

THE GREAT CRUSADE

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE PROGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN OF 1912

BY

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P R E F A C E

Perhaps the most perplexing problem in writing history is one's realization that he is, of necessity, painting but an impressionistic portrait of an event or a period, regardless of how much data he includes, and that his impression may vary radically with the next one. This is the problem I have confronted in this work, and I have set down my impressions accordingly.

The year 1912 was an exciting one, and the Taft-Roosevelt feud that it symbolizes is complex and confusing. Allan Nevins, in his Gateway to History, has stated the problem succinctly:

We decide by a ~~rapid~~ preliminary survey that Roosevelt broke with Taft in 1911 because he wanted a third term in 1912; how much easier just to pick out enough facts to prove it! A vast deal of so-called history is indeed written in that fashion. It is always easier to write, usually to read, and open to only one objection -- it usually misses the truth.

I have tried to avoid these pitfalls, and yet I have also attempted to reveal something of Theodore Roosevelt and something of the progressive era that the year 1912 tends to summarize. I have tried to bring to light some of the passions, the fears, the hatred, and the sorrows that human nature inscribes on the face of history, and yet inevitably they become largely obscured in the depths of men's minds, never to be fully recorded. We might learn much from Hemingway's dictum that the one tenth of the iceberg that we can see and analyze is but a partial representation of the thoughts and emotions that lie beneath.

The year 1912 was a boom year for crusading in American history, and since crusades are rarely launched on the basis of rational considerations,

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much of this work will deal with psychological and emotional intangibles. It is an attempt, primarily, to determine Theodore Roosevelt's place in the context of 1912, and the principal emphasis will lie in the pre-convention campaign between Roosevelt and Taft, for it was here that the election in November was decided.

A crusade is an event of absorbing interest, of deep fascination, to a historian. It is a phenomena that demonstrates both the best and the worst in man. The Great Crusade for Progressive Democracy in 1912 was no different.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

Throughout the composition of this work I have been consistently reminded of my dependence on a multitude of people without whose assistance and indulgence I could have accomplished very little. Whatever this thesis fails to accomplish should be duly attributed to the author and not to them.

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PREFACE

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CHAPTER ONE

B A C K F R O M E L B A

"With Pinchot knocked out and Aldrich put in command I think you can hear a lion roar in East Africa."

Senator Jonathan P. Dolliver to
Senator Albert J. Beveridge,
September, 1910.

ON June 18, 1910 the Kaiserin Augusta Victoria docked off the battery in New York harbor. Aboard was ex-President of the United States Theodore Roosevelt. He had returned after a fourteen month trip -- from East Africa to Egypt to Rome to London. He was feted and honored as few Chief Executives have been, in office or out. It had all begun when he left the White House in March of 1909 and elaborately embarked on his famous African safari, leaving his successor, William Howard Taft, at the helm of the government. He felled wild animals, studied wildlife, and practiced the strenuous life on the dark continent (reading occasionally from Carlyle's Frederick The Great, which he carried in his saddle-bag), and then stormed through Europe. He lectured in Egypt on the benefits of British imperialism, he reviewed the spike-helmeted German war machine with the colorful Kaiser Wilhelm, had got into a quarrel between Methodists and Catholics in Rome, refused to see the Pope, and was the official representative of the United States at the funeral of King Edward VII in London. Now he was home. The welcoming crowds thronged to the docks, complete with a strong contingent of rough riders. It appeared that

Roosevelt "was five thousand feet high, six blocks wide, wore a halo that dimmed the luster of Aurora Borealis, breathed thunder and spouted lightning, and the gnashing of his teeth was heard around the world." ¹ Captain Archie Butt, an old Roosevelt friend, was there representing the White House. It was a triumphant ceremony for the Colonel. Butt thought he had indeed become a world citizen; "His horizon seemed to be greater, his mental scope more encompassing." ² His successor, speaking for the nation, welcomed him back from his "perilous expedition" and said that he had "increased the prestige of Americans throughout the world." ³

Amidst all this excitement there was one obvious and as yet unanswered question -- what were Roosevelt's future political plans? For the Colonel's admirers, discouraged by the incumbent administration, it was a question they would press to the limit. For Taft and his followers it was a question that would contribute to many a sleepless night.

Even as the huge wooden crates containing Roosevelt's safari gear were trucked away from the White House on the cold inaugural day in March, 1909, Roosevelt heard his successor say:

I have had the honor to be one of the advisors to my distinguished predecessor, and, as such, to hold up his hands in the reforms he has initiated. I should be untrue to myself, to my promises, and to the declarations of the platform upon which I was elected to office, if I did not make the maintenance and enforcement of those reforms a most important feature of my administration. ⁴

As he left for Africa Roosevelt was at least moderately confident that

¹ A statement made by E. French Strother in the California Weekly, reprinted in "The Mythical Roosevelt," The American Review of Reviews, v. 42, December, 1910, p. 725.

² Archie Butt to Clara Butt, June 19, 1910, Archie Butt, Taft and Roosevelt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, (Garden City, 1930), p. 396.

³ "A Welcome to Mr. Roosevelt," The Outlook, v. 95, June 18, 1910, p. 343.

⁴ James D. Richardson, ed., The Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. XVI,

Taft would follow the progressive line which had been unbroken since 1902. Roosevelt's supporters at home, however, soon began to detect what they thought were deviations from progressivism and the "square deal."

Taft had called for an extra session of Congress on March 15, 1909 to revise the highly protective Dingley tariff. Roosevelt, basically a protectionist, had advocated a more equitable tariff for the general public, and had therefore favored some downward revision; however, he left the burden of such revision to the next administration. Taft's call thus seemed an early vindication of Roosevelt's trust in him. It turned out to be a most unfortunate beginning.

Almost before the Congress had their seats on Capitol Hill a move developed to depose the conservative Speaker of the House, Joe Cannon. It was not entirely unexpected, for a similar move had been attempted in December of the preceeding year. The new movement, led by George W. Norris of Nebraska and Victor Murdock of Kansas, almost succeeded and did produce some changes in the House rules. It demonstrated dramatically the dissension in Republican ranks, and the increasingly powerful progressive delegation in Congress. This should have been indication enough for Taft, but instead it "marked the opening wedge of estrangement between the president and the progressive forces in the Republican party."⁵

We have every reason to believe that Taft sincerely wanted to lower the tariff. It was certainly a delicate problem to undertake at the very outset of a new administration. Although he wanted to follow in the path of his predecessor, he had developed at the same time a personal admiration

(New York, 1897), p. 7368.

⁵ George E. Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, (New York, 1946), pp. 40-44.

for Roosevelt's old opponent Nelson A. Aldrich of Rhode Island, who led the move against the effective reform of the tariff in the Senate. As expected, the problem became increasingly complex -- almost unmanageable. At one point an income tax measure was introduced into the bill by the progressives after the Senate had killed the inheritance tax proposal. Taft effected a "deal" with Aldrich whereby the President would drop the income tax -- which he did in a subsequent special message to Congress -- if Aldrich would support a tax on interstate corporations.⁶ This move created great suspicion of Taft in the progressive ranks. Many believed that he had simply stabbed them in the back. Taft carried his fight, with less fervor, into the subsequent joint congressional conference, and finally, after extended debate and considerable rancor, the Payne-Aldrich tariff emerged. The tariff had indeed been lowered, but largely on raw materials, which benefited the eastern manufacturer at the expense of the west and south. In many significant areas the new tariff was actually higher than the old Dingley Act and, taken as a whole, the two were very similar -- the new measure being devoid of any major improvement.⁸

We cannot escape the conclusion that Roosevelt was partly responsible for this fiasco. Aside from picking Taft to succeed him, Roosevelt had also carefully avoided the tariff question in his own regime as much as possible. Oscar King Davis, an ardent supporter of the Colonel, writes that

During his seven and a half years in the White House
Mr. Roosevelt had avoided the tariff issue He used

⁶ Henry F. Pringle, in his Taft (pp. 433-436), believes that this was a presidential victory, but this is very questionable in the light of the tariff results as a whole.

⁷ A 41.77% ad valorem tax of the Payne-Aldrich as opposed to a 40.21% ad valorem tax for the Dingley bill.

⁸ For an excellent discussion of the Payne-Aldrich tariff, see Mowry,

to say quite frankly that he didn't know anything about the tariff and couldn't make himself take an interest in it As a general rule economic questions did not interest him nearly as much as those of a sociological character he was quite ready to agree with the leaders of [the] Republican organization of both Senate and House to postpone tariff action until after the election. ⁹

The fact that Taft did not achieve a great improvement in the tariff is politically understandable, but he made one of his most grievous political errors by attempting to cover-up for this disappointment by praising it. Taft chose to answer the indignation aroused against the tariff in the middle west by declaring in Winona, Minnesota, that it was the "greatest tariff ever passed by the Republican party." Taft later claimed that this was a line in his speech hastily included or overlooked between whistle stops, but he continued to treat the tariff in this manner throughout his thirty day coast-to-coast tour in 1909. Many progressive Republicans were protectionists, but most of them favored some downward revision. Therefore, the "Back from Elba" movement was greatly fortified in the Mississippi Valley. ¹⁰

Unfortunately, the tariff was but one of Taft's problems. The other major controversy of his early administration was precipitated by the dismissal of Gifford Pinchot as Chief Forester of the Department of Agriculture. Taft was admittedly placed in a difficult position. Pinchot was

Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, pp. 36-65.

⁹ Oscar King Davis, Released for Publication, (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 159-160.

¹⁰ Many in the White House who had been close to Roosevelt tried to convince Taft that this "Back from Elba" movement was serious. Even Secret Service Agent Jimmy Sloan had done so on January 12, 1910. Archie Butt to Clara Butt, January 12, 1910, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 261. The movement began to take practical shape with the meeting of the Roosevelt Club of St. Paul early in June of 1910. James R. Garfield, President of the Club, even predicted that Roosevelt, Pinchot and Garfield would head a new third party. "In their subsequent addresses neither Pinchot nor Garfield denied or doubted the prescience of the statement." Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p.118.

a symbol of one of Roosevelt's most enthusiastic reforms -- the conservation of the nation's natural resources. He was a volatile, dedicated figure, who would have been quite at home in the New Deal administrations. He initiated a public indictment against the new Secretary of the Interior, Richard A. Ballinger, on the grounds that Ballinger was conspiring to deliver some valuable Alaskan mineral fields into the hands of private industry -- to be specific, the Guggenheim trust. Since Ballinger was a cabinet member Pinchot's actions were open insubordination, but the progressives considered them justified and in the public interest. Pinchot had actually brought the crisis to a head by writing a letter to Senator Jonathan P. Dolliver of Iowa admitting that he had used confidential material from government files in his public attacks on Ballinger. Dolliver read this letter on the floor of the Senate, and Taft was challenged with a situation that had no easy way out. This was exactly what Pinchot wanted -- a clear indication of where Mr. Taft stood on the issue. Taft believed that the whole matter was a conspiracy designed to forment a breach between him and Roosevelt, and Captain Butt reports that the problem weighed so heavily on the Chief Executive that "he looked like a man almost ill." ¹¹ Finally, with the full approval of his cabinet, and on the advice of Elihu Root, Taft dismissed Pinchot and brought down another pelting rain of progressive criticism upon his administration. ¹² The Mississippi Valley grew even more suspicious

¹¹ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, January 7, 1910, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 254.

¹² Archie Butt to Clara Butt, January 9, 1910, Ibid., p. 256.

if not hostile towards Taft, and Senator Dolliver wrote to Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana that "With Pinchot knocked out and Aldrich put in command I think you can hear a lion roar in East Africa." ¹⁴

There have been a number of lesser causes suggested for the personal split between Roosevelt and Taft. Some have felt that Roosevelt resented Taft's degree of appreciation to his brother, Charles Taft, for help in winning the election. The fact that Roosevelt did not send Taft a letter or thank-you for the President's bon-voyage gift in 1909 has been the subject of speculation as well. Many have felt that the Taft family, especially Mrs. Taft, resented Roosevelt simply because he had been so necessary to Taft's election, and there seems to be evidence to support this view. ¹⁵ Much of this has undoubtedly been exaggerated in the light of subsequent events. ¹⁶

Whatever the reasons for the political enmity between the two men, it had unmistakably developed to a degree before Roosevelt's arrival in New York in June of 1910. As early as November of the preceding year Taft confided to Archie Butt: "There is no use trying to be William Howard Taft with Roosevelt's ways." In January of 1910 he told Senator Bourne that he "thought it would be impossible to elect a conservative man to the Presidency next time" and that he "saw signs of a complete break within

¹⁴ J.P. Dolliver to A.J. Beveridge, September 14, 1910, Quoted in Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 69.

¹⁵ Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 105-106.

¹⁶ Many of these "causes," including the fact that Taft failed to retain Henry White as ambassador to France, "were not issues until Roosevelt's anger distorted his memory." Henry F. Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, A Biography, (New York, 1956 ed.), p. 370.

the party... " ¹⁷ In July of 1910 Mrs. Taft actually told her husband that he would have to fight Roosevelt for the nomination in 1912 and, if Taft won, Roosevelt would defeat him for reelection. At the same time, Taft felt that Roosevelt might consider forming a third party, because it seemed probably "the only logical way" for the Colonel to reach an additional term.

Roosevelt became aware of the dissatisfaction of the progressives at home when letters began to reach him overseas complaining of Taft's regime. ¹⁹ Gifford Pinchot paid him a visit, a most significant one, at Porto Maurizio in 1910, and we can well imagine how Pinchot painted the incumbent administration. Perhaps the first thing that impressed Roosevelt with the possibility of Taft's divergence from the progressive path was the President's failure to retain some of the particular cabinet members whose retention Roosevelt had specifically requested. There is evidence that the Colonel apparently felt assured that James R. Garfield would remain as Secretary of the Interior and that his personal secretary, William Loeb, Jr., would be made Secretary of the Navy. Neither of these came to pass. ²⁰ Roosevelt did not emphasize this at the time, but it must have suggested the possibility of a change in Taft. Roosevelt told Henry L. Stoddard that he tried to keep out of

¹⁷ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, November 14, 1909 and January 30, 1910, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 236 and p. 272.

¹⁸ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, July 16, 1910, Ibid., p. 436.

¹⁹ Some, like Henry L. Stoddard, felt that "There was a sag everywhere in Washington; the old vigor was gone; none of the familiar calls to action were ever heard," or, more seriously, that Taft's acceptance speech in Cincinnati in 1908 and his inaugural address were "the last ever heard from Taft in a kindly way about Roosevelt's policies..." Henry L. Stoddard, As I Knew Them, (New York, 1927), p. 368 and p. 345. Oscar King Davis said that immediately after the 1908 convention "it became apparent to close observers that things were not well with the party, and that they were likely to be worse before they were better." Davis, Released for Publication, p. 94.

²⁰ Davis, Released for Publication, p. 126.

Taft's affairs, but "a policy of exclusion of all the men who had any relation at all with me or what I stood for seemed to have been inaugurated, under the guidance of Charles and Henry Taft."²¹ This is also certainly exaggerated, but it was a fact that Taft was seen more and more with members of the Old Guard, especially Nelson Aldrich. He claimed that he had to work with them to a degree to fulfill his legislative program, but even Archie Butt bewailed the fact that wherever Taft went "he affiliated with the men whom Roosevelt disliked the most and whom he was wont to call the 'Enemy'."²²

Roosevelt sent Taft a letter which arrived at the White House on June 18, the day the ex-President's ship docked in New York. In it he said that he would not make any political statement for two months, until he had thoroughly studied the situation.²³ Taft then asked his predecessor to the White House, and Roosevelt replied rather unsatisfactorily: "Now, my dear Mr. President, your invitation to the White House touches me greatly But I don't think it well for an ex-President to go to the White House, or indeed to go to Washington, except when he cannot help it ..."²⁴

The Colonel was clearly sizing up the situation with his keen political eye. He was already somewhat predisposed against Taft, and he probably

²¹ Stoddard, As I Knew Them, p. 387.

²² Archie Butt to Clara Butt, September 6, 1909, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 202. During the debate on the tariff, Senator Dolliver had said of Taft: "He is an amiable gentleman, entirely surrounded by men who know exactly what they want." Quoted in Davis, Released for Publication, p. 169.

²³ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, June 19, 1910, Ibid., p. 395.

²⁴ T.R. to William Howard Taft, June 19, 1910, William Howard Taft Papers, The Manuscript Division, The Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Hereafter referred to as Taft MSS.

had reason to be. Yet, he also realized that to bring things to a head in the summer of 1910 would be politically unwise.²⁵ He attempted to calm the enthusiastic Gifford Pinchot by indicating that he, too, was disappointed in Taft, but also indicating that although Taft had been "a rather pitiful failure" this could well be attributed to his lack of good advisors (an indictment of the President's wife and brother Charles). He reminded Pinchot that the failure of the party to renominate Taft had to be based on "strong reasons" and that his own candidacy would not be proposed "unless everybody believed that the ship was sinking..."²⁶ Yet, Roosevelt realized that Taft's would not be a progressive administration, and the possibility of his own entrance into the growing breach in party ranks certainly began to occur to him. Regardless of the fluid state of Roosevelt's plans, he was determined to remain, characteristically, near the center of the political stage. When he was indirectly approached by Carr V. Van Anda of the New York Times about an editorship, Roosevelt laughed and said he had taken the position as contributing editor of the Outlook. "I want to preach," he said, "I have a good many sermons in me that I want to deliver, and the Outlook will furnish me a bully pulpit."²⁷ The one thing he seemed to dislike most, and this becomes ironic in the light of subsequent events, was that Taft had contributed little to party unity -- in fact, just the opposite. Roosevelt also regretted that this

²⁵ The very fact that Roosevelt did not attack Taft on the tariff question indicated to many that he was not actively gunning for the nomination against the President, and that his desire for another term was unfounded. See "Mr. Roosevelt's Motives and Purpose," Independent, v.69, October 27, 1910, pp. 935-37. We can also remember that Roosevelt felt unsure discussing the tariff.

²⁶ T.R. to Gifford Pinchot, June 28, 1910, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Hereafter referred to as Roosevelt Mss. He also expressed the same sentiment to Arthur Hamilton Lee: "... Taft has come far short of doing what he ought to have done, but after all he has done well enough to make me feel justified in supporting him ..." T.R. to Arthur H. Lee, July 19, 1910, Roosevelt Mss.

²⁷ Davis, Released for Publication, p. 139.

struggle involved not only politicians but "the masses of the people" as well.²⁸ At this stage Roosevelt was criticizing Taft not so much "for being a conservative but rather for not being a politician."²⁹

In less than a month after the ex-President was back the lines for the future struggle for the dominance of the Republican party were beginning to form. They were by no means clearly drawn, but the misunderstanding between Taft and Roosevelt, if that is what it was, was to grow during the summer months and would reach a critical phase of its development during the congressional elections of 1910.

One thing seemed clear -- that "every large political plan of either party for the next two years will be made with direct, if not acknowledged reference" to Roosevelt.³⁰ William Howard Taft and his close supporters were not naive. They well realized the potential threat in Roosevelt and they kept this realization uppermost in their minds. They were familiar with Roosevelt's political tactics and his tendency towards political office. "Harvey Cushing without a scalpel, John Marshall without a robe, Stonewall Jackson without an army make no more sense than Theodore Roosevelt without a public office in hand or on order."³¹

²⁸ T.R. to Nicholas Longworth, July 11, 1910, Roosevelt Mss. Roosevelt wrote Pinchot on August 17, 1910 that "One of the heaviest counts against Taft is that by his actions he has produced a state of affairs in which the split is so deep that it seems impossible to heal it, and the most likely result is that people will say: 'A Plague on both your houses,' and turn to the Democrats." Roosevelt Mss

²⁹ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 131.

³⁰ "Mr. Roosevelt -- What Next?" Worlds Work, v. 20, May, 1910, pp. 12879-82.

³¹ John Morton Blum, The Republican Roosevelt, (New York, 1963 ed.), p. 7.

A P O L I T I C A L W H I R L P O O L

"I am deeply wounded, and there is nothing to do but get used to the pain."
- William Howard Taft, September, 1910.

"I would not feel that I had a right to object to being sacrificed if it were necessary to sacrifice me, if we had to lead a forlorn hope and that I was the best person to lead it."
- Theodore Roosevelt, October, 1911.

IF the state of Maine has not always been the best political barometer in American history, perhaps off-year congressional elections have been. Similar to the parliamentary bi-elections in Great Britain, the congressional contests that occur in the midst of presidential terms in the United States have been surprisingly consistent in indicating the results of the following presidential elections. And, with even the exceptions considered, they tend to demonstrate evolving political trends most dramatically. To some extent they also determine many of the issues that will become paramount, and perhaps decisive, in the race for the White House two years later. In the congressional elections of 1910 it was clearly demonstrated that there were critical divisions in the Republican party and that the Taft administration was not faring well in the eyes of public opinion. If anything, these elections only made the problems more critical. They were certainly made more obvious.

Roosevelt wrote his friend Henry Cabot Lodge that Taft's supporters were pressuring him to come out in a "flaming endorsement" of his successor,

but the Colonel knew that this would "be bitterly resented" by many of his own close friends. The course he had determined to follow, perhaps even before his return to the United States and certainly by mid-summer of 1910, was an active campaign for the party in the congressional elections. As he told Lodge in July: "The greatest service I can render to Taft, the service which beyond all others will tend to secure his renomination ... is to try to help the Republican party to win at the polls this fall..."¹ On the other hand, he was somewhat discouraged by the possibilities of the campaign. He wrote to Theodore, Jr.: "I need not tell you that it was no desire of mine to go into the contest this year; events shaped themselves so that I could not stay out without being a craven and shirking my plain duty."² Roosevelt considered his allegiance to his party and to his friends, took a critical look at the waning popularity of Taft and the widening split in the party, and came into the campaign in typical style.

He quickly embroiled himself in the New York campaign and on a larger scale in a campaign throughout the country, particularly in the west, in an attempt to ward off a repudiation of the Republican administration. The crisis was well illustrated by the inflamed oratory and the frequent exchange of personalities between Republicans in the last Congress, by the Old Guard's refusal to give the insurgents any regular party support, and by their call for the defeat of progressive members.³

¹ T.R. to Henry Cabot Lodge, July 19, 1910, Elting Morison, editor, The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, vol. 7, (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 102-103. Hereafter referred to as The Letters.

² T.R. to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., November 11, 1910, T.R., Jr. Mss, Ibid., p. 160.

³ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, pp. 106-107.

On the national level Roosevelt set out on a long tour of the country, speaking for Republicans everywhere, and especially for his friends. This trip was made under the auspices of the Outlook, and it began in late August with a speech in Oriskany, New York. From there he went to Utica and then out to Cleveland and Denver. He spoke to great crowds in Cleveland, Kansas City, and Sioux City. In Fargo, North Dakota, thousands remained to hear him speak in the midst of a downpour. His train then wound its way to St. Paul, Milwaukee and Chicago, back to New York, and, then, briefly, to New England where he did yeoman work for Lodge. Next on his itinerary was his swing through the South -- from Virginia to Georgia and through Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, and Indiana. It was a comprehensive tour indeed.⁴

In the South, Roosevelt was met by "the characteristic high-pitched cheer ... which is the descendant, toned down a little doubtless by forty years of peace, of the 'rebel yell' of wartime." He spoke on familiar topics: good citizenship, cattle branding, conservation, his southern ancestry (on his mother's side), Uncle Remus (one of his favorites), and even his concern with the interesting topic of population -- "I like all your crops, but I like your baby crop best."⁵ They seemed to love him.

Earlier in his western tour he had made a speech at Osawatimie, Kansas that some saw as perhaps "the most radical speech ever given by an ex-President."⁶ It was a highly significant statement, filled with implications

⁴ Most of the information on Roosevelt's trip was taken from Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 195-236. Some very valuable excerpts from some of his speeches on his western tour can be found in "Some Questions Answered," Outlook, v.97, January 28, 1911, pp. 235-244.

⁵ Harold J. Howland, "Down South and Back Again," Outlook, v.96, October 22, 1910, pp. 384-387.

⁶ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 144. See Chapter Three for a full discussion of this speech. We will discuss it in the next chapter of this work.

for the future, and we will have need to speak of it in more detail later. Perhaps the most interesting episode of all, however, occurred in Chicago when Roosevelt refused to attend the Hamilton Club dinner if Senator William Lorimer would also be present. Lorimer was under indictment at the time for irregularities in his senatorial election, and the club was forced to inform him that "Colonel Roosevelt positively declines to sit at the same table with you. Our invitation to you this evening is therefore withdrawn." Roosevelt attended the dinner and called such election corruption "a most infamous treason against American institutions."⁷ This was far from the last time that the luckless Lorimer would serve as Roosevelt's "whipping boy."

Roosevelt had not, in fact, said anything original or different in a political sense, except perhaps at Osawatomie. Most of his addresses were confined to well-tried platitudes and restatements of his policies prior to 1908. This made little difference to his audiences. "If he assumes that he is the most important figure in our political life, and that the nation and the whole world are waiting to be instructed by him ... the people show no signs of being disposed to quarrel with him on that account."⁸

We was supposedly attempting to heal the wounds that the Republican party had inflicted upon itself by using his personality and his prestige to bring the divisive elements back into at least an appearance of unity. He also hoped to reassure the progressives, and they certainly needed reassuring, that the true basis of reform was still the "Grand Old Party" of Lincoln.

⁷ "Mr. Roosevelt's Speeches," Independent, v.69, September 15, 1910, pp. 560-562.

⁸ "The New Test of Roosevelt," Nation, v.91, September 1, 1910, p. 180.

Yet, his actions, instead of effecting a reconciliation, only emphasized the breach and widened it. Since many turned to him to bring the party back to its heyday of 1908, Taft began to regard dubiously the benefits of the Colonel's campaign tactics, which were supposedly in the President's behalf.

It is said that Roosevelt was persuaded to enter actively into the campaign in New York by Charles Evans Hughes, then Governor of that state, while both men attended a Harvard commencement shortly after Roosevelt's return from Europe. The Colonel announced his candidacy for the temporary chairmanship of the New York Republican convention, but the Taft-oriented organization balked and on August 16 the committee recommended Taft's Vice-President, James S. Sherman, instead. This only increased Roosevelt's determination to dominate the convention, especially since he wished to see his old friend, Henry Stimson, nominated for Governor. Sherman telephoned the White House constantly, enumerating his plans to nip the Roosevelt boom in the bud by defeating the ex-President in the convention. Taft, however, asked to remain well behind the scenes: he was still attempting to avoid a clear-cut break with his predecessor.⁹ Roosevelt realized that he might lose his fight in the convention and that the intra-party battle would probably portend "the defeat of the Republican candidate for the governorship of New York that fall."¹⁰ He remained undaunted, however, and in the convention at Saratoga he carried his fight to the delegates with characteristic ferocity. "With his pugnacious lower jaw thrust belligerently forward," he ascended the speaker's platform.

⁹ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, August 17, 1910, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 479. A very good discussion of this is contained in Elting E. Morison, Turmoil and Tradition, (New York, 1964 ed.), pp. 108-117.

¹⁰ Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 194-195.

As he spoke his "hands were clenched, and he strode back and forth ..., uttering his thoughts in short, jerky sentences, and pounding them home with one doubled-up fist strick violently into the palm of the other hand." ¹¹ He won the temporary chairmanship and Stimson was nominated for Governor on September 29. How little this did to achieve unity in party ranks is sadly illustrated in Taft's cabinet -- half of them were elated at Roosevelt's victory while the other half, the President included, were "greatly cast down." ¹²

The results of the entire congressional campaign were even more discouraging to the Old Guard. When the smoke cleared, the battlefield was strewn with the bodies of "stand-pat" Republicans. By late September of 1910, forty-one Republican incumbent congressmen had been defeated, only one of whom could be called an insurgent. ¹³ The Democrats came within three seats of a majority in the Senate and they did achieve a fairly substantial 58.3% majority in the House. ¹⁴ Taft was understandably upset at the defeat of some of his closest political friends, especially since the progressive candidates, like Miles Poindexter of Washington state, had done so well in comparison. He attributed a great deal of this to the intervention of Roosevelt, particularly in his victory over Sherman in New York. The affable President could only say: "I am deeply wounded, and there is nothing to do but get used to the pain." ¹⁵ In October he

¹¹ Ibid., p. 223.

¹² Archie Butt to Clara Butt, September 27, 1910, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, pp. 531-532.

¹³ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 130.

¹⁴ Louis H. Bean, How to Predict Elections, (New York, 1948), pp. 189-190. Despite the title, this work does contain some valuable statistics.

¹⁵ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, September (?), 1910, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 530.

confided to his closest friends at the White House -- "...I think Roosevelt expects now to be a candidate in 1912..."¹⁶

As Taft felt the pangs of defeat, so also did Roosevelt. Although the progressive Republicans seemed justifiably jubilant, it was obvious that the party had lost heavily in New York, and even with Roosevelt's influence, Stimson had lost the gubernatorial contest to Dix of the Democrats. The efforts of the Colonel to patch-up the party front had been largely in vain. After all, it seemed obvious that "the voters had repudiated both Taft's conservative principles and Roosevelt's attempt to reconsolidate the party somewhere left of center, [and] had given the new Republicanism of La Follette and Cummins a rousing vote of confidence."¹⁷ The lesson was not lost on the ex-President. He had been attempting to play a slightly left "middle-or-the-road" role in bringing the party back together, and he found himself caught between the insurgent forces on the one hand and the Taft "people" on the other. This experience -- this frustration -- was largely the result of the role he had tried to play, and this was critical in the evolution of his political activity as it developed toward 1912. He had written Lodge in September that it was "exasperating" to have Taft's "agents" trying to discredit him when actually what he was doing was to the President's advantage.¹⁸ He wrote a very long, and very revealing letter to Elihu Root in October, which said in part:

... I have never had a more unpleasant summer. The

¹⁶ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, October 11, 1910, Ibid., p. 546. However, Taft still hoped that Roosevelt would drop out for the sake of the party.

¹⁷ George E. Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America, 1900-1912, (New York, 1958 ed.), p. 273. Hereafter referred to as The Era of Theodore Roosevelt.

¹⁸ T.R. to Henry Cabot Lodge, September 24, 1910, Roosevelt Mss.

sordid baseness of the so-called Regulars, who now regard themselves as especially Taft men, and the wild irresponsible folly of the ultra-Insurgents, make a situation which is very unpleasant. From a variety of causes, the men who are both sane and progressive, the men who make up the strength of the party, have been left so at sea during these months ... that they have themselves tended to become either sordid on the one hand, or wild on the other."

He added that if he supported Taft in 1912 "it would be under no illusion and simply as being the best thing that the conditions permit." ¹⁹

It should have been clear at this time that the split in the party was irrevocable. Roosevelt suffered a loss of confidence when he realized that he couldnot bring about a unity of his own party. This loss of confidence was gallingly exasperating to a man of Roosevelt's temperament, and he strongly disliked the feeling. In looking at the whole of his correspondence for the years 1910 and 1911 we find a sense of transition implicit, if not explicit, in it. He was, in fact, slowly moving from a center (or left of center) position in the party to the relatively far left -- he was becoming perhaps one of the "wild ones" he referred to. Perhaps he sensed that sitting on the fence would not do if he were to continue in active politics on, more or less, his own terms. Constantly attempting to effect reconciliation might in itself be compromising his own position of political usefulness in the party. He would have to alienate some important elements in the party if he were to take anything resembling decisive action, and to a party man this was most discouraging. He had made an effort to pour oil on the troubled waters, but "It was an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, to pluck fruit from

¹⁹ T.R. to Elihu Root, October 12, 1910, Root Mss, Morison, The Letters, vol. 7, p. 148.

cactus, and squeeze blood from the turnip." ²⁰ It seemed that the malady was incurable by the end of 1910, for in early January of the next year, under the leadership of Robert M. La Follette and a few others, the National Progressive Republican League was formed in Chicago. Its "raison d'etre was to defeat Taft for the renomination in 1912," and upon this foundation La Follette launched his campaign for the presidency in June of 1911. ²¹

There are scores of other manifestations of the growing gulf between Roosevelt and Taft, and we cannot possibly do justice to them here. The coup de grace to any hope of reconciliation between the two men, however, was administered in the form of an anti-trust suit by the government against the United States Steel Corporation. If Taft did indeed hope for such a reconciliation, or at least to fo^erstall Roosevelt's entrance into the race of 1912, then this action marks one of the most casual and inept blunders of a Chief Executive in American history.

Roosevelt had made an effort to straddle the whirlpool of political events ever since the fall of 1910. He was unwilling to alienate either wing of the party, since he still seemed to feel that he was the only man that could unite them again, if any man could. He probably hoped Taft would receive the nomination in 1912 if only he might reap all the repercussions of his own mistakes, and thus leave the party open for another leader, free and clear, in 1916. On October 27, 1911, however, this was altered. The Colonel came to see that this attitude would not bear fruit -- it was plainly not working. The catalyst for his new train of thought came when the administration officially announced its suit against the Steel trust for

²⁰ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 119.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 172-174.

violation of the Sherman Act. On that October day Roosevelt felt he had found a critical reason why the Taft administration was undeserving of political reelection.

It will be remembered that Roosevelt, as President, had not objected to the purchase of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company by United States Steel in order to avert what seemed to be an imminent depression during the "Panic of 1907." With a consummate lack of tact, the administration made this purchase one of the principal grounds for the suit, thus inferring that Roosevelt had violated his own principles and catered to the demands of the "malefactors of great wealth" under pressure of economic hardship during his administration. "By that action the president lit the fuse of a powder bag. The resulting explosion changed the course of American politics." ²²

Roosevelt's reaction was almost violent. On the very day that the suit was announced, he sent a copy of his protest in the Outlook to Governor Hiram Johnson of California along with a letter that dealt, in part, with the possibilities for his candidacy in 1912. He said, "... I would not feel that I had a right to object to being sacrificed [by being nominated in 1912] if it were necessary to sacrifice me, if we had to lead a forlorn hope and that I was the best person to lead it." ²³ An editorial in the

²² Ibid., p. 189.

²³ T.R. to Hiram W. Johnson, October 27, 1911, Roosevelt Mss. Mowry says that in this letter Roosevelt "intimated ... that he might be persuaded to run for the nomination were he convinced that the masses of the people liked and trusted him." Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, p. 291. Aside from the fact that this idea is not new in Roosevelt's correspondence, we must also remember that he ended this same letter by saying, "... I have a right to ask every friend of mine to do everything possible to prevent not merely my nomination, but any movement looking toward my nomination."

Outlook, on August 29, 1911, compared Roosevelt's action in 1907 to Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus during the Civil War.²⁴ And, in an article in the same issue, Roosevelt was enraged that the suit intimated a certain complacency, or even complicity, on his part: "... if anyone will look back and think the matter over seriously and in good faith, he will understand that it was not a question of saving any bank or trust company from failure; the question was of saving the plain people, the common people, in all parts of the United States from dreadful misery and suffering; and this is what my action did." He went on to say that he had "dealt with the facts as they were, not with facts as they might or might not afterwards become."²⁵ In a later article Roosevelt took up the charge that he was misled by the Steel Corporation, and that the facts were not truthfully laid before him. "This statement is not correct," he said. "I believed at the time that the facts in the case were as represented to me..., and my further knowledge has convinced me that this was true."²⁶ In January of 1912 Mrs. Douglas Robinson told Major Butt, "it is too late now. If it had not been for that Steel suit! I was talking with Theodore only last week, and he said that he could never forgive."²⁷ Taft could only lament his ill fortune --

"I am afraid that he [Roosevelt] has been looking ever since he came back from Africa for some excuse to hang his hostility upon, and of course this thing [the Steel suit] had to happen. I have not played in much luck

²⁴ "The Steel Corporation and the Panic of 1907," Outlook, v.98, August 19, 1911, p. 849.

²⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, "The Steel Corporation and the Panic of 1907," Outlook, v.98, August 19, 1911, pp. 865-868. The Nation commented that "... the triumphant assertion, 'I dealt with the facts,' comes as a kind of confession of faith in stark power and a worship of force." "Dealing With Facts," Nation, v.93, August 24, 1911, pp. 159-160.

²⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, "The Trusts, The People, and the Square Deal," Outlook, v.99, November 18, 1911, pp. 649-656.

²⁷ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, January 15, 1912, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 813.

during this administration." ²⁸

In retrospect, it seems that this was the most decisive event in the Taft-Roosevelt break. ²⁹ A month or so later, Roosevelt removed some of his demands against the advocacy of his candidacy for 1912, thus making it possible for a few of his friends to work for him in good faith. ³⁰

Thousands of words have been expended on the differences between Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Roosevelt was straightforward, robust, and domineering; Taft was judicious, overweight, and oftentimes dominated by those around him. These have all been elaborated from many angles of approach. The differences between the two men are important, especially considering that once they had been so close. The tragedy in their relationship, however, occurred not only because of the differences in their personalities, but largely because the situation in which they found themselves in 1910 and 1911 was not conducive to a renewal of the relationship on the old basis. Critical to this is the fact that their relationship had been interrupted for fourteen months -- and both men came increasingly in that span to represent opposing camps, and, in a very real sense, both Taft and Roosevelt became the "victims" of these political forces, more than they did of one another. ³¹

By the end of 1911, Roosevelt could casually refer to the President as a "floppy souled creature," and the Colonel increasingly criticized the

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Ibid.

²⁹ We must remember that there were other issues on which the two men differed that seemed to many of equal importance at the time. See "A Discordant Voice," Nation, v.92, June 1, 1911, pp. 546-547.

³⁰ Mentioned in Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, p. 291; and Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 195. Refers to a letter from T.R. to James R. Garfield, December 1, 1911, Roosevelt Mss.

³¹ John Morton Blum speaks of the group of "malcontents" that gathered at Oyster Bay, and how Roosevelt "became ... their victim as well as their master..."

"wavering and shilly-shallying" of his successor.³² By this time the division in the party had dragged both men into its vortex. In this mass of political quicksand, the only way out was to take definite, decisive action. Taft never did learn the way out, but Roosevelt took such action -- radical action -- and it has been controversial ever since. The political stage was set for the climactic scenes of 1912. The curtain would soon go up, and the audience was waiting.

Blum, The Republican Roosevelt, p. 145.

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T.R. to Henry Cabot Lodge, December 23, 1911; also T.R. to William B. Howland, December 23, 1911, Roosevelt Mss.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW NATIONALISM

"We ought to use the National Government as an agency, a tool, wherever it is necessary, in order that we may organize our entire political, economical, and social life in accordance with a far-reaching democratic purpose."

- Theodore Roosevelt, September, 1910.

IN order, properly (to) appreciate Theodore Roosevelt's philosophy of government, which culminated in his New Nationalism of 1910-1912, we must reach some understanding of the context in which it appeared. This context, far from being easily defined, corresponded closely with a general "mood", a "spirit," that developed with the movement for American reform. The "mood" of 1910-1912 had its roots in the agrarian reformism of the late nineteenth century, and in the increasing demands of progressivism that the injustices of the American politico-economic machinery be eliminated. It advocated a greater responsibility on the part of government to society as a whole, and it is here that we find the foundations for extended government activity in every significant phase of American life.

American progressivism was, in short, a movement based on the attempt to join the agrarian elements with the new urban-labor factions and weld them into an effective political opposition to the plutocratic minority of the industrialists. It sought to destroy the union of business and politics and to make of government a sword of justice against injustice, and return it to its role as the servant, not the master, of the people. The slavery controversy and the Civil War had significantly interrupted the gradual

adjustment of American government to new economic demands (as had taken place in England without interruption) and during the "Gilded Age" America demonstrated her lamentable backwardness in conforming to these new conditions. It was during the progressive era that such adjustment began to occur.

This progressivism was not only political in nature, but also included men like Arthur F. Bentley and Albion Small, who attempted to apply the principles of psychology and sociology to politics through the study of "groups" rather than individuals.¹ It numbered people such as Herbert Croly, Thorstein Veblen, Clarence Darrow, Franz Boas, and Richard T. Ely (who used the phrase "new nationalism" as early as 1889), as well as the famous "muckrakers" -- Lincoln Steffens, Samuel S. McClure, Ida Tarbell, and Upton Sinclair.² At times it seemed like another American "enlightenment," an era of public sensitivity in the tradition of Jacksonian Democracy. It was, certainly, a movement of unrest -- and this unrest permeated the political system. "The agrarian revolt of the 1890's had smashed existing party lines as no other movement had done since the slavery controversy; and before any satisfactory realignment could take place following the campaign of 1896, the progressive upsurge of the first decade of the new century upset the party organization again."³ The American atmosphere

¹ Floyd W. Matson, The Broken Image, (New York, 1964), pp. 115-126.

² Louis Filler, Crusaders for American Liberalism: The Story of the Muckrakers, (New York, 1961 ed.).

³ Arthur S. Link, Wilson - Road to the White House, (Princeton, 1963 ed.), p. 310. Also see Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, (New York, 1963 ed.); The political atmosphere of the period 1910-1912 would bear great resemblance, of course, to the earlier atmosphere of 1896! "...this was a period of great turbulence in the political life of the United States, when economic and social change -- almost revolutionary in character -- seemed to demand adjustment and reform at a faster pace than those who dominated the ordinary channels of government and politics were prepared to sanction." Stanley L. Jones, Presidential Election of 1896, (Madison, 1964), p. 3.

was pregnant with the spirit of reform, and it was furbished and encouraged by the prospects of success. When the young and frustrated Sinclair Lewis came to New York in the year 1910, he could feel it around him.

The air was charged with the promise of "emerging greatness," and in art, in literature, in politics, in manners, in thought, all seemed fermentation, effervescence, insouciance. "We are living in the first days of a renescent period"; The "American Risorgimento" was imminent; yes, America was "coming of age" at last! These were the verbal banners.⁴

It was in this atmosphere that Theodore Roosevelt lived and worked. Throughout his political life Roosevelt had advocated reform, even though it was moderate when compared with many of the more radical demands. When he eventually occupied the White House, he had appeared "a prophet of doom to those who clung to the old economic traditions."⁵ Roosevelt became famous for his avid prosecution of economic monopoly -- the "trust buster"; they called him -- and this becomes ironic in view of the anti-trust busting political doctrine he was to advocate in 1910.

As we have seen, Roosevelt conducted a nationwide campaign tour in the summer and fall of 1910. Although most of his speeches were noncontroversial, and quite ordinary (for Roosevelt at least), his address at Osawatimie, Kansas, on August 31 was a major declaration of his political principles. Speaking to a crowd of about 25,000 people, Roosevelt made a firm statement of at least four of the major tenets of his New Nationalism:

The New Nationalism is impatient of the utter confusion that results from local legislatures attempting to treat

⁴ Mark Schorer, Sinclair Lewis: An American Life, (New York, 1961), p. 175.

⁵ Filler, Crusaders for American Liberalism, p. 61.

National issues as local issues It is still more impatient of the impotence which springs from the over-division of Government powers This New Nationalism regards the Executive power as the steward of the public welfare It demands of the Judiciary that it shall be interested primarily in human welfare rather than in property, just as it demands that the representative body shall represent all the people rather than one class or section of the people.

The New York Sun immediately called it "a doctrine more nearly revolutionary than anything that ever proceeded from the lips of any American who has held high office in our Government." ⁶ Roosevelt had reemphasized the role of the central government in national politics, the inefficiency of the "checks and balances" and separation of powers concepts, the role of the executive as the wielder and personification of this great power, and he had also laid the foundations for his attacks on the judiciary for their lack of social consciousness. Most importantly, perhaps, he had also reemphasized his opinions on the regulation of business combinations. In an article in the Outlook for September 3, he elaborated on the remarks he had made at Osawatomie, and offered a brief but very inclusive definition of his views on the subject:

Corporations are necessary to the effective use of the forces of production and commerce under modern conditions. We cannot effectively prohibit all combinations without doing far-reaching economic harm; and it is mere folly to do as we have done in the past -- to try to combine incompatible systems -- that is, to try both to prohibit and regulate corporations the only course left is active corporate regulation -- that is, the control of the evils that they work, and the retention ... of that business efficiency in their use which has placed us in the forefront of industrial peoples. ⁷

⁶ "The Osawatomie Speech," Outlook, v.96, September 10, 1910, p. 48.

⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, "The Progressives, Past and Present," Outlook, v.96, September 3, 1910, pp. 26-27.

This was a culmination of a certain synthesis in American political theory. The welfare of the common man had usually been associated with the limitation of governmental authority -- with the "government that governs least"; now Roosevelt advocated an almost omnipotent central power to insure the liberty and welfare of the rank and file.

We ought to use the National Government as an agency; a tool, wherever it is necessary, in order that we may organize our entire political, economical, and social life in accordance with a far-reaching democratic purpose. 8

This was an early call to arms. A great deal of criticism was heaped upon this "radical" announcement by most conservative circles, and Roosevelt allowed the situation to cool down a bit. He still was not prepared to alienate completely the important conservative wing of the party, but the theme of the New Nationalism would remain a constant from the Osawatomie speech until the campaign of 1912. He would elaborate it, and refurbish it, but it was not to be substantially changed.

Eric F. Goldman has shown the influence that Herbert Croly had on Roosevelt. While the Colonel was abroad in 1910, he read Croly's book, The Promise of American Life,⁹ and Goldman says that its point "cut through his mind like a knife specially honed for the purpose."¹⁰ Croly made an appeal for a strong central government, and for the regulation, rather than the destruction, of large corporate combinations. When Roosevelt returned

8 Ibid., p. 26. Roosevelt's call for a strong central power was certainly not new -- Edward Bellamy and others had mentioned it before -- but Roosevelt's appeal was surely the most dramatic to date.

9 Herbert Croly, The Promise of American Life, (New York, 1909). Also see Herbert Croly, Progressive Democracy, (New York, 1914). Also see the brilliant essay on Croly -- "Croly and 'The Promise of American Life'," by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in the New Republic, v.152, No:19, May 8, 1965, pp. 17-22.

10 Eric F. Goldman, Rendezvous With Destiny, (New York, 1956 ed.), p. 147.

to America he had Croly to lunch at Oyster Bay and Croly's term -- the "New Nationalism" -- became the name of Roosevelt's political doctrine.¹¹ The two men were both anti-Jeffersonian in theory largely because of Jefferson's fear of concentrated power. However, although they were more urban-labor oriented than agrarian in sympathy, their faith in the ability and in the rights of the common man -- the "rank and file" -- seemed on a direct line with the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian traditions, tempered with the demands for the adjustment of capitalism, and with a little Populism thrown in for good measure. The philosophy that Croly and Roosevelt both advocated was one that had all the prerequisites of an effective political slogan. When the Progressive Party was finally formed, Croly said, "... The Progressives are now talking a doctrine that is certain to cast a shadow across all our tomorrows."¹² This was truly the stuff from which crusades are made.

The principal weakness of Goldman's interpretation is that it attributes far too much influence to Herbert Croly. Roosevelt, in fact, had advocated many of his "new" doctrines years before. Croly's influence seems to have consisted of simply restating and amplifying these principles, placing them in a more organized presentation, and giving them the name "New Nationalism." Even Roosevelt's two most radical ideas, regarding the judiciary and corporations, were stated in his annual messages of 1906, 1907, and 1908, although rather moderately. In his December 3, 1906 message, Roosevelt stated that "The opportunity freely and publicly to criticize judicial action is of vastly more importance to the body politic than the immunity of courts and judges from unjust aspersions and attack."¹³ He also said that

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Quoted in Ibid., p. 165.

¹³ Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. XV, p. 7028.

Combination of capital like combination of labor is a necessary element of our present industrial system. It is not possible completely to prevent it; and if it were possible, such complete prevention would do damage to the body politic. What we need is not vainly to try to prevent all combination, but to secure such rigorous and adequate control and supervision of the combinations as to prevent their injuring the public ...¹⁴

His seventh annual message echoed and emphasized these sentiments,¹⁵ and his more "radical" speeches of 1908 resembled closely his statements of two and three years later. In very substantial arguments, Elting E. Morison, and especially George E. Mowry, have shown that in 1908 "Roosevelt had expressed in outline form his own political program for the next four years;" that he may have had "as much influence on Croly as Croly had on him;" and that his "1907-8 observations on the need for increasing the federal regulatory powers, his indictment of the asocial nature of big business, and his criticism of the federal courts, which he expressed with far more causticity in his private letters, were to be the very essence of his radical Osawatomie speech of 1910 and his New Nationalism of 1912."¹⁶

In a number of articles in the Outlook of 1910-1911, Roosevelt further delineated his "new" political doctrine. He called for a new sense of national purpose, reprimanded the courts for lagging behind, and declared that it was "ruinous to permit governmental action, especially judicial action" which would interfere with this purpose.¹⁷ In January of 1911 Roosevelt

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 7040.

¹⁵ See Ibid., pp. 7070-7125. It should be emphasized that Roosevelt's doctrines seemed "radical" in view of his former high place in the government. La Follette and others were far more radical at this time than he was.

¹⁶ Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, p. 222.

¹⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, "Criticism of the Courts," Outlook, v.96, September 24, 1910, p. 149.

initiated a series of nine articles, that ran until April, which presented his New Nationalism on issues from "Progress" to the Judiciary.¹⁸ Here he continued to restate and refine his ideas, and these nine articles are perhaps the greatest single source, besides Croly's book, for a discussion of the motivating theory behind Roosevelt's campaign addresses of 1912.

Of course, the objections to Roosevelt's doctrine, from conservative circles and some moderate liberals as well, were strenuous. Not only were objections raised, but the dangers of a clear break with Taft were becoming more and more ominous. As early as September 8, 1910, the Nation, commenting on the Osawatomie speech, asked, "Are we to infer that Mr. Roosevelt proposes to found and head a new party, made up of elements from both the old ones? Is this speech to be taken as a bold bid for the Presidency in 1912?" It went on further to say that the "Kansas speech outstrips not only the most extreme utterance that he himself ever made previously, but that of any of the most radical men in public life in our time."¹⁹ Harper's Weekly was equally shocked by this "radicalism": "The man himself may be considered ... dangerous to our institutions [and] the ideas he stands for are dangerous in themselves without reference

¹⁸ In chronological order -- Theodore Roosevelt, "Nationalism and Progress," Outlook, v.97, Jan. 14, 1911, p. 57; "Nationalism and Popular Rule," Outlook, v.97, Jan. 21, 1911, pp. 96-101; "Nationalism and Special Privilege," Outlook, v.97, Jan. 28, 1911, p. 148; "Nationalism and the Workingman," Outlook, v.97, Feb. 4, 1911, pp. 253-256; "Nationalism and the Judiciary," Outlook, v.97, Feb. 25, 1911, pp. 383-385; "Nationalism and the Judiciary," Outlook, v.97, March 4, 1911, pp. 488-492; "Nationalism and the Judiciary," Outlook, v.97, March 11, 1911, pp. 532-536; "Nationalism and Democracy," Outlook, v.97, March 25, 1911, pp. 622-625; "Nationalism and International Relations," Outlook, v.97, April 1, 1911, pp. 716-720.

¹⁹ "Mr. Roosevelt's New Platform," Nation, v.91, September 8, 1910, pp. 204-205.

to the personality of their chief advocate." ²⁰ Editor George Harvey also lamented the fact that Taft seemed relegated to a remote limbo in the "glowing effulgence" of Roosevelt, and he declared that the "Republican theory of government is paternalistic enough, but Rooseveltism is paternalism run mad." ²¹ In some cases, this criticism became exceptionally polemical! "The prognathic jaw and scowling eyes, more physical defects until they grow in and become a state of mind, have been so advertised throughout the world that men go to stare, just as Barnum's Fat Woman, or Skeleton Man, or Jumbo, attracted statesmen and babies alike." ²²

In the face of this criticism, the selections above being only representative, Roosevelt reacted as would be expected -- he qualified a few points, but he defended his position strongly; he was more careful at times, but he was always prepared to renew the attack with greater vigor than ever before.

In any case, Roosevelt had laid down his basic political tenets long before his official announcement of his candidacy in February of 1912. He was speaking a strong doctrine -- a doctrine that appealed to all the laborers, agrarians, and "Tory radicals" ²³ who were to unite behind him in what was to be a Great Crusade. It was to be a Crusade for specific reforms -- concerning the judiciary, regulation of trusts, national primaries, and labor legislation -- but it was also to be a crusade based upon first principles,

²⁰ "Comment," Harper's Weekly, v.54, October 8, 1910, p. 6.

²¹ "Rooseveltism and the Republic," Harper's Weekly, v.54, October 29, 1910, p. 8.

²² "Mr. Roosevelt and His Boswell," Harper's Weekly, v.55, March 4, 1911, p.11.

²³ Seymour Martin Lipset gives an interesting interpretation of these "conservatives" who "helped to democratize the society as part of their struggle against the vulgar nouveau riche businessman" in his Political Man, (Garden City, 1961), p. 299.

broad generalizations, and fiery slogans -- for the great ideals of the rank and file. It was this fervent, uncompromising, almost religious zeal for democratic redemption that would indeed make it a Crusade.

The New Nationalism, and the campaign of 1912, would "lay the seeds of much of the promise and most of the peril of the next fifty years,"²⁴ and it was the scope and intense demand of this movement that would result in a certain culmination of progressivism, and in a new way of looking at the twentieth century.

²⁴

Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, p. 295.

T H E H A T A N D T H E R I N G

" ... if you could fully realize how the rank and file of the party feel toward you I hardly see how you could decline to again serve your country."

- Governor William E. Glasscock to Theodore Roosevelt, January, 1912.

" ... I am in this fight purely for a principle, win or lose."

- Theodore Roosevelt, February, 1912.

TOWARD the end of 1911, as we have seen, Roosevelt was still warming up over the Steel suit, and the confidence he had lost in the elections of 1910 was slowly returning. Although he had not joined the National Progressive Republican League (largely to avoid too great an association with La Follette), he had certainly not repudiated it, and he surely had his eye on the leadership of the party at some future time. He was dissatisfied with Taft and he knew that the President could not be reelected; yet he was far from certain that he ought to be the man to oppose him. As the first months of the election year arrived, Roosevelt was in a very sensitive situation. Taft was making his bid for reelection; On January 3 he declared, "Nothing but death can keep me out of the fight now."¹

¹ New York Tribune, January 4, 1912. [The year 1912 is volume LXXI.]

La Follette had been openly campaigning since June of 1911. The public and the professional politicians wanted to know where Roosevelt stood -- was he in the race, and if not who did he support? A decision had to be made soon if he were to run, for the possibilities of his candidacy could only be weakened by delay. Some action, some statement, soon became imperative.

Roosevelt had always stated in his private correspondence that he had no desire to be a candidate; he said that only if he was the overwhelming choice of the people would he consider it, and he did not think such public sentiment likely.² This opinion was shared by many of his close friends. John Burroughs, Lawrence F. Abbott (publisher of the Outlook), and Henry L. Stimson all publicly declared that they did not believe Roosevelt would be a candidate. The Taft men did not want to force anything and they stated that no attack upon Roosevelt would be countenanced by the Taft organization.³ Yet Roosevelt wanted to keep the door open in case he wished to use it. He refused to withdraw his name from the official primary ballot in Nebraska, placed there by his supporters, because, as he said, "nobody had a right to ask me to cross that bridge until I came to it."⁴ He did not want to tie his hands by any definite statement and he felt that if he openly declared his candidacy he would suffer wide retribution from enemies and friends alike for seeking a third term.⁵ However, he wrote Henry Needham on January 9 that he would "put out" his platform at the Ohio Constitutional Convention in late February, with a statement that he would not seek the

² See T.R. to William L. Ward, January 9, 1912, Roosevelt MSS; and T.R. to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, January 12, 1912, Cowles MSS, Morison, The Letters, V.7, p. 477.

³ New York Tribune, January 1, 1912; January 5, 1912; January 8, 1912. T.R. said of Abbott's statement: "I haven't read it and I'm not sure I will." New York Tribune, January 6, 1912.

⁴ T.R. to George W. Norris, January 2, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

⁵ T.R. to Frank Munsey, January 16, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

nomination, "but that if it come to me as a genuine popular movement of course I will accept ... " ⁶

Finally, on January 18, he wrote to Governors Osborn of Michigan, Glasscock of West Virginia, Stubbs of Kansas, Hadley of Missouri, Johnson of California and Bass of New Hampshire suggesting a letter from them asking for a statement of his political position and endorsing him. He could then reply, stating his candidacy but qualifying it as he wished. ⁷ There followed a long series of correspondence between the various Governors, Roosevelt, and other friends of the Colonel that did not clarify matters. To some he wrote as if he were still thinking about what to do, ⁸ and to others he discussed the coming campaign and even the proper selection of a campaign chairman. ⁹

Roosevelt was undoubtedly under a great deal of pressure. He had been receiving hundreds of letters over a period of months asking him to declare his candidacy. Some simply asked him to "come out and Champion the People's Cause and you'll win," or "we need you at the Head of the government. God grant that wemmay be granted that great favor." ¹⁰ Theodore, Jr. wrote his

⁶ T.R. to Henry B. Needham, January 9, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

⁷ These letters are all similar, and can be found in the Roosevelt MSS. Pringle thinks that the "round-robin" letter originated in the Outlook offices on January 22, and Mowry says that Roosevelt thought of it on January 12. The exact date is perhaps of little importance. Certainly by January 18, and possibly earlier, Roosevelt had decided to make a statement of his candidacy.

⁸ See, for instance, T.R. to Franklin A. Shotwell, January 24, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

⁹ See, for instance, T.R. to Walter R. Stubbs, February 8, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

¹⁰ O.H. Overlook (of St. Louis) to T.R., December (?), 1911; Rich Boylston Hall (of Boston) to T.R., January 1, 1912, Roosevelt MSS. M.F. Nichols, a Negro from Ocean Springs, Mississippi, even wrote Roosevelt on January 5, 1912 that "in the name of Jesus Christ and the race of which I am a member [I] beg leave to urge you again to declare as a ... candidate for the presidency of these U.S." Roosevelt MSS. There were also scores of petitions coming in from across the nation, such as the one signed by 1,004 Republicans in Passaic, New Jersey on January 4. New York Tribune, January 5, 1912.

father from San Francisco in December of 1911, saying: "... it looks as if Taft would get the nomination. Out here of course they all dislike him but they have no one to turn to as leader. La Follette I don't think has the confidence of any except the extreme."¹¹ Governor William E. Glasscock of West Virginia said, "if you could fully realize how the rank and file of the party feel toward you I hardly see how you could decline to again serve your country."¹² He also received letters from Frank Knox, chairman of the Michigan State Republican Central Committee, and other men who were already working for him. They all, of course, encouraged him to run. The amount of sentiment in support of Roosevelt's candidacy was overwhelming in his incoming mail and scores of his supporters wrote saying that a successful Roosevelt campaign would be impossible "unless it was known Mr. Roosevelt would accept the nomination."¹³ The Colonel knew this better than anyone. He fretted under this unpleasant pressure of indecision; he longed for a clear-cut statement once and for all.

A great deal of Roosevelt's reluctance is undoubtedly attributable to his uneasiness over the prospects of his success. La Follette and Taft were both in the field, and even Senator Cummins of Iowa indicated on January 20 that he would be disposed to enter the race as well. Roosevelt could win the nomination only by uniting the progressive forces behind him, and if they did not act quickly they would be hopelessly divided, if they were not already. Many of his friends were already working for La Follette -- Gifford and Amos Pinchot, Medill McCormick, Hiram Johnson -- and they did not want to be caught in a dual role. George W. Norris urged Roosevelt to make a clear statement;

¹¹ T.R., Jr., to T.R., December (?), 1911, Roosevelt MSS.

¹² William E. Glasscock to T.R., January 1, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

¹³ Richard W. Knott to T.R., January 24, 1912, Roosevelt MSS. Knott was the editor of the Evening Post of Louisville, Kentucky.

otherwise Taft would win many states because of the "division" in progressive ranks. ¹⁴ Governor Stubbs of Kansas stated realistically that Roosevelt sentiment "must be crystallized into delegates ... who will express that sentiment by their votes" -- otherwise such sentiment would be worthless. ¹⁵ The Taft forces were jubilant that Roosevelt was remaining silent while they quietly picked up delegates to the national convention in Chicago. The New York Tribune stated that situation admirably:

Mr. Taft is by no means anxious to have Mr. Roosevelt declare himself with regard to the nomination. The talk of Roosevelt is doing yeoman's work for Mr. Taft From the insurgent point of view it is now or never, for so long as there is talk of Roosevelt the La Follette boomlet can proceed only backward ... ¹⁶

Perhaps the most important factors in prompting Roosevelt's decision were his realization that neither La Follette nor Taft could win the election in 1912, and his belief that even at this late date he could still manage to win the nomination. It must have also galled him to see that by not making a statement he was, in fact, aiding the President. "Most people admit that Mr. Roosevelt is the shrewdest politician in America. He knows what he is about If he gets into the race actively it will mean that he believes he will win." ¹⁷

Roosevelt also considered the groundwork that had already been laid for

¹⁴ George W. Norris to T.R., January 5, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

¹⁵ Walter R. Stubbs to T.R., January 6, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

¹⁶ New York Tribune, January 3, 1912.

¹⁷ Birmingham Age-Herald, (Birmingham, Alabama), February 15, 1912. Roosevelt would not be so confident of victory later in the campaign, but at this point he had everything to lose and nothing to gain from a lost cause. He could have sat through the election of 1912 and been fairly confident of the nomination in 1916. Under pressure, however, he reacted characteristically, and he accepted the challenge. If he could get the nomination he thought he could win.

his candidacy; he would step into the campaign with a certain degree of organization behind him. It has already been mentioned that Roosevelt Clubs were being formed as early as June of 1910, and toward the end of 1911 these sprang up across the country. In the first months of 1912 his closest supporters would lay the framework for his entire campaign organization.

Early in 1912 rumors began to circulate that George W. Perkins, a prominent figure in the Harvester trust and in U.S. Steel and a long time Roosevelt friend and benefactor, was financing a behind-the-scenes campaign in the South to secure some of the "rotten boroughs" for the Colonel. On January 13, Perkins refused to comment on the rumor. On the same day it was reported that Ormsby McHarg, one of Taft's lieutenants in the South in the pre-convention fight of 1908, had gone to Alabama to work for Roosevelt. On this occasion the New York Tribune said that McHarg was an "implacable enemy of Colonel Roosevelt,"¹⁸ but on January 16 they confirmed that he was indeed in the South working for Roosevelt and that he was being financed by Perkins. The Taft people believed that "such an aggregation [*sic.*] of the disgruntled" did not really represent the former President.¹⁹ Rumors were rife in the capital, and signs of a Roosevelt boom seemed to spring up everywhere.

Taft's Postmaster General, Frank H. Hitchcock, publicly endorsed government ownership of telegraph lines, and the President was angry because Hitchcock had not consulted with him. On January 15, Taft said that the recommendation "expressed the views of Mr. Hitchcock, rather than those of the administration."²⁰

¹⁸ New York Tribune, January 14, 1912.

¹⁹ Ibid., January 16, 1912. The Tribune condemned Perkins and McHarg and declared that they were misrepresenting Roosevelt and were buying support with "unlimited funds." New York Tribune, January 22, 1912.

²⁰ Ibid.,

There were speculations that Hitchcock would break with Taft and this was especially significant since he had been the sheperd of the Negro delegates from the South in the 1908 convention. This seemed even more suspicious because Ormsby McHarg was Hitchcock's personal attorney. Some of Taft's advisors thought that "a concerted effort was being made to force a break between Taft and Mr. Hitchcock, so that the latter's service and his political advice might be removed from the Taft camp ..." ²¹ This turned out to be largely unwarranted, but in the early months of 1912 the atmosphere was definitely laden with the excitement of impending political decision; " ... the air about Washington is charged nowadays with electricity ... and a political gloss is put upon any happening, however innocent, which may be suspected of deep and dark significance." ²²

It was also said in Indianapolis that Roosevelt was being supported by the United States Steel Corporation. On January 16 Roosevelt replied: "I will not discuss pipe dreams from Indianapolis or anywhere else. There are depths of tomfoolery which I cannot solve." ²³ The next day the business manager of the Philadelphia North American, a member of the Frank A. Munsey newspaper chain, announced that he had received an editorial from the New York office which avidly boomed Roosevelt for the nomination. He was instructed to print it on the front page. He said he was given to understand that it was to be printed at the solicitation of Perkins. He added, "I, of course, knew that the bulk of Mr. Munsey's fortune is invested in the securities of the U.S. Steel Corporation." ²⁴ On January 19 E.H. Gary of

21

Ibid., January 23, 1912.

22

Ibid., January 16, 1912.

23

Ibid., January 17, 1912.

24

St. Louis Republic (St. Louis, Missouri), January 18, 1912.

U.S. Steel denied his company's role in Roosevelt's camp,²⁵ but the participation of Perkins and Munsey in the Colonel's campaign would soon be obvious. They were helping him all they could, and they would continue to do so.

Even though Roosevelt had not announced his candidacy, certain events at the outset of 1912 seemed ominous indeed to the declared candidates in the field. Appropriately on January 1, 1912, the Progressive Republican League of Ohio met in Columbus, formed a permanent organization, and adopted a resolution opposing Taft and promising support for "La Follette, Theodore Roosevelt, or any other Progressive Republican." Gifford Pinchot and James R. Garfield worked feverishly to keep the convention from endorsing any specific candidate -- namely, La Follette -- even though Pinchot maintained that he was working for the Wisconsin Senator. Senator Works of California, working diligently for La Follette along with Senator Clapp of Minnesota, delivered an electrifying speech in which he said that division in the progressive ranks would be fatal, and that "in all fairness to the progressive movement, Roosevelt should say 'I am a candidate,' or 'I am not a candidate.'" After three hours of debate the convention refused to endorse La Follette by a vote of 52-32 but voted 81-11 to give him "personal praise."²⁶ This pointed up the frustration^{10N} that the progressives felt as well as the sentiment that existed in their ranks for Roosevelt.

In St. Louis, Missouri on January 18, the Republican City Central Committee endorsed Roosevelt for the nomination by a vote of 15-10. E. Mont Rely of Kansas City had started the Roosevelt drive in the state and W.E.S. Jarrett, the chairman of the City Committee, engineered the St. Louis endorsement.

²⁵ New York Tribune, January 20, 1912.

²⁶ The Cincinnati Enquirer, (Cincinnati, Ohio), January 1, 1912; January 2, 1912; New York Tribune, January 2, 1912.

There was no real harmony in the meeting, however, and many federal officeholders were understandably upset. There were prognostications that Ormsby McHarg, a recent visitor to St. Louis, had used his influence on Republican leaders.²⁷ Finally, the majority of St. Louis Republicans threatened to bolt the ticket if Roosevelt, an un-declared candidate at that, remained the committee's choice, and on February 2 the City Committee was forced to rescind its action of two weeks before by a vote of 25-1 and to remove Jarrett (the one dissenting vote) as chairman.²⁸

These were but small actions in what was to be a long war, but the frustration they demonstrated was duplicated in scores of local organizations throughout the land.

These episodes were sufficient to convince Roosevelt that his present position was untenable. His followers desired to go all out for him, but they could not be expected to burn their bridges behind them if they were not even sure of their candidate's willingness to take an active part in the campaign. In mid-January the Roosevelt National Committee was established in Chicago.²⁹ Alexander H. Revell, a Chicago furniture manufacturer, was made chairman and when the official offices were opened in the Congress Hotel on January 23, he declared confidently, "We are open for business."³⁰ They were not to close until after November. Edward J. Brundage became the vice-chairman, Edwin W. Sims was the secretary, and Truman H. Newberry agreed to act as financial administrator. On February 10, the eight Governors who were to send Roosevelt the "round-robin" letter met with delegates from some thirty

²⁷ St. Louis Republic, January 19, 1912.

²⁸ Ibid., February 2, 1912.

²⁹ Mowry maintains that it was formed on January 15; Elting Morison says that it was on January 16. It was officially announced on January 20, however.

³⁰ New York Tribune, January 24, 1912.

states in Chicago for executive sessions. Many of the delegates reported elaborate Roosevelt organizations in their states, and the campaign seemed to be off and running.³¹ And all this ~~was~~^{with}out a positive public statement from Roosevelt.

Shortly before Roosevelt's formal entrance into the race, Senator La Follette's hopes suffered some severe setbacks. The Wisconsin progressive certainly had more than his share of troubles. He caught the wrong train to a La Follette rally in Lansing, Michigan and when he failed to appear, Governor Chase Osborn, who was to have introduced him, took the opportunity to make a public speech asking La Follette and Taft to withdraw in favor of Beveridge or Roosevelt.³² La Follette, undaunted, continued to barnstorm the midwest, criticizing Roosevelt's presidential anti-trust record, attacking Taft, and avidly proclaiming his own progressivism. On the night of January 3, he suffered a case of ptomaine poisoning and on the next day he fell down the steps of his campaign train.³³ On January 5 it was announced that he was on the verge of a "physical collapse" and he was confined to his bed as he traveled across Illinois. At Clinton, Iowa, "he was so exhausted he was unable to address his audience."³⁴ As the Roosevelt organization started to function, La Follette began losing support. Although Gifford Pinchot still introduced him on January 22 at Carnegie Hall as "the candidate I support for the Republican Presidential nomination,"³⁵ he had lost Representative Hanna of North Dakota and many others as well.³⁶ On January 25 his headquarters

³¹ Ibid., February 11, 1912; Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 211.

³² New York Tribune, January 3, 1912.

³³ Ibid., January 5, 1912.

³⁴ Ibid., January 6, 1912.

³⁵ Ibid., January 23, 1912.

³⁶ Ibid., January 26, 1912; January 27, 1912.

reiterated that he would be in the fight until the bitter end and that he would tour the country.³⁷ In Philadelphia on February 2, La Follette addressed the Periodical Publishers Association at their dinner at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel. Woodrow Wilson had spoken earlier and gave a moving speech. "La Follette was exhausted by labor and by anxiety for the life of a daughter who was desperately ill; ... he launched into a long and bitter tirade against the money trust and the newspaper and magazine publishers."³⁸ From Washington the next morning came the announcement that "Fighting Bob," on the verge of a breakdown, had cancelled all his speaking engagements for two weeks.³⁹ On February 5, Medill McCormick of the Illinois Progressive League and one of La Follette's strong supporters, issued a call for all progressives to work for Roosevelt. Amos Pinchot followed suit the next day, and two days later Governor Chester A. Aldrich of Nebraska encouraged a progressive rally around the Colonel. The New York Tribune commented: "His former supporters are so anxious to bury Mr. La Follette that they have hardly time to praise him. He is being hustled ruthlessly inside the hearse, although he still insists that he is strong enough to occupy a seat alongside the driver."⁴⁰ W.L. Houser of Washington, D.C., La Follette's determined campaign manager, announced in mid-February: "Senator La Follette

³⁷ Ibid., January 30, 1912.

³⁸ Link, Wilson -- Road to the White House, p. 395, footnote #15; New York Tribune, February 3, 1912. Belle Case and Fola La Follette, in their generally objective biography of their father, lament this event as a great detriment to his campaign, but they chose to put it into a more balanced context. La Follette had certainly been waging a bewilderingly intense campaign, and the weight of this, plus his daughter's illness and the problems with Roosevelt all led to his irate conduct on this occasion. See Belle Case and Fola La Follette, Robert M. La Follette, June 14, 1855 - June 18, 1925, (New York, 1953). 2 Vols.

³⁹ New York Tribune, February 4, 1912.

⁴⁰ Ibid., February 4, 1912; February 6, 1912; February 7, 1912; February 8, 1912.

is in the race for the presidential nomination to stay." ⁴¹ Later he stated that if the Wisconsin senator could not win he would shift his strength to Taft. ⁴² Both of Mr. Houser's statements would prove to be true.

The Springfield Republican said that "Armies like stirring and encouraging bulletins from headquarters ..." ⁴³ and that is exactly what the Taft headquarters provided. On February 8, William B. McKinley -- "a quiet, unostentatious, bald-headed, blue-eyed little man" ⁴⁴ -- was appointed Taft's campaign manager largely because he was experienced, and also because Taft distrusted his former manager, Hitchcock. When asked what he thought of McKinley's appointment, Roosevelt quipped, "What McKinley is that?" ⁴⁵ Most importantly, however, all the leaders were in the field and fighting -- all except Roosevelt. The pressure on him was approaching the breaking point.

During these hectic months Taft was undergoing an ordeal of apprehension over Roosevelt's apparent indecision. In December of 1911, Major Butt reported that "the Colonel hangs over him [Taft] like a big, black cloud and seems to be his nemesis. He frets under it, I can see." ⁴⁶ Charles D. Hilles,

⁴¹ Fargo Forum, (Fargo, North Dakota), February 16, 1912.

⁴² Ibid., February 19, 1912. Arthur S. Link maintains that the rumors of La Follette's breakdown "were the excuse that Theodore Roosevelt used for discarding La Follette's candidacy and announcing his own." Wilson - Road to the White House, p. 395, footnote #15. I have shown that the Roosevelt candidacy, in effect, was well underway by February 2 and it appears that by that time La Follette's chances had reached their nadir. Contrary to Dr. Link's statement, Roosevelt never embraced La Follette's candidacy and therefore could hardly have "discarded" it. Some of Roosevelt's supporters certainly used La Follette's collapse as an excuse for switching to Roosevelt, but the record will show that Roosevelt did not. In the case of many people, La Follette's collapse was the actual reason for their switch to the Colonel.

⁴³ Springfield Republican (Springfield, Illinois), February 2, 1912.

⁴⁴ Stoddard, As I Knew Them, p. 121.

⁴⁵ New York Tribune, February 10, 1912.

⁴⁶ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, December 19, 1911, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 79⁴.

a close Taft friend and advisor and chairman of the Republican National Committee from 1912 to 1916, said in January: "There is going to be great bitterness between the two before and during the convention, and I think the Colonel wants to notify his old friends that they had better be prepared for a fight to the finish, for no one can remain neutral during the next few months."⁴⁷ In February the mounting pressure had its effects on Taft: "The President is looking very badly His flesh looks like wax, and his lips are thin, and he is getting those unhealthy bags under his eyes."⁴⁸ Taft had a premonition of what was to come, and he could hardly ready himself for the monumental task of defending his administration against a major Roosevelt onslaught.

During February Roosevelt readied himself for the same conflict. He felt that it was becoming imperative for him to take the field and save the party. He was considering and reconsidering all the many aspects of his position, he was mobilizing all the ideological energy of the New Nationalism, and he was quietly furbishing his candidacy with all the trappings of a crusade. He began to divide the issues into black and white, into right and wrong, as was characteristic of him. He wrote of the party: "... my aim is to make it and keep it the Republican party that it was in the days of Lincoln."⁴⁹ From New York on February 20, the day he left to make his speech at Columbus, he wrote Truman Newberry: "... I am in this fight purely for a principle, win or lose."⁵⁰ His old friend Elihu Root had written him:

⁴⁷ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, January 13, 1912, Ibid., p. 812.

⁴⁸ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, February 9, 1912, Ibid., p. 839.

⁴⁹ T.R. to Augustus Everett Wilson, February 14, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

⁵⁰ T.R. to Truman Newberry, February 20, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

... it seems to me that those who ask you to make a declaration are asking you to incur the considerable probability of being defeated in the election, and that the consequences to your future, to your power of leadership in the interests of the causes which you have at heart, and to your position in history, would be so injurious that no friend and no number of friends have any right to ask such a sacrifice. ⁵¹

This was the voice of moderation -- it spoke a common sense language that Roosevelt was to ignore by the end of February. By the 18th there were thirty delegates to Chicago, and all were for Taft. ⁵²

Accompanied by his private secretary, Frank Harper, Roosevelt boarded the St. Louis Express at 5:43 p.m. on February 20 from Grand Central. In Cleveland the next morning he told W.F. Eirick, the County Commissioner, "My hat is in the ring," but he added, "you will have my answer on Monday." ⁵⁴ It was an off-hand remark which clearly indicated that he had made up his mind to run, but it did not receive the attention in some press circles as might have been expected. He made four speeches in Ohio in the blinding snow and rain before thousands of well-wishers. While he was there he took the opportunity to speak with Garfield, Frank Knox, Nathaniel C. Wright (chairman of the Roosevelt National Publicity Committee), Washington Gladden and Wanamaker. ⁵⁵ There was an exciting glow to all the events in Ohio because Roosevelt's declaration was clearly imminent.

As he stood before the Ohio Constitutional Convention in Columbus on February 21 -- his teeth evident beneath his walrus mustache -- pounding his

⁵¹ Philip C. Jessup, Elihu Root, (New York, 1938), Vol. II, pp. 173-175.

⁵² New York Tribune, February 18, 1912.

⁵³ Ibid., February 21, 1912.

⁵⁴ Cincinnati Enquirer, February 22, 1912; New York Tribune, February 22, 1912.

⁵⁵ Boston Journal, February 22, 1912; Cincinnati Enquirer, February 22, 1912.

points home with a doubled-up fist -- it became obvious to his audience that this was a principal address, an address to launch a campaign. "I believe in pure democracy this country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it." He restated his appeal for the honest public servant, the leader who would insure this democracy. To trust to the old political methods to achieve this democracy would be "as foolish as if we should attempt to arm our troops with the flintlocks of Washington's Continentals instead of the modern weapons of precision." He also restated that "business must be done in larger units," for the old dissolution of trusts would not suffice in an industrial society. "It is imperative to exercise over big business a control and supervision which is unnecessary as regards small business." The federal government should guarantee this regulation through the application of the square deal. In business, "the mere fact of size is not of and by itself criminal." "We stand for the rights of property," he said, "but we stand even more for the rights of man." He reemphasized his belief in the short ballot and the direct election of Senators, and then proceeded to advocate a doctrine that was anathema to the conservatives. He avidly declared his faith in the initiative and the referendum. As for the recall, he stated that it should be used only sparingly, but when it was needed, especially against judicial decisions, it was justified. The one kind which he proposed was not the recall of a good judge for a bad decision, but the recall of the decision itself. Roosevelt claimed that this would maintain the independence of the judiciary, but prevent their interference with social and economic progress.⁵⁶ He used the judicial annulment of the employer's liability act in New York as a prime example, for in this case

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Oscar K. Davis says that it was Dr. Van Hise, President of the University of Wisconsin, who first suggested this idea of the recall of judicial decisions to Roosevelt. Released for Publication, p. 264. [In any case, this idea was confused with the actual recall of judges, and Taft found it the most obnoxious part of Roosevelt's program.]

"justice was denied." In conclusion he declared that "our aim must be the moralization of the individual, of the government, of the people as a whole." 57

Roosevelt had stepped off the brink and into the whirlpool -- and he had stepped in with both feet. He had alienated the ultra conservative wing of the party. On the night of February 25, Frank Harper gave out Roosevelt's reply to the eight Governors declaring that he was in the race to the end. 58

The immediate reaction to the Columbus speech was varied. The New York Tribune said: "It is Colonel Roosevelt's impatience with established institutions that constitutes his 'radicalism.'" 59 Some believed that Roosevelt's speech was "the harangue of the skillful and unscrupulous agitator to all the elements of political unrest." 60 Others even suggested that it "removes him from the Republican party and makes it impossible that the nomination to be made at Chicago can go to him." 61 On the other hand, his avid supporters, including the Chicago Tribune, considered it a "ringing reaffirmation of the fundamental ideals of the Republic." 62 The Munsey papers were aglow with tribute:

The rugged figure of Roosevelt, aflame with courage and conviction as the champion of the people themselves, never stood out bigger and bolder than in this address. It is

57 All of Roosevelt's Columbus speech was taken from the New York Tribune, February 22, 1912. It is reprinted in full on page four.

58 The New York Tribune, February 26, 1912. The Governors' letter, which was sent to Roosevelt from Chicago on February 10, and Roosevelt's reply, are reprinted in full in "Mr. Roosevelt and the Presidential Nomination," Outlook, v.100, March 2, 1912, pp. 475-476.

59 New York Tribune, February 22, 1912.

60 New York World, February 22, 1912.

61 New York Times, February 22, 1912.

62 Chicago Tribune, February 22, 1912.

63 Boston Journal, February 22, 1912.

a courageous presentation, for while it will convince some people of the desirability of supporting him, it will doubtless cost him the support of some others. ⁶³

Roosevelt was never the one to partake of "me-tooism" and this is certainly a case in point. Some of his most ardent supporters agreed that the speech cost him dearly -- and whether they agreed with its principles or not, most of his political advisors lamented its consequences. Not only did it lose him the personal support of Lodge, Root and other old friends, but it left him open to the most vituperative attack from the conservative elements. It probably cost him the nomination. However, we can exaggerate its effects, for he had said many times earlier, notably in his Osawatimie speech of 1910, what he thought of business combinations and the judiciary. The recall of judicial decisions was new, but certainly not as radical as the recall of judges. In order to understand or appreciate the effects of the Columbus speech we must see it within the context of 1912; only within this context will its consequences be clear.

The remainder of the campaign was, in a sense, a continuing attack and defense of this address and the doctrine contained therein. Taft prepared a series of speeches to refute it, and confided to his friends at the White House, "He has drawn the line now he has leaped far ahead of the most radical leaders of the Progressive party He has gone too far." ⁶⁴

William Allen White had felt the crusading spirit earlier: "Taft found the party united; his leadership has left it torn and broken. Unless the Republicans change leaders the country will change parties Its Roosevelt or bust." ⁶⁵ This would be the foundation for the Roosevelt drive for a third term. The hat and the ring had finally coincided. The Great Crusade was underway.

⁶⁴ Archie Butt to Clara Butt, February 21, 1912, Butt, The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, p. 846.

⁶⁵ Emporia Gazette (Emporia, Kansas), January 10, 1912.

" . . . A SATURNALIA OF SCURRILITY . . . " ¹

"There was never a straighter fight waged for the principle of popular rule than that which we are now waging. We are fighting against entrenched privilege."

-- Theodore Roosevelt, March, 1912.

" . . . my own belief is that I shall not be nominated at Chicago. But they will have to steal the delegates outright in order to prevent my nomination, and if the stealing is flagrant no one can tell what the result will be."

-- Theodore Roosevelt, June, 1912.

WHEN Roosevelt officially announced his candidacy, one of the bitterest campaigns of American history was begun. It started amidst excited speculation over the future of the party and was increasingly watched as a major confrontation between two opposing sets of political values. It was predicted that there would be no holds barred, and a month had not passed before the prescience of the speculation would be proven. Republicans watched with dismay: "Roosevelt's candidacy . . . can hardly fail to engender unusual political bitterness and create a breach among Republicans wider than rival candidates ordinarily produce, and in a year when the party will need its full strength to win." ² This became the understatement of the year. Democrats, on the other hand, looked on with silent satisfaction: "Certain it is that

¹ This is a phrase used by George E. Mowry to describe the pre-convention battle waged between Roosevelt and Taft in 1912, and in my opinion an appropriate one. Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 220.

² New York Tribune, February 26, 1912.

the democrats could have asked nothing better than for the republicans to get themselves in the fix they are in right now." ³ Surely, those who enjoyed free-wheeling political campaigns would not be disappointed.

In February Roosevelt's full campaign committee was announced. Chairman of the drive for a third term was Joseph M. Dixon, Senator from Missoula, Montana, a young man of "very pleasant and winning personality, easy manners, and attractive address." ⁴ Frank Knox, prominent Michigan Republican, was vice-chairman, and William L. Ward of New York, Walter F. Brown of Ohio, Cecil Lyon of Texas, and William Flinn of Pennsylvania were also on the executive committee. They would conduct the Roosevelt campaign from offices in New York. On February 29, the first Roosevelt delegates to the convention were chosen in the second congressional district of Missouri. ⁵

Oscar King Davis, refused a leave of absence from the New York Times, resigned from that paper to become the Roosevelt publicity chief, and John O'Laughlin took charge of the Washington headquarters, where the Pinchots, Garfield and Medill McCormick based their activities. ⁶ Ormsby McHarg was soon announced as Dixon's special assistant and he was to remain a most important cog in the machine.

The Roosevelt drive got under way in Newark, New Jersey on the night of March 1. Governor Stubbs, the chief orator, told his audience in the Krueger Auditorium that the recent Columbus address was "the greatest declaration of human rights since Lincoln's day." He declared that Roosevelt had not wanted to enter the campaign, but was forced into it for the defense of his

³ Birmingham Age-Herald, February 22, 1912.

⁴ Davis, Released for Publication, p. 267.

⁵ New York Tribune, March 1, 1912.

⁶ Morison, The Letters, Vol. 7, p. 502, footnote #1.

progressive principles. "We have come to the time in the history of our nation," he said, "when the people are going to run this country." Although the size of the crowd was somewhat disappointing, those who were there cheered heartily and were pleased to set the spark to an unusual political effulgence. ⁷

The Roosevelt managers faced a complex and challenging task before them. The problems were multitudinous and the answers did not come easily. Their first problem, of course, was Roosevelt's relatively late entrance into the race. Taft had been quietly organizing his forces for the scores of local nominating conventions throughout the nation, especially in the South, and he had largely succeeded in gaining a strong bloc on which he could depend at Chicago. Roosevelt had his strong areas as well, but he realized that the powers of a presidential incumbent are many. It would take a steep up-hill battle to neutralize those powers -- powers which, ironically, he had given to Taft in 1908. The Colonel's forces had to be consolidated, and quickly. Roosevelt himself knew that he had a growing deficit to make up, and on occasion he did not seem very optimistic. He wrote to Joseph B. Bishop in late January that "while there are a great many people in this country who are devoted to me, they do not form more than a substantial minority of the ten or fifteen millions of voters." ⁸ The forces that had already shown loyalty in some of the state and local conventions had to be energized and sent into battle.

For some time Roosevelt had considered the South one of the keys to his success, and he retained this belief after he broke away from the party.

⁷ Newark Evening News, March 2, 1912; New York Tribune, March 2, 1912. There were only around 700 people present, and the auditorium had a seating capacity of twice that many. The leaders gathered at the front of the hall between 8:00 and 8:30 p.m. waiting for the crowd to grow. Finally they went on with the show. Another disappointment was that Governor Bass of New Hampshire became ill and could not speak as scheduled.

⁸ T.R. to Joseph Bucklin Bishop, January 29, 1912, Morison, The Letters, vol. 7, p. 492.

Now it was too late for this strategy to be effective for the convention. To Dan Hanna he admitted that, "As for the South, I am afraid we can do little or nothing there. The 'rotten boroughs' are naturally and inevitably against us."⁹ Roosevelt well knew the ability of the current party leaders to dominate the skeletal Republican outfits in the South through the use of federal patronage. Ormsby McHarg had been doing some work there since January, but this was largely ineffective. The remaining course of action was to contest the elected delegates, hold separate conventions, and generally harass the Taft movement in the South for what it was worth. This would become one of the central elements of Roosevelt's campaign strategy.

Roosevelt also realized that he was more popular, on the whole, with the rank and file than was Taft -- but he had to transform this elusive popularity into an effective force. In 1912, however, the convention system ruled supreme. Early in the year there were only six states that had presidential preference primaries, and Roosevelt could not expect to win in all of these.

Another pressing problem loomed over the heads of Roosevelt's managers -- the consequences of the Columbus speech. Their candidate had alienated the staunch conservative element in the party, and many of these men had been previously anxious to work for him as the man who could win. Now large elements of this support vanished with the very mention of "recall," whether it be of judges or their decisions. Any effective campaign had to include an effort to win back these recently dissatisfied groups and to soften the "radicalism" of Roosevelt's frank statements. The American people, even parts of the beloved rank and file, were not in the habit of sending radicals to the White House.

Thus, Roosevelt's campaign procedures grew naturally out of the realization

⁹ T.R. to Dan Rhodes Hanna, February 29, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

that these problems must be met, and for success they must be conquered. The general strategy was to take the fight to the Taft organization in every conceivable area and, when victory was not possible, initiate a contest against the Taft delegates in the hope that the National Committee would be forced to decide enough of them in Roosevelt's favor. Campaign plans also included a great drive for presidential primaries in all states that did not already have them, and a further appeal to the people through an attack on Taft's reluctance to enter into widespread primary battles. A happy medium also had to be struck between the great momentum and challenge of Roosevelt's attacks on the judiciary and a more balanced and sane impression for the conservatives. All three of these campaign plans would be diligently pressed in the months ahead.

On March 16, Dixon issued a statement that all Southern Taft delegates would be contested. This led to general confusion in the tabulation of delegates already elected. The Roosevelt forces did not include the contested delegates for either candidate, whereas the Taft leadership more realistically counted most of the contested seats for the President. Thus, on March 16, Dixon estimated that Roosevelt had 66 delegates in the South to 14 for Taft, with 68 being contested. McKinley estimated that 134 delegates were for Taft, with but 14 pledged to Roosevelt.¹⁰ This continued throughout the campaign and it is a credit to the majority of the American press that they saw through Roosevelt's smokescreen and usually attributed most of the contested seats to Taft. The Roosevelt leaders were clearly building up the basis for their argument that the convention was stolen from them.¹¹

Almost from the first "unfailing signs of double-headers were ... visible."¹²

¹⁰

Birmingham Age-Herald, March 17, 1912.

¹¹

I will use delegate statistics taken from the New York Tribune. These are not always accurate, because the paper was for Taft, but I have found them substantially correct and generally realistic.

¹² Victor Rosewater, Back Stage in 1912, (Philadelphia, 1932), p. 64.

These "double-headers" took various forms. More or less typical was a double convention in one Mississippi district, "one meeting inside the court house instructing for Taft and a second meeting in the yard instructing for Roosevelt."¹³ When Taft won in Kentucky, over 1000 contests were filed by the Roosevelt forces in almost all the state electoral districts.¹⁴ The Michigan state convention turned out to be mass confusion, the militia being called out to control the disorder and initially two sets of delegates -- one for Taft and one for Roosevelt -- were nominated.¹⁵ As late as April 15, Roosevelt claimed that he and Taft had about 150 delegates each with the rest being contested. Roosevelt was actually beginning to believe that these contests, on the whole, were legitimate.¹⁶ On May 28 he concluded that "Evidently, Taft and his associates have prepared to steal the convention if they are able ..." ¹⁷ and he wrote to Sydney Brooks on June 4 that the Taft people would "have to steal the delegates outright in order to prevent my nomination, and if the stealing is flagrant no one can tell what the result will be." ¹⁸ However, even some Roosevelt supporters realized the true nature of the contest strategy. The Washington Times (a Munsey paper) said:

For psychological effect as a move in practical politics it was necessary for the Roosevelt people to start contests on these early Taft selections in order that a tabulation

¹³ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁴ New York Tribune, April 11, 1912.

¹⁵ Ibid., April 12, 1912.

¹⁶ Ibid., April 15, 1912. In this same issue, the Tribune gives the more accurate tabulation: 322 delegates for Taft and 236 for Roosevelt.

¹⁷ T.R. to William Rockhill Nelson, May 28, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

¹⁸ T.R. to Sydney Brooks, June 4, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

of delegate strength could be put out that would show Roosevelt holding a good hand. In the game, a table showing Taft 150, Roosevelt 19, contested none, would not be very much calculated to inspire confidence, whereas one showing Taft 23, Roosevelt 19, contested 127, looked very different. That is the whole story of the larger number of southern contests that were started early in the game. It was never expected that they would be taken seriously.¹⁹

The contests were either in the form of separate conventions, each claiming validity, or of dissident elements of a single convention claiming to represent the convention. The Republican National Committee figured heavily in this, of course, because they would be called upon to adjudicate the contests prior to the Chicago convention in June. That group had the power to decide the political complexion of the convention, and seemed surely in Taft's camp. The more Roosevelt realized this hard political fact, the more weight he gave to the legitimacy of the contests. With each Roosevelt contest the pressure multiplied, not only on the National Committee members but throughout the party. It was this growing pressure that contributed to one of the most vituperative intra-party fights on record.

The other major prong of Roosevelt's attack was the fight for presidential primaries. It was clearly within the reformist and progressive traditions to demand a greater share for the people in the selection of political candidates, and the primary was becoming an integral part of the attack on oligarchic rule, just as was the advocacy of the direct election of senators. Roosevelt had an ever greater motive, perhaps, because he felt he was more popular with the people than was Taft, regardless of some of the doubts he expressed in pessimistic moments. Only if Roosevelt could demonstrate to the conservatives that he was the man who could win for the party in November, and that Taft was not, could he hope to compensate for some of the things he had said about

¹⁹ Washington Times, (Washington, D.C.), June 9, 1912.

the democratization of the judiciary which had alarmed them. Thus, the push for the primaries across the land began in earnest.

It should be noted that the race of 1912 did not immediately degenerate into a rabid exchange of personalities; instead it began with guarded and rather careful remarks on the part of both candidates.²⁰ It is obvious in retrospect, however, that the conflict between the two organizations was gradually forcing their respective candidates into more adamant positions -- and the little niceties of politics would soon be useless to both sides.

Almost immediately after the campaign got underway, Dixon, O.K. Davis, and J.C. O'Laughlin drew up a public challenge to McKinley stating that all delegates to the convention should be elected in direct primaries in order to decide which candidate ^{WAS} actually the choice of the people. McKinley took up the challenge, answering that Taft was, of course, the most popular man, but qualifying his opinion on exactly how the primaries should be operated. McKinley knew that Roosevelt would have the advantage, but he wanted to give the impression that the Taft forces were not afraid of public opinion. In reality, Taft headquarters worked quietly to discourage direct primaries. However, Davis believed that this move "immediately put the Taft people on the defensive and scored for the Progressives a good deal of publicity."²¹ Roosevelt was typically dividing the issues into black and white. He wrote Dixon on March 8:

²⁰ I say two candidates here, referring to Taft and Roosevelt, for La Follette had largely been dropped from serious consideration in most circles. However, it should be remembered that he remained in the campaign until the convention, and we shall have need to speak of him later. During the four months of the pre-convention fight, La Follette was simply trying to stay in the race. On May 20, for instance, at a La Follette rally in Cleveland, he had to pass the hat around among the crowd to help cover his campaign expenses. New York Tribune, May 21, 1912

²¹ Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 271-272.

There was never a straighter fight waged for the principle of popular rule than that which we are now waging. We are fighting against entrenched privilege. We believe that if given a fair chance the people will declare against both political and financial privilege. Therefore, we demand that they be given that fair chance.²²

The following day in his article for the Outlook he clarified the situation even more. "In reality," he said, "the issue is perfectly simple: Do you believe in the rule of the people? If you do, you are with us. If you do not, you are against us."²³

In the first significant primary Roosevelt lost. Robert La Follette had been campaigning widely in North Dakota, and he was clearly out to nail Roosevelt to the wall if he could. Wisely, he avoided overzealous criticism of the ex-President, and his tactics paid off. On March 20 it was clear that he had beaten Roosevelt by some 11,000 votes.²⁴ Roosevelt wrote Bass (who had led his forces in North Dakota), shrugged off the loss, and said: "Of course, La Follette is really for Taft, if he can't get it himself. This campaign has made it evident that he is for progressive policies only when he can himself win by them; but I have been very careful not to say anything bitter about him in public."²⁵ Five days later he would privately

²²

T.R. to Joseph M. Dixon, March 8, 1912, Roosevelt MSS. This letter was clearly intended for political use, and it got wide distribution.

²³

Theodore Roosevelt, "Do You Believe In the Rule of the People?", Outlook, v.100, March 9, 1912, p. 526. Roosevelt had received many letters encouraging him to take this position. Typical was one from Senator Joseph L. Bristow of February 23, 1912: "If people are not capable of self-government, then the fundamental principles upon which this Republic is based are wrong." Roosevelt MSS.

²⁴

New York Tribune, March 20, 1912. The final results were La Follette 34,123; Roosevelt 23,699; and Taft 1,876. These figures are taken from The World Almanac and Encyclopedia, (New York, 1914), and all figures from this source have been checked with data from The Chicago News Almanac and Yearbook for 1913, (Chicago, 1913). Unless otherwise indicated, citing tabulations are from these sources. G.K. Davis admitted that the Roosevelt organization was conscious of its disadvantage and thought of withdrawing at the last minute. Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 276-277.

²⁵

T.R. to John F. Bass, March 21, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

describe the Wisconsin Senator as " ... half zealot and half self-seeking demagogue." ²⁶ This would be the last serious Roosevelt-La Follette confrontation until the convention in June, as the Colonel restrained himself for the duration of the pre-convention fight by ignoring "Fighting Bob" as much as he could.

The Taft attack on Roosevelt centered around the condemnation of Roosevelt's proposals toward the judiciary as " ... irrational, dangerous and demoralizing ... " ²⁷ Another important aspect of Taft's strategy was the attempt to link Roosevelt to George W. Perkins and other big business figures, thus accusing him of catering to the interests he denounced. Taft's manager, McKinley, said as early as March 5, " ... Mr. Perkins would probably have lost his job long ago had it not been for his intimate friendship with Mr. Roosevelt ... " ²⁸ Taft was also aided somewhat by the defection of many of the Colonel's old supporters into the President's camp. In addition to Lodge and Elihu Root, Henry L. Stimson (a member of the President's cabinet at the time) announced his support of Taft on March 5. Roosevelt could only make a weak rejoinder. ²⁹

Taft attempted to avoid a personal attack on Roosevelt by simply criticizing him indirectly. In Toledo, on March 8, the President referred to the recall of judicial decisions as "crude, reactionary, and utterly without merit." ³⁰ He tried to minimize the demand for primaries in a Boston speech by saying

²⁶ T.R. to John St. Joe Strachey, March 26, 1912, Morison, The Letters, v.7, p.532.

²⁷ New York Tribune, March 5, 1912.

²⁸ Ibid., March 6, 1912.

²⁹ Ibid., and "The Political Campaign: Secretary Stimson's Speech," Outlook, v.100, March 16, 1912, pp. 563-564.

³⁰ New York Tribune, March 9, 1912; March 19, 1912.

that the American people had always ruled themselves.

Roosevelt, it seems, also attempted to avoid the use of his opponent's name at first. On March 20 he spoke in Carnegie Hall for an hour and a half to a large audience, reiterating that he stood "squarely on the Columbus speech." The printed text of the address mentioned Taft by name, but he avoided this usage in the speech itself. He did attempt to qualify his recall proposals somewhat, but as far as he was concerned, criticism of them was less a denunciation of himself "than a criticism of all popular government." ³¹

On March 26, New York held a primary of sorts in which Taft scored a three to one victory. ³² This greatly angered Roosevelt, especially since it was his home state, and he began lashing out more recklessly at Taft, calling the primary "a criminal farce," referring to Taft's methods as "infamous" and declaring that "we shall see such infamies repeated as long as our people tolerate the alliance between crooked politics and crooked business." ³³ In Detroit at the end of March Roosevelt began equating Taft with Senator Lorimer of Illinois, the latter still fighting to take his seat in the Senate. ³⁴

Throughout March and early April Roosevelt's candidacy was characterized more by bluff and bluster than by anything else. Partly out of frustration, it appears, Dixon charged the Taft leaders in Kentucky with wholesale corruption and called upon Taft to repudiate their actions or be considered

31

Ibid., March 21, 1912; "Mr. Roosevelt's Carnegie Hall Speech," Outlook, v.100, March 30, 1912, pp. 707-708. In a letter to Dixon he said that he considered the Carnegie Hall speech and the Columbus speech as the two main planks of his platform. T.R. to Joseph M. Dixon, March 21, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

32

The New York "primary" was simply an indication of preference not actually binding on the members of the state convention, which met in Rochester on April 9 and endorsed Taft.

33

New York Tribune, March 27, 1912; March 28, 1912; April 1, 1912. The Tribune commented that the Roosevelt forces were "against the ... primary only when they lose."

34

Ibid., March 31, 1912.

"a deliberate receiver of stolen goods," a charge that would become common among Roosevelt advocates.³⁵ The Illinois primary, however, gave Roosevelt his first real victory. On April 10 the Illinois voters handed him a solid 100,000 vote majority over Taft and La Follette combined. Medill McCormick was jubilant in New York, while the Roosevelt Headquarters were overjoyed.³⁶ Developments began to come quickly now, with Michigan undecided as to its preference and with Roosevelt's victory in Pennsylvania on April 13 where he captured over two thirds of the delegate strength.³⁷ The drive was gaining momentum, obviously disturbing the Taft headquarters. On April 14, McKinley said that a campaign "of willful and malicious misrepresentation, villification, and a assault" on Taft was underway. Taft himself announced that ^{he would} take to the stump to answer Roosevelt's charges, a task he certainly did not relish.³⁸ Roosevelt wrote Chase Osborn, "I have never seen more infamous conduct than that of the Taft managers in this campaign and of course Taft is coniving at it and profiting by it."³⁹ This growing animosity was leading to the high point of scurrility in the pre-convention battle -- the Massachusetts primary.

35

Ibid., April 7, 1912; "Public Morals and Public Manners," Outlook, v.100, April 20, 1912, pp. 843-844.

36

Ibid., April 11, 1912. Final results: Roosevelt, 266,917; Taft, 127,481; La Follette, 42,692. According to Davis the Illinois primary "really started the Roosevelt movement and gave it an element of practicality which warned the Taft men and the Old Guard that they were facing a situation of extreme danger." Davis, Released for Publication, p. 280.

37

Ibid., April 14, 1912. Taft leaders had previously conceded only 10% of the delegates to Roosevelt and they were obviously stunned. The results; Roosevelt, 273,962; Taft, 193,063; all others, 37,327.

38

Ibid., April 15, 1912; April 20, 1912. Taft wrote to Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul on June 12 concerning Roosevelt: "He is a real menace and danger to the country, and it was because I thought so that I did a thing that was more distasteful to me than anything else I ever had to do, i.e., to go on the stump as President and meet his calumnies." Taft MSS,

39

T.R. to Chase Salmon Osborn, April 16, 1912, Morison, The Letters, v.7, p.534.

Following an attack by McKinley, in which he called Roosevelt a "traitor" to the party, Taft bitterly attacked his predecessor ~~in~~ Boston on April 25. In part, he said that "one who so lightly regards constitutional principles ... and who has so misunderstood what liberty regulated by law is, could not safely be entrusted with successive Presidential terms."⁴⁰ Roosevelt replied in kind. In Worcester, Massachusetts on April 26, he said Taft was marked by "feebleness" and that he had been "disloyal to every canon of ordinary decency and fair dealing." The next night, in the Boston Arena, he equated Taft with Lorimer once again and the crowd almost tore down the building from excitement.⁴¹ Up until the last possible moment the two candidates read other's speeches (sent by telegraph) and parried remarks. It was obvious that both men "displayed their sharpest hostility and engaged in their most personal allusions and nowhere were their respective adherents divided by a deeper fractional rift."⁴²

The result in Massachusetts, however, was an entangled mess. Both Taft and Roosevelt, counting the eight delegates at large, got eighteen delegates, but Taft won the preference of the party by 3,655 votes. Roosevelt, abiding by the "square deal" principle, freed the delegates at large from any commitment to him and encouraged them to vote for Taft. These delegates eventually decided to vote independently as each saw fit.⁴³

⁴⁰ Boston Journal, April 26, 1912; New York Tribune, April 26, 1912.

⁴¹ Boston Journal, April 27, 1912; April 28, 1912.

⁴² Rosewater, Back Stage in 1912, p. 66. Also see "Mr. Taft's Boston Speech," Outlook, v.100, March 30, 1912, pp. 706-707; and "The Massachusetts Speeches -- A Review," Outlook, v.100, May 4, 1912, pp. 16-21.

⁴³ New York Tribune, May 2, 1912; "The Massachusetts Primary -- A Poll of the Press," Outlook, v.100, May 11, 1912, pp. 62-64. The results: Taft, 86,722; Roosevelt, 83,099; La Follette, 2,058; others, 99.

A week later a similar situation developed in Maryland where Roosevelt won the primary on May 6. However, Roosevelt barely slipped through in Howard County, giving him a majority of one vote in the state convention. On May 9, it turned out that Taft had an actual working majority in the convention but he reciprocated the "square deal" and Roosevelt took the Maryland delegates.⁴⁴

There was little doubt in mid-May that the convention in June would be painfully close. This realization goaded the Roosevelt headquarters into a more concentrated frenzy, for victory seemed within their grasp. This atmosphere was also not lost on the President. Unable to campaign personally in California, Taft sent a telegram to "the people of California!" for use by his leaders in that state. He accused Roosevelt of "appealing to class hatred and forcing sham issues in such a way that his success would be a dangerous departure from a wise tradition ... that limits a citizen to two terms in the Presidency."⁴⁵ On May 14 Roosevelt swept the California primary, defeating Taft two to one.⁴⁶

The campaign now centered in Ohio, the President's home state. In Taft's bitterest speech of the entire campaign, on May 13, he called Roosevelt "dangerous" and "egotistical," a "demagogue" who attempted to "honeyfugle" the people. "Mr. Roosevelt," Taft claimed, "likens himself to Abraham Lincoln more, and resembles him less, than any man in the history of this country."⁴⁷ Roosevelt canvassed the state relentlessly -- he was only too aware that Taft had said the Ohio vote would "settle the question of the nomination." Both

⁴⁴ New York Tribune, May 7, 1912; May 8, 1912; May 10, 1912. The results: Roosevelt 29,674; Taft 26,618.

⁴⁵ Ibid., May 13, 1912.

⁴⁶ Ibid., May 15, 1912. The results: Roosevelt, 138,563; Taft, 69,343; La Follette, 45,876.

⁴⁷ Ibid., May 14, 1912; Cincinnati Enquirer, May 14, 1912.

candidates announced that they were now confident of winning victory in Chicago.⁴⁸ The first returns on May 21 indicated that the race was down to the wire and the next day it was clear that Roosevelt had a plurality of 35,000 votes, and 32 of the 42 delegates to the convention.⁴⁹

Roosevelt announced on May 21 that his forces were considering open opposition to the selection of Elihu Root as the temporary chairman of the convention. Soon it became clear that this was to be the Roosevelt strategy.⁵⁰

The New Jersey primary provided a finishing touch. Taft, Roosevelt and La Follette were all barnstorming the state in such a fury that it is a small wonder that their campaign trains did not collide. On May 28, Roosevelt defeated his two opponents with a clear 14,000 vote plurality.⁵¹

By the end of May the pre-convention fight had shifted to a new level. For the first few weeks of June it would be the Republican National Committee that would hold the center of the stage. For all practical purposes the real pre-convention battle had ended by the time the committee convened on June 6 in Chicago.

It had been a wild campaign indeed. Not only was it marked by free-swinging primaries on a scale never before witnessed in the United States, and by vilification and constant charges and counter-charges of corruption, but also by attempts to initiate scandal and to carry on political assault in every feasible area. The publication of Roosevelt's correspondence in regard to the

⁴⁸ New York Tribune, May 17, 1912; Cincinnati Enquirer, May 15, 1912; May 16, 1912; May 17, 1912.

⁴⁹ Cincinnati Enquirer, May 22, 1912; May 23, 1912. The results: Roosevelt, 165,809; Taft, 118,362; La Follette, 15,570.

⁵⁰ See T.R. to Joseph M. Dixon, May 23, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

⁵¹ New York Tribune, May 24, 1912; May 25, 1912; May 29, 1912. Results: Roosevelt, 61,297; Taft, 44,034; La Follette, 3,464.

Harvester Trust by the Attorney General and the Congressional investigation of campaign contributions and expenditures must fall in this latter category. By early June, nevertheless, certain things were evident. Roosevelt was, by far, more popular with the people than was Taft or La Follette. He had won nine of the thirteen significant primaries⁵² and he had taken 278 popularly elected delegates to 48 for Taft and 36 for La Follette. It seemed purely that "the toil of years by the apostles of progressivism within the Republican party had begun to bear fruit."⁵³

Of approximately 1100 delegates to the national convention, over one-third were contested. The Roosevelt psychology, furbished by the strong evidence that he was indeed the most popular man in the party, had reached a certain high mark. This psychology would attach the toil and hopes of the campaign to the contested seats, and it was to prove disastrous to the party. On June 4 Roosevelt wrote to Sydney Brooks: "... my own belief is that I shall not be nominated at Chicago. But they will have to steal the delegates outright in order to prevent my nomination, and if the stealing is flagrant no one can tell what the result will be."⁵⁴

⁵² Roosevelt had won in California, Illinois, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota; Taft had won in New York and Massachusetts; La Follette had won in Wisconsin and North Dakota.

⁵³ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, pp. 235-236.

⁵⁴ T.R. to Sydney Brooks, June 4, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

A R M A G E D D O N

"If I win the nomination and Roosevelt bolts, it means a long hard fight ahead with probable defeat. But I can stand defeat if we retain the regular Republican party as a nucleus for future conservative action."

-William Howard Taft, June 20, 1912.

"We fight in honorable fashion for the good of mankind; fearless of the future, unheeding of our individual fates, with unflinching hearts and undimmed eyes, we stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord."

-Theodore Roosevelt, June 17, 1912.

ON June 4 Roosevelt emerged from a meeting at Oyster Bay with Perkins, Gifford Pinchot, William L. Ward and Frank B. Kellogg. He gave reporters a dictated statement that he would oppose the election of Elihu Root as temporary chairman of the convention. A week earlier he had written William R. Nelson:

Evidently, Taft and his associates have prepared to steal the convention if they are able, but I don't think they will be able. As far as I am concerned, I shall not accept Root as a satisfactory man for Temporary Chairman. He is not a Progressive; he is utterly out of sympathy with the Republican Party on the most vital issues of today and he has no business to be put in a position where he is to¹ deliver the keynote speech if I am to be made the nominee.

This was a sure indication that Roosevelt thought he could actually defeat Taft, even though a realistic tabulation of delegates and probable delegates seemed to preclude a Roosevelt victory. Clearly, then, Roosevelt was

¹ T.R. to William R. Nelson, May 28, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

relying on the national committee to give him enough of the contested seats to grant him a victory." On June 5 Roosevelt said of the committee: "A few might vote against me, but the majority will act fairly because they have got to consider the effects of their acts on their own political destinies. They know they must face their constituents when they go home."² This was not a new feeling in the Roosevelt camp. As early as April 1, William L. Ward expressed the confidence that Roosevelt had 29 of 53 committeemen either for him or against Taft.³

There were rumors that R.B. Howell of Omaha would demand his seat on the committee as the successor to his fellow Nebraskan Victor Rosewater, the acting chairman of the committee. However, he was dissuaded from this action by Roosevelt leaders, partly because he almost certainly would not have succeeded, and partly because they thought the committee might decide enough of the contests in favor of Roosevelt if pressure was not applied.

On June 6 the committee convened and the next day they seated²⁴ Taft delegates to none for Roosevelt. Among these first contests was the controversial ninth Alabama district, which can serve as a typical example of one of the more serious Roosevelt attempts. On February 15 the Republicans met in convention in Birmingham, Alabama (ninth district), but split into Roosevelt and Taft factions. Oscar R. Hundley, a native of Limestone County and Huntsville and a federal judge, claimed that Roosevelt was endorsed 19 to 11 at the convention, but this was of no avail. The meeting was so confused that it is, in fact, difficult to say what actually

² New York Tribune, June 6, 1912.

³ Philadelphia North American, April 1, 1912.

did occur.⁴ In any case, the Roosevelt faction met in the Birmingham city hall on March 16. These one hundred progressives, led by Hundley and J.O. Thompson, endorsed Roosevelt and declared that the Republicans who endorsed Taft, led by Pope M. Long, were "irregular and ineligible." They decided to contest only the two delegates at large and the two delegates from the ninth district, but the controversy settled around the latter of these challenges.⁵ In any event the Roosevelt delegates from the ninth district, Hundley and George R. Lewis of Bessemer, were not awarded credentials by the national committee. The Taft delegates, James B. Sloan of Oneonta and J. Rivers Carter of Birmingham, were seated instead.⁶ Following these decisions, Frank Kellogg said he was convinced that the country would "be astounded at the flimsy character of the Roosevelt contests." Dixon replied that the "theft was cold blooded, premeditated and deliberate ..."⁷ Ormsby McHarg made the Roosevelt strategy from this point clear the following day: "We are going to carry our fight to the committee on credentials."⁸ On June 9 the committee even considered a formal reply repudiating Roosevelt's remarks about its decisions, but did not. It was revealed on the same day that the Roosevelt leaders had ordered a special train

⁴ Birmingham Age-Herald, February 16, 1912. Also see Howard W. Smith, "The Progressive Party and the Election of 1912 in Alabama," Alabama Review, v. IX, January, 1956, pp. 7-14. Unfortunately, Judge Hundley left no personal papers of any importance following his death in 1921, but his scrapbooks are in the possession of his wife, now Mrs. M.J. Baer of Black Mountain, North Carolina. I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge Mrs. Baer's help in providing me with additional information on her former husband, and also for material on the Republican convention of 1912, which she attended with Judge Hundley.

⁵ The Birmingham News, March 16, 1912; Birmingham Age-Herald, March 17, 1912. The Age-Herald commented on February 17: "A collection of postmasters is not a party in the full American sense of the word, and when such a collection splits into two parts it arouses one's sense of the ridiculous."

⁶ New York Tribune, June 8, 1912.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., June 9, 1912. Roosevelt said: "We have sent election officials to the penitentiary for deeds morally not one whit worse than what was done by the national committee in the 9th district."

made ready to go to Chicago from New York if necessary.⁹

By June 13 the committee had seated 159 Taft delegates to nine for Roosevelt and the final tally revealed that the Colonel's supporters had only been successful in 19 out of 254 contests.¹⁰ The national committee finally adjourned its hectic two-week session, "in which the most opprobrious words were constantly hurled back and forth and several near fisticuffs had resulted."¹¹ On Friday night, June 14, Roosevelt left Grand Central Station for Chicago clad in a new buckskin sombrero. McKinley hailed this journey as an admission of defeat and Dixon announced that the Colonel would address a mass audience on Monday night, June 17. The convention would officially begin the next day. When Roosevelt arrived in Chicago on June 15 he was welcomed by cheering thousands and brass bands and he took up temporary residence with Mrs. Roosevelt in a suite in the Congress Hotel, addressing the crowd from its imposing balcony. The convention was to be something definitely out of the ordinary.¹²

On Monday morning, June 17, the Roosevelt leaders held a caucus and decided on a resolution demanding that only 540 uncontested delegate votes would constitute a majority. This, of course, involved the 250 seats that the Roosevelt forces still considered contested. It was clear that, now more than ever, their strategy was built around the credentials conflict.

9

Ibid., June 10, 1912.

10

Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 239. Mowry comments: "Probably about one hundred Roosevelt contests deserved a thorough examination. From the investigation of these contests it is obvious that the committee as a whole was less interested in justice than in seating enough delegates pledged to Taft to insure his nomination,"

11

Rosewater, Back Stage in 1912, p. 132.

12

New York Tribune, June 15, 1912; June 16, 1912.

This was only logical, for only if he could force enough of his delegates on the convention could he control it and, of course, he had to control it in order to be reasonably sure of the nomination. It was also an opportunity to dramatize Roosevelt's cause before the convention and the people, thus laying the foundation of justification for a possible bolt, an alternative that remained constantly in his mind. Among many others, Otto T. Bannard of the Republican Club of New York City, Senator William O. Bradley, Taft, and William Jennings Bryan all predicted a Roosevelt revolt from the convention if he failed to have his way. They simply reflected the rumors to this effect that began to grow as the campaign became intense. Roosevelt usually referred to these speculations as "fakes" or "nonsense."¹³ However, this possibility had been seriously considered by many of Roosevelt's supporters. The Colonel himself wrote Governor Osborn in mid-April: "About the forming of a new party, I do not think we need yet consider that; but we will have to consider it if the political thugs in our own party handle enough votes in the way they have handled them in Kentucky, Indiana and Michigan to bring about the nomination of Mr. Taft against the will of the States where the people really are represented, as in Pennsylvania and Illinois."¹⁴

With the decisions of the national committee tormenting him, Roosevelt took an air of righteous indignation to his Monday night address and gave it full vent. This was, of course, a challenge to Taft and to the convention in every sense -- a challenge which implicitly threatened strong¹⁵ decisive action. He roundly castigated Taft, thoroughly denounced the national committee, and said that only the assembled convention could decide the final result. His last paragraph would have done justice to a medieval king exhorting his

¹³ Ibid., March 24, 1912; May 18, 1912; May 20, 1912; June 10, 1912.

¹⁴ T.R. to Salmon Chase Osborn, April 16, 1912, Morison, The Letters, v.7,p.534.

armor-clad minions on the eve of a mighty encounter with some pagan enemy:

We fight in honorable fashion for the good of mankind;
fearless of the future, unheeding of our individual fates,
with unflinching hearts and undimmed eyes, we stand at
Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord. ¹⁵

The next morning, June 18, the Fifteenth National Republican Convention gathered at the Coliseum in Chicago. Long lines of anxious delegates poured into the gigantic building, which resembled a huge barn with an incongruous facade of turrets and spires. The air of the convention was like most of the similar phenomena that became a living symbol of modern American politics -- the stale tobacco smoke, the anxious whispers between party bosses, the raucous shouts of the angry and inebriated, and the exuberant, often truly spontaneous demonstrations that lasted for many minutes and expressed four years of quiet political activity that had led to that particular moment.

At noon Victor Rosewater, chairman of the national committee, called the convention to order. Divine blessing was dutifully invoked, the call for the convention was read, and immediately Governor Herbert S. Hadley of Missouri was on his feet asking for permission to substitute a list of Roosevelt delegates for 72 Taft delegates that, he charged, ^{were} ~~were~~ "not honestly elected ..." This, of course, was simply a resubmission of the most important Roosevelt contests to the entire convention. ¹⁶ After some

¹⁵ Ibid., March 18, 1912; Chicago Tribune, June 17, 1912; June 18, 1912.

¹⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all information concerning the sessions of the convention is taken from The Official Report of the Proceedings of the Fifteenth Republican National Convention, (New York, 1912). This source will hereafter be referred to as Official Proceedings, and specific reference will be made to it when necessary.

debate, Rosewater ruled that any ~~opposition~~ on credentials was out of order because the convention had not yet been organized.¹⁷ He then placed Root's name in nomination for temporary chairman and the La Follette leaders duly nominated Governor Francis E. McGovern of Wisconsin, also supported by Roosevelt. The seconding speeches began and after about a dozen short addresses, Francis J. Heney of California rose and denounced the national committee, declaring that a President of the United States could not be elected by the "rotten boroughs" of the South, especially Taft. His remarks were often interrupted by cheers, questions and catcalls, and great disorder broke out when he resumed his seat.¹⁸ This was to become a characteristic feature of this convention. After the seconding speeches were concluded, Rosewater employed a precedent of the 1884 convention whereby the balloting for temporary chairman would be by individual delegate, rather than by state. Throughout the balloting there were strong, sometimes vicious, protests from Roosevelt delegates over the voting of the Taft delegates they had especially contested -- as in Alabama, California, and Pennsylvania. Often the roll call was punctuated by cries of "You are thieves!," "You are robbers!" and "Receivers of stolen goods!" Finally, the voting was concluded and Root was elected over McGovern 558-501. The Roosevelt leadership had lost their first, and perhaps most important, vote on the convention floor.¹⁹ Amid catcalls, Root mounted the platform and, after a police captain had restored some semblance of order in the hall, he began his keynote address. He simply reiterated the Taft platform and ended with an eloquent appeal for "an independent and courageous judiciary."²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 32-41.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 47-49.

¹⁹ The result was: Root, 558; McGovern, 501; Lauder, 12; Houser, 1; Gronna, 1; not voting 5. Ibid., p. 61.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 88-100. Taft wrote a short note to Root on June 19 from Washington. It read: "I congratulate you on your great speech. It is worthy in a great crisis." Taft MSS.

The convention's temporary officers were announced for approval. Then Hadley achieved recognition and presented his "List 1" of 72 Taft delegates to be stricken from the rolls and "List 2" bearing 72 name of Roosevelt delegates to replace them. These were read to the convention by the secretary and at 7:43 p.m. the delegates adjourned to convene the following morning. Roosevelt's comment on Root's election: "I'm a better warrior than a prophet."²¹

That night Chicago was alive with delegates, some working desperately for a particular candidate, some simply enjoying themselves. In the Congress Hotel the progressives had rented the Florentine Room where an around-the-clock harangue was kept up by various speakers against the national committee. The Taft headquarters, to the contrary, was so quiet "that Roosevelt men went there to rest when they wanted to get away from the noise and hubbub of their own headquarters."²² The sights and sounds in Chicago that night were familiar to a convention city:

A smell of cocktails and of whiskey was ubiquitous; a dense pall of tobacco smoke pervaded the committee-rooms; and out of doors the clang of brass bands drowned even the incessant noise of the throngs. There was no night, for the myriads of electric lights made shadows but no darkness, and you wondered when these strange creatures slept.²³

On Wednesday, June 19, Governor Hadley argued for his motion to replace the 72 Taft delegates with the Roosevelt list. He and Governor Charles S. Deneen of Illinois attempted to make it impossible for any of the 72

²¹ New York Tribune, June 19, 1912.

²² Nicholas Roosevelt, A Front Row Seat, (Norman, 1953), p. 51.

²³ William Roscoe Thayer, Theodore Roosevelt, an Intimate Biography, (Cambridge, 1919), pp. 358-359.

"contested" delegates to vote on either their own case or any other case when the motion was brought before the credential's committee, but this amendment was tabled by a vote of 567-507.²⁴

The Committee on Credentials was not prepared to give its report on ~~Thursday~~, June 20, so no actual session of the convention was held. There were increasingly ominous signs on the horizon, however, for Roosevelt had said in a caucus that morning, "So far as I am concerned, I am through. If you are voted down I hope you, the real and lawful majority of the convention, will organize as such, and you will do it if you have the courage and loyalty of your convictions."²⁵ Taft still had a measure of hope that Roosevelt would remain in the fold. He wrote to Horace Taft about Roosevelt's followers: "They in their proposals came as near as being revolutionary as they can, but they have not yet taken the physical course, which will make them rebels."²⁶ The President would consider no compromise that would give Roosevelt the upper hand. He had indicated to some that he might consider Hughes or Root as a compromise candidate "but no other."²⁷ Since neither of these was suitable to the opposition, he was determined to wage the battle himself to the bitter end: "If I win the nomination and Roosevelt bolts," he wrote, "it means a long hard fight with probably defeat. But I can stand defeat if we retain the regular Republican party as a nucleus for future conservative action."²⁸

²⁴ The Roosevelt forces were given a small scare when, at one point in the debate, Hadley was cheered by a member of the Pennsylvania delegation as "the next President of the United States" and received a fifty minute demonstration. Official Proceedings, p. 143; New York Tribune, June 20, 1912.

²⁵ New York Tribune, June 20, 1912.

²⁶ W.H.T. to Horace Taft, June 19, 1912, Taft MSS.

²⁷ W.H.T. to Henry C. Coe, June 20, 1912, Taft MSS.

²⁸ W.H.T. to Myron Herrick, June 20, 1912, Taft MSS.

The convention session of June 21 was a long, drawn-out affair that was primarily composed of arguments over the credentials committee report. On every major contest, beginning with Alabama, the progressive forces attempted to get the Roosevelt delegates seated over the decision of the committee by vote of the convention. They were defeated in an extended series of ballots that lasted four hours, and when the assemblage eventually adjourned little doubt remained that Taft was virtually certain to be nominated.

If a bolt was to occur, this was the time. A premature departure of the Roosevelt members of the credentials committee had already shown the temper of the progressive camp, and their return shortly afterwards did little to nullify the suspicion that something, indeed, was about to happen. On June 22, Henry J. Allen of Kansas rose to read a statement from Roosevelt. Frequently interrupted by yells from the Taft men, he read solemnly:

The convention as now composed has no claim to represent the Republican party. It represents nothing but a successful fraud it would be deeply discreditable to any man to accept the convention's nomination under these circumstances; and any man thus accepting it would have no claim to the support of any Republican on party grounds, and would have forfeited the right to ask the support of any honest man of any party on moral grounds.

He then asked that those delegates pledged or favorable to him refrain from voting. There was an additional element of bitterness in Allen's own closing remarks:

You accuse us of being radical. Let me tell you that no radical in the ranks of radicalism ever did so radical a thing as to come to a National Convention of the great Republican party and secure through fraud the nomination of a man whom they knew could not be elected. ²⁹

²⁹ Official Proceedings, pp. 333-335.

After the announcement, the platform was read, and 343 delegates were present but did not cast their votes on it. When Warren G. Harding nominated Taft he was interrupted so often and so loudly that he could hardly be heard. Taft defeated Roosevelt 561-107 with 344 delegates declining to vote; and on the final ballot, James S. Sherman easily won the vice-presidential nomination with 352 delegates not voting. ³⁰

It was all over. Roosevelt spoke to an enthusiastic meeting in Orchestra Hall that night "that gave one more opportunity for vehement denunciation of the action of the Republican Convention ...". Here Roosevelt promised to accept the nomination of an independent party convention, to be held later, if it were tendered him. ³¹

The Republican Convention of 1912, for all its failure, was a memorable occasion. The convention hall had been

pervaded by a sullen bitterness and hostility that foreshadowed the tumult to come. In fact, from the second of the opening gavel to the moment of adjournment the body was in an almost constant state of disorder. Scarcely a speaker for either side was heard for long. Many simply had to stop speaking when the hisses and yells swelled into a roar against which a single throat was impotent. As passions ran high, actual fights broke out. One observer counted five in the last three hours of the convention. ³²

Yet, out of this confusion and rancor was to appear indirectly one of the most unusual and idealized movements in the history of American politics.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 402-407.

³¹ Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 314-315.

³² Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 245.

Within six weeks there would be another, and far different, convention in Chicago. The Great Crusade of 1912 had already begun, but in August it was to be institutionalized and officially given a name.

As for Roosevelt: "When the time came, it was natural for him to stand at Armageddon -- he had never stood elsewhere." ³³

THE GREAT REVIVAL

"In my judgment we either have to submit tamely to infamy or follow the course that we have actually followed."

— Theodore Roosevelt, June, 1912.

"We are profoundly conscious that both heaven and earth are interested spectators of the birth-travail of this hour. A cloud of witnesses is waiting to carry the glad tidings to the ends of the earth."

— Rev. T.F. Dornblazer, The Progressive Party Convention, August 5, 1912.

ROOSEVELT had taken a decisive step. In his early political career he had looked had looked on James G. Blaine as the anathema to all he believed in; yet when Blaine became the Republican nominee, Roosevelt punched cows in the solitude of the Dakotas rather than bolt the party. In 1912, however, he bolted with all the fire and invective that only Theodore Roosevelt was capable of engendering; " ... with his speech before the assembled crowd at Orchestra Hall, Roosevelt had advanced to a point from which there was no turning back. He had promised to run as an independent. And, knowing Roosevelt, the country looked forward to a hard-fisted campaign with no holds barred." ¹ Its implications were perhaps greater than Roosevelt himself realized, for "with the Roosevelt secession radicalism as a potent force within the Republican party was dead for at least thirty years." ² Roosevelt

¹ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 255.

² Ibid., p. 252.

was to transfer this radicalism to a thoroughly new and radical party.

Even though he knew that the convention was lost almost before it convened, Roosevelt was still a little uncertain of his course of action after the convention was finally over.³ In several all night sessions in Chicago during the convention, he had been assured by George Perkins and Frank Munsey that their formidable fortunes were at his disposal for a continuation of the campaign under a new banner. This solved perhaps the greatest problem confronting any third party movement in American politics.⁴ With this in mind, Roosevelt told the nation on June 26 that he would "stick" in the race. On the same day, Dixon presided at a ten-hour meeting of top progressives at the Hamilton Hotel in New York.⁵

The picture was far from promising in many ways, though, for Governor Hadley, William L. Ward, and others refused to follow Roosevelt out of the party. On July 3, Governor Osborn denied the necessity of a third party and said that Republicans could "vote for Wilson without leaving their party or bolting."⁶ La Follette, Charles R. Van Hise, and some others also refused to cater to the Roosevelt leadership and began working directly

³ As early as June 11, Roosevelt wrote: "... I have absolutely no affiliations with any party." T.R. to James Bronson Reynolds. He also wrote on the same day: "As for running independently or not, that must be as the event decides." T.R. to Edward Casper Stokes, Roosevelt MSS.

⁴ Stoddard, As I Knew Them, p. 306. Stoddard also says that "there certainly would have been no national Progressive Party but for ... [Perkins and Munsey]... There probably would not have been a Roosevelt candidacy ... in the convention against Taft but for them Had either Perkins or Munsey faltered at Chicago, the call for a national Progressive Party convention would never have been issued." pp. 421-422.

⁵ New York Tribune, June 27, 1912.

⁶ Ibid., July 4, 1912. Osborn, however, would eventually join the new party, as would some others. Van Hise actively supported Wilson, while La Follette indirectly supported him by attacking Roosevelt and Taft but remaining within the Republican fold. Arthur S. Link gives evidence that although La Follette would not come out openly for Wilson, "he was secretly supporting him." See Link, Wilson-Road to the White House, p. 468, footnote #6, and p. 526.

or indirectly for Wilson. The new party still had Dixon, Davis, Poindexter, Bristow, Clapp and many others such as Donald Richberg, Harold Ickes, and the young Dean Acheson. On the whole, however, most of the real politicians, with the exception of Flinn of Pennsylvania, had stuck to the old party.

Much of Roosevelt's decision was undoubtedly prompted by consideration of his staunch followers and by his belief in the truth of his political principles. However, Roosevelt's psychological make-up reacted as could have been expected to the circumstances in which he found himself. He had been one of the most popular Presidents in history, he had grown more firmly convinced that his political tenets were the best for the country, and he had been rebuffed by his own party -- he had lost by "theft" at the hands of the man he had put into office four years before. It is not difficult to understand how Roosevelt could come to view his progressive movement as something almost sacred and inviolate. He was angry at the Republicans, and he let his natural tendency to crusade have full rein. The choice for him, in the last analysis, was quite simple: "In my judgment we either have to submit tamely to infamy or follow the course that we have actually followed." ⁷

Whatever the reasons behind it, the new organization set up headquarters in New York and Chicago, with a direct line of communication between them. For the most part, the old Roosevelt leadership was retained as the nucleus of the new "third-term" party. ⁸

⁷ T.R. to Edward Casper Stokes, June 27, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

⁸ The New York Tribune, and other Taft papers, referred to the new party by this name until the official party title was established. This obviously was intended to emphasize Roosevelt's attempt to break the two term presidential tradition. This does point up, however, the confusion that existed between the Republican and Progressive conventions both within and without the Roosevelt ranks as to actually what to call the new movement. The term "Bull Moose" had already been culled from one of Roosevelt's statements and attached to the party.

Roosevelt was gratified when Robert R. McCormick of Illinois, the head of his fight in that state for the nomination, promised to support his new candidacy and assured him of a good opportunity to win in Illinois in November.⁹ Governor Deneen, however, was advising the support of Taft.

The outcome of the Democratic convention in Baltimore, held on June 25 to July 3, would naturally have an influence on the new party and its chances in the election. It is obvious that the nomination of Woodrow Wilson, after the Bryan resolution and forty-six ballots, was a blow to Roosevelt, for the New Jersey Governor was also an outstanding progressive with credentials to prove it. Even though Roosevelt publicly stated that the new movement "would not in any way be affected by the outcome at Baltimore,"¹⁰ he undoubtedly had some second thoughts after Wilson's convention victory. He eventually decided that to throw his support behind any other progressive candidate would be a sign of weakness on his part, for he had come to represent "at the moment" the progressive movement.¹¹ He held to his belief that it would be "useless to try to get anything good permanently out of the old parties" and he pointed to the Democratic record in Congress and to the fact that both parties were dominated by the "bosses."¹²

The new party was to go on, and in the sultry afternoon air that hung in the lobby of the Manhattan Hotel on July 7, Dixon read the official call for

⁹ New York Tribune, July 2, 1912.

¹⁰ Ibid., July 3, 1912.

¹¹ T.R. to Chase Salmon Osborn, June 28, 1912, Morison, The Letters, v.7, pp. 566-567.

¹² T.R. to John Foster Bass, July 2, 1912, Roosevelt MSS. Roosevelt was not as vituperative toward the Democrats and Wilson in July as he would be later. He even referred to the Democratic nominee as an "excellent man." T.R. to Chase Salmon Osborn, July 5, 1912, Morison, The Letters, v.7, p. 569.

the Progressive convention, which was to be held in Chicago on August 5. Forty states were represented in the call but none of the territories. It was typically rhetorical and thoroughly progressive. All the stops had been pulled.¹³

The two outstanding problems that now faced the new party leaders were the Negro problem and the difficult situation created in specific areas by new party electors and particular and varying local party structures. The first problem would draw a great deal of attention before and, to an extent, during the Progressive convention, but its influence was not great. The second was far more serious in nature, and called for astute political reasoning.

Roosevelt had great hopes that he could win support in the South, perhaps enough to win the election. Most of this became impossible when the Democrats nominated Wilson, who was not only a progressive but a native southerner as well. However, Roosevelt had to decide how Southern Negroes would be integrated into the new party, and to what extent. It is fairly clear that he respected the rights of Negroes, and wished to give them a place in the Progressive movement. The great stumbling block to an open acceptance of the Southern Negro was the fact that the great mass of Southern voters would be repelled by a party dominated locally by Negroes. The "lily-white" movement in the Republican party was undertaken partly to give the party respectability in the South, and this is what Roosevelt felt the new movement needed as well. In addition, the Negro vote, within and without the South, was small and certainly posed no threat to any national candidate. It would be the first thing to go by the boards in

13

New York Tribune, July 8, 1912. It seems that Roosevelt wanted to make the official "call" a platform to be published in advance of the convention. Henry L. Stoddard and Munsey succeeded in cutting the call down to the size in which it finally appeared, prevailing on Roosevelt to save the platform until later. Stoddard, As I Knew Them, pp. 406-408.

practical political considerations. Roosevelt attempted to reach a compromise, and the Negro emerged on the short end. He advocated protection of ~~the~~ Negro rights and he spoke out whenever he could in favor of the black race. However, although he believed that the Progressive party should be an organization for all men, he also believed

that the surest way to render the movement impotent to help either the white man or the colored man in those regions of the South where the colored man is most numerous, would be to try to repeat the course that has been followed by the Republican Party in those districts for so many years, or to endeavor in the States in question to build up a Progressive Party by the same methods which in those States have resulted in making the Republican Party worse than impotent. 14

He would make further clarifications of his position during the Progressive convention. Since Mississippi and Georgia had each sent contesting delegations to the convention of which the all-white delegations had been seated, most Negroes became disillusioned with the new party. Booker T. Washington and some other prominent Negro leaders declared for Taft in mid-August. 15 This practical move surely did not cost Roosevelt many votes, but it did weaken his contention that the new Progressive party was free from the taint of injustice that stained both the old parties. The Taft organization was particularly critical of Roosevelt for this policy.

The Progressives managed to take over the regular Republican machines in six states, 16 but in states like Pennsylvania the problem was complex.

14 T.R. to Julian La Rose Harris, August 1, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

15 For additional information, see "The Progressive Party and the Negro," Crisis, Vol. V, November, 1912. For an excellent account of this problem on the state level, see Gilbert Osofsky, "Progressivism and the Negro: New York, 1900-1915," American Quarterly, Vol. XVI, No:2, Part 1, Summer, 1964, pp. 153-168.

16 Kansas, Minnesota, South Dakota, Idaho, California, and Washington.

The confusion created by a new party, with new sets of electors and candidates, was likely to result badly at the ballot box. Flinn and Van Valkenburg had therefore suggested that Taft and Roosevelt should utilize the same electors with the understanding that the electoral vote would go to whichever candidate received a popular majority in the state. Hadley had suggested a similar proposal for Missouri. Roosevelt had declared on July 8, in an open letter to William Allen White, that the Progressives could adopt any name at the local level as long as they supported the national Progressive candidates,¹⁷ but he was adamantly against mixing the Roosevelt-Taft electors.

I think we ought to have a straight-out progressive ticket, on which all progressive Democrats as well as Republicans can vote for me. I regard Taft as the receiver of a swindled nomination. I cannot consent to anything that looks as if I was joining forces with him. I won't go into a friendly contest with a pickpocket as to which of us shall keep my watch which he stole.¹⁸

He thus vetoed the Flinn plan on July 14.¹⁹ On the afternoon of July 22, however, Flinn and Roosevelt were closeted together for some five hours at Oyster Bay, and the Colonel acquiesced in allowing Flinn to work out a suitable compromise in Pennsylvania. He said, "I will not dictate."²⁰ This was the only realistic political solution to the problem. The new party had to have, above all, flexibility -- and a policy which did not allow necessary compromises dictated by local circumstances was detrimental. However, even though Roosevelt allowed some compromises he still favored

¹⁷ New York Tribune, July 9, 1912.

¹⁸ T.R. to Edwin A. Van Valkenburg, July 16, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

¹⁹ New York Tribune, July 15, 1912.

²⁰ Ibid., July 23, 1912.

complete slates of candidates and electors in most states, and Oklahoma, Maryland and other states complied with his wish.

On the whole, the Progressive party managed to solve most of its basic problems, but some of them, like the difficulties created by running full slates of candidates, would contribute to its eventual downfall as a potent political force. On the contrary, it is surprising that within a month a party structure could be organized, limited as it was at first, and be ready to hold a large national convention. And, for all their troubles they were to do surprisingly well for a third party.

On July 24 the New Jersey Progressive convention met at Asbury Park and the 1000 assembled delegates adopted "one of the most radical platforms since Populism." It was a fitting indication of the events that were to take place in Chicago in the first week of August. ²¹

The Progressive delegates that began pouring into Chicago seemed as strange apparitions to a city accustomed to political conventions. Their outstanding characteristic was that so few of them were politicians. They were primarily of the urban middle class, primarily native-born Protestants, and most had previously been Republicans. The leaders, including state chairmen, national commit^{ee}men, and large donors, were well educated and most came from the upper professional echelons of business, law, journalism and the academic community. Those from the South usually belonged to the "new elite"; those in the North were, to a great degree, from the older aristocracy; and those from the West were similar to the leaders found in the other two parties. Very few were professional politicians and few "had experienced or even understood the importance of party discipline."

²¹ Ibid., July 25, 1912.

On the whole, they seemed to represent "the ideas of the older, more rural America," in spite of their urban backgrounds.²² It was indeed a strange assemblage of intellectuals, social workers, and liberal community leaders that gathered in Chicago. However, what they lacked in political acumen was, to a degree, compensated for by their enthusiasm.²³ They knew they had a job to do in Chicago, and they took that job seriously. Each one seemed to feel an independence coupled with a strong sense of mission -- "You could get a spark, a flash, of hot discussion from a group of delegates as easily as a smithy hammers one out on an anvil."²⁴ The convention, indeed, was in the mood for "a jubilant, heroic time."²⁵

Roosevelt arrived in Chicago at nine o'clock on Monday morning, August 5. Some were disappointed that he was welcomed by only five-hundred people, but Roosevelt didn't seem to notice -- he immediately lashed out against the "crooked press" for distorting his intentions toward the Negroes.²⁶ As the convention opened, with state delegations waving banners and cheering, the "atmosphere was charged with emotion akin to prayer. Old newspaper men,

22

This information is taken primarily from the excellent study by Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., "The Origins of Progressive Leadership," which appears as Appendix III in Vol. 8 of Morison, The Letters, pp. 1462-1465. Chandler examines 260 Progressive leaders and notes their occupational breakdown: Business, 95; Law, 75; Journalism (Editors), 36; other professions, 55. Also see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order, (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 17-26; and Lipset, Political Man, p. 299.

23

"Enthusiasm is the best product of the third termers ..." New York Tribune, August 5, 1912.

24

Stoddard, As I Knew Them, p. 405.

25

Ibid., p. 410.

26

New York Tribune, August 6, 1912.

hardened by many years of experience, made cynical and skeptical by constant contact with human deceit and insincerity, came to scoff, and went away filled with wonder and excitement, to write such things of a political convention as they had never dreamed." ²⁷ It seemed to the New York Tribune that it "was a pink tea, or a town meeting, or something similar in the way of exchanging ideas and gossip ..." From the first it was clear that this was a most unusual phenomenon. It was, in a very real sense, a climax of unadulterated progressivism, and the delegates and their leaders felt it. ²⁹

Amidst great excitement, the convention was called to order by Dixon, the provisional chairman, at 12:45 in the afternoon. He immediately proclaimed that "before the sun sets this afternoon a new milestone will have been erected in the political history of this nation ..." ³⁰ O.K. Davis, the secretary of the convention, read the official call and then Dixon introduced Dr. T.F. Dornblazer of the German Lutheran Church of Chicago to invoke the blessings of deity. Dr. Dornblazer set the tone for the Progressive convention. In a long prayer, replete with ringing phrases, he declared that the "star of empire" looked upon the convention hall "waiting for the birth of a new organization...", an organization that unfurled a new banner.

²⁷ Davis, Released for Publication, p. 327.

²⁸ New York Tribune, August 5, 1912.

²⁹ Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914, (Chicago, 1957), pp. 92-93.

³⁰ Unless otherwise indicated, all information on the Progressive convention is taken from the first-hand notes of G. Russell Leonard, a shorthand reporter of Chicago who was the official reporter of the convention, in the Roosevelt Collection at the Houghton Library at Harvard University. These will hereafter be known as the Progressive Convention Proceedings. Professor Eric F. Goldman, on p. 360 of the bibliography of his Rendezvous With Destiny, credits these notes to J.M. Striker. However, Miss Striker, at one time a personal secretary to Roosevelt, simply presented the notes to the library. Mr. Leonard's name appears in print on each page of the manuscript. Also see Official Minutes of the (provisional) Progressive National Committee, Roosevelt MSS.

... we are persuaded that the men rallying to this new standard have the roots of power and success deep down in their hearts, with the ark of God leading the way. May the law proclaimed from Sinai and the principles announced in the Sermon on the Mount, be their inspiration in the siège against the intrenched iniquities of our modern Jerichos We are profoundly conscious that both heaven and earth are interested spectators of the birth-travail of this hour. A cloud of witnesses is waiting to carry the glad tidings to the ends of the earth.

And they would all follow Roosevelt, for "His shoulders must bear a heavy cross; his brow must wear the crown of thorns, before a victory is assured." The standing convention then repeated the Lord's Prayer, sang "America" and had their picture taken.³¹ This was clearly "less a political convention than an assemblage of crusaders."³²

Albert J. Beveridge then came forward as the temporary chairman and delivered a long address, frequently punctuated with applause. He declared that "ours is a battle for the actual rights of man." Both old parties were under the fist of bossism and sectionalism, while the Progressive party was not. He restated the new nationalist theory of business regulation and said that the new Progressive motto was "Pass prosperity around." He criticized the tariff planks of both old party platforms -- the Democrats advocated "free trade" and the Republicans countenanced "extortion." The Progressives would plead for a genuine tariff commission, to take the tariff out of partisan politics. The Progressives would also demand immediate revision of the Payne-Aldrich Act, and replace it with a properly balanced economic measure.

31 Progressive Convention Proceedings, pp. 8-11.

32 Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 262.

A tariff high enough to give American producers the American market when they make honest goods and sell them at honest prices, but low enough that when they sell dishonest goods at dishonest prices foreign competition can correct both evils; a tariff high enough to enable American producers to pay our workingmen American wages and so arranged that the workingmen will get such wages; ... this is the tariff ... in which the Progressive party believes. ³³

Beveridge also appealed for an end to child labor through national action; the protection of women wage-earners through national action; a minimum wage; a national plan for the care of the aged; and woman suffrage. He appealed eloquently to the Preamble of the Constitution and he began to draw his speech to a close with the lines:

Soon the night will come, and when, to the sentinel on the ramparts of liberty the anxious ask: "Watchman, what of the night?" his answer shall be, "Lo, the dawn appeareth."

He then repeated a few lines from the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and the delegates went into a frenzy. After roaring their approval, they sang the "Battle Hymn" over and over at Beveridge's request. ³⁴ It was a prevalent opinion that the "Beveridge speech was one of the strongest ever delivered in a political convention ..." ³⁵

The temporary officers, the temporary rules, and the various committees were presented to the convention. In the spirit that was so typical of that gathering, the rules were suspended, therefore avoiding the necessity for a long roll call, and these lists were adopted by a viva voice vote. There would not be a single roll call in the Progressive convention. Thus,

³³ Progressive Convention Proceedings, pp. 31-34.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

³⁵ Stoddard, As I Knew Them, p. 410.

the first session was adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

Beveridge's speech had outlined the new Progressive platform. It was clearly the most radical appeal since Populism, and it was clearly free from the broad compromises necessitated by largely conflicting ideologies. The Progressives would never really compromise. They felt that they had a mission.

On Tuesday afternoon, at 12:35, the convention convened to hear Theodore Roosevelt. This, for most, would be the high point. It is significant that Roosevelt would deliver his major speech ~~even~~ before nominations had begun.

After some preliminary business the convention sang "America" and the Colonel was escorted to the platform by a committee of fifteen. One of the wildest demonstrations in our political history ensued, and lasted almost an hour. Red bandannas had been used to a degree by the Roosevelt delegates in the Republican convention, and now they proliferated throughout the throng. The bandanna became almost as much a symbol of the new party as the bull moose. These fifteen hundred people cheered Roosevelt "as they had never cheered anyone else. Here were no clagues, no artificial demonstration sustained by artificial devices. None were needed. Men and women simply stood on their feet for an hour to welcome a man because they liked him and believed in him." ³⁶

Roosevelt stood there with one fist clenched, his teeth plainly visible, swaying from one side to the other. This was to hi^m, at the time, his finest hour. It was not so much what he said -- the principal points he had stated many times before -- but the way in which he said it, and the way in which it was received. His speech was, as expected, radical and challenging.

³⁶ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 264. Also see William Allen White, Autobiography of William Allen White, (New York, 1946), pp. 484-485.

He enunciated the old arguments for the primary, direct election of senators, the short ballot, and castigated the press and the "theft" of six weeks before. He declared that when "representative government has in actual fact become non-representative there the people should secure to themselves the initiative, the referendum, and the recall ...", although these must be used with discretion.³⁷ If the judiciary was not socially conscious, their decisions could justifiably be revoked by society when necessary. He spoke for woman suffrage, for the farmer, for the worker, for the liberal businessman. He called for a national industrial commission, complete government regulation of interstate commerce, a protective tariff "from the standpoint of the whole people," and a tariff commission of "experts." The currency system must be more flexible, he said, and the people must have a full, proportional share of the prosperity of an industrial age. He offered a solution to the dilemma of progress and poverty. The army should be kept strong, and his beloved Panama Canal, vital for defense, should be fortified.

At this point, he was interrupted by several delegates and he responded to some questions from the floor in a most informal manner. One of them concerned the Negro problem. He commented on the fact that the new party offered recognition of the Negro in the North as well as in the South, and he appealed to the principle of the political equality of Negroes throughout the nation. From here he concluded his prepared remarks by declaring that his address was "a confession of faith" and that the Progressive cause was "based on the eternal principles of righteousness." His last words were familiar: "We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord."³⁸

³⁷ Progressive Convention Proceedings, p. 62.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 134-138.

The second session adjourned at 3:55 p.m. The delegates had heard what they had come to hear. In the days ahead they would attempt to realize the goals Roosevelt had set for them. With each new day it became more evident that this "resembled an old-fashioned religious revival more than a political convention."³⁹

The next morning, August 7, the convention met at 11:30 and the committee reports were in order. The temporary officers were made permanent by a viva voce vote, and Medill McCormick then presented the report of the rules committee.⁴⁰ John L. Hamilton of Illinois moved to amend the report so that the official name of the party could be either the "National Progressive Party" or the "Progressive Party" to facilitate the filing of the title in various states for the election. McCormick withdrew the report, and after a brief recess he resubmitted it, giving the organization the authorized title of "The Progressive Party," but allowing local units to use other names if they had already filed them in certain states. This was the rule adopted by the convention. Before the recess, William H. Hotchkiss, the Progressive chairman of New York, had told the convention that "New York still feels the chafing of the chains, but they have fallen off and with gyves off our wrists and with leg-irons gone, thanks be to the god of battles, we march on with reverend spirit toward certain victory."⁴¹ Also before the recess, Henry J. Allen had attempted to have the rules suspended so the nominations

³⁹ Link, Wilson - The Road to the White House, p. 474.

⁴⁰ Significantly, it was specified that contested delegates, although they could be put on the temporary role by the national committee, could not vote until their credentials had been approved by the entire convention. Progressive Convention Proceedings, p. 154.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 161.

could begin immediately and this motion carried after the short intermission.⁴²

Alabama yielded to New York and William A. Prendergast stepped to the platform to nominate Roosevelt. He said that the Progressives had "that confidence that can only come to those who are borne along by the impulse of a spiritual conviction." The people demand a great leader, he said; "Such a leader they demand for this crusade against the foes of democracy. As the crusaders of old pledged themselves to God and country so do we consecrate our lives to the service of that enduring democracy ordained by the divine power for the happiness of all his people, and as the leader I present to you America's greatest statesman and lion-hearted citizen, Theodore Roosevelt." As expected, a massive demonstration exploded from the floor, the first American flag with forty-eight stars was unfurled from the ceiling, and "a chorus of cheering followed, a sea of waving red bandannas appeared over the heads of the howling delegates, and hats were thrown in the air."⁴³ The nomination was seconded by Judge Ben Lindsey, Horatio C. King and others, including Miss Jane Addams of Hull House.

Another unusual event occurred when the platform was read by William Draper Lewis, Dean of the School of Law at the University of Pennsylvania, in the midst of the nominations. This, more than anything else, signified that in reality the platform and the man -- Roosevelt -- were one and the same. Lewis began reading the platform, actually only a collection of assorted slips of paper, untypewritten. The Committee on Resolutions had wrangled the night before over modifications to the Sherman anti-trust law. Finally, Roosevelt submitted the plank that he and Perkins favored, one that broadly

⁴² One of the principal arguments for beginning the nominations early was that many of the delegates had planned to leave Chicago that afternoon and night, not having suspected that the convention would last very long.

⁴³ New York Tribune, August 8, 1912; Progressive Convention Proceedings, p. 183.

outlined "the class and character of acts to be prohibited" by the law. When Lewis came to this plank, Perkins sat forward in his chair to hear it. Davis, sitting next to him, saw an expression of "blank amazement come over his face, for it was the plank favored by the side that wanted to list the prohibited acts, and not the one prepared by Colonel Roosevelt that morning." Perkins left the platform and stalked out of the hall. It was quickly ascertained that the Roosevelt plank had indeed been adopted by the committee, and Perkins was soothed by the publication of the corrected plank in the news media and all official party material.⁴⁴

Aside from this event, everything went according to plan. The platform was unanimously adopted, with the recall of judicial decisions included. It was a blue-print of modern American reform. Roosevelt was then nominated by acclamation, and John M. Parker of Louisiana nominated Hiram Johnson for the vice-presidency. The California governor was also unanimously approved.

During another loud demonstration, Roosevelt and Johnson were escorted together to the platform, and they accepted their nominations in short speeches. Above the platform hung four lines from Kipling:

For there is neither East nor West,
Border nor breed nor birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,⁴⁵
Though they come from the ends of the earth.

The entire convention then rose and sang the doxology, and the Rev. James Goodman of Chicago gave the benediction. Beveridge went to the podium.

I now declare it [the convention] adjourned without delay, and thus end one of the three most historic and notable events in history.

⁴⁴ Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 328-334.

⁴⁵ Thayer, Theodore Roosevelt, an Intimate Biography, p. 375.

Unfortunately Beveridge did not say what the other two "notable events" were but perhaps it didn't really matter. The Progressive National Convention of 1912 was over.

Taft had been watching with mixed emotions from Washington and Cincinnati. He generally believed that Roosevelt was now thoroughly radical, and this made his own candidacy even more justified. He wrote to Charles Hilles on August 7:

The Bull Moose Convention has in a certain sense been a success, that is, they have had a large convention and 15,000 people to listen to Roosevelt From all I can see of what has been done, every crank, every academic enthusiast, every wild theorist with any proposition for the solution of any social problem, has been gathered there by invitation [Roosevelt] has been radical to the last degree in state socialism My own judgment is that his appeal will reach quite as far into those who might support Wilson as into our own ranks. ⁴⁶

Taft also expected a last-ditch campaign on all levels. To brother Charles he wrote: "... in view of the attitude of the Roosevelt party at Chicago, we must anticipate a third party in every State, county and congressional district, and that the thing for us to do is to fight and to conciliate no longer; that those who are not for us are against us ..." ⁴⁷

For Roosevelt, it was a new opportunity. For him, the events of the summer assumed a distinct clarity; they had demanded certain actions on his part and he believed that he had responded correctly. To his close friend Arthur Hamilton Lee, he wrote:

The Republican Party had become pretty nearly hopeless. Either it had to be radically regenerated from within, or a new party had to be made. I attempted the regeneration. By simple swindling, the party bosses ... defeated the

⁴⁶ W.H.T. to Charles Hilles, August 7, 1912, Taft MSS.

⁴⁷ W.H.T. to Charles Taft, August 8, 1912, Taft MSS.

attempt. I am not at all sure but that they did me a good turn Probably if I had been nominated they would have knifed me at the very moment that by their nominal association with me they were compromising me; ... even if we progressives had controlled the Republican Convention we could hardly have gotten so clear and as definite a statement of our principles as was put out at the convention that has just adjourned ...

.... I am perfectly happy, for I have never in my life been in a movement into which I could enter as heartily as into this; and although I expect to lose I believe that we are founding what really is a new movement, and that we may be able to give the right trend to our democracy, a trend which will take it away from the mere shortsighted greedy materialism. Our platform really does represent a pretty good mixture of idealism, of resolute purpose and of good plain common sense. My colleague, Hiram Johnson, is a trump, and the men I am with on an average represent a far higher moral type than the party leaders whom I have seen at the head of affairs during my lifetime. ⁴⁸

Much of this is obviously rationalization, but Roosevelt believed every word.

The new Progressive Party represented, indeed, an attempt at "radical regeneration." It was a radicalism born of opposition to industrial plutocracy, but without the drawbacks of agrarian domination. It was the first radical movement of the twentieth century that embodied the new urban sophistication demanded by the new age. Like most radicalism, it was somewhat "transmogrified into a belligerent claim to self-evident virtue and a bellicose assertion that one's opponents were evil men." ⁴⁹ The "Bull Moosers were clearly a reform party -- more sweepingly and more belligerently reformist than any important party since the Populists," ⁵⁰ and this was aptly demonstrated in the convention. The gathering itself was a "monumental tribute to the spirit of reform and social consciousness that had been sweeping the country for a decade." ⁵¹ It had "carried out the pre-arranged program for launching a

⁴⁸ T.R. to Arthur Hamilton Lee, August 14, 1912, Morison, The Letters, v.7, pp. 597-598.

⁴⁹ Howard Mumford Jones, O Strange New World, (New York, 1964), p. 279.

⁵⁰ Goldman, Rendezvous With Destiny, p. 163.

⁵¹ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 264.

new party, as if made up of crusaders with a religious ecstasy, and without a serious hitch." ⁵² It was clearly "one of the most remarkable gatherings the country had ever witnessed." ⁵³ It was more than just a religious revival; "It was also something like a circus." ⁵⁴

The prevailing atmosphere, nevertheless, was one of religious intensity; a crusading fervor firmly rooted in the faith in a larger purpose. In many ways the actual election would seem anti-climactic in comparison. The progressive hosts would continue to "battle for the Lord," but the fact that they had gathered in Chicago and did what they did was in an ideological sense the high point of 1912 and of the Progressive Era.

52 Rosewater, Back Stage in 1912, p. 201.

53 Link, Wilson - The Road to the White House, p. 474.

54 Allen F. Davis, "The Social Workers and the Progressive Party, 1912-1916," American Historical Review, Vol. LXIX, No:3, April, 1964, p. 675. Davis also comments: "The social workers also contributed to the religious revival atmosphere of the Chicago convention. They organized a 'Jane Addams Chorus' and joined the singing of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic,' but the convention was more than a revival meeting. It reminded Jane Addams of a meeting of the American Sociological Association or a Conference of Charities and Correction; she saw so many familiar faces."

CHAPTER EIGHT

F O R A T H I R D T E R M

"~~He~~ appeals to their imagination; I do not. He is a real, vivid person, whom they have seen and shouted themselves hoarse over and voted for, millions strong; I am a vague, conjectural personality, more made up of opinions and academic prepossessions than of human traits and red corpuscles. We shall see what will happen!

- Woodrow Wilson, 1912.

"Wilson ... is a strong candidate My judgment is that he will win, and that I will do better than Taft."

- Theodore Roosevelt, August, 1912.

ON the morning after the Progressives adjourned, the members of the National Committee of the new party met in the Congress Hotel in Chicago. They had the impossible task of winning a presidential election only three months away with a superficial party structure and a lack of grassroots organization. Their only hope lay in the two Progressive candidates -- Roosevelt and Hiram Johnson. The general campaign plan, due to the lack of time and preparation, had to be simple. It was to involve "extensive trips" by both candidates "across the continent at first, with a swing by each through his own territory at the close."¹

It was obvious at the outset that the battle would be waged between Roosevelt and Wilson, causing the Colonel to say that speaking against Taft was a waste of time. The conservatives watched nervously as the fight developed between the two progressive giants.

¹

Davis, Released for Publication, p. 345.

Roosevelt had been impressed by the early career of Woodrow Wilson, but now the New Jersey Governor was a rival. The Colonel distrusted Wilson's advocacy of state's rights and his belief in Jeffersonian government. He consistently maintained that "only a third party will relieve the honest and farsighted man of the necessity of voting either for the puppet of the machine Republicans, or for the highly undesirable Democratic Party."

Furthermore,

So far from the Baltimore platform nearly resembling mine, it is the exact reverse. It is, to my mind, one of the worst platforms that any party has put put for over forty years, and certainly worse than any, with the possible exception of the Democratic platform of '96. It is not progressive at all.²

But Roosevelt suffered no illusions. In August he wrote: "... I think it probable that Wilson will win. There are plenty of well-meaning progressives who do not think deeply or fundamentally who will go to him."³ Later in the same month he wrote Arthur Lee: "If Wilson had not been nominated, or at least if either Harmon or Underwood had been nominated, I would have had immense Democratic support. Wilson, however, is a strong candidate My judgment is that he will win, and that I will do better than Taft."⁴

The main issues that would be the substance of disagreement between the two men would be the tariff, anti-trust legislation, and the general question of big government (Wilson would also advocate banking reform). The Democrats favored a tariff for revenue only, while the Progressives, true to their Republican origins, argued for a protective tariff that would be regulated

2

T.R. to Horace Plunkett, August 3, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

3

Ibid.

4

T.R. to Arthur Hamilton Lee, August 14, 1912, Lee MSS, Morison, The Letters, p. 598.

to benefit the wage-earner. Roosevelt's New Nationalism, of course, called for governmental regulation of monopolies -- but monopolies that were necessary and even desirable in an age of economic concentration. Wilson, following the New Freedom philosophy of Walter Weyl and Louis Brandeis, favored the strengthening of the Sherman Law and expressed a basic fear of economic concentration. While Wilson argued for state's rights and the Jeffersonian dictum that the "best government is that which governs least," Roosevelt demanded a degree of national political domination heretofore unknown in the United States.

The two leading candidates would debate these issues through October and November, but perhaps the most significant thing about them, politically, was the general impression the public got by comparing the two.

Here were two of the greatest political figures of recent American history, one closing out his career with a revivalistic campaign, and the other just beginning his long reign in national politics. Striking comparisons could be made. Henry Stoddard caught the most readily discernible differences:

... Wilson stands out, clear cut and rigid, in the sharp definite lines of a steel engraving; when I turn to Roosevelt he is revealed in strong human tints, the warm flesh tones of a Rembrandt or a Franz Hals.⁵

Woodrow Wilson himself realized how he fared in the comparison. He wrote:

He [Roosevelt] appeals to their imagination; I do not. He is a real, vivid person, whom they have seen and shouted themselves hoarse over and voted for, millions strong; I am a vague, conjectural personality, more made up of opinions and academic prepossessions than of human traits and red corpuscles. We shall see what will happen!⁶

⁵ Stoddard, As I Knew Them, p. 37.

⁶ Quoted in Link, Wilson - The Road to the White House, p. 475.

It was a campaign between two great personalities, with the genial Taft reduced almost to the position of a spectator.

The Progressives, understandably, had problems. The greatest of these was Woodrow Wilson. He began almost immediately to draw progressive strength from Roosevelt, although it was not as great as some have thought.⁷ There was also some early dissension in the Progressive ranks over the position of George Perkins, the millionaire, as Chairman of the Progressive National Committee. William Allen White had opposed him early in the game, but Roosevelt insisted that Perkins remain as Chairman and the Colonel used him extensively as an advisor and close political friend. His followers went along with this policy for the most part, largely because of Perkins' heavy financial contributions to the Progressive campaign.⁸ The Progressive leaders were also to find that Roosevelt, as the weeks wore on, often did not reach his previous heights of eloquence and effectiveness. The ex-President suffered from a bad throat through most of the campaign. Governor Johnson also did not meet expectations, and he became apathetic at times over the prospects of Progressive success, which were at no time very promising.⁹ The new party was also constantly plagued with problems of local organization. Where they had captured the regular Republican

⁷ See Ibid., p. 479; also see "Republican Progressives for Wilson," National Monthly, vol. IV, November, 1912, p. 138.

⁸ See Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 337-340; and also see Roosevelt's comments on his relationship with Perkins which he included in his statement of August 28 to the Senate subcommittee investigating campaign contributions during 1904, 1908, and 1912. T.R. to Moses Edwin Clapp, August 28, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

⁹ This becomes more understandable when we realize that in many instances the Governor's schedule was confused by conflicting arrangements, that he was often unaccompanied while on speaking tours, and on occasion he was even forced to "handle his own Pullman accomodations." Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 346-348.

machinery they did well, but in other areas their campaign structure was often ambiguous and characterized by all kinds of local compromises with the other parties on details. Roosevelt, not expecting victory, saw it as a fight for long range principles of social welfare.

He concentrated his campaign in the west and mid-west, and his organization put him on successive tours that forced Wilson to undertake the wide "stumping" campaign in September that he had not contemplated.¹⁰ Usually Roosevelt took with him a large supply of books, on widely divergent topics, which he would pore over in spare moments on his campaign train. After his first trip, he was always accompanied by several stenographers, a few experts on Woodrow Wilson's career and political philosophy, and a throat specialist. Wilson's remarks were telegraphed to the train as it sped through towns and cities, and at mealtimes the Colonel and his advisors would discuss the issues. Often Roosevelt would rise from the table in the middle of his meal to dictate ideas to a waiting stenographer. As the campaign became more virulent, so did Roosevelt. There is perhaps no other major figure in American politics who so thrived on controversy. And all the while he would keep up with his personal correspondence as best he could -- to Ben Lindsey, Arthur Lee, and his family.¹¹ Nevertheless, the campaign grew somewhat lethargic, not because of any lack of enthusiasm on the parts of the leading candidates, but because the nation sensed, and sensed correctly, that the next President of the United States had, in fact, been determined in those final, disastrous hours of the Republican convention in June.

On Saturday night, October 12, following a speech in Chicago's Coliseum, the ex-President was advised by Dr. Terrell to discontinue speaking, and to

¹⁰ Link, Wilson - The Road to the White House, p. 487.

¹¹ Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 352-361.

whisper only when absolutely necessary.¹² Two days later, he left the Hotel Gilpatrick in Milwaukee to deliver another address. As he got into his car, he made a gesture to the crowd and a man stepped forward and fired a revolver into his chest at point-blank range. The impact knocked Roosevelt to the seat of the automobile, and several members of his party leaped immediately on the assailant and disarmed him. Roosevelt quickly recovered and asked to see the man who had shot him -- after a brief glance he asked that the man not be harmed. This probably saved the would-be assassin's life, for Cecil Lyon of Texas was armed with an automatic pistol and he was furious.¹³ Although he felt stunned, the Colonel insisted on speaking as planned. Even with all his close friends frantically attempting to stop him, Roosevelt read his speech, scarcely audible, for over an hour. When he finally arrived at Mercy Hospital in Chicago the next morning, it was confirmed that the bullet had been deterred by his heavy army overcoat, the doubly folded manuscript of his speech, and his glasses case -- finally lodging near his fifth rib. It had been a near-tragedy.¹⁴ This, of course, precluded any active part in the campaign for him. Five days after the event he wrote Anna Roosevelt Cowles, dictating the letter to his wife: "I am in great shape. Really the time in the hospital, with Edith and the children here, has been a positive spree, Of course, I would like to have been in the campaign, but it can't be helped and there is no use crying pver what can't be helped!"¹⁵

¹² Ibid., pp. 366-367.

¹³ Ibid., p. 375; and Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, A Biography, pp. 398-399.

¹⁴ (Nicholas) Roosevelt, A Front Row Seat, p. 54; and Davis, Released for Publication, pp. 378-384.

¹⁵ T.R. to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, October 19, 1912, Cowles MSS, Morison, The Letters, v.7, p. 629. Edith Roosevelt added a postscript -- "He is very weak & easily tired."

This was the most dramatic event of the campaign. Roosevelt received letters of condolence from Taft and Wilson and thousands of well-wishers. Wilson offered to discontinue active campaigning, but Roosevelt typically declined, and Beveridge took the Colonel's speeches and finished his scheduled appearances. Except for a speech at Madison Square Garden on October 30, Roosevelt made no more major addresses, and, for all practical purposes, the campaign was over in mid-October.

The attempted assassination probably helped Roosevelt's candidacy, but exactly to what degree is impossible to say. Millions of Americans could not help but admire his action in the face of danger -- "Men did not judge it histrionic or childish A degree of lethargy in the campaign shifted to sincere sympathy for Roosevelt and admiration for his courage."¹⁶ For Roosevelt it had been the same as charging up that famous hill in Cuba -- he reacted typically under fire. In a way his progressive opinions had probably saved his life. When doubly folded his speech was about one hundred pages thick.

When election day arrived, Roosevelt's earlier predictions were confirmed. Wilson had defeated him by a three-to-two margin and Taft by two-to-one.¹⁷ Even though Wilson had managed to defeat Roosevelt by some 2,173,512 votes, he was still a minority President -- the total of all the other candidates surpassed his votes by some two and a half million. He won handily in the electoral college, however, with 435 votes to 88 for Roosevelt and a pitiful 8 for the incumbent President.

¹⁶ Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, A Biography, p. 399.

¹⁷ Results: Wilson - 6,293,019; Roosevelt - 4,119,507; Taft - 3,484,956; Eugene Debs - 901,873; Chafin (Prohibition) - 207,928; Reimer (Socialist Labor) - 29,259. The World Almanac and Encyclopedia. Unless otherwise indicated, all others figures are taken from this source.

The third party affiliation was the deciding factor in Roosevelt's defeat, but even then he managed to win in California, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Washington. William Henry Harbaugh says that Roosevelt "fared poorer than expected in the West" and that he did best in urban areas.¹⁸ This statement is generally valid, but Roosevelt did win a substantial number of his popular votes in the West and Mid-west. He came relatively close to victory in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Maine and Vermont. In fact, in traditionally Democratic states like Arkansas, Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee the combined Roosevelt-Taft vote was more than half that of Wilson. The closest race of the campaign, however, was in California -- Roosevelt took the state into his column with a mere 17⁴ vote plurality.

Any candidate who carried the banner of progressivism did well in the corn belt, the mountain belt, and in the Pacific coastal area.¹⁹ And this explains to a degree Roosevelt's failure to take more of the states in these areas, for Wilson was also a progressive and he had behind him the active, if not completely open, support of many western reformers like Van Hise, La Follette and Works.

However, even with Roosevelt's substantial 27 percent of the popular vote, "the two major parties elected all but 18, or 96 percent, of the 435 Congressmen."²⁰ This was highly significant for the future of the new party. In addition, if we base the Democratic and Republican results in 1912 on reasonable expectations derived from their past performances, we

¹⁸ William Henry Harbaugh, Power and Responsibility, the Life and Time of Theodore Roosevelt, (New York, 1961), p. 450.

¹⁹ Harold F. Gosnell, Grass Roots Politics, (Washington, 1942), p. 14.

²⁰ Louis H. Bean, How to Predict Elections, (New York, 1948), p. 63.

may assume that Roosevelt drew about two million votes from each party;²¹ this is probably a little inaccurate since Roosevelt drew undoubtedly more votes from the Republicans than he did from the Democrats. But this is only an interesting, and academic, speculation. Of more importance are the figures which indicate that Roosevelt did poorest in the ten Southern states and a few other scattered areas, while he did best in the mid-west and Pacific coast states and in a few of the eastern and northeastern states.²² Roosevelt had been second to Wilson in twenty-three states, Taft in seventeen.

As for the Progressive party, the most significant result was its inability to elect more than a handful of congressmen and other minor officials -- for this precluded their long-range success. The Democrats had gained an additional nine seats in the Senate (the Republican number remained the same), and they had increased their membership in the House from 58 to 66 percent while the Republicans declined from 41 to 29 percent.²³ On the whole, the election results were obvious -- the Democratic party made a relatively clean sweep in 1912, largely because of the Republican split. However, from a thorough analysis of the election, and even with all the necessary prognostication, we must conclude that Wilson would have defeated Taft whether or not Roosevelt entered the race, but that if Roosevelt had secured the Republican nomination he almost certainly would have become the first American President to win a third term -- and the only one to date to win more than two terms nonconsecutively. Still, we must remember that "party loyalty, Wilson's eloquence, and the lingering belief that the Colonel was

²¹ Ibid., p. 68.

²² For complete tables see Ibid., and also see the Statistical Abstract of the United States, Bureau of the Census, 1946, cited in Ibid.

²³ Bean, How to Predict Elections, pp. 189-190.

a trimmer all worked against him." ²⁴

If we should speculate even further, we could conclude that if the Democrats had failed to nominate a progressive, the new third party might well have seen its candidate in the White House -- in any event it would have been a painfully close election.

Arthur S. Link has given a brief but valid summary of the election in Volume One of his Wilson series:

Most historians agree that the campaign of 1912 was largely a contest of personalities; they have portrayed in vivid colors the inevitable contrast between the emotional and impulsive Roosevelt, the deliberate and rational Wilson, and the obtuse and genial Taft. All of which, to some extent, is true. Roosevelt's vote in November, to be sure, represented the bulk of his personal following; Wilson's plurality represented the votes of the Democratic regulars and the independent progressives and conservatives who supported him; while Taft's following consisted of the faithful and, for the most part, conservative remnants of the once proud G.O.P. ²⁵

Roosevelt was naturally disappointed, but on the whole he was philosophical about the election results. After all, he had predicted them much earlier.

... I suppose that I ought not expect that in three months we could form a new party that would do as well as we have actually done Whether the Progressive Party itself will disappear or not, I do not know; but the Progressive movement must and will go forward even though its progress is fitful. It is essential for this country that it should go forward...

²⁴ Harbaugh, Power and Responsibility, p. 450.

²⁵ Link, Wilson - The Road to the White House, p. 476. The last two chapters of this volume, "Presidential Campaign of 1912" and "Campaign Climax and Election," are excellent, with emphasis, of course, on the Democratic aspects. Link says further -- "At any rate, it is a safe assumption that Wilson's nomination precluded the success of the Progressive ticket." p. 524.

He was also satisfied with his own conduct in the campaign.

... There was no human being who could have made any fight at all or have saved the movement from collapse if I had not been willing to step in and take the hammering.²⁶

It had been a progressive election year, however, in the broadest meaning of the term, and in this sense it was a political revolution of sorts. The "Wilson revolution" would almost certainly have been stopped short had Roosevelt been the Republican nominee. As it was, for Roosevelt and the Progressive party, "Armageddon had been fought, but the Lord had forgotten."²⁷

²⁶ T.R. to Arthur Hamilton Lee, November 5, 1912, Lee MSS, Morison, The Letters, v.7, pp. 633-634.

²⁷ Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 281.

CHAPTER NINE

POST - M O R T E M

"We have fought the good fight, we have kept the faith, and we have nothing to regret. Probably we have put the ideal a little higher than we can expect the people as a whole to take offhand."

- Theodore Roosevelt, November, 1912.

WE have already noticed the link between progressivism and Populism, but what of the reform tradition after 1912? Here we may gain an insight into the true place of Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive campaign of 1912, and what place that campaign occupies in our history. The Progressive party lingered for some years after 1912, but it ~~really~~^{actually} died in the congressional elections of 1914 when scores of old "bull moosers" returned to the Republican fold. Roosevelt himself well knew that the party would not last without effective local organization in depth, and he was to devote his last years increasingly to damning Woodrow Wilson and pleading for American involvement in World War One. After the war, of course, came the twenties and Harding, Coolidge and Hoover. In this decade not only would prohibition of alcohol occur, but prohibition of widespread economic and social reform as well.

With the second Roosevelt many of the old Progressives were to find a new home. The campaign of 1912 had grown out of idealism, but the stark realities and tragedies of the 1929 crash gave birth to the New Deal. In the decade of the thirties the industrial coordination and federal regulation of monopoly preached in the New Nationalism would find a great degree of realization in the NRA. Donald Richberg, for instance, called for

governmental reorganization of industry in the shadow of the depression.¹ As things moved forward in 1933, the trends "favored those who contended that industrial growth had produced an organic economy requiring national control," and Harold Ickes seemed an individual reincarnation of the Bull Moose in the Department of the Interior.² The New Deal effected a certain synthesis between the New Freedom and the New Nationalism, with Theodore Roosevelt's philosophy becoming more valid and increasingly practiced. If nothing else, the Great Crusade of 1912 had shown dramatically that the old concepts of liberty and authority were no longer tenable in an industrial age -- vital freedoms were to be gained through authority, by using political authority to control at least partially the powerful, irresponsible social and economic forces that preyed on individuals and groups in twentieth century society.

The Progressives of 1912 were also successful in a more immediate sense, for President Wilson could hardly help but realize that progressive legislation and reform was demanded of his administration -- one look at Taft's pitiful failure was proof positive. In fact, like the British Liberal Party, the Progressives of 1912 expired partly because their demands had been achieved -- and Wilson's successful legislative program realized many of them.

At the outset of this study we noticed that crusades tended to reveal both the best and the worst in man and that the Great Crusade of 1912 was no different. With this in mind we should examine Roosevelt's activities in order to discover some of their indirect consequences. In the first place,

¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal, (Cambridge, 1959), p. 92.

² Ibid., p. 180 and p. 281.

we have seen that Roosevelt's psychology quite naturally led him into the crusading spirit when he was "repudiated" by the Republican leaders. Secondly, we know that crusaders of all kinds converged around him to produce the Progressive phenomenon of 1912. Up to this point, we have tended to assume that this activity of 1912 was healthy and admirable, but was it? Is our system of government not damaged by movements which claim complete ownership of right and justice, and does it not work because of a lack of such movements? These are important questions that we must ask. Eric F. Goldman suggests that the Progressives damaged confidence in moral judgments because of their failures, but Richard Hofstadter more accurately concludes that the Progressives' real failure was not that they "most typically undermined or smashed standards, but that they set impossible standards, that they were victimized, in brief, by a form of moral absolutism."³ It was this "absolutism" that inspired the crusade.

The Progressives were so dedicated and angry and righteous that they could not themselves achieve most of their demands -- an administration based on compromise, conciliation, and immediate realities would have to eventually enact part of their proposals almost twenty years later. In this sense, the second Roosevelt has fulfilled the hopes of the first.

However, we cannot maintain for long that the Progressive campaign of 1912 had no positive contributions to make. It accomplished a most necessary function in dramatically demonstrating to the nation that social, economic, and political reforms were needed, and that they were inevitable. The Progressives, in fact, helped introduce the American people to the

³ Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R., (New York, 1955), p. 16.

twentieth century. If we examine their crusade carefully, we find that it was not a radical and truly revolutionary attempt, but that it was committed to the most fundamental American values. The Progressives wished to control society so that it would allow the fulfillment of American individualism and the "Alger ethos," as Louis Hartz points out in his Liberal Tradition in America. In fact, because "the Progressives confronted no serious challenge on the left, they were saved from a defensive appearance, were able to emerge as pure crusaders."⁴ It was a crusade in a peculiarly American context, in purely American terms -- but it was a crusade nevertheless. The belief that solutions could be found to the problems of the new century, and the realization that the conservatives would not admit that many of the problems even existed, called for a crusade and resulted in a singular crusading psychology -- "The Progressive mind is like the mind of a child in adolescence, torn between old taboos and new reality, forever on the verge of exploding into fantasy."⁵

We must ask ourselves if crusaders of one kind or another are not necessary to change. American history reveals such phenomena from the Boston tea party through the abolitionists, to the Progressives and the civil rights movements of the 1960's. We might admit that crusades often, perhaps normally, set impossible standards -- but they do set new standards and usually these standards are recognized or even realized at a later time. It was so with the crusade of 1912. Less than a week after the election, Roosevelt wrote James Garfield: "We have fought the good fight, we have kept the faith, and we have nothing to regret. Probably

⁴ Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America, (New York, 1955), p. 235 and p. 229.

⁵ Ibid., p. 237.

we have put the ideal a little higher than we can expect the people as a whole to take offhand." ⁶

Roosevelt had indeed fought the good fight. His influence in national politics was to decline during the last seven years of his life, never to return. His causes were largely lost in an immediate sense, but just as America eventually entered the Great War as he said she should, so also would America come to grips with the economic, social and political realities of the twentieth century a decade or so after his death.

Perhaps he was overly confident, overly dramatic and even dogmatic, but if laurels are to be bestowed ^{on} ~~to~~ those who made great and lasting contributions to society, we cannot pass him by without a generous gift -- and then move on to newer demands and better solutions, as he would have done.

6 T.R. to James R. Garfield , November 8, 1912, Roosevelt MSS.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

This is no attempt to present a comprehensive list of the bibliography of the Progressive Era -- it is simply a compilation of the works which were found particularly useful in writing this thesis and which are cited in the footnotes. The following list is divided into appropriate categories and, where possible, those sources which were most extensively used in the preparation of this work have been indicated.

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