for the uses of liberty, both in the United States and wherever else it may be employed for the benefit of mankind.\textsuperscript{73}

By May, the Americans were in control of Veracruz, where they remained for seven months, performing a host of services associated with Progressivism (e.g., improving transportation and drainage, installing electric streetlights, cracking down on crime and prostitution).\textsuperscript{74} Meanwhile, U.S. power assured that most arms shipments did not reach Huerta but that those intended for Carranza arrived at their destination safely.\textsuperscript{75} Yet, when Carranza’s forces ousted Huerta in August 1914, the Mexican revolution was only at its midpoint.

In the United States there was little opposition to the use of force in Mexico. Even La Follette, who adhered to the Progressive belief in spreading democracy but was increasingly opposed to American expansionism, publicly declared, after troops landed in Veracruz, “Let it be known in every capital of the world that the President has the support
of a united nation.” Yet he also urged that the troops be withdrawn as soon as possible. He was among the Progressives that favored persuasion and nonmilitary pressure, and honoring the right of foreigners to govern themselves as they saw fit, over what might be termed the “big stick Progressivism” of Teddy Roosevelt and Wilson. Furthermore, he continued to believe that profit was the principal motive for U.S. intervention in the affairs of its southern and Caribbean neighbors; and, with regard to Mexico, the degree of U.S. investment in the country would suggest that he was not entirely incorrect.\textsuperscript{76}

While all this was unfolding in the Western Hemisphere, two wars erupted in the Balkans in 1912-1913. Though today they are often regarded as preludes to the Great War, they had little, if any, impact in the United States. Even the assassination of the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Sarajevo, Bosnia, on June 28, 1914, provoked little concern: it was, after all, one of several royal assassinations that had occurred in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{77} That it would lead to a major European war was certainly not evident; that war would be the most deadly conflict the earth had yet seen was unimaginable; that the United States would become involved, and that the country’s domestic Progressive drive might suffer, was not even to be considered—save by a few prescient individuals, among them an American corporate lawyer named S. Stanwood Menken. Temporarily stranded in Europe when war was declared in early August 1914, Menken was sitting in Britain’s House of Commons, listening to patriotic speeches and thinking about the relationship of the United States to the conflict, when he suddenly thought, as he later reported, of “America’s condition of unpreparedness and the possibility of America getting into this war.”\textsuperscript{78} He became among the first to advocate preparedness, a debate that would steadily grow in ferocity, dividing “big stick”
Progressives from their more pacific fellow Progressives, over the following two and a half years.
WAR AND PROGRESSIVE RESPONSES
AUGUST 1914-APRIL 1917

“Our stock exchanges closed for the first time since 1873, our values disordered, our blessed tourists by the thousand running hither and yon in Europe, their credits useless and no ships to bring them home,” Edward S. Martin editorialized passionately in the August 13, 1914, edition of Life magazine. “It is like being caught in a vast flood, an overwhelming torrent of hate and sudden death from Europe’s broken dam.”¹

That August was indeed a breathtaking month. Although the United States was far away from the action taking place on the Continent, more than 120,000 U.S. tourists were caught amongst mobilizing armed forces, frightened refugees, and suspicious officials there and in Britain. London-based engineer and investor Herbert Hoover, who was asked by the American counsel general there to organize assistance for some of these unfortunates, felt particularly sorry for a large group of school teachers “who had pinched, saved and planned for this one trip to Europe all their lives. They had come to make themselves better teachers.”²

Reports started reaching the States from American news correspondents and embassy personnel. In Belgium, U.S. ambassador Brand Whitlock, a former journalist and Progressive mayor of Toledo, Ohio, kept a diary and wrote reports as a massive and disciplined German army moved through that country, violating decades-old treaties guaranteeing its neutrality. “The scene had the allure of medievalism,” Whitlock wrote, “something terrible too, that almost savage chant [of soldiers singing while they

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marched], and those grey [uniformed] hosts pouring down out of the middle ages into modern civilization.”

Late in the month, reports reached the United States of the burning and looting of the ancient university town of Louvain, including the total destruction of its medieval library filled with priceless treasures and the murder or imprisonment of many of its people. American correspondent Richard Harding Davis, who had witnessed the destruction, wrote:

> It was all like a scene upon a stage, unreal, inhuman. You felt that the curtain of fire, purring and crackling and sending up hot sparks to meet the kind, calm stars, was only a painted backdrop; that the reports of rifles from the dark ruins came from blank cartridges, and that these trembling shopkeepers and peasants ringed in bayonets would not in a few minutes really die, but that they themselves and their homes would be restored to their wives and children.4

The destruction of Louvain caused an early, if relatively brief surge of anti-German sentiment in the United States5 (though perhaps the millions of German-American citizens did not share in that sentiment). Combined with other stories emerging from Belgium and the pleas of Belgian officials, Louvain also helped spark one of the most effective American humanitarian efforts of the war.

Termed by one author “an undertaking unprecedented in world history,”6 the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB) was a massive undertaking headed by the same Herbert Hoover who had aided stranded American tourists—and who, by dint of this and other war work would become, according to one historian, perhaps “the most famous and respected figure of the [wartime] Progressive movement.”7 The kind of organizational expert in whom Progressive leaders of many stripes placed much faith, Hoover built, with tact skill—and the diplomatic assistance, when needed, of Ambassador Whitlock, Spain’s
Marquis de Villalobar and others—an organization that, “became almost a country in itself; its staff of five hundred drew their own passports, [and] chartered their own flag-bearing ships . . . while both Allies and Central Powers watched suspiciously but without real interference.” Funded by donations from the Rockefeller Foundation and private American citizens, the effort made Hoover and the entire United States heroic in the eyes of millions of hard-pressed Belgians.9

In Washington, meanwhile, for President Wilson August was a month of anguish and terrible tensions interrupted only briefly by a few flashes of political triumph, one of them in the ongoing struggles between labor and capital. On August 3, managers of ninety-eight western railroads that had been threatened with a strike by 55,000 enginemen and firemen acceded to the president’s plea to submit to arbitration and thus avoid what Wilson termed a “national disaster” given the “world-wide conditions, unparalleled in recent history, that have arisen over the last few days.”10 In mid-month, the Panama Canal officially opened, an achievement celebrated, somewhat less than diplomatically, by the New York Times, which editorialized: “The European ideal bears its full fruit of ruin and savagery just at the moment when the American ideal lays before the world a great work of peace, goodwill and fair play.11 (The Times’ characterization of the canal might be open to question, since it was intended as a conduit for warships as well as merchantmen and fair play was not always the watchword in its development and construction.)12

Yet completely overwhelming these triumphs was the fact that Wilson’s beloved wife Ellen died on August 6. Moreover, swirling around that great personal loss were the America’s own financial troubles (the country had been in a deep recession for months,
the *New York Times* reporting that in that city, alone, 325,000 men were out of work, the continuing troubles in Mexico (U.S. troops remained in Veracruz until November and the revolution was still unfolding), and the alarming events in Europe. The same day the unions agreed to arbitration, Germany declared war on France, and the following day, as German troops entered Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany. That day, August 4, Wilson issued the United State’s official Declaration of Neutrality, calling for all Americans to “act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned.”

One element running through the four-paragraph declaration was a concern based on the millions of immigrants recently arrived in the country—more in the past fourteen years than had arrived in the previous forty. Voicing a concern that would grow with the length and ferocity of the war, Wilson declared:

> The people of the United States are drawn from many nations, and chiefly from the nations now at war. . . . Some will wish one nation, others another, to succeed in the momentous struggle. It will be easy to excite passion and difficult to allay it. Those responsible for exciting it will assume a heavy responsibility . . . for no less a thing than that the people of the United States . . . may be divided in camps of hostile opinion, hot against each other, involved in the war itself in impulse and opinion if not in action. Such divisions amongst us would be fatal to our peace of mind and might seriously stand in the way of the proper performance of our duty as the one great nation at peace, the one people holding itself ready to play a part of impartial mediation. . . . The United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name.

The question of how to deal with social problems caused by the influx of so many millions of immigrants had already divided the ranks of those long established in the country. Progressive reformers themselves were divided. Some believed that assimilation was the answer; others believed that it was best to begin restricting immigration. One of the most intriguing and provocative Progressive intellectuals, Randolph Bourne, managed
to criticize both these schools of Progressive thought on immigration in an essay titled “Trans-national America,” published in 1916. After stating that “We act as if we wanted Americanization to take place only on our own terms, and not by the consent of the governed,” Bourne suggested that America think of itself as the first international nation, each cultural group celebrating its own traditions, perhaps even holding dual citizenship. He stated:

Only America, by reason of the unique liberty of opportunity and traditional isolation for which she seems to stand, can lead in this cosmopolitan enterprise. Only the American—and in this category I include the migratory alien who has lived with us and caught the pioneer spirit and a sense of new social vistas—has the chance to become that citizen of the world.19

Bourne’s essay received some praise, from Jane Addams, among others. Yet it was either ignored or criticized by most of those who read it, including Ellery Sedgwick, editor of The Atlantic Monthly, who had agreed to publish the piece, though he disagreed with it “very profoundly.” “What have we to learn of the institutions of democracy from the Huns, the Poles, the Slavs,” Sedgwick wrote Bourne in March 1916.20

With one eye on the appalling bloodshed going on across the Atlantic and the aggressive nationalism that he believed had caused it, Bourne countered such chauvinistic statements by stating that the only thing that kept the United States from such damaging nationalism was the presence of immigrants. Yet Bourne was a voice crying in the wilderness. The influence of American “nativists,” those who wished to restrict immigration and “Americanize” immigrants already in the country, was on the upsurge and would be greatly expanded by the war—and by President Wilson’s intermittent verbal salvoes in the direction of immigrant Americans as his war worries deepened.21 In
December 1915, for example, he included the following declaration in his third annual message to Congress:

There are citizens of the United States, I blush to admit, born under other flags but welcomed under our generous naturalization laws to the full freedom and opportunity of America, who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life; who have sought to bring the authority and good name of our Government into contempt, to destroy our industries wherever they thought it effective for their vindictive purposes to strike at them, and to debase our politics to the uses of foreign intrigue. . . . we are without adequate federal laws to deal with it [this disloyalty]. I urge you to enact such laws at the earliest possible moment and feel that in doing so I am urging you to do nothing less than save the honor and self-respect of the nation. 22

Loyalty and solidarity seemed uppermost in Wilson’s mind when confronting the issue of immigrants, rather than a belief that immigration should be subject to greater restrictions. In January of 1915, in fact, he vetoed a restrictive immigration bill that required, among other things, a literacy test. In the message with which he returned the bill to Congress he said:

. . . it seeks to all but close entirely the gates of asylum which have always been open to those who could find nowhere else the right and opportunity of constitutional agitation for what they conceived to be the natural and inalienable rights of men; and it excludes those to whom the opportunities of elementary education have been denied, without regard to their character, their purposes, or their natural capacity. 23

He vetoed a similar act in February 1917, only two months before the United States entered the Great War—but that time Congress mustered the votes to override the veto, and the new restrictions became law. 24

Overriding the veto may have been a triumph of nativist prejudices or of growing fears of disloyalty as it became clear to many that the United States would not be able to avert direct involvement in the war. It may also, in part, have been a reflection of changes
in U.S. Progressivism and a gradual retreat from reform among the American general public.

Many Americans now felt that the reform movement, with its new tariff law, its many federal and state investigations, and what seemed constant attacks on the status quo, had contributed to the deep recession of 1913-14 by making businessmen more conservative in their actions. Thus, the recession, in the words of historian Edmund Morris, “had disillusioned the electorate with [Wilson’s] New Freedom, and by extension [Teddy Roosevelt’s and the Progressive Party’s] New Nationalism. 25 The outbreak of war and the institution by the British of a blockade not only of their opponents’ territories but also of neutral European nations through which supplies might reach the enemy initially made the recession deeper. 26 The war, itself, as it wound on, with single battles taking hundreds of thousands of lives and the unleashing of such horrible new weapons as tanks, flamethrowers, and poison gas, was a direct challenge to the optimism inherent in Progressivism—and a direct refutation of the belief, among the most pacific Progressives, that the age of warfare between developed nations was over.

During the 1914 fall U.S. state-office and congressional campaigns, conservatives were already beginning to condemn Progressives for undermining the popular government that Progressive leaders such as La Follette had been spending decades trying to expand. They undermined it, conservatives charged, by relying far too much on experts, “tax-eating commissions,” and government regulation, all of which created unresponsive bureaucracies—particularly at this time at the state level—and cost the growing number of taxpayers money. 27 Moreover, the efforts of some Progressives to improve lives by forming and increasing the power of job-oriented groups (e.g., farmers’
organizations, various unions) had begun to fragment further the overall Progressive movement, which insurgents such as La Follette believed must appeal to, and unite, skilled and unskilled workers and people of different economic classes. Differences over immigration policy and prohibition, as well as wartime pressures, also were moving many Americans who had initially been friendly to sweeping reforms to turn inward and identify themselves chiefly with their own cultural or religious groups. These and other factors contributed to bitter losses by Democratic and Republican Progressives and Progressive Party candidates in favor of conservative Republicans in the 1914 elections.

Yet despite conservative criticisms and the slowly ebbing tide of public support, there was still ample Progressive spirit and Progressive action during the August 1914 to April 1917 period. Soon after the Federal Reserve System became law, President Wilson concentrated on pushing through antitrust legislation. On September 26, 1914, he signed into law a bill establishing the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Designed to “prevent persons, partnerships, or corporations, except banks and common carriers . . . from using unfair methods of competition in Commerce,” the act greatly increased the federal government’s regulatory powers. Once again, La Follette and his fellow insurgents were disappointed in elements of the law, which they felt could have been stronger and allowed less self-regulation by businesses. But La Follette applauded the law’s provision for investigations that would reveal corporate wrongdoing. With Louis Brandeis, his good friend and the intellect behind the FTC legislation, he believed that “publicity . . . will go far toward preventing monopoly.” By early 1915, when commission members were appointed, however, it seemed clear to La Follette that Wilson was intent to make the FTC “a counsellor and friend to the business world” rather than an effective monitor.
Brandeis, too, believed Wilson’s appointments to the commission were of poor quality, going so far as to call the board “a stupid administration.” Yet the FTC, with its less-than-impressive membership, seemed to insurgents much better than nothing.

In June 1914, months before Wilson signed the FTC bill, the Clayton Act passed both houses of Congress and was subsequently signed by the president. Aimed to amend and bolster the provisions of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, the act comprised twenty-six sections pertaining to railroads, banks, labor unions, and farmers’ organizations. Unlike the Sherman act, it specified particular activities that would constitute restraint of trade. It also legalized labor’s right to strike, picket peaceably, and boycott an employer—elements that moved Samuel Gompers, head of the non-radical American Federation of Labor to call the act labor’s “Magna Carta.” Though it, too, was a firm step forward, many Progressives, including La Follette, were disappointed that its provisions had been weakened as it moved through Congress. Senator James A Reed, Democrat of Missouri, growled, “When the Clayton bill was first written it was a raging lion with a mouth full of teeth. It has degenerated to a tabby cat with soft gums, a plaintive mew and an anaemic appearance.” Its relative toothlessness apparently resulted from a distracted President Wilson’s failure to protect the measure from conservative amendments. Even deprived of the number of teeth that they might have possessed, however, the FTC and Clayton acts aggravated the lions of big business. At about this time, J. P. Morgan, Jr. fulminated about life under the Wilson administration:

The general situation here is perfectly unspeakable. . . . A greater set of perfectly incompetent and apparently crooked people has never so far as I know, run, or attempted to run, any first class country. The Mexicans are far better off, because their various bosses only murder and rape, but our bosses ruin the country and make life intolerable for a much larger number of people.
In 1915, another Progressive bill would make shipowners equally unhappy. The Seamen’s Bill was a personal triumph for La Follette, who had first introduced the measure in 1910, then in each following year until it finally passed. Though it did much to benefit seamen of merchant and passenger ships by such measures as abrogating binding contracts that the head of the Seamen’s Union said constituted a form of slavery, La Follette presented the measure as also benefiting passengers. It required sufficient lifeboats for all passengers, for example, and sufficient crew to man them, and it required lifeboat and fire drills on passenger ships. A bill becoming law is sometimes not sufficient, however. After the Seamen’s Act became a reality, shipping companies put huge pressure on Secretary of Commerce William Redfield not to enforce the bill’s discretionary provisions, which included a number of those included to benefit passengers. He acquiesced—and thus helped to precipitate a major domestic tragedy. On July 24, 1915, a Great Lakes excursion boat, the Eastland, overloaded with passengers and allowed by Redfield to carry insufficient lifeboats, capsized and sank in the Chicago River, killing one thousand of the twenty-five hundred people crammed on board. An investigation by Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo revealed that, in general, shipowners’ claims that they were unable to afford more lifeboats and other measures called for in the act were fraudulent. The discretionary provisions of the bill were subsequently enforced by the Wilson administration.

The years 1913 and 1914 marked the high point of President Wilson’s push for reform measures. In 1916, however, he did successfully fight conservative resistance (and subtle anti-Semitism) to place his premier Progressive counsel, Louis Brandeis, on the U. S. Supreme Court, the first Jewish person to enjoy that honor. He also supported
the Rural Credits Act of 1916, which made it easier for farmers to receive credit; a
measure to provide workers’ compensation for employees of the federal government; the
Adamson Act, which was “the first federal legislation regulating the number of hours that
private employees (in this case interstate railroad workers) worked; and the 1916
Keating-Owen Act, the first federal law regulating child labor. Unfortunately, the last
measure was in effect for less than two years before it was invalidated by the U.S.
Supreme Court. 39

Though Wilson signed a new tax bill in 1916, he did little to aid in its passage.
The principal figures responsible for the increase in taxes were Representative Claude
Kitchin (D-NC) and Robert La Follette. And the principal reason for their shepherding
through a bill that doubled the tax rate on incomes over $5,000 from 1 to 2 percent,
placed a 10 percent surcharge on incomes over $40,000, and imposed inheritance taxes
on a graduated scale on estates over $50,000—plus levied appreciably high taxes on the
munitions industries—was the Great War thundering on across the Atlantic. 40 For, well
before 1916, the United States had climbed out of its deep recession into a time of huge
profits, generated principally by sales to the combatant, primarily the Allied, nations, and
by the growing U.S. preparedness program. 41

After 1914, even as U.S. businessmen rushed to take advantage of downturn in
European investments in Latin America, 42 war orders from Allied nations, particularly
Britain and France, began pouring into the United States. As Vincent De Santis has
noted, between 1914 and 1916, “American trade with Germany and Austria [the major
Central Powers] . . . fell from $169.2 million to a mere $1.1 million. In the same period
American trade with the Allies rose from $828.8 million to $3.2 billion.” 43 Buying in
such bulk was quickly depleting Allied treasuries, yet Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan in late 1914 had forbidden private loans to countries on either side of the conflict as violations of the “spirit of neutrality.” Though Bryan himself began to back away from that policy, it was Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo and Bryan’s 1915 replacement, Robert Lansing who were chiefly responsible for reversing the no-loan policy, with President Wilson’s support. In October 1915 alone, American bankers organized by J. P. Morgan agreed to loan the British and French governments $500 million. By the time the United States entered the war, American sources had already loaned the amazing sum of $2.25 billion to the Allies (as against a “mere” $27 million to Germany). Emily Rosenberg has observed:

By late 1916, the American stake in Allied successes had become so great that the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve Board grew alarmed. The loans, financing a brisk trade in war matériel with Britain and France stimulated American industry, but made continued prosperity dependent on an Allied victory.

Some Progressives, La Follette and Jane Addams prominent among them, viewed this burgeoning business interest in the war with alarm—and, in La Follette’s case, with suspicion. In a July 1916 speech in the U.S. Senate regarding increased U.S. military expenditures, La Follette declared:

the interests that are behind this preparedness program in the United States do not fear Germany, do not fear England, do not fear any nation on this earth; but they do want a large army, they do want a large navy. It fits into the commercial, industrial, and imperialistic schemes of the great financial masters of this country.

Addams, La Follette and many others who are, in the present day, termed “peace Progressives,” believed it was imperative for the United States to remain neutral and work to persuade the combatants to reach a peaceful settlement, despite what most
Americans viewed as increasing and unwarranted provocations—by the Allies and, especially, by Germany.

Very early in the war, Britain laid a massive number of mines in the North Sea approaches to Germany. Yet this lethal enterprise was far less irritating to the United States than Britain’s naval blockade of Germany and neutral European nations through which Germany might receive aid. That ever-tightening blockade violated certain provisions of the prevailing rules of naval warfare (violating neutral rights, for example, and targeting food and other materials chiefly intended for German civilians).49 Moreover, British ships soon began intercepting merchant ships while they were out at sea and confiscating cargo, something reminiscent of Britain’s unacceptable behavior toward American vessels during the War of 1812. Further, the list of materials the British deemed “contraband,” and thus subject to confiscation, kept expanding. In May 1915, alone, the Royal Navy seized four hundred cargoes carried by neutral ships.50

Because these actions threatened U.S. commercial interests, and because he was the leader of the largest neutral nation, President Wilson repeatedly protested to the British government—to little avail. David Traxel has noted:

England was dependent for its protection on possessing the world’s most powerful navy, and it would not agree to any restrictions on the use of that power. The United States could protest all it wanted, and would be listened to politely; compensation for seized cargoes would usually be paid eventually. But the policy of starving Germany and Austria of war materials and then the campaign for the literal starving of their civilian populations of food were not negotiable.51

The United States also was displeased with British interception of U.S. mail and Britain’s blacklisting of U.S. firms for violating its trading-with-the-enemy act52 (i.e., Britain’s enemies; as a neutral, the United States did not officially have any enemies
before April 1917). In the spring of 1916, a wave of indignation swept through the
United States as Americans learned of Britain’s ruthless suppression of the Irish
Rebellion. (One Irish-American even handed an Irish Republican flag to the captain of a
U-boat that made a surprise landing at Newport, Rhode Island, leading the German to
promise, “The first British ship we sink, we will hoist this flag in honor of Ireland.”)\textsuperscript{54} By
summer of 1916, Wilson was saying to his confidant Edward House, “I am, I must admit,
about at the end of my patience with Great Britain and the Allies.”\textsuperscript{55}

Yet Britain and the United States, though in many ways rivals, had long had
relatively friendly relations, and while Britain did have a royal family and a still-rigid
class system, it also boasted a parliamentary form of government that Wilson personally
admired.\textsuperscript{56} Britain’s governing system and its venerable and expanding democracy\textsuperscript{57} took
it well out of the autocratic realm that characterized both Germany and its chief Central
Powers ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For those broad historic and ideological
reasons, as well as practical reasons centering on the burgeoning American financial
entanglements with Britain and France (see above), British blockade policies never
strained relations with the United States to the breaking point. “After much haggling,”
Robert H Zieger has written, “the United States accepted the broad outlines of British
policies while reserving the right to protest specific actions.”\textsuperscript{58}

Relations with Germany, under the autocratic rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II, became
another matter altogether. The behavior of German armies in Belgium in August 1914
had appalled many Americans (see above), but German brutality in Belgium had little
adverse effect on American material interests. That was not true of the unrestricted
submarine warfare—one of the terrible innovations of the Great War—that Germany
launched on February 4, 1915. The German declaration stated:

All the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland, including the whole
of the English Channel, are hereby declared to be a war zone. From
February 18 onwards every enemy merchant vessel found within this war
zone will be destroyed without it always being possible to avoid danger to
the crews and passengers. Neutral ships will also be exposed to danger in
the war zone, as, in view of the misuse of neutral flags ordered on January
31 by the British Government, and owing to unforeseen incidents to which
naval warfare is liable, it is impossible to avoid attacks being made on
neutral ships in mistake for those of the enemy. 59

President Wilson responded firmly six days later, stating that the Government of
the United States would view destruction of American lives and/or vessels on the high
seas by German submarines (or U-boats, as they were known) as "an indefensible
violation of neutral rights" and that "the United States would be constrained to hold the
Imperial German Government to a strict accountability for such acts." 60 Yet just three
months later, the U-boat crisis deepened when, on May 7, 1915, submarine U-20
torpedoed the British passenger liner Lusitania. The huge ship quickly sank, killing 1,198
civilians, including 128 Americans. 61

During the ensuing international uproar, President Wilson, acting against the
advice of his pacifist secretary of state, William Jennings Bryan, to exercise restraint and
seek concessions from both Germany and Britain, 62 dispatched three stern notes to the
German government, May 13, June 9, and July 21. Robert Zieger describes their
character:

The first affirmed the right of Americans to travel as passengers on
merchant ships, demanded an explicit German disavowal of attacks on
merchant ships, and called for a German pledge to abandon submarine
warfare against commercial vessels, whatever flag they might fly. By its
very nature, Wilson's note declared, submarine warfare constituted 'a
practice, the natural and necessary effect of which is to subject neutral
nations and neutral persons to new and immeasurable risks; and must be
terminated. In the second note . . . Wilson waved aside German arguments
that the British blockade was illegal, that the blockade was a cruel and
even deadly attack on innocent civilians, and charges that the Lusitania
was carrying munitions. The third American note . . . issued what
amounted to an ultimatum, declaring that the United States would regard
any subsequent sinking as 'deliberately unfriendly,' which was diplomatic
language that hinted strongly at a formal break in relations and perhaps
eventual American belligerency against Germany.63

These seemed to provoke thought within the German government (even as they
provoked Secretary of State Bryan to tender his resignation on June 7, 1915).64 After a U-
boat sank the British merchantman Arabic on August 19, killing two Americans,
Germany offered reparations and pledged not to make unannounced attacks on passenger
ships. A diplomatic victory for Wilson, this kept relative peace between the two nations
on the naval front until March 24, 1916. On that day a U-boat sank the unarmed French
steamer Sussex, killing two Americans and seriously injuring several more.65 An angry
President Wilson issued an ultimatum during what would now be termed a "high-profile"
speech before a joint session of Congress on April 18: if Germany did not abandon
unrestricted submarine warfare, the United States would sever diplomatic relations.66

Not wishing to risk a broader war before its U-boat fleet was sufficiently built up,
Germany then gave its so-called Sussex Pledge, promising not to sink any more merchant
vessels without warning. Germany, in other words, would now engage in restricted
submarine warfare. A crisis seemed to have been averted.67

Yet Germany's naval transgressions were not the only problem. Even as the
Lusitania crisis was unfolding, evidence came to light of German espionage in the United
States when, in July 1915, the U.S. Secret Service came into possession of a portfolio
belonging to one Heinrich F. Albert, a German citizen then residing in the United States.
The portfolio contained evidence, later published by the *New York World*, that Albert was the head of an German espionage ring.68 (His movements were thenceforward obviously restricted, yet he remained in the United States until it entered the war.) Just over one year later, on July 30, 1916, a massive explosion destroyed docks at Toms River Island near Jersey City, New Jersey, that were packed with freight cars containing materials, including ordnance, ready to be shipped to the Allies. Felt as far away as Pennsylvania, the explosion shattered windows in New York and New Jersey, hurled shrapnel into the Statue of Liberty, and killed three men and a child.69 Quickly reckoned to be the work of German saboteurs, the Black Tom explosion, as it became known, did nothing to alleviate mistrust within the U.S. government and an increasing number of Americans about German intentions, and it fed, among many, fears of German-American disloyalty. Yet the United States continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Germany into 1917.

Even as the U.S. government, American bankers, and U.S. businessmen leaned more heavily toward the Allies, and crises like that surrounding the *Lusitania* sinking caused intermittent spikes of popular sentiment against the Germans, most people in the United States continued to favor neutrality and peace. To some, despite provoking news bulletins, the war remained something far away and none of their business. To others, including Jane Addams, the war was “a horrible disaster which had befallen the world,”70 a disaster that they must try their best to temper. Addams was prominent among Progressive leaders of a determined movement for peace.

Before the war was even a month old, on August 29, 1914, more than fifteen hundred women, clad in mourning black, marched slowly down Fifth Avenue in New York City to the beat of muffled drums, holding aloft a white banner decorated with a
dove bearing an olive branch. Organized by Progressives including Fanny Garrison Villard, a daughter of Civil-War-era abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, these women were enemies of war. Their actions also reflected a great worry among Progressives in the Great War years: that fervor for war would take attention away from Progressive movements for reform—in the New York marchers’ case, the continuing quest for new women’s roles and women’s rights.\textsuperscript{71}

In January 1915 an estimated three thousand women, including Belle La Follette, wife of Wisconsin’s insurgent Republican senator, assembled in Washington, D.C., and formed the Women’s Peace Party, whose members selected Addams as its president. This was only one of a number of Progressive-led groups devoted to peace that would be formed in the United States as the war grew longer. David Kennedy notes:

\[ \text{The Women’s Peace Party} \text{ sought both to blunt the drive for American military build-up and to strengthen the cause of American feminism. It was soon joined by a host of newly formed peace societies, including the League to Enforce Peace and the American League to Limit Armaments. In varying degrees those societies . . . fused the anti-preparedness goals that were their ostensible reasons for being with one or another program for social reform. Thus, the first impact of war on the progressive left had been to give its myriad elements new organizational energy and spine.}\textsuperscript{72}\]

Reflecting the international aspects of Progressivism, American women also participated in an extraordinary wartime peace conference at the Hague, Netherlands, organized largely at the instigation of Dutch suffragists led by Aletta Jacobs and attended by women from belligerent, as well as neutral nations. Braving “official obstacles and nationalist hatreds,” as Alan Dawley has written,\textsuperscript{73} Addams headed the U.S. delegation (one of many reasons she would become the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1931).\textsuperscript{74} She also was chosen to be president of this international women’s congress. While its discussions of disarmament, a “concert of nations,” and the
rights of smaller nations did not spark any immediate diplomatic initiatives among the warring and neutral nations, such leading women Progressives as the passionate attorney and social reformer Crystal Eastman regarded the conference as a hallmark achievement. Eastman stated:

The fact that women of the warring nations met and discussed the war problems sanely and in friendship while all their male relatives were out shooting each other is to my mind a great and significant event in history—significant in the history of human progress and . . . of women’s progress.75

Women, including Addams and Hungarian-born international reformer Rosika Schwimmer also hatched, with automobile magnate Henry Ford, a plan to send a ship filled with pacifists to Europe to organize a peace conference. The voyage was to be underwritten by Ford, who stated—surprisingly, given his chosen life’s work—that the cause of the war was “capitalism, greed, the dirty hunger for dollars. Take away the capitalist and you will sweep war from the earth”76 (this at a time when “the Ford plant in Britain was already producing vehicles used in the [abortive British] Dardanelles campaign”).77 Determined, in his businesslike way, to get the warring armies “out of the trenches and back to their homes by Christmas,”78 Ford launched his peace ship, the Oskar II, toward Europe on December 4, 1915. One political cartoon of the time shows the ship approaching Europe, its only visible cargo a gigantic white sphere. The cartoon’s legend, “The snowball approaches Hell,”79 proved to be an accurate assessment of the Peace Ship’s impact on the war.

While peace movements were being organized in the United States, a movement of another sort was taking place, one that has come to be called the “Great Migration.” Sparked by poverty, violence (seventy-nine black people were lynched in 1915 alone),80
and a 1915 resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the South, and by new opportunities for work in the North as Allied orders for goods picked up, the Great Migration, which began in 1915, would bring some 6 million African Americans into northern cities by 1930. To many of these domestic migrants, this was a movement of Biblical significance. The “folklore of the Great Migration,” Alan Dawley writes, “was replete with the imagery of Moses leading his people into Canaan.” He goes on to note that, by 1916, as the U.S. preparedness movement was picking up steam, “‘Northern fever’ was raging all over the South.” By mid-1917, W. E. B. Du Bois estimated, in the NAACP publication Crisis, that, to that time, “about 250,000 colored workmen” had traveled north. The influx of blacks into northern cities would create tensions that sometimes exploded into violence. To Du Bois, it was a phenomenon that marked “a social change among American Negroes of great moment,” part of an effort—not yet embraced by most white Progressives—to broaden opportunities for black Americans.

Even before war Allied orders for war matériel helped create opportunities for black workers in the manufacturing centers of the North. Du Bois, who in 1917 and 1918 would support the enlistment of black soldiers in the segregated U.S armed forces, urged African Americans to support the Allies. In a 1914 editorial Du Bois stated:

As colored Americans then, as Americans who fear race prejudice as the greatest of War-makers, our sympathies in the awful conflict should be with France and England; not that they have conquered race prejudice, but they have at least begun to realize its cost and evil, while Germany exalts it.

If so great a catastrophe has followed jealousies and greed built on a desire to steal from and oppress people whom the dominant culture despises [sic], how much wilder and wider will be the conflict when black and brown and yellow people stand up together shoulder to shoulder and demand recognition as men! Let us give then our sympathies to those nations whose triumph will most tend to postpone if not to make unnecessary a world war of races.
By late 1916, Wilson having won a second presidential term on the accidentally arrived-at slogan “he kept us out of war,” other Progressives who had earlier been reluctant even to think about U.S. intervention, were beginning to see the conflict, as Wilson, privately, was beginning to, as a duel between autocracy and democracy. This view was enhanced by the March 1917 revolution in Russia that toppled the czar and brought to power a new republican government that promised to institute liberal reforms—and that Allied leaders, and President Wilson, initially hoped would “prosecute the war with more energy and effect” than had the Russian leadership under the czar. After that, the war seemed truly a contest between the bad-guy autocrats and the good-guy democratic republicans. To defeat the autocrats would spread democracy, and spreading democracy, within and outside the country, was a principle Progressive dream. While La Follette and a decreasing number of likeminded Progressive leaders, continued to believe strongly that spreading democracy should be done by persuasion rather than with the business end of guns—and without increasing the power and influence of business trusts—others were beginning to view military intervention on the Allied side as an acceptable means of achieving that end.

Well before the war, Herbert Croly, the intellectual light behind Roosevelt’s 1912 bid for the presidency, had written in his seminal book The Promise of American Life, “If America wants peace, it must be spiritually and physically prepared to fight for it.” Croly went on to become one of the cofounders and guiding lights of the seminal Progressive publication The New Republic, which initially supported American neutrality. Like so many Progressives, Croly, his colleague Walter Lippman, and others associated with the magazine vacillated for nearly two years in the ongoing debate
between neutrality and intervention. Yet by late 1916, *The New Republic* editorially was leaning very heavily toward active American mediation (in fact, President Wilson borrowed the phrase “peace without victory,” which he used in his January 1917 speech now known by that term, from the pages of *The New Republic*). The magazine would go on to support the country’s intervention as a full-scale combatant for democracy.88

Theodore Roosevelt was perhaps the foremost Progressive leader who advocated intervention. Though no great admirer of Wilson,89 Roosevelt had supported the president’s early neutrality declaration and offers of U.S. mediation of the conflict. As German provocations increased, however, Roosevelt swung emphatically over to the interventionist camp, becoming part of the preparedness movement. He and, at his behest, all of his sons attended the civilian training camps, overseen by the military, that had begun opening in the summer of 1915 (camps that historian David M. Kennedy has characterized as “summer séances of well-to-do businessmen and college boys training at their own expense to be military officers”).90

That same summer, well before most Americans were even thinking of military intervention, Roosevelt told General Frank Ross McCoy that, “My hope is, if we are to be drawn into this European war, to get Congress to authorize me to raise a Cavalry division”—a hope he would continue to express until he received an official “no” shortly after America entered the war. Several days later, Roosevelt told a crowd at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, “No nation ever amounted to anything if its population was composed of pacifists and poltroons, if its sons did not have the fighting edge.”91
Some Progressive leaders, however, continued to hone their fighting edge in speeches against the press for preparedness and the concomitant movement for Universal Military Training (UMT), which the National Security League believed should be "wholly under national control, for all physically fit male citizens." One eloquent verbal salvo against UMT was fired by attorney and reformer Amos Pinchot. In a letter to Samuel Gompers, Pinchot declared:

[B]ack of the cry that America must have compulsory service or perish, is a clearly thought-out and heavily backed project to mould the United States into an efficient, orderly nation, economically and politically controlled by those who know what is good for the people. In this country so ordered and so governed there will be no strikes, no surly revolt against authority, and no popular discontent. In it, the lamb will lie down in peace with the lion, and he will lie down right where the lion tells him to. . . . This, if we cut through the patriotic pretext and flag-waving propaganda, is the real vision of the conscriptionist.\(^93\)

By summer of 1916, however, as the war took more millions of lives in Europe, as the Sussex crisis was passing—and as thousands of American troops were in revolution-torn Mexico searching for Pancho Villa, who had earlier staged raids in the United States—President Wilson, himself, had joined the preparedness movement. Earlier in the year, he had toured the country speaking on behalf of preparedness, and in June he led a preparedness parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington.\(^94\) That same month, Congress passed the National Defense Act, which provided for an increase of the small 175,000-man U.S. army to a still-small 223,000 by 1921 and also increased the National Guard to 450,000\(^95\) (by contrast, at that time the German army alone numbered just under 4 million men).\(^96\) Then, in August, via the Naval Appropriations Act, Congress authorized a shipbuilding program that would create “incomparably the greatest Navy in the world.”\(^97\) At about the same time, President Wilson had managed to
have buried in committee a resolution advanced by two fellow Democrats, Senator Thomas Gore of Oklahoma and Representative Atkins Jefferson (Jeff) McLemore of Texas, to warn Americans not to travel on vessels belonging to belligerent nations, and Congress created a Council of National Defense (comprising the secretaries of war, navy, agriculture, commerce, labor, and interior) with a Civilian Advisory Commission (representing transportation, labor, general industry, finance, mining, merchandise, and medicine). The Shipping Act, passed by Congress that September, was both a reaction to plans laid by the Allies at a 1916 economic summit to which the United States, as a neutral, was not invited, and a bow to the preparedness movement. The merchant vessels authorized under this act, Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo asserted, would not only serve the nation commercially but would operate as naval auxiliaries in the case of hostilities. While most American civilians still were eager to leave the European war alone, to pacific Progressives such as La Follette, it seemed clear that the Wilson administration—and, behind the president, the business interests they had so long distrusted—were leading the country straight toward war.

In the end, German actions precipitated the final decision for war. On January 31, 1917, the German ambassador announced that the following day Germany would resume unrestricted submarine warfare. Shortly thereafter, the British gave the Wilson administration the text of an intercepted message German foreign minister Arthur Zimmermann had sent to the German ambassador in Mexico. The telegram stated:

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our
part that Mexico is to reconquest her lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.\textsuperscript{101}

To add insult to proposed injury, the Germans urged Mexico to encourage Japan, the rising Asian power that was increasingly a rival of the United States, to switch sides from the Allies to the Central Powers.

Released by the White House on the heels of the German unrestricted submarine warfare announcement, this created a wave of protest on which Wilson, reluctantly but firmly, led the country into war. The last great congressional battle before the actual war-declaration debate was led by La Follette, who organized a filibuster against a bill that would have authorized arming American merchant vessels for protection against submarines, a measure La Follette and his fellow insurgents believed would surely lead to war. Despite his and his colleagues' success at preventing a vote on the bill (thereby provoking a Wilsonian rant against "a little group of willful men"), American merchantmen were armed under the authority of an Executive Order from President Wilson.\textsuperscript{102}

On April 2, 1917, Wilson went to Capitol Hill and asked Congress for a declaration of war. Stating that the United States would go to war "without rancor and without selfish object," he declared objectives for entering the conflict that were undoubtedly celebrated by interventionist Progressives. Wilson said:

\begin{quote}
It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.\textsuperscript{103}
\end{quote}
The vote was not immediate. During the four-day debate on the president’s momentous request, La Follette delivered a four-hour speech against a war declaration, tracing the history of American relations with the combatants and pointing out what he saw as the flaws in American policy that had led to the president’s request. Yet it was his like-minded colleague, Senator George Norris (R-NE) who put one of the principal aspects of the insurgent position more succinctly and passionately in a speech which, like La Follette’s was greeted with shouts of “Treason!” Norris declared:

We are going into war upon the command of gold. We are going to run the risk of sacrificing millions of our countrymen’s lives in order that other countrymen may coin their lifeblood into money. And even if we do not cross the Atlantic and go into the trenches, we are going to pile up a debt that the toiling masses that shall come many generations after us will have to pay. . . . By our act . . . it may well be that millions of our brethren must shed their lifeblood, millions of broken-hearted women must weep, millions of children must suffer with cold, and millions of babes must die from hunger, and all because we want to preserve the commercial right of American citizens to deliver munitions of war to belligerent nations.

Others in Congress, Progressives and Conservatives alike, were hesitant to commit the country to war. Some, while willing to defend U.S. safety and honor, feared that entering the war would involve the United States in the kind of entangling alliances that George Washington warned against when the country was in its infancy and which had sparked the Great War. Others wished to avoid the kind of appalling human losses the European armies had been suffering for nearly three years. Representative Isaac Sherwood (D-OH), a veteran of the American Civil war declared:

My experience in the Civil War has saddened all my life. I had my soul rent with indescribable agony, as I stood in the presence of comrades who were maimed, mangled, and dying on 42 battlefields of this Republic. As I love my country, I feel it is my sacred duty to keep the stalwart young men of today out of a barbarous war 3,500 miles away in which we have no vital interest.
Despite such pleas, Congress voted overwhelmingly, but not unanimously, for war on April 6, 1917. Norris and La Follette were among six insurgent senators who voted against the declaration. Among the fifty-five representatives who joined Sherwood in voting against the resolution was Jeannette Rankin, a devoted pacifist who had just become the first woman member of Congress.

The Progressive movement, already shaken by conservative reaction to its attempts at sweeping domestic reforms and by a weakening of public support, now faced a terrible new challenge and a new division in its ranks. Would the war strengthen reform at home under the guiding hand of a strong and responsible government, while American strength helped spread democracy abroad, as many pro-war Progressives hoped? Or would it mean only greater profits and increasing strength for business trusts and those supporting them while the era of social reforms at home came to an end, as such antiwar stalwarts as La Follette, Norris, and Jane Addams feared?
DUELING CRUSADES FOR DEMOCRACY, 1917-1923

As of April 6, 1917, the United States was at war as a power "associated" with the Allies. Yet it was unclear, even to many who were fully prepared to support the war effort, exactly what that effort was going to entail. Many assumed that the principal United States role would be to continue supporting the Allies with goods and loans while the U.S. Navy assumed the nation's chief combat role. President Wilson was not one of those people. He was prepared for full mobilization, and he had agonized over what that might mean for the country before addressing Congress on April 2. On the night of March 31, he invited Frank Cobb of the New York World to the White House. Much later, Cobb related what Wilson had said.

Once lead this people into war and they'll forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance. To fight you must be brutal and ruthless, and the spirit of ruthless brutality will enter into the very fibre of our national life, infecting Congress, the courts, the policeman on the beat, the man in the street. Conformity would be the only virtue, the President said, and every man who refused to conform would have to pay the penalty.¹

Over the nineteen months that the United States participated in the war, Wilson's late-night prophecy became, in many ways, a matter of bitter fact as the government faced the massive organizational and logistical challenges inherent in mobilizing the human and material resources of a huge country wholly unprepared for total war.

To earn a seat at the postwar peace table, it was important to have an American army in the field—and the growing possibility that the Russian war effort actually would collapse rather than be intensified under that country's new regime made the American contribution of a sizable ground force even more imperative.² But, as has been noted, the 175,000-man regular U.S. Army had, barely a year before, been authorized gradually to
increase to a completely inadequate 223,000. Thus, while volunteer enlistment was still possible, in May 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act after sometimes contentious debate, stemming in large measure from the country’s long tradition of distrusting the military and general avoidance, whenever possible, of the heavy hand of the federal government. Written by the army’s judge advocate general, this act instituting conscription for the first time since the Civil War aimed to make the draft more palatable to people who had grown used to a small volunteer force by placing principal responsibility for conscription on 4,648 local Selective Service boards. Membership of those boards, Robert Zieger has noted, consisted of “influential citizens, primarily [local] business and civic leaders.” Federal officials, including Newton D. Baker, an Ohio Progressive who had become Wilson’s secretary of war, were concerned that the local boards would not make conscription palatable enough. Thus, they were pleasantly surprised at how people across the country responded to the draft on registration day. Zieger reports:

The actual response of the American people on June 5, a Tuesday, exceeded the most optimistic hopes of Baker and his military advisers. Amid hastily organized local festivities, parades, pageants, and processions, some ten million men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty came forward to register before more than 135,000 local board officials. From across the land, reports of enthusiastic and patriotic compliance flooded in. Ocala, Florida, was typical. . . . There was no sign of dissent or resistance, as 503 Marion County men, equally divided between white and black, registered. . . . The actual selection of draftees, launched with lottery drawings beginning on July 20, likewise met with overwhelming and even cheerful compliance.\(^3\)

In the face of Allied battlefront reverses, the age range of eligible men was expanded in January 1918 to between eighteen and forty-five. Despite the early patriotic
fervor, there was, as William Leuchtenburg has noted, significant reaction against the
draft. Leuchtenburg wrote:

Many Americans viewed the war with a discernible lack of enthusiasm. The War
Department put the total of draft dodgers at 171,000, and in two Oklahoma
counties, a ‘Green Corn Rebellion’ of tenant farmers, Indians, and blacks defied
draft authorities and resorted to violence. Areas where German-Americans or
Anglophobic Irish-Americans or peace-minded Scandinavians were dominant
greeted the war with sullen hostility. The Socialists, unlike their counterparts
abroad, were bolder. On April 9, 1917, they adopted a resolution, later approved
in a party referendum by a vote of 21,000 to 350, which proclaimed: ‘We brand
the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the
United States.’ In the 1917 municipal elections, Socialist candidates received 22
percent of the vote in New York City, 34 percent in Chicago (where they had
polled less than 4 percent a year before), and 44 percent in Dayton.\(^4\)

To assist draft resisters and antiwar activists (such as prominent Socialist and
Progressive reformer Eugene V. Debs, who was imprisoned for his views), an
organization established late in 1915, the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM)
created a Civil Liberties Bureau headed by the increasingly prominent Progressive Roger
Baldwin\(^5\)—who was, himself jailed for a year for failing to register for the draft. Soon
severed from the AUAM for strategic reasons, the Civil Liberties Bureau initially became
the American Civil Liberties Bureau\(^6\) and, in 1920 during the first so-called “Red Scare”
of 1919-1920, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).\(^7\)

Yet despite this simmering dissent, some 24 million men were registered during
the course of U.S. belligerence; more than 4 million were selected; and nearly 3 million
actually were inducted. Combined with the existing troops and volunteer enlistment,
nearly 4.5 million men served in the U.S. armed forces during the war, about 2 million of
them actually serving overseas as members of the American Expeditionary Force—the
first United States army to go into combat on the Continent.\(^8\)
The many interweaving stories of this American fighting force—and the women who supported it as doctors, nurses, Salvation Army workers, and telephone operators who were quickly dubbed “hello girls”—may be found in many excellent works on U.S. WWI combat experience. This was a huge military migration of people out of peacetime life and into training camps and other facilities. From these facilities many then moved overseas to receive further training and gradually, through small engagements and the gruesome evidence amply displayed all along the battlefront, learn the shocking lessons of modern warfare.

By June 1918, (as, back home, Progressive reformers were reeling from a series of setbacks including the Supreme Court's invalidation of the 1916 Federal Child Labor Law), U.S. forces in Europe were involved in a major battle at Chateau-Thierry, the first in a series of all-out clashes that would reverberate through American military history. These included Belleau Wood (June 6-25), the Aisne-Marne Offensive (July 18-August 6), St. Mihiel (September 12-13), and Meuse-Argonne (September 26-November 11). In the midst of this nearly non-stop combat, Wilson, bitterly disappointed and worried by the Bolshevik ascendance in Revolutionary Russia, authorized the use of U.S. troops in a two-pronged multinational Allied campaign in Russia that lasted nearly two years.

Food, weapons, uniforms, training camps, recreational facilities, medical care, transportation (railroads and ships, though most U.S. troops were conveyed overseas on British vessels)—these and many other logistical requirements for American forces, plus continuing assistance to the war-battered Allies, had to be met in impossibly short order. This meant many sacrifices for a vast number of Americans. But it also meant new employment for many, including the women who moved into jobs vacated by volunteers
and draftees. As La Follette and others had predicted, it also strengthened the position of American businesses and created great wealth for a relative few: the war, William E. Leuchtenburg has reported, created 42,000 new millionaires.¹¹

This massive effort required centralized planning and control. The Great War saw a marked increase in the reach and impact of the federal government¹² and in the power of the presidency.

Getting the people behind the war effort was the first order of business. Thus, barely a week after the declaration of war, Wilson signed an executive order establishing the Committee on Public Information (CPI) and named former muckraking Progressive George Creel as its head. Initially formed, as Secretary of War Baker later reported, under the philosophy of “faith in democracy . . . faith in the fact,”¹³ the committee was responsible for a massive propaganda offensive involving writers, artists, entertainers, and what David M. Kennedy has termed “a small, fast-talking army of patriotic speechifiers.”¹⁴ Known as “Four-Minute Men,” they popped up almost everywhere (including movie theaters and street corners) to give short talks on patriotic themes.

Throughout the American war, CPI distributed 75 million pamphlets, in multiple languages; issued thousands of press releases; created posters; and, as Alan Brinkley notes, “controlled most of the information available for newspapers and magazines.”

Further, Brinkley states:

Creel encouraged journalists to exercise ‘self-censorship’ when reporting war news, and most journalists—fearful of more coercive measures—complied by covering the war largely as the government wished.¹⁵

Increasingly, the government wished to have as little questioning and criticism as possible—and it passed draconian legislation to stifle dissent (see below). As devotion to
fact began to give way to crude propaganda in CPI, Four-Minute Men began concentrating on stories of atrocities purportedly committed by the Central Powers, and CPI-produced movies transmuted from celebratory semi-documentaries such as Our Colored Fighters to darker works such as The Prussian Cur. The committee also began placing ads in the popular magazines that were a principle source of Americans’ entertainment and enlightenment, prevailing upon readers to report to the Justice Department “the man who spreads pessimistic stories . . . cries for peace, or belittles our efforts to win the war.” The Justice Department itself encouraged a wave of vigilantism that swept over the country and lasted until well after the armistice by encouraging citizens to become volunteer detectives and report any signs of disloyalty. This sparked the creation of several self-appointed loyalty-monitoring groups with the full approval of Justice. In his thought-provoking study, Perilous Times, Free Speech in Wartime, legal scholar Geoffrey Stone describes some of these organizations. Stone writes:

The largest of these citizen groups, the American Protective League quickly enlisted more than 200,000 members. APL members ferreted out disloyalty whenever and wherever they could find it. They reported thousands of individuals to the authorities on the basis of hearsay, gossip and slander. The leadership of the APL consisted primarily of conservative men of means—bankers, insurance executives, factory owners. Other volunteer organizations were the Knights of Liberty, the Boy Spies of America, the Sedition Slammers, and the Terrible Threateners.

In April 1918, Attorney General [Thomas] Gregory boasted that the assistance of these volunteer organizations ‘enables us . . . to investigate hundreds of thousands of complaints and to keep scores of thousands of persons under observation. We have representatives at all meetings of any importance.’ H. L. Mencken observed sadly that ‘between Wilson and his brigades of informers, spies, volunteer detectives, perjurers and complaisant judges . . . the liberty of the citizens has pretty well vanished in America.’
As these vigilante groups, poked, spied, accused, and tattled—and in 1918 began staging so-called “slacker raids” to round up men suspected of dodging the draft (in the process rounding up many who were guiltless)—more government coordination agencies were being established.

In July 1917, the Council of National Defense (see previous chapter) established the War Industries Board (WIB) to coordinate the government’s procurement of military supplies. Insufficiently effective initially at bringing order out of procurement chaos, it became much more effective after Wilson reorganized it and placed Wall Street financier and political consultant Bernard Baruch in charge. Under Baruch and a staff dominated by so-called dollar-a-year men (described by Alan Brinkley as businessmen who “took paid leave from their corporate jobs and worked for the government for a token salary”), the WIB exercised near-dictatorial power over the wartime U.S. economy. On the one hand, this coordinated action fit right in with Progressive beliefs in government as an instrument of reform (though, in this case, temporary wartime rather than permanent social reform). According to Eric Goldman, however, it also gave the dollar-a-year men some ideas for the future that might easily have caused metaphorical dark clouds to gather above La Follette’s head and the heads of other Progressives worried about undue business influence over American domestic and foreign affairs. Goldman observed:

Many of the dollar-a-year men went back to their fifty-thousand-dollar-a-year jobs [that was grand recompense in the Great War era] with an idea buzzing in their heads. Perhaps their decades-old battle for ‘free competition’ and against ‘government in business’ had not been wise. They had been given striking proof that federal activity need not be anti-business, and they had seen the advantages that could come from joint operations carried on under federal aegis. . . .
Why not give up the talk about competition and draw firms together in trade associations, which would standardize products, pool information, advertising, insurance, traffic, and purchases, and draw up codes of proper practices? Why not stop fighting the government and work with it in setting up these trade associations? Few of the new business thinkers ... called for repeal of the anti-trust acts, but rather implied that the acts should not be permitted to stand in the way of the fullest functioning of trade associations. Still less rarely did they speak of government regulation; government and industry were to 'co-operate.' But whatever the importance of these emphases, vanguard thinking among businessmen in the postwar period was not opposed to governmental intervention in economic life. The new thinking was all for intervention—provided that businessmen or business-minded politicians conducted the intervention.20

Marching on toward centralized control of the war effort, on August 10, 1917, Congress enacted the Lever Food and Fuel Control Act, which Ronald Shaffer has called "one of the most sweeping grants of power in American history."21 Despite what David M. Kennedy describes as the bill's "modest and qualified departure from laissez-faire orthodoxy,"22 the bill stirred up a storm of controversy, one newspaper howling editorially that it was "the most revolutionary measure ever enacted by an American Congress," another that it constituted virtual "state socialism."23 In reality, the act authorized the president to set the price of wheat (this led to the establishment of a federal Grain Corporation with assets of $150 million to guarantee wheat prices) and to control fuel prices through a Fuel Administrator.24 Finally, it made official an agency that had actually been operating since May.

That agency, the Food Administration, headed by Progressive lion and former Belgian-relief czar Herbert Hoover, was devoted to increasing U.S. grain output and to conserving food supplies (through, e.g., home-front "meatless Mondays" and "wheatless Wednesdays) so that adequate foodstuffs could reach not only U.S. troops but also U.S. allies abroad. (This was one area in which the adamantly antiwar Jane Addams believed
she could work for the good of innocent people; she agreed to assist the Food Administration by lecturing across the country on food conservation.) 25 William Leuchtenburg reports that “the Hoover program was an outstanding success; under it, the United States was able to ship three times as much food to the Allied countries as it had before the war.” 26

Domestic transportation problems almost threatened Hoover’s program and the stream of supplies from depots across the country to east coast seaports, from which they could be shipped to American troops overseas. In the bitter-cold winter of 1917, while the American Expeditionary Force in equally frigid France was suffering severe shortages, 27 this led to another act of wartime centralization that David M. Kennedy calls “without doubt the most drastic mobilization measure of the war.” 28 On December 16, President Wilson announced that the federal government was assuming control of the nation’s railroads. Alarming to some, particularly railroad owners, this act was viewed with hope by many Progressives, who had long protested unfair railroad rates and practices. Yet hopes for lasting government-guided reforms faded when the Federal [Railroad] Control Act of March 1918 guaranteed that federal control of the railroads would continue no longer than twenty-one months after cessation of Great War hostilities. Further, the act guaranteed that railroad owners would receive proper payment for the period of time their businesses were under government control—in the eyes of some Progressives another Wilsonian bow to the business interests.

Two months before the Wilson administration assumed control of the rails, in October 1917, Congress passed the Trading with the Enemy Act, or “An Act to define, regulate, and punish trading with the enemy, and for other purposes.” Under its authority
an “Alien Property Custodian” took control of all enemy property in the United States and the Federal Trade Commission was authorized to issue licenses for the use of enemy-owned patents. David M. Kennedy describes a more ominous aspect of the bill, one particularly discomfiting to the nation’s huge immigrant population and to Progressives increasingly concerned over the state of civil liberties in wartime. Kennedy writes:

That Act required foreign-language newspapers to submit to the Post Office Department, in advance of publication, English translations of all articles or editorials referring to the government, to any of the belligerent powers, or to the conduct of the war. The procedure was costly and forced crippling delays in publication—though exemptions might be issued in cases of demonstrably ‘loyal’ publications. [Postmaster General Albert] Burleson wielded this new authority with the same unrelenting fierceness that he had shown to the radical press [under the authority of the 1917 Espionage Act, see below], with the result that the country’s many foreign-language publications either converted to an unqualified and even overblown support for the government or simply shut up shop, many never to reopen.

Pompous (President Wilson called him “the Cardinal”) and characterized by Wilson’s confidant Edward House as “the most belligerent member of the cabinet,” Burleson had first entered the censorship realm with passage of the Espionage Act in 1917. An officially sanctioned assault on free speech, the act focused ostensibly on preventing espionage and protecting military secrets. In actuality, however, it was used to chill public discourse on the war. Geoffrey R. Stone described the portion of the act that served as a basis for curbing dissidence. Stone wrote:

... the relevant part of the act made it a crime, when the nation is at war, for any person (a) willfully to ‘make or convey false reports or false statements with intent to interfere’ with the military success of the United States or ‘to promote the success of its enemies’; (b) willfully to ‘cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States’; or (c) willfully to ‘obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States.’ Violations were punishable by prison sentences of up to twenty years. The act also authorized the postmaster general to exclude from the mails any
writing or publication that is ‘in violation of any of the provisions of this act’ or that contains ‘any matter advocating or urging treason, insurrection or forcible resistance to any law of the United States.’

The ensuing overzealous prosecution of those provisions might have seemed sufficient even to the very zealous U.S. attorney general, Thomas Gregory, who, in November 1917 declared, “May God have mercy on [war dissenters], for they need expect none from an outraged people and an avenging government.” But Gregory was far from happy with the Espionage Act, which he thought had been deprived of its most effective teeth during the long debates that preceded its passage. Thus, largely at his instigation, in May 1918, Congress passed the Sedition Act, which restored some of those missing Espionage-Act teeth by prohibiting “any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the Constitution of the United States, or the flag of the United States, or the uniform of the Army or Navy,” or any language that might bring those institutions “into contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute.” Its sweeping language also forbade any person to “by word or act oppose the cause of the United States,” wording that could be, and was, broadly interpreted.

In November 1917, with the Espionage Act in force, La Follette addressed the Senate on the question of free speech. “Other senators, as well as myself,” La Follette noted, have been “accused of the highest crimes of which any man can be guilty—treason and disloyalty—and, sir, accused not only with no evidence to support the accusation, but without the suggestion that such evidence anywhere exists.” He then declared:

I say without fear of contradiction that there has never been a time for more than a century and a half when the right of free speech and free press and the right of the people to peaceably assemble for public discussion have been so violated among English-speaking people as they are violated today throughout the United States. Today, in the land we have been wont to call the free United States, governors, mayors, and policemen are preventing or breaking up peaceable meetings called
to discuss the questions growing out of this war, and judges and courts, with some notable and worthy exceptions, are failing to protect the citizens in their rights.

It is no answer to say that when the war is over the citizen may once more resume his rights and feel some security in his liberty and his person. Now is precisely the time when the country needs the counsel of all its citizens. . . .

But more than this, if every preparation for war can be made the excuse for destroying free speech and a free press and the right of the people to assemble together for peaceful discussion, then we may well despair of ever again finding ourselves for a long period in a state of peace. With the possessions we already have in remote parts of the world, with the obligations we seem almost certain to assume as a result of the present war, a war can be made any time overnight and the destruction of personal rights now occurring will be pointed to then as precedents for a still further invasion of the rights of the citizen. This is the road which all free governments have heretofore traveled to their destruction. 37

The fact that, six months later, Congress passed the Sedition Act is concrete evidence that La Follette’s concern was not shared by a majority in Congress. Further evidence may be found in another restrictive measure, this one also sparked by fears of disloyalty and aimed particularly at recent immigrants. The Alien Act of 1918 flew in the face of due process. Under this legislation aliens (and occasionally even naturalized citizens) who were accused of belonging to anarchist organizations could be deported after an investigation, conducted in secret, during which the accused had no right to counsel. In what remained of 1918, 11,625 people were deported under Alien Act authority. 38

In the atmosphere created by these three repressive laws coupled with government-encouraged vigilantism—an atmosphere likened by David M. Kennedy to the world created in George Orwell’s 198439—Progressive men and women such as La Follette and Jane Addams saw their vision of a more just and democratic America being overwhelmed by the patriotic fervors and violent prejudices surrounding the country’s international crusade to save democracy abroad. After the war, Addams wrote:
Within a year after the war began the old causes were gone, and we were steadily forced back from our advanced positions—public ownership and enfranchisement of labor, economic freedom, industrial cooperation, and political equality for the black man with the white man, for the alien with the citizen—these were all abandoned like war trenches on the Western Front, and we found ourselves fighting in the last ditch for the primary bases of democratic society, the civil liberties proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed in the Constitution.  

Yet many of the old causes remained, and many Progressives persisted in their efforts to further reform—but these efforts met with increasing resistance. Labor unrest, for example, did not cease during the war. In 1917, in Butte, Montana, a disaster occurred that led to strikes and murder. The city of 100,000 was located near Granite Mountain, then known as "The Richest Hill on Earth" for its lodes of copper and other precious metals that were in great demand by the Allied nations. More than 14,000 miners worked in the honeycomb of underground mines that laced the mountain, and on the night of June 7, a fire that accidentally started in one shaft raced through the complex, killing 168 men and sending shock waves across the nation. Anger about mine conditions resulted in strikes, workers demanding improved safety as well as better pay in view of skyrocketing copper prices and company profits. International Workers of the World activist Frank Little, who was adamantly against U.S. participation in the war, helped organize the strike—and he paid a heavy price, perhaps as much for his pacifism as for his devotion to the cause of labor. On August 1, six masked men broke into his boardinghouse room, beat him, dragged him out of town, and lynched him. A sign pinned to his chest read "first and last warning." There was no serious investigation of the crime, and the labor unrest in Butte continued: on April 25, 1920, mining company detectives shot and killed sixteen unarmed striking miners.  

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In July 1917, Bisbee, Arizona, miners striking against the Phelps-Dodge Corporation were set upon by two vigilante “committees” and the corporation’s private police. What ensued, now known as the “Bisbee deportation,” has been described by historian Maureen A. Flanagan. Flanagan wrote:

Men, women and children were indiscriminately rounded up, placed under armed guard, marched at gunpoint into sealed boxcars, and deported to a desert town in New Mexico. The Citizens’ Protective League [one of the vigilante groups] thereafter issued passports to Bisbee residents who were able to demonstrate their loyalty. No one could live, work, or obtain a draft exemption in Bisbee without taking a loyalty oath.\(^43\)

The war years and beyond continued to be rocked by strikes and other evidence of labor’s dissatisfaction with the conditions under which millions of Americans worked, though most incidents were not as bloody as the examples above. To help ameliorate the ongoing feud between labor and business, the Wilson administration created a War Labor Board (WLB) in March 1918—a move that seemed to reflect Progressive values. Comprising representatives of labor, management, and the general public, the board, as Ronald Shaffer writes, “coordinated the work of federal mediators, set minimum wages based on living costs and gender, and served as a court of last resort in labor disputes.”\(^44\)

Yet while the administration, through the WLB, allowed unions to exist, in fact they had little or no power. David M. Kennedy writes:

President Wilson directed the WLB to protect the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. Employers could not interfere with organizers, nor discriminate among union and non-union employees. But at the same time the Board was instructed that the open shop “shall not be deemed a grievance,” where it was already the practice; moreover, unions were to be prohibited from requiring workers to become union members, and from doing anything “to induce employers to bargain or deal” with them. Thus management might refuse to meet with union representatives, or might choose to deal exclusively with a safe union of its own creation. . . . There were some employers who chafed at even those mild prescriptions.\(^45\)
Experience with the WLB did, however, show workers some of the benefits of organizing. As William Leuchtenburg reports, “By 1920 the American Federation of Labor claimed a membership of 3.26 million, most of it represented by a wartime increase of 2.3 million.” Optimism was severely tempered, however, after the November 1918 Armistice. David M. Kennedy writes:

The coming of the Armistice left precious few means for the government to make its weight felt on labor’s side, however much it might have been inclined to do so. Cancelled contracts and the presumed evaporation of the commandeering power, granted only for the duration of the conflict, broke the government’s already tenuous grip on capital. . . . Against labor’s heightened hopes was set the strengthened determination of capital, especially in the steel industry, to resist union demands. 

Postwar unrest exploded into action in 1919; more workers than ever before in American history, Kennedy notes, engaged in labor protests—to little avail. A long, bitter, and unsuccessful strike by steelworkers demonstrated that labor’s wartime progress was largely ephemeral. The failure of that strike “collapsed labor’s high wartime hopes and all prospects of soon organizing the unskilled workers in the great mass-production industries that increasingly dominated the American economy.”

The hopes of such activists as W. E. B. Du Bois that the war would further the cause of racial equality also were not realized. Over 90 percent of the black men who entered the U.S. Army and were sent overseas were forced to work as laborers for the army’s Services of Supply. The 93rd, an African American combat division, won many battlefield honors. That division, however, fought under French command, and was thus free from the bitter prejudices that infected most of the white officers in the AEF.

On the home front, tensions raised by the Great Migration exploded, in July 1917, in a bloody riot in East St. Louis, Illinois, that took 49 lives, 40 of them black. The next
month, in Texas, black soldiers incensed by racial incidents surged into Houston and started a riot that killed 19 people. Sixty-four soldiers were court-martialed, 19 were hanged.\textsuperscript{51} Lynching of blacks increased during the war, reaching an apex in the bloody year of 1919, as black soldiers began returning from overseas.\textsuperscript{52}

In the international arena, Allied victory did not fulfill the dreams of Progressives who had supported the war as a crusade for the triumph of democracy. In January 1918, with American field units still months away from being fully engaged in combat operations, President Wilson appeared before Congress and outlined his vision for a postwar world. "The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by," Wilson declared, "so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of this world."

He proceeded to outline "Fourteen Points" by which postwar affairs would be guided. These included:

[I] Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international Understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view;

[III] The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance

[IV] Adequate guarantees given and taken that national Armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

[V] A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined;

[XIV] A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.\textsuperscript{53}
Two months, later, the fledgling Bolshevik government in Russia began publishing the terms of secret treaties through which the Allies (not including the United States) had agreed to advantageous disposition of coveted territories once victory was achieved. Those who assumed this was merely the last gasp of an antiquated system received some rude jolts after the November 1918 armistice that ended the war, when Wilson joined other Allied and affiliated leaders in Paris, France, to negotiate the terms of the peace treaties, chiefly that with Germany, that would be presented to the Central Powers. The first serving president to travel to the Continent, promulgator of the Fourteen Points, and commander-in-chief of the American troops who had bolstered Allied strength at a crucial point in the world’s most devastating conflict to date, Wilson was greeted by tremendous crowds. Their jubilant reception was, it may be assumed, the high point of his visit. For in Paris, he encountered the ills of a damaged world and a host of ambitions and resentments.

The war, and the flu pandemic that killed even more people than the war did, had rocked the world, disrupting lives, societies, and the international economy. In Europe, Margaret MacMillan reports, “the war had left factories unusable, fields untilled, bridges and railway lines destroyed.” In many areas there was an abundance only of shortages. MacMillan writes:

From all quarters of Europe, from officials and private relief agencies, alarming reports came in: millions of unemployed men, desperate housewives feeding their families on potatoes and cabbage soup, emaciated children. In that first cold winter of the peace, Herbert Hoover, the American relief administrator, warned the Allies that some 200 million people in the enemy countries and almost as many again among the victors and the neutral nations faced famine. . . . The humanitarian case for doing something was unanswerable. So was the political one. ‘So long as hunger continued to gnaw,’ Wilson warned his colleagues, ‘the foundations of government would continue to crumble.’
The German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires had come crashing down, the disposition of their colonial territories to be decided. Representatives of colonial people, whether officially invited or not, descended on the conference. Some were heard, many were ignored—as were the demands for representation at the conference made by women’s suffrage societies that had established headquarters in Paris. Territorial squabbles were already in progress. On the Continent itself, armed units of the newly reconstituted Poland were fighting Russian troops. Many Allied people had a near insatiable thirst for revenge against Germany. Allied leaders were demanding that the Germans pay huge reparations and accept full responsibility for the war. In the swirl of petitions, demands, and accusations, the open negotiations originally envisioned became much less open, involving principally what became known as the Council of Four:

Wilson, British prime minister David Lloyd-George, French premier Georges Clemenceau, and (occasionally) Italian prime minister Vittorio Orlando.

Under the circumstances, it is perhaps little wonder that the high principles expressed in the Fourteen Points did not survive unscathed. William Leuchtenburg provides a succinct overview of the compromises Wilson felt it necessary to make.

Leuchtenburg writes:

Although he believed in open covenants openly arrived at, the treaty was drafted behind closed doors. Although he espoused the self-determination of nations, he consented to turn over the Austrian Tyrol to Italy, to put Germans under Polish rule in Silesia and the Corridor, and to allow Japan to take over the German sphere of influence in Shantung. Although he advocated a peace among equals, he agreed that Germany must pay an immediate indemnity of $5 billion, sign a blank check for future reparations (including the full cost of pensions to Allied soldiers), surrender vast amounts of coal- and iron-rich territory, lose much of her merchant marine, and be stripped of her entire overseas empire. Although he had expressed doubt about the causes of the war, the treaty pinned the ‘war guilt’ on Germany.
The document made no mention of freedom of the seas [one of the Fourteen Points] and did nothing to break down economic barriers, in part because, as Wilson confessed on one occasion, he was ‘not much interested in the economic subjects.’ Nonetheless, when Wilson sailed home from Europe, he brought with him a treaty that included provision for the league that was his heart’s desire.\textsuperscript{60}

Wilson’s “heart’s desire,” shared by many Progressive Americans,\textsuperscript{61} was to elude him, though it did become a central feature of the Versailles Treaty between the Allies and Germany. Criticized by European nationalists, the League faced an unending barrage of objections in the United States, with salvoes coming in from all directions. Indiana’s Republican senator Albert Beveridge, an expansionist with Progressive leanings, sneered at the League as something conjured up by “amiable old male grannies who, over their afternoon tea, are planning to denationalize America and denationalize the Nation’s manhood.”\textsuperscript{62} Massachusetts senator Henry Cabot Lodge was not, like Beveridge, an “irreconcilable” with regard to the League. Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he was a leader of the “strong reservationists”—and one of his strongest reservations was his reluctance to countenance any idea brought to the table by Woodrow Wilson, whom he detested.\textsuperscript{63} Perhaps surprisingly, given his hopes for an increasingly democratic world in which there would be diplomatic congress between peoples rather than armed conflict, Robert La Follette was adamantly opposed to the League and the treaty that would create it. In a November 1919 speech in the Senate, La Follette declared:

\ldots the little group of men who sat in secret conclave for months at Versailles were not peacemakers. They were war makers. They cut and slashed the map of the old world in violation of the terms of the armistice. They patched up a new map of the old world in consummation of the terms of the secret treaties the existence of which they had denied because they feared to expose the sordid aims and purposes for which men were sent to death to the tens of thousands daily. They betrayed China. They locked the chains on the subject peoples of Ireland,
Egypt, and India. They partitioned territory and traded off peoples in mockery of that sanctified formula of 14 points, and made it our Nation’s shame. Then, fearing the wrath of outraged peoples, knowing that their new map would be torn to rags and tatters by the conflicting, warring elements which they had bound together in wanton disregard of racial animosities, they make a league of nations to stand guard over the swag!...

Senators, if we go into this thing, it means a great standing army; it means conscription to fight in foreign wars, a blighting curse upon the family life of every American home every hour. It means higher taxes, higher prices, harder times for the poor. It means greater discontent, a deeper, more menacing unrest.64

The U.S. struggle over the League and the Versailles Treat lasted into 1920. It ended in defeat for the Versailles Treaty and the League and included a pro-League cross-country speaking tour by President Wilson that ruined his health. The year 1920 also saw the violent end of the repressive “Red Scare.” In 1917, Bolsheviks had gained control of Russia, the largest nation on earth, and some Americans feared their example would incite Socialists and labor agitators to disrupt the American way of life. Evidence (real and imagined) and editorial agitation by some of the nation’s newspapers and government official bolstered that fear. The Scare started in the spring of strike-torn 1919, when bombs were discovered in the mail: one arrived at the office of the mayor of Seattle; thirty-four were intercepted by postal authorities in New York. Those in New York were addressed to John D. Rockefeller, Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, among others. Publicity about their discovery started a firestorm of riots and repression, encouraged by Palmer (whose attitude was not improved by the bomb that partially destroyed his house in June). His Red-Scare-prompted creation, the Central Intelligence Division of the Bureau of Investigation, headed by J. Edgar Hoover “fed the Red Scare,” Geoffrey Stone has written, “by aggressively disseminating sensationalized and often fabricated or exaggerated charges that Communists and other radicals had instigated violent strikes and
race riots." State governments sometimes outdid Palmer federal authorities in their zealousness before the Red Scare abated in the spring of 1920 and the raids, deportations, and associated violence stopped.65

Without fanfare that same year, Congress repealed the Sedition Act. The Espionage Act, however, remains in effect.

The year 1920 did see the realization of two Progressive dreams. The Eighteenth Amendment made prohibition the law of the land—creating a business boom for bootleggers and mobsters. The Nineteenth Amendment was also ratified that year, finally making woman suffrage a reality, justly celebrated as a mighty victory.

In the main, however, events during the war years and in the war’s immediate aftermath had dashed, or driven underground, many other Progressive dreams. David M. Kennedy writes:

Disillusion with Wilson and disappointment at their own failure to protect the reform cause were not the only wounds the war inflicted on progressives. The cruelest damage was visited on their very social philosophy, their most cherished assumptions about the reasonableness of mankind, the malleability of society, and the value of education and publicity as the tools of progress. The events of the war years had mauled [ Progressive philosopher and educational reformer] John Dewey’s central premise that the world, even a world at war was a plastic place that an enlightened public might shape to progressive ends. Both on the domestic and international fronts, the conflict had revealed forces loose in the world that terribly twisted the fragile hopes of men of good will.

Even less tenable in the aftermath of wartime hysteria was the presumption that the public at large was rational and decent. Increasingly, that benign appraisal of human nature succumbed to a more cynical assessment, and the idea of ‘the people,’ good and educable, gave way to a concept of ‘the masses,’ brutish and volatile. Publicity, in which the prewar progressives had placed so much political hope, became in the postwar decade little more than an adjunct to the new economy of consumerism, as the fledgling industry of advertising adopted the propagandists’ techniques of mass communication and persuasion. . . . When John Dos Passos wrote USA, his bitterly disillusioned account of American life in the World War I era, he made ‘public relations’ expert J. Ward Morehouse among the most contemptible of characters, a man who blithely urged the marketing of a worthless ‘health food’ cereal under the banner
of 'selfservice, independence, individualism... This is going to be more than a publicity campaign,' Morehouse is made to say in grotesque mockery of the rhetorical crimes of the war, 'it’s going to be a campaign for Americanism.66

Nineteen Twenty was also a presidential election year, and the election brought Republican Warren G. Harding to the White House. Robert La Follette might have cringed at one of Harding’s campaign promises—"Less government in business and more business in government"—but a majority of the voting public embraced the sentiments Harding had expressed before his nomination:

America’s present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise; not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality.67

The United States was prepared for a return to normalcy. In the wake of the war era and all that had happened, however, what did normalcy mean?
EPILOGUE: THE ELECTION OF 1924

Age 67 in 1924, Robert La Follette, now generally called the “Old Man,” seemed to many observers a bit more mellow, with less of a roar in his rhetoric. Yet he remained wholly devoted to his vision of Progressivism and had been pleased, in 1922, when the Progressive movement seemed to be rebuilding. That year, a group called the People’s Legislative Service, with which La Follette was closely involved, organized a convention in Chicago to which it invited “labor and farm leaders, Socialists, the Nonpartisan League, and others ‘to establish closer understanding’ in electing legislators who would resist conservative Republicans.”¹ Wisconsin’s veteran insurgent senator faced a tough reelection campaign in 1922, and he rose to the occasion, traveling the state, and beyond, rising at times to his old rhetorical highs. Undoubtedly benefiting as well from the backing of the organization that sprang from the Chicago convention, the Conference for Progressive Political Action, La Follette won reelection so easily that the New York Times predicted that the “leader of the radical progressives, [would] be the most powerful legislative factor in the next Congress.”²

La Follette had higher ambitions. In 1924, after his bid for the Republican presidential nomination was roundly defeated, he resurrected the Progressive Party and ran as its candidate for president. The Progressive Party platform on which he ran commenced with a familiar statement: “The great issue before the American people today is the control of government and industry by private monopoly.” The principles and politics to which the party pledged allegiance were also reminiscent of the heady days when it had seemed possible that the more conservatively Progressive Teddy Roosevelt might return to the White House under the Progressive Party banner: preservation of
natural resources, railroad reform, tax reform, an end to child labor. Further, the platform denounced, in words very much like those La Follette had often used, "the mercenary system of foreign policy under recent administrations in the interests of financial imperialists, oil monopolists, and international bankers," as "contrary to the will of the American people, destructive of domestic development and provocative of war." The people, rather than the business-controlled government, should lead the way. With them, in whom the supreme sovereignty in the American democracy rests, "should rest the final decision of all great questions of national policy."

On this platform, which conservative Republicans declared would invite chaos should the Progressive win, 4 La Follette ran against Democrat John W. Davis, a former U.S. ambassador to Britain, and Republican Calvin ("Silent Cal") Coolidge, who had succeeded to the presidency after Warren Harding's death in 1923, the year the last American troops returned from occupation duties in Europe. Silent Cal’s philosophy toward strong business interests, contrasting sharply with La Follette’s, would be reflected in a speech that he gave to the American Society of Newspaper Editors two months after the election:

There does not seem to be cause for alarm in the dual relationship of the press to the public, whereby it is on one side a purveyor of information and opinion and on the other side a purely business enterprise. . . . After all, the chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing and prospering in the world. I am strongly of the opinion that the great majority of people will always find these are moving impulses of our life. The opposite view was oracularly and poetically set forth in those lines of Goldsmith which everybody repeats but few really believe:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
   Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.
Excellent poetry, but not a good working philosophy. 5

In the 1924 election, Coolidge won by a landslide.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


3. Ibid., 294. In this article, Filler declares “that no civilization could hope to avoid fearful errors which did not maintain a sophisticated acquaintance with its past experience. It is a sad fact that in recent decades … we lost sight of this fundamental truth, so that otherwise normal and responsible people presumed to think they could do without history.” His following complex sentence is charged with passionate intensity: “Shallow pragmatists who have thought they could handle their temporal problems on an ad hoc basis, without regard for religious considerations, without history, without a sense of what people are, whether they know it or not, have ended up in the monstrousity of the Organization Man: a Frankenstein creation which looks human but may be manipulated by any creature having access to the few pecuniary buttons which give it movement.” Fifty-two years later, in 2013, this concern was echoed, in less passionate terms, in a report, The Heart of the Matter, issued by the Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. See Linda Downs, “Report Warns Against Declining Emphasis on Humanities and Social Sciences,” College Art Association, ‘http://www.collegeart.org/advocacy/2013/06/19/report-warns-against-declining-emphasis-on-humanities-and-social-sciences/’ (accessed October 2013).


6. Henry F. May, The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 22-23. A “muckraker” was one of a group of talented American writers, including Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and Lincoln Steffens, who investigated and wrote exposés on various social problems. The term was coined, Brinkley notes, in The Unfinished Nation, 582-83, “after Theodore Roosevelt accused one of them of raking up muck through his writings.” This, one assumes, was Roosevelt in one of his less Progressive moments.


9. Ibid., 149. De Santis notes, regarding the broad and disparate Progressive movement, that it did not “have any single leader as such with a reform program that appealed to all reformers. There were associated with it four nationally known political leaders—Robert M. La Follette, William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. But none of these men could be called the national leader of progressivism. Of the four, La Follette was probably most identified with the whole sweep of the movement, but he cannot be regarded as the single leader.” He might also have mentioned, though he did not, that every one of these four leaders had, either intermittently or generally, quite low opinions of all the others.


13 Ibid., 19-20. Dawley, one of a number of historians to note this end-of-war optimism, states that “International flows of capital, labor, and knowledge all seemed to point straight toward ever-greater cooperation among the peoples of the world. Widespread acceptance of that view is evident in the popularity of [British author, lecturer and member of Parliament] Normal Angell’s pacifist tract *The Great Illusion*. Published in a dozen different countries in 1910, the book presented an antiraw version of social Darwinism. ‘War has no longer the justification that it makes for the survival of the fittest,’ Angell contended, ‘it involves the survival of the less fit.’ To believe that progress comes about through war was the ‘great illusion.’ The truth was, said Angell, progress comes about through the peaceful exchanges of world trade and investment. Since these were on the upswing, social evolution was making war obsolete.”

14 See, e.g., “The National Movement for Permanent International Arbitration,” *The New York Tribune*, April 7, 1907, showing portraits of prominent members of the movement. http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/3798325498/ (accessed October 2013). De Santis, in *The Shaping of Modern America*, 248, writes, “The growing interest of the United States in general world affairs was shown in the efforts of both [Theodore] Roosevelt and [William Howard] Taft, in negotiating agreements with other nations, to submit to the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague all cases coming within the scope of arbitration. Hay, Roosevelt’s first Secretary of State had negotiated fourteen arbitration treaties, mainly with Great Britain, France, and Germany, by December 1904.” That year, it is significant to note, the Russo-Japanese war was raging, a prime example that not all military conflicts were being circumvented through arbitration. In fact, De Santis goes on to state, “However, they all excluded from arbitration questions affecting the vital interests, national honor, and independence of the contracting countries and thus the treaties were rather limited instruments.” Given the scope and flexible definitions of the excluded areas, “rather limited” would seem to be an understatement.

15 Christopher Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II* (Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000), 39. The author notes that this social consciousness on the part of the Kaiser did not stem entirely from his own generosity of soul. “The unprecedented scale of the strike wave of 1889-90 had shocked and confused the Prussian authorities.” In the Germany of that time, militaristic Prussia was the sun around which the other German states revolved, and Kaiser Wilhelm was king of Prussia as well as emperor of all Germany.

16 Daniel T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 62. “From a trickle in the mid 1870s to a broad, institutionally established stream in the 1890s, a generation of American students of economics and social science made their way to Germany for study. They passed through the German *Wanderjahre* from hand to hand until these hardened into formula: a semester in Johannes Conrad’s economics seminar in Halle, a research paper with the Verein für Sozialpolitik’s leading figure, Gustav Schmoller, and, almost always, the lectures of Adolph Wagner in Berlin, where the theoretical and ethical fallacies of classical economics were laid out with passionate argument.”

17 Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 85. Mary Kingsbury (later Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch), 1867-1951, became an American settlement worker and housing reformer and was active in the woman suffrage movement.


20 Ibid., 63-64, 68-69.

21 Ibid., 64. The author notes that Hull House and Lillian Wald’s Henry Street settlement were among the U.S. social-welfare establishments that “functioned as hostels for an astonishingly broad list of sojourning English Progressives.”

22 Ibid., 66.

24 Dawley, Changing the World, 15.

25 Filler, “Progress and Progressivism,” 298.

26 Rogers, American Crossings, 70. Eric F. Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform (Chicago, Ill.: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 229, notes that when a Japanese delegation visited the United States and visited “Judge Ben Lindsey’s court to observe his methods of handling juvenile delinquents . . . they even added a photographer so that the courtroom furniture might be exactly reproduced in Tokyo.”

27 May, End of American Innocence, 22-23.

28 For a brief description of one of the United States’ worst industrial accidents, see Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 600-601. Brinkley says of this avoidable accident, so reminiscent of recent news stories out of such “undeveloped” countries as Bangladesh (see e.g., “Building Collapse in Bangladesh Leaves Scores Dead,” New York Times, April 24, 2013, and “Bangladesh Clothing Factory Hit by Deadly Fire, BBC online, October 8, 2013 at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24453165), “146 workers, most of them women, died. Many of them had been trapped inside the burning building because management had locked the emergency exits to prevent malingering.” Three years later a commission established to study the accident issued a report that Brinkley terms “a classic progressive document, based on the testimony of experts, filled with statistics and technical data.”

29 See De Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 155; “Millions of Americans were also distressed by their personal poverty and misery under the country’s vaunted economic system. There was an almost incredible disparity between the incomes of the wealthy few and the poor masses. One percent of American families owned nearly seven-eighths of the wealth in the country; seven-eighths of the families owned only one-eighth. While a fifth of the nation’s families were comfortable or rich, four-fifths just subsisted.”

30 Rogers, Atlantic Crossings, 71.

31 Ibid.


33 As quoted in Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny, 208-209, Roosevelt described the basic tenets of his square deal and the “New Nationalism” as follows: “I mean not merely that I stand for fair play under the present rules of the game, but that I stand for having those rules changed so as to work for a more substantial equality of opportunity. . . . The American people are right in demanding that New Nationalism, without which we cannot hope to deal with new problems. The New Nationalism puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage. . . . [It] rightly maintains that every man holds his property subject to the general right of the community to regulate its use to whatever degree the public welfare may require it.” These are declarations with which most, if not all Progressives, could have agreed. The speech, however, also contained elements with which other leading Progressives, most notably La Follette and Woodrow Wilson, would have, and did, take issue. When Roosevelt gave this speech in late summer of 1910, Wilson was just gaining national attention as a political (as opposed to academic) figure while serving as the notably Progressive governor of New Jersey.


35 May, End of American Innocence, 4.

36 Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette, 122.


39 As De Santis notes, The Shaping of Modern America, 196-7, “The Taft administration instituted ninety anti-trust suits—more than twice as many as [Theodore] Roosevelt—and secured forty-three indictments.” Among
other Progressive actions that occurred during Taft’s tenure were passage of the Mann-Elkins act, extending the authority of the Interstate Commerce Commission, establishment of the Bureau of Mines, which was to regulate mine safety (with very mixed success) mine safety, and passage of a law “requiring publication of the names of persons contributing to campaign funds in federal elections.” Yet De Santis also notes that “Taft had no desire to destroy the trusts,” and it is generally accepted that Taft’s base lay in the conservative, not the Progressive, arm of the Republican Party.


41 For more background on dollar diplomacy see George C. Herring, From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 373-376.

42 Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette, 188-189.

43 P. Kennedy, “La Follette’s Foreign Policy, 292.

44 Ibid., 189, 194. See also Melvin I. Urofsky, Louis D. Brandeis. A Life (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009), 332-333, for a short description of the formation of the NPRL, of which Brandeis became a charter member. Though he would often differ with La Follette, particularly over foreign policy during World War I, Brandeis maintained a warm and admiring friendship with the Wisconsin Progressive from 1910 until La Follette’s death in 1925. When La Follette was named head of NPRL, Brandeis “sent a congratulatory telegram declaring that ‘no man in public office today expresses so fully the highest ideals of American democracy.’”

45 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 597, points out that city political bosses and their machines often had a great deal of support from some of the people that Progressives were devoted to helping: “there was a great constituency of urban working people, many of them recent immigrants, for whom the machines were a source of needed jobs and services.” Yet increasing Progressive pressure, and the machines’ corrupt practices, eventually overcame these difficulties.

46 Ibid., 600.

47 Ibid.

48 Regarding municipal and state government reforms, see Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 596-599, and De Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 160-169.

49 Dawley, Changing the World, 2.

50 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 602.

51 De Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 170. The author did not cite a source for the “permanent clot in the social bloodstream” phrase that he placed in quotes.


55 Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette, 88-90.
58 Edmund Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 2010), 138. Morris writes: “The heads of state and other eminences he [Roosevelt] had met, in nation after nation from Italy to Norway, had betrayed, in their various defensive ways, a general consciousness that some breakdown of civilization was on its way. Whether it happened soon, as [former British prime minister Arthur] Balfour and [British diplomat Cecil] Spring Rice kept predicting, or held off for a decade, as [American journalist and historian Henry] Adams hoped, it was unlikely to be deflected by arbiters droning on at The Hague.”

57 Ibid.


59 Ibid., 146.

CHAPTER ONE


2 For information on La Follette’s distrust of Roosevelt during this period, see Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 194-99. Regarding Roosevelt’s waffling and the growing pressure on him to run, see Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt*, 153, 157-171.


4 Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt*, 170. In discussing Roosevelt’s final announcement, Morris notes that, before making it, he had casually stated, in typically pugnacious TR prose, “My hat is in the ring. The fight is on and I am stripped to the buff.” Curiously, the statement didn’t create much of a stir at the time.


6 Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 619. Roosevelt would use the “Armageddon” sentence the following August to end his acceptance speech at the Progressive Party convention.

7 Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 620.

8 De Santis, *The Shaping of Modern America*, 205.


12 Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 349-356. Herring notes that under Roosevelt’s guidance, “the U.S. Navy completed the shift from harbor defense to a modern battleship fleet, . . . His dispatch of the Great White Fleet on its world tour in 1907 was, to him, a crowning achievement. . . . The cruise exposed major technical problems with the fleet and a serious shortage of bases in crucial areas, but it represented a coming-out party of sorts for the modern U.S. Navy.” He also observes that the growing power of the Japanese was one motive for the fleet’s mission: “His master stroke, as he saw it, was to send the fleet on a world cruise that included a stop in Japan. He hoped through this blatant
show of force to publicize the importance of the navy, build political capital in California, and give pause to the Japanese.”

13 Roosevelt, “Confession of Faith.”


15 Quoted in de Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 205-206.


17 De Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 207.

18 Ibid.


20 Ibid., 347.

21 Herbert David Croly, The Promise of American Life (New York: Macmillan, 1909). The book, which has been reprinted many times, includes two sections on Roosevelt and his policies in Chapter VI, “Reform and the Reformers.”

22 Urofsky, Louis D. Brandeis, 348-349.

23 Ibid., 342.

24 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 607.

25 Urofsky, Louis D. Brandeis, 349.

26 See Morris, Colonel Roosevelt, 244-251.

27 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 537, [Appendix]-32. The decline in voter turnout continued through the twentieth century, and voter turnout remains relatively low in the twenty-first century.


29 Ibid.


31 Ibid.


35 Dawley, Changing the World, 27.

36 Ibid., 27-28.


40 Quoted in Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette, 139.


43 Ibid.

44 “Primary Resources: The Ludlow Massacre,” WGBH American Experience.

45 James A. Morone, Hellsfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 312. Morone writes: “The national government was hooked on that liquor money. Then the Progressives won their income tax. . . . Now the government had an alternative. At first the tax landed on just a handful of wealthy people. But with the advent of World War I, federal tax revenues grew eightfold. Even though liquor revenues doubled, they now made up just 9 percent of the federal take. The liquor money was finally expendable.”


48 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 542, says about the Sherman Antitrust Act: “Responding to growing popular demands, both houses of Congress passed the Sherman Antitrust Act in July 1890, almost without dissent. Most members of Congress saw the act as a largely symbolic measure, one that would help deflect public criticism but was not likely to have any real effect on corporate power. And for over a decade after its passage, the Sherman Act—indifferently enforced and steadily weakened by the courts—had virtually no impact. As of 1901, the Justice Department had instituted many antitrust suits against unions, but only fourteen against business combinations; there had been few convictions.

49 Rebecca S. Shoemaker, The White Court: Justices, Rulings, and Legacy (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 114.

50 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 595 (state legislation), 592 (largest reform movement).

51 Ibid., 621. La Follette’s support for the Underwood-Simmons Tariff is noted in Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette, 227.

53 See, e.g., Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 622.

54 Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 230. Unger describes La Follette’s distress over the tepidness of the Federal Reserve Act somewhat colorfully: “In La Follette’s eyes, the Democrats, dictated by their fear of the powerful business interests, were giving the monkeys their own banana plantation.”


56 Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 228, 185 (founding date of magazine).

57 Ibid. Unger notes that “Wilson’s racial attitudes remained fundamentally unchanged throughout his presidency.”

58 Ibid., 221. The shipping trust Morgan headed was the International Mercantile Marine Company.

59 Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt*, 182. Morris notes that the Titanic tragedy touched not only the White House but the pre-convention campaign among presidential hopefuls. Campaigning in Kansas, Roosevelt spoke of the tragedy and the loss of Tall’s aide, who had helped women and children to safety before going down with the ship. “Major Butt was the highest type of officer and gentleman,” TR said. “I and my family all loved him sincerely.”

60 Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 221.


62 Ibid.


68 Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 390 (“mother to foreigners”), 290 (“Americans came to view Mexico”).

69 Ibid., 391.


71 Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 391.
Ibid., 392-393.

Bolling, Chronology of Woodrow Wilson, 35-36.

Herring, From Colony to Superpower, 394.

P. Kennedy, “La Follette’s Foreign Policy, 290.

Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette, 236. La Follette’s declaration of support for the President appeared in the pages of his magazine, La Follette’s Weekly.

A quick check of Internet resources reveals that Umberto I of Italy was assassinated on July 29, 1900; Carlos I, king of Portugal, and his son Crown Prince Luiz Felipe were assassinated on February 1, 1908; and George I of Greece was assassinated on March 18, 1913.


CHAPTER TWO

Quoted in David Traxel, Crusader Nation: The United States in Peace and the Great War, 1898-1920 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 125. The Life magazine of which Martin was editor is the humor magazine that was published from the 1880s to 1936. That year, it was purchased and transformed into the more modern and familiar Life by Henry Luce.

Ibid., 126 (number of U.S. tourists), 136 (Hoover quote).

Ibid., 130.

Quoted in Morris, Colonel Roosevelt, 382.

Ibid.


Traxel, Crusader Nation, 142-143.


Quoted in John Milton Cooper, Jr., Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 221.

For the story of the development and construction of the Panama Canal, see, e.g., David McCullough, The Path Between the Seas: The Construction of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977); and, much more succinctly, Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 627-628.

Traxel, Crusader Nation, 144. Cooper, Pivotal Decades, 210-211, calls the “business downturn” of this period “the worst depression since the 1890s. . . . Business failures mounted rapidly, and industrial production fell. Job losses hit cities and heavy industries such as coal and steel particularly hard. Massachusetts unions found that nearly a fifth of their members were unemployed at the end of 1914. Other surveys found comparable levels of unemployment
in most major industries in the Northeast and Midwest." Some sources, however, e.g., Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, don’t find the downturn significant enough to mention.


15 De Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 100, states: "Between 1860 and 1900 almost fourteen million immigrants came to the United States. Another fourteen and a half million followed between 1900 and 1915." Bruce Clayton, Forgotten Prophet: The Life of Randolph Bourne (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 188, states: "From 1900 to 1915 upwards of fourteen million [immigrants] had arrived, more than in the entire fifty year ‘peak period,’ 1830-1880."

16 Wilson, "Message to Congress."
17 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 605.
18 Clayton, Forgotten Prophet, 191.
19 Ibid., 193.
20 Ibid., 194 (Sedgwick), 195 (Addams).
21 Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, 605-606.


23 Bolling, Chronology of Woodrow Wilson, 42-43.
25 Morris, Colonel Roosevelt, 392.

26 Traxel, Crusader Nation, 144. Traxel states, “Tariff income would fall by almost $85 in the first year of the war, as owners foreign and domestic refused to risk their ships on the suddenly hostile sea. This fear had dire effects on American exports since the country had relied heavily on foreign vessels to carry goods to world markets because American-flagged shipping was so expensive . . . Trade stopped, and the commodities such as cotton, wheat, oats, corn, and much else began to rot on the docks . . . Cotton was particularly hard hit. In 1913 cotton had commanded a price of thirteen cents a pound for the standard grade; a couple of weeks into the war in 1914 the price had fallen to less than half that. Since it cost more than nine cents a pound to grow, the South, which depended, as [Secretary of the Treasury] McAdoo was well aware, ‘almost wholly on cotton’ was ‘facing a gigantic disaster.’ . . . The cotton crisis had effects on the already weak economy outside the South.”

27 David Thelen, Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 118.

28 Ibid., 118-119. Cooper, Pivotal Decades, 203, notes: “agitation over immigration restriction and prohibition heightened tensions between small-town and rural ‘native’ Protestants on one side and mostly Catholic urban ethnics on the other. These issues still did not occupy the center of the political stage, but they were moving inexorably into more prominence, along with the drive for woman suffrage, which was so often linked to prohibition by both supporters and opponents.” There were also intense wartime pressures, through the Committee on Public Information and other government organizations, to unify Americans, and to “Americanize” immigrants—though, at times, these efforts took the form of celebrating the fact that many ethnicities were a part of the American fabric. During U.S. participation in the war, Fourth of July parades became prime venues of celebrating both Americanism and ethnicity. See, e.g. Matthew Dennis, Red, White, and Blue Letter Days: An American Calendar (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 77: “in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1918, some seventy-five thousand immigrants and their children marched in that city’s Fourth of July Americanization parade. Here too ethnic Americans, although displaying sashes that read ‘America First,’ walked in native costumes or built floats recalling their homelands.”

104
Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 623. Thelen, *Insurgent Spirit*, 118, noted La Follette's distress at the "disastrous election of 1914 in Wisconsin," that bastion of Progressivism. "Five progressive candidates entered the 1914 gubernatorial primary against corporate manager Emanuel Philipp. . . Philipp won the primary, and John J. Blaine, La Follette's candidate for governor on an independent ticket in the general election, lost badly to Philipp." Morris. *Colonel Roosevelt*, 392, notes the effect of the election on candidates who ran under the Progressive Party banner (as opposed to Progressives who ran on the tickets of the two major parties): "On 3 November [1914], the Progressive Party lost all its state contests except in California, where Hiram Johnson was reelected [governor]. Only one Progressive kept his seat in the House of Representatives. Nationwide, the Party registered just two million votes—half its strength in 1912—to six million apiece for the two major parties."


De Santis, *The Shaping of Modern America*, 219-20. De Santis goes on to note that the bill's "labor provisions were not as favorable to labor as was expected. They did not free labor from the restraints of the antitrust laws, and court decisions in the twenties on the act's provisions greatly reduced their seeming benefits."

Quoted in Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 231.

Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 623.

Quoted in De Santis, *The Shaping of Modern America*, 220.

Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 226. Unger notes that "the Supreme Court in 1897 exempted seamen from the Thirteenth Amendment, upholding the contract of merchant sailors as 'an exceptional one . . . involving . . . to a certain extent, the surrender of . . . personal liberty during the life of the contract.'"


See David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 16, where Kennedy quotes Representative Kitchin: "I am persuaded to think, Kitchin wrote to William Jennings Bryan, 'that when the New York people are thoroughly convinced that the income tax will have to pay for the increase in the army and navy, they will not be one-half so frightened over the future invasion by Germany and that preparedness will not be so popular with them as it now is.'"


De Santis, *The Shaping of Modern America*, 258.


De Santis, *The Shaping of Modern America*, 258.


Ibid. In a wartime pamphlet, *The Starvation of Germany* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), Britain’s James W. Headlam defended the blockade policy that many Americans found inhumane: “The great change . . . which the Allies have made in the conduct of the war by sea is that they have virtually done away with the distinction between absolute and conditional contraband. Why have they done so? It is because this distinction arose from the conditions under which previous wars have been conducted, and those conditions no longer prevail. Food-stuffs were formerly conditional contraband, i.e. the importation of them was legitimate when it was intended for the civil population, illegitimate when it was intended for the immediate services of the army. But now we have shown this distinction to be no longer valid. Those who remain at home are deliberately working under an organized scheme for the service of the army and the conduct of the war just as much as those away in the field. All food-stuff imported into Germany directly and immediately adds to the combatant power of Germany.”


De Santis, *The Shaping of Modern America*, 263, notes the interception of U.S. mail by the British.

Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt*, 468-469. The U-boat in question was U-53, commanded by Lt. Hans Rose. According to Morris, in October 1916 Rose blithely sailed his “sea-green, 213-foot German submarine . . . into [Newport’s] inner harbor, where thirty-seven warships of the U.S. North Atlantic squadron were at anchor, and docked as coolly as if it had been a yacht putting in for tea at the Casino.” He had brought a letter for the German ambassador in Washington, which an enterprising AP reporter mailed for him. He then conducted tours of the submarine for interested Newporters before departing. The next day U-53 sank six eastbound ships “including a British liner carrying a large number of American citizens. All had been permitted to lower lifeboats before they were struck.” Morris does not report whether Rose flew the Irish Republican flag as his submarine sank the liner.


Ibid., 14. Leuchtenburg writes, about Wilson’s affection for things British, that even facing wartime provocations, “Wilson could not help but be influenced by his own sympathies, however much he tried to control them. He had modeled himself on English statesmen, he was an extravagant admirer of British government, and he even courted his second wife by reading passages from Bagehot and Burke.


Bolling, *Chronology of Woodrow Wilson*, 43-44.


Ibid. 24.
For Bryan's letter of resignation and a statement of explanation he issued immediately afterward, see Stanley Coben, ed., Reform, War, and Reaction: 1912-1932 (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 56-62. In his letter of resignation, Bryan stated that "you have prepared for transmission to the German government a note in which I can not join without violating what I deem to be an obligation to my country. . . . Alas desirous of reaching a peaceful solution of the problems arising out of the use of submarines against merchantmen, we find ourselves differing irreconcilably as to the methods which should be employed." In his post-resignation statement, Bryan emphasized one major point of difference between his approach and that of the president, who refused to countenance a restriction on American travel on vessels of belligerent nations, such as the Lusitania: "Why should an American citizen be permitted to involve the country in war by traveling upon a belligerent ship when he knows that the ship will pass through a danger zone? The question is not whether an American has the right under international law to travel on a belligerent ship; the question is whether he ought not, out of consideration for his country, if not for his own safety, avoid danger when avoidance is possible. It is a very one-sided citizenship that compels a government to go to war over a citizen's rights, and yet relieves the citizen of all obligations to consider his nation's welfare." Leuchtenburg, Perils of Prosperity, 27, asserts, "Wilson never fully escaped the trap he set for himself when he insisted that an American citizen had the right to travel on a belligerent ship, even one carrying munitions, and that the American government must uphold that right as a matter of national honor."

Zieger, America’s Great War, 43. Sources differ, however, on whether there were any American fatalities. Cooper, Pivotal Decades, 238, e.g., states that the toll included several “injured” Americans. All sources agree that the German attack on the Sussex took place and that it raised American hackles.

De Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 263.

Leuchtenburg, Perils of Prosperity, 18, among other sources notes the Sussex Pledge and also observes that the Kaiser directed his government to make the pledge because he was "convinced that he did not yet have enough U-boats to risk war."


Quoted in Leuchtenburg, Perils of Prosperity, 14.

Kennedy, Over Here, 30. Kennedy notes that the marchers “felt that war, which would glorify the martial and virile virtues, posed a particular threat to the feminist movement, struggling as it was to minimize sexual differences and to discredit the spurious claim that male primacy in the sexual order derived from the primeval prowess of men as warriors.”

Kennedy, 30-31.

Dawley, Changing the World, 95.


Dawley, Changing the World, 95.

Leuchtenburg, Perils of Prosperity, 12.

Dawley, Changing the World, 96.


Cooper, *Pivotal Decades*, 209.

Perhaps not coincidentally, in February 1915, D. W. Griffith released his hallmark film *Birth of Nation*, which glorified the Klan. Cooper, *Pivotal Decades*, 209, states that “The new Ku Klux Klan offered an ironic tribute to the cultural impact of the movies” [a relatively new art form at that time]. He goes on to note, “Hostile as these sheeted crusaders were toward blacks, this Klan would devote more attention to combating ‘alien’ menaces among whites, principally from Jews, Catholics, immigrants, and modernists. The most publicized lynching in the South during 1915 had as its victim not a black man but a Jew. This was the infamous case of Leo Frank, a factory owner in Atlanta, Georgia, who in 1914 had been convicted for the rape and murder of one of his employees, a 14-year-old white girl named Mary Phagan... Forty-five other whites met their deaths at the hands of lynching mobs in 1915. Nearly all of these lynchings occurred in connection with labor troubles in the West.”


The by now well-known story of Wilson’s 1916 campaign slogan is in, among other places, Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity*, 20; Martin Glynn, former governor of New York was giving the keynote address, which included citing precedents for Wilson’s actions thus far. “Fearing he would tire his audience with further examples, Glynn started to pass on to another subject, but delegates rose from their seats and shouted, ‘No! No! Go on!’ An old campaign war horse, Glynn rose to the occasion. Each time he offered an example from the past when, provoked to the point of war, a President sent a diplomatic note instead, the crowd would yell, ‘What did we do? What did we do?’ And Glynn would shout back, ‘We didn’t go to war! We didn’t go to war!’” Wilson, however, “felt exceedingly uneasy about the new Democratic slogan, ‘He Keeps Us Out of War.’ (‘I can’t keep the country out of war,’ Wilson protested to Secretary of the Navy [Josephus] Daniels. ‘They talk of me as though I were a god. Any little German lieutenant can put us into the war at any time by some calculated outrage.’)”


Quoted in Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny*, 244.

Ibid., 252-53, 260-261.

Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt*, 436, notes that late in 1915, Roosevelt intimated to reporters, without actually saying Wilson’s name that “any peace-loving prose stylist living in a house once inhabited by Abraham Lincoln should emigrate to China. ‘Let him get out of the country as quickly as possible. To treat eloquence as a substitute for action, to rely upon high-sounding words unbacked by deed, is proof of a mind that dwells only the realm of shadow and of shame.’”

Kennedy, *Over Here*, 146.

Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt*, 432.


Quoted in Kennedy, *Over Here*, 146. Pinchot’s letter was dated March 10, 1917.


97 De Santis, The Shaping of Modern America, 264.

98 Ibid., 263-264; Leuchtenburg, Perils of Prosperity, 18.

99 Kennedy, Over Here, 114-115.

100 Ibid., 304. Of the Paris Economic Conference held by the Allies in June 1916, Kennedy writes: “The war had already, of course, played havoc with the multilateral, interdependent character of the pre-1914 international economy. The Allies at Paris now proposed to deepen that disruption by tightening the wartime blockade against the Central Powers. They also announced their intention to perpetuate the economic fragmentation of the world in the postwar period by creating an exclusive trading bloc. . . . These policies ostensibly aimed to counter the Mitteleuropa plan and to threaten Germany with permanent economic isolation. But the intensification of economic warfare posed a no less lethal threat to the commerce of the neutral nations excluded from both proposed trading blocs. Though the United States had historically opposed any such exclusionary combinations, the character and regional distribution of its own foreign commerce rendered the Allied measures much more directly menacing to American interests. Those measures constituted nothing less than ‘militarism translated into commercial warfare,’ declared one American official.”


102 Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette, 244-247.


104 Included in the Congressional Record (65th Cong. 1st Sess.: 223-34), La Follette’s speech was reprinted twenty years later, as war clouds were again gathering over Europe, in a pamphlet titled ‘Old Bob’ La Follette’s Historic U.S. Senate Speech Against the Entry of the United States Into the World War (Madison, Wis.: Progressive Publishing Co and Capital Times Publishing Co, 1937).

105 Kennedy, Over Here, 21.


107 Kennedy, Over Here, 23.

CHAPTER THREE

1 Quoted in Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny 249, citing John L. Heaton, Cobb of “The World” (New York: Dutton, 1924), 267-70.

2 Meirion Harties and Susie Harries, The Last Days of Innocence; America at War, 1917-1918 (New York: Random House, 1997), 92. The authors report that, as Congress was debating conscription, the U.S. Army chief of staff, Major General Hugh L. Scott urged passage of the bill, with the following statement: “I think the best efforts of every patriot should now be concentrated on Congress to cause them to pass the [conscription] bill. . . . If Russia should weaken and make peace, forty-one divisions of the German army will be freed from that front and cast at once on the English and allied lines, in which case we would have to conscript million after million of men. It requires not a few volunteers, but a nation in arms.”

3 Zieger, America’s Great War, 60-61.

4 Leuchtenburg, Perils of Prosperity, 42.
Postwar, Baldwin wrote *Civil Liberties and Industrial Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), which, on page 3, includes his succinct definition of Progressivism: "In general terms, it is the extension of the control of social institutions by progressively larger classes, until human society ultimately abolishes the violence of class conflict."

Kennedy, *Over Here*, 36.


For a brief description of U.S. participation in the Allied invention in Siberia (where Americans served alongside Japanese forces, the two forces of rival nations eye each other suspiciously) and in North Russia (where a small American contingent served with British and French forces), see Harries and Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence*, 297-299.


Zieger, *America’s Great War*, 60, notes that prior to the war, "In vast parts of the country, the only tangible evidence of the federal government was the local post office, and that was often merely a window in the general store."

Kennedy, *Over Here*, 60.

Ibid., 61.

Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 644.

Ibid., 644-645; Kennedy, *Over Here*, 61.

Kennedy, 61-62.


Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 643.


Kennedy, *Over Here*, 123.


Kennedy, *Over Here*, 123.


Harries and Harries, *Last Days of Innocence*, 213, reports on a very unpleasant Christmastime 1917 suffered by the AEF, some units of which were so short of vital supplies that "men were marching through the ice and snow with rags wrapped around their feet... To [AEF commander, General John] Pershing’s anger, allotments of winter clothing and blankets had been reduced because they were needed at home." Rations were also low and some AEF horses (still vital helpmates in this first modern war) were dying of starvation.

Kennedy, *Over Here*, 253.


Ibid., 75.

Stone, *Perilous Times*, 151-152.

In addition to Burleson’s effective censorship of radical and foreign-language publications by refusing to convey them by U.S. mail, these prosecutions included the ten-year sentence given to immigrant social-activist Rose Pastor Stokes for stating, during remarks to the Women’s Dining Club of Kansas City that were later published in the Kansas City *Star*, "No government which is for the profiteers can also be for the people, and I am for the people while the government is for the profiteers." The judge, Arba S. Van Valkenburgh, stated that such sentiments might cause insubordination in the military and have a negative effect on soldiers’ home-front relatives’ war support. See Shaffer, *America in the Great War*, 14; see also Judith Rosenbaum, "Rose Pastor Stokes," *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, the Jewish Women’s Archive online, [http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/stokes-rose-pastor](http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/stokes-rose-pastor) (accessed October 2013). Another ten-year sentence was given to Robert Goldstein, who produced a movie about the American Revolution (in which, it may be recalled, American colonists were at war with the British). The presiding authority felt that the film did not show America’s Great War ally in the best light. Stone, *Perilous Times*, 173, reports the judge saying "History is history, and fact is fact...[but] this is no time [for] those things that may have the tendency or effect of sowing...animosity or want of confidence between us and our allies."


Kennedy, *Over Here*, 80. Stone, *Perilous Times*, 185, notes that the Sedition Act, strengthened even beyond Gregory’s recommendations by the Senate Judiciary Committee, passed with barely any debate, "resulting in the most repressive legislation in American history." Stone also notes that, by the time this act was passed, "There was a strong undercurrent of repression even within Congress. At one point, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts complained, 'I have become a little weary of having Senators get up here and say to those of us who happen to think a word had better be changed' that we 'are trying to shelter treason.'"

Stone, *Perilous Times*, 186.


Ibid.

Kennedy, *Over Here*, 62. Kennedy writes, “The American experience in World War I (as, indeed, the experience of many other belligerents in that war) darkly adumbrated the themes [George] Orwell was to put at the center of his futuristic fantasy [1984]: overbearing concern for ‘correct’ opinion, for expression, for language itself, and the creation of an enormous propaganda apparatus to nurture the desired state of mind and exorcise all dissenters. That American propaganda frequently wore a benign face, and that its creators genuinely believed it to be in the service of an altruistic cause, should not obscure those important facts.”


42 “Labor Sites in Butte, Montana.”


44 Shaffer, *America in the Great War*, 36.


47 Kennedy, *Over Here*, 271.

48 Ibid., 279.

49 Shaffer, *America in the Great War*, 81.


51 Shaffer, *America in the Great War*, 75-76.


56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., 59. MacMillan writes: “A young kitchen assistant at the [Paris] Ritz sent in a petition asking for independence from France for his little country. Ho Chi Minh—and Vietnam—were too obscure even to receive an answer. A Korean graduate of Princeton University tried to get to Paris but was refused a passport. After the Second World War, Syngman Rhee became the president of a newly independent South Korea.” In her chapter on “Arab Independence,” she describes the experiences of Feisal [sic], Lawrence of Arabia’s—and thus Britain’s—ally in the Great War, in his unsuccessful Paris quest for Syrian independence. (Postwar Syria became a French territory or mandate.) He would ultimately become the monarch of Iraq, which emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire to become a British mandate.

58 Ibid., 59.

59 Ibid., 53.

60 Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity*, 56-57.

61 Ibid., 57. Leuchtenburg notes that, initially, “The league of Nations met a warm response in the United States... In the summer of 1919, the majority of the American people appear to have favored entrance into the
League; the proposal received the indorsement [sic] of thirty-three governors of both parties. If the League were not approved wrote an Ohio editor, “God pity us all, for there will be war from now to kingdom come.” The author notes, however, that the League “also summoned up determined resistance.”

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 57-58. Leuchtenburg reports that Lodge expressed the following anti-Wilson sentiment in a 1915 letter to Theodore Roosevelt: “I never expected to hate anyone in politics with the hatred I feel towards Wilson.”

64 Torelle, The Political Philosophy of Robert M. La Follette, 251-252.

65 Stone, Perilous Times, 220-223 (quoted material is on 223).

66 Kennedy, Over Here, 90-91.


EPILOGUE

1 Thelen, Insurgent Spirit, 168, 170-71.

2 Ibid, 172.


4 Thelen, Insurgent Spirit, 189.

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