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The Mind of the Connecticut Progressive

In the early 1950's George Mowry and Richard Hofstader established a benchmark in the historiography of the Progressive Era. Challenging the stereotype of progressivism as a simple extension of Populism, Mowry asserted that the urban middle class was the dynamic force behind the reform movement of the early 20th century. A typical progressive, he argued, was a young, well-educated, white, Protestant of comfortable means who feared both labor unions and large corporations.[1] Hofstader offered a persuasive explanation of this phenomena. In his view progressives were insecure men striving to shore up their status menaced by groups wielding raw, organized power.[2] The familiarity of these arguments today is testimony to their wide acceptance. Status politics quickly replaced interest politics as the key to understanding the nature of progressive reform.

The new orthodoxy provoked two severe criticisms. It failed to account for the passage of the mass of diverse and often contradictory pieces of reform legislation enacted at all levels of government during the Progressive Era. The indifference of middle class citizens toward specific reforms demanded by business leaders, urban based politicians, labor organizers, and social workers has been fully documented. In addition the pertinence of middle class identification as the motive force behind reform activity has been diminished

[1] George Mowry, "The California Progressive and His Rationale: A Study in Middle Class Politics," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXVI (Jan. 1950), 239–50; Mowry, *The California Progressives*, University of California Press, 1951; Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt*, New York, 1958.

[2] Richard Hofstader, *The Age of Reform*, New York, 1955.

by the realization that conservative individuals often shared the same class background and values.[3]

In the light of such serious qualifications what is left of the Mowry-Hofstader thesis? Like all efforts at historical synthesis it must ultimately rest on intensive studies of limited scope and sharp focus. Not all such specialized investigations downgrade the role of the middle class in agitating for reform. An in-depth examination of the careers and attitudes of the leadership of the Progressive party in Connecticut sustains many of the conclusions reached by Mowry and Hofstader almost two decades ago.

Eight men controlled the Bull Moose party in Connecticut from its sudden appearance in the summer of 1912 until its disintegration before the election of 1916. The key figures in the organization were state Chairman Joseph Alsop, a tobacco grower related by marriage to Theodore Roosevelt, and Herbert Knox Smith, former Commissioner of Corporations, who was the party candidate for Governor in 1912 and for Senator in 1914. The only Democrat among the party hierarchy was Willard Fisher, a Wesleyan University economics professor and two term mayor of Middletown, who ran for Governor in 1914. Three political neophytes, Yandell Henderson, a physiologist at the Yale University medical school; Horace Hoadley, a Waterbury minister turned industrialist; and Samuel E. Vincent, a wealthy Bridgeport merchant, were nominees for Congress. Two men who did not seek public office were influential. The president of Trinity College in Hartford, Flavel Luther, was a party founder and an enthusiastic campaign orator. Gutzon Borglum, a noted sculptor with a studio in Stamford, was the dynamo of the party in Fairfield county. While others shared leadership these men were the crucial decision makers in the Progressive party in Connecticut.

The eight individuals whose careers have been examined represent two generations. Three were born before Appomattox, and grew up during the 1860's and 1870's. They were over fifty years of age in 1912. Four others, in their thirties at the time of the Bull Moose rebellion, had come to maturity during the period of industrial turbulence and imperialistic stirrings between 1880 and the

[3] The best survey of the diversity of motive and ideology that modern historians have discovered in the progressive movement is John D. Buenker, "The Progressive Era: A Search for a Synthesis," MID AMERICA, LI (July, 1969), 175–93. Also valuable is Dewey Grantham, "The Progressive Era and the Reform Tradition," MID AMERICA, XLVI (October, 1964), 227–51.

turn of the century. In age only Borglum, born in 1867, fell between these two groups. Two distinct personality types are also visible. The older men—Hoadley, Vincent and Luther—were quiet, dignified and reserved. With the exception of Herbert Knox Smith and the inclusion of Borglum, the younger set was blunt, confident, and aggressive. A fight for the very love of battle appealed to them. However young or old, belligerent or reticent, the reactions of the Connecticut progressives to America in transition were remarkably similar.

None of the eight were revolutionaries. Men of prestige and influence, they were deeply attached to the social, economic, and political order which had permitted them to forge ahead. Yet neither were they reactionaries blindly clinging to the familiar. Highminded and virtuous, they were troubled by social evils which they perceived, but scarcely experienced. Independent by nature, and imaginative in their professional careers, they welcomed innovation, requiring only that it be based on scientific evidence and implemented systematically. This tension between a complacency born of success, and a restlessness feeding on the presence of injustice, drove the Connecticut progressives to seek ways to rejuvenate traditional values. An understanding of the steps taken by the Progressive party to bring reform without fundamental change requires an appreciation of the intensity of these conflicting pulls.

Without exception, the lives of these men were marked by a high degree of personal and financial security. They stood out in their communities as eminent citizens whose views carried great weight. Most had impeccable family connections. Only Vincent, born into a farm family in isolated Litchfield County; Fisher, the son of a lawyer in a small village near Albany, New York; and Borglum whose father, a Danish immigrant who was an itinerant physician, approached humble origins. The parents of Hoadley and Luther were of modest means but were rich in a family heritage established in colonial New England. Alsop and Henderson had even more prestigious family trees, and money as well. The Reverend Edward Smith, father of Herbert Knox Smith, was the pastor of the Congregational church in fashionable Farmington, Connecticut. Names of public officials, educators, ministers, and railroad presidents dot the genealogical charts of the entire group.[4]

[4] Biographical information about state and local personalities must be gleaned from a variety of sources. Obituary reports in local newspapers, college alumni records, town and regional histories are fruitful.

Marriage added to the prestige of many. Elizabeth Dietrich Smith, the wife of the Progressive party candidate for Governor and Senator, was the daughter of a United States Senator from Nebraska. Alsop married the favorite niece of Theodore Roosevelt. Henderson's in-laws founded Colby College in Maine. Some of the inadequacies of Borglum's formal education were offset by his wife Mary Montgomery, a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Berlin. No signs of domestic strife are visible in the lives of any of these men. On the contrary the marital relationship of all seems to have been a source of stability.

The level of formal education represented by these leaders was equally impressive. Six added some further study to their undergraduate degrees. Three of the four Yale alumni also held advanced degrees from the New Haven institution. Smith earned a law degree, Henderson a Doctorate in Chemistry, and Hoadley was a graduate of the Divinity School. Hoadley engaged in an almost continuous process of updating his education. During his active ministry he sought to gain insights into modern social problems by a year of study under Richard Ely at John's Hopkins University. A short time later when he decided to enter industry he prepared for this venture by special studies in mechanical engineering at Cornell University. Willard Fisher spent six years at Cornell, the last two as a fellow in History and Political Science. Alsop and Henderson studied in Germany. Trinity College in Hartford granted its future President, Flavel Luther, a Masters degree in science. A decade of art study in Europe augmented Borglum's academic training, which never went beyond tiny St. Mary's College in Kansas. Shortage of funds stopped Samuel Vincent's education at high school, but he was literate enough to support himself for several years as a high school teacher and principal.

A few biographical works of wider scope contain information on the more prominent Progressives in Connecticut. They are: Harold Bingham, *History of Connecticut*, 4 Vols., New York, 1962; Richard Burton, ed., *Men of Progress*, Boston, 1898; Ward Duffey, ed., *Who's Who in Connecticut*, New York, 1933; Samuel Hart, et. al., *Encyclopedia of Connecticut Biography*, Vol. II, New York, 1917; *Noted Men of Connecticut*, New Haven, 1908; Norris Osborn, ed., *Men of Mark in Connecticut*, 5 Vols., New York, 1907; Robert Stevenson, ed., *Connecticut History Makers*, Vols. II, III, Waterbudy, 1929; William H. Taylor, ed., *Taylor's Legislative History and Souvenier of Connecticut, 1903–1912*, 5 Vols, Putnam, Connecticut, 1903–1912. In this essay I have made citations only to the source of direct quotations and to statements pertaining to attitudes or opinions of Connecticut Progressives.

Travel had eased the hold of provincialism on most Connecticut Progressives. Alsop, Henderson, and Borglum had traveled in Europe. In addition Alsop worked for almost two years as a ranch hand in Colorado. While he was carrying out artistic commissions Borglum resided in Georgia, Texas, and South Dakota. Hoadley studied outside the state, and spent a summer in missionary work in the midwest. A decade of teaching in Wisconsin and Ohio extended Luther's experience. Herbert Smith worked for nine years in Washington. Clearly they possessed a more cosmopolitan outlook than most state political leaders.

By 1912 each of these men had gained financial security and a solid professional reputation. Inherited wealth and a winning gamble with large scale tobacco production enabled Alsop to maintain his family's preeminence in Connecticut. Smith enjoyed both a lucrative law practice and national fame as a member of Roosevelt's Tennis Cabinet. The rank of full professor, a badge of achievement and a guarantee of tenure in the academic world, had been won by both Henderson and Fisher. In addition the Yale physiologist had earned the admiration of his fellow scientists for his experiments in toxology. Two terms as Mayor point out the esteem in which the citizens of Middletown held the Wesleyan economist. Trinity College was growing steadily under Luther's direction. Samuel Vincent had completed a journey from rural poverty to prominence as an affluent Bridgeport merchant. Art critics praised the vigor of Borglum's sculpture. While several of these men would suffer personal financial reverses later in their careers, they were all prosperous and respected in 1912. Horace Hoadley, for example, in 1917 was forced to sell the firm he had nursed from a small machine shop, but at the time of his Bull Moose activities the Waterbury Tool Company was entering a period of spectacular expansion.

The leaders of the Progressive party in Connecticut fit comfortably into the Mugwump tradition. Of proud Anglo-Saxon lineage, well-educated, widely traveled, comfortably prosperous, they resembled the Brahmin reformers who fought the earlier battles to outlaw the spoils. However any effort to explain the attachment of these men to progressive reform in terms of a psychological rebellion against loss of personal prestige or influence must miscarry. These eight Connecticut progressives, by objective standards or judged by their own psyches, were not failures. Rather their public and private lives showed an ability to surmount obstacles. If, deep within themselves, they felt inadequacy or dimunition of status,

they did not reveal it by their words or actions. On the contrary confidence and serenity, the product of secure wealth and unshakable reputation, led them into the reform movement. Stable and well adjusted, they looked upon themselves as capable of solving the problems of others.

It is a paradox that the Connecticut progressives, who shared a sense of security, should also feel an ill-defined restlessness toward life. This uneasiness was particularly noticeable in their professional careers. Some shifted from one activity to another in search of something more than profit and fame. Hoadley was the most extreme example of this disquiet. After spending ten years in theological studies and the active ministry, this intense individual became an industrialist in Waterbury. In the early 1920's he again made a major shift into the fledgling field of industrial psychology. In the case of other Connecticut leaders this restlessness took milder but no less definite forms. Few confined themselves to one type of business. Like Joseph Alsop, most juggled simultaneously several projects. Not only did Alsop manage a large tobacco and dairy farm but he was also a tobacco wholesaler, and an insurance company executive. To a man, Connecticut progressives rejected familiar and accepted methods of carrying on their professions. Novel marketing techniques brought Samuel Vincent wealth and distinction. Massive mountain-side sculpture, as practiced by Borglum, was a new medium for artists. Looking back over his long life Alsop summed up this innovative tendency of the progressives when he advised his son, "In all our business I dislike to wait to have everybody else prove something and then take it up. I prefer to be one of the pioneers."[5]

In politics this flexibility was evident, and helps to explain the ease with which these eight men slipped into the Progressive party. Slavish party devotion had no hold on them. Alsop was raised as a Cleveland Democrat and became a Roosevelt Republican,[6] while Willard Fisher reversed this procedure. William Jennings Bryan was a negative factor in both decisions.[7] Henderson and Borglum, nominal Republicans, on occasion supported Democratic candidates.

[5] Joseph Alsop to John Alsop, Oct. 27, 1952, Joseph Alsop Papers (In possession of his son John Alsop, Hartford, Connecticut), Box 1.

[6] Alsop to Aimee E. Alsop, Jan. 24, 1895, Alsop Family MSS., Yale University Library, Box 4. His father, Dr. Joseph Alsop, was the Democratic party candidate for Lieutenant Governor in 1890. J. A. Spalding, *Illustrated Popular Biography of Connecticut*, Hartford, 1891, 273–4.

[7] *Interview with Professor Willard Fisher*, Hartford, Democratic Press Bureau, 1904, 16.

The Yale Professor voted for Wilson in 1916 and Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932.[8] The New Deal received support from the irascible artist until 1937.[9] The non-partisan nature of the Republicanism of Vincent and Luther was noticeable enough to attract newspaper comment.[10] Rather than return to the Republican party Smith virtually retired from political life in 1916.

The Connecticut progressives displayed a vague uneasiness toward American life. When Willard Fisher told his constituents in Middletown, "I believe the world is not all right. I believe there are many things in the world that are all wrong," he captured the dissatisfaction of all the Connecticut party leaders.[11] Their writings and speeches were sprinkled with worried references to the ills of society. No one evil was singled out as paramount, just as few precise solutions were advanced. All agreed that extensive changes were not necessary, but the exact extent and dimensions of needed reform were matters of dispute. Nevertheless there was unanimity among the Connecticut progressives that some things were amiss, and that they should take the lead in correcting them.

The situation had all the characteristics of a perplexing dilemma. The tranquility of these upright men had been jarred by the menacing presence of serious problems, yet none of them wished to alter drastically the rules of a game they all played so well. However they saw no dilemma. Confident of their ability to adjust traditional values to modern conditions, they refused to discard the values themselves. They believed they could rid a fundamentally healthy system of harmful accretions without establishing a totally new way of life. In explaining the attachment of these men to an older America attention must be given to the strong moral orientation of the group as well as their admiration for the powerful, self-reliant individual.

A sizable portion of the Progressive message, as it was pronounced by the Connecticut leaders, was composed of exhortations to practice virtue. Much of the impetus for this political evangelism came from organized religion. Six of the eight men main-

[8] *New Haven Journal-Courier*, Oct. 20, 1916; Oct. 8, 1936.

[9] Borglum publicly praised the New Deal as late as 1935. Borglum, "The New Deal," *North American Review*, CCXXXV (Apr. 1933), 353; Borglum, "The World As I Want It," *Forum and Century*, XCIII (Feb. 1935), 112–13. By 1937 he was attacking Roosevelt. Borglum to Henry Fletcher, Apr. 10, 1936; Borglum to Glenn Frank, Apr. 10, 1936; Borglum to Burton Wheeler, Mar. 24, 1937, Gutzon Borglum Papers, Library of Congress, Box 62.

[10] *Bridgeport Farmer*, July 19, 1915; *Hartford Times*, Aug. 10, 1912.

[11] *Middletown Penny Press*, Nov. 3, 1910.

tained ties with institutional churches. Only Henderson and Borglum were not members of a specific Protestant denomination.[12] At least three, two of whom were ministers, had a deep commitment to formal Christianity.[13] Frank Butterworth, Progressive party candidate for Lieutenant Governor in 1912, expressed the feelings of many Connecticut leaders when he wrote, "Life without religion . . . would not be worthwhile."[14]

While the influence of church membership was important in the lives of these men, the strong ethical drive felt by all progressives was even more decisive in motivating them to work for reforms that would respect the primacy of moral values. The Puritan ethic located a backwater of sustenance in the Connecticut Progressive party. The simple, industrious, frugal life was praised and lived by the leaders of the organization. Waste and extravagance were decried and avoided. Alsop indicated his own recognition that productive labor was a duty enjoined by God when he chided his brother for considering the possibility of retiring to the family homestead in Middletown without a constructive outlet for his talents. "The idea of anyone settling down without some very real hard work to do and real work that does good for the community seems to be too sad to think of," he warned the younger man.[15] These sentiments were echoed by Yandell Henderson, who urged scientists to recognize the public significance of their calling.[16]

Connecticut progressives detested extreme wealth and luxury. Their hostility to the trusts was based not only on the irresponsible use of power by these combinations, but also on the opulent life they made possible for the few. Wealth, they explained, was free of taint only if it had been earned by productive labor and used benevolently as a grateful steward. On these grounds Flavel Luther could praise J. Pierpont Morgan, a Trinity benefactor.[17]

12 Henderson severed his connection with the Presbyterian church at an early age; interview with son, Malcolm Henderson, June 9, 1966. Borglum had a life-long fascination with religion although he stayed aloof from church membership; Mary Borglum and Robert Casey, *Give the Man Room*, Indianapolis, 1952, 36.

13 Hoadley and Luther were ordained Congregational and Episcopal ministers respectively. Smith's father was a minister. He was a zealous lay leader of the Congregational Church in Farmington, Connecticut. A gift of $10,000 was assigned to this church in his will; *Hartford Courant*, June 15, 1932.

14 Frank Butterworth to Editor, *Yale News*, Jan. 23, 1926.

15 Alsop to John deKoven Alsop, Dec. 31, 1910, Alsop Family MSS., Box 4.

16 Henderson, "Public Service as an Element in the Life of the American Scientist," *Science*, LXXVII, (June 16, 1933), 584–5.

17 *Hartford Courant*, April 7, 1913.

Using the same criterion Borglum categorically damned the large financial interests of the nation. "Wall Street creates nothing," he baldly asserted.[18] In a less dramatic fashion, but for the same reasons, Horace Hoadley recommended that industry should set up profit sharing plans to distribute excess wealth.[19]

The business practices of the mammouth corporations were looked upon as risky and unnatural by the Connecticut progressives. Even though most of them owned stock and borrowed money, they all were suspicious of credit and speculation. Samuel Vincent went further than the others when he refused to extend credit or accept a loan even to purchase a home.[20] But fear of the instruments of finance, that somehow appeared synthetic and immoral, was common. Alsop's admonition to his sister, "Never buy a thing unless at the time you have the money in the bank to pay for it," expressed an ideal approved by all progressives.[21]

Another facet of the Puritan ethic that was familiar to the Connecticut progressive leadership was its capacity to thrive on adversity. It was characteristic of those attracted to the Puritan ethic to see it on the verge of expiring, and to feel that it was their lot to reinvigorate it. If real menaces were not present, then imagined evils would have to be found. Edmund Morgan points out that when persecutions ceased the early Puritans had recourse to the Jeremiad, "a rhetorical substitute for adversity, designed to stiffen the virtue of the prosperous and successful by assuring them that they had failed."[22] The Progressive party served the same function in Connecticut. Party leaders considered it a useful vehicle to alert a complacent people of their impending doom. Only by returning to the old-fashioned virtues, they pleaded, could this tragedy be averted.

Connecticut Progressive party leaders sought to revive the stern moral code they believed had been responsible for the progress of the nation. In order to accomplish this renewal it was necessary to preserve the central position of the individual in American life. It was unanimously agreed that continued advancement depended on

18 Borglum to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jan. 9, 1932, Borglum Papers, Box 62.

19 Hoadley, "Review of Our Social Progress" speech, Naugatuck Conference of Congregational Churches, Birmingham, Connecticut, Nov. 1, 1892; Horace Hoadley Papers, Yale University Library, Box 5.

20 Interview with Samuel E. Vincent, Grandson and current President of Vincent Brothers Company, July 20, 1966.

21 Alsop to Aimee Alsop, July 17, 1901, Alsop Family MSS., Box

22 Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, XXIV, (Jan. 1967), 3–4

the growth of each citizen in virtue. No institutional tinkering or administrative techniques could replace personal integrity. During the campaign of 1914 Fisher placed the role of the individual in perspective. "The social disorder is a moral one," he stressed, and then added,

> You may train the bodies of men as you will and their minds too, but the great problems remain unsolved. As long as vicious habits remain, and selfishness dominates the industrial world, just so long will misery and injustice remain to vex and burden the world.[23]

Like other party officials he believed that good government was primarily a question of electing good men to office. In a characteristic burst of fervor Flavel Luther predicted that elected officials must demonstrate "honor, and truth, and self sacrifice and unselfish consecration to the public good if evil is to disappear."[24]

Because Socialism ignored the individual and magnified class distinctions, it was denounced by the progressives. Society was a uniform fabric composed of persons with similar needs and desires, argued the Connecticut leaders. The vitality of capitalism and democracy lay in their recognition of "the fundamental necessity of human nature, as it is, of throwing men on their own responsibility and also of holding before the ambitious and capable man the free choice of his course in life and the fullest reward of his exertions."[25] The goal of the Connecticut progressives was not equality but liberty.

The demands of the Puritan ethic and a respect for the strong individual compelled many Connecticut Progressive party leaders to perform hazardous and painful feats of physical endurance. Alsop's adventures as a Colorado rancher were matched by Henderson's mountain climbing exploits and Smith's penchant for arduous camping expeditions. It was not a reckless search for thrills that motivated these sober men, but a felt necessity to re-assert the importance of physical suffering and self-sufficiency in a world succumbing to softness and stifling combinations of power.[26]

[23] Fisher, speech, Baptist Brotherhood, *Hartford Courant*, Sept. 7, 1914.

[24] Luther, Baccalaureate Sermon, Trinity College, June 25, 1911, Flavel Luther Papers, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut.

[25] Hoadley, "Review of Our Social Progress," Hoadley Papers, Box 5.

[26] James R. McGovern, "David Graham Phillips and the Virility Impulse," *New England Quarterly*, XXXIX (Sept. 1966), 334–5 treats this drive as an operational force in the life of another New England progressive.

None of the Connecticut progressives repudiated what they considered the basic premises of American life. The pertinence of Protestant Christianity, and the continued relevance of the gospel of socially productive labor and simple tastes were upheld. A capitalistic economy and a democratic political system, which placed the source of progress in individual initiative, were accepted without dissent. Yet dissatisfaction lingered. These sensitive men were uncomfortable defending a system built around the unfettered individual at a time when the excesses of individualism were becoming intolerable. Evidence of flaws in the competitive structure were found in the slums of even Connecticut cities. Social injustice shouted from the pages of muckraking magazines, and could not be hidden by the "better" journals. The characterizations of the "robber barons" and the "politicos" were overdrawn, but they were close enough to reality to make progressives wonder whether capitalism and democracy any longer nurtured men of wisdom and virtue. Violent strikes, and the inroads of Socialism filled the Connecticut leaders with apprehension for the future of an organic society.

Shock and fear turned the Connecticut progressives into reformers. However there was less unanimity among them about what to change than about what to retain. The direction to proceed was clear enough. Unbridled competition, which they castigated as "greed . . . masquerading as individualism,"[27] must be replaced by a greater measure of co-operation. This "communal sense," as Herbert Knox Smith termed it,[28] was a prerequisite to wholesome reform. Selfishness, the law of the jungle, must give way to co-operation, the doctrine of civilization. While all agreed with the wisdom of this axiom many hard questions remained. How much and what type of collective action was required? In what areas of society should it operate? What safeguards against abuse were necessary? These problems produced differences of opinion among the eight men.

Voluntary associations, particularly those based on economic realities, won speedy approval. The tobacco and dairy co-operatives set up by Alsop, the labor unions applauded by Hoadley and Fisher, the businessmen's organizations headed by Vincent, even the American Association of University Professors in which Henderson was

[27] Yandell Henderson, "Statement for Continental Telegraphen Compaignie," Sept. 6, 1915, Yandell Henderson Papers. In possession of son, Malcolm Henderson, Washington, D. C.

[28] *Bridgeport Farmer*, Oct. 8, 1912.

so active, seemed to do little violence to tradition. Lacking the element of coercion and designed to restore influence to the individual, they appeared as up-to-date means to reach familiar ends. The suggestion that these associations were pressure groups engaged in breaking down the national unity that they praised so extravagantly was curtly dismissed by the Connecticut progressives. Each man considered the business or professional organization to which he belonged to be working for the good of the entire population.

Collective action determined and directed by government fiat was something else. Even though all Connecticut leaders advocated some expansion of the role of government, they disagreed over the amount of power it should be given and the level at which it should be exercised. In reaching positions on these questions they were guided by personal experiences and needs. Willard Fisher, whose political life had been spent in city government, desired to see municipalities more powerful and autonomous. The grip of a state legislature dominated by rural hamlets paralyzed Connecticut cities in his opinion.[29] Extensive state control over public education as a first step toward a national public school system was favored by college President Flavel Luther.[30] Gutzon Borglum revealed the awkward position of the progressives. Although the artist had spent a lifetime calling for the federal government to assist farmers and promote the arts, two areas of his personal concern, he recoiled from the central planning features of the New Deal.[31]

Yandell Henderson and Herbert Smith were willing to go furthest along the road of expanded federal power. Nine years in Washington had eased Smith's fear of a national bureaucracy, and persuaded him that it was the only force capable of dominating mammoth corporations. Industrial consolidation he regarded as inevitable, and he argued that big government must direct this concentrated power into socially useful channels.[32] The states as sovereign entities were the targets of Henderson's criticisms. His was a goal of a totally centralized nation requiring the elimination

[29] Fisher, "How British Cities Are Governed," *The Citizen*, I (Dec. 1895).

[30] Luther, "Control of Public Education," speech, New Hampshire State Teachers Association, Concord, New Hampshire, Oct. 22, 1909, Luther Papers.

[31] Borglum to Senator James A. Reed, Jan. 29, 1924, Borglum Papers, Box 61; Borglum to Editor, *New York Times*, May 22, 1927; Borglum to Dr. Glenn Frank, Apr. 10, 1936, Borglum Papers, Box 62.

[32] Smith, "The Progressive Party," *Yale Review*, New Series, II (Oct. 1912), 26.

of the states as anything but administrative units. The state socialism of Germany was his professed ideal.[33]

Even in the advanced schemes of these two men the amount and type of power that the federal government should exercise was severely limited. Smith insisted that the government should be granted absolute authority to investigate and expose, but not the right to compel. "Publicity and prosecution are mutually destructive," he concluded.[34] Henderson desired to eliminate the states as intermediaries between the federal government and the people. But he anxiously supported any device that would streamline the mechanics of popular participation in the central government.[35] Moreover the idea of an all-powerful government was repugnant to the independent nature of the testy scientist. While Henderson might commend Communist Russia for subsidizing technical education,[36] he bristled at the spectre of government regimentation of scientific research.[37]

The crucial challenge of reform, judged the Connecticut progressives, was to reconcile a necessary increase in the power of government with the continued independence of the individual. How could the individual be saved from drowning in a sea of collectivism, they asked themselves? As a group they showed a substantial amount of agreement on how this was to be done. In the first place they had no doubt that this delicate task could be accomplished. They were certain that abuses could be purged without major alterations in the American system. A sunny optimism permeated their thinking. "Evil is to be beaten at last. Of that all history makes us sure," cheered Luther.[38] Sketchy about details, Connecticut leaders were definite only that reaching a state of healthy equilibrium was a slow, evolutionary process. "There is no social panacea," reminded Fisher. Society "cannot be cut and reshaped at will."[39]

[33] Henderson, "The Progressive Movement and Constitutional Reform," *Yale Review*, III (Oct. 1913), 78–88; Henderson, "German Culture From the Standpoint of a Progressive and a Pro-German," *Vital Issues Booklet Number 11*, New York, 1915, 4.

[34] Smith to Senator Francis Newlands, Aug. 18, 1911, Francis Newlands MSS., Library of Congress.

[35] Henderson, "Complexity of Government Its Fundamental Defect," typed manuscripts, no date, Henderson Papers.

[36] *New Haven Journal-Courier*, Sept. 1, 1935.

[37] Interview with Malcolm Henderson, June 6, 1966.

[38] Luther, Baccalaureate sermon, Trinity College, June 25, 1905, Luther Papers.

[39] Fisher, *Interview with Willard Fisher*, 9.

The confidence of the progressives in the ultimate success of gradual, selective reform stemmed from three sources. The first was a belief that America was under the special protection of the Creator who constantly guided the nation toward perfection and happiness. Like Theodore Roosevelt, all of the Connecticut progressives were proficient flag wavers. When Luther told Trinity graduates, "We of the United States are appointed by God," he was merely stating what progressives agreed was an elementary truth.[40]

The ability of science to ease the strains of modern civilization impressed all of the Progressives. The older Connecticut leaders expressed constant wonder at the achievements of the industrial revolution. While the younger men accepted these advancements without notice, it was the revelations of the social scientists that inspired their praise. Smith and Fisher, both well versed in economics, did not hesitate to claim that rational solutions to all human problems could be worked out by technical specialists.[41]

Finally a faith in education was shared by all of these men. It was the task of the schools, they asserted, to provide citizens with the tools to master the complexities of an urban-industrial society. They insisted that the public schools should train the masses for effective citizenship and productive labor. Vincent, Borglum, and Fisher were openly critical of public education for concentrating on academic and cultural subjects to the neglect of technical and manual training.[42] Other progressives while agreeing with this condemnation, held a broader view of education. Schools should teach anything that was necessary to prepare men for service to others. In the opinion of many, educational institutions must mold the character as well as provide the skills required for survival in the modern world. The ideal of the Gunnery School, as interpreted by its Headmaster, an active progressive, was to shape subtly the total character of future leaders.[43] Yale, boasted Frank Butterworth, class of 1895 and the original Bull Mooser in New Haven, was a

[40] Luther, Baccalaureate sermon, Trinity College, June 21, 1908, Luther Papers.

[41] Smith, "Corporate Regulation—An Administrative Office," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XLIV (July, 1912), 284–8.

[42] Fisher to Editor, *New Haven Journal-Courier*, Sept. 6, 1910; Borglum to Editor, *New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1922; Borglum to Warren G. Harding, Oct. 21, 1920, Borglum Papers, Box 60; Vincent, *Bridgeport Post*, Oct. 18, 1912, Oct. 16, 1913.

[43] John C. Brinsmade, "Old and New," speech, 17th Annual Meeting, Gunnery School Alumni Association, May 30, 1908, reprinted in *The Stray Shot* (Gunnery School student newspaper), June, 1908.

great school "because of the men it turns out with capacity and character for utilizing their university education for the public good."[44] Such emphasis on character formation presupposed that the elite, men of talent and breeding, would receive a different education than the masses. While Connecticut leaders supported this distinction on "practical" grounds, their acceptance implied approval of a stratified society.

Education not reform was the target of Connecticut progressives. These men believed that if the masses had full knowledge of all the circumstances surrounding public problems they would act wisely to eliminate evils. Publicity in their eyes became a method of reform. They were not attempting to alter human character as much as they were seeking to enable the crowd to see situations as lucidly as they themselves perceived them. Herbert Smith gave the clearest expression to this function. His conception of an effective government regulatory commission was one that relied on investigation and publicity to inform the public. Once in possession of accurate information Smith believed the people would force industry to cease harmful practices. The Bureau of Corporations, he felt, came close to this ideal because it

> does not actually attempt the regulation of business *per se*. It gives credit for proper business management, and imposes discredit for the reverse, but assumes no power of direction and simply leaves the public to apply the pressure through public opinion and the investment of the public's moneys.[45]

Manifest destiny, science, and education, progressives sensed, would make possible a better life. But exactly how would this be accomplished? By what means could the safe balance between innovation and tradition, between the individual and the group be reached? Here Connecticut leaders stumbled and stammered in search of a reliable course of action. What they finally settled on was to take refuge in the abilities of a select few. The composition of this hierarchy brought out a difference in emphasis among the eight. One segment would place the fate of society in the hands of an aristocracy of character, which had fortified itself with scientific training. The other faction advocated reliance on a corps of skilled technicians, who possessed nobility of character. Unanimous agreement that they were among this ruling class, regardless

[44] Butterworth to Editor, *Yale News*, Jan. 23, 1926.

[45] Smith to Newlands, Aug. 2, 1911, Newlands MSS.

of how it was defined, reassured the Bull Moose leaders about the wisdom of this decision.

Men like Alsop, Luther, and Borglum talked incessantly about the responsibility of men of talent and integrity to guide the amorphous public. It is not surprising that the two Presidents most admired by Alsop were Theodore Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower. Both men convinced him that they possessed the sturdy character required for leadership.[46]

The remaining Progressives were more willing to trust an elite of disinterested, non-partisan technicians with the power to make the basic decisions involving human welfare. While it was understood that these men must be unselfish and virtuous, their judgment would be based not on ethics but on objective data. The tariff, a perennial political issue, should be framed by economists.[47] Herbert Smith felt that a similar government bureau of experts should be given the responsibility of supervising the large corporations. The decisions of this group would rest on economic facts rather than on political or legal considerations.[48] In the same vein, Henderson alerted scientists to their duty to impress on government officials the "practical significance" of their research.[49] In carrying out this self-imposed mandate he became enmeshed in bitter squabbles over air pollution and prohibition.[50]

This ruling elite, whatever its exact composition, could not impose its will on the masses. The Connecticut progressives agreed that it must be democratically selected, and receive regular guidance on important issues from the public. All expressed a conviction that the public, if fully informed, would choose the "right" men, and give them the "proper" direction. Progressives favored most devices designed to simplify and make more efficient the

46 Alsop to George W. Dulany, Oct. 2, 1952, Alsop Papers, Box 1.

47 The need for a scientifically designed tariff was the sole issue on which Vincent based his compaign for Congress in 1912. The views of the party on this subject are summarized in Vincent, *What the Tariff Is and How it Should be Treated in the Interest of Those Who Are Protected*, Bridgeport, 1912.

48 Smith, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XLIV, 284–8.

49 Henderson, *Science*, LXXVII, 584–5.

50 Henderson caused a furor when he charged automobile manufacturers and gasoline producers of cynically ignoring the problem of air pollution, *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1924; Apr. 22, 1925. His position on prohibition is best expressed in Henderson, "Science, Law and Alcohol," *Harpers*, LCXVII (June, 1933), 46; and Henderson, *A New Deal in Liquor: A Plea for Dilution*, New York, 1934.

process by which citizens could participate in government. However plebiscite democracy was desired by none of the Connecticut leaders. Few were as blunt as Borglum who blustered, "I don't believe in the rule of the crowd or of democracy,"[51] and attacked the universal ballot as "the 'Open Sesame' to every form of political corruption."[52] Fewer still would agree with him that such extreme restrictions on suffrage as those of temperance, property and "a direct interest in and knowledge of the subject balloted upon," were called for.[53] Yet a number of Bull Moose leaders showed an aversion to granting the vote to women.[54] Most were apprehensive about the referendum and recall.[55]

A crippling limitation of the Connecticut progressives as reformers was their lack of personal, intimate contact with urban conditions. None were actively engaged in work with the city poor. Hoadley spent a short time in a charity bureau in Waterbury before 1895, but he never really understood urban problems. His unenlightened concept of poverty as a sign of personal inadequacy was not changed by this experience.[56] As an employer he dealt exclusively with highly skilled craftsmen. Fisher was of great assistance to organized labor, but primarily as a technical advisor. It is interesting to note that these two men who had the most familiarity with urban social problems, slight as it was, were the only Connecticut Progressive party leaders who keenly disliked Theodore Roosevelt.[57] Most of the eight were born in small towns and lived either in middle-class city neighborhoods or country estates. The attachment of the entire number to rural life and values was strong. The country is "the fountain of youth from which the tired city constantly renews its strength," trumpeted Borglum.[58] Those Connecticut party officials who were not indifferent to urban culture, condemned it as a corruption of the American heritage.

51 Borglum to Senator James Watson, Aug. 8, 1923, Borglum Papers, Box 61.

52 Borglum to Edward Rumley, Aug. 29, 1939, Borglum Papers, Box 62.

53 Borglum to Elsie Hill, Feb. 2, 1917, Borglum Papers, Box 61.

54 *Danbury Evening News*, Sept. 17, 1912; *Hartford Times*, Jan. 23, 1913.

55 Smith, *Yale Review*, II, 28; Henderson to Theodore Roosevelt, Feb. 8, 1913, Henderson Papers.

56 Hoadley, "Our Aims During the Past Six Months," report to first public meeting of the Directors of the Christian Visitation and Charity, Trinity Church, Waterbury, Connecticut, Mar. 13, 1892, Hoadley Papers, Box 5.

57 *Waterbury Republican*, Aug. 4, 1912; *Middletown Sun*, Sept. 28, 1912.

The Bull Moose party in Connecticut did not offer any broad program of social reform because the leaders had a limited sensitivity to the needs of a large segment of society. Only Fisher had any personal experience with labor unions. The others exhibited varying degrees of suspicion and enmity toward workers' organizations which they believed menaced the social cohesion of the nation. In the opinion of many, union officials did not possess the upright character that must accompany the use of power.[59] Mention of immigration or the problems of ghetto life are almost totally absent from their writings. Because of the shortage of farm labor during the 1920's Alsop was forced to come to grips with the movement for restriction of immigration. He rejected both a literacy barrier and a quota system, but did favor a test of character and morals.[60] Samuel Vincent built his coal business with Hungarian immigrant workers without realizing that slum life in Bridgeport entailed difficulties that could not be surmounted by a rigid application of honesty, industry, and thrift.[61] When the trustees of Trinity College complained about the increasing percentage of Jewish immigrants in the student body after World War I, president Luther meekly agreed to reduce the number of these less desirable individuals.[62]

The plight of the Negro was hardly noticed by these men. Theodore Roosevelt's decision to keep the Progressive party in the South "lily-white" drew comments from only two Connecticut Progressives. Flavel Luther came the closest to protesting this arrangement in a letter to the Colonel which pointed out that it conflicted with the ideals for which the Civil War had been fought. But he took pains to assure Roosevelt that "I think the right thing was done."[63] The other commentator was Yandell Henderson, a native Kentuckian, who praised the action as proof of Roosevelt's integrity and moderation.[64] During the campaign of 1912 Herbert Smith injected the race issue but only as a club with which to beat the Democrats. The Negro problem, he claimed, was a convenient

58 Borglum, "Memorandum A," typed manuscript, no date, 1917–1918, Borglum Papers, Box 60.
59 Smith to Roosevelt, May 26, 1914, Theodore Roosevelt Papers; Borglum to Burton K. Wheeler, Feb. 25, 1937, Borglum Papers, Box 62.
60 Connecticut Dairyman's Association, *Report of the Forty-Second Annual Meeting* (1923), 50–6.
61 Interview with Samuel E. Vincent, July 20, 1966.
62 Glenn Weaver, *The History of Trinity College*, Hartford, 1967.
63 Luther to Roosevelt, Aug. 8, 1912, Roosevelt Papers.
64 *New Haven Register*, Aug. 9, 1912.

excuse for the Democratic party "to sidetrack any progressive policy objectionable to any part of the party."[65]

The willingness of the Connecticut progressives to shelve temporarily private careers and join the Bull Moose crusade can be understood best by reference to the Mowry-Hofstader model. Men of secure wealth and personal prestige they worried about the disintegration of a value system they deemed essential to national vitality. Their appeal to elite leadership was an effort to reconcile an ethos based on individual initiative and freedom from institutional restraint with a growing realization that organization and collective action were prerequisites for survival in urban, industrial America. Wary of coercion, they accepted a "safe" measure of central planning in response to social pressure from above and below. When Richard Hofstader characterized the progressive reformers as "spiritual sons of the Mugwumps" caught up in "an effort to realize familiar and traditional ideals under novel circumstances," he succinctly presented the rationale of the Progressive party in Connecticut.

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65 Smith to Roosevelt, July 11, 1912, Roosevelt Papers.