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THE DECLINE OF THE WESTERN PROGRESSIVE REPUBLICAN BLOC IN THE SENATE DURING THE NEW DEAL 1933-1945

by

RONALD L. FEINMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1975

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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PREFACE

The advent of the Great Depression in the fall of 1929 marked a turning point in American political history. The federal government was confronted with an economic and spiritual crisis of staggering proportions. President Herbert Hoover, the apostle of government-business cooperation and political conservatism, viewed the depression as a short-lived phenomenon, which would correct itself through natural economic forces. An opponent of intervention by the national government in the economy, Hoover refused to consider large-scale government assistance to those in need, attacking the concept of a "dole" as the undermining of America's "rugged individualism". As Hoover proclaimed that prosperity was around the corner, members of his own party were calling for a change in priorities on the national level.

The most prominent and outspoken opponents of Hoover were the bloc of western Republican senators who proudly called themselves progressives, and who were labeled "Sons of the Wild Jackass" by conservatives. In alliance with a smaller number of progressive Democrats, these independent minded, individualistic reformers demanded recognition of the need for federal action to combat the depression. The members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc, while not always in agreement as to the type and extent of reform

legislation required, had not come to sudden realization of the urgency of change. They had been the leading opponents of the policies of the Republican administrations during the 1920's, and had kept reform sentiment alive in its period of declining fortunes.

As the 1930's began, the progressive Republican Senate bloc members were regarded as the leading reformers in American politics. Journalists, intellectuals and fellow politicians were in basic agreement on this point. The proposals that the progressives set forth during the Hoover administration to combat the depression were later, in many particulars, to be adopted by the Democratic party under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. In this respect, the advent of the New Deal was a triumph for the progressive Republicans, who saw their long struggle for economic and social reforms come to fruition.

But the New Deal was also a challenge to the progressive Republicans, who witnessed many of their ideas and proposals being usurped by Roosevelt and the Democrats to their political advantage. The New Deal also came to represent a threat to the cherished ideals of many of the members of the bloc, as it advanced in many respects beyond the philosophy of Western Republican progressivism. The growing menace of Fascism in Europe and Asia confronted the progressive Republicans with a different type of challenge, with their response leading to their rapid decline in public esteem. Between 1930 and 1945, the progressive Republican Senate bloc plummeted from a

position as the forerunner of the New Deal to one of repudiated reactionaries in the public mind.

The purpose of this work is to examine how and why the Western progressives in the Republican party declined in power and prestige between 1930 and 1945. The following chapters will trace how the progressives reacted to the domestic and foreign policies of the New Deal, and the nature of their relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt. The President's role in attracting the progressives to his leadership, and then ultimately alienating them, will be delineated. The weaknesses of the progressives as a group and as individuals will also be examined in detail. Hopefully, this work will place the progressives in proper historical perspective and clarify their significance as individuals and as a bloc in the history of the 1930's. As the following pages will demonstrate, personality played a key role in progressive reactions to the New Deal, as well as politics and principle.

The term "progressive" should be clarified. There has never been agreement among scholars as to the precise meaning of the term. The general principles that progressives believed in and promoted are discussed in the first chapter. The author decided that, in doing research for this work, he would consider specific senators as members of the progressive bloc if they were so labeled by journalists or historians, or if these senators proclaimed themselves to be progressives. Some scholars may disagree with some of

the author's choices, but each of the twelve senators covered in this work has met at least one, if not more, of these three criteria for being considered "progressive".

This work could not have been written without the cooperation and assistance of the staffs of the various manuscript repositories that I either visited personally or had correspondence with over the last few years. I wish to express my gratitude to the following institutions for the cordial handling of my requests for manuscript material: The Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; The Kansas Historical Society, Topeka; The Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; The Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York City; and the Oral History Collections, Columbia University, New York City. I also extend my thanks to the following institutions for sending me useful manuscript material by mail; The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; The I. D. Weeks Library, University of South Dakota, Vermillion; The William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Western Historical Manuscripts Collections, University of Missouri, Columbia; and the Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado, Boulder. I also wish to thank the many other repositories which sent me material, which,

unfortunately, I did not find useful, and those that informed me that their manuscript collections lacked material regarding the Western progressive Republican Senate bloc.

Material from the Hiram Johnson Papers has been quoted by permission of the Director, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Permission to cite material from the Louis Taber Memoirs in the Oral History Collections, Columbia University, has been granted, copyright, 1972, by the Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Finally, permission to use material in the Frank P. Walsh Papers has been granted by the Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

I was very appreciative of the warm reception and cooperation given me by those distinguished public figures who acceded to interviews on their recollections of the New Deal years and the role of the progressive Republicans in the history of that era: the late Gerald P. Nye, Burton K. Wheeler and Raymond Moley; and also Morris H. Rubin, Isen LaFollette, Benjamin Cohen and James Farley.

I am deeply indebted to my adviser, Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., for his careful reading of my dissertation draft and his advice regarding relevant material for this topic. I have no doubt that this work has been vastly improved by his suggestions. It has been my pleasure and honor to work with him. I also wish to extend my thanks to Professor Michael Wreszin of Queens College and Professor Bernard Bellush of City College for their valuable comments

and criticisms of my manuscript. I must also thank Professor Frank Warren of Queens College for inspiring my interest in the New Deal, while I was an undergraduate at that institution.

On the personal level, I wish to express my gratitude to my wife's parents for their interest in and support of my project. I am endlessly grateful to my brother and my parents for their strong support and endorsement of my work. My mother especially became involved with the progressive Republicans and could be considered a minor expert on the topic! I could not possibly have completed this work without her encouragement. Finally, I owe my wife, Adria Osroff Feinman, a debt that I could never repay. Her cheerfulness and encouragement were important in the final stages of this project, and she lent her assistance in the proof reading of the manuscript. I will be everlastingly grateful to her.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROGRESSIVE REPUBLICAN SENATE BLOC

On November 7, 1929, Senator George Higgins Moses, a conservative Republican from New Hampshire and one of the leading figures in the Senate leadership, addressed an audience of New England manufacturers. In the course of his speech, he delivered a scathing attack on a bloc of independent senators of both major parties. Labeling them "Sons of the Wild Jackass", he immortalized them in a manner he had not intended. The nation's newspapers seized upon the phrase and publicized it. The term became a subject of discussion and debate in newspaper editorials, political columns and in the halls of Congress. Soon it was practically a household expression and was worn with pride by the members of the progressive Senate bloc. [1]

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[1] New York Times, November 9 and 10, 1929; New York Herald Tribune, November 9 and 10, 1929. Journalistic accounts of the "Sons of the Wild Jackass" include the following: Ray Tucker and Frederick R. Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass (Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1932); Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round (New York: Horace Liveright, Inc., 1931), Chapter 8, pp. 184-216; "The Progressives of the Senate," American Mercury, XVI (April, 1929), 385-393. Personal interviews with the following people gave me much information on the "Sons of the Wild Jackass": Senator Burton K. Wheeler, March 25, 1971, Washington, D.C.; Senator Gerald P. Nye, March 30, 1971,

The group so colorfully labeled by Senator Moses consisted of senators who had acquired a reputation of being "progressive" in their economic and political outlook, mavericks in their party loyalty and supreme individualists. They represented states in the Midwest and Far West and had a history of support for progressive legislation since the time of Theodore Roosevelt. With only one exception, however, those few old enough to vote in 1896 had voted against William Jennings Bryan. Most of the progressives, in tune with their individualistic nature, also refused to take an active role in the presidential campaigns of progressives Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 and Robert LaFollette, Sr. in 1924, preferring to remain neutral. Many were second generation progressives who only came into national politics

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Washington, D.C.; Benjamin V. Cohen, March 31, 1971, Washington, D.C.; Raymond Moley, May 14, 1971, New York City. I had correspondence with the following which gave me useful information: Bruce Bliven, May 4, 1971; Alfred Bingham, May 7, 1971; Senator Burton K. Wheeler, May 10, 1971; Governor Alf. M. Landon, May 25, 1971. Secondary sources which gave important background details include the following: Leroy Ashby, The Spearless Leader: Senator Borah and the Progressive Movement in the 1920's (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), which deals with the entire progressive group although concentrating on Borah; Otis L. Graham, Jr., An Encore for Reform: The Old Progressives and the New Deal (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Russel B. Nye, Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Development, 1870-1958 (New York: Harper and Row, 1959); and the three volume Age of Roosevelt by Arthur M. Schlesinger,Jr., the titles being: The Crisis Of The Old Order, 1919-1933, The Coming Of the New Deal, and The Politics of Upheaval, 1935-1936 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956-1960). A useful doctoral dissertation on the "Sons of the Wild Jackass" during the Hoover administration is Hugh James Savage, "Political Independents of the Hoover Era: The Progressive Insurgents of the Senate, " University of Illinois, 1961.

during the 1920's, but along with the older progressives, they fought for reforms during that decade.

The progressive bloc, harsh opponents of special privilege, denounced the encroachments of big business, banks and utility companies upon the public interest. To curb the power of these vested interests, the progressives actively promoted anti-trust legislation and public power projects such as Muscle Shoals. Representing the great agricultural heartland of America, they advanced the interests of farmers. Believers in political democracy, they denounced the Teapot Dome scandals of the Harding Administration and the role of "corrupt" political machines in the affairs of the two major political parties. Convinced that America's participation in the First World War had been a disastrous mistake, they fought to keep the nation isolated from future European power struggles.

Most of the "Sons of the Wild Jackass" were Republicans. However, there were some Democrats in the group, as well as a few Republicans who had left the Senate by 1933. A brief description of these senators follows.

Thomas J. Walsh of Montana served in the Senate from 1913-1933. President Roosevelt then appointed him as Attorney General, but Walsh died before he could take office. Burton K. Wheeler, also of Montana, served four terms in the Senate from 1923-1947. He was the Vice Presidential

nominee on Robert LaFollette, Sr.'s Progressive Party ticket in 1924. Wheeler played a major role in the history of the New Deal and remained in close alliance with the progressive Republicans.

Clarence C. Dill of Washington served two terms in the Senate from 1923-1935, his major accomplishment being the sponsorship of the Grand Coulee Dam. Edward P. Costigan of Colorado served only one term (1931-1937), but worked closely with progressive Republicans on unemployment relief and public works legislation. Beginning his career as a Republican, he was one of the founders of the Progressive Party in his state in 1912, a delegate to the Progressive National Conventions of 1912 and 1916, and a member of the United States Tariff Commission from 1917-1928. In 1930, he allied himself with the Democratic party and was elected to the Senate, refusing to run for re-election in 1936 because of poor health.

Three Republican senators, included by journalists in the progressive bloc, did not serve in the Senate beyond the opening of the New Deal. Smith W. Brookhart of Iowa was elected as a progressive Republican to the Senate in 1922 and served until his defeat for renomination and for election as an independent candidate in 1932. He was appointed as foreign trade adviser in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration from 1933-1935 and sought the Republican senatorial nomination unsuccessfully in 1936. During his years in the Senate he was one of the most outspoken members of

the progressive bloc.

Robert B. Howell of Nebraska served in the Senate from 1922 until his death on March 11, 1933. He could not compete for prominence with his colleague, George Norris, and never received much publicity, but he often voted with the progressive bloc. The third Republican who left the Senate before the start of the New Deal was John J. Blaine of Wisconsin, who served as the progressive governor of his state from 1921-1927 and as the colleague of Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr. for one term from 1927 until 1933, when he was an unsuccessful candidate for renomination. He was appointed as director of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation by President Roosevelt in 1933, serving in that post until his death in April, 1934. Of the seven progressives mentioned, only Wheeler and Costigan had a great influence on the New Deal. Since this work deals only with Republicans, their activities will be covered only insofar as they relate to the actions of members of the progressive Republican bloc. [2]

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[2] Information on these seven Senators was obtained from Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961) on the following pages: Walsh, p.1771; Wheeler, p. 1798; Dill, p. 812; Costigan, p.741; Brookhart, p. 602; Howell, pp. 1085-86; Blaine, p.560. A biography of Costigan and the memoirs of Wheeler are listed in the Bibliography. The first five Senators listed were mentioned in Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass while Howell and Blaine were discussed in Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round and the American Mercury article on "The Progressives of the Senate", all of which are listed in Footnote 1.

At the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration, there were twelve Republicans in the United States Senate considered to be progressives, although in varying degrees. They were similar in some respects but differed in many ways. Their dates of birth stretched from 1861 to 1895 and the year of their beginning of service as Senators from 1907 to 1927. The group included some of the most colorful, controversial, outspoken, crusading members of the Senate, but also some of the most unassuming and retiring senators.

Some were very outspoken and gregarious, while others said little for the public record and concentrated on those subjects of primary interest to their constituents in the Midwest and Far West, particularly farm problems, anti-trust legislation, public power and isolationism in foreign affairs. All of these senators voted "right" enough of the time during their careers up to 1933 to be considered as progressives by their contemporaries and colleagues, as well by historians who have researched in the inter-war period. We will now examine in some detail the background, careers, personalities, and beliefs of the twelve members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc at the beginning of the New Deal.

The first to enter the Senate was William Edgar Borah of Idaho [3] who served from 1907 to 1940, and at his death

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[3] Biographical material on Borah is abundant and

was dean of the Senate and rated as one of the great men of that body's history. Borah was born on June 29, 1865, at Fairfield, Illinois, the son of William Nathan and Elizabeth West Borah. The Borahs were an old American family of mixed German and Irish ancestry, who had come to America in 1760 and moved through the generations from Pennsylvania to Kentucky, and then to Wayne County, Illinois. William was their third son in a family of ten children. His father was a prosperous, hard-working farmer and stock raiser and a devout Presbyterian who ruled his family with a firm hand, while his mother was a gentle woman.

Borah received his early education at Tom's Prairie public school and at the Southern Illinois Academy at

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includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p.573; William E. Leuchtenburg's article in Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), Supplement 2, Volume 2, pp. 49-53; Current Biography 1940, pp. 99-102; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, and Washington Post for January 20, 1940; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 4, pp. 70-95; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, Chapter 8, pp. 210-214; the American Mercury article on the "The Progressives of the Senate," p. 393; Claudius O. Johnson, Borah of Idaho (New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1936); John Chalmers Vinson, William E. Borah and the Outlawry of War (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1957); Marian C. McKenna, Borah (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961); Robert James Maddox, William E. Borah and American Foreign Policy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Leroy Ashby, The Spearless Leader: Senator Borah and the Progressive Movement in the 1920's (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972); Orde S. Pinckney, "William E. Borah and the Republican Party, 1932-1940", Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1958. Numerous other dissertations, as well as journal and magazine articles on Borah have been written over the years.

Enfield. After his school days were over and before entering the University of Kansas in 1885, Borah joined a traveling Shakespearean troupe to assume the role of Mark Antony, demonstrating his natural inclinations toward an oratorical career. Borah was later to be acknowledged as one of the great orators of Senate history. Forced to leave the University of Kansas in the early spring of 1887 due to the threat of tuberculosis, he never returned to finish college. The famous progressive journalist William Allen White had been a fellow student.

After regaining his health, Borah decided to become a lawyer. He read law in the office of his brother-in-law and met the Kansas bar requirements in September, 1887. In 1890, he decided to move west to improve his prospects for a successful law career, as Kansas was in the midst of an agricultural depression that would lead to the Populist revolt. Planning to go to Seattle, Washington, he got no further than Boise, Idaho, because of a shortage of funds. He established himself as a prominent criminal lawyer during the 1890's and dabbled in politics as early as a year after reaching Boise. He was chairman of the Republican State Central Committee by 1892 and became secretary to the Idaho governor, marrying his daughter Mary O'Connell in April, 1895.

In 1896, Borah bolted the Republican party for the first and only time in his life. A strong supporter of silver and a critic of the trusts, he endorsed Bryan

in the presidential election. He was the leader of a Silver Republican convention in Idaho and ran for Congress on that group's ticket, losing to a candidate who had both Populist and Democratic support, but he gained more votes than the regular Republican candidate. He was a leader of the progressive faction of the Republican party in Idaho in 1902 and seemed a sure bet for election to the United States Senate in 1903, but he was defeated in the Republican caucus in the Idaho legislature.

In 1906 Borah ran again for the Senate as a supporter of the progressive programs of President Theodore Roosevelt and as an advocate of a direct primary law in Idaho. In January, 1907, the legislature chose him for the Senate by a handsome margin. Borah proceeded to ignore the adage that freshman senators are seen, but not heard from. He sponsored a bill to create the Department of Labor, fought for the income tax amendment and direct election of United States Senators, and was an uncompromising opponent of the trusts, in tune with his Jeffersonian philosophy.

Borah had limits to his progressivism even in the early years of his Senate career, however, breaking with other progressives in his opposition to recall of judges and Theodore Roosevelt's program for the recall of judicial decisions. He supported Taft in the Ballinger-Pinchot dispute and on the Payne-Aldrich Tariff, and he refused to bolt the Republican party in 1912 to support Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Progressives. He acquired a

reputation as a political maverick who would not obey party dictates between elections but would always support the party in election years or remain loyal by saying nothing during the campaign. Throughout his career he opposed third party movements or bolting from the party. Many progressives criticized him for this stand.

Borah felt responsible only to the citizens of his state. They became immensely proud of his independence and individualism in the Senate. He arrived at decisions on national and international issues, however, without consultation with his constituents, believing he was a free man and should make up his own mind. He was always a lone wolf, unaccustomed to working with others for long on any cause.

During the Wilson administration Borah opposed most progressive legislation, including the Federal Reserve Act, the Clayton Anti-Trust Act, the Federal Trade Commission, the Underwood Tariff, the Adamson Act and Wilson's appointment of Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court.

He disliked the growth of bureaucracy and centralization of power in the federal government and desired a return to the egalitarian and competitive economy which had prevailed during the 19th century. He was thus opposed to regulation of trusts by the federal government, believing in a strict enforcement of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. He was a firm believer in states rights, to the point that he opposed the woman suffrage amendment and anti-lynching bills. On the other hand, he was a strong

supporter of the prohibition amendment and the enforcement of that law by the federal government. His political behavior puzzled both contemporaries and historians. He was an enigma, called conservative or reactionary by some, and was not always trusted by the progressive group in the Senate because he would not fight all the way for a cause, unless it was for the preservation of the Constitution. He was the supreme moralist in political and foreign affairs.

In foreign affairs, Borah was a nationalist who would support American interests anywhere in the world, but he opposed involvement in the political affairs of Europe. He was an advocate of armed intervention in Mexico and criticized Wilson for his neglect of American interests there. Attacking Wilson for his abandonment of America's neutral rights in World War I, he made the war a major issue in campaign speeches in the presidential campaign of 1916 and he voted for American entrance into the war in April, 1917. He voted for war as a nationalist, concerned with American national interests, not as one concerned for the fate of democracy in the world. After the war ended, he was one of the leading members in the Senate bloc of "bitter-end irreconcilables" that opposed Wilson's League of Nations project and the Treaty of Versailles. He refused to consider any settlement and exerted great influence on Senator Henry Cabot Lodge so that he would not consider a compromise agreement on that subject.

During the 1920's, Borah, though he never left the

country, became chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the most powerful and influential spokesman in Congress on foreign policy. He believed that each country should be allowed to solve its own problems without outside interference. As early as 1922, he introduced a resolution for the recognition of Soviet Russia, which finally came about in 1933 under the Roosevelt administration.

He was firmly opposed to American involvement in any international organization, such as the League of Nations and World Court, with political powers. He wanted the United States to steer clear of "entangling" alliances with foreign nations, and he worked for disarmament, bringing about the Washington Conference of 1921. He was also for world peace through the rule of law and played an important role in bringing about the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. During the 1930's, Borah was one of the leading spokesmen for the cause of isolationism in the Senate.

In domestic affairs, Borah often was on the other side of the fence from the Republican presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover. He campaigned vigorously for Hoover in 1928, but with the depression, he began to advocate more direct action to alleviate the economic emergency. Borah was seriously considered as a possible presidential candidate in every campaign from 1912 to 1940. He only campaigned for the office seriously in 1936 when he was already seventy-one years old, losing the nomination to Governor Alf Landon of Kansas. He was offered the Vice Presidency a number of

times, but declined it , explaining: "I would rather be Borah than President"--when reminded that it was a possible stepping stone to the White House.

Borah was one of the most magnificent orators in American political history. He was a superb actor with a rich, full voice and a great command of the English language. Whenever he spoke in the Senate, the chamber and the galleries were packed.

Another member of the progressive Republican Senate bloc, Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, recalled in an interview with the author that on numerous occasions when he would go to Borah's office, he would find the Idaho Senator sitting there reading aloud from the classics. Nye believed this was the secret of Borah's success and eloquence with the English language.

Newspapermen found Borah a favorite subject. He willingly held interviews in his Senate office, and enjoyed the attention given to him by reporters. He was universally considered as a kind, honest and sincere man. He lived a very simple life with his wife in Washington. They had no children and never went out socially or entertained guests.

The Idaho Senator was a man of imposing presence, with a leonine head, a majestic mane and rugged features. He had the appearance of an elder statesman early in his career. His clothes were dark and loosely cut, giving him a baggy appearance, and they were often unpressed. He wore dilapidated hats and showed indifference to money. He ate little,

avoiding liquor, coffee, tea and tobacco all his life, and spent most of his leisure reading books.

Despite his long years in the Senate, Borah was not considered an effective leader. He avoided routine duties and committee work and often abandoned causes without carrying them through. Another progressive, George Norris of Nebraska, once said that Borah would shoot until he saw the whites of the enemies' eyes. The Idaho senator tended to be big on rhetoric but small on action. In his long life as a senator, there was no important piece of legislation which he could call his own, although he exerted great influence over many members of Congress.

Borah had a reputation as a great spokesman for the Constitution, but he refused to stretch that document to fit the twentieth century. He was a nineteenth century liberal in his views, believing that one could end monopoly or war simply by passing a law. Despite his limitations, Borah was respected and admired and could, if aroused enough over an issue, be one of the most effective spokesmen on it. In addition to his service on the Foreign Relations Committee, Borah was also a leading member of the Education and Labor, and the Judiciary Committees of the Senate.

George William Norris [4] of Nebraska, the acknowledged

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[4] Biographical material on Norris is extensive and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the

dean of the progressive group after the death of Robert LaFollette, Sr. in 1925, was born on a farm in Sandusky County, Ohio on July 11, 1861. His father died when he was a child and his only brother was killed during the Civil War. Norris experienced poverty in his youth and had to help support his widowed mother and sisters. He attended local schools as well as Baldwin University in Berea, Ohio and Valparaiso University in Indiana, studied law, but became a school teacher for two years. He was admitted to the bar in 1883.

In 1885 Norris moved to Beaver City, Nebraska, where he practiced law and entered politics, winning elections as prosecuting attorney of Furnas County in 1892 and district judge from 1895 to 1902. Having moved to the town of McCook

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American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1393; Richard Lowitt's article in Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), Supplement 3, Volume 23, pp. 557-561; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for September 3, 1944; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 3, pp. 43-69; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, Chapter 8, pp. 214-216; the American Mercury article on "The Progressives of the Senate," pp. 390-391; Richard L. Neuberger and Stephen B. Kahn, Integrity: The Life of George W. Norris (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1937); Richard L. Neuberger, "A Politician Unafraid: George W. Norris, Senator From Nebraska", Harper's Magazine, CLXXIII (October 1936), 540-550; Alfred Lief, Democracy's Norris: The Biography of a Lonely Crusade (New York: Stackpole Sons, 1939); Richard Lowitt, George W. Norris: The Making of a Progressive, 1861-1912 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 1963) and George W. Norris: The Persistence of a Progressive, 1913-1933 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Norman L. Zucker, George W. Norris: Gentle Knight of American Democracy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966). The Nebraska Senator also wrote his memoirs shortly before his death: Fighting Liberal: The Autobiography of George W. Norris (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945).

in 1900, Norris advanced in politics in 1902 when he was elected to the House of Representatives, where he remained for five terms until his election to the Senate in 1912. He was re-elected to the upper house four times and served thirty years, until his defeat for re-election in 1942 when he was eighty-one years old.

As a member of the House from 1903-1913, Norris tended to be a regular Republican until the battle over the powers of Speaker Joseph Cannon of Illinois broke out in 1909. Under the prevailing House rules, the Speaker had the power to select the members of the Rules Committee, which determined the calendar on legislation. This gave him tremendous authority over the activities of the House of Representatives. Norris led the attack on the Speaker, and succeeded in restricting his power. He now gained a reputation as an insurgent and entered the progressive camp.

In 1912 Norris supported Theodore Roosevelt over William Howard Taft for the Presidency and was elected to the Senate as a progressive Republican. His major committee assignments during his years in the Senate were the Agriculture and Forestry and the Judiciary Committees. During the Wilson administration, Norris became prominent as one of six members of the Senate to oppose the armed ship bill and American entrance into World War I. President Wilson condemned Norris, Robert LaFollette, Sr., and the other members of the group, and Norris suffered for a time a loss in public esteem. However, during the years of neutrality

legislation in the 1930's, he was hailed as a prophet for his World War I stand. Norris also opposed the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations and acquired a reputation as an isolationist, which remained with him until his switch to support of Franklin D. Roosevelt's foreign policy.

During the Republican administrations of the 1920's, Norris became the symbol of the progressive movement on the national level. Always a vigorous fighter for farm relief legislation, he supported the McNary-Haugen plan vetoed by President Coolidge. During this decade, Norris began his long fight for conservation and the development of hydro-electric power sites and public control of utilities, in what came to be known as the Muscle Shoals project. Presidents Coolidge and Hoover vetoed bills for public power, and only with the advent of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the White House in 1933 did Norris's program become a reality as the Tennessee Valley Authority and later the Rural Electrification Administration.

During the 1920's, Norris also promoted the rights of labor unions and the average working man, and he successfully sponsored the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932, which banned the use of injunctions in labor disputes and the yellow dog contract. Norris also became interested in the cause of good government and thus opposed the use of politics in the civil service. He worked for more efficiency in government through promotion of the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution, which changed the presidential inauguration date from March 4

to January 20 and ended the lame duck session of Congress. He also promoted the concept of a unicameral legislature in his home state of Nebraska, which adopted the idea during the 1930's.

Norris became more of a political independent as the years went by. In 1928 he supported Al Smith, because of Hoover's opposition to public power. In 1930, the Republican National Committee tried to defeat him by running an obscure grocer with the same name in the party primary. This trick failed to retire Norris, but embittered the progressive Republicans against Hoover. In 1932 Norris endorsed Roosevelt and supported him again in 1936, 1940 and 1944, agreeing to lead a progressive campaign organization in support of his candidacy in the first three elections. In his 1936 re-election campaign, Norris finally made a complete break with the Republican party, running as an Independent in a three-way race but achieving victory against great odds. By this time the Nebraska senator had achieved a well deserved reputation as the great non-partisan leader.

The blossoming of the New Deal was Norris's greatest triumph. He became very close to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Approving of most of the New Deal initiatives, Norris still reserved the right to criticize the administration where he felt it was going astray, as in the case of politics in the Post Office Department under James A. Farley. He saw the New Deal as the culmination of his dreams of social justice for the average man and woman in America. He switched to

support of Roosevelt's foreign policy as the threat of Fascism became more apparent during the late 1930's, thus changing his lifelong isolationism. Franklin D. Roosevelt never had a better friend in the Senate than George Norris. The nature of the New Deal cannot be completely understood without an examination of the relationship between the wealthy, patrician New Yorker and the modest, rural Nebraskan.

After his unexpected defeat in 1942, the shocked and embittered "gentle knight of American Democracy" retired to McCook, Nebraska, and wrote his memoirs and some articles on postwar problems for liberal periodicals. He had spent half his life in national politics and acquired the reputation as one of the outstanding legislators in American history.

No senator took a more serious view of his responsibilities than did Norris. Earnest, hardworking, pragmatic and grave, he usually was among the last to leave the Senate Office Building each evening. He was a vigorous fighter for human rights and governmental reform, but he was always considered to be fair to his opponents in his speeches on the floor of the Senate, dealing in facts rather than in personalities. A simple, humble man who avoided social engagements and preferred quiet evenings at home with his wife and children, Norris was acknowledged as the unofficial leader of Senate progressives. He tended to be a lone worker, refusing to act as an aggressive leader. His personality and oratory did not attract attention, and he often went through long

periods of time in a morbid and depressed state if things were not working well for him.

Norris's career contradicted the usual belief that one becomes more conservative as he grows older. He was as youthful in spirit and ideas as the youngest member of the progressive Republican Senate bloc, Robert M. LaFollette, Jr. of Wisconsin. His critics thought him a visionary and some considered him as a radical, fanatic or anarchist. But one never doubted his complete sincerity, integrity and unpretentiousness. Not a profound thinker, he added little that was new to American political thought. His philosophy included portions of the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian heritage of agrarianism and the common man, the moralistic conceptions of the Social Gospel and Christian Socialism, and the propositions of the Populist movement. More than any other progressive Republican except maybe Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., Norris was willing to accept the growing urbanism in America, as evidenced by his concern for labor and for New Deal urban programs. He was an advocate of the positive state, but also a believer in the agrarian myth. Norris held a vision of the future America at the same time that he spoke for the virtues of the past.

In appearance, Norris resembled a small town lawyer or businessman. A stockily built man of medium stature, he had a crop of silvery hair by the time of the New Deal, which crowned a high forehead, although his eyebrows were still dark. He had gentle blue eyes but heavy drooping lids

and a heavily lined face with a sad expression. He wore very plain clothes, usually a dark sack suit, starched shirts and stringy bow ties.

Hiram Warren Johnson [5] of California, the third of the progressive Republicans to come to the Senate, was born in Sacramento, California, on September 2, 1866, the son of Grove Laurence Johnson, a corporation lawyer and Congressman, and Annie De Montfredy Johnson. He went to public school in Sacramento and graduated from Sacramento High School. After graduation, he studied shorthand and worked in his father's office as a stenographer while studying law. After a year's experience, he entered the University of California at Berkeley, remaining until his junior year when he married Minnie L. McNeal and then dropped out of college.

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[5] Biographical material on Johnson is adequate but not extensive. It includes: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1126; George E. Mowry's article in Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), Supplement 3, Volume 23, pp. 393-398; Current Biography 1941, pp. 439-441; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for August 7, 1945; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 5, pp. 96-122; George E. Mowry, The California Progressives (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951); Spencer C. Olin, Jr., California's Prodigal Sons: Hiram Johnson and the Progressives, 1911-1917 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968); Irving McKee, "The Background and Early Career of Hiram Warren Johnson, 1866-1910," Pacific Historical Review, XIX (February 1950), 17-30; Clifford B. Liljekvist, "Senator Hiram Johnson: His Career in California and National Politics," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1953; Richard Coke Lower, "Hiram Johnson and the Progressive Denouement, 1910-20," Ph. D. Dissertation,

In 1888 Johnson was admitted to the California bar and began the practice of law in Sacramento with his father and brother. Acquiring a reputation as an outstanding trial lawyer, he achieved fame at the turn of the century when he drove gamblers out of the capital city of California. He then campaigned for a reform mayor for Sacramento, delivering vituperative speeches which had the effect of electing his candidate in a landslide vote.

In 1902 Johnson and his brother moved to San Francisco, and after a short time as partners, he set up his own law practice, becoming one of the best jury lawyers on the Pacific Coast. He became involved in politics also, fighting the state's political machine as the champion of civic virtue and the spokesman of public protest. He became a member of the staff of prosecuting attorneys investigating the bribery cases which involved leading officials of the San Francisco city government and the public utility corporations in the city. In 1908 he became the chief prosecuting attorney of San Francisco.

In 1910 Johnson campaigned for Governor of California, touring the state in a little red automobile. He ran on a platform of clean reform government and a pledge to drive the Southern Pacific Railroad, of which his own father was

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University of California at Berkeley, 1969; Peter Gerard Boyle, "The Study of an Isolationist: Hiram Johnson," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1970; Howard A. DeWitt, "Hiram W. Johnson and American Foreign Policy, 1917-1941," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1972.

an attorney, out of politics. Successful in his gubernatorial campaign, he appointed a group of reformers as his advisers and proceeded to give California a reform administration from 1911 to 1917. Under Johnson's direction such achievements as a direct primary, referendum, recall, shorter ballot, woman suffrage, prison reform, workman's compensation law, shorter hours of work for women, and regulation of railroads and public utilities were enacted into law.

In 1912 Johnson became a figure of national importance as the Vice Presidential candidate with Theodore Roosevelt on the Bull Moose party ticket. By 1916 he had acquired enough influence to determine the presidential outcome in California, which decided the election. Charles Evans Hughes, the Republican candidate, came to California to campaign and forgot to meet with the governor. Johnson, angered by this slight, withheld his support from Hughes, thus giving the state and the election to Woodrow Wilson.

In 1916 Johnson was elected to the Senate and served five terms. In the last two terms, he had practically no opposition for re-election and received all major party nominations. Overall, he served twenty-eight years in the Senate until his death in August, 1945. In the Senate, he acquired a reputation as a nay-sayer, one of his rare positive accomplishments being the sponsorship of the bill for a federal Boulder Dam (1928). Conservatives distrusted Hiram Johnson, but many liberals considered him increasingly reactionary as the years went by. Both liberals and

conservatives regarded him as a complex mixture of revolutionary and standpatter. Everyone agreed that he would throw himself heart and soul, mind and body into any cause he believed in and against anything he hated.

As a leading member of the Senate, Johnson was a potential candidate for President every four years. He was offered the Vice-Presidential nomination by Warren G. Harding in 1920, but declined, thus losing his best chance for the Presidency. He was an active campaigner for the Presidential nomination in 1924, but could not defeat the incumbent Calvin Coolidge for the nomination. Some urged his candidacy in 1932 and though he despised Hoover, he declined to run. The California Senator was one of the biggest boosters of Franklin D. Roosevelt during the latter's first White House term, but turned bitterly against him after that. He acquired a reputation as a bitter, sour, cantankerous old man out of tune with his times.

Johnson exerted the greatest influence during his years in the Senate in the field of foreign affairs. A lifelong isolationist as a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, although a strong supporter of a large navy as a member of the Naval Affairs Committee (a major difference between him and a number of other progressive Republicans), Johnson fought valiantly against foreign entanglements. He opposed the League of Nations after World War I, the World Court, and repeal of neutrality legislation after the outbreak of World War II. He sponsored the Johnson Act, which

placed a federal ban on loans to governments in default of their World War I debts.

Short and stocky with a round and somewhat florid face, Johnson rarely smiled and was often depicted in photographs as in a fighting mood, with a clenched fist held out in front of him. He was an extremely emotional speaker in Senate debate and on the stump, effective at dramatizing issues and attracting audiences. Colleagues found him sensitive and thin-skinned. He was known as a person who could bear a grudge for a lifetime. Senator Borah once commented that the major difference between himself and the California senator was that he dealt with issues from the point of principle, while Johnson dealt with them from the point of view of personalities.

Johnson was extremely moralistic, as many progressives tended to be, and he exhibited much evidence of inflexibility. Once he had adopted a position, he would adhere to it with all his energy, often despite later contrary evidence. He depicted his stand on an issue as the side of the forces of light while his opposition represented the forces of darkness. Many contemporaries considered him as self-centered and egotistical and cynical, without loyalty to his friends and supporters. He had few close friends in the Senate, preferring to be a bloc of one. Extremely sarcastic in his private correspondence toward fellow progressive Republicans, he had a special dislike of Senator Borah, who always received more newspaper and periodical coverage,

although the two Senators were often considered as a team in many of their fights. The California senator, who wore glasses and was usually dressed in a blue serge suit with white piping on his vest, was a supremely independent man, incapable of compromise.

Charles Linza McNary [6] of Oregon, the fourth member of the progressive Republican bloc to enter the Senate, was appointed to fill a vacancy, caused by the death of Harry Lane, in May 1917. He was born on June 12, 1874, the ninth of ten children, on a farm near Salem, Oregon, which had been first tilled by his grandfather, a migrant from Kentucky. His parents died while he was still very young, and his eldest sister reared a family of nine children. After finishing his secondary education in Oregon, McNary entered Leland Stanford University in 1896, but left after two years.

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[6] Biographical material on McNary is limited and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1314; Earl Pomeroy's article in Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), Supplement 3, Volume 23, pp. 496-497; Current Biography 1940, pp. 542-544; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for February 26, 1944; Walter K. Roberts, "The Political Career of Charles Linza McNary, 1924-1944," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1954; Roger Taylor Johnson, "Charles L. McNary and the Republican Party During Prosperity and Depression," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967.

In 1898 he was admitted to the practice of law in Oregon and began work in the law office of his brother John, where he remained until 1913. He held various local public offices and from 1908 to 1913, he also served as dean of the law department at Williamette University in Salem. In 1913 he was appointed a justice of the Supreme Court of Oregon to fill an unexpired term. Defeated for election to the court by one vote in 1915, he took on the responsibilities of chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. Then, he was appointed to the Senate in May, 1917, was elected to the seat in 1918, and won re-election four times, serving until his death in February, 1944.

During his years in the Senate, McNary won respect from his colleagues, as well as from journalists and the public. A moderate progressive in his political views, he was yet liked and trusted by the most extreme conservatives in the Senate. The Oregon senator managed to maintain his party regularity. As with other progressives from the West and Midwest, he could be "radical" in agricultural and public power proposals while being a party regular on other issues.

In 1933 when the Republicans became the minority in the Senate, his colleagues elected McNary minority leader. He was one of the most effective Republican Senate leaders in many years. Mild and pleasant in his manner, he tended to be always cheerful and rarely lost his temper. He proved to be a skillful parliamentarian, an able party strategist,

and a realistic conciliator, acting as a bridge between conservatives and progressives within the party. He played a significant role in keeping the Republican party a viable group in the Senate during its nadir in the 1930's. He remained the minority leader until his death.

McNary avoided oratory on the Senate floor, preferring to use his influence in the Senate cloakrooms and in behind-the-scenes negotiations. Advocating support of the New Deal when he felt it dealt with the nation's economic problems realistically, he played an effective role in opposition to Roosevelt's programs in his second term, especially in regard to the Supreme Court reorganization proposal in 1937. He counseled his own party to adopt more liberal attitudes.

The respect and admiration which his party had for him was demonstrated by his nomination as Vice-Presidential candidate to run with Wendell Willkie in the 1940 presidential campaign. The Oregon senator performed his duties as a candidate in an admirable fashion and then returned to his leadership role in the Senate after the defeat of the Republican ticket. President Roosevelt's liking for McNary saved him from Democratic attack during the campaign.

McNary was chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee from 1926 to 1933, during the years that he pushed the McNary-Haugen plan, which would have permitted the government to sign contracts with grain growers to sell abroad at lower prices than in the home market, and to receive recompense through an equalization fee paid out of

the Treasury. He actively sponsored major legislation to protect and preserve American forests and worked diligently for Oregon, gaining federal aid for roads and bridges, for the improvement of harbors and waterways, and for many of the hydroelectric projects of the Northwest. In 1922, he joined George Norris in favoring public development of Muscle Shoals. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, he supported development of the Tennessee, Colorado, and Columbia Rivers.

The Oregon senator presented a tall, slender, urbane figure on the floor of the Senate, with his sandy hair and impeccable dress. In private life, Senator McNary was married twice, the second time in 1923 after his first wife had died. He was the father of an adopted daughter, and he owned a farm in Oregon to which he returned after each congressional session.

Arthur Capper [7] of Kansas, elected to the Senate in 1918, served five complete terms, retiring in 1949.

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[7] Biographical material on Capper is limited but adequate and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 660; Current Biography 1946, pp. 91-93; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for December 20, 1951; Homer E. Socolofsky, Arthur Capper: Publisher, Politician, and Philanthropist (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1962); article by William Allen White on Capper in Kansas City Star, April 22, 1942, published in the Congressional Record, Appendix, April 27, 1942, 1559-1560 by Representative U.S. Guyer and found in the Victor Murdock Papers, Library of Congress, 1941-1945 box.

Born in Garnett, Kansas, on July 14, 1865, of Quaker parents, Capper attended the local schools and learned the printing trade while working on the Garnett Journal. After he graduated from high school in 1884, he worked as a typesetter on the leading newspaper in the Kansas capital, the Topeka Daily Capital. He was promoted to the positions of reporter and city editor within a few years.

In 1891, Capper moved to New York and worked for the New York Tribune for a year, returning in 1892 to the Daily Capital as its correspondent in Washington. Fascinated by the newspaper business, Capper bought a weekly Topeka newspaper, merged it with another paper, and created a semimonthly which he called the Kansas Farmer. This was the beginning of a publishing empire, with emphasis on agricultural news. Capper Publications published the Topeka Daily Capital, Capper's Farmer and Capper's Weekly among other publications during its publisher's lifetime. Capper became the biggest publisher of farm journals in the nation, producing magazines in Missouri, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, as well as Kansas. He also came to control two radio stations, WIBW and KCKN. With his newspapers, magazines, and radio stations, Capper acquired tremendous influence in the farm belt.

Capper first entered public life in 1910, when he was appointed to the presidency of the Board of Regents of Kansas State Agricultural College, holding that position until 1913. During these years, with other Republican progressives

such as William Allen White, Senator Joseph L. Bristow, and Congressman Victor Murdock, he fought against boss rule and railroad control in Kansas. In 1912 he was the Republican candidate for Governor of Kansas, losing by only twenty-nine votes. In 1914 he was elected Governor and was re-elected in 1916.

During his four years as Governor, laws were passed to centralize the administration of education in Kansas; to create an industrial welfare and a highway commission; to establish vocational education, a child hygiene department, and a budget system; and to provide compensation for persons injured in some industries. He also started agricultural clubs for boys and girls which acquired his name.

Capper was elected to the Senate by a large majority in November, 1918 and never had serious opposition for re-election. His reputation was that of a regular party man with progressive leanings. William Allen White wrote of him: "His record is progressive but he has friends in both factions, dear friends whom he consults often and who respect him for his honesty and courage no matter whether he follows their advice or not." Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana told the author that he had considered Capper to be a mild progressive, who did not always go along with the Old Guard, but kept in close contact with them. Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota expressed the belief that Capper had definitely been one of the progressives, but was a less aggressive battler for progressivism than some of the others.

Journalists pointed out that he adhered to the party line more than any other member of the group with the possible exception of McNary.

During his long years on Capitol Hill, Capper was generally considered one of the most conscientious legislators, missing only a few roll calls and quorum calls during his thirty years in the Senate. He was a leading member of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Forestry, Foreign Relations, Finance and the District of Columbia. He was one of the best friends that the District of Columbia ever had in Congress. But agriculture remained his chief concern. His book, The Agricultural Bloc (1922) set forth the aims of the bi-partisan farm bloc. He sponsored a mass of farm legislation during the 1920's. When the New Deal began, Capper went along with much of the farm legislation as the best hope for his state and section.

Capper also became very involved in foreign affairs through his membership on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Basically fearful of international commitments, Capper fought against American entry into the League of Nations in 1920. A decade later, he proposed a resolution that would implement the Kellogg-Briand Pact by an economic embargo on nations which violated the treaty. He favored enactment of neutrality laws during the 1930's and proposed a referendum before war could be declared.

Capper was married to Florence Crawford. The couple never had children, but they took an active part in the

social life of the nation's capital. Capper was impressive neither physically nor as an orator. He was described by contemporaries as being five feet eight inches tall and weighing one hundred twenty five pounds. He was a kind, gentle, mild mannered man, who was very popular among the people of his home state. He had a folksy, modest, self-effacing nature. Having a hearing disability, he spoke mostly from manuscript in the Senate. He was not one of the major Senate orators, being content to speak out with brief remarks centered on the issues of agriculture and foreign affairs. But he was known for his independent, free-thinking nature.

Peter Norbeck [8] of South Dakota, the sixth member of the progressive group to enter the Senate, was elected in 1920. He was born on August 27, 1870, on a farm in Clay County in the southeastern part of Dakota Territory, the oldest of seven children of a Swedish born father and Norwegian mother. His father was a Lutheran minister and was elected to public office twice, as a member of the

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[8] Biographical material on Norbeck is limited but adequate and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 1392-1393; Gilbert C. Fite's article in Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), Supplement 2, Volume 2, pp. 491-492; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for December 21, 1936; Gilbert C. Fite, Peter Norbeck: Prairie Statesman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1948).

Dakota territorial legislature in 1871 and the South Dakota state legislature from 1889-1891. Norbeck attended the public schools and the University of South Dakota at Vermillion for a couple of terms, but he never received a degree.

In his early adult years, Norbeck engaged in agricultural work and began work in 1895 as a contractor and driller of artesian wells for water, oil and gas. In 1898 he formed a partnership with Charles and Oscar Nicholson, and in a short period of years Norbeck and Nicholson were the leading well-drilling business in South Dakota. Norbeck established the headquarters of his successful business at Redfield, South Dakota, which became his home away from Washington, D.C. in his later years. He had become one of the most prosperous businessmen in his state by 1908 when he decided to enter the field of politics.

Norbeck identified himself with the progressive or insurgent political faction that was emerging in the Midwest at that time. He was elected to the South Dakota state senate in 1908 and served there for three terms. In the 1912 presidential election, he first supported LaFollette and then Roosevelt over Taft. In 1914 he was elected Lieutenant-Governor, and he played a key role in the adoption of a state bank-deposit guarantee law. He became a supporter of the Non-Partisan League, which was formed in 1915, and the backing of this radical farmers' group assisted him in his successful campaign for Governor of South Dakota in 1916 and for

re-election in 1918.

His four years in the governorship were noted for their assistance to the state's farmers. Some of his achievements included legislation providing for rural credits, for a state-owned coal mine and cement plant, and for hail insurance on farm crops. Also, a state highway department was set up and a road building program begun. It is said that as governor he fought for and signed more laws in the interest of the common people than any other governor in the United States in the same period.

Norbeck was elected to the Senate in 1920 and served until his death on December 20, 1936. The single line he allowed to be printed as his biography in the Congressional Directory stated that he was a Theodore Roosevelt Republican. His political views often exasperated the Old Guard, but many progressive Republicans considered him conservative. Many politicians and journalists however, counted him as a member of the progressive bloc, and he often allied himself with them, expecially on issues related to the welfare of the farmer. He was regarded in the Senate as a cool and level-headed debater, although adverse to personal publicity and flamboyant showmanship. He was easily the most influential Republican in his state, and his continuous struggle for the betterment of agriculture assured him of easy re-election in 1926 and 1932, in the latter year bucking the tide against a Roosevelt and Democratic landslide.

Norbeck devoted most of his time to farm relief,

agricultural reforms and conservation projects. He worked for the McNary-Haugen bills and for more liberal rural credit legislation. Often criticizing his own party on the ground that it neglected the farm problem, he insisted more than ever after the depression hit in 1929 that the federal government must aid the farmer to maintain prices and income. During 1932, as chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee of the Senate, he investigated the New York Stock Exchange.

Norbeck was not a great public speaker, and he could not be considered a progressive leader in the Senate. During the years of the New Deal, he was often ill and missed many days of debate. But he turned out to be a willing supporter of the New Deal when he thought it was of aid to the farmer. Overall, he many be classified as a moderate progressive. In foreign affairs, he was basically an isolationist.

Norbeck was a distinguished looking gentleman, six feet tall and weighing about two hundred twenty five pounds, with a bushy mustache, thick iron gray hair, broad and powerful shoulders and a reddish complexion. He had a pronounced Norwegian accent and was a plain dresser, usually wearing a dark grey or blue suit, striped or plain patterned shirt and conservative tie.

James Couzens [9] of Michigan entered the Senate by

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[9] Biographical material on Couzens is adequate and

appointment in November, 1922. He was born on August 26, 1872, in Chatham, Ontario, the eldest of five children of English immigrants. His father worked in a grocery store and later in a soap factory. Eventually, he set up his own soap factory, but the Couzens family lived modestly for many years.

Although young Couzens had a relatively humble background, he showed marked self-assurance from an early age. After attending the public schools of Chatham and two years at a business college, Couzens moved to Detroit in 1890, where in due course he went to work for the Malcolmson Fuel Company as an assistant bookkeeper and office worker for seventy-five dollars a month. The owner, Alex Malcolmson, put up the largest share of the original capital investment in the new Ford Motor Company. Couzens assisted Malcolmson in enlisting other investors and decided to put in $2,500 himself.

Couzens soon became the business manager of the Ford Motor Company. From 1909-1915, the company was practically a partnership of Ford and Couzens, but the latter was dominant in the business affairs section. Couzens suggested the

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includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 742; Harry Barnard's article in Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), Supplement 2, Volume 2, pp. 125-127; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for October 23, 1936; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 10, pp. 221-244; Harry Barnard, Independent Man: The Life of Senator James Couzens (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

five-dollar-a-day wage plan adopted by Ford in 1914, although Ford received the credit. In 1915 Couzens resigned as business manager due to tension between him and Ford over the latter's political activities and Couzen's dissatisfaction with the automobile business. He controlled eleven percent of the company's stock in 1915, and when he sold out his stock in 1919, he received nearly thirty million dollars for his original $2,500 investment.

While a partner with Ford, Couzens had already shown his interest in a career of public service. He was chairman of the Detroit Street Railway Commission from 1913 to 1915 and battled unsuccessfully for municipal ownership of the street car lines. In September 1916, he was appointed Police Commissioner of Detroit. His vigorous law enforcement policy alienated many upper class citizens, but made him a favorite of the ordinary citizens. In 1918 Couzens was elected mayor. An independent mayor, he achieved an unprecedented program of public improvements, including municipal ownership of the transportation system. His programs were denounced as socialistic by some, but he was easily re-elected to a second term in 1921.

Couzens was appointed in November 1922 to fill a Senate vacancy brought about by the resignation of Truman M. Newberry. He was elected to two full terms in 1924 and 1930, dying near the end of his second full term in October, 1936. Couzens was one of the wealthiest men in public life, but he was a "scab" millionaire rather than a "regular" millionaire.

During his years in public life, he had many fights and many of them were at the expense of rich men or big business interests.

Couzens soon allied himself with the Republican bloc of progressives in the Senate led by LaFollette. He opposed the Harding and Coolidge tax program and became involved in a long controversy with Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon. He emerged early as a leading advocate of "soak the rich" high taxation for the wealthy and low taxes, if any, on the person of average income. He confirmed his position as an independent Republican by opposing prohibition and supporting the development of Muscle Shoals, later to be enacted under the New Deal. He was also a pioneer advocate of the Federal Communications Commission. The Michigan senator also became somewhat notorious in the eyes of his colleagues when he declared in 1927 that United States Senators were overpaid and underworked!

During the 1920's and 1930's, Couzens was very active as a philanthropist. He donated millions for the health and welfare of children, including the establishment of the Children's Fund of Michigan, to which he endowed twelve million dollars. He found himself unable to support Hoover's policies toward the depression, believing it the duty of the federal government to act aggressively in the economic emergency. He became one of the stronger supporters of the aims of the New Deal and was appointed by President Roosevelt as a delegate to the London World Economic Conference of 1933.

Couzens was always noted for his independence, brusqueness, and unpredictability. He came across to his colleagues, even among the progressive group, as a bluff, blunt and forceful personality, who would ride over any opposition that was put in his way. He was a hard man to deal with. Therefore, he was not able to be a leader of the progressives in the Senate, but he could be counted upon to speak out on the issues, although sometimes disagreeing in public with other members of the group.

The Michigan senator was a leading member of the Banking and Currency, Finance and the Interstate Commerce Committees. He was described as being of stocky build, steely blue eyes, frosty face and peppery nature. The bespectacled Couzens was considered the "grizzly bear" of the Senate. He was hardly a man of tact and compromise, functioning best when working alone. His basic motivation was his passion for social justice and economic equality. In private life, Couzens was married to Margaret Ann Manning in 1898 and they had six children, four of whom survived him. His son Frank was elected Mayor of Detroit in 1933.

The 1922 elections brought Lynn Joseph Frazier [10] of North Dakota to the Senate. He was born on December 21,

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[10] Biographical material on Frazier is very limited and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 913; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, Washington Post and

1874, on a small farm near Medford in Steele County, Minnesota, of parents of pioneer stock who had migrated from Maine. While still very young, Frazier's family settled on a farm near Hoople, North Dakota, where he lived for most of his life. He attended country schools and was graduated from Mayville State Normal School in 1895 and from the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks in 1902.

Frazier became a farmer and a school teacher and was associated with various business enterprises in his early adulthood. He drifted into local politics as a member of the township board and chairman of the board of directors of the local school district. He enlarged his business interests as officer of a grain elevator company and a home improvement company.

When the Non-Partisan League was launched in 1915, Frazier identified himself with it and became its candidate for Governor in the Republican primary. He won the nomination and was elected by a large vote. He received an easy majority for re-election in 1918. Elected to a third term in 1921, he was removed in October of that year by a

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Bismarck (N. D.) Tribune for January 13, 1947; Robert L. Morlan, Political Prairie Fire: The Non Partisan League, 1915-1922 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); George Creel, "The Old Homesteader," Collier's XCVIII (October 3, 1936), 22; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, Chapter 8, p. 203; the American Mercury article on "The Progressives of the Senate," pp. 389-390; two page memorandum on Senator Frazier's career in Philip LaFollette Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Box 73 (Miscellaneous File 1936).

recall election arranged by the enemies of the Non-Partisan League.

As governor, Frazier was responsible for such reforms as the establishment of an industrial commission with broad powers to manage utilities and industries, the creation of the Bank of North Dakota, and the passage of such laws as a minimum wage and maximum hours for women, disability compensation, inspection of coal mines, limitation of the issuance of injunctions, and state income and inheritance taxes.

Frazier served in the Senate for three terms from 1922 to 1940, when he lost renomination to Governor William Langer and was thus forcibly retired. During his eighteen years in the Senate, he was known as a strong backer of farm legislation. He was the sponsor of the Frazier-Lemke bills, dealing with farm mortgages, during the 1930's. He is most remembered for his activities in behalf of this cause, along with his support of LaFollette in 1924, an action for which he was read out of the Republican party temporarily in 1925.

Frazier's first and only major interest in the Senate was in aiding the farmers of his North Dakota constituency. He also favored prohibition, and he promoted a cash bonus for soldiers of the First World War. An isolationist in foreign affairs, he consistently opposed army and navy appropriations and co-sponsored a constitutional amendment to require a referendum before taking part in any war abroad.

The North Dakota senator deferred to other members of the bloc in debates and discussions on domestic and

foreign issues, devoting most of his speechmaking to farm issues and the cause of isolationism. He was not considered a brilliant senator, but his instincts and leanings were definitely progressive. Frazier was an earnest, sincere, humble man who let the initiative and drive for progressive causes come from others. He shunned the limelight and was considered a "plodder in the ranks". His whole life was farming, and he took an active role on the Senate Committee for Agriculture and Forestry, his major committee assignment. A plain, ordinary-looking man of the Great Plains, Frazier did not pursue an active social life in the nation's capital, preferring to spend his time with his wife and children.

Henrik Shipstead[11] of Minnesota became the only Farmer-Labor member of the Senate in 1922. He was born on January 8, 1881, at Burbank in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, of Norwegian immigrant parents who had migrated to America in 1865. He was one of a family of twelve children.

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[11] Biographical material on Shipstead is limited and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1596; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for June 27, 1960; Martin Ross, Shipstead of Minnesota (Chicago: Packard and Company, 1940); Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 8, pp. 171-195; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, Chapter 8, pp. 206-209; the American Mercury article on "The Progressives of the Senate," pp. 391-393; Sister Mary Rene Lorentz, "Henrik Shipstead: Minnesota Independent, 1923-1946," Ph. D. Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1963; two long memorandums on Shipstead's background and career in Henrik Shipstead Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 1.

He attended the public schools at New London, Minnesota, and the state normal school at St. Cloud, acquiring a reputation as an excellent student who was ready to debate and state his opinions while still very young. He grew up on a farm, but used every spare moment that he could find away from farm chores to read.

Shipstead took a degree in dentistry at Northwestern University in 1903. Moving to Glenwood, Minnesota, he practiced dentistry between 1904 and 1920, but found time to become involved in public affairs. He served as a member of the charter commission in Glenwood in 1911 and 1912, was Mayor of the town from 1911 to 1913, and a member of the state house of representatives in 1917. Shipstead also was an insurgent member of the Republican State Central Committee in 1914 and was nominated for a seat in Congress by the Non-Partisan League forces in 1918, losing to Andrew Volstead, author of the prohibition law. Defeated in the Republican primary of 1920 as the Non-Partisan League candidate for Governor, he withdrew from the Republican party to run as an independent, losing again. He now made the decision to join the more radical Farmer-Labor party.

In 1922 he was elected to the Senate on the Farmer-Labor ticket and was re-elected three times, serving until 1946. By the late 1930's, he had become disillusioned with the Farmer-Labor party, because of Communist influences within the leadership. He now switched back to the Republican party for his 1940 re-election campaign. The

author has considered him as part of the progressive Republican group due to his original membership in the Republican party, his return to that party by 1940, and his tendency to vote with the Republican caucus on organization of the Senate during the 1920's, when his vote made the difference in a nearly equally divided Senate of Democrats and Republicans.

Shipstead came into the Senate branded as a "wild-eyed radical". As the only member of his party in the Senate, he could obtain little patronage or exert little influence on legislative matters. But he was also not subject to party discipline. Thus, he was the epitome of the completely independent senator. He gained the cooperation and friendship of many senators of various political factions, and many of them supported him in his re-election campaigns despite party lines. He came to be considered as one of the most astute, best trained legislators in Congress and was respected as a brilliant parliamentarian, who knew how to get things done.

Shipstead, as a leading member of the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, was a major champion of agricultural interests. He was deeply concerned by the effects of railroads, banks and manufacturing interests on the farmers. He wished to curb these interests so as to equalize the advantages of all elements in American society, with special concern for the farmer and the working man. Shipstead supported the McNary-Haugen plan and also fought for a bill designed to halt misuse by the courts of the injunction in

labor disputes. This later became law as the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932. The Minnesota senator was a promoter of conservation of natural resources, giving strong support to the St. Lawrence Seaway project and the Rural Electrification Administration. He lent his support to much of the domestic legislation of the New Deal, but also opposed many of Roosevelt's initiatives.

It was in foreign affairs that Henrik Shipstead probably achieved his greatest fame. He was a die-hard isolationist all the way through the Second World War and adoption of the United Nations charter. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he exerted influence on the neutrality policies of the 1930's and opposed any American involvement in the League of Nations or World Court. He was unreservedly opposed to the use of American armed forces abroad and was equally adamant when any measure came up that would tend to violate the Monroe Doctrine.

Shipstead was criticized by some journalists as among the least militant of the progressives. He was considered too cautious and a dull speaker, and was accused of introducing meaningless resolutions for publicity purposes, since he would never exert himself for most causes. He was an impressive figure, with his six foot, one hundred ninety pound frame, burning eyes and steel gray hair.

Robert Marion LaFollette, Jr. [12] of Wisconsin, son of "Fighting Bob", the leading progressive of the first quarter of the century, was born on February 6, 1895, in Madison Wisconsin. The doctrines of the "Wisconsin Idea" formulated by the elder LaFollette were absorbed at a young age by Bob and his younger brother Philip, who was destined to be Governor of Wisconsin and the founder of the Wisconsin Progressive Party in 1934 and the National Progressives of America in 1938. The father's belief that "the will of the people shall be the law of the land" was instilled in the brothers by "Old Bob" and their mother Belle Case LaFollette, an exceptional person in her own right.

By the time young Bob was six years old, his father had become Governor of Wisconsin on a platform of freeing the state from control of railroad and lumber corporations. His childhood was spent listening to the conversations between his father, mother and other progressive leaders

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[12] Biographical material on LaFollette is quite extensive and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1184; Current Biography 1944, pp. 368-372; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post for February 25, 1953; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 7, pp. 148-170; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, Chapter 8, pp. 190-195; the American Mercury article on "The Progressives of the Senate," pp. 386-388; Edward N. Doan, The LaFollettes and the Wisconsin Idea (New York and Toronto: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1947); Roger T. Johnson, Robert M. LaFollette, Jr. and the Decline of the Progressive Party in Wisconsin (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1964); Jerold S. Auerbach, Labor and Liberty: The LaFollette Committee and the New Deal (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966); Mauritz A. Hallgren, "Young Bob LaFollette,"

who met at the executive mansion. In 1906, Old Bob went to Washington to serve in the Senate. His two sons were now exposed to national political issues. Young Bob spent much of his time listening to his father's participation in Senate debates. When he was seventeen, his father ran unsuccessfully for the Republican presidential nomination, with Theodore Roosevelt overshadowing him. He saw the enactment of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom legislation and the adoption of some of his father's liberal ideas by the Democratic administration.

Thus, young Bob had much exposure to the world of politics and public affairs, but it has been said that he never wanted to go into politics himself. He developed an interest in journalism and banking, attending the University of Wisconsin to study these subjects. He was considered an adequate but not bright student, but was well-known and liked by his fellow students and townspeople. He was elected

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The Nation, CXXXII (March 4, 1931), 235-237; Oswald Garrison Villard, "Issues and Men: Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., "The Nation, CXXXIX (August 8, 1934), 147; Francis Brown, "LaFollette: Ten Years a Senator," Current History, XLII (August 1935), 475-480; Donald Young (ed.) Adventure in Politics: The Memoirs of Philip LaFollette (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1970); Theodore Rosenof, "The Ideology of Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., "M.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1966; Alan E. Kent, "Portrait in Isolationism: The LaFollettes and Foreign Policy," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1957; personal interviews with Morris H. Rubin, August 6, 1970, Madison, Wisconsin and Mrs. Isen (Philip F.) LaFollette, August 6, 1970, Madison Wisconsin. There are a number of journal and magazine articles on the Progressive Party of Wisconsin and the National Progressives of America, as well as two dissertations on the Progressive Party, which will be cited in the appropriate place in the text.

freshman president, but at the end of his second year in college, he became critically ill with pneumonia.

Upon his recovery after many months of convalescence, young Bob decided not to return to the University of Wisconsin. Instead, he became his father's secretary and for a while the chief clerk to the Senate Committee on Manufactures. From 1921-1924, he was chairman of the Republican State Central Committee in Wisconsin. In 1924 he became the manager and chief spokesman for his father's campaign for the Presidency on the Progressive party ticket. Then, in June, 1925, the elder LaFollette died, leaving a vacancy in the Senate.

It was decided that young Bob had to carry on the LaFollette tradition by filling his father's seat in the upper chamber. Mrs. Belle Case LaFollette did not wish to run for the seat and Philip, who was more ambitious and interested in a political career than Bob, was two years below the minimum age of thirty required by the Constitution. Young Bob had just turned that age, so was eligible to run. He was easily elected to his father's seat in a special election and won re-election three times, in 1928, 1934 and 1940, serving in the Senate until the end of 1946, when he was defeated in the Republican Senate primary by Joseph R. McCarthy. LaFollette left the Republican party in 1934 and was elected to the Senate in that year and 1940 on the Progressive ticket. When the Progressive party's fortunes declined in Wisconsin during the early 1940's, he made the

fateful decision to rejoin the Republican party, but his defeat in the primary in 1946 ended his political career.

When LaFollette entered the Senate in September 1925, he was the youngest member of that body since Henry Clay. He declared to conservative Republicans that he was determined to carry on the insurgent role of his father, and was thus denied his choice of the better committee assignments. He spoke out early for the rights of labor and farmers and against the taxation policies of the Coolidge administration under Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon. He also spoke out against the World Court in Senate debate. Increasing his activity in 1927, LaFollette proposed an anti-third-term resolution for President Calvin Coolidge, attacked administration policy in Latin America and appealed for clemency for Sacco and Vanzetti. By 1928, he had established himself in the Senate as a national figure.

During 1928, LaFollette involved himself in two subjects which remained his key interest, taxation and unemployment. He proposed a national taxation system based upon the principle of ability to pay according to income. He also proposed a serious examination of the national unemployment problem even before the depression hit America in 1929. In the 1928 Republican convention, he presented a minority report which urged farm relief, public ownership of utilities, higher income taxes, aid to the St. Lawrence waterway project, prohibition of injunctions in labor disputes, and the curbing of stock market inflation. He later

attacked the Republican platform as reactionary and concentrated on his own re-election campaign, ignoring the Presidential candidacy of Herbert Hoover.

During the Hoover administration, LaFollette headed a coalition of Progressives and Democrats who fought the conservative Smoot-Hawley tariff bill. In 1930 he became a member of the Senate Finance Committee and began an attack on the inadequacy of federal relief measures for the unemployed during the depression. He now became a leader of the progressive bloc along with Borah, Norris and Johnson. Norris complimented him by saying he would be the new progressive leader of the future. LaFollette had not reached this state of prominence because of great oratorical ability, which he did not possess. Rather it was through hard work in committees and on the floor, his fairness in debate, and his mastery of the subjects under discussion.

Other than his political party and foreign affairs activities, LaFollette concentrated most of his attention in the next decade to three issues--unemployment, labor relations and taxation. In 1930 he compiled nationwide statistics on the unemployed and pushed for passage of relief and public works bills. He finally found a friend in this regard with the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Presidency. LaFollette found that his ideas were sometimes more advanced than those of the New Deal, as in regard to such proposals as a government owned central bank, public ownership of railroads, public development and operation of electric power,

and government ownership of munitions plants. In the field of labor relations, LaFollette became chairman in 1936 of a Senate subcommittee to investigate abuses of civil liberties and denials of the right of labor to bargain collectively. The LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee did a thorough investigation of its subject and provided much information and evidence upon which national and state labor legislation was based. Finally, in the field of taxation, LaFollette promoted the principle of taxation in accordance with ability to pay and achieved some victories. He was a leading member of the Education and Labor, Finance and Manufactures Committees in the Senate, as well as the Foreign Relations Committee, a subject in which he took great interest.

LaFollette took up the isolationist viewpoint of his father and many other progressives, opposing war plans and foreign entanglements. He fought against American entrance into the World Court, the repeal of the Neutrality laws of the 1930's, and for a constitutional amendment to provide for a national referendum on war, except in case of attack by foreign armed forces upon the Western Hemisphere.

In addition to his activities in the Senate and the progressive movement in Wisconsin, LaFollette also found time to be the owner of a weekly journal of opinion named The Progressive, the successor to LaFollette's Magazine, begun by his father in 1909. The magazine acquired its new name in 1929. In newspaper format, it contained information about the activities of the LaFollette brothers and other

progressive leaders and causes in Wisconsin and the nation, as well as editorials by the brothers detailing their views on the issues of national and state importance. The editor of The Progressive until 1940 was William T. Evjue, who was also editor of the leading newspaper in the Wisconsin capital, the Madison Capital Times.

In his last years in the Senate, LaFollette devoted himself to the subject of congressional reorganization, and was largely responsible for passage of a major congressional reform in 1946. However, his zeal in the cause prevented him from returning to Wisconsin to campaign extensively for the Republican Senate primary, which he lost by a few thousand votes to Joseph McCarthy.

LaFollette, unlike most of the other members of the progressive bloc, was concerned with the problems of an industrial society. He willingly abandoned the old-time liberalism for a more pragmatic, realistic analysis of modern capitalism. He avoided being doctrinaire or dogmatic and demonstrated a better understanding of economics than most of his colleagues. One of the most conscientious members of the Senate, he commanded universal respect, even from those who opposed his ideas with vehemence. He was considered the most constructive and cohesive force among the progressive bloc members, and his name was often bandied about as a possible future candidate for the White House.

LaFollette tended to be shy and reserved, while his brother Phil was more outgoing and volatile, like their

father had been. The Wisconsin senator tended to be less dynamic and more judicious than his father, and he was more willing to be conciliatory. He resembled his father in appearance and manner. He was slight of stature, below average height, and he tended toward rotundity with his stocky, powerful build. He possessed a round face, full lips and a fighting jaw, as well as deep black curly hair, which he kept slicked down instead of in the pompadour style of his father. He possessed his father's quick, nervous stride and his swift gestures. He was intensely serious and his speeches tended to be impersonal and factual. He often suffered from poor health, which contributed to his frequently depressed, melancholy nature. LaFollette had few hobbies, and lived quietly with his wife Rachel, formerly his Senate secretary, and their two sons.

Gerald Prentice Nye [13] of North Dakota came to the Senate by appointment in November, 1925, after the death of

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[13] Biographical material on Nye is quite extensive and includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1397; Current Biography 1941, pp. 618-621; obituaries in the New York Times and Washington Post for July 19, 1971; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 13, pp. 292-315; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, Chapter 8, pp. 197-200; the American Mercury article on "The Progressives of the Senate," p. 389; Wayne S. Cole, Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962); John E. Wiltz, In Search of Peace: The Senate Munitions Inquiry, 1934-1936 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963); Francis Brown, "The Crusading Mr. Nye," Current

Edwin F. Ladd. Born in Hortonville, Wisconsin, on December 19, 1892, to Irwin R. Nye and Phoebe Ella Prentice Nye, he spent most of his youth in Wittenberg, Wisconsin, where his family moved when he was two years old. His father, the crusading editor of a number of country weeklies in Wisconsin, was an original LaFollette man.

After graduation from the public schools and Wittenberg High School, Nye returned to Hortonville in 1911 to take charge of one of his father's papers. He followed a career in country journalism for the next fourteen years, as he moved from Wisconsin to Iowa and then to Fryburg, North Dakota during World War I. In Fryburg Nye started a newspaper called The Pioneer, which supported the rising Non-Partisan League movement in the state which elected Lynn J. Frazier governor . He became involved in the war effort as county food administrator, headed a couple of Liberty Loan drives, and attacked LaFollette for his opposition to American involvement in the war. Nye then held a very different attitude on foreign affairs from the one he would hold during the years spent in the Senate. In 1919 he and his wife, whom he had married in 1916, settled in Cooperstown, North Dakota, and Nye became editor and manager

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History, XLI (February 1935), 521-527; Daniel Rylance, "A Controversial Career: Gerald P. Nye, 1925-46," North Dakota Quarterly, XXXVI (Winter 1968), 5-19; personal interview with Senator Nye, March 30, 1971, Washington, D. C.

of the Griggs County Sentinel-Courier, a Non-Partisan League paper. He campaigned for LaFollette and the Progressive ticket in North Dakota in the 1924 campaign, but was not yet a figure of political importance.

When Senator Ladd died in 1925, Nye advised the governor of the state to fill the seat by appointment, rather than leave it vacant for a year until the 1926 elections could be held. He was very surprised when he was offered the Senate appointment by the governor, but willingly accepted it. The man who some called the "village Greeley," a country editor with populist orientation, came to the capital in December, 1925, wearing, as journalists described him at the time, "bulbous yellow shoes and an Old Oaken Bucket haircut", and he was depicted as a naive country editor and a hick. Nye discovered that his appointment had caused a debate within the Senate as to whether the governor had the power to fill a Senate vacancy. Progressives, led by Borah and Norris, fought for his admission, and he finally won the right to his seat by two votes. A few months later, Nye ran as an independent against a conservative Republican and won election to the Senate. He was re-elected in 1932 and 1938 and served for nineteen years in the Senate, being defeated in his bid for re-election in 1944.

Nye became the chairman of the obscure Public Lands Committee within a short time of his entrance into the Senate, due to a shift in chairmanships after the 1926 elections, and he presided over the investigation of the Teapot Dome oil

scandal. This experience convinced the North Dakota senator of the danger represented by moneyed interests in the East. He acquired a reputation as a stubborn fighter for farm relief legislation and as a champion of the small shopkeeper and the consumer. He also declared his opposition to United States entrance into the World Court and any involvement in foreign crises. He attacked Mellon's taxation policies, declaring that the Coolidge administration was dominated by bankers and industrialists who had no concern for the welfare of the farmer. He attacked monopolies, chain stores and branch banking. He reluctantly supported Hoover in the 1928 presidential campaign, after opposing his nomination because of his alleged lack of concern for the farmer. Nye had the outlook of the typical agrarian and isolationist of his section.

In 1932 Nye was re-elected by a three to one majority despite the Democratic landslide. He found he was able to support some New Deal programs, but he was opposed to many others. He also became involved in the famous investigation of the munitions industry which put his name on the front pages of the newspapers. The publicity given to the Nye Committee investigations encouraged the isolationist group in the Senate, of which the progressive Republicans were leading members, to work for the passage of neutrality laws to prevent America from becoming involved in European quarrels. Nye was to become one of the most controversial men in public life from 1939 to 1941 when he exerted every effort to keep

America out of World War II. He was attacked as pro-Fascist and anti-Semitic by many of his opponents, because of his isolationist speeches for the America First Committee.

At different times in his career, Nye was called a liberal, reformer and idealist, at other times a reactionary and opportunist, and at all times some claimed he was a publicity seeker. His movement toward the right during the second Roosevelt term continued to the end of his Senate career and in private life during the next quarter century. His whole career was based on two main threads, isolationism and agrarianism. Nye was a major member of the Appropriations, Commerce and Military Affairs Committees in the Senate. After the death of Senator Borah in January, 1940, the North Dakota senator also took over the vacant seat on the Foreign Relations Committee.

Nye did not wear "bulbous yellow shoes and an Old Oaken Bucket haircut" for very long after coming to Washington, switching early to dark suits, white shirts and slightly flamboyant ties. He was five feet ten and a half inches tall and weighed one hundred fifty five to one hundred sixty pounds. He had a lean and wiry build and always appeared younger than he was. He had eyes described as both pale blue and hazel, a sharp nose, a strong and stubborn chin, and a serious expression. Possessing a low-pitched voice, he nevertheless had considerable talent as a public speaker, adept at delivering very long speeches in the Senate or on the stump, especially for the cause of neutrality from

1939 to 1941. He was earnest, direct and intense in his manner and was an aggressive, outspoken, vigorous advocate of the causes he believed in.

Nye married for the second time in 1940, after being divorced by his first wife from whom he had three children. The Nyes were not particularly active in Washington social life.

Bronson Murray Cutting [14] of New Mexico, the last of the progressive Republican Senate bloc to enter that body and the one with the shortest career in national politics, was born on June 23, 1888, at Oakdale, Long Island, New York to William Bayard Cutting, a New York City lawyer and reformer, and Olivia Peyton Murray Cutting. He was the second son and third child in a family of four. He was born into what had originally been one of Boston's oldest and wealthiest families and was allied to a small group which ruled New England intellectually and financially. The Cutting fortune had been established in Boston, but had expanded with the expansion of the West, going into Western railroads, timber

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[14] Biographical material on Cutting is quite good, considering his short career in the Senate. It includes the following: Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 770; the article by Charles O. Paullin in Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), Supplement 2, Volume 2, pp. 215-216; obituaries in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, Washington Post and St. Louis Post-Dispatch for May 7, 1935; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, Chapter 9, pp. 196-

and mines. Cutting was a nephew of a former chairman of the New York Citizens Union, Robert Fulton Cutting, and a descendant of Robert Livingston, Robert Fulton and a number of other prominent American public figures dating back to the American Revolution.

Like Franklin Roosevelt, but a few years later, Cutting graduated from the Groton School in Massachusetts and went to Harvard. While there, he was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society. Stricken with tuberculosis shortly before graduation, he traveled westward to Southern California and New Mexico in 1910 to recover his health, and he made Santa Fe his home base. He took up an interest in the various Indian tribes residing in New Mexico. Associating himself with the political, commercial and cultural interests of the state, he became within a short period of time one of its leading residents. In 1912, the year New Mexico became a state, he purchased controlling interest in a newspaper company which published three daily and weekly newspapers, including one in Spanish for the many Spanish-speaking residents of the state. The most significant

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220; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, Chapter 8, pp. 204-206; Patricia Cadigan Armstrong, A Portrait of Bronson Cutting Through His Papers, 1910-27 (Alberquerque: Division of Research, Department of Government, University of New Mexico, June 1959); Gustav Leonard Seligmann, Jr., "The Political Career of Senator Bronson M. Cutting," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1967; Robert W. Larson, "The Profile of a New Mexico Progressive, Bronson M. Cutting," New Mexico Historical Review, XLV (July 1970), 233-244.

of the three newspapers was the daily Santa Fe New Mexican, which promoted Cutting's budding political career. He became involved in city and state affairs and was a delegate in September, 1911, at the first Republican state convention.

Around the same time, he helped to found the New Mexico Progressive Republican League and joined the Progressive party in 1912. He served as treasurer of its New Mexico central committee from 1912 to 1914 and as its chairman from 1914 to 1916, as well as chairman of his state's delegation to the Progressive National Convention at Chicago in 1916, which saw the demise of that party.

He also served as a colonel in the New Mexico National Guard before World War I, as a captain of infantry in the United States Army during World War I in which he spent time in military intelligence, and service in London as assistant military attache at the American embassy. He was awarded the military cross by the British for his services and returned home to Santa Fe as an active leader of the American Legion. His concern for World War I veterans continued during his short term in the Senate, provoking disagreement and bad feelings between him and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Cutting experienced strong opposition from Old Guard Republicans when he attempted to begin a political career in New Mexico. They considered his scholarly nature, Ivy League manners and progressive political purposes undesirable in New Mexico. However, Cutting proved to be very shrewd in political matters. He used his newspaper company as a

means of acquiring a large group of supporters, especially among voters of Mexican descent and members of the American Legion. Many of his opponents accused him of building a political machine that could rival the great political bosses in the nation's cities. Cutting learned Spanish so that he could make speeches before Mexican groups.

Finally, in 1927 he was appointed by the Republican governor to a vacancy in the Senate caused by the death of Andrieus A. Jones. The following year, he was elected to the Senate by a plurality of over 18,000 votes. He was to serve until May 6, 1935, when he was tragically killed in a plane crash in Missouri. The circumstances that led to his death were to cause a rift between the progressives and President Roosevelt. At the time of his death, Cutting was fighting a disputed re-election contest in the New Mexico courts.

As a member of the Senate, Cutting immediately identified himself with the progressive group and became known as a strong spokesman for the "forgotten man" even before that term was in vogue. He served on various Senate committees, including Agriculture and Forestry, Foreign Relations, Manufactures, and Military Affairs. He was a vigorous opponent of President Hoover's handling of the depression and pushed for a strong public works program. He was one of the leaders in the fight to guarantee eventual independence for the Philippine Islands, and he fought against censorship of literature by customs clerks and for

recognition of the Soviet Union. His early support of Franklin D. Roosevelt dwindled by 1934, when the two men disagreed as to the policy to be followed toward bonuses for veterans. This led to the contested re-election of 1934 that indirectly brought about Cutting's death. During 1934 the New Mexico senator introduced a bill providing for increased federal regulation of all banks, a step he considered necessary to prevent another depression.

Dressed usually in rough tweeds, Cutting tended to speak rarely in the Senate. He had a shy, reserved, self conscious nature. He was not regarded as a good speaker, being somewhat hampered by a lisp. However, the New Mexico senator was considered one of the most learned, liberal minded, independent members of the Senate. He was tall and distinguished in appearance, with a streak of gray in his carefully brushed dark hair.

The New Mexico political machine which he controlled, sometimes called the Tammany of the Southwest, never had scandal attached to it. Cutting's background set him apart from the rest of the progressive Republicans. He had grown up in the cosmopolitan East in a wealthy family and had come West originally only to recover his health. Cutting never married, but was very devoted to his mother and sisters. He left a considerable share of his fortune to friends and associates, including the LaFollette brothers, Bob and Phil.

The members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc were a varied group in their background. The group included four journalists (Capper, LaFollette, Nye and Cutting), four lawyers (Borah, Norris, Johnson and McNary), two businessmen (Norbeck and Couzens), a farmer (Frazier) and a dentist (Shipstead). The group included four former governors (Johnson, Capper, Norbeck and Frazier), two former mayors (Couzens and Shipstead) and one former Congressman (Norris). All of them, with the single exception of Nye, had held some political office on the state level of an elective or appointive nature before coming to the Senate. Four (McNary, Couzens, Nye and Cutting) first came to the Senate by appointment to finish out an unexpired term. All of the progressive Republicans, with the exceptions of Couzens and Cutting, came from middle class American families of small town, agrarian backgrounds. All of them had a Northern or Western European ethnic background and a Protestant religious heritage. Nine had at least some college education, while Capper, Couzens and Nye finished high school. Only Couzens was ever exposed to urban problems on a first-hand basis, when he was Mayor of Detroit. Couzens and Cutting were the only ones who possessed wealth, the former by investment in the Ford Motor Company and the latter by inheritance.

Political commentators in the late 1920's and early 1930's speculated about the reputed power of the progressive

Republican Senate bloc. One of the major problems facing the group was leadership. How were they to be effective within their own party and in Congress in the struggle for progressive ideals and goals without organization and unity? In 1929, T.R.B. of The New Republic criticized the progressive bloc for their individualism and lack of leadership. At the outset of the Hoover administration, he wrote: "To those who recall the power of these Senate independents under the late LaFollette, and fully grasp the potentialities of a well-led, balance-of-power group swinging between the two parties, their present supineness is not without a tragic flavor. Sometimes it almost makes you weep to see the opportunities lost." The real problem with the progressives was ". . .that there is not among them a genuinely strong man who combines stability of conviction with a reasonably clear head and first-class political brains." Borah, Norris, Johnson and LaFollette all were incapable of imposing strong leadership over the group, T.R.B. stated, and the other members of the bloc were only interested in promoting their own careers. [15]

Around the same time that T.R.B. was delivering a scathing attack on the progressive bloc, The American Mercury was similarly attacking the group as ". . .a sorry bunch of weaklings and timeservers." The anonymous author declared: "The principle of attack, of aggressive leadership,

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[15] T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, CVIII (February 20, 1929), 15-16.

of purposeful endeavor is completely lacking among them." Ray Tucker, a journalist who authored a book on the "Sons of the Wild Jackass" with that term as its title, praised the group, declaring: "It is no exaggeration to suggest that the Senate Progressives possess most of the brains and brilliance to be found in that body." But he was concerned with the ability of the group to achieve any constructive change in the midst of the depression. Robert S. Allen and Drew Pearson also wondered about the effectiveness of the progressive bloc during the impending years of crisis. Praising them for their sincerity, intelligence and forward looking ideas, they nevertheless lamented their lack of planning or purpose, which made them ineffectual. The progressives were so individualistic in nature that they did not work well together, and they seemed incapable of organizing the independent political movement that was necessary if fundamental change were to come about. [16]

As the depression worsened in the early 1930's, the progressive Republican Senate bloc was confronted with the challenge of taking leadership in the midst of the economic crisis. The nature of their response would have a great effect on the history of the United States during the next

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[16] "The Progressives of the Senate," American Mercury, XVI (April 1929), 385-386; Tucker and Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass, p. 8; Allen, Washington Merry-Go-Round, pp. 184-187.

decade. Their foreign policy attitudes would also exert a great influence on the formulation of a response to the threat of Fascism. Whether the progressive Republicans would effectively rise to these twin challenges was yet to be seen.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT DEPRESSION: A CALL FOR ACTION

The inauguration of Herbert Hoover on March 4, 1929, caused no rejoicing in the progressive Republican Senate bloc. Hiram Johnson, who despised his fellow Californian and refused to campaign for his election, expressed the feelings of many progressives on the eve of Hoover's accession to power. "I do not need to tell you the thoughts that course through my mind," he wrote his son, "when the greatest Californian, who has ever existed, is about to be initiated into the Presidency of the United States. . . .we need not worry, for after the fourth of March God will reign." He confided to his sons that he was not optimistic about the future, because he thought Hoover was a ruthless man with ambitions to become a dictator. [1]

Any honeymood period that Hoover may have had with the progressives in his party ended with the stock market crash in October, 1929. Johnson, in a sarcastic reference to the

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[1] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 9, 1929; to his Boys, February 23 and March 5, 1929, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

President, told his sons: "The only good reason for the great slump in the market that I have heard is that god was absent for a few days sailing o'er the Ohio River, and could not, therefore, give the personal attention that otherwise he might have given had he remained in Washington." He criticized Hoover's slow response to the stock market crisis and his consultations with wealthy businessmen, who were not greatly affected by the crash. "The President is the prince of bunk artists, and what he is doing now is to take political advantage of the situation. He calls here those who have much and have lost little. They make speeches from the White House steps about business is sound, there is no cause for worry, and that prosperity is with us, and the newspapers in their filthy lying way, tell those who have lost their all, that it is quite for the best, and they will soon recover it, and that everything is fine." [2]

As the depression worsened during 1930, the progressive Republican bloc in the Senate demonstrated their discontent. With the third session of the Seventy-First Congress due to open in December, 1930, rumors began to spread of an open split in the Republican party, similar to that which occurred under President Taft from 1910 to 1912, which had led to the Bull Moose Progressive campaign by Theodore Roosevelt and Hiram Johnson. In late November, the progressive bloc held

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[2] Hiram Johnson to his Boys, October 26, 1929; to Hiram Johnson, Jr., November 16, 23, and 30, 1929, Johnson Papers.

a meeting to map out a legislative program for the new session, including a demand for a special session of Congress during the spring and summer of 1931 to deal with the economic emergency, the passage of unemployment relief, an anti-injunction bill, Muscle Shoals legislation, and higher taxation of the rich. Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr.'s magazine, The Progressive, declared these were the main issues of the new session. Speculation was already widespread that the progressives might leave the Republican organization and form a third party, or that they might try to dictate a progressive platform and candidate at the 1932 Republican convention. The Nation commented that the progressive group had an extraordinary opportunity to do good deeds, if only they could unite on a program. However, leadership and organization were lacking, and the journal lamented the fact that each of the progressives tended to go his own private way. [3]

When the session opened in December, 1930, the progressives began an attack on Hoover's indifference to unemployment relief. Millions of Americans were out of work, but the federal government had refused to take action to aid the unemployed. Shipstead offered a resolution requesting the President to transmit the report of his Emergency Commission on Unemployment to the Senate for their study. He declared

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[3] New York Times, November 23, 1930; The Progressive, December 6, 13, 20, 27, 1930; "A Progressive Program," The Nation, CXXXI (December 3, 1930), 598.

on the Senate floor: "I fear we are making a very grave mistake in underestimating the national emergency and the economic depression. The longer we wait the greater will be the emergency and the more we will have to pay." He called for direct unemployment relief, public works, conservation and control of natural resources, a change in the tariff rates, a better balanced distribution of national income, and steps to prevent inflation and deflation of credit. Toward the end of the session in February, 1931, Shipstead became sarcastic about the inaction of the Hoover administration, declaring: "Before the Roman revolution, when the people became discontented and hungry, they were given a loaf of bread and a circus. Now we only give them a circus." [4]

LaFollette became the major spokesman for the progressive group during this third session of the 71st Congress. He was disturbed that no one in the progressive bloc had a definite program, and wrote his sister: "I am going to try and get the progressive group together soon to see if we cannot outline our position and a legislative program. . ." On

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[4] Congressional Record, December 3, 1930, 80; December 16, 1930, 802-803, 807; February 3, 1931, 3856. The major works dealing with President Hoover's relations with Congress and the progressive group specifically are: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956); William E. Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); John D. Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, 1921-1933 (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, 1960); David A. Shannon, Between the Wars: America, 1919-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965); Jordan A. Schwarz, The Interregnum of Despair: Hoover, Congress, and the Depression (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970); and Hugh James Savage, "Political Independents of the Hoover Era: The Progressive

December 9, he introduced a resolution, calling for an investigation of the effects of the depression on the American people. He criticized Hoover's greater concern for wealthy taxpayers than for the ordinary citizen. The resolution was a response to Hoover's statement that sponsors of relief measures were "playing politics at the expense of human misery." On December 15, the LaFollette resolution was debated in the Senate. The Wisconsin senator declared that the unemployment problem had been minimized by the administration. He put telegrams from labor leaders and the heads of community relief organizations into the Congressional Record, demonstrating the realities of large scale unemployment. The victims of an earthquake, he declared, would be immediately helped by the federal government. Why could not the victims of an economic earthquake gain similar treatment? The President's charge that such aid would be a "dole" had not, LaFollette asserted, been raised by Hoover when he requested aid to relieve and feed the victims of the World War in 1919 and 1920, so why should it be raised now? LaFollette demanded that the federal government appropriate funds for the needy to supplement the efforts of the state and local governments and charity organizations. During the discussion that ensued in the Senate, Borah chimed in with his belief that the government must take immediate and direct action, declaring: "For God's sake, get something done to feed the

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Insurgents of the Senate," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1961.

people who are hungry!" [5]

On December 16, LaFollette proposed a resolution similar to that introduced by Shipstead, calling upon the President's Emergency Committee for Unemployment to submit to the Senate a full report indicating the extent of unemployment, a recommendation for expansion of public works, and an indication of the amount of relief that the American National Red Cross could supply. The Senate passed the resolution the next day. However, on December 20, Congress passed Hoover's minimal relief measures and adjourned for the Christmas holidays. LaFollette denounced this action, declaring that the appropriations were totally inadequate to deal with the economic distress throughout the country. He expressed hope that his fellow Senators would examine the unemployment problem in their own states during the Christmas recess and return with the same generous spirit toward the average American they had already displayed toward corporations and the wealthy. He announced that he was sending questionnaires on the unemployment problem to mayors of all municipalities of over five thousand population. [6]

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[5] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola LaFollette, November 4, 1930, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Congressional Record, December 9, 1930, 426; December 15, 1930, 703, 707; New York Times, December 15 and 16, 1930.

[6] Congressional Record, December 16, 1930, 859; December 20, 1930, 1173-1207; New York Times, December 21, 1930.

After the recess, LaFollette took up cudgels against Hoover again. During the recess, he had collected extensive statistics on the unemployment situation with the assistance of the American Federation of Labor. He had received vast amounts of information from many mayors who had returned the questionnaires mailed in December. LaFollette contended that these reports demonstrated the need for extensive federal appropriations to aid the unemployed. The Hoover administration, he asserted, lacked the will or the courage to meet the problem. Congress, he said, must assert its leadership if the President refused to take action. LaFollette urged four steps on the Congress. First, food and clothing must be provided to sufferers from the drought in the rural areas. Secondly, direct relief must be given to the unemployed and their dependents. Third, public works must be expanded. Finally, the industrial and financial leaders of the nation must solve the question of distribution as well as productivity. The Wisconsin senator warned his colleagues: ". . .The Congress, like Nero, is fiddling while Rome burns." He took his campaign for increased federal relief for the unemployed to the public during January, declaring in an appearance at Town Hall in New York that Hoover had minimized the situation from the beginning and persisted in refusing to recognize the ultimate responsibility of the federal government. [7]

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[7] New York Times, January 5, 1931; Congressional Record, January 9, 1931, 1662-1711; New York Times, January 17, 1931.

Other progressive Republicans joined the fight. Norris declared: ". . .If we have reached the time when the United States Senate, right or wrong, can not express itself in favor of the appropriation of public funds to relieve human suffering, then we ought to abandon our form of government. What are we here for?" Borah, in an impassioned speech, denounced administration forces in the House for opposing a $25 million drought relief appropriation passed by the Senate. He declared himself willing to aid in forcing a special session of Congress by holding up appropriations bills until the government agreed to aid the hungry and unemployed. He pounded with emphasis on his desk as he spoke. Attacking those who called the relief appropriations a "dole", he said that the Red Cross was unable to meet the problem and that people were starving and the health of children was being undermined. Borah's speech made a great impression on the Senate. Democrats applauded him while conservative Republicans sat in silence, offering no reply to his denunciations of the administration's attitude towards unemployment relief. [8]

In early February, a compromise $20 million drought relief bill to aid farmers was reported favorably to the Senate. LaFollette indicated he would vote against the measure, because it showed "callous indifference to the needs of the hungry" in the cities. The administration, he said, seemed

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[8] Congressional Record, January 14, 1931, 2140-2143; February 2, 1931, 3759-3760; New York Times, February 3, 1931.

unconcerned over the lowered living standards, the suffering and the hunger that the great mass of Americans were experiencing. He demanded that the problem of relief for farmers and urban dwellers alike be squarely faced by Congress before March 4th, the closing date of the session. A few days later, he returned to the attack, criticizing the Democrats for surrendering their principles and backing the administration's weak response to the problem at a moment of crucial importance to the unemployed. The 1930 election, which had led to Democratic control of the House of Representatives, had given that party a mandate to fight for the people's interest, LaFollette declared, but already they were abandoning this role. [9]

The Senate passed the compromise drought relief bill by a vote of 67-15 on February 14, and Hoover immediately signed the bill. Borah gave another impassioned and moving speech before the vote, appealing for government assistance for those unable to obtain loans under the terms of the compromise legislation. The Idaho senator pictured the suffering of the starving in eloquent terms. He said the Red Cross was neglecting to provide medicine for the sick, and denounced the administration for favoring the wealthy income taxpayer. Johnson and Couzens also joined in the final plea for an improved bill before the vote was taken. Johnson

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[9] Congressional Record, February 7, 1931, 4229-4230; New York Times, February 8 and 11, 1931.

recalled that the federal government came to the aid of the victims of the San Francisco earthquake. Why, he asked in ringing tones, should the people be denied aid in the present emergency? Couzens declared in a sarcastic manner that the farmer had to admit that he was a pauper before he could obtain a government loan under the compromise drought relief bill. In the vote on the bill, only two of the dozen progressive Republicans, Capper of Kansas and McNary of Oregon, voted for the Hoover version. Hiram Johnson wrote to his son after the vote: "I think Hoover has driven another nail into his coffin by his action, and that when the thing is discussed so that our people know what it is, as it probably will be in the ensuing campaign, he will be in a particularly defensive position." [10]

As the session drew to a close, LaFollette introduced a resolution calling for hearings by the Committee on Manufactures, of which he was chairman, on a proposed National Economic Council to deal with the depression. After some changes were made in the language, the Senate passed the resolution. As the session ended, LaFollette issued one more attack on Hoover, as well as the Democrats for their surrender to the President. He expressed the belief that the need for relief would be greater by the next session in December than it was now in March. Borah suggested that the Senate try to force through a resolution appropriating $10 million

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[10] New York Times, February 15, 1931; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 15, 1931, Johnson Papers.

for unsecured loans to those in need. However, no action was taken on this proposal and Congress adjourned on March 4, 1931. [11]

The progressive Republicans had been unsuccessful in their first legislative attempt to obtain federal relief for the unemployed. During the first month of the session, they had also discovered the complicity of the Republican National Committee in the unsuccessful attempt to defeat Senator Norris for re-election in Nebraska by recruiting a grocer with the same name to run in the primary. This demonstrated Hoover's antagonism toward the progressive bloc of his party. Did the progressive Republicans have a future in their party? Many intellectuals and liberal spokesmen did not think so.

The leading organization of intellectuals and liberals that held this viewpoint in the early 1930's was the League for Independent Political Action led by John Dewey, the philosopher. This organization had been founded in 1929 to promote a political realignment in America, through lobbying activities, publications and public addresses by leading liberal spokesmen. The LIPA criticized the two major parties on economic grounds and condemned the unequal distribution of income. They felt that progressives who remained within the two major parties compromised their liberalism. The goals of the League for Independent Political Action were considered

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[11] Congressional Record, February 20, 1931, 5462-5463; February 26, 1931, 6100; New York Times, March 1, 1931.

very advanced and radical at that time. [12]

When the news of the Republican National Committee plot against Norris became public in December, 1930, Dewey saw this as a propitious time to call on the Nebraska senator and other progressive Republicans to assist in the formation of a new progressive party. He urged Norris to sever his relationship with the Republican political machine and to take on the leadership of a new party which agreed with his philosophy of life. "You do not belong in the Republican party," Dewey wrote. "You are too socially minded for it. Come out of it and participate in the thrill and enthusiasm of a great movement which is our own and which will realize for common men their rightful heritage. They will rally to your support. Will you help lead the march?" Dewey released his letter to the newspapers, and it became front page news. [13]

The day after Dewey's letter made the front pages, Norris issued a public reply. While praising Dewey's sincerity and patriotism, he declined to lead a third party movement. The way to gain their common goals, he said, would be better served through action to abolish the electoral college and encourage independent candidacies for the White House,

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[12] For background on the League for Independent Political Action, see the following: Donald R. McCoy, Angry Voices: Left-of-Center Politics in the New Deal Era (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958); Karel Denis Bicha, "Liberalism Frustrated: The League for Independent Political Action," Mid-America, XLVIII (January, 1966), 19-28; and R. Alan Lawson, The Failure of Independent Liberalism, 1930-1941 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971).

[13] John Dewey to George Norris, December 23, 1930, George

thereby weakening the hold of the established political parties on the presidency. He declared that he personally would not seek the Presidency in 1932. [14]

Two days later, Borah discussed the Dewey-Norris exchange with newsmen, indicating that he agreed with the Nebraska senator that a third party was not practical in the present situation. A new party could only succeed if it came from the grassroots, Borah declared, and he did not see a demand for such a third party by the American people. Progressives had to work within the two-party system if they were to effect change, the Idaho senator indicated. [15]

Editorial comment on the Dewey-Norris correspondence was varied. The New York Times was critical of the progressives for their double standard. They were willing to remain Republicans so they could keep their committee chairmanships, but they felt free to attack the President in order to gain a national reputation. The New Republic, disappointed by Norris's reply to Dewey, commented that the progressives in the Republican party might not be capable of formulating a program and philosophy of their own, but some new leadership was needed and liberals and progressives might have to turn elsewhere. The Nation stated that the Republican

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Norris Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, December 26, 1930.

[14] George Norris to John Dewey, December 27, 1930, Norris Papers; New York Times, December 27, 1930; New York Herald Tribune, December 27, 1930; The Progressive, January 3, 1931.

[15] New York Times, December 29, 1930; New York Herald Tribune, December 29, 1930.

party would do a service for the country if they pushed the progressives out, because they would thus serve to clarify the political scene and would also force the progressives to formulate an adequate and coherent economic and political philosophy. At the present time, the progressive Republicans were not acting as a constructive opposition group. They were not giving the country the leadership expected of them by liberals and progressives. Their motives were honorable and worthy, but "in tying themselves to the old organization they cut themselves off from the new movement and indicate that they do not belong in it." [16]

While the two leading figures of the progressive Republican Senate bloc were unwilling to consider a third party movement for 1932, they were interested, along with other progressives, in working out a legislative program for the new session of Congress beginning in December, 1931. Their failure to influence the last session in regard to unemployment relief measures led to a Progressive Conference, held in Washington at the Carlton Hotel on March 11 and 12, 1931. Republican senators Norris, LaFollette and Cutting of New Mexico were co-sponsors, along with Democrats Burton K. Wheeler of Montana and Edward P. Costigan of Colorado. The

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[16] New York Times, January 1, 1931; "The Need For a New Party," The New Republic, LXV (January 7, 1931), 203-204; "Toward A New Party," The Nation, CXXXII (January 14, 1931), 32.

conference was to center around five key subjects: unemployment and industrial stabilization, public utilities, agriculture, the tariff, and a return to representative government. The five senators denied that the gathering was to be a stage in the formation of a new political party. Norris also said that the conference did not have the purpose of furthering the political ambitions of any participant. [17]

A few days before the meeting, LaFollette, in a radio address, reiterated that the meeting had not been called to back a particular candidate or to form a new party for the 1932 election. It was being held with the sole purpose of formulating a constructive program to battle for in the next session of Congress. LaFollette criticized Hoover and the hierarchy of the two major parties for their lack of "enlightened leadership" and declared: "It is the hope, therefore, of those who have called the progressive conference that it may contribute to the solution of our present problems and thus materially aid in the maintenance of our democratic institutions and the creation of that equality of opportunity and richness of life promised by the Declaration of Independence." [18]

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[17] Form letter invitation to Progressive Conference, February 25, 1931, Edward P. Costigan Papers, Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado; New York Times, March 3, 1931; New York Herald Tribune, March 3, 1931; The Progressive, March 7, 1931.

[18] New York Times, March 8, 1931.

Among those who attended the Progressive Conference were progressive Republican Senators Blaine, Brookhart, Frazier, Nye, Borah and Shipstead; labor leaders William Green and Sidney Hillman; journalists and intellectuals such as Charles Beard, Edwin Borchard, Edward Keating, Judson King, Basil Manly, Lincoln Steffens, George Soule, Bruce Bliven and Rudolph Spreckels; farm leaders such as Milo Reno, William Hirth and John A. Simpson; and political and social reformers, including Amos Pinchot, Harold Ickes, Jeanette Rankin, Florence Kelley, Lillian Wald, Walter White and Donald Richberg. Among those unable to attend for various reasons were Representative Fiorello LaGuardia of New York, Democratic Senator Hugo Black of Alabama, progressive Republican Senators James Couzens, Hiram Johnson and Peter Norbeck, progressive Governors Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania, Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York, and Philip LaFollette of Wisconsin, and journalist William Allen White. Governor Roosevelt sent a message of regret that he could not attend because the New York legislature was in session. Hiram Johnson explained his absence at the Progressive Conference in a letter to Harold Ickes. "I told Norris and Cutting that they had my sympathies and I gave them my blessings, but that I expected in the few years remaining to me to continue to be a block of one, and to walk alone in my own path. I have been happier doing this, and I am sure I will be happier in the future by continuing." The California senator continued: "I am going ahead in my own fashion and do exactly as I damn please, and I do not want to put myself in a position where

I might, although not wholly with justice, feel bound to any particular course; . . ." Couzens said the conference was a mistake and ill-advised, but did not explain why he thought so. Dewey, who had urged Norris to help in the formation of a third party, was not invited, so as to avoid discussion of that issue. His reaction was to attack the progressives for their weaknesses in Congress and their unwillingness to fight harder for their views. [19]

An estimated one hundred seventy-four people attended the opening day of the conference. Senator Norris, the chairman, delivered a stirring introductory address, centering his attention on the power trusts, which he accused of interference in the legislative process to prevent adoption of beneficial legislation designed to promote federal development of cheap power and conservation of natural resources at Muscle Shoals. Norris had long fought for this project without success and also without the cooperation of Republican Presidents Coolidge and Hoover. The Nebraska senator warned that the power companies were planning to use their influence to control the national conventions of both political parties in 1932. In the afternoon session, Borah spoke on the farm problem, criticizing the Hoover administration for failure to consider agriculture on an equal level with industry,

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[19] Progressive Conference Lists, Costigan Papers and Norris Papers; New York Times, March 9 and 12, 1931; New York Herald Tribune, March 9 and 12, 1931; Hiram Johnson to Harold Ickes, March 8, 1931, Johnson Papers (also in Harold Ickes Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); New York Herald Tribune, March 11, 1931.

especially in regards to the protective tariff. He denounced monopolies and trusts, blaming them for the sad economic state of the nation. At the evening session, Cutting accused President Hoover of an attempt to take legislative power into his own hands, to govern through commissions and bureaus. He called for measures to strengthen the corrupt practices act dealing with the use of money in political campaigns, recalling the administration's attempt to defeat Senator Norris for re-election in 1930. [20]

The highlights of the second day of the Progressive Conference were speeches by Senators Norris and LaFollette. Norris called for another Roosevelt in the White House, a leader in the mold of Theodore Roosevelt. This declaration caused speculation that the Nebraska senator was endorsing Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt for President, but Norris denied this. LaFollette concentrated on Hoover's refusal to involve the federal government in unemployment relief and public works projects. The conferees proceeded to adopt a series of resolutions. One called for a study of the business depression and the convening of a special session of Congress to deal with the economic crisis by passage of unemployment relief and public works programs. Other resolutions adopted included proposals for legislative action to lower the Hawley-Smoot tariff; the adoption of an

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[20] New York Times, March 10, 11, 12, 1931; New York Herald Tribune, March 10, 11, 12, 1931; Proceedings of a Conference of Progressives (Washington, 1931) and other materials in Costigan and Norris Papers.

anti-injunction law; the prohibition of "excessive and corrupt use of money" in primary elections; the abolition of the electoral college; the adoption of Norris's Lame Duck Amendment to the Constitution (changing the presidential inauguration day and the opening day of a newly elected Congress); and revision of the rules of the House of Representatives. No resolutions were presented with reference to the agricultural and public utilities issues. Instead, committees were set up to investigate these subjects and recommend legislation to the new Congress that would meet in December, 1931. The conference closed without any attempt to form a permanent organization. [21]

Reaction to the Progressive Conference was mixed. The New York Times asserted that the progressives in Congress would not cooperate with each other on so-called "progressive" legislation since each had his own "pet plan". The conference was simply an opportunity for politicians to make speeches which they had neglected to deliver during the Congressional session. The progressive bloc had demonstrated its inability to influence events in the recently completed session. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch hailed the conference for its objective: ". . .the well-being of the people as a whole." The conference might be ". . .the foreword of a new historical volume." The New York World-Telegram endorsed the results of

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[21] New York Times, March 13, 1931; New York Herald Tribune, March 13, 1931; Proceedings of a Conference of Progressives (Washington, 1931) and other materials in Costigan and Norris Papers.

the conference, requesting a fair chance for the progressives to solve the nation's economic problems. The paper warned: "If democracy cannot provide jobs and a decent living for the masses as the Progressives demand, this country is headed for Fascism or Communism." [22]

The New Republic hailed the meeting for endorsing federal relief for the unemployed, public works projects, and compulsory unemployment insurance. The journal saw the sentiment for national economic planning as the major significance of the conference. The Nation declared that the Washington conference indicated the progressives were the only major political group actively concerned with the economic crisis. It was easier to have faith in progressive leadership and ideas, the journal asserted, as a result of these discussions. The socialist-oriented New Leader was critical of the meeting. The progressives had again demonstrated that they had no comprehensive philosophy. Their solutions would fail because they were still tied to the preservation of the capitalist economic system. [23]

As soon as the Progressive Conference ended, speculation arose over the possibility of an alliance between the

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[22] New York Times, March 12, 1931; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 11, 1931; New York World-Telegram, March 13, 1931.

[23] "The Progressive Conference," The New Republic, LXVI (March 25, 1931), 137-139; "Progressivism Awakes," The Nation, CXXXII (March 25, 1931), 316; Mauritz A. Hallgren, "Progressives Turn to the Left," The Nation, CXXXII (March 25, 1931), 320-321; The New Leader, March 21, 1931.

progressive Republicans and the Democratic party for the 1932 presidential campaign. Norris declared he would not support Hoover, and while he denied that he had decided to back Franklin D. Roosevelt, his statement that the country needed another Roosevelt in the While House was built up by the newspapers as an indirect endorsement of the New York governor. Norris reiterated his belief that there would be no third party in the 1932 election. If the Democrats nominated someone unacceptable to him, he would refuse to endorse anyone. Meanwhile, Democratic Senator Cordell Hull of Tennessee praised the developments at the Progressive Conference as in harmony with views of many rank and file Democrats. Many observers thought that Governor Roosevelt had been aided in his potential candidacy for the White House by the conference results. The telegram which he had sent to the meeting, explaining why he could not attend, had been read to the gathering and had evoked applause. Borah expressed the opinion that the conference had aroused agitation for the legislative proposals promoted by the progressives, but he refused to comment on the possible political effects of the meeting. Observers felt that the Idaho senator would aid the progressives in creating sentiment for their program but, unlike Norris, would not bolt his party under any circumstances. [24]

Other members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc

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[24] New York Times, March 14, 1931; New York Herald Tribune, March 14, 1931, New York Times, March 15, 1931.

were unwilling to make public statements, but it became obvious that a split had developed among the members of the group as to whether to attempt a fusion with the Democrats for the 1932 campaign or to encourage an insurgent Republican to run against Hoover in the primaries. A number of the progressives had to be shown that Franklin D. Roosevelt was a true progressive. Senator Nye was specifically cited by one newspaper as being in this category. The New York Times noted the developing split: "These personal divisions and collisions among the Progressives show at once their weakness and their strength. As troublemakers in Congress they are potent. They are able to unite behind a disturbing program, but cannot produce among themselves, or find elsewhere, a leader whom they will obediently and harmoniously follow. This makes the chief scene of their labor and their influence Congressional, not political in the sense of wielding great power in a Presidential campaign." The paper felt that Governor Roosevelt had been definitely aided by the Progressive Conference, since a third party was improbable and President Hoover was unlikely to experience a strong challenge for renomination at the 1932 Republican National Convention. [25]

Hiram Johnson, who had refused to attend the conference, made a public statement a few days later, warning the Republican party to pay attention to the political unrest evident at the meeting. Political observers reported that

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[25] Washington Evening Star, March 15, 1931; New York Times, March 16, 1931.

many progressives hoped Johnson, along with other prominent insurgents, would enter various Republican presidential primaries in 1932 as favorite sons, with the aim of rounding up enough anti-Hoover delegates to force the Republican party to consider their demands in regard to the platform and possibly the Vice-Presidency. T.R.B. of The New Republic wrote shortly after the Progressive Conference that the progressives would have a major impact on the next presidential campaign. Meanwhile, the members of the bloc hoped to pressure Hoover to call for a special session of Congress to deal with the unemployment crisis. [26]

A few days after the Congress adjourned, Shipstead called upon Hoover to summon a special session to consider a program of remedial legislation to aid the hungry and bankrupt. A few weeks later, Borah also demanded a special session, pointing out the increased number of unemployed reported for January, 1931. LaFollette, however, was once again the key spokesman of the progressive Republican bloc. "I suppose people will think I have an obsession on Hoover," he wrote, "but it does seem as though someone should keep after him and no one else in Washington appears to feel as keenly as I do about the shameful manner in which he has neglected his responsibilities in this economic crisis." LaFollette was not willing to wait until December, 1931, to prod Hoover toward some action. He made a series of speeches

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[26] New York Times, March 17, 1931; T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXVI (April 1, 1931), 181-182.

in Boston, Brooklyn and New York during April, in which he criticized the President but also proposed a seven point legislative program, including federal aid for the unemployed, a shorter work day and work week, maintenance of wage levels, stabilization of industry, unemployment insurance, rehabilitation of agriculture, and graduated income and inheritance taxes to meet the increasing burdens and responsibilities of government. Such a program, he asserted, would result in a large reduction in unemployment, would maintain the purchasing power of the masses, and would provide a constantly rising standard of living. The policy of laissez faire was dead. If the nation's leadership did not face up to the problems of the depression, he asserted, revolution was in the offing. In New York, he stated that he might support a Democrat in the 1932 election if the party's platform were progressive. He defended the decision of the progressives, stated by Norris and Borah, against the formation of a third party as suggested by John Dewey and the League for Independent Political Action. He felt that the progressives in Congress had a much better chance of pushing legislation by remaining members of both parties, than through abandonment of the two-party system. [27]

In May, LaFollette called for a special session of Congress to act on relief measures for the unemployed for the

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[27] New York Times, March 8 and 22, 1931; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to his mother and sister Mary, April 14, 1931, LaFollette Family Papers; New York Times, April 15, 24, and 27, 1931.

coming winter. By the time the new session opened in December, he said, there would be little that could be done to help millions of unfortunate people to last through the cold winter. When Hoover refused to call for a special session, LaFollette again denounced the President for his do-nothing policy. He expressed his pessimism in a letter to his sister and brother-in-law: "I take a very dark view of the future. I see nothing that promises to bring the much promised recovery. It looks to me like a long, long, pull with lowered standards of living for the masses of the people. I shall be happy if we can weather thru with out some big failures and a panic such as we have never known before." [28]

The barrage of criticism directed against Hoover continued, Borah and Couzens criticized the administration in late May, regarding the subject of tax revision. Borah attacked the suggestion of Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon that tax exemptions be lowered on income, because this was equivalent to a decrease in wages for lower income Americans. Couzens put forth the suggestion of a gift tax, an increase in the death or estate tax, and an increase in surtaxes on incomes over $100,000. Norris indicated he favored similar proposals, in a letter to the managing editor of an Omaha newspaper. Public works should be built to relieve unemployment, with the bonds for the road building to be paid by a heavier

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[28] New York Times, May 22 and 24, 1931; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, May 15, 1931, LaFollette Family Papers.

income tax levied on large incomes. The concentration of wealth in a few hands, the senator declared, must be broken by the imposition of a federal progressive inheritance tax.[29]

During June, Couzens announced that he planned to introduce a bill, calling for the creation of employment through public works projects, at the next session of Congress. Denouncing Hoover for failing to assist the unemployed, he declared that private charity was not providing relief, and he advocated a federal and state system of unemployment insurance, as well as old-age assistance. In early August, in an interview with newsmen, he declared that he hoped that Congress would yet be called into special session by October to provide a relief appropriation. The Michigan senator asserted: "We've played ostrich long enough. Families cannot be allowed to starve and Red Cross and community funds will be insufficient." Senator McNary, reading this interview in the newspaper, wrote Couzens expressing the view that the President was unlikely to be influenced by his plea, and that Hoover probably dreaded the fact that Congress was due to convene in December. Couzens responded that he did not expect his comments to have any influence on the President, but he felt he had to make a statement "on the subject which is nearest my heart and head, and that is, the condition of the unemployed." At the end of August, Couzens pledged one million dollars of his fortune to aid the city of Detroit,

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[29] New York Times, May 26, 1931; George Norris to Fred S. Hunter of the Omaha Bee-News, June 11, 1931, Norris Papers.

if the city leaders could raise nine million dollars from private sources. He wrote Mayor Frank Murphy of Detroit that he knew Hoover would persist in his refusal to do anything before the regular session in December, so he was willing to aid the city with a grant of his own fortune. In response to a citizen's letter, he wrote that he did not consider this grant as permanent relief, but simply as a temporary expedient for the forthcoming winter. [30]

In September, Shipstead delivered a radio address in which he again called for a special session to devise programs to meet the economic emergency. Borah declared in Idaho that the rich of the country must feed the unemployed during the coming winter. If they refused to do so, he warned, they would be forced into such action by the people and Congress. Declaring it the duty of the government to care for the unemployed, he suggested an increase in the income tax on large incomes, as other progressives had already suggested. The Idaho senator indicated privately that there was a widespread unrest and discontent directed against the Hoover administration in the West, and that Franklin D. Roosevelt was likely to be the beneficiary of this situation. [31]

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[30] The Progressive, June 20, 1931; New York Times, August 5, 1931; Charles McNary to James Couzens, August 5, 1931; Couzens to McNary, August 12, 1931, James Couzens Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, August 23, 1931; Couzens to Robert E. Klinkhardt, September 2, 1931, Couzens Papers.

[31] New York Times, September 6 and 8, 1931; William Borah to Herbert Bayard Swope, September 10, 1931, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

LaFollette continued his campaign for unemployment relief during the summer months of 1931. In July he wrote an article on Hoover's record on the unemployment issue for The Nation. In August, he announced that he would offer a relief bill at the next session of Congress in December. In October, he emphasized that public works programs were necessary to cope with the unemployment problem. The depression was not a temporary phenomenon and there would be no spectacular recovery, the Wisconsin senator declared. Drastic increases in income and inheritance taxes for the wealthy, and an effective gift tax were essential to bring about an increase in government revenues. [32]

Antagonism toward the Hoover administration's handling of the depression, while widespread, was not unanimous, however, among the members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc. At least one, Arthur Capper, kept up a correspondence with the President in which he indicated his sympathy with Hoover's plight. Immediately after the congressional election in 1930, Capper wrote Hoover about the election results in Kansas. Capper had won an easy re-election victory while commending the administration's program in his campaign speeches. The Kansas senator admitted to the President that "the future - politically - looks rather gloomy, I regret to say." In June, 1931, Capper told Hoover that the political situation for 1932 in the West was no more encouraging than

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[32] Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., "President Hoover's Record:

it had been six months earlier. "Yet I know of nothing that you or anyone else can do to better the situation. As long as we have low prices for farm products the party in power and the man in The White House will be blamed. This ought not to be, but unfortunately a majority of the people are up against it and do not stop to reason." He assured the President of his "cordial support" and declared: "Personally, I shall do everything I can to further your renomination and re-election. I think you have made the country a great President under most trying conditions. No one could have done a better job. You are entitled to another term. I still have faith in the American voters. I believe when they stop to think it over, they will reach the conclusion that it would be a mistake to make a change." In September he told William Allen White of his pessimism about the political future of Hoover and the Republican party. The two men agreed that the President had lost whatever progressive and independent followers he had, because he was considered a friend of Wall Street bankers and financiers. Capper predicted "another year of hard times" and the possible loss of Republican control of the White House and Congress. As the year 1931 ended, Capper wished the President a better new year and added: "It is my sincere belief that you have fought a good fight; have served your country and your people

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IV: The President and Unemployment," The Nation, CXXXIII (July 15, 1931), 61-63; The Progressive, August 8, 1931; New York Times, October 7, 1931.

with ability, distinction, and sincerity of purpose." [33]

As the new congressional session approached, T.R.B. of The New Republic wrote of the political importance that the progressives might have. "It becomes clearer that the only group in the coming Congress with any sort of coherent program will be the progressives. . . .Not since anyone can remember have the progressives had quite so fine an opportunity to commend themselves to the country as in the coming session." The progressives would now be able to show that they were statesmen as well as crusaders and critics. T.R.B. believed they would hold the balance of power in the new Congress. The session was destined to be a duel between the progressives and the President, and the former would not always lose as in the last congressional session. [34]

In the last week of November, Norris called a conference of the Senate progressives. He declared that the progressives planned to be an aggressive force in the promotion of legislative proposals, especially unemployment relief, public works, and an anti-injunction bill. At the opening of the congressional session, LaFollette again took the initiative. He released the report of the Unemployment

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[33] Arthur Capper to Herbert Hoover, November 6, 1930; June 1, 1931, Herbert Hoover Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; Capper to William Allen White, September 15, 1931, William Allen White Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Capper to Hoover, December 31, 1931, Hoover Papers.

[34] T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXVIII

and Industrial Stabilization Committee of the Progressive Conference, recommending national planning for regularized growth and increased and steadied purchasing power for the masses. The report proposed a national economic board to be appointed by the President and to represent labor, finance and industry. It also recommended wage increases, redistribution of income, stabilization of price levels and unemployment insurance. It came out in flat opposition to sales taxes as a burden on the people during the depression. Two days later, LaFollette re-introduced a bill to establish a National Economic Council to his Committee on Manufactures, as well as a bill calling for a five and a half billion dollar emergency public works program, to be financed by issuance of "prosperity bonds". The measure also proposed an additional surtax of two percent on all incomes over $5,000, the proceeds of which would be used to redeem the bonds. Three and three-quarters billion dollars would be for the states and the rest for the federal government. [35]

In a radio address in support of his public works program in early January, LaFollette said four and a half million people would be employed under the public works bill. Such a program would distribute purchasing power and break the deflationary cycle. The Reconstruction Finance

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(October 21, 1931), 262 and (November 11, 1931), 351-352.

[35] New York Times, November 24 and December 20 and 23, 1931; Congressional Record, December 22, 1931, 1070, 1126-1129; The Progressive, December 26, 1931; "The Week," The New Republic, LXIX (January 6, 1932), 198.

Corporation program of the Hoover administration would not aid the ordinary citizen, he asserted, but only banks, insurance companies and railroads. A few days later, LaFollette introduced an unemployment relief bill, co-sponsored by progressive Democratic Senator Edward P. Costigan of Colorado, which proposed an appropriation of $375 million for the unemployed through direct federal aid. The funds would be allocated to the states on a population basis. LaFollette had his doubts, however, as to how much support this bill would command in the Senate. [36]

The LaFollette-Costigan unemployment relief bill, opposed by the Hoover administration because of its alleged semi-dole features, came before the Senate in February, 1932. LaFollette began the debate with a three hour speech urging the adoption of the measure. The nation was confronted with the most serious economic crisis in its history, the Wisconsin senator warned. He gave statistics to demonstrate that over three hundred cities wished direct aid from the federal government to help them with their relief problems. He stated that the relief burden should not fall solely on the local governments, as the municipalities would eventually go bankrupt. Denying that the measure under consideration was a dole as administration leaders charged, LaFollette said it

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[36] Congressional Record, January 5, 1932, 1292-1293; January 12, 1932, 1760-1763; New York Times, January 12, 1932; Congressional Record, January 15, 1932, 1997; New York Times, January 22, 1932; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, December 30, 1931, LaFollette Family Papers.

was an emergency operation based on need rather than a definite and specific allowance that would be perpetual. He introduced testimony from labor unions, business leaders, social workers and mayors to show the desperate need for federal unemployment relief. In private, LaFollette was doubtful that the bill had a chance of passage, but he felt his address had piled up enough evidence to prevent the bill from being sent back to committee as many Democrats and conservative Republicans wished to do. [37]

Borah, Johnson, Frazier and Couzens spoke up in the debate over the LaFollette-Costigan bill. Borah clashed with Senator Simeon Fess of Ohio, a conservative Republican, over the use of the word "dole". The Idaho senator contended that new conditions forced the setting of new precedents by the government, but that the relief bill could not justly be called a dole. He criticized the willingness of the federal government to give aid to banks and corporations through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and yet to consider aid to unemployed Americans as a dangerous precedent. He declared that the issue was one of humanity on the part of the government toward its citizens. The Fess-Borah debate caused much excitement on the floor and in the Senate galleries. Johnson made a plea in his speech for the same assistance to be extended to women and children that had been given to

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[37] New York Times, February 1 and 2, 1932; Congressional Record, February 2, 1932, 3068-3095; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, February 5, 1932, LaFollette Family Papers.

banks and railroads. He quoted President Hoover as being in favor of relief for Europe in 1924, although not for the United States now. All legislation passed during the depression, Johnson declared, had favored the wealthy over the people. He delivered an eloquent appeal for help for the needy. [38]

Frazier, in a rare speech on the Senate floor, declared it the responsibility of the federal government to provide assistance to the unemployed, as well as to business. There was no danger in a so-called "dole", he said, since almost everyone would prefer to work if they could find employment. The people could not be blamed for turning toward radicalism when they were unable to support themselves. The spread of communism was likely in a situation where millions of Americans were unemployed and the government refused to aid them. Frazier concluded that a radical uprising could be avoided by the passage of the LaFollette-Costigan bill. Couzens stated that he was in sympathy with the bill but, breaking with other progressives, said he believed the states should make every effort to care for the unemployed before federal aid was requested. [39]

The LaFollette-Costigan relief bill came up for a vote on February 16, 1932, and was rejected 48-35. Nine of the twelve progressive Republicans voted for passage. The two

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[38] Congressional Record, February 10, 1932, 3666-3673; February 12, 1932, 3810-3813; New York Times, February 11 and 13, 1932.

[39] Congressional Record, February 11, 1932, 3756-3757; February 16, 1932, 4018-4021.

moderate progressives most connected to the Hoover administration, Capper and McNary, voted against, along with Couzens. The Senate thus went on record as being opposed to direct federal relief for the unemployed. The progressive Republicans had failed in their major effort of the session. LaFollette delivered one last speech before the vote, centering his attack on conservative senators who had spoken against the bill. He declared that these senators were as blind as the Bourbons of France before the French Revolution. The Wisconsin senator still hoped that a substitute relief bill would be considered, possibly one being formulated by Senator Robert Wagner of New York. During the spring of 1932, LaFollette continued to work for a public works bill and the establishment of a National Economic Council.[40]

In May, LaFollette and Borah, along with Bronson Cutting, again raised the issue of unemployment relief. Borah repeated his demand that the federal government should grant direct relief through outright grants to the states. LaFollette criticized Hoover's policies toward the unemployed in a speech before the conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Washington. Cutting, who had not spoken out before on the subject in the Senate, offered a new bill calling for a five billion dollar bond issue, of which three billion would be expended by the

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[40] Congressional Record, February 16, 1932, 4052; New York Times, February 17, 1932; The Progressive, February 20, 1932; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, February 19, 1932, LaFollette Family Papers.

the federal government on highways and two billion for rivers and harbors, public buildings, reforestation and other public projects. He assailed Hoover's relief program as "a wavering policy which left the country facing the alternatives of starvation or revolt." The New Mexico senator argued that a public works program inaugurated by the federal government and pursued as if it were wartime conditions, would stop the downward spiral of the depression and start the country on the road to recovery. In a second Senate speech on his bill, Cutting declared that more attention should be paid to the restoration of the purchasing power of the people than to balancing of the budget. [41]

During June, a $300 million unemployment relief bill written by Democratic senators, but satisfactory in its basic purposes to the administration was passed by a vote of 72-8 in the Senate. Hiram Johnson hailed the vote as a triumph because it finally demonstrated recognition of the federal government's obligation to the unemployed. However, the bill was of a limited nature, and Borah again defended the need for a large-scale program. He said it would not harm the individualism or the physical or moral fibre of the American people, as many conservatives had charged. LaFollette declared that his only criticism of the measure, other than its limited nature, was that it took so long to pass and

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[41] New York Times, May 19, 23, 24, and 31, 1932; Congressional Record, May 23, 1932, 10919-10923; May 30, 1932, 11538.

came from a grudging administration. [42]

Later in the month, the Senate debated the Wagner relief bill, which provided for $500 million for public works. Various amendments were offered by progressive Republicans, who contended that this amount was inadequate. Norris introduced a bill providing for three billion dollars for public works supported by bond issues. LaFollette offered an amendment to the Wagner bill to raise the allotment for public works up to five and a half billion dollars, as his own bill had provided. The Wisconsin senator declared in a floor speech that the present situation was graver than that of the World War. The conference report, without LaFollette's amendment as part of the bill, passed the Senate by a vote of 43-31 on July 9th, but Hoover vetoed the bill. The progressive Republican bloc split on this vote, with seven in favor (Borah, Frazier, Johnson, McNary, Norbeck, Norris, Nye), four opposed (Capper, Couzens, LaFollette, Shipstead) and one (Cutting) not voting. Johnson declared that President Hoover had to take personal responsibility for preventing relief from going to those who needed it. In a comment that brought to mind Franklin Roosevelt's later references to "the forgotten man", the California senator declared that the bill just vetoed was designed to help such Americans. [43]

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[42] New York Times, June 11, 1932; Congressional Record, June 10, 1932, 12534-12535.

[43] New York Times, June 19, 1932; Congressional Record, June 22, 1932, 13674-13690; New York Times, July 10, 1932.

The progressive Republicans had fought vigorously for an adequate program of unemployment relief and public works. They had only partially triumphed when a modified Democratic-sponsored relief bill of a more limited nature than they wanted passed in June, 1932. Their only major success of the congressional session was the passage of the Norris-LaGuardia anti-injunction legislation on March 1 by a lop-sided majority of 75-5. Senators Capper, Norbeck and McNary had also successfully promoted the distribution of government owned wheat to the Red Cross and other relief organizations to aid the needy. But the struggle to assist the unemployed had basically failed. However, the progressive Republican Senate bloc, led by LaFollette, had been the first group in Congress to emphasize the responsibility of the federal government to aid the mass of Americans affected by the Great Depression. In so doing, they acted as the forerunners of the New Deal. [44]

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[44] Congressional Record, December 17, 1931, 670; February 23, 1932, 4489; May 26, 1932, 11262; June 4, 1932, 11948; "The Week," The Nation, CXXXIV (March 16, 1932), 297.

CHAPTER III

ALTERNATIVES IN THE ELECTION OF 1932

The progressive Republican Senate bloc had five possible strategies as the election of 1932 approached. Before the national conventions, the insurgents had the options of forming a third party or encouraging a leading progressive politician in or out of Congress to challenge Hoover for renomination, with the hope that at least the party platform could be steered toward progressive goals. After the national conventions, the alternatives were to support the Democratic nominee, Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York, as the best hope for adoption of progressive programs in the future; to remain loyal to the Republican party and endorse Herbert Hoover for re-election; or to remain uncommitted to either candidate. All five strategies were considered at one time or another by members of the progressive bloc.

The response of Senators Norris and Borah to Dewey's suggestion in December, 1930, silenced rumors of a third party movement. The decision of the leaders of the Progressive Conference in March, 1931, to refuse an invitation to Dewey to attend the meeting further signified their

unwillingness to consider the formation of a new party. Many of the progressives were veterans of earlier third party movements in 1912 and 1924 and were unwilling to indulge in a similar strategy again in 1932.

With the third party idea rejected, the insurgents now considered a challenge within the Republican party to Hoover's renomination. As early as November, 1930, there were rumors of possible challenges to the President by Senators Borah and Norris and Governor Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania, who originally acquired his fame through involvement in the Ballinger-Pinchot conservation controversy during the Taft Administration. In March, 1931, Hiram Johnson's name was added to the list of possible rivals and in May, LaFollette's name was also suggested, although later discounted due to his youth and lack of experience. [1]

The first definite planning for 1932 was on the part of Governor Pinchot. At the end of May, 1931, the New York Times reported that he had formulated plans to enter Republican presidential primaries if the depression became more severe during the following six months. Pinchot was confident that the progressive group in the Senate would back his candidacy. A few days later, the governor sent representatives to confer with several senators to seek support for his candidacy. These senators were told that his campaign

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[1] New York Times, November 23, 1930; March 17, May 3, 1931.

would be run on two major issues, agricultural relief and regulation of public utilities. After the series of meetings were held, the senators refused to comment on the record or to be identified. However, one unnamed legislator declared a Pinchot candidacy a futile gesture, although it would give the progressives an opportunity to promote a liberal platform at the Republican convention. The next day, Governor Pinchot delivered a stirring speech at the annual Governors' Conference at French Lick, Indiana, on the subject of public utilities, calling for federal regulation of the graft-ridden companies. Senator Norris hailed the speech and declared his support of Pinchot for the Republican presidential nomination if he should decide to seek it. [2]

The possibility of a Pinchot candidacy was explored further in late October in a series of conferences between the Pennsylvania governor and a group of progressives, including Senators Borah, Nye, Frazier and Couzens. These legislators told Pinchot that the western states were anxious for an alternative to Hoover. They felt a fight against the President was worthwhile and encouraged Pinchot to enter the contest. The Pennsylvania governor refused to commit himself to candidacy, but left the impression that he would enter up to twelve primaries if the progressives in the Senate endorsed him in public statements. The conferees agreed to

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[2] New York Times, May 31, June 2 and 3, 1931; New York Herald Tribune, June 2, 1931; on Pinchot in 1932, see Martin N. McGeary, Gifford Pinchot: Forester-Politician (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

meet within a few months to consider the situation. Another series of informal conferences were held during the holiday recess in December, but no conclusions were reached. Finally, in March, 1932, Pinchot asked Harold Ickes, the progressive reformer from Chicago, to send out letters promoting his candidacy to progressives around the country. The letter was published in the newspapers nine days after being mailed to thousands of people. Ickes, who had already unsuccessfully promoted Hiram Johnson's candidacy, had little hope that Hoover could be denied renomination. He wrote the progressive journalist William Allen White: "Just between you and me, I agree with you that Gifford has not got a chance and that no one could take the nomination away from Hoover." Ickes said he had agreed to mail out the letters because of his fondness for Pinchot but had warned him that nothing would probably result from it. [3]

A few days later, Ickes wrote to Pinchot about the poor response to the mailings. "These letters so far mean to me that the Republicans are going to take their licking lying down. They are afraid of the future, they have no hope in the present and they regret the past four years. But most of all they are afraid to make a move for fear they may interfere with that return of prosperity which is 'just

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[3] New York Times, October 21 and December 30, 1931; Form letter of Harold Ickes promoting Gifford Pinchot for President, March 14, 1932, Gifford Pinchot Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, March 23, 1932; Harold Ickes to William Allen White, March 18, 1932, William Allen White Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

around the corner'." At the beginning of May, Pinchot decided to abandon his effort, which had failed to garner progressive endorsement. Ickes agreed, indicating the belief that "the whole thing is tied up for Hoover." [4]

The rumors of Senator Borah's possible candidacy began to spread in the middle of 1931. When Borah agreed to tour the farm states during the summer and to make speeches critical of Hoover's agricultural relief program, the press speculated that he might eventually enter the primaries against the President. The rumors of his candidacy increased when he declared in September, that he had no objection to the formation of a Borah for President club in the state of Virginia. Some progressives thought he might run because it would be his last chance, due to his advanced age. Others thought that he would drop out because of the realization that Hoover could not be defeated. [5]

In early October, Senators Frazier of North Dakota and Brookhart of Iowa declared that Borah still had presidential aspirations and might enter the primaries in the western states. At the beginning of November, a group of Republican businessmen were reported to have offered to finance a primary campaign. Borah was reported to be impressed with the offer, but unwilling to run because of the advantages that

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[4] Harold Ickes to Gifford Pinchot, March 23, 1932; Pinchot to Ickes, May 3, 1932; Ickes to Pinchot, May 7, 1932, Pinchot Papers.

[5] New York Times, May 24 and September 14, 1931; New York Herald Tribune, September 14, 1931.

an incumbent President possessed. Hoover was assured of support from the eastern and southern delegates at the Republican convention, and the western delegates' votes were not enough to stop his renomination. The businessmen were said to be willing to renew the offer of financial assistance within a few months if Borah decided to run. By January, the Idaho senator had received many letters urging his candidacy, but he had not yet decided what to do. At the end of February, he made a decision against challenging Hoover. He made known his attitude to Governor Pinchot, who had offered to back him if he ran. Borah believed that Hoover could not be defeated and that the insurgents would not even be able to control the platform. [6]

Senator Norris, the subject of much speculation as another challenger, had already stated in his public letter to John Dewey in December, 1930, that he was not interested. He was glad to boost other progressives for the White House, such as Democratic Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt or Republican Governor Gifford Pinchot. In November, 1931, he declared that the West favored the nomination and election of any progressive politician over Hoover. But he again affirmed that he was definitely not a candidate for President. By the beginning of 1932, Norris felt it futile for the progressives to run their own candidate against Hoover. In reply to a letter from California, Norris wrote that he would

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[6] New York Times, October 5, November 1, 1931, January 14 and February 26, 1932.

not permit his name to be considered in a challenge to Hoover, but he was willing to make a fight for any progressive who decided to seek the nomination although he was doubtful of the wisdom of such action. He believed that Governor Roosevelt was the best hope of the progressives and deserved their support, as well as that of all liberals, if he became the Democratic nominee. In response to a letter from Oregon, he wrote that whatever funds the progressives could gather should be saved for the election contest, not in a wasteful struggle against Hoover. [7]

The best hope of the progressive group turned out to be Hiram Johnson, who considered the possibility of candidacy for many months. Many progressives thought he had a good chance to defeat Hoover. The leading promoter of the California senator's candidacy was Harold Ickes, who knew Johnson from Bull Moose days and had worked for his nomination in 1924. From the middle of 1931 to February, 1932, Ickes bombarded Johnson with letters, attempting to convince him to challenge Hoover. During June, he wrote that no one thought Hoover could win the next election, but that no one seemed to be willing to prevent his renomination, which would lead to disaster for the Republican party. [8]

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[7] New York Times, November 10, 1931; George Norris to Arthur G. Wray, February 4, 1932, George Norris Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Norris to Kenneth Harlan, March 29, 1932, Norris Papers.

[8] Harold Ickes to Hiram Johnson, June 19, 1931, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley and Harold Ickes Papers, Manuscript Division,

During the fall of 1931, Ickes informed Johnson that he planned to meet with other progressive senators to promote the Californian's candidacy. He again declared that Johnson was the strongest candidate the progressives could run. During November, Ickes met with Robert LaFollette, Jr. He found the Wisconsin senator in a receptive mood, and the two men agreed that some progressive should challenge the President in the primaries. LaFollette declared his liking of and respect for Johnson and agreed with Ickes that a good campaign could and should be made on the economic issues. Johnson replied to Ickes that the contacts he had made with his progressive colleagues convinced him that "their peculiar individualism renders any concert of action well-nigh impossible." The major weakness of the progressive group was obvious to Johnson, himself a supreme individualist: "I am perfectly satisfied that if we undertook anything we could not count upon anything like united action from those who call themselves Progressives here. A few individually would be glad to aid, but those are few. The difficulty with the so-called Progressives is that they are so very good, no individual except themselves can measure up to their standards." [9]

Library of Congress; on Johnson and 1932, see Marty Hamilton, "Bull Moose Plays an Encore: Hiram Johnson and the Presidential Campaign of 1932," California Historical Society Quarterly, XLI (September, 1962), 211-221; on Ickes' attempt to persuade Johnson to run, see Harold Ickes, The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon, (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943).

[9] Harold Ickes to Hiram Johnson, November 5, 1931,

Speculation that Johnson might seek the Republican presidential nomination increased in November when the California senator declared that President Hoover should eliminate himself as a candidate for a second term. If he did so, Johnson declared, he would earn the gratitude of his party as well as the people of the United States. When asked by a newsman if he was a candidate for the nomination, Johnson replied: "Quit kidding me about the Presidential nomination. When I'm a candidate you'll know about it." [10]

Ickes continued his pressure on Johnson during December and January. In early December, he wrote the California senator that he had consulted with Bronson Cutting, who felt someone with progressive views should challenge Hoover. He told Ickes that while he did not agree on every issue with Johnson, he could support his candidacy for the nomination without any trouble and believed Johnson could carry his state. A few days later, Ickes again assured Johnson that his candidacy would attract great support throughout the country, and that he would sweep the primary states. He warned Johnson: "Unless you get into the fight Hoover is going to get this nomination by default, the Republican party will get a terrific licking in November and the organization will remain in the hands of the reactionaries."

Johnson Papers; Ickes to Johnson, November 20, 1931, Ickes and Johnson Papers; Johnson to Ickes, November 23 and 30, 1931, Ickes Papers.

[10] New York Times, November 20, 1931.

Other letters of a similar nature were sent by Ickes to Johnson later in December, warning him time was running out and that he must decide to run. At the end of the month, Johnson told his sons that he was not inclined toward a Presidential candidacy because of his age and lack of funds. Johnson declared that Hoover was likely to lose the election, but that he had the power to renominate himself and that any challenger to the President was doomed to defeat. He indicated similar sentiments to Ickes. [11]

However, the pressure on Johnson increased in January, 1932. Colonel McCormick, the owner of the Chicago Tribune, offered financial aid to the California senator if he would run in the Illinois primary. Johnson told his sons: "I have been importuned day and night to go into the presidential preference primaries." But the California senator remained convinced that if Hoover could be denied renomination, the alternative would simply be another person of the same background and beliefs. Bronson Cutting wrote to Ickes that he was committed to Johnson's candidacy if the California senator could only be convinced to run. Ickes decided to make one last effort to draw Johnson into the primaries. [12]

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[11] Harold Ickes to Hiram Johnson, December 7, 1931, Johnson and Ickes Papers; Ickes to Johnson, December 11, 14 and 23, 1931, Johnson Papers; Johnson to his Boys, December 27, 1931, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Ickes, December 28, 1931, Ickes and Johnson Papers.

[12] Hiram Johnson to his Boys, January 9 and 18, 1932, Johnson Papers; Bronson Cutting to Harold Ickes, January 21, 1932, Ickes Papers.

The Chicago reformer wrote to Mrs. Johnson, whom the California senator called "The Boss", imploring her to convince her husband to run against Hoover. Borah and Pinchot had no chance of winning, Ickes declared, but Johnson could sweep the primaries. Ickes also wrote three more letters to the senator during the next two weeks. He told Johnson that his decision would be significant for the future of the progressive movement in the Republican party as well as for the nation. "It seems to me that it is the inescapable duty of any man who can take this nomination away from Hoover and who can establish as the head of the government a tolerant, wise, humane leadership at this hour of great crisis to say the word that will release the forces that will bring about his nomination and election." In his last letter, Ickes appealed to the senator's ego, declaring that Johnson could be remembered in history as a man who took upon himself the solution of the economic crisis by challenging Hoover and being elected President. Ickes pointed out that even senators of outstanding ability tended to be forgotten in history, while Presidents were always remembered. During this last burst of activity by Ickes, Bronson Cutting consulted with Johnson about the finances necessary to run a campaign, and he told Ickes that he planned to speak also with Mrs. Johnson. But Cutting told Ickes that the chances of Johnson deciding to run were slim, and he indicated that some progressives, including Borah, LaFollette and John Blaine of Wisconsin were

unsure about supporting him. [13]

Johnson was still convinced that he should not run due to his age and lack of financing. He had not changed his view that a progressive could not be nominated at the Republican convention, whether or not Hoover was rebuffed. He did not rejoice in having to fight a primary campaign in his home state against another native son, the President. He indicated his feelings in a letter to Charles K. McClatchy, publisher of the Sacramento Bee, a newspaper friendly to Johnson. A final decision had to be made by the middle of February on whether he would enter the North Dakota primary, to which he was publicly invited by progressive senators Nye and Frazier. On February 12, he announced that he would not run in that primary although he did not publicly withdraw from the possibility of candidacy in other state primaries. However, he had definitely rejected a campaign for President. The next day, he wrote to Ickes, telling him that he was sorry to disappoint him, but he had not changed his mind. [14]

At the end of February, there were published reports that Senators Nye, Johnson, Norris and Cutting felt the situation was hopeless and that no progressive could defeat

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[13] Harold Ickes to Mrs. Hiram Johnson, January 24, 1932, Ickes Papers; Ickes to Johnson, January 28, 1932, Johnson Papers; Ickes to Johnson, January 29, 1932, Ickes and Johnson Papers; Ickes to Johnson, February 8, 1932, Johnson Papers; Cutting to Ickes, January 29, 1932, Ickes Papers.

[14] Hiram Johnson to Charles K. McClatchy, February 2, 1932, Johnson Papers; New York Times, January 14 and February 13, 1932; Johnson to Harold Ickes, February 13, 1932, Johnson Papers.

Hoover. Borah, Johnson and Norris, the elder statesmen of the Senate progressives, had all refused to run, and Gifford Pinchot's candidacy floundered and died during the next two months for lack of interest and support. The individualism of the progressive Republicans had led to an ineffective response to a crisis within the Republican party as well as the nation. As in many earlier cases, the progressives had demonstrated more bark than bite. [15]

Now that the progressive Republicans had abandoned their attempt to deny President Hoover renomination, they faced a decision on whether to abandon their party ties and support the Democratic nominee, to remain neutral, or to support President Hoover. The progressive bloc split among these three options during the 1932 election campaign.

Senator Norris had been rumored as favorable toward Roosevelt's candidacy ever since he declared, at the 1931 Progressive Conference, that the nation needed another Roosevelt in the White House. In May, 1932, he formally announced that he would support the election of Roosevelt if he was the Democratic nominee. In any case, he refused to support Herbert Hoover. No other member of the progressive group endorsed Roosevelt before the campaign began in the autumn, but their favorable attitude toward the New York

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[15] New York Times, February 26, 1932.

governor was not surprising in many cases. [16]

As early as September, 1931, political observers in Wisconsin predicted that Senator LaFollette and his brother Philip, the progressive governor of the state, would support Roosevelt if he were nominated to run against Hoover, due to his similar views on public ownership and regulation of utilities. Hiram Johnson wrote Charles K. McClatchy in February, 1932, that Roosevelt was the one political figure likely to beat the President. Johnson felt the New York governor was not the ideal candidate but he seemed to have great popularity among the mass of American voters and could attract the support necessary to win the election. By April, Johnson was certain that Roosevelt was destined to be the Democratic nominee. The California senator declared: ". . . the people who are abusing Roosevelt, and the reasons for which he is being abused, are beginning to make me feel very, very kindly towards him." He indicated that he could not support Hoover for re-election and was unwilling to support a conservative Democrat. [17]

Although the progressives abandoned their fight to deny Hoover renomination, their criticism of the administration did not abate. In March, LaFollette issued a denunciation of the administration and the reactionaries in both

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[16] New York Times, May 6, 1932.

[17] New York Times, September 9, 1931; Hiram Johnson to Charles K. McClatchy, February 14, 1932; to his Boys, April 17 and May 1, 1932, Johnson Papers.

major political parties for their attitude on federal relief for the unemployed. He began a campaign to elect as many progressive delegates as possible to the Republican National Convention. Aware that Hoover's nomination could not be prevented, LaFollette still desired to gain publicity for the progressive planks, which he hoped to present as a minority report to the Platform Committee of the convention. At the end of March, Senator Nye threatened to bolt the Republican ticket. Nye faced a re-election campaign and proceeded to criticize Hoover's agricultural policies, which were harming his state. [18]

Political observers were most interested to see what Borah would do. The Idaho senator had a reputation for being a maverick three and a half of every four years, returning to the party fold by election time. However, in late May, Borah announced that he was dissatisfied with the prohibition resubmission plank formulated for the Republican national platform and had decided not to attend the convention. This public statement led President Hoover to invite Borah to a White House breakfast to discuss the prohibition plank. However, the Idaho senator's differences with Hoover on this subject were not bridged, and he remained away from the convention, attacking the prohibition plank and the platform clause which condemned party irregularity. A few days later, he announced in the Senate that he would not support Hoover

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[18] New York Times, March 22 and 28, 1932.

for re-election on the platform adopted by the Republican convention. At this time, Norris again affirmed that he would not support Hoover, and Lynn Frazier of North Dakota indicated similar sentiments. [19]

In accepting the Democratic nomination, Roosevelt welcomed the progressive Republicans into the fold, and the convention extended a formal invitation by adopting a resolution based on Senator Norris's declaration of support. Hiram Johnson wrote his son that he was glad that the New York governor was chosen. He told McClatchy that the Democrats had picked the best ticket possible, and that Roosevelt could win the election if he could overcome the force of all those who wished to preserve the status quo. He indicated that he would remain silent in public as to his role in the campaign until he returned to California and had a chance to discuss the campaign with McClatchy and other friends. However, on July 4, the California senator issued a statement very complimentary to Roosevelt, leading observers to speculate that he would eventually throw his active support behind the Democratic candidate. Johnson praised Roosevelt's decision to come to the Democratic convention to deliver his acceptance speech in person, a break with tradition. Johnson refused to commit himself formally at that time, however, and Nye, Frazier, and Borah also remained non-committal. LaFollette was considered at this point as unlikely to

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[19] New York Times, May 24 and 31, June 16 and 21, 1932; The Progressive, May 28 and June 25, 1932.

campaign actively for the Democratic ticket, even if he endorsed Roosevelt. Other than Norris, it was evident that the progressive Republicans were not yet ready to rush to the Democratic fold. On the other hand, no one except Arthur Capper of Kansas was willing to endorse President Hoover. Capper issued a statement in the middle of June predicting the re-election of the President "if the country excercises its sober judgment." He declared that ". . .history is going to record that Herbert Hoover served his country well and faithfully and courageously and ably during these times." As the 1932 election campaign opened, therefore, only Norris and Capper had definitely committed themselves to a candidate, of the members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc. [20]

Shortly after Roosevelt's nomination, LaFollette's publication, The Progressive, printed an editorial advising watchful waiting on the part of progressives. While pleased by Roosevelt's nomination, the journal declared that he had been weak and vacillating in his attitudes on various issues while seeking the nomination. "The Progressive believes that Progressives and liberals everywhere should await the future pronouncements of the Democratic nominee before enlisting under his banner in the coming campaign." On the

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[20] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., July 3, 1932; to Charles K. McClatchy, July 3, 1932, Johnson Papers; New York Times, July 5 and 3, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, July 3, 1932; New York Times, June 15, 1932; Speech of Senator Capper, June 14, 1932, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka.

other hand, the journal admitted that Roosevelt was bitterly opposed by "the forces of organized greed" which made him a more appealing candidate to progressives. As the campaign warmed up in September, the progressive Republicans began to make their decisions on the presidential campaign, and Governor Roosevelt undertook a series of actions designed to attract the support of as many progressives throughout the nation as possible. [21]

The Democratic nominee made a campaign tour of the West during September, hoping to gain support from progressive elements who found President Hoover's re-election unpalatable. On September 22, he delivered a speech in Sacramento, California, in which he invited the followers of Hiram Johnson to support his candidacy. He also praised the senator as a "warrior for progress", who had done much during his years in public office to further progressive ideals and goals. The next day, Johnson issued a statement expressing appreciation for Roosevelt's tribute. He declared that Roosevelt was obviously more favorable to progressive proposals than President Hoover. He did not endorse Roosevelt, however. He simply stated that as long as he was a member of the Senate, he would fight for progressive programs. His statement was considered an aid to Roosevelt's campaign, but few observers thought that he would actually endorse and campaign for the

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[21] The Progressive, July 9, 1932.

Democratic candidate.[22]

A few days later, Roosevelt was in Lamy, New Mexico, the home of Bronson Cutting. The Democratic nominee called for support of all liberals in his speech and invited Cutting to join him on the platform. The senator silently assented and waved to the audience that had gathered, but he declined to make any remarks. Roosevelt proceeded to tell the crowd that his family and the Cutting family had been friends for generations in New York. Both Roosevelt and Cutting had come from upper class backgrounds and had attended the same schools, although Roosevelt was a few years older. The Democratic nominee declared that he had known Cutting since they were young boys. Cutting, who had resigned a few days earlier as Republican National Committeeman at the state convention at Alberquerque, refused to commit himself to Roosevelt's candidacy in conversation with newsmen after the public meeting. However, many political observers believed that Cutting would declare his support for Roosevelt before the election.[23]

The next day, Roosevelt was in McCook, Nebraska, home of Senator Norris, who had already declared his support of the New York governor. The two men exchanged compliments before a crowd and expressed their approval of each other's

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[22] New York Times, September 23 and 24, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, September 23 and 24, 1932.

[23] New York Times, September 28 and 25, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, September 28, 1932; Santa Fe New Mexican, September 27 and 24, 1932.

views on the important public issues, as well as the need for voters to ignore party lines in the forthcoming presidential election. Norris declared that the nation needed Roosevelt in the White House, while the Democratic nominee eulogized the Nebraska senator as "the very perfect gentle knight" of American progressivism and as a better Republican than President Hoover. Norris made a special point of praising Roosevelt for his views on the utilities issue and his support of public power projects. This Nebraska appearance ended Roosevelt's personal appeal to Western progressives to support his candidacy. [24]

The other major effort of the Roosevelt camp to gain support of Republican progressives was the formation of the National Progressive League for the Election of Roosevelt and Garner on September 25, 1932, with Senator Norris agreeing to serve as chairman. Harold Ickes had speculated as early as April about the possibility of a progressive movement to support Roosevelt if he was the Democratic nominee. In late August, at the request of Frank P. Walsh, the head of the New York State Power Commission under Governor Roosevelt, a letter was sent out to a selected list of people to obtain their views on the formation of a group independent of the Democratic party organization to support Roosevelt's presidential campaign. The letter produced responses from many progressives, including Ickes, Donald Richberg and Norris.

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[24] New York Times, September 29, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, September 29, 1932.

The Nebraska senator's reply was the most positive, indicating his belief that "there ought to be some kind of a movement, nation-wide in its scope, to bring the Progressive vote of the country to Roosevelt where it naturally and logically belongs. This organization ought to be controlled and handled preferably by Republicans of the Progressive wing." Upon receipt of Norris's letter, Walsh called a series of conferences with various public figures from September 7 to 13. A plan of organization was drawn up and Walsh visited Roosevelt in Albany to discuss his idea of a National Progressive League. He showed Norris's letter to Roosevelt, who agreed that such an organization should be set up. [25]

Walsh favored the establishment of separate headquarters for the National Progressive League in Washington for publicity, in New York for the speakers' bureau, radio and finance, and in Chicago for membership and field work. He wanted to form a national committee of progressive Republicans and progressive Democrats encompassing at least three-fourths of the states, and to arrange for public appearances by progressives at political gatherings in the West and Midwest under the auspices of the league. Walsh proposed that

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[25] Harold Ickes to Hiram Johnson, April 30, 1932, Johnson Papers; eleven page typed memorandum on Formation of the National Progressive League in September 1932, written in 1934 by Walsh assistant, R.G. Sucher, Frank P. Walsh Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library; George Norris to Basil Manly, September 1, 1932, Walsh and Norris Papers.

Norris become the chairman of the organization. After consultation with Walsh's assistant, Basil Manly, the Nebraska senator agreed to take on the responsibility of this position and to make a speaking tour of the nation during October. Harold Ickes agreed to take charge of the western headquarters in Chicago, and Senator Costigan of Colorado, a progressive Democrat, was named Vice-Chairman of the organization to assist the elderly Norris. Richberg became chairman of the Executive Committee, and Frederic C. Howe was appointed Secretary of the National Progressive League. On September 25, the formation of the organization was announced in a statement authorized by Howe. The league was to be non-partisan in its policy, and its activities were to be confined to a discussion of economic issues. The membership was to include both Democratic and Republican progressives, as well as independents. Among the members of the league announced within the first few days were such public figures as Henry Wallace, Frank Murphy, Bainbridge Colby, Felix Frankfurter, Ray Stannard Baker and Amos Pinchot. Murphy, Colby and Pinchot agreed to speak on a nationwide tour beginning in the middle of October. Progressive Democrats who later joined the National Progressive League included Senators Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, Clarence C. Dill of Washington and Tom Connally of Texas. [26]

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[26] Eleven page typed memorandum on Formation of the National Progressive League in September, 1932, written in Fall of 1934 by R.G. Sucher, Walsh Papers; typed press release for morning papers of September 26, 1932, Walsh Papers; New York Times, September 26, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, September

The New York Times commented in an editorial that the National Progressive League was especially designed to appeal to progressive Republicans. Norris ". . .if anybody can persuade the Republican voters of the Middle West to desert the Republican standard, which he himself has long ceased to follow. . . .The main work of the new organization must be among Progressive Republicans." The Progressive saw the new league as an obvious attempt to gather progressive Republican support for Roosevelt. T.R.B. of The New Republic felt Roosevelt was certain to gain the open support of many progressive Republicans, based on the results of his Western trip and the formation of the new league. As it turned out, the Democratic nominee gained the endorsement of six of the twelve members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc--Norris, Johnson, Cutting, LaFollette, Frazier and Shipstead. [27]

Frank P. Walsh sent his representative, Robert G. Sucher, to the West, before the announcement of the formation of the National Progressive League, to encourage other members of the progressive group to follow Norris's lead and support Roosevelt's election. On September 16, Sucher had a conference with the LaFollette brothers in Milwaukee, in which he informed them of Norris's plans to head the new

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26, 1932; typed carbon list of National Committee members of National Progressive League, Walsh Papers.

[27] New York Times, September 27, 1932; The Progressive, October 1, 1932; T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXXII (October 12, 1932), 232-233.

league. On September 22, Sucher held a conference with Hiram Johnson in his San Francisco office, giving him the same information. The conference lasted several hours, and Johnson made it clear that he was awaiting an appropriate opportunity to lend at least indirect aid to Roosevelt's candidacy. Roosevelt's references to him the next day led to his praise of the Democratic nominee, but no definite commitment for an unequivocal endorsement and campaign speeches for Roosevelt. On September 27, Sucher met with Bronson Cutting at Santa Fe, shortly after the New Mexico senator returned from meeting with Roosevelt at Lamy. Cutting was informed of Norris's plans and activities, and he told Sucher that he wanted to confer with Senator LaFollette before making a public statement of support for Roosevelt. However, he indicated that he had no objections to the use of his name by the National Progressive League. On September 30, Sucher again met with the LaFollette brothers, this time in Madison, Wisconsin. Both were interested in the attitude of Johnson and Cutting. Thus, as October came around, it seemed only a matter of time before Senators Johnson, Cutting and LaFollette would endorse Roosevelt. [28]

On October 12, Hiram Johnson received a telegram from seventy Southern California newspaper publishers, calling on him to declare his support for the national and state

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[28] Eleven page typed memorandum on Formation of the National Progressive League in September 1932, written in fall of 1934 by Walsh assistant, R.G. Sucher, Walsh Papers.

Republican tickets. Johnson responded that he would not and could not support Hoover's re-election. He refused to mar his progressive record by voting for an ultra-conservative who was in alliance with the wealthy and powerful interests in the country. Progressives were concerned with the majority of the people and their human needs and therefore, he asserted, could not support Hoover for re-election. Governor Roosevelt had no comment on Johnson's statement, but conjecture increased that Johnson would support the Democratic candidate openly within a very short time. Ickes went to California at the request of Frank P. Walsh to confer with Johnson and to urge him to campaign for Roosevelt. The California senator finally agreed to speak for the Democratic candidate twice in California and once in Chicago. [29]

In his first speech in San Francisco at the end of October, Johnson attacked the Hoover administration and called on progressive Republicans to join in support of Roosevelt. He said that Hoover did not understand the economic problems which the nation faced and that he had a disastrous record, which should not be rewarded by party support. Loyalty to America came before loyalty to bankers and the power trust. In a Los Angeles speech a few days later, Johnson said California progressives should back Roosevelt

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[29] New York Times, October 13 and 15, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, October 15, 1932; Hiram Johnson to representatives of seventy Southern California newspapers, October 13, 1932, Johnson File in Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park.

as they had supported his own candidacy for governor in 1910 at a time when the Republican party in that state was controlled by a corrupt machine. He attacked Wall Street and big business, party regularity, and the leadership of the Republican party. He spoke of Roosevelt's philosophy, which "speaks the hopes and aspirations of this common humanity, demanding for all alike, rich and poor, high and low, big and little, the same rights in government, and insisting that the blessings of government shall not be showered upon a selected class." In his third campaign speech, he spoke before a Chicago gathering of 20,000 people, reviewing President Hoover's career and philosophy. Declaring that the President had guessed wrong many times and broken many promises to the people, he affirmed that the present crisis demanded a change in the White House. In letters to progressive colleagues Peter Norbeck, Charles McNary, and Bronson Cutting during October, Johnson indicated his expectation that Roosevelt would win the election, unless big business and the power trust could somehow turn the tide to Hoover. He told Cutting that he was not concerned with threats of Republicans to prevent his re-election to the Senate in 1934 because of his support of Roosevelt. "I infinitely prefer to take the present abuse and suffer the consummation of the threats of what will happen in the future than always or at any time to be in the attitude of running with the hare and

hunting with the hounds." [30]

After meeting with Ralph Sucher on September 27, Senator Cutting spent a few weeks considering how much support he would give to Roosevelt's candidacy. He wrote his mother in early October, indicating that he might not endorse Roosevelt at all, but that he would definitely repudiate the Hoover administration. He believed that Norman Thomas, the Socialist party candidate, would make the best President. But he agreed that Roosevelt was the only practicable alternative to Hoover. In another letter to his mother, Cutting indicated doubts about Roosevelt's progressivism. "The . . . immediate question to decide is, whether Roosevelt or Hoover is the lesser of two evils, and whether, if I believe the former, I am not under some moral obligation to say so." Despite his doubts, the New Mexico Senator informed his mother that he planned to come out with a public endorsement for Roosevelt at Alberquerque within a few days. Cutting was convinced by this time that Roosevelt would carry New Mexico in the election. The National Progressive League issued a statement by Cutting praising Roosevelt on October 21. Cutting declared that Roosevelt was for the average citizen,

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[30] New York Times, October 29 and November 3 and 5, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, October 29 and November 5, 1932; Hiram Johnson to Peter Norbeck, October 3, 1932, Peter Norbeck Papers, Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia; Johnson to Charles McNary, October 7, 1932, Charles McNary Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Johnson to Bronson Cutting, October 18, 1932, Bronson Cutting Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

that his career had been devoted to improving living conditions of the people, and that he was "an idealist who has sought to put his ideals into practice." [31]

On October 26, Senator Cutting called on the country to vote for Roosevelt in a Denver speech under the auspices of the National Progressive League. He criticized Hoover's four year record and depicted Roosevelt as an independent Democrat not accountable to political bosses and sympathetic with the problems of the masses. In his second speech at Alberquerque on November 6, Senator Cutting renewed his appeal to the people to vote for Roosevelt. The major issue of the campaign, Cutting declared, was that one candidate thought it was too expensive to put the unemployed to work, while the other made it the main item of his program. This was the issue that should guide the votes of the people. The people should pay no attention to Hoover's appeal to their fears but rather think of their hopes. [32]

After Ralph Sucher's meetings with the LaFollette brothers in September, Senator LaFollette wrote Cutting, indicating that he was undecided as to the course to take in the presidential campaign. He was certain that he would issue a

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[31] Bronson Cutting to his mother, Mrs. Bayard Cutting, October 5, 10 and 21, 1932, Cutting Papers; Santa Fe New Mexican, October 21, 1932; typed press release on Cutting support of Roosevelt, Walsh Papers.

[32] New York Times, October 27 and November 7, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, October 27, 1932; Santa Fe New Mexican, October 26 and November 7, 1932.

statement giving the reasons why he could not support Hoover, similar to his declaration in the 1928 election, but he was, like Cutting, doubtful about supporting Roosevelt. LaFollette told his Senate colleague: "I sense in his speeches confirmation of my estimate of the lack in depth and breadth of his fundamental progressivism." Also, support of Roosevelt would be seen as backing for the state Democrats in Wisconsin who were considered to be reactionary. The Progressives in Wisconsin had lost their hold on the Republican organization to the conservatives in the 1932 state primaries, with the surprising upset of Governor Philip LaFollette's bid for a second two-year term. Senator LaFollette hoped to remain out of the state election, but he knew this would be difficult if he endorsed Roosevelt for President. [33]

Despite his expressed doubts, Senator LaFollette announced his support of Roosevelt and the Democratic candidates for Governor and Senator on October 19. His brother endorsed Roosevelt a few days later, when he addressed a Democratic rally in Springfield, Illinois, as a replacement for Senator Norris, who had a cold and throat infection. The journal published by the LaFollette brothers, The Progressive, endorsed Roosevelt in its October 22 issue. The Wisconsin senator endorsed Progressive candidates for Congress and the state legislature, wherever they had a chance of victory.

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[33] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Bronson Cutting, October 1, 1932, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

He said in his statement that he was supporting Roosevelt as the only immediate hope for the relief of ten million unemployed people. He would, however, feel free to oppose any policies that Roosevelt pursued which he disagreed with, and he had no illusions about the reactionary nature of the two major party organizations. LaFollette indicated a new political realignment was likely in the future. He gave no speeches in behalf of Roosevelt's candidacy during the weeks remaining in the campaign, however, as Senators Johnson, Cutting, and Norris did. Norris scheduled eleven major speeches from October 17 to November 7, ranging from Philadelphia to Long Beach, California. The schedule wore him down, and he was forced to bow out of some public appearances, being replaced by Governor LaFollette on October 24 and Cutting on October 26. [34]

The other two progressive bloc members who supported Roosevelt, Henrik Shipstead and Lynn Frazier, avoided public statements regarding the campaign. Frazier said in a September interview that he would not support Hoover, but he refused to say whether he would endorse Roosevelt. Shipstead predicted shortly before the election that Roosevelt would carry his state and be elected President by the most decisive majority in many years. He refused to clarify his attitude toward the campaign, but he agreed to preside at a meeting addressed by Senator Norris. Despite the two

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[34] New York Times, October 20 and 25, 1932; New York Herald Tribune, October 20 and 25, 1932; The Progressive, October 22, 1932; eleven page typed memorandum on formation

senators' unwillingness to make a clear endorsement of Roosevelt, both were listed as members of the National Progressive League, so they can be considered as supporters of Roosevelt's election in 1932. [35]

Four progressive Republicans--Borah, Nye, Couzens and Norbeck--remained neutral in the 1932 election, avoiding endorsement of either major party candidate. At the beginning of August, Borah said he would not support either ticket in the presidential election, although he would back the Republican state organization in Idaho. He was critical of the prohibition and economic planks of the Republican platform, which had led to his original declaration in June that he would not support Hoover. [36]

Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, a moderate who had ties to progressive and conservative leaders in the party, tried to gain Borah's endorsement for Hoover. He wrote Borah in late August: "I am impatiently waiting for your Republican commitment in the present campaign. Some how or other I have a feeling that it is on the way. I can think of nothing more important at the moment, not only to the Party, but particularly to the country." In late October,

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of the National Progressive League in September 1932, written by R.G. Sucher, Walsh assistant, in 1934, Walsh Papers; copies of Norris campaign speeches in Norris Papers.

[35] Bismarck (N.D.) Tribune, September 29, 1932; New York Times, November 7, 1932; typed carbon list of National Committee members of National Progressive League of 1932, Walsh Papers.

[36] New York Times, August 3, 1932.

Vandenberg wrote again to Borah, who had expressed his distaste for Hoover. Vandenberg indicated that Borah could certainly state what his disagreements with the President were, but yet declare that he preferred him over Roosevelt. He believed that Borah's support would swing many undecided voters to the President. He suggested that the Idaho senator deliver a brief radio speech during the last week of the campaign or send a letter to the Republican National Committee. However, Borah was unrelenting in his refusal to support the President's re-election. He wrote an Idaho editor who urged him to come out for Hoover: "I am perfectly aware I am being criticized because of my silence. . . .whatever the result may be to me politically, I will not advocate a program in which I do not believe nor prostitute my intellect in defense of policies which I believe unwise, if not unpatriotic." He indicated that he felt the Republican party was wandering away from Republican principles. [37]

At the end of October, the Associated Press quoted Borah as saying he would vote for Hoover but not campaign for him. The Idaho senator issued a statement declaring that he had not made any such comments. As the issues developed in the remaining days of the campaign, he said, he would make his decision on how to vote. He cast an absentee ballot a few days

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[37] Arthur Vandenberg to William Borah, August 23, 1932, Arthur Vandenberg Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Vandenberg to Borah, October 21, 1932, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Borah to Alfred J. Dunn, editor of Wallace Printing Company, October 3, 1932, Borah Papers.

before the election, but refused to indicate his choice. He maintained his non-committal attitude toward the presidential campaign right up to the last speeches on election eve. Once the election was decided, Borah wrote Walter Lippmann: "I found myself out of harmony with both the candidates in this campaign, particularly upon economic and monetary questions. It did not seem to me there was any program whatever before the people purporting toward relief, -- and this vote was a protest vote. However, I sincerely hope that the new President will be equal to the task." [38]

Nye had indicated in the spring of 1932 that he doubted that he could support Hoover and would concentrate on his own re-election campaign. He had not changed his attitude by October. He indicated his views in a letter to Senator Norris: ". . .I could not and would not support Hoover so long as his administration withheld from agriculture as much in the way of relief as was being granted to the big and selfish interests." Nye avoided mentioning Hoover or Roosevelt in his campaign speeches. His attitude toward Roosevelt was summed up by a comment to Norris. "As for Roosevelt I do not and could not enthuse over him as you do." Later in October at a campaign rally in Bismarck, North Dakota, Nye condemned the political leadership of America as ineffective in the face of the economic crisis. In another address at Minot six days later, he referred to criticisms that

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[38] New York Times, October 27 and November 7, 1932; Borah to Walter Lippmann, November 9, 1932, Borah Papers.

had been aimed at him for remaining silent on the presidential campaign. He responded that any Republican in the state who endorsed Roosevelt was foolish, because it would only put more voters into the Democratic column. On the other hand, he considered it necessary to run an independent campaign so that he could criticize Hoover's farm programs. Nye remained neutral to the very end of the campaign and won re-election handily. [39]

Nor could Couzens be persuaded to abandon his neutrality. Vandenberg tried to convince him to endorse Hoover. Donald Richberg of the National Progressive League attempted to enlist Couzens to join in a Roosevelt campaign meeting in Michigan, at which Senator Norris was scheduled to speak. Even his private Senate secretary, John Carson, tried to prevail upon him to join the Norris meeting. But Couzens refused to commit himself. He told Vandenberg: "I can get up no enthusiasm for either candidate. I have received some letters from out in the State asking me to make some speeches but I have declined and intend to remain out of the campaign." He told his secretary that he did not see how he could be expected to endorse Hoover after being so critical of him. He expressed the belief that he was a senator for all the people and not just one particular party. Therefore, he would not engage in campaigns for others seeking high office. His reply

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[39] Gerald Nye to George Norris, October 5, 1932, Norris Papers; Bismarck (N.D.) Tribune, October 19 and 25, 1932; Personal Interview with Senator Nye, Washington, D.C., March 30, 1971.

to Richberg's invitation to the Norris meeting stated that he was refusing to take part in the campaign and was completely unenthusiastic about it. However, the New York Times reported that he was seen on the platform when President Hoover gave a speech in Detroit on October 22. But he gave no statement and seemed anxious to leave the meeting as soon as possible. Apparently, he had felt it proper to pay his respects to the President when he was in Michigan, while refusing to endorse him. [40]

Peter Norbeck, the only other progressive Republican running for re-election in 1932 besides Nye, had a similar dilemma. Should he endorse an unpopular President or remain neutral? His opinion of Roosevelt was definitely unfavorable. He wrote a friend after Roosevelt's nomination: "I have absolutely no confidence in him or his party, and I know the party and its leaders thoroughly." He avoided endorsement of Hoover. In a speech in Veblen, South Dakota, early in October, he blamed the Democrats during the Wilson administration for the present agricultural slump. He implied that President Hoover was not at fault for the depression, but he failed to go further in support of the administration. Later in the campaign, Norbeck declared in Sioux Falls that he was

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[40] Arthur Vandenberg to James Couzens, September 22, 1932; Donald Richberg to Couzens, October 11, 1932; John Carson to Couzens, October 13, 1932; Couzens to Vandenberg, September 26, 1932; to John Carson, October 1 and 17, 1932; to Richberg, October 12, 1932, James Couzens Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, October 23, 1932.

still a Republican and hoped for the success of the entire ticket. However, he avoided making a flat endorsement of the President, declaring only that he would feel less at home with the Democrats in power. Norbeck was obviously attempting to prevent alienation of the voters from his own re-election campaign, which he won handily while the Democrats swept the state. [41]

Only two progressive Republicans, McNary and Capper, endorsed Hoover and campaigned for him. These two moderate progressives, with the closest ties to the regulars in the party, made important contributions to the Hoover campaign. McNary delivered two radio speeches in Chicago and an address at Madison Square Garden in New York during the last week of the campaign. In his first speech, the Oregon senator declared that Hoover had done more for the farmer in the last three years than had been accomplished for them throughout the entire period of American history. He saw the Agricultural Marketing Act as a good beginning to a solution of the farm problem. In his second speech, he declared that Roosevelt was "ambiguous or evasive on controversial issues" and that the people still were unaware of his stand on many major questions. He defended Hoover and predicted the President's re-election by a substantial majority. In New York, McNary warned the people that a new President with plans for

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[41] Peter Norbeck to W.R. Ronald, July 11, 1932, Peter Norbeck Papers, University of South Dakota Library, Vermillion; Sioux Falls (S.D.) Daily Argus-Leader, October 8 and 24, 1932.

radical changes in policy would further depress industry and thus retard recovery.[42]

Capper was one of the most active campaigners in the Republican party for the re-election of Hoover. In Chicago, at the end of September, he declared that Hoover had "courage and backbone" and that the people should not abandon him. Roosevelt was a man of far less experience and attainment, and Capper warned against putting the reins of government into new and inexperienced hands. In a speech over his own radio station in Topeka, Capper said that Hoover was sympathetic with western interests. "Roosevelt has lived all his life in New York. He does not know the West. I see no reason for voting a western man out of the White House to put an eastern man in. We have too much eastern dominance in public affairs as it is now." During October and early November, Capper delivered similar speeches over his radio station and at public meetings in Ohio and Iowa. In his last address on the eve of the election, he declared that Roosevelt's election would postpone recovery at least a year. In addition to his campaign addresses, Capper also wrote an editorial in each week's issue of Capper's Weekly promoting Hoover's candidacy. In private, however, Capper was doubtful that Hoover could win. He wrote Borah that it would be difficult for the President to carry Kansas on election day, but

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[42] Speeches of Senator McNary in Chicago on October 31 and November 1, 1932, McNary Papers; New York Times, November 2, 1932.

that he was going to do the best he could to promote his re-election. [43]

On Election Day, Roosevelt swept the nation, winning forty-two of the forty-eight states. The progressive Republicans had divided into three camps on the campaign: six for Roosevelt, four neutral and two for Hoover. However, now the election was over and the progressive bloc was faced with a new challenge. How much influence could they, liberal members of the minority party in Congress, exert over a President who professed agreement with many of their ideals and principles? Would they lose their identity as a result of the Democratic landslide? The progressive Republican Senate bloc looked to the advent of a new administration and a "New Deal" with feelings of both optimism and concern.

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[43] New York Times, September 27, 1932; Topeka Daily Capital, September 27, 28, October 8, 19, November 2 and 8, 1932; New York Times, November 8, 1932; Capper's Weekly, September 24, October 1, 15 and 22, November 5, 1932; Arthur Capper to William Borah, September 30, 1932, Borah Papers.

CHAPTER IV

THE CABINET OVERTURES AND THE HUNDRED DAYS

The election of Franklin Roosevelt to the Presidency in 1932 pleased those progressive Senators who had bolted the Republican party to support his candidacy. Hiram Johnson wired the President-elect: "No man was ever paid a greater tribute by a people and no one ever more deserved it. Mrs. Johnson and I are very happy in your marvelous victory. . . ." He also sent telegrams to James Farley, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and Harold Ickes, who had played a major role in the National Progressive League's campaign. The California senator told newsmen that Roosevelt's election was a "political revolution". The common people had triumphed and were determined that the government should benefit them, rather than the wealthy interests. [1]

In Washington at the end of November, Johnson challenged the leadership of the Republican party to recognize the needs of the common people and adopt progressive

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[1] Hiram Johnson to Franklin D. Roosevelt, November 9, 1932; to James Farley, November 9, 1932; to Harold Ickes, November 9, 1932, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley; New York Times, November 10, 1932.

programs. He dismissed criticism by conservative Republicans of Senators Norris, LaFollette, Cutting and himself for having supported Roosevelt, affirming that he was still a Republican and would not accept a committee chairmanship when the Democrats took control of the Senate in March, 1933. He believed the Republican progressives had two major duties in the next few years: to aid the new President so that his programs would be a success, and to liberalize the Republican party in order to make it competitive with the Democrats in future national elections. Hoover's philosophy must be repudiated and a "New Deal" must come about within the Republican party as well as the nation. The key issue of the moment, Johnson declared, was unemployment relief rather than prohibition, which had been emphasized too much during the 1932 campaign. [2]

A few days later, Johnson wrote his friend, publisher Charles K. McClatchy of the Sacramento Bee, that he had no interest in patronage. His only reason for supporting Roosevelt had been principle, not the hope of political gain. The California senator believed that the new President was faced by a crisis that had never been equaled in American history, and he was certain that no actions would be taken to solve the nation's problems until Roosevelt was inaugurated in March. [3]

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[2] New York Times, November 30 and December 9, 1932; The Progressive, December 10, 1932.

[3] Hiram Johnson to Charles K. McClatchy, December 4,

George Norris agreed that the progressives had supported Roosevelt ". . .with a zeal and unselfishness which I think is remarkable. Not one of them, so far as I know, was guided in the slightest degree, by any thought of personal gain or advancement." The LaFollette brothers sent telegrams of congratulations to Roosevelt after the election. The President-elect responded that he would like their support and counsel in the days to come. The LaFollettes' journal, The Progressive, declared in an editorial: "Progressives in Wisconsin and throughout the nation generally will rejoice in the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the smashing repudiation of Hooverism . . ." If the Republican party would not follow liberal leadership, the journal declared, then it was time for the formation of a third party or a drift of all progressives to the Democratic party. [4]

Of those progressives who had endorsed Roosevelt, Bronson Cutting was least optimistic. He told Philip LaFollette of his doubt whether the Democratic party would take full advantage of their victory to bring about liberal programs. To his mother, he wrote: "I wish I felt a little

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1932, Johnson Papers.

[4] George Norris to Bertrand V. Tibbels, December 27, 1932, George Norris Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Philip LaFollette, November 19, 1932, Philip LaFollette Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Robert LaFollette, Jr., November 19, 1932, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; The Progressive, November 12 and 19, 1932.

more real confidence as to what the new administration will do." He considered Roosevelt's election too overwhelming to be satisfactory. In a letter to a constituent, he said that he had "no confidence in the Democratic party as a whole. Perhaps they will give us a pleasant surprise but I confess that I rather doubt it." [5]

Progressive Republicans who had remained neutral or supported Hoover now pledged support to the new President. Arthur Capper, the most active supporter of Hoover in the group, wrote an open letter to Roosevelt, offering " . . .my whole-hearted support in the mighty task you must undertake." He believed the farm problem transcended all other problems, and that higher prices, control of surplus agricultural production, refinancing of farm mortgages, and stabilization of the dollar were necessary to its solution. Thanking Capper for his "gracious and generous" letter, Roosevelt indicated that he wished to cooperate with the Kansas senator after March 4. [6]

Charles McNary, who had also been a strong supporter of Hoover, was invited to visit the President-elect during

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[5] Bronson Cutting to Philip LaFollette, November 10, 1932, Philip LaFollette Papers; Cutting to his mother, November 11, 1932; to Clara D. True, November 19, 1932, Bronson Cutting Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[6] Capper's Weekly, December 3, 1932; Capper's Farmer, February, 1933; also see Capper's Weekly editorials for November 12 and 26, 1932 and Capper's Farmer editorial for January, 1933; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Arthur Capper, December 22, 1932, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka.

January to discuss politics and agriculture. The Oregon senator wrote his brother afterward: "He is very affable and I think him much on the square and I am sure it will be a pleasure to work with him." James Couzens, who had remained neutral during the campaign, wrote a Michigan constituent in January: "I will be in a friendly atmosphere if a majority of the Democrats go along with legislation to better provide for our countrymen than has been done heretofore." But he doubted that the Democrats would stay united for long and accomplish much reform legislation. Peter Norbeck, also neutral in 1932, regarded himself lucky to have won re-election in South Dakota, considering that the entire Republican state and congressional ticket had been defeated, and that both houses of the legislature had gone Democratic for the first time in the state's history. While he felt Roosevelt was too "cagy" and failed to be frank with the people, he believed it mistaken for Republicans to consider the election results a fluke. [7]

During the four months between the election and the inauguration, Senator LaFollette reasserted the progressive goal of promoting the LaFollette-Costigan unemployment relief

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[7] Charles McNary to John H. McNary, January 25, 1933, Charles McNary Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; James Couzens to Thomas W. Payne, January 3, 1933, James Couzens Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Peter Norbeck to Lauritz Swenson, December 29, 1932, Peter Norbeck Papers, Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia.

bill, calling for $500 million aid for the needy. The lack of action on his bill in Congress was discouraging to LaFollette who, along with Costigan, re-introduced it in December, 1932. He wrote his sister in early January: "I hate to be a party to a congress which fiddles while Rome burns." The bill was defeated in the Senate by a vote of 44-28 in late February. The problem of unemployment relief thus fell upon the new administration. [8]

President-elect Roosevelt had decided by late November, 1932, to offer cabinet posts to three progressive Republicans--Senators Johnson and Cutting and former Governor Philip LaFollette. In November, newspapers reported that the post of Attorney General would go to Hiram Johnson. The New York Times indicated, however, that Senators Johnson, Norris, LaFollette and Cutting were not willing to leave the Senate, because of their desire to preserve their identity and independence and to be free to criticize the President's policies. Norris, in particular, was unwilling to consider a cabinet appointment and had advised his colleagues that they should not accept such an offer lest it would cast doubt on their motives. The Nebraska senator declared that the progressive group in the Senate was so small that it would be a great loss to the Senate if any were replaced by

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[8] Congressional Record, December 8, 1932, 162; The Progressive, December 17, 1932; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, January 6 and 13, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; The Progressive, February 25, 1933.

reactionaries. The progressive Republicans could best aid the new President by remaining in the Senate and fighting for good programs. Norris indicated that the progressives were interested in insuring that Roosevelt selected good personnel for the cabinet, especially for the positions of Secretary of State, Secretary of Agriculture, and Attorney General, as well as for membership on the various commissions, including Interstate Commerce, Federal Trade, and Power. The progressives had a major responsibility to guide Roosevelt at a time when many reactionaries, former political enemies of Roosevelt, were gathering around the President-elect. [9]

Shortly after the election, Roosevelt had asked Cutting to come to Warm Springs, Georgia. At the beginning of December, the New Mexico senator met with Roosevelt twice, the first progressive Republican to see the President-elect since the election. Afterward, Cutting told newsmen that the progressive Republicans should prepare a legislative program of their own, which would be submitted to Roosevelt. Indicating that he was prepared to support Roosevelt on progressive legislation, he asserted that the progressive bloc in the Senate did not expect patronage from the Democratic administration, and that they would not consider joining the Democratic party. Roosevelt had spoken with Cutting about the Interior Department post

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[9] New York Times, December 1, 1932; George Norris to Bertrand V. Tibbels, December 27, 1932, Norris Papers.

but did not formally offer it to the New Mexico senator until January 19 at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. At that time, Roosevelt indicated he did not want a final answer until Cutting had some time to consider it carefully. [10]

A few days later, Senators Cutting and LaFollette had a conference with Roosevelt at Warm Springs, in which the prospects of federal unemployment relief as well as cabinet posts were discussed. The newspapers were full of rumors that Cutting would take the Interior post, but he was not yet ready to decide. Roosevelt again told him to take his time. In the middle of February, the New York Times, published a front page story indicating that Cutting was a certainty to be in the new cabinet as Interior Secretary. However, the next day the newspaper reported evidence that Cutting had actually declined the post. Cutting later told a staff assistant that he had rejected the offer because he wanted to remain a "free agent". He added, in a very grave manner, that he "could not, somehow, trust Franklin." The New Mexico senator's suspicions and distrust of Roosevelt were to lead to a split between the two men when Cutting was

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[10] Franklin D. Roosevelt to Bronson Cutting, November 19, 1932, Cutting Papers; New York Times, December 5, 1932; Typed memorandum by Cliff McCarthy, Cutting's assistant, on "1932-33 Offer of Cabinet Post. Relations with F.D.R.", undated, Cutting Papers; Ten Page statement by Clifford McCarthy, undated but entitled "1932-1935", Cutting Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, January 20, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers.

a candidate for re-election to the Senate in 1934. [11]

The rumor at the end of November that Hiram Johnson would be offered a cabinet position did not become official until mid-January. The California senator told his sons of the speculation during December, indicating that no definite offer had been tendered. However, various unnamed individuals had asked him what he thought about the proposition. Johnson responded that he was not going to accept or reject a position that had not been offered, and he would not even discuss it until and when such an offer was a reality. However, he confided to his sons that he had indeed given much thought to whether he would accept a cabinet post, were it to be tendered to him by Roosevelt. "I have lived so long in absolute independence that it is a very difficult thing for me to see myself a member of any group where I would discipline myself to the views of any one, or any few men. . . .I have never been able to take my politics or my governmental policies from others. And this is why, perhaps

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[11] New York Times, January 23, 1933; New York Herald Tribune, January 23, 1933; The Progressive, January 28, 1933; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, January 24, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers; New York Times, February 18 and 19, 1933; Typed memorandum by Cliff McCarthy, Cutting's assistant, on "1932-33 Offer of Cabinet post. Relations with F.D.R.", undated, Cutting Papers; Ten page statement by Clifford McCarthy, staff assistant to Cutting, undated but entitled "1932-1935", Cutting Papers. On Roosevelt's consideration of Cutting to be Interior Secretary, also see Raymond Moley, After Seven Years (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1939) and The First New Deal (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966). My interview with Raymond Moley, May 14, 1971, New York City, indicated much the same information as in his two books mentioned previously.

I have been in rebellion and opposition so much. . . . I know myself well enough to know that I could not change, . . .I do not think therefore that there would be any real charm for me in any Cabinet position, nor do I believe that such small ability as I may have, could be best thus employed." If the opportunity arose, perhaps he might reconsider, but he doubted it. [12]

In the middle of January, Johnson informed his son that he would be meeting with Roosevelt within a few days. At a conference with the President-elect at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington on January 19, the two men spoke for twenty minutes. Roosevelt greeted him warmly with flattering personal comments and praise for the strong support which Johnson's state had given him in the election. He told the California senator that they had similar views on policies, and that he wanted Johnson to become a member of his official family as Secretary of the Interior, the same position he offered Bronson Cutting that evening in another private conference. Obviously, Roosevelt must have been aware of the likelihood that either or both senators would reject the offer, or he would not have asked both men on that day about the same cabinet post. According to Roosevelt advisor Raymond Moley, Roosevelt had discussed with him the possibility of offering Johnson, Cutting or Philip LaFollette the post of Attorney General, but neither senator was ever

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[12] Hiram Johnson to his Boys, December 18, 1932, Johnson Papers.

asked about this place in the cabinet.

Roosevelt believed that Johnson, as a westerner, had the knowledge necessary to handle the problems of the Interior department. Johnson thanked him for the compliments and generous offer, but he asserted that he did not want and would not accept any cabinet office. Roosevelt responded that he hoped to give added responsibilities to the Interior department, making it one of the most important agencies in the government. He urged Johnson to spend some time considering the offer, because of Roosevelt's great desire to have him as a part of his administration. Johnson indicated that he definitely would not accept the position since he wished to maintain his individualism. He left the interview with the President-elect immensely impressed with him and glad that he had supported him in the election campaign. He wrote his son of his impressions of Roosevelt. "He is genial, kindly, and sympathetic. I think I may sum up the impression that he made upon me by saying he is just a human being, and because he is just this, he is vastly different from the man who now occupies the White House. . . . He presents . . .as fair a hope for us as during my political career has been presented by any man." To his publisher friend, Charles K. McClatchy of the Sacramento Bee, Johnson confided that he had an immense liking for the new President and was pleased by Roosevelt's expressed desire to maintain cordial relations with the

progressive bloc in the Senate. [13]

Once Cutting and Johnson had rejected the Interior Department post, Harold Ickes was considered for and finally given the post. Ickes wanted to be in Roosevelt's cabinet, and so indicated his interest in letters and phone calls to Senators Johnson, LaFollette, Cutting and Nye. All expressed their support, but they contended that it was not their place to suggest it to Roosevelt. When Johnson declined the cabinet post, Roosevelt did not ask him for any suggestions. When Cutting later rejected the same offer, he also was not asked for advice on other possibilities for the Interior post. Then, Moley asked Senators Norris, Johnson, Cutting and LaFollette to suggest someone to represent their interests at a meeting to discuss policy toward the London Economic Conference. The progressives recommended Ickes as their representative. Before Ickes had met with the President-elect, Roosevelt telephoned the four senators to ask their opinion of his qualifications to be Interior Secretary. All endorsed him, and the newspapers reported speculation that the Chicago reformer would be selected. When Ickes met with Roosevelt, he readily accepted the cabinet posts. The turn of events pleased Hiram Johnson. "I think his selection is probably the best he could have made. There is no question of Ickes' ability and integrity.

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[13] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 15 and 22, 1933, Johnson Papers; Raymond Moley, The First New Deal, p. 73; Johnson to Charles K. McClatchy, January 29, 1933, Johnson Papers.

He regards the place as a great opportunity, and he has had sufficient experience to know how to conduct himself under the circumstances. I really look to see him make as good a secretary of the Interior as we have ever had." T.R.B. of The New Republic called Ickes' selection "the real surprise" of the cabinet and declared: "Quite clearly the Ickes appointment is due to the influence of Senator Hiram Johnson of California, and is completely progressive." [14]

The other progressive Republican considered for appointment to the Roosevelt cabinet, former Wisconsin governor Philip LaFollette, was rumored to be in line for a number of positions, within and outside the cabinet. Philip wrote his brother in early December that he would give a post serious consideration, but would not make any decision before consultation with his brother and Senators Cutting and Norris. In the middle of December, the first concrete offer of a cabinet post for the former Wisconsin governor came in a letter from a Roosevelt friend, John F. Sinclair, to Senator LaFollette. The senator's brother was being considered for Attorney General and Roosevelt was

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[14] Harold Ickes to Hiram Johnson, January 30, 1933; Johnson to Ickes, February 12, 1933; Johnson to his Boys, February 12, 1933; Ickes to Johnson, February 14, 1933, Johnson Papers; Raymond Moley, The First New Deal, pp. 94, 126-127; Harold Ickes, Autobiography of a Curmudgeon (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943), pp. 266-268, 270; Interview with Raymond Moley, May 14, 1971, New York City; New York Times, February 23, 1933; Hiram Johnson to his Boys, February 26, 1933, Johnson Papers; T.R.B. "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXXIV (March 8, 1933), 100-101.

interested in knowing the attitude of the progressives in the Senate toward this possibility. Senator LaFollette indicated in a telephone call to Sinclair that such an offer would require a great amount of thought. Sinclair agreed to travel to Wisconsin over the Christmas holiday to discuss the matter with the senator's brother. [15]

Meanwhile, Philip LaFollette made plans for a European trip from January to March. He held a meeting with Colonel Edward House, the former advisor to Woodrow Wilson, who was now working for Roosevelt during the transition period before his inauguration. House gave him information and letters to assist his travel throughout Europe. He also spoke of the need for Roosevelt to seek support from the progressives in the West. The former Wisconsin governor declared that the progressives were a guard against extreme reactions to the left or right, and that they should not join with Roosevelt unless "he was willing to apply courageously and intelligently the remedies that would at least try to get to the guts of the depression." The LaFollette brothers had earlier held a meeting with Senator Cutting in regard to the cabinet speculation. Philip sailed for Europe a few days after these meetings, unwilling to commit himself to Roosevelt unless the proper situation developed. After he left the country, Senator LaFollette received a

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[15] Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., December 9, 1932; John F. Sinclair to Robert LaFollette, Jr., December 15, 1932; Robert LaFollette Jr. to Philip LaFollette, December 22, 1932, LaFollette Family Papers.

telegram from Roosevelt advisor Henry Morgenthau, indicating that the President-elect wished to speak to his brother, the first definite indication that Roosevelt was seriously considering the former Wisconsin governor for a government position. Senator LaFollette wired back that his brother was on a European trip, but that he was willing to speak for him in his absence. [16]

The next day, Sinclair told LaFollette that the President-elect wanted to see him on January 19 at the Mayflower in Washington. This was the same day on which Senators Cutting and Johnson were offered the Interior Department post at separate meetings with Roosevelt. The Wisconsin senator wrote Sinclair to assert that he was not seeking an interview with Roosevelt, but that he was ready to meet with him to discuss any matter dealing with public affairs. Sinclair sent this letter to Roosevelt, observing: "It seems to be the attitude of the Progressives that they will cooperate in every way, but they do not want to be making suggestions to you with reference to public policy unless you ask definitely for their cooperation." [17]

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[16] Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., January 4, 1933; Philip LaFollette to Fola and George Middleton, January 4, 1933; Henry Morgenthau to Robert LaFollette, Jr., January 9, 1933; LaFollette, Jr. to Morgenthau, January 9, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers.

[17] John F. Sinclair to Robert LaFollette, Jr., January 10, 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Sinclair, January 17, 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers and LaFollette Family Papers and Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park; Sinclair to Roosevelt, January 18, 1933, Roosevelt Papers.

At the Mayflower Hotel meeting, Roosevelt's secretary Marvin McIntyre and advisor Raymond Moley greeted LaFollette and ushered him into a room where Roosevelt was talking with progressive Democrat Burton K. Wheeler of Montana. As soon as LaFollette entered the room, Roosevelt turned to him and declared: "I want Phil in my official family. I do not know just where yet, but he must come in." LaFollette had no chance to reply, because of the conversation that ensued, regarding various matters, among Roosevelt, Moley and Wheeler. Upon leaving, LaFollette indicated to Roosevelt that the possibility of his brother joining the cabinet must be discussed more frankly and in further detail at another time. The President-elect suggested that LaFollette visit him at Warm Springs, Georgia, along with Bronson Cutting. [18]

By the time of the meeting between Roosevelt and Senators LaFollette and Cutting, the rumors that the President-elect was considering Philip LaFollette for a cabinet post had reached the columns of two liberal journals, Common Sense and the LaFollette publication, The Progressive. The latter speculated that the former Wisconsin governor might be named Secretary of the Interior or Attorney General. It considered the second post as a key one for a progressive Republican to hold, since it offered . .

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[18] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, January 20, 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers and LaFollette Family Papers; Raymond Moley, The First New Deal, p. 73.

an opportunity to progressives to follow up on their program of public power control, conservation of natural resources, and anti-trust activity. [19]

At the Warm Springs meeting, LaFollette came away with the impression that the President-elect's attitudes on public power, farm relief, unemployment relief, and public works were similar to the progressive positions. He wrote his brother that Roosevelt had stated that he planned to offer the position of Attorney General to him if Senator Thomas Walsh of Montana, a progressive Democrat, rejected the position. If Walsh accepted the post, then he wanted to know what other position outside of the cabinet Philip was willing to accept. LaFollette responded that while he could not answer for his brother, he doubted that he would be willing to leave Wisconsin, unless the opportunity offered him for public service were outstanding. Cutting informed Roosevelt that he would make his own decision on a cabinet post only when Philip had decided if he would also join the President's official family.

LaFollette then told Roosevelt that he had supported him because of his positions on the major issues, and that he planned to support his administration so long as he followed progressive policies and goals. He did not expect that Roosevelt would consult with him regarding policy. He would work for the success of the new Democratic administration,

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[19] Common Sense, January 19, 1933; The Progressive, January 21, 1933.

regardless of whether or not Philip was in the cabinet. He also told Roosevelt that if he followed progressive policies, he was bound to divide his own party. The President, he said, had the rare opportunity to make the Democrats a progressive party. Roosevelt responded that he was aware of this, and that this was the reason that he wanted the support of men such as the LaFollettes and Senator Cutting. In his letter to his brother, LaFollette indicated that he thought Senator Walsh would accept the post of Attorney General, and that Roosevelt had offered the position to Philip purely as a means of gaining the brothers' support for his administration. No matter what resulted in regard to the cabinet offer, LaFollette added: "I shall be governed by the position which he takes upon public questions; and I shall support his policies when they are in conformity with progressive principles and shall do all in my power to make his administration a success so long as it is evident that he intends to advocate genuine progressive policies." A few days later, LaFollette wrote his sister: "The chances of Phil's being offered a place in the cabinet are now very remote. Everything I hear indicates Walsh will accept and that eliminates Phil as I see it. If it works out this way Cutting will decline and that's that." [20]

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[20] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, January 24, 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers and LaFollette Family Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, January 26, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers.

At the beginning of February, Philip LaFollette wrote from Berlin. He indicated his approval of the course followed by his brother in the conference with Roosevelt. He felt that Cutting was right in refusing to join the cabinet unless another progressive Republican were named to the cabinet. The former Wisconsin governor felt that ". . .the big central question is we must not be maneuvered into a situation which will divide our forces.---Hence I think it will be for the best if it works out that none of us are in his cabinet, and are left free to use this year to organize ourselves into a closer and more definitely organized group.---There is real danger that by going into his cabinet we would become prisoners to his future---that danger is greatly augmented if one of us goes alone." Senator LaFollette responded a few days later, reaffirming that Cutting would not accept a cabinet post unless Philip were in the President's official family. If Cutting declined, Philip might be offered the Interior post, because Roosevelt wanted at least one progressive Republican in his cabinet. He agreed with his brother that if two progressives were to be in the cabinet, Phil should consider accepting a position, but he should reject it if he were to be the lone progressive. [21]

After Cutting rejected the Interior Department post

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[21] Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., February 5, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip and Isen LaFollette, February 7, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers.

in mid-February and Walsh accepted the position as Attorney General, Roosevelt asked Senator LaFollette whether his brother would accept the chairmanship of the Federal Power Commission or membership on the Federal Trade Commission. Philip responded that he could not consider either position while on his European trip. After his return to the United States in the middle of March, the two LaFollettes, at Roosevelt's invitation, went to the White House on March 20. Philip prepared a nine-page memorandum on the conference, which lasted one hour. The relief program and foreign affairs, as he had witnessed it on his trip through Europe, were discussed. Then, the President declared that he was anxious to have the former Wisconsin governor become a member of his administration through a position on the Power Commission; the transportation, radio and telegraph system; the Federal Trade Commission; or the public works and relief program. Philip replied that he was not interested in leaving Wisconsin at that time, but that he would make himself available later if there were urgent need for his services. He believed that other people were better equipped to handle the positions which had been offered to him. Roosevelt requested that the two brothers keep in touch with him and visit him often. The LaFollette brothers

considered the overall atmosphere of the meeting very pleasant. [22]

The result was that Harold Ickes was the only representative of progressive Republicanism in the cabinet who possessed close contacts with the major leaders of the Senate bloc, although the progressives were also happy with Henry Wallace's appointment as Secretary of Agriculture. Cutting, Johnson and former Governor LaFollette all refused positions because of the desire of the progressive bloc to remain independent of the Roosevelt administration. Whether Roosevelt had expected them to accept is debatable. In any case, he wished to fortify the bridge that had been built between him and some of the progressive Republicans during the campaign.

Shortly before the election of 1932, Roosevelt spoke at length about the progressives with one of his advisors, Rexford Guy Tugwell, a close friend and associate of many of them. Roosevelt declared that the progressives "were wonderful people, but they did have the general characteristic of complete unreliability." Being individualists,

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[22] Robert LaFollette, Jr. To Philip LaFollette, February 22, 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers and LaFollette Family Papers; Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., February 23, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, February 24, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 6, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers and Roosevelt Papers; Phil's Notes on interview with FDR on return from Europe, March 20, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers; New York Times, March 21, 1933; The Progressive, March 25, 1933.

none was willing to accept the leadership of others or work effectively in a group. Roosevelt told Tugwell that political leaders must make deals to gain their ends, but the progressives were unwilling to condone this. As Tugwell later expressed Roosevelt's thoughts: "They insisted on dictating means as well as defining ends; they'd sacrifice the cause if the strategy happened not to please them, and they would be noisy and accusatory." Roosevelt believed that he would never be able to retain the support of the progressive Republicans through two terms. Thus, while admiring the progressives, Roosevelt distrusted them. He hoped, however, that Tugwell would be able to firm up their support for him and his programs for as long a period as possible. [23]

One other move that Roosevelt made in the interregnum to gain progressive support was to pledge to put into operation government owned power and nitrate plants at Muscle Shoals. This was the project that Senator Norris had long fought for in Congress, only to be set back by President Hoover's vetoes. Norris was with Roosevelt when he made his announcement at Montgomery, Alabama, in late January, and tears came to his eyes as he told reporters that his dream was finally coming true. Hiram Johnson cheerfully declared: "Roosevelt has taken such a remarkable position concerning Muscle Shoals that

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[23] Rexford Guy Tugwell, The Brains Trust (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), 489-492, 496.

we can forgive him many other things." [24]

A few weeks before the inauguration, T.R.B. of The New Republic declared that the progressives expected to be able to work in a harmonious manner with the new President. This was a unique experience for the progressive bloc, which had always been forced to work in opposition to the administration since Taft's presidency. The Roosevelt cabinet pleased the progressives. The LaFollette journal, The Progressive, expressed its approval of the people selected by Roosevelt. Five outstanding liberals had been selected, including Thomas J. Walsh for Attorney General, Frances Perkins for Secretary of Labor, Henry Wallace for Secretary of Agriculture, Harold Ickes for Secretary of the Interior, and Cordell Hull for Secretary of State. After Hull's appointment was announced, Senator Borah indicated to newsmen that he was very satisfied with the choice, calling Hull "an able, cultured gentleman, a deep student of international affairs and a man of fine courage." [25]

While progressive Republicans were happy at the prospect of the inauguration of a progressive-minded President, they did not wish to lose their identity as a

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[24] New York Times, January 22, 1933; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 4, 1933, Johnson Papers.

[25] T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXXIV (February 15, 1933), 16-17; The Progressive, March 4, 1933; New York Times, February 19, 1933.

separate bloc in the Senate. This explains the refusal of those progressives who had supported Roosevelt to accept patronage, the retention of their committee chairmanships or a cabinet or other post under the Roosevelt administration. During the months before inauguration, the progressives also attempted to form a permanent organization that would serve as their vehicle of independence from the administration, an extension of the National Progressive League of 1932.

Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania was the first to suggest such a permanent organization. He asked a friend, Representative Philip D. Swing of California, to consult with Johnson and LaFollette on his proposal that progressive Republicans meet to discuss future tactics. Johnson was favorable, but LaFollette felt it would be better to await events after March 4 before deciding on future strategy. Swing told Pinchot that LaFollette believed "that if Roosevelt was fortunate in having the Country return to some degree of prosperity, the probability was that the progressive rank and file would stay merged in the Democratic party, at least for another election. If Roosevelt's program failed to produce results, then the situation would be different." However, LaFollette believed that the progressives should announce their own program before Roosevelt indicated his goals, because it would demonstrate that they were not just posing as critics as they had in the past administrations, but that they had a

constructive series of proposals of their own, by which Roosevelt's progressivism could be judged. Pinchot replied to Swing that while he was disappointed with LaFollette's expressed doubts about a permanent progressive organization, he hoped such a conference would be held. [26]

Ickes, before his appointment as Interior Secretary, was also a major promoter of a progressive conference. He wrote to Hiram Johnson in mid-January, urging the California senator to attend a preliminary conference on the matter, where Senators Norris, Cutting, LaFollette and Democrats Wheeler and Costigan were planning to discuss the question of a progressive organization. However, Norris appeared reluctant, as the nominal head of the progressives, to call for such a meeting. This led Ickes to write to LaFollette, suggesting that the senators meet, whether or not Norris agreed to attend. Ickes recommended Cutting as the leader of the progressive organization if Norris's reluctance continued. LaFollette replied that a meeting had been arranged by Norris for January 28, but that Johnson was not expected to attend. Ickes now wrote Johnson of his disappointment, declaring: "I do think it of tremendous importance for the Progressives to make common cause and

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[26] Phil D. Swing to Gifford Pinchot, December 14, 1932; Pinchot to Swing, December 16, 1932, Gifford Pinchot Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

undertake to work together where and when they can." [27]

At the meeting of progressive senators in Washington on January 28, nine legislators--only half of the progressive Republican Senate bloc--were present. Norris, LaFollette, Cutting, Nye, Frazier and Blaine (who was a lameduck), as well as Farmer-Laborite Henrik Shipstead and Democrats Wheeler and Costigan attended. Norris declared that it was the hope of those present that the National Progressive League of 1932 would continue to aid in the achievement of liberal programs. No definite results were accomplished, however. A subcommittee was appointed to examine the prospects of a permanent organization, with LaFollette, Cutting and Wheeler agreeing to serve. LaFollette asked Ickes whether there would be funds to finance a headquarters in Washington. Ickes indicated that he thought the progressives should organize a nationwide committee with representatives from every state and headquarters in Washington. The main goal should be to "at least create a skeleton organization so that two years from now or four years from now we won't have to start from scratch or act as individuals without a common understanding or a common objective." [28]

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[27] Harold Ickes to Hiram Johnson, January 13, 1933, Johnson Papers; Ickes to Robert LaFollette, Jr., January 24, 1933; LaFollette, Jr. to Ickes, January 27, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Ickes to Johnson, January 30, 1933, Johnson Papers.

[28] New York Times, January 29, 1933; The Progressive, February 4, 1933; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Harold Ickes, January 30, 1933; Ickes to LaFollette, Jr., February 1, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers.

In early February, Cutting and Wheeler met with LaFollette and agreed that a progressive organization should be established, but they expressed doubts about the ability of their group to raise enough money to finance such an organization. At the end of February, Norris announced that progressives would attempt to use their influence to move the administration toward progressive goals through the establishment of a separate organization. Robert S. Allen wrote in Common Sense magazine: "The Progressives . . .still hold to their belief that Roosevelt will display a militant liberal leadership. But they frankly are taking no chances. If he lives up to their expectations, well and good. If not they propose being ready to abandon ship and set out on their own again." But these plans were weakened at the start by the refusal of Senators Borah and Johnson to take part, along with other progressives of lesser renown, including Couzens, Norbeck, Capper and McNary. [29]

Unity even among those senators who had taken part in the meeting for progressive organization seemed unlikely. LaFollette, for example, felt that Norris was too intent on working for progressive results through the Roosevelt administration and the "reactionary Democrats". "I shall not be able to follow Norris's leadership," he told his brother

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[29] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Harold Ickes, February 6, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; New York Times, February 26, 1933; New York Herald Tribune, February 26, 1933; The Progressive, March 4, 1933; Common Sense, March 2, 1933.

Phil, "if he persists in his adherence to the policy of silent cooperation which he has outlined." While LaFollette himself wanted the new President to succeed, he was unwilling to tie the progressive future to Roosevelt. LaFollette wrote his brother: "I dread any open break with Norris and I know it will weaken the movement at least temporarily; but I would rather go on alone, if need be, than to have the movement destroyed." Once again, as so often in the past, the progressive Republicans lacked unity. Would the progressive Republicans be able to exert any leverage with Roosevelt and play an important role in the New Deal? This was the question that many observers of the political scene wondered about as the new administration took office. [30]

Hiram Johnson predicted to his sons a few weeks before Roosevelt's inauguration that "you'll see some of the most bizarre and fantastic legislation that ever was enacted." The California senator was amazed at the serenity and confidence which Roosevelt displayed in face of the biggest crisis for the country since the Civil War. Shortly before inauguration, Senator Borah expressed concern that the Congress would confer dictatorial power on the new President because of the economic emergency. The economic problems which the nation faced could be solved, the Idaho senator

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[30] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Phil and Isen LaFollette, February 7, 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers and LaFollette Family Papers.

declared, by using the constitutional powers which the President had, which had not been employed by Hoover. [31]

Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated on March 4, 1933. His inaugural speech attracted widespread interest. The Progressive praised the inaugural address for its optimistic note. The speech expressed the determination and courage of Roosevelt to lead the way out of the economic morass. This was not the time to be partisan, the journal declared, but rather to join behind the new President at the special session called to deal with the nation's problems. The progressives in general were pleased. Hiram Johnson attended the inauguration for the first time in his career, and then went to the White House for tea. Johnson liked particularly the passage in Roosevelt's address in which he attacked the "moneychangers" who had led the nation to economic ruin. He was certain that no Republican president would have dared to utter such a statement. "The Lord only knows what is going to be done," Johnson told his sons, "but that he is going to endeavor to do something quickly is certain." [32]

On his first night in office, Roosevelt directed the Secretary of the Treasury to draft an emergency banking bill by the opening of the special session on March 9. He also

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[31] Hiram Johnson to his Boys, February 12 and 19, 1933, Johnson Papers; New York Times, February 23, 1933.

[32] The Progressive, March 11, 1933; Hiram Johnson to his Boys, March 5, 1933, Johnson Papers.

halted all transactions in gold and proclaimed a national holiday by a proclamation on March 5. When the special session, which was to become famous as the "First Hundred Days" to history, opened on March 9, the banking legislation was passed by a unanimous voice vote in the House and by 73-7 in the Senate. The measure extended governmental assistance to private bankers to reopen their banks. It validated actions already taken by the President and gave him complete control over the movement of gold, penalized the hoarding of gold, and arranged for reorganization of banks that had closed and the reopening of banks that had liquid assets. The bill did not provide for nationalization of the banking system, however, as some progressives had favored.

The progressive Republicans were divided on the bank bill, with four (Couzens, Johnson, McNary, Norris) voting with the majority; four voting against (Borah, LaFollette, Nye and Shipstead); and four not voting, although Norbeck and Frazier were announced against the bill and Capper for it. Norbeck expressed concern about the passage of the bill without any time for debate. ". . .When we undertake to frame important banking legislation in an hour we are liable to get ourselves in trouble." LaFollette declared that he believed no more important vote had been cast since the declaration of war in 1917. He was concerned that, under the terms of the bill, the large New York banks would exercise a dictatorship over the nation's banking system. The Wisconsin senator felt that the President should have

greater control over banking than the bill provided for. Borah voted against the bank bill for the same reason. The bank bill, he wrote a constituent, was "laying the foundation for the creation of a financial dictatorship with headquarters in New York." Johnson, who had been invited to consult with the President the night before the opening of the special session, admitted that no one knew much about the banking bill, but he was impressed by Roosevelt's willingness to act, so had decided to support his good judgment. Capper served a warning on the administration later in the special session that Roosevelt should not try to force a general bank reform measure through Congress as rapidly as he had done with the emergency banking measure. While Capper had been announced as in favor of the bill, he indicated that he was opposed to a unified banking system if it meant the destruction of the smaller local banks. [33]

On March 10, Roosevelt sent his second message to Congress, requesting power to cut $400 million from payments to veterans and $100 million from the pay of federal employees. After only two days debate, Congress passed the economy bill, with only three progressive Republicans

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[33] Congressional Record, March 9, 1933, 67, 46, 63-65; The Progressive, March 18, 1933; New York Times, March 11, 1933; William Borah to Joseph J. Turner, April 3, 1933, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Hiram Johnson to his Boys, March 12, 1933, Johnson Papers; Congressional Record, April 27, 1933, 2434-2435.

(Capper, Johnson, McNary) voting with the majority, while four voted against (Borah, Couzens, Frazier, Nye), with the rest not voting although at least two (Cutting and LaFollette) were known to oppose the bill. Capper declared that he was supporting the grant of extra powers to Roosevelt during the emergency because this was not a time for petty politics. He hoped that Roosevelt would be fair in the application of the law to the veterans and government employees and would not cut their paychecks drastically. It was heartbreaking to have to cut salaries and benefits at all, but the government would go bankrupt if expenditures were not decreased. The President, he declared, must be entrusted with all the powers necessary to solve the economic crisis. He was not interested in which party received the credit for the actions taken by the federal government, as long as the country benefited. [34]

Couzens considered the economy bill "iniquitous" and wondered whether this was a government of "moneylenders" or of the people. He expressed high regard for the new President and his hope to support him, but he was certain that Roosevelt personally would not find the time to decide the specific details of how much compensation veterans should receive. This would be left up to bureaucrats who were unconcerned about the effect of pension cuts on the war veterans. Borah declared that an across-the-board

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[34] Congressional Record, March 14, 1933, 322-323.

percentage reduction for all government workers was unfair to those at the bottom of the scale. He denounced the bill after its passage as "clearly in violation of the Constitution" because of its grant of new powers to Roosevelt. LaFollette introduced two amendments to the Economy Act, both of which were defeated. One would have limited the pay cut to veterans to fifteen percent, while the other would have prevented a flat cut in the salary of government employees. The Wisconsin senator wrote a friend that both the bank bill and economy bill were deflationary measures. He wanted to stand behind the President, but he would not do so when he felt that Roosevelt was steering in the wrong direction. Bronson Cutting, who had been absent for the vote, considered the economy bill "the most indefensible piece of legislation ever passed by Congress." He made plans to fight the veterans' cuts in the Senate before the session ended. [35]

A number of progressives fought for reinstatement of the veterans' pensions later in the session. Hiram Johnson declared in Senate debate that he had voted for the Economy Act and had no apologies to make for it. But he recalled that the early days of the special session had been days of "hysteria", in which bills had been thrown at the

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[35] Congressional Record, March 14, 1933, 346-348, 336-337; March 15, 1933, 442-443, 449, 466, 468; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Thomas Duncan, March 17, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; William Borah to L.C. Macomber, April 3, 1933, Borah Papers; Bronson Cutting to Dr. E.S. Bullock, April 28, 1933, Cutting Papers.

Congress in a bewildering fashion and pressure was applied to pass them without debate. The California senator said that he had never thought the Economy Act would have such a drastic effect on the veterans. He appealed for action to restore the cuts permitted in the legislation. Borah stated that a great injustice had been done. The methods employed to save money were too severe, and it was essential to have a radical modification of the legislation. The Idaho senator told his colleagues: "The supreme question here is whether we are willing to retrace our steps, assume the power given to us by the people and retrieve the authority we have delegated to the President." LaFollette said that the veterans would have tremendous hardship if the Economy Act went into effect with the proposed $400 million slash. [36]

Cutting offered an amendment to limit the cut in veterans' pensions to a maximum of twenty-five percent. Even this was too much of a reduction in his mind, and he preferred a fifteen percent slash or none at all. Attacking the Economy Act as "the most infamous act ever passed", he advocated its repeal. He told his colleagues that his criticism of the Economy Act should not be construed as having a partisan basis. It was not meant as an attack on the President. The New Mexico senator pointed out that he had known President Roosevelt for nearly forty years.

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[36] Congressional Record, May 31, 1933, 4651-4655, 4658; New York Times, June 1, 1933.

Claiming "the highest affection and admiration" for the President, Cutting questioned the reasoning employed by the administration to justify the veterans' pension cuts. The budget would remain unbalanced until the government could find some way of building up the purchasing power of its citizens. The way to bring this about was certainly not to cut the income of the poorest members of the community.

As the session came to an end, Johnson urged that the wrong done to the veterans by the Economy Act be repaired through passage of Cutting's amendment, which was co-sponsored by Republican Frederic Steiwer of Oregon. However, no action was taken on this matter, and Cutting and the other progressives lost a hard-fought struggle. Roosevelt apparently grew embittered toward Cutting's denunciation of the administration over this issue, leading to the decision to oppose his re-election campaign in 1934. Cutting wrote privately: "The veterans' fight has been extremely wearying, but I felt that it was up to me to make it, especially in view of the fact that I was not here to make a fight on the economy bill in March. We got nothing substantial in the way of legislation, but I do think the Administration will henceforth be rather leery about perpetuating the same kind of outrages which have been the rule in the last two

months." [37]

Roosevelt's third message to Congress called for quick action to end prohibition by amending the Volstead Act to legalize beer of 3.2 percent alcoholic content by weight. The progressives divided on this issue with Borah and Capper, two of the leading "drys" in the Senate, attacking the bill as a nullification of the 18th Amendment. Capper expressed the hope that Roosevelt would give the nation a program to take care of the unemployed and the farmers, rather than devote his time to such issues as the right to drink beer. [38]

Up to this point, the administration had followed a very conservative program oriented toward deflation. This had not pleased the progressives. Cutting, when he arrived in Washington at the end of March, expressed a lack of enthusiasm for the Roosevelt program as it had so far been presented. He told his mother that he doubted much could be accomplished during this "steamroller" session. The administration had wasted its time during the first month on harmful measures and had lost a great opportunity to introduce constructive programs. He was relieved that he

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[37] Congressional Record, May 31, 1933, 4662; June 2, 1933, 4815, 4832; June 5, 1933, 4970; June 14, 1933, 6002-6003; Bronson Cutting to Col. J.D. Attwood, June 16, 1933, Cutting Papers.

[38] Congressional Record, March 16, 1933, 519, 527.

had rejected a cabinet post, telling his mother: "How glad I am not to be a part of it!" Hiram Johnson expressed admiration of Roosevelt's manner of taking hold of affairs and pleasure that a "regular human being" had replaced "a direct descendant of God" in the White House. But he admitted that most members of Congress did not know what the measures presented to them called for. He felt that some of Roosevelt's proposals were not "thoroughly digested" and that his program would be "scrutinized now with much more care, and they will not be passed with the same celerity which characterized those of the financial crisis." [39]

On March 16, the President charted a new course with the introduction of a farm bill, destined to be known as the Agricultural Adjustment Act. It provided for reduction of farm mortgages, restriction of acreage, the levying of a tax on the processors of agricultural commodities, and the payment of fees to farmers who agreed to limit production based on parity, which gave the farmer the same level of purchasing power that he had before the world war. The progressive Republicans supported passage of this bill and, except for McNary, favored the amendment of Senator Elmer Thomas of Oklahoma, authorizing the President to bring about inflation through alteration of the gold content

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[39] Bronson Cutting to his mother, March 25 and April 8, 1933, Cutting Papers; Hiram Johnson to his Boys, March 19, 1933; to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 25, 1933, Johnson Papers.

of the dollar. But there were misgivings about the effectiveness of the new agricultural legislation. Senator Norris doubted that it would bring prosperity, but he thought that it would help the farmers more than any other suggested program. In his opinion, it would not adequately restore the purchasing power of the farmer. It also gave the President and the Secretary of Agriculture almost unlimited power to control agriculture, but the Nebraska senator was not concerned about that, since he believed they were "moved by the very highest of motives." He was certain that difficulties would arise in the administering of the law, but the power had to be delegated to someone. The AAA would not cure all the evils that the farmers had to contend with, but it was an important first step. [40]

Borah declared that the only part of the AAA which he approved was the farm refinancing section, but, if it could not be separated from the bill, he would vote for the entire legislation. He later said the AAA would fail to restore the price of farm commodoties for an extended period of time until a sound method of insuring inflation were adopted. The Economy and Banking bills had led to greater deflation, Borah asserted. Senator Frazier declared that, in order to increase the purchasing power of farmers, the

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[40] George Norris to A. Barnett, April 8, 1933, Norris Papers; Congressional Record, April 12, 1933, 1548-1550; April 13, 1933, 1636.

bill needed a provision for a reasonable profit as well as an average cost of production. Senator Capper indicated that the AAA was a step in the right direction. He knew it would not solve all of the problems of the farmer and that it granted unusual powers to the executive branch of the government. The AAA was an experiment in national planning that might not work, but the President should be praised for taking action. The Kansas senator thought Henry Wallace well fitted to carry out the measure. Norbeck said he supported the bill "because of the necessity for it." If the farmer had no earnings, there could be no purchasing power. He had misgivings about the effectiveness of the farm-mortgage provision, but was in favor of the bill as the only alternative to the present depressed condition of agriculture. Nye believed that the AAA was a "glorious experiment". It did not have the total support of farm state senators, but it at least promised an improvement in commodity prices. He hoped the measure would be administered for the maximum benefit of the farmer. As it turned out, Nye voted against the final legislation, without explaining the reason, along with Borah and Frazier, while the other nine progressive Republicans supported it.[41]

The passage on May 3 of a bill creating the Tennessee Valley Authority, which Roosevelt had promised to Senator

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[41] Congressional Record, April 13, 1933, 1630; April 17, 1933, 1831; April 13, 1933, 1632-1633; April 14, 1933, 1730-1732; April 22, 1933, 2160; April 28, 1933, 2558; April 22, 1933, 2157; May 10, 1933, 3121.

Norris in January, received the unanimous support of all progressives who had long fought alongside Norris for public power, while the passage of Senator Hugo Black's five day work week bill was supported by all progressives, except Borah and McNary. Borah indicated in a letter to an Idaho union leader that he considered it unconstitutional. Roosevelt also thought the 30-hour work week bill unconstitutional and began to move for the enactment of a recovery bill, which would regulate both industry and labor. The main emphasis for the rest of the special session was on passage of the National Recovery Act and unemployment relief. [42]

Unemployment relief came first, with the President proposing a Civilian Conservation Corps. Roosevelt was not keen about a program for public works and federal grants to the states for relief, but eventually came around to support of these programs under progressive pressure. Senators LaFollette and Costigan revived their relief bill, which passed on March 30 with the support of all progressive Republicans except McNary. But the battle for public works was not as easy a victory for LaFollette, Costigan and other progressives. The Wisconsin senator wrote his sister at the beginning of April that the Roosevelt cabinet was divided on the issue of public works programs, with many advocating

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[42] Congressional Record, May 3, 1933, 2808; The Progressive, April 15, 1933; Congressional Record, April 6, 1933, 1350; William Borah to L.F. Ingersoll, April 7, 1933, Borah Papers.

balancing of the budget and the restoration of confidence, in the spirit of the Hoover administration. LaFollette felt that Roosevelt must swing away from a deflationary policy and use public works to stimulate purchasing power. He thought a sharp recession likely within a few months if the deflationary policy continued.[43]

After another week had passed without action by the administration on public works, LaFollette gave up hope that the administration would support "an adequate program to restore purchasing power." However, along with Wagner, Costigan and Cutting, he agreed to meet with the President to discuss a program of re-employment. On April 14, the four senators presented their ideas at the White House. Roosevelt left the impression that he was committed to a large public works program and wanted the four senators to formulate the details. But then Roosevelt told newsmen that little could be accomplished by such a program, a statement which disappointed LaFollette. The four senators were determined to draft a bill, however.

LaFollette was critical of Roosevelt's lack of planning and organization. "It . . .seems to me clear," he wrote, "that in a crisis of this gravity, with mighty economic forces at play, the policy of leaping and looking

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[43] The Progressive, March 18, 1933; Congressional Record, March 27, 1933, 860; March 30, 1933, 1042; The Progressive, April 8 and 22, 1933; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, April 3, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers.

afterwards may very easily prove disastrous." Philip LaFollette offered to help his brother present public works plans in greater detail at another meeting with Roosevelt. In reference to the President, the former governor told his brother: "If R. sees it, and wants it, we are rapidly approaching the time where our crowd can not only be of help to him, but can help push some of the reactionaries out, and at the same time pick up enough substantial, open-minded conservatives to put a real program over." [44]

On May 8, Costigan, Cutting and LaFollette introduced a public works bill calling for a $6 billion outlay, with all power over programs granted to the President. The administration had its own program, calling for $3.3 billion as part of the recovery bill. LaFollette thought this inadequate, but the National Recovery Act as passed contained the administration figure. Though the progressives had not set the amount of money, they had succeeded in impressing upon the President the necessity for public works. LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, proudly pointed out that Roosevelt's plan was modeled on that of Governor Philip LaFollette's administration in Wisconsin in 1931 and

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[44] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola LaFollette, April 10, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, April 13, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers; New York Times, April 15, 1933; LaFollette, Jr. to Alfred T. Rogers, April 20, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Philip LaFollette to LaFollette, Jr., May 3, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers.

1932. The unemployment relief legislation was also copied from the LaFollette experience in Wisconsin.[45]

The National Recovery Act, probably the most important piece of legislation of the First Hundred Days, authorized business to draft code agreements in major industries under exemption from the anti-trust laws. Business was to be licensed by the government, and labor was guaranteed the right to collective bargaining through Section 7-A of the act. The codes set up by big business were to include minimum wages and maximum hours, a replacement for the Black thirty hour bill. The bill also provided for $3.3 billion in public works. The philosophy behind the NRA was one of government-business cooperation in the interest of national planning. This was a carry-over of the New Nationalism philosophy of Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Croly. But most of the progressive Republicans were suspicious of cooperation between the government and big business and wanted the anti-trust laws enforced rather than suspended.

LaFollette convinced the committee members drawing up the bill to include a business licensing provision, as this was a weapon that could be used by the administration to protect the public interest. But Borah was especially unhappy with the bill's provision for suspending the anti-trust

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[45] Congressional Record, May 8, 1933, 2966; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dear Ones, May 8, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; New York Times, May 14, 1933; The Progressive, May 27, 1933.

laws. He declared in debate with Wagner that the bill was a step toward further concentration of wealth. He reviewed the provisions of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 and quoted from Louis Brandeis, who had advocated trust busting as part of the New Freedom philosophy he recommended to Woodrow Wilson. The Idaho senator proposed an amendment to the bill, stating that the industrial codes should not permit combinations in restraint of trade, price fixing, or other monopolistic practices. He reminded Senator Wagner that the Democratic party had promised to strengthen and enforce the antitrust laws during the campaign, but now were moving to suspend them. He also disliked the amount of power that would be given to the administrator of the act, Hugh Johnson. [46]

When the NRA came up for a Senate vote on June 9, all the progressive Republicans voted for it, except for Borah. Couzens and Norbeck were not present and did not indicate how they would have voted. But when the conference report on the bill came up for a vote in the Senate on June 13, seven of the nine progressives who voted earlier for the bill joined Borah in opposition, leaving only Capper and McNary, the moderate progressives, in support. Why had the progressives changed their minds? Borah ably stated the

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[46] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, June 6, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Congressional Record, June 7, 1933, 5162-5165; June 8, 1933, 5246; New York Times, June 8, 1933; Congressional Record, June 13, 1933, 5842.

case against the conference report. It had eliminated language referring to combinations in restraint of trade and price fixing from the Borah amendment adopted by the Senate. The Idaho senator declared that consumers and small businessmen would have no chance to compete with big business under the terms of the bill. The NRA was a bill designed to promote the security of monopolies and was an emasculation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Later, Borah wrote: "The masses will pay for it in the end. There may be a temporary revival, but in the end, the price fastened upon the great body of the people will amount to nothing less than a crime." LaFollette had urged before the original passage of the bill by the Senate that his amendment requiring public disclosure of income tax returns by businesses under NRA supervision be adopted. The Senate had agreed to his amendment by a vote of 56-27. However, the conference report eliminated his amendment as well as the Borah amendment, and this led the Wisconsin senator to agree with his colleague that the report should be rejected. The Senate vote was extremely close, 46-39. The progressive Republicans, nurtured on the anti-trust laws, were not pleased at the possibility that big business would gain strength at the expense of smaller businesses and the consumers. They were ready to attack the NRA as soon as

its weaknesses became apparent. [47]

During the session, Roosevelt also asked Senators Johnson and LaFollette to serve as members of the United States delegation to the London Economic Conference. The President first asked Ickes to pursuade Johnson to accept the post. But at a White House meeting of the three men on May 21, Johnson spoke of his independent stand and said he could not yield his individualism. Roosevelt asked him to consult with his wife before making a final decision. The next day, Johnson indicated that he had not changed his mind about serving, despite his wife's desire to travel to Europe. Johnson told his sons that his refusal to go to the London Economic Conference as a representative of the administration was a difficult one because of the President's kind nature and his own desire to travel through Europe. But he felt he must maintain his independence as he had always done in the past.

Roosevelt next turned to Senator LaFollette, who also refused to serve, despite a telegram from his brother recommending that he accept. The Wisconsin senator contended that it was necessary to give his time to the legislation still to be considered and voted on in the special session,

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[47] Congressional Record, June 9, 1933, 5424; June 13, 1933, 5861, 5834-5837; New York Times, June 14, 1933; William Borah to George Record, June 19, 1933, Borah Papers and Amos Pinchot Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Congressional Record, June 9, 1933, 5419-5420; June 13, 1933, 5851.

specifically the industrial recovery bill and public works programs. Roosevelt now turned to Senator Couzens of Michigan, who agreed to go to the conference as the progressive Republican representative on the American delegation. Roosevelt again had experienced a difficult time in gaining the involvement of progressive Republicans in the policies of his administration. [48]

Reactions to the Hundred Days were mixed among the progressive Republicans. As a group, they had not been effective, often splitting their votes on important legislation. Most of them disapproved of the Banking bill, Economy Act, and the National Recovery Act, because they were deflationary and aided big business. The group was more enthusiastic about unemployment relief, Black's thirty hour bill, Muscle Shoals, the Section 7-A labor provision and public works provisions of the NRA, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act with the Thomas inflation amendment included, because those dealt with issues long promoted by the progressives. However, many of them had doubts about the extent of the commitment of the administration to public works, and they considered the AAA only

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[48] Harold Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), I: 33,42,43; Raymond Moley, After Seven Years, p. 218; Raymond Moley, The First New Deal, p. 407; New York Times, May 22 and 25, 1933; Hiram Johnson to his Boys, May 26, 1933, Johnson Papers; Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., May 28, 1933; LaFollette, Jr. to Phil LaFollette, May 29, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; New York Times, May 30, 1933; The Progressive, June 3, 1933; New York Times, May 30 and 31, 1933.

a beginning toward a solution of the farm problem. Overall, the progressive Republicans had ambiguous feelings about the First Hundred Days of the New Deal.

Hiram Johnson was optimistic about the future and positive toward the new President. He detected a definite change in the atmosphere of government in Washington and considered the progressive philosophy of government closer to fulfillment than at any point in his lifetime. He indicated that he was willing to go along with the President in almost anything that he desired. He praised the President's capacity for hard work, his energy and his willingness to experiment with new ideas. ". . .I am glad to pay my small tribute," he told his fellow senators, "to the fine and gallant gentleman who sits in the White House . . .He has the adventure of youth and he has the wisdom of age. . . .we can thank God that there was a man in the White House who had the guts to do and go forward and to strive and to try and to take the responsibility of striving and trying." He did, however, express concern to his sons that too many things were being attempted without real understanding of their implications by the Congress, admitting: "We are shooting in the dark, . . ." But these concerns were mitigated by his admiration for Roosevelt. [49]

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[49] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 1, 1933; to his Boys, April 16, 1933, Johnson Papers; Congressional

Robert LaFollette, Jr. had worked hard for the passage of unemployment relief and public works legislation and was generally pleased with the Hundred Days. His magazine, The Progressive, declared that the New Deal was succeeding in changing the face of government in Washington. But it warned that the "big interests" still had a major hand in government through the NRA. In an editorial, LaFollette asserted that the battle against the depression was not yet over. "With the general purpose of some of these measures I was in hearty sympathy. To the extent to which they attempted to promote a more orderly economic system, to bring about inflation in its proper sense, to restore purchasing power and to raise the standard of living of the great mass of families who depend for their livelihood upon the effective functioning of industry and agriculture, they had my support." But he disapproved of aspects of the NRA, the Banking Act, and the Economy Act. He thought the NRA was good only in the sense that it made concessions to organized labor. [50]

Arthur Capper was basically optimistic about the New

Record, April 28, 1933, 2541; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., May 2, 1933; to Charles K. McClatchy, June 4, 1933, Johnson Papers.

[50] The Progressive, June 17 and 24, 1933.

Deal. In an interview in New York, he predicted increasingly better times. He expected that commodity prices would continue to rise, which would lead to an increase in employment and wages. He praised President Roosevelt's leadership and expressed his confidence in Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace. America was obliged to experiment, he declared, if a way was to be found out of the depression, and he was willing to support any program that promised improvement in the economy. As one of only two progressive supporters of the conference report on the NRA, the Kansas senator admitted that it was an experiment that might not work, but he wrote in a Capper's Weekly editorial: "It will require the co-operation of industry, of labor, of a majority of people in the country, to give it a chance to work successfully. In my judgment it is necessary to try the experiment." He also called on his Kansas constituents to give the AAA a chance before criticizing it. "Whether we approve entirely of the plans worked out by Secretary Wallace and his assistants or not, it is up to us to give those plans every chance to succeed. The measure was written in our interest. . . .Our co-operation is essential to its success." [51]

Other progressive Republicans who were generally optimistic about the thrust of the New Deal were Charles McNary of Oregon, the minority leader of the Senate, and

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[51] New York Times, June 20, 1933; Capper's Weekly, June 17 and 24, 1933.

Peter Norbeck of South Dakota. McNary wrote his brother that there was a feeling of optimism again in Washington. "I think out of this legislation Congress has passed at the suggestion of the new President, that benefits nation wide will ensue." Norbeck believed that Roosevelt had done a better job than he had thought possible. He admitted to a friend: "I occasionally find myself singing faint praises. Yes, I know he is making a mess of a lot of things, but, My God, he is trying. What is more . . . they are introducing a little humanity into government . . . where it has been outlawed for some time." [52]

But other progressives were concerned about a number of aspects of the Hundred Days. Couzens declared: "The legislation being proposed, the demands for more legislation, and further demands for government aid are almost bewildering." Borah was quite unhappy over many aspects of the New Deal. He disliked having to criticize a President who had such great popularity and support and possessed such sincerity as Roosevelt did. He hoped that Congress would eventually demonstrate its independence of the President. The Idaho senator was suspicious of the new powers that had been granted to the President, since he believed the Congress had no right or authority to grant such powers under the Constitution. The same results, he contended, could be

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[52] Charles McNary to John H. McNary, April 10, 1933, McNary Papers; Peter Norbeck to James E. Stewart, May 25, 1933, Peter Norbeck Papers, I.D. Weeks Library, University of South Dakota, Vermillion.

accomplished without the extra grant of powers. [53]

Along with Borah, Nye was the progressive Republican most concerned about the effects that the National Recovery Act might have on small businessmen and consumers. In an Atlantic City address shortly after the end of the session, he declared that whether the NRA worked or not depended on the honesty and judgment of the President and those whom he chose to administer the act. Nye said that Congress had passed the NRA with fear and trepidation, and only with the knowledge that if necessary, it could recall the grant of executive powers after a period of two years. The North Dakota senator was already concerned over indications that big business would attempt to dominate the new codes. He hoped that the federal government would eventually take over control of the nation's banks. [54]

Thus, as the Hundred Days came to an end, Roosevelt and the New Deal evoked a mixed response among progressive Republicans. The members of the Senate bloc saw good and bad tendencies in the accomplishments of the congressional session. Only the passage of time and new developments would indicate the success of the President's programs and the ultimate response of the progressive Republicans to them.

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[53] James Couzens to A.L. Couzens, May 26, 1933, Couzens Papers; William Borah to Hunter Woodson, May 1, 1933, Borah Papers.

[54] New York Times, June 27, 1933.

CHAPTER V

GROWING DISCONTENT AND DISILLUSIONMENT, 1933-35

The First Hundred Days had been a period in which the legislative branch willingly granted extensive powers to President Roosevelt to combat the depression. However, many members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc, while anxious to assist the President in formulating programs to deal with the economic crisis, expressed concern about various aspects of the administration's recovery program, specifically the NRA, AAA, Economy Act and public works. During late 1933 and 1934, the progressives drew attention to the faults that they saw as inherent in the legislation of the First Hundred Days.

During the summer of 1933, the Roosevelt administration negotiated NRA code agreements with major national industries. The President appointed General Hugh Johnson as administrator of the National Recovery Administration, and the Blue Eagle was adopted as the symbol to promote industrial recovery. However, as early as September, 1933, the NRA had begun to provoke commentary, much of it hostile, from political figures, including some of the progressive Republicans who had opposed the legislation when it became law in June.

LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, posed the problems that progressives faced in assessing the effectiveness of the NRA. The administration had made a good start during the First Hundred Days, the magazine said, but the manner in which the NRA was administered, especially in regard to its treatment of organized labor under section 7-A, would indicate just how "progressive" Roosevelt's programs were. In another issue, the journal expressed its concern over reports that the NRA was likely to be dominated by "millionaire manufacturers" who would serve on recovery boards that possessed the power to destroy small businessmen if they refused to comply with the codes that big business negotiated with the federal government. The small businessmen, The Progressive asserted, should be given a "square deal". A few weeks later, the journal declared that bankers and big business were indeed gaining control of the NRA machinery, a development which disturbed LaFollette. [1]

Senator Couzens agreed to deliver a radio speech in support of the NRA program in August, 1933. But he indicated to his secretary that he had reservations about the efficacy of the legislation because it was attempting to encompass every aspect of business enterprise and was a move toward centralization of power in Washington. The NRA administration had to be simplified, the Michigan legislator said, and the President had to avoid making it a political issue.

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[1] The Progressive, July 15, August 5 and 19, 1933.

Couzens asserted: "The cause is too big to argue about who should get credit for it -- the people will decide that when we find the results." [2]

In September, Capper gave a radio address endorsing the NRA, entitled "Time for Action, Not Argument". He declared that the NRA program deserved the support of the American people, because it was an expression of hope in the future of America. The President had stopped the drifting of the American economy and deserved the undivided support of all Republicans as well as Democrats as he tried to revive the nation's business, industry and agriculture. Later in September, Senator McNary remarked in an interview that he heartily approved of the NRA legislation, although he felt more emphasis should be placed on the public works program, so as to cut down unemployment, increase purchasing power and provide higher wages for labor under the recovery codes. [3]

As the months went by and the NRA appeared to fall under the control of big business, progressive Republicans, especially Borah and Nye, began an attack on the purposes, policies and tendencies of the program. In November, Borah called for revival of the anti-trust laws, a proposal which had failed to pass in June when the NRA legislation was adopted.

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[2] James Couzens to John Carson, August 24, 1933, James Couzens Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[3] Arthur Capper Radio Address, September 17, 1933, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka; New York Times, September 27, 1933.

Farmers were suffering because of higher prices for products they bought, which was a direct result, the senator declared, of the NRA codes, which promoted monopoly and thus were failing to aid recovery. He urged upon the President federal control of the nation's combines and trusts, in a speech he delivered later in November at the national convention of the Grange, a farm organization. At the end of that month, Nye, in a letter to Hugh Johnson, charged that the NRA was "failing to accomplish through its codes that which the Congress intended should be accomplished" because it was not protecting small independent businessmen against monopolistic practices. He cited the General Electric Company as a specific example of a large corporation harming small independents. LaFollette also developed doubts on the effectiveness of the NRA. He told his wife: "People are losing faith in the N.R.A. and unless Roosevelt cuts loose on this recovery program and pumps out purchasing power and relief in other agencies, my judgment is that his administration is going to fail tragicly [sic]." Despite his doubts, he delivered a public speech in Buffalo in December, in which he declared that NRA was a "great step in the right direction" and that the American people were behind it. [4]

At the end of December, Hugh Johnson invited Borah and Nye to become members of a board established to guard the

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[4] New York Times, November 6, 18 and 26, 1933; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dearest, November 8, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; The Progressive, December 16, 1933.

interests of small businessmen under the NRA codes. Both progressives had suggested the idea, but they believed that Congress should assign them to such duties, rather than the Roosevelt administration and therefore rejected the offer. As the new session of Congress opened in January, 1934, The Nation speculated on the role that progressives would play. Johnson indicated that he would avoid disagreements with the administration and would continue to support Roosevelt because it was either that or "economic hell". The magazine continued: "A number of the other independent spirits in Congress have, however, remained ominously silent, while a few have broadly intimated that they will seek to modify the Roosevelt recovery program and restrain the President. Senators Borah and Nye, for example, have been agitating for a restoration of the antitrust laws to their former standing, and they apparently mean to carry their agitation to the floor of the Senate." [5]

The New York Times reported on January 17 that Nye planned to attack the NRA in a Senate speech, which was seen as the forerunner of a progressive attack on the codes as responsible for monopolies, elimination of small business and increases in the cost of living. The next day, the senator delivered his address accusing the NRA of being a huge government machine with powers more far-reaching than any except the government of the Soviet Union. Congress, he said, must

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[5] New York Times, December 27, 1933; "The Week", The Nation, CXXXVIII (January 3, 1934), 1.

amend the legislation so that it served the people, rather than the profit takers and monopolists. He supplied facts and figures from various industries to buttress his attack. Borah chimed in, calling again for reinstatement of the anti-trust laws; otherwise, monopolies, combines and trusts could fix the prices of products and set the rules for the entire economy. Prices had risen 67 to 120 percent since the instituting of the codes, the senator asserted. [6]

When Hugh Johnson defended the NRA operations, Nye responded in the Senate, demanding that the New Deal be divorced from the "industrial pirates". General Johnson then asked Senator Norris to pave the way for a conference with Nye, since Norris was regarded as the ideal intermediary. When the two men met, they agreed that machinery would be created to protect the interests of the small businessmen. At the end of January, Nye delivered another radio address on "Needed N.R.A. Reforms". He asserted that the machinery of the New Deal was being captured by "Old Dealers". The general principles and purposes of NRA were laudatory, Nye said, but the codes should not be allowed to foster monopoly. He was encouraged that General Johnson had agreed to name a board to consider complaints of independent businessmen. Nye boldly proclaimed that big business had never contributed to progress. The captains of industry, he said, were only

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[6] New York Times, January 17, 1934; Congressional Record, January 18, 1934, 866-871, 871-874; New York Times, January 19, 1934.

interested in profits. T.R.B. of The New Republic took note at the end of January of the restiveness of many progressive Republicans at the "lack of clear purpose" of the Roosevelt Administration, especially in regard to the NRA. [7]

During February, 1934, the progressive attack on the NRA increased. Borah submitted a resolution calling on the Federal Trade Commission to investigate the steel code, to check for fixing and raising of prices. He also wanted the commission to report on the increase in the cost of gasoline during the previous six months, to explain how the petroleum code affected the price of gasoline to consumers. The Senate accepted the Borah resolution. Capper also joined the attack. The New Deal seemed to be forgetting smaller businessmen and industries, he declared, in its pursuit of prosperity. He pledged to continue supporting the administration's recovery program as long as it was in the public interest. Capper was certain that the President and his associates had the welfare of the average citizen in mind as they set policy. Thus, they needed only to be made aware of the nature of many of the industrial codes, which were acting as "death warrants" for the little businessmen. Then, the administration would take action against monopoly to protect those in distress. [8]

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[7] Congressional Record, January 22, 1934, 1075-1077; New York Times, January 23 and 25, 1934; Congressional Record, January 27, 1934, 1442-1444; T.R.B., "Washington Notes", The New Republic, LXXVII (January 31, 1934), 333.

[8] Congressional Record, February 2, 1934, 1824; New York Times, February 3, 1934; Congressional Record, February 6, 1934, 2059-2060.

Senator Nye continued his assault by introducing a resolution asking for a list of all persons employed in responsible positions under NRA, with their present and past business connections indicated, along with those industrial codes that they had helped to prepare. For those officials who had left the NRA, the resolution called for the listing of their positions in private life and whether they were employed by any code authorities administering the agreements. The resolution also called for a complete roster of all code authorities and their members, in order that independents could ascertain to what extent big business was represented. Shipstead now joined the attack, asserting that NRA was supposed to be a program to redistribute wealth and to provide employment, and therefore, prices must be reduced and wages increased. But the steel code, for example, was not restoring purchasing power. Rather, the NRA seemed to be a "price-gouging program, permitting monopolistic practices and going back to the practices that brought on the depression." [9]

Nye's NRA resolution was sidetracked when the Senate first considered it. By a vote of 41-33, the Senate sent it back to the Finance Committee. Robinson of Arkansas, the Democratic leader, said that the Roosevelt administration objected to the resolution, but Nye claimed that General Johnson was not opposed to it. All the progressive Republicans (ten out of twelve, with Norbeck and Shipstead not present) voted

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[9] New York Times, February 7 and 8, 1934; Congressional Record, February 8, 1934, 2156-2158, 2182-2185.

against returning the resolution to the Finance Committee. The next day, the Nye proposal, in modified form, passed the Senate. The wording of the resolution left it up to the NRA's discretion as to whether the data requested would be supplied to the Senate, although Nye insisted that it should be given. T.R.B. of The New Republic commented, as the NRA debate was growing in ferocity in the Senate, that the progressives were never going to be satisfied so long as General Johnson continued in supreme command. [10]

On March 7, the Roosevelt administration finally created a National Recovery Review Board to study monopolistic tendencies in the industrial codes. Clarence Darrow, the noted attorney, was appointed head of the investigating committee. The establishment of this board pleased progressive critics. While the Darrow committee was investigating the NRA, Borah publicized the findings of the Federal Trade Commission on the steel code. The report, he asserted, demonstrated the need for the restoration of the anti-trust laws. The steel industry was engaged in illegal practices that were undermining the recovery program. The government's effort to restore purchasing power to the masses was being thwarted by steel and other monopolies. Borah pleaded that the Senate reconsider his anti-trust bill. [11]

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[10] Congressional Record, February 20, 1934, 2831; February 21, 1934, 2945; New York Times, February 21 and 22, 1934; T.R.B., "Washington Notes", The New Republic, LXXVII (February 7, 1934), 361-362.

[11] Congressional Record, March 21, 1934, 4999-5000; New York Times, March 22 and 23, 1934.

In mid-April, Nye predicted a wide shakeup of the NRA by President Roosevelt. He said that the President would divorce the NRA leadership from big business. He renewed his criticism of General Johnson's control over the NRA machinery. At the beginning of May, Capper attacked the legislation again as favoring the concentration of wealth. He could no longer support this aspect of the New Deal, he said, although he was willing to give his endorsement to other legislation that was beneficial to farmers, small businesses, and consumers. [12]

Shortly before the Darrow Report on the NRA was published, Nye wrote to Roosevelt, urging that he meet with the heads of the Federal Trade Commission, the Darrow Review Board, and two boards operating under NRA (the Research and Planning Commission and the Consumers' Advisory Board) to discuss the situation regarding the codes. Nye was disturbed that General Johnson had made few changes on his own volition under the barrage of criticism from Congress and the public. Roosevelt indicated he approved of Nye's suggestion and would be pleased if he would attend such a meeting. [13]

The Darrow Committee issued its report on the NRA during May and June, 1934. It concluded that giant corporations were indeed dominating the code authorities and were squeezing

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[12] New York Times, April 15, 1934; Arthur Capper Radio Address, May 1, 1934, Capper Papers.

[13] Gerald P. Nye to Franklin D. Roosevelt, May 16, 1934; Roosevelt to Nye, May 18, 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park.

labor, small businessmen and consumers, just as the progressives had been contending for many months. General Hugh Johnson became politically expendable as Nye continued his attack upon the leadership of the NRA. The senator declared that the Blue Eagle was a "bird of prey" on the masses. Accusing the NRA administration of dismissing underlings who tried to administer codes fairly, he suggested that Hugh Johnson might like to abolish Congress and send the President to exile in Hawaii while he took control of the government. Then, he would have a marvelous opportunity to destroy all small businessmen. Despite his critical comments, Nye felt that there were certain aspects of the NRA worth saving. It needed a complete overhaul of personnel, and Nye now suggested publicly the proposal he had suggested privately to Roosevelt. The senator believed that the labor provisions of NRA were good precedents that should be continued. Borah again tried to force action on his anti-trust bill, but the Congress adjourned without considering it seriously. As the session ended, Senator Cutting indicated that he had always believed the NRA was a questionable piece of legislation, which could only have succeeded if wages had risen faster than prices. But purchasing power had not increased measurably, and labor had not been given the same rights and protection as employers in Section 7-A, which must be amended, he said, to protect the working people of the nation. [14]

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[14] New York Times, May 23, 1934; Congressional Record,

After the session ended, Borah indicated that he planned to deliver a series of public speeches critical of New Deal legislation, including the NRA specifically. Demanding that small businessmen be released from a maze of laws, regulations and restrictions, he assailed the Democratic party for attacking monopoly in the 1932 campaign, but then suspending the anti-trust laws under the NRA. Denouncing the Republican party leadership for their silence on this significant issue, he declared that he would continue the struggle for restoration of the anti-trust laws. In another speech, he asserted that monopolies were "economic Hitlers" that retarded economic improvement. The real aims of the New Deal, the senator believed, were opposed to those of big business. Therefore, he did not feel that his criticisms were a direct attack on the Roosevelt administration, as some observers assumed. Both Borah and Nye were hopeful that the President would bring about the changes in the NRA necessary to end price fixing and monopoly. They certainly were pleased when General Johnson resigned as N.R.A. head in September, 1934. [15]

When the new 74th Congress convened in January 1935, the two senators, dissatisfied over the lack of fundamental change in the NRA after Hugh Johnson left it, again publicized the monopoly issue. Borah introduced a bill to require all

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May 22, 1934, 9234-9240; May 23, 1934, 9320-9323, 9327, 9328; New York Times, May 25, 1934; Congressional Record, June 16, 1934, 12051-12052.

[15] New York Times, July 5, 6 and 25, August 7 and 4, 1934.

but a few corporations engaged in inter-state commerce to prove, as a condition of continued operation, that they were not guilty of monopolistic practices or trade restraints. They would be required to obtain licenses from the Federal Trade Commission. The senator also re-introduced his proposal repealing that part of the NRA which granted immunity from the anti-trust laws to corporations. In February, Nye introduced a resolution, co-sponsored by Patrick McCarran of Nevada, to investigate the administering of the NRA codes. The measure was sent to the Senate Finance Committee against Nye's wishes. He preferred that it be given to the Commerce or Judiciary Committees, which were considered more likely to favor his resolution. The Senate adopted it unanimously anyway on February 28. Borah was placed on the investigating committee, but now he advocated that Congress abandon the codes entirely. He was convinced that the President agreed with him that the anti-trust laws were necessary to control big business. The labor provisions of NRA, he said, should be replaced by new statutes dealing with wages, hours and child labor. Later in March, Borah offered an anti-trust amendment to a relief resolution under consideration by the Senate, but it was rejected by a vote of 43-33. In early April, Senator Norris joined the attack on the NRA, indicating his disappointment with its operation in a letter to a Nebraska constituent. He declared: ". . .the N.R.A. has not in my judgment been a success. The tendency has been to give the big fellow an advantage over the little fellow, and I think mistakes have been made in trying to enforce rules

which have been adopted." But he had confidence that the administration would correct the mistakes and expressed an unwillingness to criticize the codes publicly.[16]

At this time, the Roosevelt administration was considering a renewal bill for the NRA, which was due to expire in June. At the end of March, Borah called for a Supreme Court decision on the constitutionality of the legislation. The new bill would not solve the faults of the NRA, he declared, and he hoped the Court would reject the whole concept before the renewal date came up. At the end of April, the President held a conference at the White House with a large group of Senators, attempting to produce a NRA renewal bill that would satisfy all. Among those present at the meeting were Borah, Nye, LaFollette, Couzens and McNary. No compromise was reached and Borah indicated that the struggle against the NRA would continue until price fixing was eliminated. The logjam on extension of the legislation led to an organized march on Washington by business and industrial representatives who wanted a two-year extension of the NRA. Nye and Borah attacked the march, and the former introduced a resolution calling upon the NRA to supply to the Senate within three days any information it might have indicating whether the

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[16] New York Times, January 11, 1935; Congressional Record, February 14, 1935, 1905-1906; New York Times, February 15 and 16, March 1 and 9, 1935; Congressional Record, March 8, 1935, 3201-3203; New York Times, March 10 and 22, 1935; Congressional Record, March 21, 1935, 4166; George Norris to Richard W. Grant, April 4, 1935, George Norris Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

individuals promoting the demonstration were employed by that agency. [17]

The controversy over the NRA ended on May 27, 1935, when the Supreme Court declared the legislation unconstitutional in a unanimous 9-0 decision in the case of Schechter Poultry Company v. United States. The Court stated that the Congress had given over too much legislative power to the executive branch, and that the federal government had no authority to regulate intrastate commerce. The Court was interpreting the commerce clause of the Constitution in a narrow sense. Hiram Johnson wrote his son that the NRA decision ". . .was an absolute knock-out to the administration. Apparently, those in command had given little or no thought to the possibility of a decision, which would upset the entire industrial recovery organization." Roosevelt held a press conference in which he denounced the Supreme Court decision. This marked the beginning of the administration's attacks on the Court which were to result in a major crisis in 1937. [18]

The other major legislation of the First Hundred Days, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, also came under attack by some progressive Republicans. In the summer of 1933, Senator Capper urged the readers of Capper's Farmer to avoid

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[17] New York Times, April 1, May 1 and 21, 1935.

[18] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., June 2, 1935, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

partisanship and give their total support to the administration's farm program. He admitted: "We know this legislation is an experiment. . . .This farm bill is only a part of the big experiment in government toward which we are heading . . . ." But the decision of the New Dealers to plow up the cotton crop and slaughter pigs to create a shortage that would bring up prices caused a tremendous controversy. LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, criticized the Roosevelt farm policy in the fall of 1933. It was ironic that at a time when many Americans were suffering for lack of meat and clothing, the magazine observed, farmers were being told to curb production. Former Governor Philip LaFollette of Wisconsin criticized the crop reduction program as "cockeyed" in a speech at the New School for Social Research in New York in the spring of 1934. Destroying wealth, he declared, was not a way out of the depression. [19]

Borah led the progressive attack on the AAA, during the spring of 1934. He delivered a radio address dealing with "Some Phases of the Agricultural Problem". The Idaho senator said that he did not agree with the view that one of the contributing causes of the depression was overproduction. As long as this view prevailed, the United States would encounter more economic and political problems. The policy of destruction, of restraint upon initiative and production, would only delay recovery. Borah contended that the real

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[19] Capper's Farmer, July, 1933; The Progressive, October 21, 1933; New York Times, March 20, 1934.

problem lay in underconsumption and distribution. Purchasing power of the masses must be restored. The disparity of wealth and the inequality of distribution were the problems to be overcome. Borah perceived a connection between the successful solution of the farm problem and the restoration of the anti-trust laws under the NRA. The senator wrote: "We ought not to seek to produce less, but more. The farmer ought to be encouraged to extend his production rather than to reduce it. Limitation of production is death to any industry." [20]

Norris, while reluctant to criticize the administration, agreed that the policy of destruction of food products, when many people were deprived of the necessities for life, was a mistake. But he believed that Roosevelt, Henry Wallace and the other leaders of the farm program were honest and sincere and had good intentions. Permanent recovery for farmers would only occur, however, the senator contended, when steps were taken to insure a more equal distribution of wealth and property. [21]

In addition to discontent over the NRA and AAA, progressive Republicans continued to work to restore the cuts in pensions for veterans. Senator Frazier endorsed the proposal of Frederic Steiwer of Oregon and Patrick McCarran of Nevada for

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[20] Congressional Record, March 23, 1934, 5218-5220; William Borah to J.R. Durk, April 21, 1934, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[21] George Norris to Charles E. Franklin, April 12, 1935, Norris Papers.

increased pensions, saying that it was a disgrace for veterans to have to depend upon charity. Norris told his colleagues that while he supported the New Deal on most programs, he was taking his own stand in opposition to the Economy Act's effect on veterans. He recalled how financiers had lived in luxury during the World War while America's servicemen had risked their lives in combat. Therefore, he did not care if the pensions increased the budget, since it was a necessary expense. Capper said he had been fooled into voting for the bill, and that the broad powers given to the President and his subordinates in the Economy Act had been abused. [22]

The Steiwer-McCarran amendment to the Independent Offices Appropriations Bill passed the Senate by one vote in February, 1934, and was amended in the House with the approval of the Senate. President Roosevelt proceeded to veto it, but it was passed over his veto in both houses by votes of 310-72 and 63-27, with all twelve progressive Republican Senators voting against the President. Before the vote to override, Senator Cutting, one of the leading critics of Roosevelt's action, told his colleagues that the President's veto message was similar in nature to Hoover's rejection of relief programs. Cutting indicated that he had no apologies to make for having supported Roosevelt in 1932, and that he wanted to maintain his friendship with the President, but he

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[22] Congressional Record, February 26, 1934, 3212; February 27, 1934, 3296-3297, 3292-3293.

could not overlook the shabby treatment of veterans. [23]

The progressive Republicans, led by LaFollette and Cutting, also urged a greater investment in public works programs. LaFollette felt that the three billion dollars provided for in the NRA should have been at least six billion. He appealed to Roosevelt in July, 1933, to "prime the pump". At the end of 1933, LaFollette was disappointed by the President's decision to set aside only two billion dollars for all emergency expenditures in the second half of 1934. In February, 1934, Cutting and LaFollette introduced amendments to increase appropriations for public works. The Roosevelt administration was at this time proposing that public works funds be slashed. Cutting said that two billion dollars should be set aside for the Civil Works Administration, which he felt had done more to put purchasing power into the hands of the people than any program of the New Deal. Four million people had been employed under this program. The appropriations for this highly successful agency, he contended, should not be cut at the first sign of a partial recovery. LaFollette, in support of Cutting's position, reviewed the causes of the depression. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few had taken away the purchasing power of the masses. If the public works program were cut back, more unemployment would result. LaFollette wanted a major public works program which would provide a job for everyone who

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[23] Congressional Record, March 27, 1934, 5554; March 28, 1934, 5606, 5573-5574.

wanted one. In April, 1934, he urged that ten billion dollars of additional funds be spent on public works projects until June, 1936. Advanced progressives like LaFollette and Cutting were never satisfied with the level of public works spending during the New Deal. [24]

The progressive Republicans advocated higher taxation of large incomes as a way to finance the public works program. During 1934, Norris endorsed publicity for income tax returns and called for a levy on profits of holding companies. LaFollette made a concerted effort to have the Congress adopt his amendments for a graduated increase in income taxes and higher estate taxes, as well as to make tax returns part of the public record. He contended that the cost of federal aid to the unemployed must be met by those with the ability to pay. The wealthy had prevented federal action against the depression under Hoover, but now they must be required to pay their fair share of the tax burden. The LaFollette amendment, promoting a normal tax of six percent with the surtax ranging between five and seventy-one percent was defeated by a vote of 47-36 in the Senate, although all progressive Republicans with the exception of minority leader Charles McNary

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[24] The Progressive, July 22, 1933; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 8, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Fola and George Middleton, December 11, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Congressional Record, February 8, 1934, 2162-2168, 2169-2174; New York Times, February 8 and April 12, 1934.

voted in support of the proposal. [25]

During the second session of the 73rd Congress, the progressive Republican senators, with the exception of McNary, supported Roosevelt's Gold Reserve Act, which set the price of gold at $35 an ounce and reduced the dollar's value in gold. They were unanimous in backing the Securities Exchange Act of June 6, 1934, which created the Securities and Exchange Commission to administer the stock market. The law was designed to prevent manipulation of the stock market by insiders, by placing trading practices under federal regulation. All securities traded on the exchanges had to be registered and give full information, and margin requirements were regulated, also. The progressive Republicans, long opponents of Wall Street, were pleased to support this legislation. [26]

The most controversial New Deal legislation of 1934, in the minds of the progressive Republicans, was the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, which empowered the President to negotiate agreements with other countries to raise or lower existing tariff rates up to fifty percent, if they would reciprocate with similar concessions for American products.

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[25] Congressional Record, April 13, 1934, 6547; April 12, 1934, 6464, 6468; April 5, 1934, 6084; April 12, 1934, 6460, 6486; April 13, 1934, 6543-6546; April 4, 1934, 5973-5975; April 24, 1934, 7198-7200; April 5, 1934, 6091.

[26] Congressional Record, January 27, 1934, 1484; May 12, 1934, 8714.

The bill easily passed the Senate by a vote of 57-33, but the progressives split 6-6 on the legislation. Borah, Cutting, Frazier, Johnson, McNary and Nye voted against, while Capper, Couzens, LaFollette, Norbeck, Norris and Shipstead voted in favor. Hiram Johnson wrote his friend Charles K. McClatchy, publisher of the Sacramento Bee, that he feared that Roosevelt was obsessed with a love of power. The senator thought the President's demands for control over tariff rates was extraordinary and dangerous, but he was convinced that Roosevelt had been swayed by two internationalists in his cabinet, Secretary of Agriculture Wallace and Secretary of State Hull. Johnson was determined to oppose such a grant of power to the Chief Executive. [27]

Borah delivered a series of attacks against surrender of the constitutional powers of Congress to the President. He declared that he was not opposed to a reduction in the tariff rates, but believed that only Congress could make the reduction, because it held the taxing, treaty-making and legislative powers under the Constitution. Once such powers were delegated to Roosevelt, even for a short time, the President's successors would enlarge on the precedent. The integrity of constitutional government was at stake, Borah asserted, and no emergency situation should be allowed to modify the Constitution. Senator McNary wanted agricultural

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[27] Congressional Record, June 4, 1934, 10395; Hiram Johnson to Charles K. McClatchy, March 11, 1934, Johnson Papers.

products to be exempt from any power of the President to decrease rates, so that farmers would not be harmed by imports of farm goods. He declared, in a rare speech in the Senate, that the President could not devote much time to the problem of tariffs, and therefore would give the responsibility of setting rates to administrators who would have no concern for the interests of the American farmer. McNary wanted reciprocal trade agreements only for those items which America did not produce, rather than those in which the United States was in competition with foreign nations. [28]

Hiram Johnson told the Senate, as the final vote on the bill neared, that he was opposed to the proposal because it gave legislative powers to the President, took away the taxing power of Congress, and eliminated the Senate's participation in the treaty-making process. These were the same arguments which Borah had used in his attack on reciprocal trade. Bronson Cutting also considered the bill dangerous. The senator wondered why America should be selling its products abroad while people were starving at home. Until domestic purchasing power was provided for all, he felt that reciprocal trade legislation was perilous to the interests of the United States. Borah summed up the debate for the progressive opponents of the bill, by declaring that he believed the President's motives were the highest and that he

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[28] New York Times, March 18, 1934; Congressional Record, May 17, 1934, 9006-9012; 8996-9005; New York Times, May 18, 1934.

had the interests of the American people at heart. Borah was not going to vote against the bill because of a lack of respect or confidence in the Chief Executive. Rather, it was simply his refusal to endorse the surrender of congressional power to the executive branch. Capper summed up the attitude of progressive Republican supporters of the legislation by indicating that Congress could not, from a practical viewpoint, negotiate tariff agreements with foreign countries. He was willing to grant limited powers to the President to negotiate these treaties, but he would hold Roosevelt responsible for protecting the interests of the agricultural states. The peak of the progressive group's disagreement on a bill during the second year of the New Deal was reached on this issue. [29]

The personal attitudes of the progressive Republicans toward Roosevelt and the New Deal during 1933 and 1934 varied, as one would expect in a group of mavericks. For instance, Charles McNary, who as Republican minority leader in the Senate served as the link between the progressive and conservative branches of his party, found himself "criticized by some for being too close to the President, by others for being too friendly toward the Conservatives and by some for being too friendly toward the Progressives." On the gold bill, McNary felt obliged to go along with the majority of

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[29] Congressional Record, May 30, 1934, 9960; New York Times, May 31, 1934; Congressional Record, May 31, 1934, 10084-10090; June 4, 1934, 10375-10376, 10378-10380.

conservative Republicans in their opposition to devaluation. By the end of 1934, McNary had criticized the AAA, Reciprocal Trade Act, and tendencies toward excessive government regulations and regimentation. But he called upon the Republican party to liberalize itself to meet the problems of the depression. The eastern Republicans, he asserted, must make concessions to the West and Midwest to bring about party solidarity for 1936. Meanwhile, he urged Roosevelt to cut down on the government bureaucracy and to reassure businessmen of his future plans so that confidence could be restored in the value of new business investment. [30]

Capper declared in July, 1933, that he would not play politics and that he intended to support Roosevelt's New Deal, which he said was "simply the good old 'square deal' of another and former Roosevelt, under a new label." At the beginning of 1934, the Kansas senator told a radio audience of his admiration for Roosevelt. He declared: "You know, that man fascinates me. He covers so much territory. He has so many ideas. . . ." Due to comments such as this one, Capper was passed over by the chairman of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee as a member of a special executive committee to take active leadership of the 1934

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[30] Charles McNary to John H. McNary, December 19, 1933; Charles McNary to John H. McNary, January 27, 1934; Senator McNary Radio Speech, June 8, 1934, Charles McNary Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, June 9, 1934; Congressional Record, June 16, 1934, 11968-11969; New York Times, July 17, 1934; Charles McNary to James Couzens, August 14, 1934, McNary and Couzens Papers.

congressional campaign. Capper seemed to be too "Democratic" in his utterances to suit many Republicans' tastes. On the first anniversary of the President's inauguration, Capper reaffirmed his nonpartisan support of the Roosevelt program, reserving the right to issue constructive criticism. He saw promise of better times for agriculture, his major concern. In May, 1934, Capper declared that the business situation was greatly improved. [31]

However, as the Congress closed its session in June, Capper expressed concern that Roosevelt's program was becoming "bewildering" to business and to himself. The farm problem had not been solved, and the NRA was very unpopular in the Midwest. Capper told William Allen White, the progressive journalist: ". . .We should be prepared to make a fight for the Republican ticket all down the line this fall and need not hesitate about fair criticism of Roosevelt's program." He was deeply concerned about the great increase in the national debt and the size of the government bureaucracy. Capper told a radio audience in August that he was opposed to the large scale patronage program which Postmaster General James Farley was instituting on all levels of government. He declared: "Nearly 100,000 non-civil service appointments practically all Democrats have been made since President Roosevelt took office. New bureaus and commissions are being

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[31] Capper's Weekly, July 8, 1933; Arthur Capper Radio Address, January 16, 1934, Capper Papers; New York Times, February 24 and March 4, 1934; Capper's Farmer, March, 1934; New York Times, May 4, 1934.

created outside the civil service. . . .The Democrats now have the greatest army of political workers ever possessed by any party in this country. That has been one of the abuses of the near-dictatorial powers given this Administration." [32]

Capper was not the only member of the progressive Republican group concerned about political appointees. Norris, one of Roosevelt's most ardent supporters, wrote Farley and the President as early as September, 1933, criticizing the administration for discharging Republican postmasters. The Nebraska senator said the Post Office was becoming a large political machine. He believed it should be operated on a non-partisan basis. He proposed that Farley resign either his post as Democratic National Chairman or as Postmaster General, because the two jobs should not be held by one person. In March, 1934, Norris proposed that all bureaucratic appointments in the Home Owners Loan Corporation be nonpartisan. After this idea was deleted in the conference report on the bill in April, Norris reiterated his belief that the Post Office should be a business institution conducted on business principles. Despite his disappointment at the lack of action on his suggestions, Norris believed that President Roosevelt came closer to conducting the national government

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[32] Arthur Capper to William Allen White, June 1, 1934, William Allen White Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Capper's Farmer, August, 1934; Arthur Capper Radio Speech, August 6, 1934, Capper Papers.

on an efficiency basis than any Chief Executive of the twentieth century. [33]

Norris wrote an extensive letter in June, 1934, outlining his views on Roosevelt and the New Deal. He indicated his pleasure at the administration's record. The honesty, sincerity and good intentions of the President were well-known and documented. Unfortunately, some of his appointments had been purely political in nature. However, the senator believed that the President was really non-partisan in his heart. Norris had refused to ask for patronage from Roosevelt despite his vocal support of the President in 1932. He was willing to ignore the administration's mistakes because of his belief in Roosevelt's good motives. His confidence in the President was demonstrated by his vote to give power over reciprocal trade agreements to the executive branch. He would not have supported such a grant of authority to any other President. [34]

James Couzens expressed his feelings about Roosevelt in a letter to a constituent in February, 1934. "Our President is displaying fine leadership and I am glad to support him whenever possible." That summer, he wrote McNary that there was much that one could criticize about the New Deal,

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[33] George Norris to Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 22, 1933, Roosevelt Papers; Norris to James Farley, September 22, 1933, Roosevelt Papers; Congressional Record, March 15, 1934, 4602-4603; April 30, 1934, 7666-7667, 7672-7673.

[34] George Norris to A.F. Buechler, June 8, 1934, Norris Papers.

"but I am reluctant to do it because we seemed so impotent before the President took office." In a newspaper interview, the Michigan senator declared that the President should inform the people more clearly of his plans and policies. However, at the same time, he rebuked administration critics who criticized and condemned the President without offering substitutes for his program. Adjustments and compromises in the present system were necessary, he affirmed, but the days of laissez faire and "rugged individualism" were over forever. Couzens did not endorse the entire New Deal, but felt that the administration should be given credit for doing everything possible to find work for everyone who wanted a job. The senator made numerous speeches in the fall of 1934, praising the President in all of them. He told Senator McNary: "I have simply said that I have served in Washington under four Presidents and that Roosevelt is the only one who has indicated a keen interest in the common people whom Lincoln pleaded for." [35]

Borah devoted the second year of the New Deal to an attack on various aspects of the reform program, specifically the NRA, AAA, and reciprocal trade agreements. Nostalgic for the past, Borah indicated his fears of a departure from the principles of the Constitution. He wrote a constituent in

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[35] James Couzens to Marguarite Meagher, February 1, 1934, Couzens Papers; Couzens to Charles McNary, August 23, 1934, Couzens and McNary Papers; New York Times, August 26, 1934; Couzens to Violet M. Wood, September 4, 1934, Couzens Papers; Couzens to McNary, October 5, 1934, Couzens and McNary Papers.

the fall of 1934: "I feel very strongly that the situation in this country is critical in more ways than one. It is critical economically and governmentally. . . .if I am not mistaken, the trend in some respects is absolutely at war with the fundamental principle of American institutions, and will ultimately undermine many of the rights of the citizen." [36]

Five progressive Republican senators faced re-election campaigns during 1934. All had supported Roosevelt's election in 1932. Lynn Frazier of North Dakota and Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota had not actively campaigned, but had been listed as members of the National Progressive League. Hiram Johnson, Robert LaFollette, Jr. and Bronson Cutting had campaigned for the Democratic nominee, abandoning their party ties to do so. The Roosevelt administration faced a major decision during 1934. Should it endorse the progressive Republicans over their Democratic party opponents or should it turn against loyal supporters of Roosevelt in 1932?

The American press pondered the question that Roosevelt faced as the congressional election year began. T.R.B. in The New Republic pointed out that the progressive Republicans might be few in number, but ". . .it is quite clear that their support is indispensable to the Roosevelt program. They are, for one thing, easily the most forceful and articulate group

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[36] "The Week," The New Republic, LXXIX (July 18, 1934), 247; Oswald Garrison Villard, "Issues and Men: Borah Goes on the War Path," The Nation, CXXXIX (July 25, 1934), 91; William Borah to James F. McCarthy, September 29, 1934, Borah Papers.

in the Senate, and their effectiveness has been demonstrated a good many times in the past." Both The Nation and The New Republic agreed that the progressives were in a dilemma. Should they accept support from the Democrats and leave the Republican party, or should they run an independent campaign? The New York Times reported in January that the Roosevelt administration was ready to take the progressive Republicans up for re-election under the wing of the Democratic party. The senators would be given assistance to become independent or Democratic nominees for their seats. But some of these men were reportedly not willing to accept such direct support from the administration because of their desire to remain within the Republican party. There was speculation that if these progressives agreed to run as Democrats, the Republican party would be completely taken over by conservative elements. [37]

Ultimately, the Roosevelt administration took no involvement in Lynn Frazier's re-election battle in North Dakota. This least known and influential member of the progressive bloc won re-election without any assistance from the President. In Minnesota, Roosevelt straddled the fence, refusing to take sides between Senator Shipstead and his Democratic opponent. In a press conference in June, the President

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[37] T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXXVII (January 10, 1934), 250-251; Oswald Garrison Villard, "The Senate Progressives' Dilemma," The Nation, CXXXVIII (January 17, 1934), 63; "The Progressives' Dilemma," The New Republic, LXXVII (January 17, 1934), 267-268; New York Times, January 15, 1934.

declared that Shipstead was a good friend, but that he was in a quandary about this particular Senate race, because the Democratic candidate (Hoidale) was also a good man. Shipstead also won re-election without Roosevelt's endorsement. [38]

The President decided to endorse Hiram Johnson for re-election. Relations between Roosevelt and the California senator were extremely warm during 1933 and 1934. Johnson was willing to give his support to the President's programs most of the time, because he felt Roosevelt's motivations were good. He had high praise for the President's performance in office, and Roosevelt cultivated his friendship. Interior Secretary Ickes, whom Johnson had recommended to Roosevelt, wrote the senator after the end of the special session in July, 1933, that Roosevelt had ". . .referred to you in affectionate terms. There isn't the slightest doubt of his very real feeling for you, . . ." The New Republic reported a rumor during the same month that Johnson might be considered for a future vacancy on the Supreme Court. During August, Johnson wrote the President, praising the actions he had taken during the First Hundred Days. "It is the glory of this Administration, of which all of us are so proud, that it has dared to do and has gallantly embarked upon an economic adventure the most astounding the world has ever seen; . . . How heartily I congratulate you upon the work you are doing I cannot adequately express! May your heart continue strong

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[38] Microfilm Copy of Press Conferences of the President, Volume 3, June 27, 1934, p. 435.

in your good deeds and your high achievement, . . ." [39]

Roosevelt invited Johnson to visit him at Warm Springs in December so that the two men could spend a few evenings discussing ". . .the big things we are both working for." Johnson was very pleased that Roosevelt had written him in the midst of many problems and burdens, and he expressed a willingness to fight with the President against those who opposed what the administration was trying to do to solve the economic distress of the nation. Johnson wrote a very warm letter to Roosevelt, declaring: "I hope to be in Washington just after your return there. Of course, I've followed your gallant fight, and nothing like it in courage and high endeavor has this country witnessed during my time. I'm eager to do my small part; and I return to Washington with my faith in my President strengthened, my pride in his achievements increased, and with whole hearted devotion to his great purposes." Ickes wrote Johnson at the end of November that the President had been pleased with his letter, and that he respected Johnson's ability and willingness to fight for a cause. During December, Johnson lunched with the President at the White House, a meeting the senator later declared was ". . .a delightful and an unforgettable hour." [40]

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[39] Harold Ickes to Hiram Johnson, July 10, 1933, Johnson Papers; T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXXV (July 12, 1933), 233-234; Johnson to Franklin D. Roosevelt, August 26, 1933, Johnson Papers.

[40] Franklin D. Roosevelt to Hiram Johnson, November 5, 1933, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Charles K. McClatchy, November 9, 1933, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Roosevelt, November 16, 1933, Johnson and Roosevelt Papers; Harold Ickes to

In late January, the New York Times reported that the administration had decided to exert its influence among Democrats in California to bring about an uncontested re-election of Johnson to his Senate seat. Farley had already indicated that most Democrats wanted Johnson to remain in the Senate. Johnson was gratified at the development. The result was his re-election by a landslide, with the support of the Republican, Democratic and Progressive parties of California. The senator continued his close relationship with Roosevelt throughout 1934, visiting with him a number of times and issuing statements of support for the New Deal program. On the first anniversary of the President's inauguration, he criticized a Republican National Committee statement attacking the New Deal as overly partisan. Praising the President's audacity and the results he had achieved so far, he asserted: "We are better, and our country is better, and our people are better, and our times are better for what the President has done during the past year." In a Labor Day address at San Francisco, Johnson ridiculed cries of unconstitutionality raised against the New Deal. He said that some of Roosevelt's policies were frankly experimental and might not be desirable as to their end or objective, but at least the administration had made an effort. He criticized the conservatives who made themselves guardians of the Constitution, while refusing to take any action to solve the depression. The relief programs

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Johnson, November 30, 1933, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Roosevelt, December 22, 1933, Johnson and Roosevelt Papers.

of the New Deal, while generally unwarranted as a general policy over a long period of time, were indispensable means to aid the jobless and hungry. Overall, the senator considered that the accomplishments of the New Deal far outweighed the faults, such as the reciprocal trade agreements legislation.[41]

Robert LaFollette, Jr. and his brother Philip, the former governor of Wisconsin, made a decision early in 1934 to leave the Republican establishment and form the Progressive Party of Wisconsin as a vehicle for their political ambitions. While the two brothers were hopeful that the New Deal would do what they considered necessary to take the country out of the depression, they were suspicious of the reform commitment of Roosevelt and the Democratic party. Therefore, they decided to call a meeting of progressives in Chicago at the beginning of December, 1933, to decide future strategy for progressive leaders. The senator had suggested this conference to his brother in October, as a means of restating and reaffirming progressive goals. It would also be a way to ". . .place the burden of proof on Roosevelt." The senator was pleased at Fiorello LaGuardia's election as New York mayor in November, because "It confirms my judgment held right along that if there is a reaction against Roosevelt it will not be back to reactionarism but to more fundamental progressivism than he is providing." During November, Philip LaFollette sent out letters to progressives in the fields of

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[41] New York Times, January 27, June 24, March 4 and September 4, 1934.

politics, journalism and education, inviting them to meet in Chicago on December 3. Six of Senator LaFollette's progressive colleagues were invited, including Cutting, Frazier, Johnson, Norris, Nye and Shipstead. The nature of the meeting and those who attended it was not publicized. But the general sentiment of the meeting, attended by 25 to 30 progressive leaders, according to one of its participants, was for a new party in the Northwest. The New Republic later reported that the progressive conference had given evidence of the doubts of many of its member about the New Deal. "They do not believe the President's measures will be sufficiently drastic to get the country out of this depression, and keep it out of the next one. They are, of course, in sympathy with many ideas of the liberal wing of the administration; their pessimism is based on the fact that they do not feel that the President will adopt these ideas soon enough or completely enough to attain the all-important objective of greatly increased purchasing power among the masses of the American people." Many of those present at the meeting, the journal declared, favored nationalization of banks and public utilities, which were considered unlikely to gain a sympathetic hearing from New Dealers. [42]

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[42] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, October 18, 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dearest, November 7, 1933, LaFollette Family Papers; Sample letter and list of peoples sent to, November 1933, Philip LaFollette Papers; Thomas R. Amlie to John Kent, December 15, 1933, Thomas Amlie Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; "The Progressives' Dilemma," The New Republic, LXXVII (January 17, 1934), 268.

The LaFollette brothers debated leaving the Republican party after the Chicago conference. In February, 1934, Philip wrote his brother that he was convinced that a new political party must eventually be established, and that the present time was propitious for such an undertaking. But he did not wish to harm his brother's chances for re-election. The senator was uncertain about a new party, but he agreed to sign a letter calling for a state conference of progressive leaders during March to consider formation of a Progressive Party. Philip suggested that an endorsement from President Roosevelt would be valuable if the senator ran for re-election on an independent ticket. He urged his brother to write or telephone for an appointment with the President regarding political matters, although he felt that Robert should not press too hard for an endorsement if the President seemed hesitant. On February 26, the senator met with Roosevelt at the White House. The President indicated that he wanted to support him for re-election, but that he was experiencing opposition from the Democratic party in Wisconsin. LaFollette was unwilling to consider support for the state Democratic ticket in exchange for their endorsement of his re-election. The senator came away from the meeting with the impression that Roosevelt did not want to alienate the Wisconsin Democrats by endorsing a Republican. However, the President would find it easier to endorse LaFollette as an independent candidate. Roosevelt seemed to be concerned also that support of the senator might be interpreted as a backing of his brother Philip, if he were to run again for Governor. The senator told his

brother: "To sum it up, my view is that we can pretty well count on Roosevelt's not doing anything in Wisconsin which will be at all effective so far as we are concerned." In early March, the senator went back to Wisconsin to discuss the political alternatives with friends and supporters.[43]

On March 3, the state progressive convention was held. Five to six hundred people attended, and the sentiment was strong for a third party, convincing Philip LaFollette that he should proceed with the necessary steps for its formation. Senator LaFollette was not as convinced of the desirability of a new party, but his speech at the convention indicated that he would not try to prevent its formation. Telling the delegates that they should determine the best strategy for the coming election, he urged them not to allow his own campaign to act as a deciding factor. He was willing to take his chances on the strategy that best furthered the common cause. The convention adopted a resolution which authorized a committee to go to the state Supreme Court for a decision on whether a new party could be legally established. On April 30, the court ruled that a third party could indeed be formed under the laws of the state. A statewide progressive conference of 400 delegates was arranged for May 19 at Fond du Lac

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[43] Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., February 12,1934, LaFollette Family Papers; LaFollette, Jr. to Phil LaFollette, February 16, 1934, LaFollette Family Papers; Phil LaFollette to LaFollette, Jr., February 24, 1934, LaFollette Family Papers; LaFollette, Jr. to Phil LaFollette, February 27, 1934, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dearest, March 2, 1934, LaFollette Family Papers.

to inaugurate the new party formally. [44]

The senator committed himself to a third party candidacy officially in early May, ignoring suggestions that he become a Democrat. At the Fond du Lac convention, the delegates voted 252-44 to break away from the Republicans and form the Progressive Party. A general platform was adopted, and the state Democratic party was attacked as reactionary. Senator LaFollette declared that the principal achievements of the New Deal had had their origins in years of effort by progressives in both major parties. Senate progressives, led by Borah, Nye and Norris, announced their support and intention to campaign for the senator on the new party line. The Madison Capital Times, paper of the progressive movement in Wisconsin, declared in an editorial that the new party might be the forerunner of a national realignment. "If President Roosevelt continues his battle for progressive and liberal principles, the movement nationally may be held in abeyance. If on the other hand, President Roosevelt begins to yield to reactionaries in his own party and follows a middle of the road policy in which he attempts to hold reactionaries and liberals together in his own party, the movement started here in Wisconsin will assume national proportions." [45]

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[44] Thomas Amlie to Howard Y. Williams, March 5, 1934, Amlie Papers; The Progressive, March 10, 1934; Francis Scott, "Making History in Wisconsin: The Third Party Movement Gathers Headway," Common Sense, III (April, 1934), 16-17; Madison Capital Times, May 1, 2, and 5, 1934; The Progressive, May 5 and 12, 1934.

[45] Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., March 31, 1934, LaFollette Family Papers; Madison Capital Times, May 12

In early June, President Roosevelt told Senator Norris that he was interested in LaFollette's re-election campaign and intended to endorse him at an appropriate time. In a press conference on June 27, the President said that personally he would like to see the senator re-elected, but he could not prevent the Democratic Party in Wisconsin from challenging him for the Senate seat. Meanwhile, the Progressive Party adopted a fourteen point declaration of principles at a conference at the end of June. They promoted public ownership of utilities and the banking system, the right of tenure for land owners through moratorium legislation, employment for everyone capable of working, unemployment insurance, sickness and accident insurance, old age pensions, legislation guaranteeing the right for workers to organize, opposition to the sales tax, and support of a levy on corporate dividends and inheritances to bring about redistribution of wealth and increase purchasing power. In mid-July, Agriculture Secretary Wallace praised the LaFollette brothers and the Wisconsin progressive movement in a Madison speech. Wallace's statement gave additional strength to reports that Roosevelt would endorse Senator LaFollette over his Democratic opponent. The President came to Wisconsin in the middle of August. At Green Bay, he praised LaFollette and his Democratic colleague

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and 20, 1934; New York Times, May 20, 1934; New York Herald Tribune, May 20, 1934; Madison Capital Times, May 21, 1934; The Progressive, May 26, 1934; Mark Rhea Byers, "A New LaFollette Party," North American Review, CCXXXVII (May, 1934) 401-409; Madison Capital Times, May 21, 1934.

in the Senate, F. Ryan Duffy, for their cooperation and termed both of them "old friends of mine." He endorsed LaFollette's candidacy and recommended the political background of Wisconsin progressivism as a model for the national government. A few days later, the senator opened his campaign with a declaration of support for Roosevelt and the New Deal, "as long as he is right." He congratulated the President for having successfully taken power away from the reactionary Democrats, but he warned that they remained in the wings, waiting for their chance to assume control of the Democratic party again.[46]

The senator's brother meanwhile had announced his candidacy for Governor, the office he had held as a Republican in 1931 and 1932. The LaFollette brothers ran their campaign on the concept of a general political realignment as essential to protect American democracy. An equitable distribution of wealth and purchasing power was necessary if the country was to escape from the throes of the depression, Philip LaFollette wrote, in an article in Common Sense. During October, many progressives in the Senate came to Wisconsin to speak for Senator LaFollette and his brother or sent letters of endorsement. Among them were Frazier, Johnson, Norris, Nye, Shipstead, Wheeler of Montana, Costigan of Colorado, Bone of

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[46] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, June 4, 1934, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers; Microfilm Copy of Press Conferences of the President, Volume 3, June 27, 1934, p. 434; Madison Capital Times, July 1 and 12, August 9, 1934; New York Times, August 10 and 13, 1934; Madison Capital Times, August 13, 1934; The Progressive, August 25, 1934.

Washington, and Wagner of New York. President Roosevelt sent two notes expressing his interest in how the senator's campaign was progressing, and he invited LaFollette to visit him after the election. These letters were published in Wisconsin to give further evidence of the President's desire to see the senator re-elected. In November, the LaFollette brothers swept to victory, and the Progressive Party of Wisconsin was an established political force to be reckoned with. The senator declared that it was a permanent fixture and the beginning of a political realignment, after visiting with the President at the White House. [47]

The re-election campaign of Bronson Cutting and the manner in which the Roosevelt administration handled it caused a major controversy and led to bitterness and division

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[47] Madison Capital Times, August 14 and 16, 1934; New York Times, August 17, 1934; Philip LaFollette, "Capital on Strike," Common Sense, III (July, 1934), 6-9; Madison Capital Times, October 4,5,9,14,19,22,23,30,31, 1934; The Progressive, September 29, October 13 and 20, November 3, 1934; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, October 21, 1934, LaFollette Family Papers and Roosevelt Papers; Madison Capital Times, November 2 and 9, 1934; New York Times, November 9, 1934; The Progressive, November 10, 1934. For other details on the Progressive Party of Wisconsin, consult the following: Donald McCoy, "The Formation of the Wisconsin Progressive Party in 1934," The Historian, XIV (Autumn, 1951), 70-90; Charles H. Backstrom, "The Progressive Party of Wisconsin, 1934-1946," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1957; John E. Miller, "Governor Philip F. LaFollette, The Wisconsin Progressives, and the New Deal, 1930-1939," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1973; Donald Young (editor), Adventure in Politics: The Memoirs of Philip LaFollette (New York, Chicago and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 204-216; Wallace S. Sayre, "Left Turn in Wisconsin," The New Republic, LXXX (October 24, 1934), 300-302; Harold M. Groves, "Wisconsin's New Party," The Nation, CXXXIX (August 1, 1934), 122-124; E. Francis Brown, "The Progressives Make a New Bid," Current History, XLI (November, 1934), 149-154.

between the progressive senators and the White House. Cutting had always been somewhat suspicious of Roosevelt's motives. From similar backgrounds, the two men's temperaments clashed. Cutting was quiet and introverted, the opposite of the exuberant President. The senator had been reluctant to endorse Roosevelt in 1932, but finally did so and delivered a few speeches during the last weeks of the campaign. Then, the President-elect had offered him the post of Secretary of the Interior, but he had rejected it, saying he wished to be a free agent. Cutting told his staff assistant, Clifford McCarthy, that he "could not, somehow, trust Franklin." During the first month of the New Deal, Cutting was on vacation to recover from poor health. He returned to Washington in time to attack the Economy Act's effect on the veterans' bonus. He also spoke out for greater government spending than the New Deal relief and public works programs called for. Despite Cutting's overall support of the New Deal in other respects, Roosevelt seemed to cool toward the New Mexico senator because of his denunciation of the President's veto of restoration of the veterans' bonus in 1934, which was later overridden by Congress. Rumors spread early in 1934 that the administration and the Democratic National Committee planned to endorse and finance a Democratic opponent for Cutting's Senate seat. [48]

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[48] Ten page statement by Clifford McCarthy, staff assistant to Senator Cutting, Undated, but entitled 1932-35, Bronson Cutting Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Cutting was skeptical over the effectiveness of the New Deal. In November, 1933, he wrote Philip LaFollette that ". . .Franklin's program is not working, that it cannot work without a fundamental revision of the aims as well as methods, and that such a revision is getting harder every day. . . ." The senator informed his mother that he had received a request from the NRA to give some speeches in behalf of the President's policies, but he was ". . .sorely tempted to tell them just what I think of the President's program." He was certain that he had no desire to accept any favors or positions from Roosevelt. At the beginning of the new session in 1934, Cutting delivered a speech critical of many aspects of the New Deal. The Economy Act had cut down on purchasing power, he declared, and the NRA and public works programs had been disappointments. He concluded: "I am for the new deal. I believe, and I think an overwhelming majority of this country believe, in the sincerity and good faith of the President, . . .But I think there are too many people in the ranks of the administration who are at heart not 'new dealers' at all, but old dealers in some other form." He praised the President's willingness to experiment, but warned Roosevelt that ". . .the time is coming when the people of this country are going to demand results. We have as yet few results to show them. We have got to get results, and we cannot afford to postpone them until it shall be 'too late'." [49]

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[49] Bronson Cutting to Philip LaFollette, November 1,

In January, 1934, Senator Norris heard rumors that Roosevelt was planning to oppose Cutting's re-election. He wrote the President to question why all federal appointments in New Mexico seemed to be going to men who were political enemies of Cutting. Norris declared: "I do not know how the patronage is distributed in that State, but it is quite evident that the man who has charge of it is laying the foundation to defeat Senator Cutting for reelection. I cannot believe that such a course meets with your approval, or that you have any knowledge that such a campaign is being conducted." Roosevelt responded that he was very fond of Cutting, whom he had known since they were boys, but that he wanted to speak with Norris about Cutting some day. The President wrote: "I do not want to do anything to hurt him, but a lot of Bronson's retainers in New Mexico are not considered especially fine citizens." The President thus hinted that he would oppose Cutting's reelection to the Senate. By March, Cutting had been informed that Roosevelt would only endorse him if he became a Democrat. The senator told his mother: "On any other ticket I shall be anathema. This certainly is a fine type of non-partisan statesmanship, and makes me feel like swallowing the Old Guard at their worst." [50]

1933, Philip LaFollette Papers; Cutting to his mother, November 12 and 29, 1933, Cutting Papers; Congressional Record, January 27, 1934, 1476-1477.

[50] George Norris to Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 19, 1934, Roosevelt Papers; Roosevelt to Norris, January 24, 1934, Roosevelt Papers; Bronson Cutting to his mother, March 21, 1934, Cutting Papers.

Cutting's criticism of the President's veto of soldier pensions during March further harmed relations between the two men. The senator was very pleased at the success of the Congress in overriding the veto. He told his mother: "Really, it is the best thing for the President, because it takes the issue out of the fall campaign." Actually, this incident led the administration to promote the candidacy of Dennis Chavez, Congressman from New Mexico, for the Senate. Chavez was to receive large-scale financial support from the Democratic National Committee. Cutting became more bitter about Roosevelt. He wrote a friend: "I have not yet met anyone who could explain what is going on in his mind, and I doubt if he can, . . .I doubt if either Benny or handsome Adolf have as much actual power. It is a pity he doesn't think up something sensible to do with it." [51]

In July, Farley made a political visit to Alberquerque in his post as Democratic National Chairman. He praised Senator Cutting's record and thanked him for his role in the 1932 election. But he said the administration believed in a "home rule" policy, and therefore it would not interfere with the state Democratic party's right to select a candidate to oppose Cutting. No overtures were made to Cutting to become a Democrat at this time. Cutting was angry over the Farley visit, and he wrote a friend that the national chairman had

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[51] Bronson Cutting to his mother, April 1, 1934, Cutting Papers; Cutting to H. Phelps Putnam, April 22, 1934, Cutting Papers.

". . .consorted entirely with my enemies. I think there is no chance to do anything with the Democrats, even if I felt disposed to." The Progressive and Republican parties reunited as one group after a series of meetings on July 20 and 21. But a number of influential Old Guard Republicans immediately announced they would support the Democratic candidate against Cutting in the fall election. Cutting admitted that the situation was complicated and that a successful re-election campaign was doubtful, but he pledged he would make a good fight. [52]

By the beginning of August, Cutting was convinced that Chavez would be a powerful opponent, since Farley and the Democratic National Committee were pledged to support him financially. By late August, the senator pegged his chances at less than even to beat Chavez. In September, Cutting declared he would run for re-election only if a progressive platform were endorsed by the state Republican party when they met in convention later in the month. At this time, Chavez arrived in Washington to speak with administration officials about support for his campaign. Five days later, he formally announced his challenge to Cutting's re-election. The two men were then nominated by their parties' state conventions. In his acceptance speech, Cutting declared he was for the New Deal so long as it was for relief of human misery,

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[52] Santa Fe New Mexican, July 17, 1934; Bronson Cutting to Dottori, July 19, 1934, Cutting Papers; Cutting to his mother, July 24, 1934, Cutting Papers; Santa Fe New Mexican, July 21, 1934.

employment for all, and increased purchasing power among the masses. He had gone down the line with the administration, he declared, except when it had pursued policies contrary to these goals. The Economy Act had taken away the purchasing power of disabled veterans and underpaid federal employees, so he had to oppose it. He attacked the state Democratic party for using the political argument that the state's share of relief funds depended on the Democratic ticket's success. [53]

At the beginning of October, the Republican National Committeeman for New Mexico, Albert G. Simms, announced that he would support Chavez for the Senate. This symbolized the desertion of many conservative Republicans from Cutting's campaign because of his refusal to support his party in 1932, and made it seem that his re-election was impossible. However, Cutting gained vocal support from progressives in and out of Congress. Letters of support came from Borah, Capper, Frazier, Johnson, the LaFollette brothers, McNary, Norbeck, Norris, Bone of Washington, Wheeler of Montana, Costigan of Colorado, Representative Lemke of North Dakota, and Governor Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania. Hiram Johnson sent a wire to Farley about the Cutting re-election contest late in

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[53] Bronson Cutting to his mother, August 1 and 24, 1934, Cutting Papers; Santa Fe New Mexican, August 25 and September 11, 1934; Cutting to his mother, September 12 and 15, 1934, Cutting Papers; Santa Fe New Mexican, September 19, 24 and 25, 1934; text of acceptance speech of Bronson Cutting, September 24, 1934, Cutting Papers; Santa Fe New Mexican, September 26, 1934.

October, protesting the administration's handling of the issue. Johnson felt Cutting was being persecuted by both party organizations because of his progressive stands and his support of the President in 1932. He told Farley that Cutting was a valuable senator. It was unjust to fight a legislator with such courage, who had rendered such important service to Roosevelt in 1932. Johnson also wrote Norris of his concern over Cutting's struggle and his hope that the Nebraska senator would display his own displeasure over the handling of the New Mexico election. Johnson later had a telephone conversation with Farley, in which he again protested the administration's approach to the campaign. The California senator also delivered a radio address from San Francisco supporting Cutting's stand. Norris sent a telegram shortly before the election, appealing to the voters of the state, regardless of party, to re-elect Cutting. Both The Nation and The New Republic endorsed him for re-election and emphasized the administration's campaign against him. [54]

The results of the Cutting-Chavez Senate contest were very close. A week after the election, Cutting had a lead of over 1200 votes with all precincts reported. But Chavez

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[54] Santa Fe New Mexican, October 1, 1934; Letters and telegrams in Cutting Papers; Hiram Johnson to George Norris, October 23, 1934, Norris Papers; Johnson to Edgar F. Puryear (Cutting's secretary), October 27, 1934, Cutting Papers; Santa Fe New Mexican, October 27, 1934; George Norris to Bronson Cutting, October 29, 1934, Norris Papers; "Sinclair, LaFollette and Cutting," The Nation, CXXXIX (November 7, 1934), 522; Fleter Campbell Springer, "Through the Looking Glass," The New Republic, LXXX (November 7, 1934), 357-358.

claimed he had won the election but had been robbed of victory, and that he would challenge the results in a petition to the state courts and the Senate, if necessary. He said he would expose evidence of irregularities and buying of votes by Cutting supporters. Cutting challenged Chavez to come up with proof to back his allegations of fraud and bribery. Chavez went to Washington to confer with Democratic leaders about a challenge to the results. Borah sent a telegram to Cutting, informing him that Chavez had indicated he was prepared to file charges that the senator had bought the election. Johnson gave encouragement to Cutting at this time, telling him he should not ". . .permit a lot of rogues to take your hard won laurels." The complete official returns, issued on November 21, showed that Cutting was ahead of Chavez by 1291 votes. [55]

Norris, angry over the impending challenge to the election results, criticized President Roosevelt for opposing Cutting. He asserted that Farley could not have pursued his strategy in New Mexico without the knowledge and consent of the President. Norris felt Roosevelt had made a serious mistake and that his legislative program might be affected by his actions. He again called for the resignation of Farley from either his chairman's post or as Postmaster General. Norris also expressed concern that Chavez might attempt to unseat

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[55] Santa Fe New Mexican, November 13, 15, 16 and 17, 1934; William Borah to Bronson Cutting, November 16, 1934, Cutting Papers; Hiram Johnson to Cutting, November 16, 1934, Cutting Papers; New York Times, November 22, 1934.

Cutting through false charges. In late November, Senator J. Hamilton Lewis of Illinois confirmed that Roosevelt had opposed the re-election of Bronson Cutting because of his attack on the President over the issue of veterans' pensions. Cutting had accused the President, Lewis declared, of "a want of humanity". A Senate committee to investigate campaign expenditures was assigned the New Mexico election controversy. Borah indicated that he expected the committee to delve into all aspects of the campaign, including the relief expenditures and contributions made by the Democratic National Committee to defeat Cutting. Norris was still hopeful that a full-fledged struggle over the Senate seat could be avoided, as the progressives were making their displeasure about it known to Roosevelt. T.R.B. of The New Republic wrote that a continued fight by the administration against Cutting would lead to a damaged relationship with the progressive Republican Senate group. [56]

During December, Chavez brought a writ of mandamus, asking the state Supreme Court to throw out returns in some New Mexico counties. He alleged stuffing of ballot boxes and illegal and unregistered voters. On December 31, the state's highest court dismissed the mandamus suit, and Senator Cutting received a certificate of election from the state canvassing board. But Chavez refused to give up the fight,

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[56] New York Times, November 23, 1934; New York Herald Tribune, November 24, 1934; Santa Fe New Mexican, November 23, 1934; New York Times, November 25 and 27, 1934; George Norris to David K. Niles, November 30, 1934, Norris Papers; T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXXXI

announcing that he would indeed take his battle for the Senate seat to that body itself. The controversy was threatening to alienate the progressives from Roosevelt. Newspapers reported that they felt he was ungrateful for Cutting's endorsement in 1932. The New York Herald Tribune declared in an editorial: "Senator Norris and his friends cannot understand why the President long ago did not stop the Farley opposition to Senator Cutting. They look upon it as base ingratitude to a faithful friend. If the matter goes much farther it may be too late to make amends." The New York Times asserted: "The subject should and presumably will be dropped. If it isn't, the Progressives will again turn fiercely on their Democratic allies." [57]

Hiram Johnson dined with the President in mid-December, and the two men discussed the administration's handling of the New Mexico election. Johnson found that Roosevelt felt resentment toward Cutting, and that he had forgotten that the New Mexico senator had risked his political future by leaving his party and endorsing him in 1932. All the President seemed to recall was that Cutting had denounced him bitterly on the veterans' issue. Johnson was convinced that the White House had endorsed the activities against Cutting. He considered the President's actions ". . .small, and ungrateful,

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(December 12, 1934), 128.

[57] Santa Fe New Mexican, December 11 and 31, 1934, January 1, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, December 10, 1934; New York Times, January 1, 1935.

and cruel, and what little I can do to prevent an injustice being done Cutting . . .will be done." Cutting's secretary and staff assistant met with Johnson in late December to ascertain his attitude. Johnson said there was no way to avoid a re-election challenge in the Senate, because the President was encouraging Chavez to pursue the issue. When Cutting's secretary asked Johnson if the situation was not due to Farley, the senator leaped to his feet and shouted that no assistant to a senator or President would pursue such activities as disgraceful as this incident without endorsement from his superior. Johnson told Cutting's assistants that he had spoken with Roosevelt and that the situation was hopeless. [58]

Interior Secretary Ickes had informed the President on the eve of the congressional elections that his opposition to Cutting was an unwise move, because it had created a unfriendly feeling among the progressives. After the election, Ickes and Henry Wallace went to Roosevelt about the persecution of the New Mexico senator. News of what transpired at the meeting never leaked out, but the administration never backed down on its fight against Cutting. [59]

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[58] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., December 22, 1934, Johnson Papers; Ten page statement by Clifford McCarthy, staff assistant to Senator Cutting, Undated, but entitled 1932-35, Cutting Papers; Typed Memorandum by Clifford McCarthy to H.S.C., sheet on 1934-35--"The Contest. Role of F.D.R. Efforts at reconciliation," Undated, Cutting Papers.

[59] Harold Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), I: 217; Ten page statement by Clifford McCarthy, staff assistant to Senator Cutting, Undated, but entitled 1932-35, Cutting Papers.

As the new Congress opened in 1935, the Senate Democratic Policy Committee and the Steering Committee agreed to seat Cutting when he presented his credentials. But Chavez sent formal notice to the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections during January that he would contest the election results on grounds of irregularity. During February, his formal petition was filed, charging fraud in Cutting's vote total. Chavez asserted that among those who had voted for Cutting were persons under age, persons who voted more than once, persons who were not citizens of New Mexico, and deceased persons. He also accused Cutting of giving money to voters to gain their support. The senator demanded that a total recount of the state vote be held, not just those counties that his opponent wished to investigate. The Privileges and Elections Committee held brief hearings and immediately dismissed accusations of unlawful expenditures, but it called for further evidence in Cutting's defense from New Mexico records. Therefore, the senator had to travel back and forth from New Mexico to gather material to prove his election was an honest one. [60]

Hiram Johnson, as a member of the Privileges and Elections Committee, worked in support of Cutting. He had joined

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[60] New York Times, January 1, 1935; Santa Fe New Mexican, January 11, February 25 and 26, 1935; New York Times, February 26, 1935; Santa Fe New Mexican, April 11 and 17, 1935; New York Times, April 12, 1935; U.S. Senate, Privileges and Elections Committee, 74th Congress, 1st Session, Hearings on New Mexico Senator Election, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935.

the committee to fight against ". . .a contest of bad faith and harassment . . . and to see that his interests were protected." Johnson wrote his son at this time: "I'm getting bitterer and bitterer because of the iniquity and the fraud, and the malice of the contest. . . .I can assure you that they will not break this young man unjustly without this country knowing of it." [61]

Bronson Cutting continued his Senate activities during 1935 as his re-election was being challenged. He had two contacts with the administration that was trying to oust him from public office. Rexford Tugwell, a key Roosevelt adviser, met with him to ask that he introduce a banking bill for the administration. Tugwell suggested that if Cutting agreed to do this, something might be done about Chavez's challenge. While this incident was displeasing to the senator, his second contact was even more disturbing. He met with the President himself before the Senate vote on the World Court in January. When Cutting entered the White House, Roosevelt greeted him warmly and suggested that the senator "drop around occasionally", as he would always be glad to see him. Roosevelt told Cutting that he should not believe the rumors that the White House was involved in Chavez's challenge to his re-election. He was certain that the situation would be resolved in a way that would satisfy Cutting. The senator attempted to excuse himself from the conference because of

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[61] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 16, 1935, Johnson Papers.

anger over what he considered obvious presidential duplicity. Before he could leave, Roosevelt indicated to Cutting that he would be much obliged for any aid which the senator could give him on the World Court vote. Cutting favored American membership in that organization, but he was tempted to change his vote because of this incident. However, he decided to follow his convictions rather than his emotions, and thus supported Roosevelt's position on the World Court when the Senate voted on the issue. Cutting told Norris of his meeting with the President, and Norris expressed again his anger and bitterness over White House treatment of the New Mexico senator. [62]

While enroute to Washington from court appearances in New Mexico regarding his contested re-election, Senator Cutting was killed in a plane accident over Missouri on May 6, 1935. At the announcement of his tragic death by his New Mexico Senate colleague Carl Hatch, the Senate adjourned as a mark of respect to his memory. The scene in the Senate was one of extreme sorrow. The progressive group was especially shocked. Borah, Norris and Johnson were visibly affected, with tears welling up in their eyes. LaFollette was so overcome that he did not attend the brief session. The progressives renewed their criticism of the administration for

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[62] Ten page statement by Clifford McCarthy, staff assistant to Senator Cutting, Undated, but entitled 1932-35, Cutting Papers; Typed memorandum by Clifford McCarthy to H.S.C., sheet on 1934-35--"The Contest. Role of F.D.R. Efforts at Reconciliation," Undated, Cutting Papers.

having supported Chavez in the election contest. This had made it necessary for Cutting to travel back and forth from his home state to gather evidence for his defense. Five progressive Republicans--Borah, Johnson, LaFollette, Norris and Nye--were among those named to represent the Senate at Cutting's funeral and to act as honorary pallbearers. [63]

When news of Cutting's death reached the White House, the President spoke with regret of the tragedy. He told Harold Ickes that he had opposed Cutting's re-election because he did not like the type of people that Cutting was allied with in New Mexico. Roosevelt showed concern that his good friend, Senator Norris, might feel bitterness toward him over Cutting's death. Ickes believed that the progressives were likely to be estranged from Roosevelt for some time over this issue, although they would continue to support New Deal programs they thought beneficial. The Interior Secretary thought that the President was conscience-stricken over the tragedy. Roosevelt told him that he had been willing to give Chavez another position and to call off the challenge, but Cutting had refused to agree to any political deal. The President sent a letter to Cutting's mother, declaring: "I am greatly grieved to learn of the untimely death of my very old friend, Bronson Cutting." [64]

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[63] Congressional Record, May 6, 1935, 6999; New York Times, May 7, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, May 7, 1935; New York Times, May 10, 1935.

[64] Harold Ickes, Secret Diary, I: 358-359; New York Times, May 7, 1935; Statement by the President for

The nation's newspapers and liberal journals mourned Bronson Cutting's death and eulogized him in numerous editorials and articles as a major loss to the progressive movement. When Dennis Chavez was sworn in as the successor to Cutting, five progressives walked out of the chamber in silent protest--Johnson, LaFollette, Norris, Nye and Shipstead. Borah, given the credit for organizing the demonstration, was in the Supreme Court chamber when Chavez was called to be sworn in, but he later declared he was with the five others in spirit. The progressives made it clear that they felt bitter over the administration's handling of the Cutting affair. Norris said: "I left the chamber because it was the only way, in my helplessness, that I could show my condemnation of the disgraceful and unwarranted fight made to drive Senator Cutting out of public office. The determined opposition of the Democratic National Committee and its chairman to bring about the defeat of Senator Cutting is the greatest case of ingratitude in history. It is a blot upon the record of the administration." [65]

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immediate release to the Press, May 6, 1935, Roosevelt Papers.

[65] See the following newspaper editorials for May 7, 1935: New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, New York World-Telegram, New York Post, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Washington Post. Also see the following liberal periodicals: The Nation, CXL (May 15, 1935), 557; Oswald Garrison Villard, "Issues and Men: Senator Cutting," The Nation, CXL (May 22, 1935), 591; "The Week," The New Republic, LXXXIII (May 15, 1935), 1; The Progressive, May 11 and 18, 1935; Common Sense, IV (June, 1935), 2-3, 6. New York Times, May 21, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, May 21, 1935; The Progressive, May 25, 1935. For further treatment of the Bronson Cutting re-election contest, see Gustav Leonard Seligmann, Jr., "The Political Career of Senator Bronson

So ended a major controversy between the progressive Republicans and the Roosevelt Administration. The precise effect that it had upon the group's relationship to the New Deal cannot be measured. The "Second New Deal" legislation immediately followed this tragic event and gained the support of the members of the group to a greater extent than the programs of the First New Deal. But the long-term effect is harder to pinpoint. Distrust and suspicion of the President and his motives certainly had become a conscious feeling among many of the progressive Republicans. This did not augur well for the future reaction of these men to the policies of Franklin Roosevelt in domestic and foreign affairs.

M. Cutting," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1967; William H. Pickens, "Bronson Cutting vs. Dennis Chavez: Battle of the Patrones in New Mexico, 1934," New Mexico Historical Review, XLVI (January, 1971), 5-36; G.L. Seligmann, Jr., "The Purge That Failed: The 1934 Senatorial Election in New Mexico: Yet Another View," New Mexico Historical Review, XLVII (October, 1972), 361-381.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND NEW DEAL AND THE ELECTION OF 1936

The progressive Republican Senate bloc was bitter and disillusioned with Franklin D. Roosevelt at the time of Bronson Cutting's death. The Cutting tragedy threatened a progressive split with the New Deal. Already critical of some administration programs and the nature of New Deal liberalism, the progressives, who tended toward isolationism, were also disturbed over the President's unsuccessful attempt to win Senate approval of American membership in the World Court in January, 1935. Roosevelt seemed to be floundering, uncertain of the direction in which the New Deal should go.

Only one piece of major legislation, the work-relief bill which created the Works Progress Administration, passed into law during the first few months of 1935. Roosevelt asked Congress to give the federal government power to spend almost five billion dollars on a gigantic program of emergency public employment, which would give jobs to three and a half million people. The executive branch would determine how the money should be spent, an important shift of power from Congress to the White House. Senator LaFollette, who, with his brother, had met with Roosevelt twice in late 1934

and early 1935 to discuss work relief proposals, introduced an amendment to the bill calling for an appropriation of more than nine billion dollars, nearly twice what Roosevelt requested. The Senate rejected the senator's proposal by a vote of 77-8, with only three progressive Republicans (Cutting, Frazier and Nye) joining in support of LaFollette. But all members of the progressive bloc voted in favor of the administration bill and the conference report. However, Hiram Johnson expressed unhappiness with the President's control over the relief funds. He wrote his son: "I may accept this because I don't know what to do myself in curing our country's ills, and inasmuch as I am unable to present a plan, I may be justified in giving to him the purse strings of the nation for the consummation of any plan which he may devise. I do, however, hesitate in a matter of such transcendent importance. . ." The California senator voted to cut the appropriation in half and to confine it to a one year program, but both proposals were defeated. After the bill passed Congress, he told his son: "I did not feel with the views I have about relieving distress, feeding the hungry, etc., that I could vote against relief, and so finally I voted for the bill, but with many misgivings. We are in the Hands of the Lord . . . and I am perfectly certain that He, alone, and no earthly personage, has any knowledge of what will be done or what may ultimately occur." [1]

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[1] Congressional Record, March 21, 1935, 4148-4152,

Roosevelt's lack of direction in early 1935 and his attempt to hold conservative and business support alarmed many of the progressives. Hiram Johnson felt that the President was ". . .not quite sure of himself and . . .his plans for the future are wholly nebulous and inchoate." He thought the government was at a standstill while Roosevelt was deciding how to handle the extremist challenges of Father Coughlin and Huey Long. Charles McNary told his brother: "The President has lost considerable of his influence with his Party and has developed recently a rather childish peevishness, which should not be the part of a big fellow." T.R.B. of The New Republic declared in March: "To some extent, at least, he has lost the confidence of the progressive group in the Senate. It is, in my judgment, a much more serious loss than is generally appreciated because the progressives were his only convinced supporters." [2]

In early May, the progressives took action to steer the President toward new ideas. Roosevelt's attempt to hold on to business support had failed, as the US Chamber of Commerce, the major spokesman for American business, denounced

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4160; The Progressive, February 23, 1935; New York Times, December 8, 1934; The Progressive, December 15, 1934; New York Times, January 20, 1935; The Progressive, January 26, 1935; Congressional Record, March 23, 1935, 4366; April 5, 1935, 5135; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 26 and April 7, 1935, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[2] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 3 and 10, April 28, 1935, Johnson Papers; Charles McNary to John H. McNary, February 26, 1935, Charles McNary Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; T.R.B., "Washington Notes," The New Republic, LXXXII (March 6, 1935), 101.

him and broke with the New Deal. Senator LaFollette led a group of Senate progressives to a White House conference on the night of May 14, only eight days after Bronson Cutting's death. The senators urged the President to assume the leadership of a new reform program and end the First New Deal policy of cooperation with big business. Norris also urged Roosevelt to put the Post Office Department under the merit system, so as to end political favors for party hacks. The progressives came away from the conference confident that Roosevelt would assert a progressive leadership in the coming months. Felix Frankfurter, an advisor to the President, with close relations to the progressive senators, informed Roosevelt that nearly all of the participants had seemed pleased. For instance, LaFollette told Frankfurter: "It was the best, the frankest, the most encouraging talk we have ever had with the President. . . .The President was fair, and frank, and I felt greatly encouraged that he is going to go into the stride of his old aggressive leadership." The Supreme Court decision on the NRA in late May finally convinced Roosevelt to make a new departure which became known as the Second New Deal. [3]

In early June, Congress was making plans to adjourn after an unproductive session. Now Roosevelt announced his

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[3] Harold Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), I: 363; George Norris to Franklin D. Roosevelt, May 15, 1935, Felix Frankfurter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Felix Frankfurter to Roosevelt, May 16, 1935, Frankfurter Papers.

new program, which he insisted Congress should act upon before the end of the session. He proposed the passage of five major pieces of legislation: social security, the Wagner Labor Relations bill, a wealth tax, a public utility holding company measure, and a banking bill. He also wanted a number of minor measures, of which the most significant was the Guffey-Snyder Coal Act.

The progressive Republicans were unanimous in their support of the Social Security legislation, which passed both houses of Congress in June. They had long advocated the need to provide old age and unemployment insurance and national aid to the states for care of the needy. Roosevelt proposed the legislation in January, 1935, and was immediately praised by Norris, Johnson and Couzens. However, Borah and McNary were critical of the bill because they felt the pensions would be inadequate. McNary endorsed a social security bill that would give dignity to workers in their old age. Borah proposed an amendment providing for old age assistance at a rate of $30 a month, higher than the administration bill provided for. His suggestion was soundly defeated by a vote of 60-17, with the progressive bloc split. LaFollette and Norris voted against the Borah proposal, without indicating their reason. All the progressive Republicans supported the final passage of the bill, which passed by a vote of 77-6 in the Senate. Nye, not present for the vote, indicated he would have backed the legislation, while Couzens and Norbeck

were absent from Washington recovering from illness. The Social Security Act established the government's responsibility for the welfare of the people, a turning point in American history. [4]

Senator Wagner's proposal to set up a National Labor Relations Board had lacked the support of the President during 1934 and early 1935. The Senate, however, passed it overwhelmingly by a vote of 63-12 in May, 1935, with all of the progressive Republicans supporting it. Roosevelt now indicated that he favored the bill and regarded House passage essential. It won final approval of Congress on June 27, and the President signed the legislation on July 5. The Wagner Act gave labor the right of collective bargaining and compelled employers to agree to union organization of their plants. [5]

On June 19, Roosevelt sent a tax message to Congress, which called for the beginning of redistribution of the wealth in the country. He recommended increased taxes on inheritances, the levying of gift taxes, graduated taxes on large incomes, and a corporation tax. This proposal caused a large scale outcry from business, but rejoicing among the progressive Republicans. LaFollette was especially pleased. He had long been in favor of heavier taxation of the wealthy. In March, he had moved for fullest publicity of every detail

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[4] New York Times, January 18, 1935; Congressional Record, June 18, 1935, 9541-9543; June 19, 1935, 9634, 9650.

[5] Congressional Record, May 16, 1935, 7681.

of income tax returns. Along with Couzens, he had proposed amendments to a tax bill calling for increased income taxes, capital stock taxes and excess profits levies. The publicity of income tax returns was endorsed by Norris and Frazier in short speeches, but the Senate defeated the LaFollette proposal on March 27 by a vote of 51-25, with the seven progressive Republicans present voting with LaFollette and seventeen Democrats. At the end of April, LaFollette declared in a radio speech that regardless of the action or inaction of the administration on increased taxes, the progressives in the Senate intended to make a major effort for passage of drastic increases in the taxes levied upon wealth, before the end of the session. Increased taxes paid according to the ability to bear the burden was the only way, he asserted, to increase the expenditures of the government in its fight against the depression. Public works programs could only be adequately financed by a wealth tax. [6]

Immediately after Roosevelt's tax message, the progressive Republicans joined with other liberal senators in issuing a statement, which affirmed: "We believe that the tax program presented by the President to the Congress should be disposed of before this session adjourns. We are willing to stay in session until action is taken upon this vitally important question." The statement was released to the press

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[6] New York Times, March 13 and 14, 1935; Congressional Record, March 27, 1935, 4509-4512, 4526; New York Times, March 28 and April 29, 1935.

with the signatures of twenty-two senators, including Borah, Capper, Frazier, LaFollette, Norbeck, Norris, Nye and Shipstead from the progressive Republican bloc. The plan for this round robin declaration was conceived at a luncheon attended by Norris, Johnson, Borah and LaFollette. All of these men had been advocating for many years higher taxes on the wealthy and on corporations. The four senators affirmed that the President had finally espoused their cardinal political philosophy and that they were ready to fight for the bill. The petition was then sent to the Senate, where it was passed around and signed by the other progressive Republicans and many Democrats. Senator Nye, active in lining up support for the move, said the idea was conceived for two reasons. The first was to promote the legislation, while the second was to test the sincerity of the President. Nye predicted that some independent senators who had been supporting Roosevelt would turn away from him in 1936 unless he used his influence in a vigorous manner to promote the tax legislation. If a progressive candidate was nominated by the Republicans in 1936, Nye thought the insurgent bloc might return to support of their party. [7]

A few days later, as the Democratic leaders of Congress seemed to waver, Senator Borah came to the defense of Roosevelt's new tax program. He called the legislation a "share the burden of government" program which was sound

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[7] New York Times, June 22, 1935.

both economically and morally. LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, hailed the tax bill as pointing the way for "a genuine 'new deal' for America, based on sound economic policy and offering the most promise for permanent improvement." Capper delivered a radio address in support of the Roosevelt tax program at the end of June. [8]

Despite the progressive support, Roosevelt seemed reluctant to fight hard for his tax proposal. A drive to adjourn began in the House of Representatives in mid-July. Senate leaders made a promise to the progressives, headed by LaFollette, that adjournment would not take place unless the President agreed to it or the progressives gave up the struggle for the tax legislation. Norris and LaFollette were given a public promise to this effect by Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi, chairman of the Finance Committee. LaFollette remained determined to force tax action before the session came to an end, and he hoped to increase the proposed revenue of the bill. Wanting to raise five hundred million dollars for public works, LaFollette offered an amendment to increase taxes beyond the Roosevelt proposal, but it was defeated. However, the Senate passed the less extensive bill by a vote of 57-22 on August 15. All progressive Republicans were in the majority, with the exception of McNary who voted against, and Couzens who was absent for the vote. The White House seemed to have lost enthusiasm for the fight,

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[8] New York Times, June 24, 1935; The Progressive, June 29, 1935; New York Times, July 1, 1935.

however, and the legislation was less than the progressives wanted. Congress eliminated the inheritance tax and reduced the graduated corporation income tax to only a symbolic levy. The Wealth Tax Act of 1935, after final passage by both houses, did little to redistribute wealth and to raise revenue. But it did increase estate, gift and capital stock taxes, levied an excess profits tax, and raised the surtax to the highest rates in American history. Overall, it was a disappointment to progressives who wanted greater changes in taxation, but it was certainly an improvement on earlier tax legislation. [9]

The Public Utilities Holding Company bill had the unanimous support of the progressive Republicans, who despised the electric power monopolies which seemed to be beyond state regulation. The administration bill included a "death sentence" provision, which would empower the Securities and Exchange Commission, after January 1, 1940, to dissolve any utility holding company which could not justify its existence. The Senate approved the "death sentence" by a single vote, 45-44, in June, with ten progressive Republicans in the majority, only McNary voting against. Final passage of the bill came by a vote of 56-32, with all eleven progressive Republicans in the majority and the rest of the Senate Republicans in opposition. Norris and Borah delivered attacks

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[9] New York Times, July 16, 17 and 28, 1935; The Progressive, August 10, 1935; Congressional Record, August 15, 1935, 13201-13202, 13254; New York Times, August 16, 1935.

on the public utilities before the final vote. Norris labeled the holding companies as robbers, thieves and swindlers in a five hour speech. He denounced the electric power "octopus" which often was removed to the second, third and fourth degree from the company that actually generated and supplied the power. Borah said that holding companies beyond the second degree should be eliminated entirely. When the House refused to pass the "death sentence" provision, Roosevelt compromised, angering some of the progressives, but Norris indicated he would vote for the conference report as a beginning toward an objective that could not yet be completely accomplished. The Senate adopted the conference report without a recorded vote. The Public Utility Holding Company Act eliminated all companies more than twice removed from the operating ones and gave the Securities and Exchange Commission power to eliminate those beyond the first degree that were not in the public interest. All holding companies in public utilities had to register with the SEC, which could regulate their financial transactions. The legislation was a major attack on bigness in business, which the progressive Republicans had always feared. It was also an endorsement of public power, which the progressives had long favored. [10]

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[10] Congressional Record, June 3, 1935, 8491-8519; New York Times, June 4, 1935; Congressional Record, June 11, 1935, 9049, 9053, 9065; New York Times, June 12, 1935; Congressional Record, August 24, 1935, 14470-14471; New York Times, August 25, 1935.

The Banking Act of 1935 enlarged government control over currency and credit. Cutting and Nye had published articles on the dangers of private banking in Liberty Magazine and Common Sense. Cutting had also delivered a speech on the subject and had proposed bills in June, 1934 and March, 1935 to change the American banking system. The banking legislation promoted by the Roosevelt administration passed without a recorded vote. A LaFollette amendment to strengthen the bill by preventing a director of one bank from sitting as director of another one was defeated by a vote of 39-22, with eight progressive Republicans among those supporting LaFollette. Couzens and Norbeck were absent for the vote due to illness, and McNary voted against the amendment. The conference report on the banking bill was agreed to without a recorded vote. [11]

The Guffey-Snyder Coal Act of 1935 passed the Senate by a vote of 45-37. It re-enacted the old bituminous coal code under the NRA. It guaranteed collective bargaining, uniform wages and hours, and a national commission to fix prices and allocate production. On this bill, six progressive Republicans voted in support (Capper, Frazier, Johnson,

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[11] Congressional Record, May 4, 1934, 8051-8053 (reprint of article entitled "Is Private Banking Doomed?" in March 31, 1934 issue of Liberty Magazine); The Progressive, April 14, 1934; Gerald P. Nye, "Under the Banker's Thumb: A Progressive Points a Way Out," Common Sense, III, (March, 1934), 12-13; Congressional Record, May 22, 1934, 9225-9227 (reprint of radio address of Bronson Cutting on May 18, 1934); June 6, 1934, 10557; March 8, 1935, 3180; July 26, 1935, 11935; August 19, 1935, 13655.

LaFollette, Norris, Nye), three against (Borah, Norbeck, Shipstead), and two (Couzens, McNary) did not vote. This bill had the lowest level of support among progressive Republicans of any of the Second New Deal legislation. [12]

The first session of the 74th Congress had been historic. The progressive Republican Senate bloc had been solidly behind Roosevelt's program. They had prodded the President toward this reform legislation, and thus the Second New Deal was much more to their liking than the First New Deal had been. The progressives had played an especially significant role in the promotion of the wealth tax legislation and the public utility holding company measure. The outstanding achievements of any congressional session in American history had been accomplished with the assistance of progressives who had pushed a wavering Roosevelt to the left.

In 1936, Roosevelt wished to avoid any new reforms, because it was an election year and he did not want to alienate potential supporters by an appearance of radicalism. But, in January, the Supreme Court declared the Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional by a 6-3 vote in U.S. v. Butler. This mainstay of the First New Deal had been re-enacted in July, 1935, with the Senate supporting it by a vote of 64-15. All ten progressive Republicans who were present and voted had supported the renewal of the legislation. Peter Norbeck expressed the attitude of progressives towards

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[12] Congressional Record, August 22, 1935, 14084.

the AAA in a speech before the vote. Referring to the farmer, Norbeck declared: "I think the Government has done something for him in the last two years. The Government has not done as much as it started out to do, but it has done something . . .there has been some improvement of conditions for the farmer." In September, 1935, Arthur Capper termed the Democratic agricultural program a "godsend to farmers." He indicated that the Republican party could not win the farm vote if it condemned the AAA in its convention platform. The AAA gave the farmer a measure of justice which he would not be willing to give up, Capper declared. He later wrote that the AAA was not a perfect program, but it had been a great aid to the farmers of the Midwest. [13]

A new farm bill was formulated within a few weeks after the adverse Court decision on the AAA. The Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act offered farmers bounties for deciding to avoid the planting of soil-depleting commercial crops, and instead growing soil-enriching grasses, clover and soybeans. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 56-20, with six progressive Republicans (Capper, Frazier, Johnson, LaFollette, Norbeck, Norris) voting in the majority, and two (Couzens and McNary) opposed. Nye and Shipstead, not present for the vote, indicated they would have gone with the majority, while Borah asserted that he would have

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[13] Congressional Record, July 23, 1935, 11658; July 16, 1935, 11219; New York Times, September 29, 1935; Capper's Farmer, November, 1935.

joined Couzens and McNary in opposing it. Norris, Capper, Frazier, Norbeck and LaFollette all spoke briefly before the vote of the necessity to pass some farm measure to replace the AAA. None considered the Soil Conservation Act the final answer to the farmers' problems, but only as an acceptable temporary measure until more permanent legislation could be enacted. Borah considered the farm bill unconstitutional because of the federal control over production that it implied. McNary thought that the legislation was really another AAA in different form, an attempt to ignore the Supreme Court's decision. Certain that the Supreme Court would find the legislation unconstitutional, he therefore opposed its passage. [14]

The other major legislation of the 1936 session of Congress was the passage of an undistributed profits tax of a modest nature, which only four progressive Republicans (Frazier, LaFollette, Norbeck, Norris) supported or were paired for, when it passed in the Senate 38-24. The vote on the conference report showed seven progressives (Borah, Frazier, LaFollette, Norbeck, Norris, Nye, Shipstead) voting or paired for the bill, with three (Capper, Couzens, McNary) voting against. Hiram Johnson was absent and did not indicate how he would have voted on the final passage,

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[14] Congressional Record, February 15, 1936, 2165; February 12, 1936, 1882-1884; February 14, 1936, 2029, 2037-2038; February 15, 1936, 2139, 2141-2143, 2161; New York Times, February 13, 1936; February 8, 1936; Congressional Record, February 6, 1936, 1576.

although he had opposed the original bill. [15]

The progressive Republican Senate bloc was very much involved in legislative matters during 1935 and 1936, but they also devoted much thought to the 1936 presidential campaign. Immediately after the 1934 congressional elections, which showed a gain for the Democrats in both houses, Borah spoke up of the need to rehabilitate the Republican party for 1936. Reorganization along liberal lines on the congressional and state level, based on new issues and new leadership, he said, was essential for the party's survival. Borah called for the end of reactionary and big business control of the party apparatus. He planned to continue his fight for the restoration of the anti-trust laws, as part of his struggle to take power away from big corporations and monopolies over the political and economic structure of the nation. A month later, Borah renewed his demand that the Republican party be liberalized. He suggested that, if the Republican National Committee would not reorganize the party, the Young Republican clubs in the nation should force changes in the party organization. [16]

McNary, the progressive Republican with the closest connections to the Old Guard, endorsed Borah's statement. The Republican party must, he declared, look at human

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[15] Congressional Record, June 5, 1936, 9110; June 20, 1936, 10476.

[16] New York Times, November 9 and 10, December 2, 1934.

problems and steer away from talk about the Constitution, the Founding Fathers and bureaucracy. New leadership, ideals and planning were essential, the senator concluded. The Republican National Chairman, Henry P. Fletcher replied that he had no intention of calling a meeting of the national committee to consider new leadership and issues. Fletcher said the stalwarts in the party would fight the attempts of the independents to take over the party. Borah responded that he had no intention of giving up the fight. Newspaper reports indicated that Senators Couzens, Cutting, Norbeck, Nye, Frazier and Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan were with Borah and McNary on this issue. Within a few days, Governor Gifford Pinchot had also endorsed Borah's call for reorganization of the party. Senator Couzens suggested that Borah write a platform for a liberal Republican party, as an alternative to the New Deal, instead of simply criticizing the Roosevelt administration, as Borah had done in the recent campaign. [17]

On December 13, 1934, Senators Borah and Nye carried their fight for Republican party liberalization to the New York County Republican committee. Their speeches, calling for young and liberal Republicans to take over control of the party apparatus, were heard over a nationwide radio hookup. Borah demanded that the party move to the left to meet

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[17] New York Times, December 2, 3 and 5, 1934; New York Herald Tribune, December 2 and 5, 1934; The Progressive, December 8, 1934.

the issue of the economic crisis in America. The party must stand for economic and social justice and a more equitable distribution of wealth. The supreme issue for a new party platform was, he declared, "protection of the rights, liberties and economic privileges of the average man and woman" against monopoly and concentration of wealth. Nye threatened a bolt by Western Republicans to a new progressive party if the West did not get recongnition in the leadership, policies and platform of the party, and if big business connections were not abandoned for that of farmers, laborers and consumers. Both Borah and Nye paid tribute to President Roosevelt's leadership, while attacking the effects of the NRA and AAA. Nye argued that Roosevelt could not succeed in liberalizing the Democratic party on a permanent basis. Thus, there was a real need for a liberal Republican party. Senator Capper endorsed his colleagues' comments when he wrote: "If the last two elections mean anything, they mean, I think, that our program has got to change if we are to again become the dominant political party in this country." [18]

By the middle of 1935, many Republican leaders thought the major issue of the 1936 presidential campaign would be revision of the Constitution, which President Roosevelt advocated after the Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional on May 27. Borah was seen as a probable candidate

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[18] New York Times, December 14, 1934; New York Herald Tribune, December 14, 1934; The Progressive, December 22, 1934; Arthur Capper to Charles F. Scott, January 11, 1935, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka.

for the Presidency on a platform of preservation of the Constitution and liberalization of the Republican party. In July, William Allen White wrote Borah: "Of course you can be President if you want to. You are the only Republican who could at this minute beat Roosevelt. And I am becoming more and more persuaded that he must be beaten and that only a big man can do the job. I cannot blame you if you shrink from the job." In September, White advised Borah: "You can have the Presidential nomination for the asking, but I suppose you will have to ask." Borah responded that he was not planning to seek the office and would not accept the nomination anyway if the reactionaries retained control of the party apparatus and wrote the platform. [19]

Rumors of Borah's impending candidacy spread during the fall of 1935. The Nation considered Borah a threat to Roosevelt's re-election despite numerous weaknesses. The senator's lone-wolf status, his age, lack of administrative and executive experience, his poor understanding of the economic system, and his past refusal to carry a progressive cause through to final victory all were points against him. The journal no longer considered the senator a progressive, but admitted that he had great prestige among the mass of the American people. The Progressive thought Borah would

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[19] New York Times, July 21, 1935; William Allen White to William Borah, July 22, 1935; White to Borah, September 23, 1935; Borah to White, September 26, 1935, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

gain support from many of the members of the progressive Republican bloc, although LaFollette and Norris were expected to support Roosevelt's re-election. In mid-October, Borah held an interview with a correspondent of the Washington Post. He declared his intention of doing everything he could to rally public sentiment against attempted eastern domination of the 1936 campaign. Although he believed the fight against conservatism would be carried into the presidential primary states, he declined to indicate if he would be the person leading the charge on the Old Guard. [20]

In early November, Borah criticized the conservative Republicans and former President Hoover for leading the country into the depression. While planning to battle for a liberal platform and nominee, he implied that he had no plans to become a declared candidate for President. However, he was willing to allow his name to be entered in any primary that his admirers registered him for. The senator asserted that Western Republicans would support Roosevelt if the Old Guard was permitted to select the party nominee. Borah expressed concern, however, that if Roosevelt was re-elected, he would use the endorsement of the American people to change the American form of government to a "federal dictatorship" with all powers centered in the executive branch. Later in November, he called about thirty-five reporters into his

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[20] "Will Borah Run?", The Nation, CXLI (September 11, 1935), 285; The Progressive, October 26, 1935; Washington Post, October 15, 1935.

office and hinted that he was planning to seek the Republican nomination. Monopoly would be the key issue in the Republican primaries, Borah declared. [21]

In early December, in a radio address, Borah attacked the basic philosophy of the New Deal and of Hoover Republicanism. While neither Roosevelt or Hoover were specifically named, Borah left no doubt whom he was criticizing. He indicated that his unannounced candidacy would aim at a philosophy that fell between Roosevelt's and Hoover's programs. Later in December, Borah said he was willing to accept the support of all liberal delegates from any state. He now organized a campaign board to direct his presidential drive. He asserted that his major aim remained that of holding the balance of power in the convention, and thus insuring a liberal platform and candidate, whether or not he was the nominee. A number of progressive Republicans now declared their support. Former Governor Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania and Senators Frazier, Nye, Norbeck and Shipstead made public statements of endorsement. The Idaho senator finally made a formal announcement of his candidacy for the Presidency on February 4, and made plans to enter various Western state primaries. [22]

On March 19, in a speech in Youngstown, Ohio, Borah

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[21] New York Times, November 4 and 16, 1935.

[22] New York Times, December 8, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, December 8, 1935; New York Times, December 20 and 23, 1935; January 4, 1936; November 29 and December 27, 1935; January 5, February 21 and 5, 1936.

defined his program. He criticized the New Deal farm policy which, he said, promoted reduction of acreage and scarcity of goods. The farmer should be paid for producing, he asserted, rather than for reducing. He also called for obedience to the Constitution and for the complete independence of the federal judiciary. He announced once again his opposition to monopoly in all forms, to the growing bureaucracy in government under the New Deal, and to politics in the administration of relief. He also criticized the reciprocal trade agreements of 1934 and urged a policy of complete neutrality for the United States from European and Asian quarrels. A few days later in Chicago, Borah warned party leaders in an impassioned speech that he might walk out of the Republican party if the corporation interests dictated the nomination and platform. Defending his support of many New Deal policies which had been beneficial in the economic crisis, he reasserted his criticisms of the Roosevelt programs. [23]

Borah became the subject of attention of many magazine articles during the winter and spring of 1936. The New Republic pointed out that many progressives in the Senate, including LaFollette, Norris and Johnson, were remaining silent in regard to Borah's candidacy. The journal commented: "The fact that Borah is supposed to represent the extreme left of the Republican party is a sharp commentary on the mental bankruptcy of the aged elephant." Oswald Garrison

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[23] New York Times, March 20 and 22, 1936.

Villard of The Nation agreed that Borah was no longer a true progressive. Common Sense accused Borah of being a "Judas Goat who planned to lead his followers to the 'slaughter House'." The magazine declared: "From beginning to end, the Borah campaign for the Presidency is a fraud, designed . . .to betray those whom he deceives to those whom he denounces." [24]

Hiram Johnson was cynical about Borah's presidential campaign. Always jealous because Borah attracted so much press attention, he termed him a "publicity agent" and expressed doubt that he would go through to the convention as an active candidate. By late March, Johnson was certain that his colleague would not be the nominee ". . .because of his vacillations, and apparent streak of laziness." He wrote his son during April: "Borah as a candidate has been a dud. I think he is a complete 'flop', so far as the convention is concerned, . . . He labored under the delusion that there would be a popular uprising, which would overwhelm the electorate and carry him upon a tumultuous popular wave to success. He has not amounted to a last year's bird's nest,

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[24] Jonathon Mitchell, "Borah Knows Best," The New Republic, LXXXV (January 29, 1936), 333-334; "Borah as a Candidate," The New Republic, LXXXVI (March 4, 1936), 97-98; Oswald Garrison Villard, "Issues and Men: Senators Wagner, Nye, and Others," The Nation, CXLI (September 4, 1935), 259; Herbert C. Pell, "Judas Goat: Is Borah Leading the Progressives to the Slaughter?", Common Sense, V (May, 1936), 24-25. Other articles on Borah in 1936 are: Richard L. Neuberger, "Behind the Borah Boom," Current History, XLIII (February, 1936), 463-466; and William Hard, "Borah and '36 and Beyond," Harper's Magazine, CLXXII (April, 1936), 575-583.

and his utterances have been really pitiful." [25]

As Governor Alf M. Landon of Kansas forged ahead toward the Republican nomination, Borah refused a request from William Allen White to become a member of the platform committee. With his fortunes failing during May, Borah declined to become an Idaho delegate to the convention. Again, he asserted that he would not support the ticket if he felt it was dictated by corporate interests in the East. He was critical of Governor Landon because the oil interests were supporting his candidacy. Arthur Krock of the New York Times wrote at this time that Borah ". . .remains the Republican mystery man", and that the press would be devoting much attention to his activities and attitudes at the convention. [26]

When Borah arrived in Cleveland on June 8, he announced he would support the nominee of the party if his planks on monopoly and foreign affairs were accepted. He implied, however, that Landon's candidacy was supported by conservatives. Borah's planks were adopted, marking the high point of the senator's influence at any Republican convention in his career. However, once Landon's nomination for President was secure, Borah took the stand that he wanted to observe the candidate's campaign before issuing an endorsement of him. [27]

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[25] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., December 27, 1935; March 29 and April 19, 1936, Johnson Papers.

[26] New York Times, April 21 and 22, May 10 and 29, 1936.

[27] New York Times, June 9 and 12, 1936.

The question of how many progressive Republicans would desert their party to support President Roosevelt became one of the interesting facets of the 1936 election. Borah's campaign had failed to push the conservatives out of power, although Landon called himself a progressive and had been a supporter of Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party in 1912. Orthodox Republicans endorsed their party's candidate without much hesitation. But where would the progressive Republican Senate bloc throw their support?

Only two progressives, Capper and McNary, endorsed Landon for the Presidency. They had also been the only members of the bloc to support Hoover in 1932. Capper had supported much of the New Deal. In April, 1935, he praised Roosevelt's willingness to experiment, which was forcing the Republican party to reassess its fundamental principles. In July, he declared his support of the President's wealth-tax proposal, but he also indicated misgivings about the "spending spree" in which the New Deal was engaged. He asserted that taxpayers' money had been spent in a reckless and extravagant manner on relief. Capper wrote Amos Pinchot at this time: "Roosevelt is losing ground. He has gone too far in usurping power that was never intended the President should have." In reply to a constituent's letter, Capper wrote: "I agree with you that Roosevelt is getting us into more and more trouble as time goes on. . . .I think the people are losing faith in most of his experiments." He retained the feeling that parts of the New Deal program, including

the AAA, were worthwhile as emergency measures. To a Kansas newspaper, Capper wrote of his fear that too much power had been conferred upon the President since 1933. While not concerned that Roosevelt might become a dictator, he was disturbed by ". . .the huge expenditures, the increasing deficit month after month and the steadily growing public debt" as well as ". . .the great increase in number of employees on the Federal payroll." In September, he told Victor Murdock, a former Congressman from Kansas during the Progressive era: "The Government will go broke if Roosevelt doesn't quit spending so recklessly. I have voted against some three billion dollars of appropriations which I considered extravagant and unnecessary. I think Roosevelt is slipping. If the Republicans put up a good man next year there is a fair chance that we can beat Roosevelt." [28]

Capper faced a campaign for re-election to the Senate in 1936, as well as a decision on the presidential campaign. He defended his support of various New Deal programs as being in the interests of Kansas and the "agricultural West", but he was critical of the reciprocal trade agreements, the ". . .waste and extravagance in the administration of relief agencies", and proposals for changing the Constitution. In

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[28] New York Times, April 22 and July 15, 1935; Arthur Capper to Amos Pinchot, July 23, 1935, Amos Pinchot Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Capper to C.A. Brewer, July 26, 1935, Capper Papers; Capper to Will Morton of the Ransom, Kansas Record, August 19, 1935, Capper Papers; Capper to Victor Murdock, September 10, 1935, Victor Murdock Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

an article on the New Deal for the New York Times in December, 1935, he declared: "Kansas does not have the confidence in President Roosevelt that it had two years ago, when the general feeling was that he should have a free hand to carry out whatever relief and recovery programs he felt advisable." He predicted a close and hard fight for the Midwest in the 1936 election and thought the Republican party would carry Kansas if its governor, Alf Landon, was the presidential nominee. [29]

Capper supported Landon's nomination from the start. The senator attempted to act as a friendly intermediary between Borah and Landon during the months before the convention, in the hope of avoiding antagonisms that might prevent Borah from supporting the Governor after the Republican convention. Once Landon had been nominated, Capper told him: "I am myself very happy over the way it has worked out and want you to know that I will be back in Topeka just as soon as Congress adjourns and stand ready to answer your call at any time until the fight is over in November." [30]

In an address at Sedan, Kansas, on October 3, Capper declared that Landon would loosen the concentration of power in Washington and would avoid ". . .extravagant spending policies and . . . extension of bureaucracy in the national

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[29] Capper's Farmer, November, 1935; New York Times, December 29, 1935.

[30] Arthur Capper to Alf Landon, January 4, 1936; Capper to Landon, June 13, 1936, Alf Landon Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka.

government." While asking the people of Kansas to re-elect him to the Senate, Capper refused to apologize for his support of various New Deal programs. He had voted in the interest of the people at all times and had not allowed partisanship to interfere with his conviction that the federal government must assist its citizens in a time of economic depression. Capper believed, however, that Landon would operate a more efficient administration because of his common sense, complete integrity, liberal views, proven executive ability and widescale knowledge of governmental affairs. On the eve of the election, Capper asserted that he had confidence that the Republican presidential candidate ". . .will keep the good things the New Deal has brought into government . . .and that he will also rid us of the waste and extravagance, the political manipulations and the encroachments of the executive upon the legislative and judicial branches of the federal government." Capper, easily re-elected to another six year term in the Senate, was disappointed over Landon's landslide defeat, which saw the Republican candidate win only Maine and Vermont. The senator wrote journalist William Allen White that ". . .the millions of relief money was the chief factor in turning the recent election to Roosevelt but he captured the imagination of the common, everyday folks because he convinced them that he was thinking of them and doing his best to see that they got an even break, while the Republicans were accepting immense sums from the Duponts and other Wall Streeters who would use the

party in the future." [31]

Charles McNary admitted at the end of the 1935 congressional session that "There has been tangible improvement in the country's economic structure . . .", but he felt the administration had been delegated too much power and had attempted to deal with too many issues at once. He believed that the people were losing confidence in the President. In August, 1935, the senator suggested that the 1936 election would be decided in the Midwest and West. Therefore, the Republican party must offer a farm program superior to the AAA. When Landon was nominated, McNary remained strangely silent. Richard L. Neuberger wrote an article in the New York Times in mid-October, pointing out that McNary had not yet announced unequivocal support of the Republican candidate. He finally endorsed Landon in late October in a speech broadcast in Oregon by the manager of his re-election campaign. He failed to deliver the speech personally because of the recent death of his brother. McNary's lukewarm endorsement stated that Landon would improve upon Roosevelt's farm program and would conserve the gains made under the New Deal. The senator won re-election to the Senate without any major challenge. [32]

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[31] Capper's Weekly, October 17, 24 and 31, 1936; New York Times, October 18, 1936; Topeka Daily Capital, October 18, 1936; November 3, 1936; Capper's Weekly, November 14, 1936; Arthur Capper speech over radio station WIBW, November 8, 1936, Capper Papers; Capper to William Allen White, December 1, 1936, William Allen White Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[32] Charles McNary statement, July 15, 1935, McNary

Lynn Frazier was the only progressive Republican senator to endorse the third party candidacy of Representative William Lemke, the Union Party candidate, who had the backing of such people as Father Coughlin and Gerald L.K. Smith. Frazier had worked with his North Dakota colleague in urging passage of the Frazier-Lemke farm mortgage moratorium bills, later invalidated by the Supreme Court. On October 3, 1936, Frazier criticized the two major party platforms as he announced his support for Lemke. He said Democratic and Republican party leaders had ignored their promises to the common people, but not to the big corporations who contributed funds to their campaigns. [33]

Three progressive Republicans--Borah, Nye, and Johnson --remained publicly neutral during the campaign. At the beginning of July, Borah returned to Idaho to campaign for reelection to the Senate. While silent on the part he would take in the presidential campaign, the senator indicated he had no intention of bolting the Republican party. Later in July, he praised Landon's acceptance speech. But Richard L. Neuberger indicated in a New York Times article in early

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Papers; New York Times, August 18, 1935; October 18, 1936; Portland Morning Oregonian, October 29, 1936.

[33] Bismarck Tribune, October 3, 1936; New York Times, October 4, 1936.

September that there were increasing doubts that Borah would actively support Landon. He had refused to meet with Republican National Chairman John D.M. Hamilton when the latter was in Idaho during August. This was seen as evidence of declining interest by Borah in the Republican party campaign. In early October, a Philadelphia newspaper reported that the senator had told one of its correspondents that he would not support Landon. If the Republican party tried to force a statement from him, he would issue a statement they would regret. He planned to confine his campaigning to his own re-election contest and would endorse no presidential candidate. The reporter said Borah felt Landon was supported by reactionary forces. If the Republicans attacked Borah during his re-election campaign as a New Dealer, the senator just might announce his support for Roosevelt. The day after publication of this article, Borah repudiated it, declaring: "I never made any such statement to anyone, and I have not authorized any one else to make such a statement." On October 9, in Spokane, Washington, he asserted that he would make no campaign speeches for any presidential candidate, confining himself to a discussion of national issues in Idaho speeches while campaigning for re-election against Governor Ben Ross. In one of his campaign addresses, he asserted that he would not apologize for any votes cast in the Senate during the past four years. He refused to condemn the New Deal as a whole. Many of its motives and objectives were worthy. He had cast his vote for those New Deal measures that he

believed would assist the country out of the depression. However, many New Deal concepts, which he had continually criticized since 1934, still disturbed him. He intended to fight for changes where he thought them necessary. In November, Borah, still retaining his neutrality, won re-election to the Senate without any major difficulty. [34]

Gerald P. Nye had supported Borah in his quest for the Republican presidential nomination. Not surprised by Borah's failure, Nye felt that the party platform was more likely to attract support from Eastern reactionaries than Western progressives. The Old Guard had dominated the convention proceedings. Farmers and wage earners would find a lack of concern for their problems, Nye believed, and the power trusts would only be encouraged by the utilities plank. [35]

President Roosevelt and Interior Secretary Ickes, aware of Nye's discontent, attempted to draw an endorsement from the senator. Ickes met with Nye in early August to request that he agree to become the chairman of a progressive league in support of Roosevelt's reelection. Nye told Ickes that he would not speak out against Roosevelt, but that he was inclined to remain neutral. Later in August, the President invited Nye to Hyde Park for a meeting which Nye later termed "a purely social afternoon." The President did not

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[34] New York Times, July 2, 7 and 26, September 6, 1936; dispatch from Philadelphia Record printed in New York Times, October 4, 1936; New York Times, October 5, 10 and 17, 1936.

[35] New York Times, July 7, 1935; The Progressive, August 17, 1935; New York Times, June 13, 1936.

personally press the senator for his endorsement, although it was obvious he had this in mind. Ickes, however, persisted. The senator refused to attend the progressive conference held in September, which endorsed Roosevelt for re-election. In October, he declared publicly that he intended to follow a "hands off" policy, confining his campaign to the gubernatorial race in North Dakota and to speeches in support of Senator Norris's independent run for re-election in Nebraska. At the end of October, Ickes, convinced that, despite his public statement, Nye was on the verge of declaring for the President, tried again. However, the senator continued to refuse to declare for Roosevelt. When Roosevelt won a landslide victory, Nye asserted that it was no surprise to him. The President now had a tremendous responsibility to the people, the senator said, as the welfare of America in both foreign and domestic affairs lay in his hands. Nye wondered whether the President would now move to the left or right politically. If the Republican party did not reorganize along liberal lines within the next few years, then a new party seemed inevitable to Nye. [36]

Hiram Johnson, a strong supporter of Roosevelt's

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[36] Harold Ickes, Secret Diary, I: 655-656; Personal Interview with Senator Gerald P. Nye, March 30, 1971, Washington, D.C.; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Gerald P. Nye, August 17, 1936, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park; Nye to Robert LaFollette, Jr., September 10, 1936, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, October 2, 1936; Harold Ickes, Secret Diary, I: 698; Bismarck Tribune, November 5, 1936; The Progressive, December 5, 1936.

election in 1932 and enthusiastic proponent of the New Deal through 1935, started to experience a change of attitude toward the President personally and politically in 1936. This led him to refuse to endorse Roosevelt publicly although he admitted privately that he had voted for him. His change in attitude can be explained partially by a stroke which forced him to recuperate at home throughout the summer and fall of 1936. More crotchety and bad tempered than ever, he became suspicious of the motives of the President. The year 1936 thus marked the beginning of the senator's switch from enthusiastic supporter of the New Deal to extreme opponent by the late 1930's.

Johnson had been disturbed as early as May, 1935, over increasing government expenditures. He told his son: ". . . it leaves me jittery, . . .All of these expenditures are of course outside of the usual expenses of government; and there are any number of other things that have many advocates, which may be adopted. . . .it is not difficult for our legislators to embrace any new, dazzling expedient of tremendous and unheard of cost." In June, he gave his view of Roosevelt to his son: "He has increased in the minds of many people, like myself, friendly to him, the feeling of uncertainty concerning him, and some think that his love of the dramatic has overcome his sense of proportion and his ideas of policies." He thought that Roosevelt would have little difficulty winning re-election because the Republican party

had no alternative to offer. [37]

The President tried to maintain his friendship with the Johnsons. He invited the senator and his wife to a cruise on the presidential boat during July, 1935. The senator's impression of the President on this cruise was that he had ". . .something of a will power about him that very few human beings possess. . . .his mind is very active. . . . Now and then, he goes off on a tangent on a more or less startling proposition, with which one cannot agree, but when he observes the disagreement, immediately he shifts to another topic." Before returning to California at the end of the 1935 congressional session, Johnson met again with the President. In November, Roosevelt asked Johnson to visit him when he returned to Washington. When Johnson arrived in the capital, he told newsmen that business conditions were the best they had been since 1929, an obvious word of approval for the New Deal. But he refused to discuss politics or foreign policy. [38]

As 1936 began, Johnson was certain that Roosevelt would win the election. He thought the campaign ". . .will be the bitterest we have ever encountered. It will develop, before

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[37] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., May 5 and June 29, 1935, Johnson Papers.

[38] New York Times, July 7, 1935; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., July 8, 1935, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 8, 1935, Johnson and Roosevelt Papers; Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., July 13, 1935, Johnson Papers; New York Times, September 1, 1935; Roosevelt to Johnson, November 14, 1935, Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, December 22, 1935.

its conclusion into a class war, . . ." Admitting that at times he was disturbed by the President's attitudes and approaches to certain issues, such as neutrality, the senator wrote his son: ". . .however, I compare him to those who are his opponents, either as candidates or advocates, and I must say that, generally speaking, he is so infinitely better than those who are yapping at him, or those who are seeking the nomination, that I feel there is little or no comparison." Johnson considered it Roosevelt's fortune that no strong Republican candidate was appearing to challenge him. "What a child of destiny Roosevelt is! He blunders along here with half-baked and oftentimes half-finished policies, and I give him due credit for his adventurous spirit, and desire to accomplish things, . . .I do think if there were a Republican party and a real Republican candidate there might be a fight this year that would gladden the disinterested onlooker." Johnson told his son of his concern over what would happen after Roosevelt's re-election victory, because ". . .he is so vain now of his powers. . ." [39]

After Johnson became ill with what were termed brain spasms, he was more isolated from political events. "The events of the days seem far removed," he wrote his son in August, "and the election something of which I am no part. . . .A strange feeling comes over one in contemplating himself, a forgotten man, unable to do the things that he was

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[39] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 5, March 1, May 9 and 31, 1936, Johnson Papers.

accustomed to do and most desirous of doing. The doctor has said I must not indulge in the campaign at all, . . ." Johnson wrote LaFollette later in August that he could not take part in the progressive conference scheduled for early September, designed to endorse the President, because of his poor health and his usual desire to remain a "lone wolf". At the end of August, he told his son: "I will soon be put on the spot in the presidential contest, which I have delayed as long as I could. Various individuals have been ringing me up, men in authority and I have been stalling." The President personally called Johnson, and the senator's house servant said that he was asleep. The New York Herald Tribune speculated that Johnson might endorse Landon. The paper said the senator had not seen visitors or answered the telephone for a long time. Unnamed friends were convinced that he would announce for the Republican presidential candidate during September. Johnson was reported to have expressed hostility toward the New Deal in comments to friends during the last session of Congress, although he had not stated these thoughts publicly. In late October, the New York Times noted that the senator was taking no part in the campaign.[40]

Ickes and Roosevelt had a discussion in early October about the failure of Johnson to endorse the administration.

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[40] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., August 2, 1936, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Robert LaFollette, Jr., August 13, 1936, LaFollette Family Papers; Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., August 24 and 26, 1936, Johnson Papers; New York Herald Tribune, August 27, 1936; New York Times, October 22, 1936.

Ickes knew that Johnson was ill, but he could not understand why the senator had not issued a statement of support. The President decided to make another attempt at communicating with the senator. On October 26, he sent a letter inquiring after Johnson's health and invited the senator and his wife to dinner at the White House after the election was over. Roosevelt wrote: "Apparently California remains safe but, of course, any statement by you, Hiram, would put the finishing touches to the picture, not only in California but in Oregon and Washington." Mrs. Johnson called Roosevelt's secretary and informed her that the senator was in a very nervous state, so he was not permitted to read his mail. It was obvious that Johnson had decided to avoid an endorsement of either Landon or Roosevelt. However, the senator did send for an absentee ballot and voted for the President, ". . .although with many misgivings," he told his son. [41]

Johnson's refusal to endorse Roosevelt surprised many outside of the White House circle. The senator's California colleague, William Gibbs McAdoo, wrote James Farley after the election, expressing surprise ". . .that my distinguished colleague never said a word for Roosevelt. I thought, at least, he would make a public statement in his behalf, . . ." Johnson was amazed at the extent of the President's landslide

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[41] Harold Ickes, Secret Diary, I: 693, 697-698; Elliott Roosevelt (ed.) F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945 (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), I: 622-623; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., October 24, 1936, Johnson Papers.

victory, and expressed concern over what it might do to his concept of the Presidency. He was not looking forward to the future, but he hoped he could play a role in political affairs again after recuperation from his illness. [42]

The other five progressive bloc members endorsed Roosevelt for re-election. Two of them--Peter Norbeck and James Couzens--were seriously ill during 1936 and died before the year ended. The Farmer-Laborite Henrik Shipstead, although not supported by the administration in an active manner in his 1934 re-election campaign, announced his support of the President. Robert LaFollette, Jr. and George Norris, the most active progressive supporters of Roosevelt, agreed to form an organization known as the Progressive National Committee to campaign actively for Roosevelt's reelection.

In July, 1935, Norbeck wrote a friend that "In spite of a deep conviction that a lot of unnecessary blunders are being made, I find myself today more disposed to support Roosevelt than I have had any time during the whole administration. . . ." By November, though convinced Roosevelt could not be defeated, he endorsed Borah for the Republican presidential nomination. He had warned the Republican party in August that "The New Deal is full of mistakes, but the Old Deal is no substitute. . . .The Republican party must

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[42] William Gibbs McAdoo to James Farley, November 5, 1936, William Gibbs McAdoo Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., November 10, 1936, Johnson Papers.

offer something more than criticism of Roosevelt and the scare about losing the Constitution. Above all, they cannot win without inviting the progressives into the party and giving them a voice in party affairs, . . ." Norbeck remained silent after the party conventions until about three weeks before the election. Then, he announced that he was supporting Roosevelt, crediting the President with bringing about the substantial recovery of business and an improved agricultural situation. Two months later, Norbeck was dead. [43]

After the 1934 congressional elections, James Couzens had urged that partisanship be abandoned and that everyone get behind the President and work together to achieve success for his policies. During most of 1935, Couzens was seriously ill, spending time at the Mayo Clinic. The President sent a number of telegrams asking about his health. Couzens faced a re-election contest in 1936, which included a challenge for the Republican nomination from conservatives who felt him to be too attached to the New Deal. In February, 1936, Couzens declared: "While I have never stated that I am in favor of all of 'The New Deal' I was, and still am in favor of a new deal, because of the great distress that many millions of my countrymen have had to go through and to a large degree due to the conduct of and control of the

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[43] Peter Norbeck to Herman D. Eilers, July 15, 1935; Norbeck to S.X. Way, November 13, 1935, Peter Norbeck Papers, I.D. Weeks Library, University of South Dakota, Vermillion; New York Times, August 11, 1935; Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader, October 14, 1936; New York Times, October 19, 1936.

management of the Republican party." He would not support any Republican candidate for President because of his own re-election campaign. If the citizens of Michigan wished to retire him because of his independence, he would not complain because "My country and the welfare of my countrymen is much more important to me than any party or any political honors that I may secure." He planned to endorse much of the New Deal, although he did not approve of the way in which the administration was handling relief. He would remain a Republican despite urgings that he become a Democrat, but "I will not pussyfoot, I will say frankly as I hope I always have, what I believe about party policies. . . . I hope that I will be able to remain a liberal Republican and I hope I will be able to 'use my party as a "reform channel"' through which to bring to the people more social justice." He had no intention of ". . .criticizing a man who has tried to relieve the distress to a much greater extent than any President we ever had." [44]

In May, the New York Times reported that Couzens might become the Democratic nominee for the Senate in Michigan, as well as an independent Republican candidate, because the Old Guard and industrial leaders in that state were opposed to his selection by the Republican party and planned to support

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[44] New York Times, November 8, 1934; Franklin D. Roosevelt to James Couzens, July 13, August 5 and 24, 1935, Roosevelt Papers; Couzens to Roosevelt, October 9, 1935, Roosevelt Papers; Couzens to George R. Averill, February 20, 1936, James Couzens Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

former Governor Wilbur M. Brucker. Couzens held to his determination to run only on the Republican ticket, and he announced his candidacy on June 15. On the campaign trail at the end of July, Couzens told a Detroit audience that he did not believe that President Roosevelt was leading the nation to bankruptcy. He disagreed with the contention of many Republicans that the Federal budget could have been balanced during the past years of the depression. He indicated willingness to retire if the voters were dissatisfied with him. Couzens came under bitter attack from his Republican primary opponent during August and September, but in an act of courage, he announced on August 22 that he would support Roosevelt for re-election. This was the most important matter confronting the nation, the senator declared, and his own campaign was unimportant. This endorsement killed Couzen's chances of renomination. [45]

Roosevelt wrote a letter of thanks to the senator shortly before the Michigan primary election. He praised Couzens for his courage. "It is one of the fine things about public life that every once in a while the usual rules of the political game are not followed! Your announcement is not only fine in itself but it is especially so because it came without solicitation or suggestion on my part or on that of any member of the Democratic organization. Frankly, I was just as much taken by surprise as, I imagine, Brother Landon was.

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[45] New York Times, May 11, 1936; James Couzens to Thomas W. Payne, June 15, 1936, Couzens Papers; New York Times, July 30, August 23, 1936.

I want you to know that I appreciate not alone what you have said and done but also your manner of doing it - for you have shown a very deep courage based on conviction and may lose your Primary as a result." Couzens lost the Republican nomination by over 120,000 votes, largely attributed by observers to the declaration for Roosevelt. The President offered him a position as Chairman of the US Maritime Commission, but the senator rejected it. Taken ill again, he entered the hospital for treatment. When Roosevelt was campaigning in Detroit in mid-October, Couzens left his hospital bed to meet with him at a dinner party and a public rally. The crowd gave him a great cheer when he was introduced. The President had offered to visit him in the hospital, but Couzens had rejected the suggestion. After Couzens returned to the hospital, Roosevelt sent a telegram wishing him a speedy recovery. However, the senator died on October 22 from uremic poisoning, after an emergency operation for a kidney ailment. The career of a leading progressive Republican thus came to a sad conclusion.[46]

Henrik Shipstead remained on good terms with President Roosevelt throughout 1935 and 1936, despite the lack of administration support for his re-election. Before leaving for Minnesota at the end of the 1935 congressional session,

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[46] Elliott Roosevelt (ed.), F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945, I: 611-612 (letter dated September 8, 1936) and I: 616-618 (letter dated September 17, 1936); New York Times, September 17, October 16 and 17, 1936; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Couzens, October 20, 1936, Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, October 23, 1936.

Shipstead wrote a note of thanks to Roosevelt ". . .for the many courtesies that I have been shown by you during the past session of Congress. . . . I hope that you will have a good rest, which you so richly deserve." Shipstead did not attend the progressive conference organized by Senators LaFollette and Norris in September, 1936, but he told LaFollette that "Roosevelt is safe anyway." Shipstead had a conference with Roosevelt in mid-September, and he then predicted to newsmen that the President would win the Midwest by the same margin as in 1932. He praised the administration's soil erosion policy as going a long way toward solving the farm problem. When Roosevelt campaigned in Minneapolis in October, Shipstead introduced him and was given a seat in the presidential automobile. On October 20, the senator gave a formal endorsement of the New Deal in a speech broadcast on seven stations covering the area of eight midwestern states. This was the first time since 1924 that he had taken a public stand on a presidential contest. [47]

Roosevelt had made mistakes, Shipstead said, but so had every President in America's history. "I have not approved of nor voted for all of the measures of the New Deal, but I am going to vote for Roosevelt because I believe he has been more often right than wrong, and he has looked upon

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[47] Henrik Shipstead to Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 5, 1935, Roosevelt Papers; Shipstead to Robert LaFollette, Jr., September 11, 1936, LaFollette Family Papers; New York Times, September 15, 1936; Minneapolis Tribune, October 9 and 10, 1936; New York Times, October 19, 1936.

the problems of the Mississippi Valley and the Northwest with greater sympathy and understanding than any other President in my time, and I have kept pretty close track of the record of Presidents for nearly forty years." Shipstead specifically praised the farm legislation, the holding company act, and the rural electrification policy as constructive measures. He also took note of the bank deposits law, conservation measures, and the Wagner Labor Relations Act as outstanding achievements. After the election, Roosevelt sent a note of thanks to Shipstead for his ". . .eloquent defense of the Administration, . . ." [48]

The LaFollette brothers were strong supporters of the New Deal during 1935 and 1936. They often consulted with Roosevelt on plans for government spending through the Works Progress Administration. The President cultivated their friendship, and in so doing, attracted independent progressive support to his administration. The LaFollettes and Roosevelt agreed on goals, but the brothers were more aggressive in pushing for reform legislation. They advocated higher taxation and government spending than the Roosevelt administration was willing to promote.

After the LaFollettes won election as Progressives in Wisconsin in 1934, the President invited them to the White House. Roosevelt greeted them warmly and began a discussion

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[48] Speech of Senator Henrik Shipstead, October 20, 1936, Roosevelt Papers; Minneapolis Tribune, October 21, 1936; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Shipstead, November 4, 1936, Roosevelt Papers.

of the need for public utility holding company legislation. Then the LaFollettes brought up the subject of the 1936 presidential election. As Governor LaFollette wrote after the meeting: ". . .Assuming he was going forward with a real program - we saw possibility of reactionary support for Republican candidate and need for Progressive support for him & his progressive program." They felt an obligation to work for a new national Progressive party for the long term, but they did not want a reactionary to defeat Roosevelt for a second term in 1936. Roosevelt indicated his interest in their support for 1936 and his intention to cooperate more closely with the LaFollettes than with other political figures. He considered independent progressive support important for the success of the New Deal. [49]

The friendship between the LaFollette brothers and Roosevelt became so close that, in the spring of 1935, there were newspaper reports that Senator LaFollette was considered as a vice-presidential possibility on the Democratic ticket in 1936 to hold the Western progressive Republican vote. These reports were not confirmed, but LaFollette indicated that he preferred to remain in the Senate. During the 1935 congressional session, a journalist wrote about the senator's relation with Roosevelt. "Today LaFollette has the ear of the President. Not that he is a New Dealer, for there has

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[49] Philip LaFollette to Isen LaFollette, December 7, 1934, Philip LaFollette Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

been much under the Roosevelt administration which he could not approve, but that with the spirit of the man in the White House and with his general purpose the Senator finds himself in sympathy. Furthermore, some of the most important New Deal legislation closely resembles proposals which LaFollette was making in the days of Herbert Hoover." At the end of the session, LaFollette's Progressive declared: "The current bitter attack being directed at the Roosevelt administration by the forces of wealth and privilege in this country is, to the liberals of the nation, one of the most encouraging aspects of the New Deal." The journal praised the accomplishments of the Second New Deal as in the public interest. Of course, LaFollette had been among that small group of progressives who had pushed the President toward a strong reform program in May, 1935, when the administration seemed to be floundering. During the spring of 1936, Felix Frankfurter wrote Senator LaFollette of the President's high regard for him: "I verily believe there are not half a dozen men who leave the same impact on him that you do, and fundamentally because he knows that your downrightness and simple honesty are used for wholly disinterested ends." The LaFollettes were ready and willing to support Roosevelt in 1936. Only a progressive organization was needed to gain supporters who wished to remain technically independent of the Democratic organization. [50]

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[50] New York Times, March 23, 1935; Francis Brown, "Old Wars for 'Young Bob'", New York Times Magazine, August 18,

George Norris was the most convinced supporter of Roosevelt among the members of the progressive bloc. On his seventy-fourth birthday in July, 1935, the senator told an interviewer that he had no regrets over his support of the President in 1932. More social legislation for the common man had been passed under the New Deal than in any period since he came to Washington in 1903. The Roosevelt administration had met the problem of the depression with determination and courage and a willingness to use new methods. Norris said of Roosevelt: "In my judgment, he is absolutely sincere. He means to do the right and to help the underdog. His sympathies are with the common man. That's what I like about him. With all his mistakes, I believe that he has made life a little easier, a little more comfortable, for the common man." The senator was especially pleased with the labor, social security, public power and banking measures of the New Deal. His main criticism continued to be the lack of nonpartisanship, due to the influence of James Farley in his joint posts as Postmaster General and Democratic National Chairman. In October, 1935, Norris formally announced that he was supporting the President for re-election. He was certain that Senator Borah would not be the Republican nominee, and he said he would be unable to support any other candidate the Republicans might nominate, as he would probably be in

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1935; The Progressive, September 7, 1935; Felix Frankfurter to Robert LaFollette, Jr., May 22, 1936, Frankfurter Papers.

sympathy with holding companies, monopolies and trusts. [51]

In November, Norris shocked many political figures with his decision to retire at the end of his term in 1936. The President immediately urged in strong terms that Norris remain in the Senate for the rest of his life. He said at a press conference: "If I were a citizen of the State of Nebraska, regardless of what party I belonged to, I would not allow George Norris to retire from the United States Senate, whether he wanted to or not, for the very good reason that I feel he is necessary not only to Nebraska but to the United States as long as he lives." Roosevelt then wrote the senator, imploring him to change his mind or at least to leave the door open. "You do not have to be as physically active as in bygone days, nor do you have to engage in nearly as much detail work or connect your activities with every legislative subject which comes up. The point is just one thing - your own broad, basic principles and point of view. The country needs your principles to be set before the nation from time to time - an occasional statement or speech to clarify our thoughts, to keep our perspective, and to encourage us. The fact that so many young men in public life rely on your leadership and help is the final argument from which you cannot escape!" In December, however, Norris declared he would not seek renomination in the Republican primary because he wished to devote his time to the re-election

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[51] New York Times, July 14, 1935; October 20, 1935; The Progressive, October 26, 1935.

of the President. [52]

Norris suggested various ideas for the Democratic platform of 1936 to Senator Robert Wagner shortly before the convention. He recommended that emphasis be placed on the Rural Electrification Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority, two administration programs he had been responsible for. He suggested that one plank in the platform endorse the merit system in all branches of government. After Landon's nomination, Norris attacked the Republican candidate as an unknown who was controlled by the special interests. [53]

When Norris reached his seventy-fifth birthday in July, volunteers in Nebraska circulated petitions to draft him for another Senate term, but he refused to commit himself to another campaign. Finally, in late August, Norris consented to the entering of his name as an independent candidate for re-election. His opponents were Democrat Terry Carpenter and Republican Robert Simmons. Forty thousand Nebraskans signed petitions urging his candidacy. It seemed like a tough re-election battle. The Agriculture Secretary, Henry Wallace, made a campaign speech for Norris in early October, and the President personally pleaded for his re-election

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[52] New York Times, November 9 and 16, 1935; Franklin D. Roosevelt to George Norris, November 22, 1935, George Norris Papers, Manuscript Divison, Library of Congress and Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, December 7, 1935.

[53] George Norris to Senator Robert F. Wagner, June 12, 1936, Norris Papers; New York Times, June 15, 1936; The Progressive, June 20, 1936.

when he spoke in Omaha on October 10. He called the senator one of the major prophets of America, and said his candidacy was one that transcended party lines. Roosevelt thus opposed his own party's choice for the Senate. In November, Norris was re-elected to his fifth term in the Senate as its only Independent. [54]

Senators LaFollette and Norris agreed that a progressive league, such as the one which had been organized in 1932, was a good method to draw the support of independents throughout the country in 1936. The President remembered the role of the National Progressive League, and therefore, in January, 1936, Interior Secretary Ickes publicly urged progressive Republicans to support Roosevelt again in the coming campaign. Donald Richberg, one of the leaders of the 1932 progressive organization and later NRA head, suggested to Norris that the organization should be revived for the upcoming campaign. ". . .We can make any rearrangement of this organization setup which appeals to you as desirable." In May, a group of progressive senators of both parties, including Norris, LaFollette and Shipstead, were invited to a three hour "general chat" at the White House, as the President tried to solidify his standing among liberals. That same month, Roosevelt asked Postmaster General James Farley to speak to Frank P. Walsh, one of the key organizers of the

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[54] New York Times, July 12, August 26, September 12, October 2 and 11, 1936; copy of FDR speech in Omaha, October 10, 1936, Roosevelt Papers.

1932 league. Walsh, after talking to Norris and LaFollette, reported back to Farley that the senators were interested in doing what they could for Roosevelt on an independent basis. Walsh then met with David K. Niles of Boston, who had been the director of the progressive organization in 1932. [55]

During July, LaFollette wrote letters and made calls to various progressives who might be willing to help out with the organization. In August, the senator decided to call a meeting of progressives for September. This was after consultations with the President on the subject. In late August, Richberg sent a draft of a proposed progressive statement to LaFollette. This was to be issued at the meeting, and it demonstrated that the President was attempting to exert a direct influence over the new progressive organization. [56]

Senator Norris was named the Honorary Chairman of the group, which was named the Progressive National Committee. LaFollette was to be the National Chairman. Unable to attend

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[55] Donald R. McCoy, "The Progressive National Committee of 1936," Western Political Quarterly, IX (June, 1956), 454-469; New York Times, January 29, 1936; Donald Richberg to George Norris, January 27, 1936, Norris Papers; New York Times, May 21, 1936; Franklin D. Roosevelt to James Farley, May 8, 1936, Frank P. Walsh Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library; Confidential memorandum by Walsh, June 4, 1936, Walsh Papers; Walsh to Farley, June 5, 1936; Walsh to Judson King, July 9, 1936, Walsh Papers.

[56] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Frank P. Walsh, July 25 and 30, August 18, 1936, Walsh Papers; Richberg to LaFollette, August 24, 1936, Donald Richberg Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

the conference held on September 11 in Chicago, Norris sent a statement to the gathering, indicating he would do everything he could, considering his advanced age and his own election contest, to bring about the re-election of Roosevelt. He considered it would be a "national calamity" were the Republicans to be elected to control of the national government. Norris, LaFollette and Walsh were among eight progressive leaders who publicized the "nonpartisan conference of progressive minded citizens to consider joint action in this vitally important national campaign." The main goal of the conference was to devise strategy that would channel the progressive vote toward Roosevelt and away from the third party in the election, the Union Party, and its candidate, Representative William Lemke. [57]

More than one hundred progressive leaders attended the conference. They included such political figures as Mayor LaGuardia of New York City; Senators Lewis Schwellenbach of Washington, Homer Bone of Washington, and Hugo Black of Alabama; Governor LaFollette of Wisconsin; many of the Wisconsin Progressives in the House of Representatives; Representative Maury Maverick of Texas; and labor leaders such as John L. Lewis and Sidney Hillman. However, no members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc, other than LaFollette

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[57] George Norris to Frank P. Walsh, August 31, 1936, Walsh Papers; Progressive National Committee telegram to Phil LaFollette, August 31, 1936, Philip LaFollette Papers; New York Times, September 2, 1936; The Progressive, September 5, 1936; New York Times, September 11, 1936; New York Herald Tribune, September 11, 1936.

and Norris, were involved in the conference. While they issued a ringing endorsement of Roosevelt, the conferees assured the public that they would remain separate from the Democratic party organization. They planned to become the backbone of the expected political realignment in the future, based on the concept of increased production and improved distribution of wealth. At the close of the meeting, the Progressive National Committee sent a telegram to the White House, informing the President of their support and intention to campaign for him among independent voters. Then, Senators LaFollette and Bone, Mayor LaGuardia, and John L. Lewis broadcast short radio speeches, describing to the American people the actions that had been taken at the meeting. [58]

Norris and LaFollette took an active role in the campaign under the auspices of the Progressive National Committee. Norris was less involved, however, due to his own campaign and his age. One week after the progressive conference, he delivered a nationwide radio broadcast from Omaha, his first public appeal for Roosevelt. He accused Governor Landon and his followers of raising the false issues of

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[58] New York Times, September 12, 1936; New York Herald Tribune, September 12, 1936; The Progressive, September 19, 1936; George Norris to the Conference of Progressives, September 11, 1936, Norris Papers; Resolution of progressive meeting, September 11, 1936, Philip LaFollette Papers; Declaration of Principles Adopted at Chicago Conference, September 11, 1936, Progressive National Committee Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 11, 1936, Roosevelt Papers.

"bolshevism" and "dictatorship" to divert attention from the real issue, which was the Republican attempt to thwart Roosevelt's efforts for the common man. Norris praised the President's opposition to monopoly and combinations of wealth and said that he had saved the country in 1933. At the end of September, LaFollette emphasized that any division of liberal elements in the country would only aid Landon and the forces of reaction. He delivered a radio speech in Chicago, the first of a series of daily addresses by progressive figures. He declared that suggestions that Roosevelt had a desire to become a dictator had no foundation in fact. The restoration of the Republican party to the White House, he asserted, would be courting another economic disaster. [59]

Norris and LaFollette continued their speechmaking up to election day. Shortly before the election, Norris issued a statement charging that the electric power interests were trying to destroy the rural electrification program, and that Landon was solidly backed by those interests. On the eve of the vote, LaFollette made a final appeal for the President. He accused the reactionary Republicans and Democrats of devoting their time to an attack on Roosevelt personally, instead of dealing with the issues. "Never in my experience has there been such wanton distortion of truth, such reckless attempts to light the fires of blind prejudice and such

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[59] New York Times, September 19, 28 and 29, 1936; Pamphlet reprinting Senator LaFollette's speech of September 28, 1936, published by Progressive National Committee, Philip LaFollette Papers; The Progressive, October 3, 1936.

vile attacks upon the character of a man who has spent a lifetime in public service. . . ." He reviewed the Republican record from 1921 to 1932, and repudiated their attacks on the growing national debt and the administration's taxation programs. He concluded: "I urge you to vote for President Roosevelt tomorrow because I believe that if reelected he will carry on for four years using his great abilities and the power of the high office of the Presidency to the end that the people may share more equitably from year to year in the national income which they produce." The senator and his brother sent a telegram to the President on election eve, declaring: "Every progressive in America is proud of you and will be at the polls tomorrow with his coat off to give the reactionaries the licking they so richly deserve for their rotten campaign." The election results gave the President the mandate he felt he needed to take new actions. [60]

Roosevelt now made the decision to reorganize the Supreme Court in such a manner that it would uphold New Deal laws and permit reform legislation to continue in his second administration. This issue was to lead to a major transformation of attitudes towards Roosevelt and the New Deal by

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[60] New York Times, October 29, November 3, 1936; Robert LaFollette, Jr. speech, November 2, 1936, Progressive National Committee Papers; Robert and Philip LaFollette to Franklin D. Roosevelt, November 2, 1936, Philip LaFollette Papers.

the members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc. LaFollette and Norris were to become totally isolated in their support of the President, and as events unfolded, even the former was to lose faith in Roosevelt and the New Deal.

CHAPTER VII

THE TURNING POINT: THE SUPREME COURT CONTROVERSY

Franklin D. Roosevelt's second term began with the bloc of progressive Republican senators dimished from twelve to nine by the deaths of Bronson Cutting, James Couzens and Peter Norbeck. Only three of the nine had endorsed his re-election. Whether the President, in his second term, could count on the level of support these senators had given him during his first administration was a major question.

In his second Inaugural Address on January 20, 1937, the President spoke of a third of the people as "ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." He hinted that he was planning a radical move to improve the economic and social conditions of the nation. Two weeks later, he shocked the Congress and the country with his proposal to reorganize the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court of 1937 consisted of four rock-ribbed conservatives (James McReynolds, George Sutherland, Willis Van Devanter and Pierce Butler), three liberals (Louis Brandeis, Benjamin Cardozo and Harlan Fiske Stone), and two moderates (Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes and Owen Roberts), who could go either way, depending on the specific issue before the Court. The four conservatives needed only

one of the two moderates to become the majority. Beginning in 1935, the Supreme Court began to void New Deal legislation as an unconstitutional extension of federal power. The most significant cases were Schechter v. U.S., which struck down the NRA, and U.S. v. Butler, which destroyed the AAA because its processing tax was declared discriminatory and unconstitutional. Other decisions, outlawing the Guffey Coal Act and the New York minimum wage laws, showed the Court's trend toward declaring much of the New Deal unconstitutional.

Roosevelt had pondered the problem of the Supreme Court's hostility to the New Deal since the first hints of difficulties arose in early 1935. A constitutional amendment did not appeal to him because of the complexities of ratification. The thought of enlarging the membership of the Supreme Court apparently came to mind at this time, but was dropped as unwise. At a press conference in January, 1935, the President repudiated published reports that he had plans to tamper with the Court's membership. [1]

The progressive Republicans had often been critical of the Supreme Court's role in American government. George Norris, William Borah, Hiram Johnson and Robert LaFollette, Sr. had led the progressive attack in the past upon the power of the judicial branch to thwart the will of the people. Proposals to alter the Court had been suggested over the years. As with most other issues, they could not agree

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[1] New York Times, January 31, 1935.

amongst themselves as to what, if anything, should be done. The NRA decision brought renewed public comment from a number of progressives on the issue.

Borah, a leading opponent of the NRA, was pleased by the Court's decision. Congress, he said, could remedy any problems which the invalidation of the law created for the government's relationship with industry. Johnson considered the decision "a body blow", but he felt that it would do no permanent damage to the New Deal. Charles McNary thought it would be a shock to industries which relied on the NRA codes, but he contended that Congress could easily pass legislation to bring the NRA within the limits of the Constitution, as long as the anti-trust laws were restored. Arthur Capper had little fear that the NRA decision was a sign that the AAA might also be invalidated. He said that the NRA had attempted to cover too much territory and had forgotten the small businessman, farmer, labor, and the small cities and towns. This was why the Supreme Court had turned against it. [2]

In a press conference after the NRA decision, Roosevelt condemned the Court's action, for relegating the nation "to the horse-and-buggy definition of interstate commerce." This statement provoked further comment from the progressive Republicans. Gerald Nye doubted that a constitutional amendment to centralize power over intrastate commerce, as well

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[2] New York Times, May 28, 30, 31, 1935.

as interstate commerce, could be ratified. McNary was not opposed to an amendment, but he asserted that action should be taken without delay to re-establish the NRA through voluntary agreements by business. Capper agreed that legislation within Supreme Court restrictions was a more immediate solution than any amendment, which could take years to ratify. Borah voiced his opposition to a constitutional amendment which would give the federal government greater controls over interstate and intrastate commerce than the Supreme Court allowed. In a radio speech, he declared that criticism of the NRA decision was unjustified and praised the judicial branch for "jealously guarding" the Constitution and the rights of the states. Only the people could change the Constitution, Borah asserted, and no theory of emergency conditions could excuse attempts to read new powers into it by the executive, legislative or judicial branches of government. Calling for an end to attacks upon the Supreme Court, the senator said that he was not claiming the Constitution as a document too sacred for amendment, but he did insist that its underlying principles were indispensable to the republican form of government. [3]

On the same day, Norris took a diametrically opposite view. The American government, he said, had become a government based upon injunction, and he called for an amendment which would take away from the courts all power to hold any

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[3] New York Times, June 1, 2, 3, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, June 3, 1935.

federal law unconstitutional. America, he asserted, was the only civilized nation which allowed a court to veto a law passed by the legislative branch. If such an amendment could not be adopted, Norris had two other suggestions. One would require a four-fifths majority of the Supreme Court to declare a law unconstitutional. The other would speed Supreme Court decisions by giving it original jurisdiction over federal legislation and abolishing the passage through lower courts. On June 17, 1935, Norris introduced a constitutional amendment to prevent the Supreme Court from ruling congressional acts unconstitutional, except by more than a two-thirds vote, and only when action had been initiated within six months after a law had taken effect. This modified proposal also gave the Supreme Court exclusive and original jurisdiction in cases involving constitutional questions. LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, took a similar view on the Court. Declaring that the "nine old men" were acting as the nation's rulers, an editorial in The Progressive asserted: "The record of the court in the present century adds credence, too, to the increasing belief that the supreme court is one of the most formidable barriers to progress along social, economic, and political lines." [4]

Controversy over the Court increased in January, 1936, when the Agricultural Adjustment Act was declared

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[4] New York Times, June 3, 1935; The Progressive, June 8, 1935; New York Times, June 18, 1935; Congressional Record, June 17, 1935, 9415; The Progressive, June 29 and 8, 1935.

unconstitutional by a 6-3 vote. While not completely pleased with the performance of the AAA, which had seemed to favor the larger farmers, the progressive Republicans were unhappy with the decision.

"If the court has said that Congress has no right to lift agriculture to the level of industry," observed Peter Norbeck, "it has created a situation that is impossible. Three of the best legal minds in the United States, now on the Supreme bench, disagreed with the opinion. So do I. The Constitution is silent and the court is trying to fill in." Norbeck introduced a bill which provided that no act of Congress could be held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court unless seven or more of the justices concurred. [5]

Capper, although not pleased by the decision, felt assured that the AAA would not be put out of business entirely. State organizations could be set up to continue the program, and Secretary of Agriculture Wallace might be able to develop a new program, the senator declared. He thought a constitutional amendment unnecessary. McNary said a new program was essential. Lynn Frazier called for direct action to restrict the power of the Supreme Court. Stating that he had never believed that the Court had the right to declare laws unconstitutional, he asserted his willingness to support any bill curbing the power of the highest judicial body. If the Court

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[5] New York Times, January 7, 1936; Congressional Record, January 17, 1936, 553; New York Times, January 18, 1936.

were to declare such a law unconstitutional, then there would be grounds to impeach its members. [6]

Hiram Johnson thought the Supreme Court decision was a political opinion. ". . .To a body whose members are responsive to no one, who . . .are subject only to their own self-restraint, comes that which the two other branches of government have decided must be done, perhaps for the preservation of the Republic, and one man, if the decision be five to four, may exercise a super-veto power. . . .it is the system that ought, in some fashion, to be altered, . . ." Robert LaFollette, Jr. assailed the Court decision as "a serious blow to agricultural recovery." He demanded that the Constitution be interpreted in light of modern conditions, so that it could deal with the economic and social problems of the nation. Otherwise, constitutional changes would be necessary. The Progressive declared in an editorial: "It is evident that eventually the American people will demand a showdown on the usurpation of legislative authority by the courts." [7]

Shortly before the Supreme Court decision, Borah wrote an article on the judiciary for Redbook Magazine, in which he criticized demands for restrictions on the power of the Supreme Court. While not averse to amending the Constitution,

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[6] New York Times, January 7, 1936.

[7] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 11, 1936, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; The Progressive, February 1 and January 11, 1936.

the senator felt that any amendment which increased federal power to control national economic conditions was undesirable. He wished to preserve the rights and powers of the states, rather than further restrict them. In defense of the Court, Borah wrote: "The Supreme Court is not a divine institution, and its members are not always wholly exempt from influence of politics. But, in my opinion, it is the most nearly perfect human institution yet devised by the wit of man for dispensation of justice, and for preservation of liberty as defined by the people themselves in the charter under which they have declared their desire to live." The senator asserted that the Supreme Court was also an anti-Fascist bulwark, because it prevented dictatorial leadership by the executive branch of government, as in Italy and Germany. After the AAA decision, Borah admitted that narrow divisions, such as 5-4 and 6-3, were great evils which he wished to correct, but he had not yet thought of a solution. The New York Times now recalled that, in 1923, Borah had proposed that 7-2 decisions be required to declare a law unconstitutional. Borah, however, no longer accepted this proposal. [8]

Norris revived his earlier attacks on the power of the Court. The AAA decision, he wrote, would lead to the nullification of most of the New Deal laws, including the

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[8] New York Times, January 3, 1936; New York Herald Tribune, January 3, 1936; Congressional Record, January 6, 1936, 57-59; New York Times, January 8, 1936.

Tennessee Valley Authority, the Social Security Act, and the Wagner Labor Relations Act. Norris asserted: "We are trying to pass upon present-day questions in the light of the viewpoint of one hundred and forty years ago. . . . Men who are trying to adjust decisions and principles to those enunciated one hundred years ago are turning the clock of human progress backward. I have read the dissenting opinion filed by Justices Stone, Cardozo, and Brandeis, and it seems to me it is a gem. It meets present conditions; it points out the true method. It will become, in my judgment, the doctrine in the years to come." Norris thought the Court decision could be a "death blow" for agriculture if it was allowed to prevail. He accused the Supreme Court of attempting to establish itself as a legislature superior to Congress. The senator, at this point, felt that the Court should be allowed to declare a law unconstitutional only when it could achieve a unanimous vote against it. Norris reasoned that since it took twelve persons to convict in a criminal trial, why should less be demanded of the Supreme Court in considering congressional legislation? [9]

During February, 1936, Norris urged that the Roosevelt Administration's new farm bill, the Soil Conservation Act, be adopted as the best substitute for the AAA. He was certain of its constitutionality, whether or not the Supreme

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[9] George Norris to William Ritchie, January 7, 1936, George Norris Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Norris to Jessie Cales, January 11, 1936, Norris Papers; New York Times, January 12, 1936.

Court agreed. Declaring that the Constitution did not give the Supreme Court the specific power to invalidate acts of Congress, Norris quoted Presidents Jefferson, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt as critics of the power of the judiciary. The amendment process was the only way to bring about fundamental change, however, since legislation would only be a temporary palliative. During the spring, Norris urged that the Supreme Court problem be made an issue in the presidential campaign. "I believe we should go before the people, frankly present this question, and fight it out during the coming campaign. As I see it, this question is fundamental. If the Constitution must be construed in the light of conditions which existed at the time of its adoption, it will be a stumbling block in the way of advancement, instead of a protection to a more enlightened and more highly-developed civilization. As the majority of the Supreme Court construes and expounds it, it becomes an impediment, not an aid, to human freedom and liberty, and an instrument of oppression." Norris admitted that few wished to make the Court an issue because it might arouse too much controversy. After the election was over, Norris predicted, the Supreme Court would again become a major issue. "This question will have to be fought out. We cannot go back to the old order. That is impossible. We must meet new conditions, and under the construction placed upon the Constitution by the Supreme Court,

that is impossible." [10]

Thus the progressive Republicans by 1936 were divided over the issue of the Supreme Court's proper role in American government. Some, led by Norris, believed action had to be taken to curb the Court's power. Others, led by Borah, were unwilling to attack the highest judicial body, because of their belief that it prevented executive dominance of the federal government. As on so many other issues, the progressive Republicans were unable to achieve a consensus.

After the 1936 elections, the Supreme Court controversy became the hottest political issue, unrivaled in its impact upon Congress and the country by any event since the battle over the Versailles Treaty in 1919. Franklin D. Roosevelt's proposals to change the third branch of the national government were to shatter the progressive Republican alliance with the New Deal. Those senators unwilling to attack the Supreme Court in 1935 and 1936 became its strongest defenders in 1937, and they were joined by some progressives who had criticized the Court's decisions. Even Norris, the leading critic of the judiciary among progressive politicians, expressed doubts about the wisdom of the President's approach to Supreme Court reorganization. Popularly known as the "Court Packing Plan", it was truly a key to the transformation of

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[10] New York Times, February 13, 1936; New York Herald Tribune, February 13, 1936; New York Times, February 15, 1936; George Norris to Editors and Editorial Associates of The Nation, May 21, 1936, Norris Papers.

progressive attitudes toward the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt.

After the landslide reelection of Roosevelt, Hiram Johnson expressed fear that the President "will really feel that he has been given a mandate by the people to do as he pleases, and there will be enough people in Congress anxious to truckle to him, that will enable him to do just as he desires." The senator expected that Roosevelt's cockiness, which could only be encouraged by the election results, would lead him to attempt all types of experiments. [11]

Norris returned to Washington anxious to fight for an amendment to the Constitution to allow for federal legislation regarding industrial and agricultural problems. While in accord with Roosevelt that there was authority under the Constitution to meet the economic crisis, if that document were interpreted in a liberal fashion, the senator still believed that legislation alone was not enough, so long as the Supreme Court insisted upon a conservative interpretation. He emphasized, as he had in 1935 and 1936, that there was a definite need for a curb over the power of injunction in federal courts, which hindered the operation of many federal agencies and laws. Many power companies had, for instance,

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[11] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., November 15, 1936, Johnson Papers.

obtained injunctions against the Tennessee Valley Authority, thereby preventing the development of the government's power program. The senator demanded the formation of a special court, in which would be vested sole jurisdiction over suits involving constitutionality of federal laws. Appeals could be taken from that special court to the Supreme Court. The time between the granting of an injunction and the disposition of the case would be drastically shortened. [12]

Roosevelt's Second Inaugural Address hinted that he planned some drastic action. The President told Felix Frankfurter shortly before the inauguration: "Very confidentially, I may give you an awful shock in about two weeks." Borah sensed that Roosevelt planned to manipulate the Court in his direction. On February 1, the senator delivered a radio address on this subject. He demanded that the Roosevelt Administration make a direct appeal to the American people for the strong central powers it claimed were essential to carry out its program, intead of tampering with the courts in an unconstitutional manner. If changes were to be made, they must be by constitutional amendment, not congressional legislation or executive action. The senator believed that the Supreme Court had correctly interpreted the Constitution, when it declared the New Deal laws unconstitutional. He pointed out that the NRA decision, for example, had been unanimous. Borah referred to historical examples to

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[12] New York Times, January 8, 16, 17, 1937; The Progressive, February 6, 1937.

demonstrate that the Supreme Court was the bulwark of American democracy, and he concluded with a reference to the sad fate of democracy in Europe and Asia, warning against a similar situation in America. [13]

Four days later, the President asked Congress to reorganize the judiciary. He discussed the problem of aging justices on the various federal courts, including the Supreme Court, and recommended that when a federal judge, who had served at least ten years, waited more than six months after his seventieth birthday to retire or resign, the President might add another judge to the Court. He would be able to select as many as six more justices for membership on the Supreme Court, as well as forty-four judges on the lower federal courts. The President claimed he was proposing this program in order to increase efficiency of the federal courts, which he declared was declining because of the large number of elderly men that refused to retire. His opponents saw the Roosevelt plan as an attempt to "pack" the Supreme Court and lower tribunals with Roosevelt appointees who would favor New Deal legislation.

The progressive Republicans avoided an immediate stand for or against the proposal. Nye refused to commit himself.

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[13] Franklin D. Roosevelt to Felix Frankfurter, January 15, 1937, Felix Frankfurter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; William Borah to J. Reuben Clark, February 1, 1937, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, February 2, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 2, 1937; Washington Post, February 2, 1937; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 3, 1937, 131-133.

Borah said it merited thorough consideration and discussion, but refused to give an immediate judgment. McNary declared: "The plan proposed by the President will have to be studied with very great care, as it involves the transfer to the President of greater powers over the judiciary than ever before existed." Norris expressed surprise at Roosevelt's proposal and declared that he thought it would have been simpler to require at least a two-thirds majority on the Court in cases involving constitutional questions. "I am not in sympathy with the plan to enlarge the Supreme Court. If the court gradually came to have fifteen members, we might sooner or later be in the same situation we are now--unless something else was done." Norris continued: "It might easily happen that a majority out of fifteen members would see through glasses fitted to meet needs of another generation, just as is true today with only nine members. It is not only men past 70 who see through glasses darkly. There are plenty of younger men totally and hopelessly unaware that the world about them is undergoing inevitable changes; this is even true sometimes of men once called liberals." Johnson also avoided immediate public comment, but wrote his son that Roosevelt was trying to make the Supreme Court subservient to the executive branch. "I will try to prevent the President's sinister grasp of power. . . .I fear that the next few years, . . .we'll be very close to a Dictatorship. The Congress, of course, is worse than subservient, and no one man can prevent what is happening, but at least, an official

as old as I am, with little in the future for him, can stand on his feet and make clear the situation." Capper had no immediate public comment either, but he arranged for the printing in the Congressional Record of a critical editorial by William Allen White of the Emporia Gazette.[14]

McNary, Borah and Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan met informally, shortly after the President's Court message, and agreed to let Democratic opposition to the proposal develop without Republican interference. The Republican party would reserve its attack until late in the Court struggle, so as to avoid making the proposal a partisan issue. The adverse reaction of many congressional Democrats to the Court plan became evident during the first few days after the message, and it demonstrated that the progressive Republican bloc in the Senate would be a crucial factor to the success or failure of the President's proposal. There was much speculation as to where they would go. Democratic congressional leaders failed to share Roosevelt's assumption that he could count on the progressives. With the lack of immediate commitment to the plan, some political observers began to recall the many examples of rebellion by progressive Republicans in past administrations. The President unknowingly had made a major

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[14] New York Times, February 6, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 6, 1937; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 6, 1937, Johnson Papers; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 8, 1937, 180.

mistake by failing to consult with progressives in advance. [15]

On February 8, Hiram Johnson announced his opposition, hinting that Roosevelt would not be able to count upon support from most progressives. "The issue, stripped of its verbiage, seems to me plain. Shall the Congress make the Supreme Court subservient to the Presidency? The implications of this are so grave and far-reaching I can do but one thing, and that is, to the limit of my capacity, oppose this extraordinary legislation." Before he made his declaration, Johnson conferred with Borah, which recalled the many times when the two men had joined together to fight for a cause. The conference made Borah's opposition to the President's proposal evident. Some unnamed progressives were reported as believing that something more basic and permanent than the President's "packing" plan was needed to reform the Supreme Court. These progressives favored a constitutional amendment, curbing the authority of the Supreme Court and increasing the power of Congress, rather than the Chief Executive. The reported dissatisfaction of many progressives with the Roosevelt plan led to widespread speculation that the President had provoked the biggest political controversy

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[15] New York Herald Tribune, February 7, 1937; New York Times, February 8, 1937; Joseph Alsop and Turner Catledge, The 168 Days (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1938), p. 97.

since 1919. [16]

On February 9, McNary announced his opposition to the proposal in response to a query from the New York Times. Capper also criticized the plan. He asserted that an increase in the number of justices on the Supreme Court would not resolve the problem of interpreting the Constitution according to present day needs adequately. "The right way to deal with this problem is to submit to the people an amendment to the Constitution, instead of giving the President the power to coerce the judiciary. I have found myself in agreement with the views of a minority of the Supreme Court on several important decisions in the past few years, but that does not mean I am in favor of a judiciary subservient to the White House. . . .I consider the President's plan indefensible from the viewpoint of sound public policy." Norris now proposed a constitutional amendment to limit the term of federal judges to nine years. While indicating that he did not favor the President's plan, Norris refused to announce his opposition. [17]

On February 10, Capper indicated he had begun a campaign in his farm publications, including Capper's Weekly and Capper's Farmer, to urge public response on the Court

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[16] New York Times, February 9, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 9, 1937; Washington Evening Star, February 9, 1937.

[17] New York Times, February 10, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 9, 1937; Washington Evening Star, February 10, 1937.

plan. He said he had already received many letters and telegrams from farmers, businessmen, and others protesting against the proposal. The next day, Norris consulted with the President at the White House. The inner circle was reportedly upset at his public statements on the President's proposal. After the conference, the senator reasserted his advocacy of a more fundamental solution to the Supreme Court issue than the administration plan. He recommended four constitutional amendments. These would limit judges to nine year terms; allow a two-thirds vote of Congress to override a Supreme Court veto; require at least a 7-2 vote of the Court to declare a law unconstitutional; and provide for general election, rather than appointment, of justices. He complained that the White House program did not go to the heart of the issue, but again refused to say whether he would support the Roosevelt plan if it reached the Senate floor for a vote. The senator declared that the administration proposals were certainly constitutional, and the charge, which had begun circulating, that Roosevelt was planning to become a dictator, was termed as ridiculous. But Norris added: "I think the President's plan is bad and I won't make any bones about it. . . .It seems to me that giving the President power to increase the Supreme Court is a dangerous precedent. Another Congress might come along and increase the court again, until it's as big as the House of Representatives. Then, we'd have

to build another marble palace." [18]

On February 12, Frazier joined the progressive opponents of the Court bill. He said that "packing" the Court might work for a short time, but he doubted that it would continue as a long-term benefit for reformers. The Supreme Court's power should be further limited and defined, rather than ignoring the problem by simply increasing the number of justices. McNary, as Republican leader in the upper chamber, predicted at this point that the Court plan would never be reported for a vote by the Senate Judiciary Committee. This view was based upon the fact that progressive Democrat Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, a close associate of many progressive Republicans and a leading supporter of the President during the first term, had announced his bitter opposition to the Court proposal and indicated his intention to lead the fight against it. If Wheeler could retain the support of most of the progressive Republicans and add many conservative Democrats and Republicans, who were opposed to the extension of Presidential power over the court system, the proposal would certainly falter. [19]

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[18] Arthur Capper to Alf Landon, February 10, 1937, Alf Landon Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka; New York Herald Tribune, February 11, 1937; New York Times, February 12, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 12, 1937; Alsop and Catledge, The 168 Days, pp. 94-96.

[19] New York Times, February 13, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 13, 1937; Lynn Frazier to Amos Pinchot, February 13, 1937, Amos Pinchot Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, February 14, 1937.

Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr. became the first, and as it turned out, the only progressive Republican to endorse the President's Court plan wholeheartedly. He delivered a radio address on February 13, in which he demanded "a government of law, not of men" and called upon Congress to back the proposal as a means of eliminating the "forces of reaction" from the Supreme Court. He accused the Court of "judicial usurpation" and challenged the Republican senators, opposed to the plan but remaining on the sidelines while the Democrats began to split over it, to lead the fight against it, if they were so certain of their righteousness. LaFollette contended that the President's plan was "nothing more or less than a call to Congress to exercise its power under the Constitution to prevent a majority of the Court from thwarting the popular will." The issue was not whether the Court was to be "packed", the senator declared. "Let's not be misled by a red herring. The Court has been 'packed' for years--'packed' in the interests of economic royalists, 'packed' for the benefit of the Liberty Leaguers, 'packed' in the cause of reaction and laissez faire." The economic royalists had been defeated in 1936, and therefore, LaFollette asserted, the Congress must "unpack" the Court and make it responsive to the demands of the people. The reform was long overdue, since the Court's membership, with their lifetime appointments, "had lost touch with the people." The amendment procedure could not solve the problem in the short term, because twelve states with only ten percent of the population could block

any amendment. LaFollette concluded with an appeal to liberals and progressives to work together for the proposal. "Liberals--be realists--don't let a lot of professional legalists--paid to do the job--blind you to the woods while they are showing you the trees. Progressives who hesitate or divide upon this issue must assume full responsibility if the mandate registered by the overwhelming majority of the voters at the last election is thwarted." This statement was a reaction to the defection of most of the progressives from the Roosevelt camp, an event that shocked LaFollette, as well as the President. [20]

On February 15, the New York Times published a poll of senators' views on the Court plan. Of the nine members of the progressive Republican bloc, five--Borah, Capper, Frazier, Johnson, and McNary--had definitely committed themselves to the anti-Roosevelt forces. LaFollette and Norris were for the President's program, although the latter was far less enthusiastic than his younger colleague. While criticizing the President's approach, Norris intimated that he would vote for the bill if no better program was adopted by Congress. Two progressives--Nye and Shipstead--had not yet stated their position. [21]

Senator Nye did not pause much longer. On February 20,

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[20] New York Times, February 14, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 14, 1937; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 15, 1937, 211-213; The Progressive, February 20, 1937.

[21] New York Times, February 15, 1937.

President Roosevelt held a conference with five senators, including Nye, Frazier and LaFollette. Frazier said afterwards that the meeting had not changed his inclination against the proposal. Nye told the President that he was giving a radio address the next day and hinted to the press that he agreed with the majority of his progressive Republican colleagues. Roosevelt--or so Nye claimed many years later--suggested to the senator that a speech on the Court issue would not benefit the senator politically, and urged him to "sprain his ankle" and enter the United States Naval Hospital for the weekend! Then, on the morning of the speech, Nye was visited at his home by the leader of the Farmers' Union, Bill Thatcher, who told the senator that he was not qualified to speak out on questions of law, because of his lack of legal training. The senator indicated that he had made up his mind to speak out against the Court plan and would not be deterred. Nye was sure that Thatcher had been sent on his mission by Roosevelt. [22]

In his speech over a nationwide radio network, Nye asserted that the President had no mandate from the people to transform the nature of the court system. Roosevelt had never suggested the idea of "packing" the Court to the people during the 1936 campaign, or in any of his many conferences with congressional leaders before February 5. In a sarcastic

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[22] New York Herald Tribune, February 21, 1937; New York Times, February 21, 1937; Washington Evening Star, February 21, 1937; Personal Interview with Senator Gerald P. Nye, March 30, 1971, Washington, D.C.

tone, Nye declared: "Bottomless seems the bag of surprises which President Roosevelt has drawn from for four years." The only redress for the American people against the excesses of the executive or legislative branches lay in their power to appeal to the Supreme Court. Nye did not approve of court delays, such as the use of injunctions, which prevented operation of federal laws and agencies, and he declared that he did not regard the Supreme Court as sacred or beyond criticism. However, the senator had strong convictions that any changes made in the federal court system must be by amendment to the Constitution, with the support of the people. If one President could "pack" the Supreme Court in a liberal direction, could not another President turn the Court in another direction for his own ends? Constitutional rights could be sacrificed under an ambitious and power-hungry Chief Executive.

Nye declared: "Remember this, we are being asked to grant these new powers, not only as affecting the AAA or the Guffey Coal bill, or pending labor legislation, but for the long, cloudy, storm-ridden future with all the proposals that such a future may bring forth." He criticized the administration's haste to push the bill through, and the propaganda and threats employed by administration loyalists. The senator asserted that the President's proposal did not change the powers of the Supreme Court, but only its personnel. He endorsed the constitutional amendment proposed by Democratic senators Burton Wheeler and Homer Bone, which would permit

Congress to re-pass a measure over a Supreme Court veto by a two-thirds vote of both houses. Nye concluded:

> As one who insists that the people will not long submit to rule by courts, as one who insists that the power of the courts must be checked, I insist that the President's plan relating to the Supreme Court should be hit hard on these grounds:
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> First, because the plan does not and cannot touch the judicial power which is standing in the way of progress;
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> Second, because it misleads the people and thus is doing great harm to real progress;
>
> Third, because it involves a direct challenge to the people who alone have the power to change the fundamental law;
>
> And, finally, because we have not resorted to the orderly process of correcting the faults before falling back upon shortcuts which can only tend to weaken and shake the foundations of government upon which American hopes are built. [23]

Shipstead was the last member of the progressive bloc to take a stand on the Court plan. Attending the new congressional session for the first time in May, due to a lengthy illness which had kept him away from Washington, the Minnesota senator criticized the proposal for concentrating on the membership of the Court, rather than on changing the powers of the judiciary. "I will vote against the President's plan as it now stands," he said, "unless I see a more reasonable argument than I have seen for it so far. It's a

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[23] New York Times, February 22, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 22, 1937; Bismarck (N.D.) Tribune, February 22, 1937; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 24, 1937, 311-314.

precedent we never had the like of. What you can do today for a good purpose, some one else can do for a bad purpose tomorrow." Disturbed that the controversy over Roosevelt's Court proposal was obscuring the real need for reform of the judicial system, Shipstead wrote a confidential letter to Norris a few days after his public statement, requesting that Norris attempt to bring together the two opposing sides on the Court issue to effect a change in the method of appointing judges, who he agreed had too often been selected on the basis of political influence and economic interests. Shipstead asserted: "I shall be very much disappointed if this opportunity to rejuvenate and clean up the judiciary from top to bottom shall be permitted to be defeated over a bitter personal and political controversy over the appointment of six new judges. I agree with a great deal, if not all of the criticism that has been directed against the Supreme Court. Their contradictory decisions over a period of years have caused great confusion as to what the Constitution really means." [24]

With seven of the progressives having declared their intention to oppose the President's Court bill if it reached the Senate floor, only one determined to fight for the plan, and one doubtful about the proposal but unwilling to reject the possibility of supporting it if no better alternative were formulated, the scene was set for the leading political

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[24] New York Times, May 12, 1937; Henrik Shipstead to George Norris, May 17, 1937, Norris Papers.

struggle of the 1930's. While progressive Republican opposition to Roosevelt was certainly not enough in itself to determine the final results, their reputation as independents and their personal prestige as some of the most honored members of the United States Senate, certainly added strength to the anti-Roosevelt forces. While their public activities against the Court plan were limited by the Borah-McNary-Vandenberg agreement to avoid making the Supreme Court a partisan issue, evidence of their thoughts on the subject during the one hundred and sixty-eight days of the Court fight is available in their private letters and occasional public statements.

Shortly after Hiram Johnson announced his opposition to the President's proposal, he told his son that a breakdown of the American system of government and the establishment of a dictatorship was certain if Roosevelt were allowed to have his way. While doubtful that the President's opponents would win the struggle, Johnson was glad to take part in the battle, "because I found that a great many people believed that my usefulness was passed, and I had fought my last fight. Immediately, I came into the spotlight and I have set at rest rumours that have been widespread." Arthur Capper told Amos Pinchot that the proposal "has stirred up more opposition in Washington than I have ever seen at any time during the Roosevelt administration." [25]

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[25] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 14,

A bill proposed by Representative Sumners and Senator McCarran, calling for the voluntary retirement of justices at seventy years of age on full pay, came up for consideration by a sub-committee of the Senate Judiciary Committee on February 16. Borah, one of the members of the sub-committee, refused to join in the signing of a favorable report and announced his objections to the bill. He thought the retirement age should be seventy-five, and when a justice retired, he should not be permitted to try cases in lower courts. He indicated that when the bill covering the Roosevelt program came before the Judiciary Committee, he would vote to split it into two sections, one dealing with proposals to change court procedures which he would favor, and the other dealing with the increase in the number of Supreme Court justices, which he would vigorously oppose. A few days later, Borah endorsed a proposal made by Senator Edward Burke of Nebraska. Burke suggested that Congress might overcome the administration's objection to a constitutional amendment, because of its lack of speedy change, by specifying that the amendment should be ratified by state conventions instead of state legislatures. Borah pointed out that the Twenty-First Amendment, repealing prohibition, had gone through state conventions and achieved ratification in eighteen months. [26]

1937, Johnson Papers; Arthur Capper to Amos Pinchot, February 16, 1937, Pinchot Papers.

[26] New York Times, February 17 and 19, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 17 and 19, 1937.

Borah responded to a friend's suggestion that he make a determined fight to arouse the country against Roosevelt's Court plan by stating that this was not the proper strategy for the small number of Republicans in the Senate to follow. With 76 Democrats, 16 Republicans, and four independents (LaFollette, Norris, Shipstead, and Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota) in the Senate, it was obvious that the Republicans alone could do nothing to stop the President's proposal. Borah declared: "The NOW business must be modified to some extent by reason of the situation here. If you were on the ground and wanting to secure votes for the proposition, I think you would do what I am doing. As you must fully realize, the party situation can not be ignored. If this is beaten, it must be beaten by Democratic votes." Borah worked vigorously to keep Republicans from speaking out. He telephoned former President Herbert Hoover three times to implore him to avoid a partisan attack upon the Court plan. Borah planned much of the anti-Court bill strategy in the office of Democratic opponents of the plan, in order to avoid press speculation and publicity as to his role in the struggle. Louis Taber of the National Grange, an associate of Borah in the struggle, indicated many years later that the senator had planned a filibuster to prevent the passage of the Court bill had enough Democrats not defected. Borah apparently had enough speech material dealing with constitutional law and history to lead a personal filibuster for thirty days! The senator was depicted by Taber as feeling so strongly on the

subject of "court-packing" that he planned to fight it with his voice until he fainted from exhaustion. If the Roosevelt proposal became law, Borah saw the death of liberty and the commencement of dictatorship in America. [27]

Norris wrote a constituent in mid-February that he expected a long, drawn out debate. While he was confident of the President's sincerity and of his wish to resolve "an intolerable situation", Norris admitted that many honest men could criticize Roosevelt's proposal as only offering temporary relief for the problem. "If the power for which he has asked were to be placed in the hands of one whom I did not absolutely trust, I would not consider it for a moment. The great danger, it seems to me, comes from the precedent it establishes." [28]

In late February, Senator Capper issued the first of a series of editorials in Capper's Weekly, attacking Roosevelt's plan as a dangerous move. On February 25, he delivered a radio address critical of the Court bill, terming it an assault upon the integrity of the Supreme Court. He spoke in favor of a constitutional amendment to solve the problems created by recent Court decisions, and expressed willingness to devote careful study to other plans designed

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[27] William Borah to Henry L. Stoddard, February 20, 1937, Borah Papers; Reminiscences of Louis J. Taber, Columbia University Oral History Collection, 1956, Volume II: pp. 321-324.

[28] George Norris to Gerald F. Harrington, February 19, 1937, Norris Papers.

to resolve the crisis quickly. Capper concluded: "It seems to me that the people of the nation have gone right to the heart of the matter. They may not agree with some of the five to four decisions of the supreme court. And I might say in passing that I myself have grave doubts of the wisdom and justice of allowing one judge to declare unconstitutional a piece of legislation that Congress may have enacted by almost unanimous vote. . . .But the people of this country, in my judgment, do not want another man, elected as president, to be able to dictate the thinking and opinions of the supreme court." [29]

The Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Sumners-McCarran bill for voluntary retirement of justices by a 9-5 vote on February 22. Borah voted against approval, while Norris, the other progressive Republican on the committee, voted with the majority. A few days later, the Senate passed the legislation by a 76-4 vote, with Hiram Johnson as the only progressive Republican in opposition. He said the bill was "bait" held out to the present Court justices to retire, and he would retain no respect for any of them who left the bench because of it. Johnson wrote his son that the legislation was designed "in the hope it would save timid, shrinking souls, from having to take a stand, . . ." While inclined to support some of the constitutional amendments

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[29] Capper's Weekly, February 20, 1937; Arthur Capper Radio Address, February 25, 1937, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka; New York Times, February 26, 1937.

proposed by Senators Norris, Wheeler and others, Johnson expected Roosevelt to be victorious in his demand for six more justices. But the senator considered Roosevelt's plan "a 'shot-gun' method of dealing with the subject." [30]

At the end of February, Borah proposed a constitutional amendment to re-define the "due-process" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, so that the states would have undisputed powers to act upon economic and social problems. Such a modification would prevent federal courts from declaring unconstitutional such state legislation as the New York minimum wage law. The nation's courts would only be permitted to pass judgment on the procedure by which such legislation was enacted in the states, not on the substance of the laws themselves. Borah declared that his amendment would have a "decided tendency to limit the activity of the Federal Government" in economic and social affairs, but he insisted these could be dealt with by the states. This proposal attracted some supporters, but it was not seen as a solution to the crisis. [31]

During the last week of February, William Allen White urged the progressive senators "to offer an alternative solution rather than to be put in a position of mere opposition.

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[30] New York Times, February 23, 1937; Congressional Record, February 26, 1937, 1649, 1644; New York Times, February 27, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 27, 1937; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 27 and 22, 1937, Johnson Papers.

[31] New York Times, February 26, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 26, 1937.

Our group has not been opposers ever. We have been constructive and we should be constructive now." He suggested that an amendment with a clear definition of interstate commerce should be formulated, giving the federal government the power to pass legislation for the social and economic welfare of the people, without the danger of rejection by the Supreme Court. This was a proposal exactly opposite to the Borah suggestion, and demonstrated once again how progressives could not agree amongst themselves as to the extent of federal intervention in the everyday lives of the people. White's amendment would have a rider attached to it, providing for a direct vote on the matter in the congressional elections of 1938. The journalist contended that "packing" of the Court would be unnecessary with the enactment of a liberal definition of interstate commerce. He commented: ". . .I would like to see Roosevelt try to get around the wisdom, justice and essential democracy of a popular referendum on a constitutional amendment." The journalist also suggested that state constitutional conventions could be a substitute for a direct referendum, and might achieve the same changes more rapidly, recalling the quick passage of the Twenty First Amendment. Norris, one of the recipients of the suggestion, visited the White House and read the letter to the President. He came away from the conference with his lukewarmness toward the President's proposal unchanged. In responding to White's letter, Norris did not indicate the President's reaction, but the senator expressed personal

approval of the proposal. However, Norris added: "The remedy is not so easy to attain as your letter might indicate. Your suggestion is rather a simple one, and yet I doubt very much whether it could ever be put into law in the form of an amendment, and I have no doubt but that it would take quite a number of years, at best, to bring it about." Arthur Capper informed White that he had talked with other progressives who were against the President's proposals, but they had indicated an unwillingness to formulate a special progressive program on the matter. Capper was doubtful that the President's plan would be enacted anyway. [32]

Roosevelt received endorsement of his Court proposal from a progressive outside the Senate ranks on February 27. In a nationwide radio address, Governor Philip LaFollette of Wisconsin agreed with his brother that the country's greatest need was for a Supreme Court that would obey the Constitution, rather than amend it by judicial decree. The Supreme Court could not be reformed by amendment, according to the governor, because it was blocking progress during the present crisis of the depression, and immediate action was therefore essential. Scoffing at the charges that the Roosevelt plan would give the executive branch dictatorial authority,

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[32] William Allen White to George Norris, February 22, 1937; White to Gerald P. Nye, February 22, 1937; White to Norris, February 23, 1937, William Allen White Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, February 25, 1937; Norris to White, February 27, 1937, White Papers; Arthur Capper to White, February 26, 1937, White Papers.

Governor LaFollette pointed out that the justices selected by Roosevelt would have to gain the approval of a majority of the Senate. He predicted the measure would pass both houses of Congress, and challenged Senator Borah and other opponents of the plan, both progressives and conservatives, to offer a constructive, plausible alternative. [33]

As progressive Republican opposition to the Court bill became more fixed, administration supporters expressed surprise and disappointment. Senator William Gibbs McAdoo found it difficult to understand the vehement opposition of his California colleague, Hiram Johnson, "in view of what I have always understood to have been his views about the courts of the country. I vaguely recall his campaigns in California and his statements about the judiciary." Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, a close friend and associate of Johnson, who had aided him in obtaining his cabinet post, was equally mystified at the senator's harsh attacks upon the President and his Court plan. Ickes believed that Johnson was becoming more conservative as he grew older, and that perhaps he saw an opportunity to finish his long career in a "blaze of glory" by opposing the President on this crucial issue. The Interior Secretary was concerned that Johnson and other progressive Republicans could do considerable damage to the administration's plan. Ickes wrote to Willam Allen White at

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[33] New York Times, February 28, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, February 28, 1937; The Progressive, March 6, 1937; Congressional Record, Appendix, March 1, 1937, 355-357.

the end of February: ". . .the sickening thing is that the so-called liberals are doing worse damage to the President's cause than even the reactionaries." Josephus Daniels told the President that he was distressed by the opposition of men like Borah and Johnson who had attacked the Supreme Court many times in past years. The liberal journal, The New Republic, warned the progressive Republican opponents of the Court bill to separate their views from the reactionary opponents of the proposal. The progressive bloc should agree amongst themselves upon the desirable constitutional changes. Until they had formulated an alternative program, they should avoid final commitments as to their vote on the Roosevelt plan. If they united behind an amendment which had a possibility of succeeding, they could visit the White House and promise their support to the President for his bill if he would endorse theirs. If no amendment seemed to have a chance of being adopted, the progressives should support the administration proposal as the only solution. "The progressives in Congress will be accepting a heavy responsibility indeed if they allow the present tactics of the reactionaries to build up such an obstruction against doing anything about the Court and the Constitution that the opportunity will be lost for many years to come." [34]

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[34] William McAdoo to Clifford C. Anglim, February 10, 1937, William McAdoo Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Harold Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), II: 69-70; Ickes to William Allen White, February 25, 1937, White Papers; Josephus Daniels to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 8, 1937,

On March 4, Borah began his thirty-first year in the Senate with an allegation that President Roosevelt, by his plan to "pack" the Supreme Court, was proposing the indirect "destruction" of the Constitution. The senator quoted James Madison on the Supreme Court as "an impenetrable bulwark against every assumption of power." Newsmen found the Idaho senator at work at a desk which contained books on law and history, from which he was gathering research for future use in a filibuster, if this was necessary to stop passage of the Court bill. Meanwhile, Capper was telling the readers of the early March issue of Capper's Weekly that there had been a "spontaneous uprising of the American people, almost unprecedented in the history of our country, . . .It seems to me that this proposal has been definitely rejected by the American people. . . .if the administration is wise, it will give up attempts to push thru Congress the President's proposal in its present form." [35]

But Roosevelt was not about to give up. In a speech at a dinner celebrating his re-election landslide, he gave what Robert LaFollette, Jr. called "An inspiring, fighting speech!" The senator added: "It was delivered in your most masterful style. I feel certain the overwhelming majority of the people will answer by coming to your support with

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Franklin Roosevelt Papers, Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park; "Progressives and the Court," The New Republic, LXXXX (March 3, 1937), 96-97.

[35] New York Times, March 1 and 4, 1937; Capper's Weekly, March 6, 1937.

renewed determination to win the battle you are waging to save our fundamental institutions of democracy." Norris declared it was the best speech the President had ever delivered. McNary commented: "I was convinced by the earnestness of the President's plea and his determination to go through with his court plan. The President made it clear that he would oppose any compromise. Therefore, the issue is drawn and his plan must be resisted with the same earnestness." Nye asserted that he doubted the President's speech would change any votes in the Senate. Johnson told his son that the President was "drunk with power, I am sorry to say." Roosevelt was likely to win the struggle, but "it will be a Pyrrhic victory." [36]

A few days after Roosevelt's speech, Senator LaFollette addressed a conference of Labor's Non-Partisan League in Washington on the Supreme Court controversy. He termed the forthcoming legislative struggle as one in which "the strength of popular democratic government in America will once more be pitted against the organized forces of reaction." He declared that the Supreme Court had an outmoded philosophy which threatened the security and well being of all Americans. The Constitution was meant to be a flexible document, adaptable to the conditions of the twentieth century. LaFollette saw the issue as "simply whether a handful of

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[36] Robert LaFollette, Jr., to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 5, 1937, Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, March 6, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, March 6, 1937; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 7, 1937, Johnson Papers.

judges ought to be allowed to exceed their lawful authority by paying more attention to their own personal economic and social beliefs than to the Constitution." While not opposed to amending the Constitution, LaFollette believed it should be an addition to the President's program. He called his fellow progressives who were attacking the administration proposal "sincere but misguided liberals whose intentions are worthy." LaFollette was the only non-Democrat at an informal caucus of administration supporters a few days later. Its members agreed to reject any suggestion of compromise and to continue the fight for the President's bill. He informed the President of the results of the meeting, pledging again his complete loyalty to the program. LaFollette delivered another speech in New York in late March at a rally of the American Labor Party. Discussing the sit-down strikes then taking place in American factories, he said that this was the response of the working people of America to the "sit-down strike" of a majority of the Supreme Court against the New Deal program of social and economic legislation. [37]

Norris, still considering the President's plan as a last resort only, continued to offer alternative legislative and constitutional remedies. He said the Congress should

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[37] Text of speech of Robert LaFollette, Jr., March 8, 1937, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Congressional Record, Appendix, March 11, 1937, 499-502; New York Times, March 9, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, March 9, 1937; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 16, 1937, LaFollette Family Papers and Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, March 25, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, March 25, 1937.

take away from inferior courts the power to declare legislation unconstitutional. The Supreme Court would thereby lose such authority, because it would lack the appellate jurisdiction necessary to decide the case. Norris again proposed that the number of justices required to declare a law unconstitutional be set by Congress as at least two-thirds and possibly as much as a unanimous vote. Amendments to the Constitution could provide for a definite term of office for all judges; give Congress power to override a veto of the Supreme Court; and permit national laws regulating hours and conditions of labor and agricultural relief. Norris publicly presented all these ideas in an attempt to resolve the controversy over the Supreme Court in a constructive manner. [38]

During March, Hiram Johnson grew more bitter toward the President. The senator wrote Raymond Moley, former New Deal adviser: "With my anger at the shuffling and the pretense is a very great sorrow that the President has proposed this. It has forced me into a position of opposition to him, which will widen as the days pass." The opponents of the Court bill wanted Johnson to deliver a radio address, but the senator still retained some weakness from his bout with illness during 1936, and therefore turned down the idea of a national speech. Johnson believed that the administration's

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[38] George Norris to J.B.S. Hardman, March 5, 1937, Norris Papers; Congressional Record, March 12, 1937, 2139-2145; New York Times, March 13, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, March 13, 1937; Congressional Record, March 15, 1937, 2196; New York Times, March 16, 1937.

use of patronage was the major reason why the President's proposal would probably pass both houses. The senator agreed with his wife that dictatorship was likely within a year after the adoption of the Court bill. [39]

Johnson proved to be wrong in his thought that Roosevelt had the votes. Popular support ebbed away during late March and early April, during the period when the Senate Judiciary Committee conducted hearings. At one meeting, Wheeler produced a letter from Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, asserting that the Supreme Court was able to manage its workload without major hardship, and that a larger Court would only lower efficiency. Then, on March 29, the Supreme Court upheld a Washington minimum wage law 5-4, similar to the New York law earlier deemed unconstitutional by the same vote, with Justices Roberts and Hughes joining the three liberals on the Court to form a majority. Two weeks later, the Court sustained the Wagner Labor Relations Act by the same 5-4 vote. This was the turning point of the Supreme Court struggle. Roosevelt was now forced to resort to rearguard action to keep his proposal alive.

McNary's reaction was to call upon the President to withdraw the Court bill. Borah expressed doubt that Roosevelt would abandon his proposal because of lingering suspicions that the Supreme Court would vote conservatively

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[39] Hiram Johnson to Raymond Moley, March 13, 1937, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 15 and 20, 1937, Johnson Papers.

on other decisions in the future. But Borah declared he was against any increase in the Court's membership, whether as many as six or as few as two, an idea that was being suggested in some quarters as a face-saving device for Roosevelt. Borah remained determined to oppose any compromise. Senator LaFollette was pleased by the decisions of the Court, but he emphasized that the bill's supporters would continue to fight for additional members. The fate of democratic institutions could not be placed in jeopardy by such a precarious factor as the switching of Justice Roberts from one view to another on different cases. Governor Philip LaFollette agreed with his brother. [40]

Hiram Johnson told his son that he had little respect for Hughes and Roberts, because they had allowed themselves to be pressured into supporting the Wagner Act's constitutionality. "I don't think the Court, from the standpoint of its personnel, at least a portion of it, is worth fighting for, and if it were not for the immensely bigger thing at stake, I would not be engaged in this contest. The 'immensely bigger' thing is the absorption of one of the coordinate branches of government by the Executive. We can not deny he already has the legislative branch, and he whips it about as a schoolmaster would whip a recalcitrant boy. Give him now

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[40] New York Times, April 13 and 16, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, April 13 and 16, 1937; New York Times, April 20, 1937; Philip LaFollette to J.B. Boscoe, April 17, 1937, Philip LaFollette Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

the judicial branch and all the power of government would be his. This way dictatorship." Johnson was critical of Senator LaFollette because he "will do anything the Administration wants." He wished he could participate in a nationwide campaign against the President, as he had against Woodrow Wilson and the Versailles Treaty in 1919-1920, but he did not yet feel strong enough to do so. He expressed the opinion that "a man could not die in any better cause." Johnson's absolute refusal to accept any compromise was evident when he told his son: "The President is using all the reprisals that he can, but if he shall use them until Hell rolls over on me of course I would not change my views." The senator reported that he had received seventy-five thousand signatures on petitions opposing the President's scheme. [41]

Capper was confident that the Supreme Court would retain its liberal stand. In mid-April, he thought that Roosevelt might yet succeed in pushing through his program by a six vote majority. But, on May 1, he wrote to Alf Landon, the recent Republican presidential candidate: "I think we are making some headway on the Supreme Court proposition. For a while it looked as if the President had everything going his way but there are indications here now that he is losing ground so far as the line-up in the Senate is concerned." By mid-May, even Norris admitted he did not know

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[41] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 16, 18 and 23, 1937, Johnson Papers.

what the outcome of the Court fight would be. [42]

On May 18, Justice Van Devanter announced his retirement from the Court, giving Roosevelt the opportunity to make an appointment. Borah and Wheeler had convinced Van Devanter to retire. Since the Supreme Court had lately been 5-4 in favor of the New Deal, a new appointment made it possible to have 6-3 votes in favor of the New Deal on many issues. On May 24, the Supreme Court upheld the Social Security Act by a 5-4 vote. These events made the need for "packing" the Court seem unnecessary. [43]

Upon Van Devanter's retirement, McNary again called upon the President to withdraw his proposal. But Johnson was opposed to this, because he believed the issue should be fought out on the floor of the Senate "to determine whether the Senate is to be subservient to the demands made upon it or whether it will preserve the independence of the Supreme Court." On the day of Van Devanter's announcement, Norris moved that the Court bill be reported favorably by the Judiciary Committee. His motion was beaten by a vote of 10-8, with Borah in the majority. A forty-six page adverse report on the legislation was issued by the committee, which also rejected Norris's proposed amendment requiring the concurrence of more than two thirds of the members of the Supreme

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[42] Arthur Capper to Victor Murdock, April 20, 1937, Victor Murdock Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Capper to Alf Landon, May 1, 1937, Landon Papers; George Norris to Lewis Westwood, May 14, 1937, Norris Papers.

[43] Alsop and Catledge, The 168 Days, p. 206.

Court to invalidate an act of Congress. Johnson was still concerned that a compromise plan to add two new justices might succeed. He issued a statement criticizing this strategy, and asked the opponents of Roosevelt's original plan to remember the principles for which they were fighting. The President's plan to nominate Senator Joseph Robinson of Arkansas, the Majority Leader, to the Court vacancy annoyed the California senator, because Robinson was sixty-five years old, which certainly seemed to weaken Roosevelt's argument that younger men were needed on the bench. [44]

In early June, LaFollette indicated his unwillingness to accept the reported compromise bill calling for two additional judges instead of six. As one of the few senators supporting the Court bill on its merits only, rather than on grounds of party loyalty, he considered that the only time to discuss a compromise was "just before the bill is to be voted on, and then only if it is found that there isn't any chance of its being passed in its present form." Borah, as the unofficial leader of the progressive opposition to the bill, again affirmed his refusal to support any compromise "which gives, or tends to give, political control over the courts." Roosevelt's hope for eventual support from three progressives (Nye, Frazier, and Shipstead), who had avoided public comment beyond their original statements on the bill,

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[44] New York Times, May 19, 1937; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., May 21, 1937, Johnson Papers; New York Times, May 23, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, May 23, 1937.

was dashed by mid-June. White House adviser Thomas Corcoran had believed it possible to change their minds. The President was concerned by this time with avoiding a total defeat. As Hiram Johnson termed it: "He is engaged in saving his face now, . . ." Johnson and Arthur Capper both expressed their determination to filibuster the bill to death if necessary, thus joining Borah in his pledge. Johnson was concerned, however, that such a strategy would fail. [45]

The Senate struggle over the Court bill came to a head in early July. Wheeler and Borah formed an opposition steering committee committed to a long filibuster. On July 15, Henrik Shipstead announced his opposition to the substitute Court reform bill calling for only two additional judges. Capper told the readers of Capper's Weekly that the Senate battle was a "war to save the constitutional form of government for this United States. . . .With all due respect to the good intentions of President Roosevelt, his intentions, if carried out along the lines suggested in this court proposal, might pave many miles of the road toward a dictatorship. . . ." Borah wrote a constituent at this time that while he did not know what the outcome of the Court fight would be, "we have a chance to win, and I feel it is a fight

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[45] New York Times, June 5 and 6, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, June 5 and 6, 1937; Alsop and Catledge, The 168 Days, pp. 86, 103; Ickes, Secret Diary, II: 125, 135; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., June 5 and 12, 1937, Johnson Papers; Arthur Capper Radio Address, July 11, 1937, Capper Papers; Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., June 23, 1937, Johnson Papers.

we can not afford to lose." [46]

The death knell of the Court plan came on July 14 with the sudden passing of Senator Robinson. Senators who had been supporters of the bill because of their personal relationship with the Majority Leader now turned away from their commitment. Borah again emphasized that there could be no compromise on substantive matters, that the principle of an independent judiciary must remain intact. On July 22, the Senate voted on whether to recommit the Court bill back to the Judiciary Committee, which would effectively kill it. The vote was an overwhelming 70-20 to recommit, with Robert LaFollette, Jr. as the only progressive Republican supporting Roosevelt. Norris was absent due to illness, and his vote was not cast. Circumstances were in the Nebraska senator's favor, as he could avoid taking a definite stand for a proposal he basically disapproved. During the last debate before the vote, the seven progressive Republicans opposed to the bill remained silent, a course they had followed in the Senate chamber since the very beginning of the controversy. However, when the vote had been cast and announced, Johnson rose to his feet and exclaimed: "Glory be to God!" As he dropped into his seat, the people in the galleries burst into

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[46] New York Times, July 7, 1937; Henrik Shipstead press release, July 14, 1937, Henrik Shipstead Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; Capper's Weekly, July 17, 1937; William Borah to Victor J. Smith, July 19, 1937, Borah Papers.

applause.[47]

The California senator, exulting in the victory, wrote his son that this had been a major defeat for the President. Capper wrote that public opinion had killed the Court plan, but that judicial reform within constitutional bounds was still desirable. McNary paid tribute to the Democratic senators who had opposed the White House on the issue. They had made the difference between victory and defeat, since the Republicans, whether conservative or progressive, could not alone have prevented the enactment of the proposal.[48]

William Allen White wrote to Felix Frankfurter three months after the Court fight ended, expressing the disappointment with Roosevelt that many progressives, including Senator Norris, had volunteered to him during the months of the controversy. Regarding the President, White wrote: "To break their heart and drive them away from his leadership was a tragedy. They will come back, perhaps I should say, we will come back, but not with the same full faith in his judgment that we had before." Whether the progressive Republicans would indeed regain their confidence in Franklin Roosevelt's Presidency, or become part of the great conservative coalition forming in Congress against the New Deal,

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[47] New York Herald Tribune, July 22 and 23, 1937; New York Times, July 23, 1937; Congressional Record, July 22, 1937, 7381; Alsop and Catledge, The 168 Days, pp. 293-294.

[48] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., July 24, 1937, Johnson Papers; Capper's Weekly, July 31, 1937; New York Times, September 2, 1937.

remained to be seen. [49]

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[49] William Allen White to Felix Frankfurter, October 11, 1937, Frankfurter Papers.

CHAPTER VIII

REVOLT AGAINST THE NEW DEAL, 1937-38

The Supreme Court controversy dominated the minds of the Roosevelt Administration and its opponents during the first half of 1937. The attention devoted to it stalled action on legislation designed to extend the benefits of the New Deal to more people and to improve the efficiency of the structure of American government. Labor, agriculture, government reorganization and relief were the key areas in which major controversies were to arise during late 1937 and 1938, resulting in a solidifying of the conservative coalition in Congress.

The progressive Republicans, with the exception of Robert LaFollette, Jr. and George Norris, were to become indistinguishable from conservative Republicans and conservative Democrats. While the Supreme Court issue was the turning point in the relationship between Roosevelt and the progressives, other developments during 1937-38 further confirmed their antagonism toward the New Deal. By April, 1938, the President also was to lose the support of the LaFollette brothers, who criticized him for the recession of 1937-38. This led Philip LaFollette to decide to form a new party as

a liberal alternative to the New Deal. Thus, within less than a year and a half after the President's smashing re-election victory, the progressive Republican alliance with the New Deal had been destroyed. Only loyal George Norris remained a convinced supporter of Roosevelt.

The sit-down strikes by industrial workers in auto and steel factories, encouraged by the CIO and its president, John L. Lewis, provoked denunciations in Congress. One of the leading critics was Hiram Johnson. On March 16, 1937, he called them "ominous", and warned of dictatorship if law and order were allowed to disintegrate. Borah disagreed, asserting that big business must share the responsibility for the strikes. While not considering them legally justified, he said the country could not expect labor to obey the law if monopolies were permitted to ignore it. Johnson wrote his son that Roosevelt was avoiding involvement in the crisis because John L. Lewis and the CIO had given generous financial support to his 1936 campaign. As the situation worsened in the auto factories of Michigan, Johnson again arose in the Senate to denounce the workers. "I am opposed to the idea that any body of men can come into my house or to yours, can shut the door and lock it, and say that they will keep possession of our homes during the time while we are determining whether we will yield to some demands of theirs." He said that the President had the authority to send militia to end the illegal strike. Borah replied that

only the Michigan authorities could deal with the situation. He indicated that he was not particularly disturbed at the actions of labor, because he believed that human rights were just as important as property rights. Norris entered the discussion, admitting his favoritism toward labor, because of its continual struggle to improve its conditions, against the opposition of organized wealth. When Senator James Byrnes of South Carolina urged an amendment to a bituminous coal bill which would condemn the sit-down strikes, Johnson rallied to his support. But Norris, agreeing with Borah, declared that it was not within the jurisdiction of Congress or the President to interfere in the Michigan strikes, and Senator LaFollette defended the sit-down action as the reply of labor to the reactionary Supreme Court. [1]

On April 5, the Senate voted the Byrnes Amendment down by a vote of 48-36, with only Charles McNary joining Johnson in support, while four progressives (Borah, Frazier, Norris, Nye) voted against the amendment and three (Capper, LaFollette, Shipstead) were absent for the vote. However, a concurrent resolution condemning both labor and big business for the sit-down strikes passed the Senate by an

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[1] Congressional Record, March 17, 1937, 2337; New York Times, March 18, 1937; Congressional Record, March 19, 1937, 2476-2478; New York Times, March 20, 1937; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 26, 1937, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Congressional Record, April 1, 1937, 3021-3022; April 2, 1937, 3062-3065, 3076-3077, 3087; New York Times, April 2, 1937; Congressional Record, April 5, 1937, 3127; The Progressive, April 3, 1937.

overwhelming 75-3 vote, with Johnson, McNary and Norris in the affirmative; Borah and Frazier against; and the other progressives not voting, although LaFollette indicated he would have supported the resolution had he been present. Johnson, in a letter to his son, criticized the Senate as a group of "cowards", and expressed the view that John L. Lewis wished to become the nation's dictator, and that President Roosevelt was willing to work with him toward that goal. The senator's growing conservatism and complete distrust of Roosevelt's motives was becoming more evident. [2]

The Roosevelt Administration's proposal to set up a minimum wage and maximum hours law for workers encountered strong opposition from the majority of progressive Republicans. Hiram Johnson felt that the Fair Labor Standards bill was "attacking a subject . . .that is an extremely difficult one, and because of the difference in localities in this country and their varying interests, it is almost impossible to accomplish. It ought to require a year's study of perfectly disinterested economists, not a couple of weeks investigation by a blatherskite committee." He thought that labor conditions had been improved adequately by passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935. When the bill came up for consideration in the Senate, Borah declared that he was for a fixed minimum wage, rather than for allowing a

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[2] Congressional Record, April 5, 1937, 3136; April 7, 1937, 3248; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 9, 1937, Johnson Papers.

Fair Labor Standards Board to decide wages for different regions of the nation. He was reluctant to grant authority to any board or commission appointed by the President. If the powers were wielded unwisely, it could be disastrous to the laboring man and could lead to arbitrary government control of the economic life of all Americans. He criticized the concept of government bureaus which would encroach upon the rights of the people. Borah thought a work week of forty hours and a wage of thirty cents an hour would be a good, uniform minimum wage. [3]

On July 31, the Senate took two votes on the Fair Labor Standards bill. First, it voted 48-36 against recommitting the bill to the Education and Labor Committee, a move that would have temporarily shelved, and possibly, permanently killed the bill. Six of the nine progressive Republicans (Borah, Capper, Frazier, Johnson, McNary and Nye) were in the minority which voted to recommit, with LaFollette and Shipstead on the winning side. Norris was not present for the vote, but left word that he would have joined with LaFollette and Shipstead in voting against recommittal. The Senate immediately took a vote on passage of the bill, and it was adopted by a tally of 56-28, with the nine progressive Republicans again splitting 6-3 against passage. This result demonstrated the progressive

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[3] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., May 29, 1937, Johnson Papers; Congressional Record, July 29, 1937, 7793-7795; New York Times, July 30, 1937.

alienation from the New Deal. No longer could President Roosevelt count on their support for liberal legislation. Arthur Capper told a radio audience that he had voted against the wages and hours bill because it had been hastily drawn and carelessly written. He thought it might be detrimental to labor in the long run, and he was opposed to the giving of discretionary power over national industries to a government board. Hiram Johnson told his son: "I would be very glad to make a minimum wage, and prescribe hours, but to leave it to a board in Washington would be one more way of turning over the economic life of the country to the President for him to exercise at his own sweet will. I decline to do this." Senator Nye indicated his general distrust of a labor board. He issued a statement critical of the National Labor Relations Board, established in the 1935 legislation, as a partisan body which favored the CIO over management during the sit-down strikes. The board had been designed to act as a judicial institution, but Nye contended that it had disqualified itself as a referee between employers and workers by its actions. He broadened his accusations against the board during the debate on the Fair Labor Standards bill. This led Senator LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, to wonder whether the North Dakota senator was still a progressive in his thoughts and actions. [4]

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[4] Congressional Record, July 31, 1937, 7954, 7957; The Progressive, August 7, 1937; Arthur Capper speech, August 29, 1937, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., August 1, 1937,

A new farm bill came up for consideration during a special congressional session called by the President for November and December, 1937. The agricultural law of 1936 had not worked out as well as expected, and the farm bloc demanded new government support. Before the special session began, Borah issued an attack upon the administration's agricultural program. Instead of reducing crops, he argued, the surplus should be purchased and stored by the federal government for future use by people in need. Capper said in an interview that the majority of the farmers in the Middle West were opposed to compulsory crop control and regimentation from Washington. They desired a permanent agricultural program that would be largely administered locally, by the farmers themselves. Capper believed that at least two-thirds of the farmers should be required to approve any measure before it could be set up as a control over all farmers. [5]

The new agricultural bill proposed an ever-normal granary, established soil conservation as a permanent program, authorized crop loans, offered crop insurance for wheat farmers who were subject to drought, and most significantly,

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Johnson Papers; New York Times, July 23, 1937; Congressional Record, July 28, 1937, 7734-7738; The Progressive, August 14, 1937.

[5] New York Times, October 22 and November 16, 1937; Arthur Capper to Victor Murdock, November 2, 1937, Victor Murdock Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

gave the Secretary of Agriculture power to assign national acreage allotments and subsidies to farmers who grew the major staples: wheat, cotton, corn, tobacco, and rice. Borah attacked the bill as an attempt to place the American farmer under complete bureaucratic control. Angered that the bill called for reduction in crops while millions of people were still hungry and needy, he thought the bill definitely unconstitutional, because he found no authority under the commerce clause of the Constitution for permanent production controls. Shipstead also criticized the proposal, because it failed to accomplish the goal of raising the income of the farmer to the level of the rest of the population. Hiram Johnson said the bill regimented farmers, and that he could not support it because it contributed towards scarcity of farm goods. Nye and Frazier were doubtful that the bill would give any benefits to the farmer beyond existing laws, and they expressed disapproval of the scarcity policy which the legislation advanced. However, both senators joined with Norris, Capper and LaFollette in supporting passage of the bill, while Borah, Johnson, McNary and Shipstead voted against. The Senate approved the measure on December 17, 1937 by a vote of 59-29. [6]

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[6] Congressional Record, December 3, 1937, 803; December 16, 1937, 1639; New York Times, December 4 and 8, 1937; Congressional Record, December 15, 1937, 1533-1534; December

The House did not approve the farm bill until February, 1938. In the Senate debate on the conference report, George Norris defended the legislation. Some compulsion was necessary if the program was to work out, he contended, and he believed that the farmers would benefit from the legislation. Henrik Shipstead attacked the conference report, asserting that agriculture should not be regulated unless industrial production and prices were also controlled. The farmers were presently being put at an unfair disadvantage. Charles McNary denounced the bill for giving too much power to the Secretary of Agriculture to control prices and production. The American farmer was losing his freedom, individuality and independence under the terms of the bill. Soil conservation was the only aspect of the legislation which he could support. He would not vote for the bill as long as the Secretary of Agriculture was permitted to be "the autocrat of the breakfast table." Hiram Johnson told the Senate that no man who valued his independence could back the bill, because it would alter the economy of the nation and harm American democracy. He took this stand despite the fact that he had supported every farm bill in the past. The Senate voted

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7, 1937, 987; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., December 18, 1937, Johnson Papers; Congressional Record, December 6, 1937, 906-908; December 10, 1937, 1236-1239; December 17, 1937, 1768.

56-31 to accept the conference report, but only three progressives supported the final passage. Norris, Capper and Frazier voted with the majority, while Borah, Johnson, LaFollette, McNary, Nye and Shipstead were in the minority. Nye and LaFollette had switched sides since the Senate passage of the original bill. The precise reason for their change of vote is unclear, but the scarcity aspects of the bill may have led them to abandon it at the end. In any case, most of the progressive Republicans had again deserted the administration on an important bill. [7]

The extent of the progressive Republicans' distrust of the President became more evident when the Government Reorganization bill came up for discussion and debate. In January, 1937, the President proposed the expansion of the White House staff; the strengthening of management agencies, including the substitution of a personnel director for the Civil Service Commission; the extension of the merit system; the setting up of new cabinet departments and the placement of independent agencies under departments; and an allowance for congressional rejection of presidential reorganization proposals, but only by a two-thirds vote of both houses. Critics of Roosevelt's Court plan saw his reorganization bill as another attempt by the Chief Executive to destroy democratic institutions in America. The proposal did not receive

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[7] Congressional Record, February 11, 1938, 1839-1841; February 14, 1938, 1868, 1870-1871, 1871-1873, 1881.

much attention, however, until early 1938, when it finally reached the Senate floor. As the new session of Congress opened, Capper discussed the reorganization bill in a radio address. While acknowledging the need for reform of executive departments of the federal government, the senator was adamantly opposed to three parts of the President's proposal. The suggestion that one man, appointed by the President, replace the Civil Service Commission, was deemed objectionable because it would give the Chief Executive control of the merit system, and it would tend to return the federal government back to the days of the spoils system. Capper also was against the placing of the Comptroller General, the man responsible for handling of government funds, under executive control. He asserted: "Congress should retain control of the government purse strings. The comptroller general should remain the servant of Congress, not become the creature of the White House." Capper also wished for independent commissions, such as the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Federal Trade Commission, to retain their status, instead of coming under presidential control through his cabinet members. The Kansas senator concluded: "It is not sound policy in the name of reform to place too much power in the hands of the Executive; the maximum of power consistent with efficiency should be retained in the hands of Congress." [8]

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[8] Capper's Weekly, January 8, 1938.

In February, as controversy raged around the reorganization bill, LaFollette announced he would support the proposal. He labeled charges that the bill would give the President dictatorial control over government departments as preposterous. Congress could not be given the assignment of reorganization because it was "too unwieldy". LaFollette was certain that Congress could achieve the two-thirds vote necessary to override any executive action on reorganization that was considered unwise. Norris echoed similar sentiments in Senate debate on the proposal during March. However, the other seven progressives did not agree. [9]

Hiram Johnson considered the reorganization bill an "iniquitous measure" and a "companion bill to the Court Bill . . ." It demonstrated, he wrote, the President's desire for dictatorial powers and his attempts to diminish the powers and prerogatives of Congress. McNary was willing to grant some power to the President over reorganization of the federal government, but he wanted assurances that Congress could recapture the power conferred and retain the right to veto the President's plans. Borah declared that Congress was just as capable of making sound judgments on reorganization as the President. He warned the Senate that Congress was slowly voting away its powers to the executive branch. During the previous five years, Roosevelt had been given the opportunity to usurp power with congressional approval.

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[9] New York Times, February 21, 1938; Congressional Record, March 8, 1938, 3028.

Frazier agreed with his fellow progressives that any reorganization plan should require congressional approval. It was not a question of whether Roosevelt should be given additional powers, but rather whether any Chief Executive should have such authority. [10]

During March, Borah joined with Burton K. Wheeler in the leadership of the opposition to the bill. Both senators asserted that the administration was applying pressure to win votes for the legislation. On March 18, a Wheeler amendment to the bill, providing for approval by Congress of all Presidential orders directing toward reorganization of the executive departments, was defeated in the Senate by a vote of 43-39. The progressive Republicans, with the exception of Norris and LaFollette, supported the defeated amendment. Hiram Johnson wrote his son after the vote: "Undoubtedly, we would have won, if the vote could have been taken forty-eight hours earlier, but the pulling and hauling, the downright bribery by the Administration in arranging for projects, gifts, et cetera, to different States, did the job. We've by no means surrendered, but will continue fighting, but I have little hope." [11]

As the date for the final vote on the bill approached,

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[10] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 26, 1938, Johnson Papers; Congressional Record, March 11, 1938, 3247-3248; March 15, 1938, 3398-3400; March 17, 1938, 3575-3576.

[11] New York Times, March 18, 1938; Congressional Record, March 18, 1938, 3645; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 19, 1938, Johnson Papers.

Capper denounced it as an unsound piece of legislation, inconsistent with and repugnant to our form of representative government. Borah wrote a constituent: "It seems almost impossible to stay the march of centralization and of arbitrary power. Unless the people are thoroughly aroused upon this matter, there is little hope of preserving the fundamental principles of our government." Johnson had the feeling that the reorganization bill "is the small crack in the dike that will let through the torrent." While the bill had been somewhat amended, it still had, he was certain, the potential of making the President a dictator. Also, many Democrats, who had deserted Roosevelt on the Court bill, "are trying to crawl back into good favor with the President on this Bill." [12]

On March 28, the reorganization bill came up for a final vote in the Senate. Shipstead declared he was in favor of delegating the power over reorganization to the President, but he wanted the Congress to approve such plans. Unless some provision were added to the bill, giving Congress the power of approval, he would vote against it. Johnson delivered an emotional speech against the legislation. The country was moving, he said, towards totalitarian, authoritarian, one man rule. He recalled how Adolf Hitler had

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[12] Congressional Record, March 21, 1938, 3733; William Borah to Professor E. D. Schock, March 25, 1938, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 26, 1938, Johnson Papers.

gained his total control over Germany by executive decrees. Capper agreed with Johnson that the pending bill was a dangerous measure that could make the President a virtual dictator of the government for at least two years. Borah said that bureaucracy was a disease of all levels of government, but that Congress could handle the subject of reorganization adequately. The legislative branch did not have the need or right to delegate their powers to the executive branch. The system of checks and balances among the three branches of government, as well as the concept of separation of powers, must be preserved, he asserted. Once new powers were granted to a Chief Executive, it could be employed as a precedent for future Presidents to demand more power. He emphasized that his vote against the bill should not be construed as a personal attack upon Roosevelt. His primary concern was to protect the United States Constitution and the rights of the American people. LaFollette defended the bill as the most satisfactory and efficient method available for reorganizing government agencies. He remained satisfied that there were adequate safeguards to prevent any serious harm to the operations of the government. While not sharing the apprehension over the threat of totalitarianism and dictatorship, he refused to criticize his colleagues. However, he declared that such emotional talk was a disservice to the country, since it could erode the confidence of the people

in their government. [13]

The Senate defeated, by a vote of 48-43, a motion to recommit the bill, with all of the progressives except LaFollette and Norris supporting the motion. The Senate then proceeded to pass the bill by a 49-42 vote, with the progressives again split 7-2 against its passage. Hiram Johnson, more crotchety and bitter than ever, wrote his son of his disgust about Norris and LaFollette, who continued to remain loyal to Roosevelt. Of Norris, he wrote: "Such men as Norris, who is a sad figure these days because of his insanity over the TVA, had nothing whatever to say. Norris had always been a man who wanted to go to the stake, and who took a real pleasure in being burned alive, but now in his old age, while senile, because of Roosevelt's gift to him of the TVA, which has meant about a half billion dollars, and because of his fanaticism in respect to that project, anything that Roosevelt does, or anything that he says, Norris will defend, although at variance with all his former life. He is truly a pathetic figure now." On LaFollette, Johnson wrote that he was "one of the first Vice-Presidents of the A.K., Inc.", always willing to advance the LaFollette family's fortunes at the expense of principle. [14]

The reorganization measure faced stiff opposition in

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[13] Henrik Shipstead Statement, March 28, 1938, Henrik Shipstead Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; Congressional Record, March 28, 1938, 4196-4197; 4193; 4194-4195; 4195-4196.

[14] Congressional Record, March 28, 1938, 4204; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 2, 1938, Johnson Papers.

the House of Representatives. Roosevelt went on the defensive, negotiating some concessions, including one that would permit a majority vote of Congress to defeat presidential reorganization plans. He also issued a statement denying that he wished to become a dictator. In harsh terms, he criticized opponents in both the House and the Senate who had conjured up "silly nightmares". Johnson proceeded to denounce the President for his temperamental statement, and he told his son that he still believed Roosevelt was planning a dictatorship. The senator hoped that Roosevelt would be deterred from such action by the strong opposition on the reorganization bill. Johnson doubted, however, that the President's powerful ego could be controlled. "He has reached the place where he thinks he is so damn smart that he can do anything and pass it off as cleverness, but I do not think that he could accomplish many more so-called cunning things without an explosion on behalf of our people." [15]

On April 8, the House returned the reorganization bill to committee by a vote of 204-196, effectively killing the bill for that session of Congress. Borah now urged that the idea of reshaping the executive departments be resumed on a basis that would protect the rights of Congress. A redrafted bill which provided that the President and Congress would work together on reorganization of the government structure

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[15] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 2, 1938, Johnson Papers.

and bureaucracy could be adopted, he contended. Johnson was joyous over the unexpected defeat of the bill, and he termed the success as the prevention of one-man government. The senator wrote his son: ". . .there were many like myself, who felt certain some devious purpose lay in the devious mind of the President, and we would never know what it was until we woke up to the fact that we had given him the power." Norris, disappointed by the defeat of the bill, charged its loss to a large-scale propaganda campaign, by many members of the Senate and House, that Roosevelt would assume dictatorial powers once the bill had passed. Norris considered this idea utterly preposterous. However, this fear of increased executive power had alienated all of the progressive Republicans, save LaFollette and Norris, from Roosevelt by 1938. Their faith in the President's good motives, once so definite, had been permanently lost. [16]

One other development during late 1937 and 1938 which harmed Roosevelt's formerly close relationship with the progressive Republican Senate bloc was the economic recession which hit the country, beginning in August, 1937. When Roosevelt's second term in office began in January, 1937, the nation had pulled itself above 1929 levels of economic performance. Although there was still mass unemployment,

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[16] New York Times, April 10, 1938; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 10, 1938, Johnson Papers; George Norris to John M. Leyda, April 30, 1938, George Norris Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

most progressive Republicans urged an end to the government's deficit spending. Concern over the large national debt pervaded many of their minds. In April, Capper told a Kansas radio audience that the federal government must end "extravagant expenditures in public funds." He spoke of the dangers of an unbalanced budget, but emphasized that reductions in government expenditures should not be made at the expense of the farmers. Johnson agreed that economizing was necessary, but he was against giving power to the President to decide where funds should be allocated, as some members of Congress were suggesting. He wrote his son: "No government can withstand forever paying two dollars out and taking one dollar in. Even the President is seeing this and to worry about it." [17]

In June, 1937, Roosevelt, concerned about the danger of inflation, made a decision to cut government spending drastically. The administration slashed the WPA rolls and turned off the pump-priming of the PWA. In August, however, a recession hit the nation. By early 1938, all gains made since 1935 in the economic indicators had been wiped out. A battle now broke out within the councils of the administration, between those led by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., who wished to leave it to business to take America out of the recession, and those led by Harold Ickes

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[17] New York Times, April 26, 1937; Capper's Weekly, May 1, 1937; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., May 7, 1937, Johnson Papers.

and Harry Hopkins, who wanted to increase government spending to make up for the lack of business investment, and also to begin a trust-busting program. Charles McNary was critical of the latter group's attack upon business, claiming this led to continued lack of business investment which deepened the recession. He criticized the President's vacillating attitude toward business. McNary wrote an Oregon newspaper editor: "The uncertainty of what he will do has made the business men timorous and I think has much to do with the present recession." [18]

In April, 1938, Roosevelt reversed his field and asked Congress to embark upon a large-scale lend-spend program. He requested five billion dollars for public works, to be administered by the WPA and the PWA, and other federal relief projects. Nye wondered "whether we can hope to accomplish recovery by repeating the effort of the last five years." However, unable to think of any alternative, he expected to go along with the President's request. Borah said he would support a "reasonable" amount that was needed to aid the jobless, but "Beyond that, I will have to be convinced and I don't see much chance of being convinced." McNary declared that federal expenditures on public works and relief had not taken the country out of the depression during the previous five years. He approached the new program with

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[18] New York Times, December 31, 1937; Charles McNary to George Putnam of the Salem Capital Journal, January 28, 1938, Charles McNary Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

"fear" of its ineffectiveness. Johnson indicated he disapproved because the program had been tried before and had not solved the problem of unemployment. The California senator was convinced that the President had introduced his spending program as a diversionary tactic to take away attention from the defeat of his reorganization bill. Johnson admitted: "There is just enough of good in it, just enough of humanitarianism utterly to confuse and confound the honest opposition." He believed that the spending program would pass Congress, because it was difficult to vote against such a bill during an election year. Capper attacked pump-priming in a radio address and a speech in the Senate. While it might produce a temporary improvement, it would not bring about a permanent recovery. Private enterprise had to take us out of the recession, he asserted. The senator suggested that the government cooperate with business, eliminate government competition with private enterprise, revise the tax system to encourage business growth, and amend the National Labor Relation Act of 1935, which the senator believed favored labor unions heavily over business interests. [19]

When the vote on the spending bill was taken in the Senate on June 3, 1938, only Hiram Johnson and Charles McNary could bring themselves to vote against it. In the 60-10 vote for the President's program, Capper, Norris, and LaFollette

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[19] New York Times, April 15, 1938; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 16, 1938, Johnson Papers; New York Times, May 23, 1938; Arthur Capper speech, May 22, 1938, Capper Papers; Congressional Record, May 26, 1938, 7547.

voted with the majority, while the four remaining progressive Republicans (Borah, Frazier, Nye, Shipstead) were not present. However, the latter three indicated they would have joined in support of the program. All the members of the progressive bloc, with the exception of Gerald Nye who was absent, had voted the day before in favor of an amendment introduced by Senator Carl Hatch of New Mexico, to prohibit political activity on the part of persons who worked for the various federal relief agencies. The amendment failed to pass the Senate by a 40-37 vote, but the unanimity of progressive Republican support for the Hatch proposal demonstrated their unwillingness to see the Democratic administration gain political points through their dispensing of relief funds and public works projects on the eve of the congressional elections of 1938. [20]

During the fall campaign, the progressive Republicans attacked the New Deal. Nye, the only member of the bloc facing a re-election contest, ran a campaign with more conservative orientation, attacking large scale government spending and increased presidential power. Capper was equally critical of the centralization of power in Washington and the heavy tax burden that he said was being imposed upon the American people. The administration had been given some twenty billion dollars over five years to find employment

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[20] Congressional Record, June 3, 1938, 8152; June 2, 1938, 8000.

for people, Capper asserted, but the relief rolls were still large. Business was in a worse condition in 1938 in many respects, than it had been in 1933. The mounting debt represented a threat to the stability of the American economic system. Capper also was unhappy with the farm program, which had failed to put agriculture on a parity with industry. But he was most disturbed by the "regimentation of the individual, by concentration of all powers of the Federal Government in the hands of the Executive; substitution of a central government at Washington for state and local government which should handle local affairs." McNary called upon the American people to elect a Congress which would stand as guardians of the Constitution. If the door to usurpation of power were opened, the Oregon senator declared in a Constitution Day speech in Portland, no one could be certain how long our civil liberties would survive. Johnson was bitter about the President's attempted purge of conservative Democrats during the 1938 primaries. Johnson wrote Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia that the President's "ruthlessness . . . seems to me compelling proof that he has reached such a despotic and unreasonable state of mind that he will tolerate no man who disagrees with him at all." The California senator considered the recent session of Congress "as disturbing and disagreeable a session as ever I have participated in." He returned to the new session in 1939 ready to devote his energies toward restoring to the legislative branch those powers which had been given over to the

President during the first six years of the New Deal. [21]

By the middle of 1938, seven of the nine members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc had given ample evidence that they had abandoned their formerly close ties, to varying degrees, with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. While not all equally outspoken on the issues, their solidarity against bills which the President considered essential for an extension of the New Deal demonstrated that they had become indistinguishable from conservative Republicans and conservative Democrats, who were attacking the New Deal on similar grounds. Thus, a conservative coalition had formed in Congress and was steadily becoming more effective at thwarting the President's programs. The progressive alienation from New Deal liberalism was only to become more manifest as foreign policy became the major national issue during the years from Munich in 1938 to Pearl Harbor in 1941.

George Norris and Robert LaFollette, Jr. had been the only progressive Republicans to support the controversial Supreme Court and Government Reorganization proposals of the President. Of course, neither was officially a Republican party member by 1938. LaFollette had run for re-election in

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[21] Personal Interview with Senator Gerald P. Nye, March 30, 1971, Washington, D.C.; New York Times, October 23, 1938; Arthur Capper speech, October 22, 1938, Capper Papers; New York Times, September 18, 1938; Hiram Johnson to Harry Byrd, August 13, 1938, Johnson Papers; Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., June 18, 1938, Johnson Papers; New York Times, December 23, 1938.

1934 as a Wisconsin Progressive, and Norris had returned to the Senate after the 1936 campaign as an Independent. Certainly, they were not in tune with Republican views, whether "progressive" or "conservative".

George Norris remained among the most loyal of the President's supporters in Congress. His strong doubts about the approach of Roosevelt to Supreme Court reform were tempered by his close association with the Chief Executive. Because of illness, Norris had been able to avoid casting his vote on the Court bill, but no one doubted that he would have backed the White House had he been in Washington. While Hiram Johnson, William Borah and the other progressives were denouncing Roosevelt, Norris always rushed to his defense, considering him the savior of liberal thought and action. Norris's loyalty provoked criticism from progressive colleagues, such as the comments written by Hiram Johnson privately. But Norris saw no alternative to Roosevelt. During 1938, the senator attacked reactionaries in both major political parties for blocking liberal reforms. Obviously, Norris was unhappy over the progressive Republican abandonment of the New Deal. He warned that if the stalemate over legislation for the benefit of the country continued, Roosevelt might be compelled to seek a third term. He thought the President was still popular with the people, and that no man in public life could hope to compete with him. Norris continued to defend the President against charges of

tendency toward dictatorial rule. [22]

Robert LaFollette, Jr. had supported Roosevelt on the major bills before Congress, with exception of the farm bill which promoted continued scarcity of goods, a concept that was anathema to the Wisconsin senator. He had been an especially ardent advocate of the Court and Reorganization bills, refuting the expressed fears of fellow progressives over these proposals. However, he and his brother Philip began to have doubts during 1937 and early 1938 as to Roosevelt's commitment to public works and relief programs as the way to take the country out of the depression. Their disappointment over the President's declining fortunes, as evidenced by the defeat of the Court and Reorganization bills, and his failure to avoid the Recession of 1937-38 led the LaFollette brothers, but principally the Governor of Wisconsin, to make preparations for a new national party, the National Progressives of America, to take away liberal and progressive support from the New Deal and to center it around themselves, much as earlier in the century, their father had made attempts to unite progressives around his own candidacy for President.

When the LaFollette brothers formed the Wisconsin Progressive Party in 1934 and won re-election to the Senate and Governorship, many political observers began to

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[22] The Progressive, January 1, 1938; New York Times, November 29, 1938.

speculate that they would eventually form a new national party patterned after the state organization, with one of them as its presidential candidate. Senator LaFollette added fuel to the speculation when he predicted a new alignment of political parties in the near future, immediately after the 1934 election results were in. National press attention to the LaFollette brothers increased drastically during 1935 and 1936. A writer for The Nation interviewed Governor LaFollette in February, 1935, about his plans for the 1936 or 1940 presidential elections. The governor replied that he was not inclined to discuss the future, because it was too remote from his present day challenges. He said his immediate ambition was to accomplish his goal of making Wisconsin an example for the nation of what progressive leadership and programs could do to better economic and social conditions. Calling himself a radical, Philip LaFollette said the government should own the utility companies. Denying he was a Socialist, he yet emphasized that the workers and farmers, rather than the corporations, should own the land and factories they worked on, as well as their homes. The government should assume control of the distribution of the national income, the governor concluded. [23]

In July, 1935, Governor LaFollette predicted a new leftist party in America by 1940. Indicating that it was

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[23] Madison Capital Times, November 8, 1934; Louis Adamic, "A Talk With Phil LaFollette," The Nation, CXL (February 27, 1935), 242-245.

difficult to organize a third national party rapidly because of vast differences in state laws, he asserted his belief that various progressive groups, including the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the Wisconsin Progressive Party, would achieve the goal of a new party by that date. It would be based upon a change in the economic system, which presently emphasized the private profit motive as supreme over the welfare of the majority of Americans. Such a modification, he asserted, must come about through democratic means only. In October, 1935, the governor said he would support President Roosevelt's re-election if his opponent was a reactionary. However, if the Republicans were to choose a liberal, he said he would have to assess the situation. He again predicted a definite political realignment in America within a few years, with events determining the exact time of its development. In a public address in Rochester, New York, in November, 1935, the governor made a plea that work be provided for every employable person in America. He criticized restrictions on agricultural production, and unproductive spending by the national government. More production, the Wisconsin governor declared, would lead to vast consumption and increased purchasing power. [24]

In 1936, the LaFollette brothers, faced with the lack of a clear liberal alternative, endorsed and actively campaigned for Roosevelt through the vehicle of the Progressive

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[24] New York Times, July 28, October 13 and 27, November 2, 1935.

National Committee, with Senator LaFollette assuming the leading role in the organization. But speculation about a new national party spread all the same. The Washington Evening Star declared that the success of Governor LaFollette's bid for re-election was important for future third party politics. The assumption was widespread that Roosevelt would keep to the tradition of two terms in the Presidency. No one in the Democratic party seemed to be able to fill the President's shoes, and the Republicans had demonstrated that reactionaries were in control of their party machine. Therefore, the Wisconsin Progressive Party, under the leadership of Philip LaFollette and Robert LaFollette, Jr., appeared to be the leading progressive beacon for the future. After the re-election victories of Roosevelt and Governor LaFollette, the New York Times asked the LaFollette brothers about their future plans. Phil spoke again of the coming realignment, while Senator LaFollette indicated his concern that should public spending be cut by the Roosevelt administration, the partial economic recovery that had been achieved would be destroyed. Sensing such a policy change, LaFollette delivered a warning to the administration again in March, 1937. In a speech before the American Bar Association, he spoke of the need for increased federal taxation. Discussion about cutting the costs of government was dangerous, he asserted, as the role of government in modern society was increasing annually due to necessity, and he emphasized public works as an integral part of any program to restore and increase mass

purchasing power.[25]

On the third anniversary of the founding of the Wisconsin Progressive Party in May, 1937, Governor Philip LaFollette declared: "The Progressive party looks forward to a national existence and to a national political realignment." He predicted that a national progressive party would sweep to victory over the "reactionary forces of America." In early June, the governor sent a letter to President Roosevelt, requesting that the federal government cooperate with state and local governments on an expanded program of public works and relief for the needy and unemployed. Roosevelt's decision during June to cut WPA spending provoked Senator LaFollette to accuse the federal government of failing to carry out its promise to restore prosperity and employment, made at the time the WPA was inaugurated. He thought that in 1933 the federal government had accepted the basic proposition that unemployment was a national problem, and recalled that Roosevelt had reaffirmed that belief in 1936. The senator wrote his wife in mid-June about the struggle in the Senate over the administration relief bill of one and a half billion dollars, which he considered inadequate, although better than the pittance which the reactionary Democrats and Republicans called for. LaFollette wrote: "Roosevelt is certainly driving the wedge deep into his own

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[25] Washington Star, October 3, 1936; Francis Brown, "The LaFollettes Survey New Horizons," New York Times Magazine, January 3, 1937, 9; Congressional Record, Appendix, March 24, 1937, 628-629.

party. If he keeps on he may bring about the party realignment so essential if democracy is to work in the future." By the end of June, Governor LaFollette had failed to receive a reply from President Roosevelt to his proposal for federal-state cooperation. The governor, disgusted, wrote his brother: "Criticism against him grows--about labor difficulties, WPA retrenchment & lack of program. It looks from here like a retreat on the Court issue. A great mistake." As Philip LaFollette later wrote in his memoirs, he considered Roosevelt's WPA retrenchment "crass and cruel." He concluded: "Roosevelt had no more real interest in the common man than a Wall Street broker. . . .I would never again support him politically; he was just not aiming at the ends that Bob and I had been taught from childhood were the objectives of progressive government." [26]

Governor LaFollette now began an active quest for expansion of the Wisconsin Progressives into a national movement. He asked an associate, George F. Rowe, to send him

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[26] New York Times, May 20, 1937; Madison Capital Times, May 20, 1937; The Progressive, May 29, 1937; Message from Governor Philip LaFollette on the Occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Founding of the Progressive Party, May 1937, Philip LaFollette Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; Philip LaFollette to Franklin D. Roosevelt, June 3, 1937, Philip LaFollette Papers; Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., June 4, 1937, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Congressional Record, June 16, 1937, 5825-5828; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dearest, June 19, 1937, LaFollette Family Papers; Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., June 25, 1937, LaFollette Family Papers; Donald Young (ed.), Adventures in Politics: The Memoirs of Philip LaFollette (New York, Chicago and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 246-247.

proposals on the mechanics of organizing a national progressive party, as well as planks that might be used in its platform. Rowe suggested that a National Progressive Committee be formed to act as a clearing house for progressive thought and action, and that progressive leaders be aided in their campaigns for public office by committee publicity, speakers and funds. A national party should be formed after the 1940 presidential campaign and before the 1942 congressional elections. Its platform should be based upon the principles of aid to labor and farmers, large scale public works, higher taxation of the wealthy, anti-monopoly legislation, and avoidance of involvement in foreign entanglements. Rowe urged Governor LaFollette to take the initiative in forming the new party. "There are unbeatable reasons why the initiative should come from you. The next political upsurge will arise from the Middle West. Wisconsin has set an example for the nation in legislation and administration. The Progressive Party has the right kind of organization and propaganda techniques. A national Progressive Party can, as in Wisconsin, combine farm, labor, and middle class support. The progressive tradition is linked with the name of LaFollette. Other progressive and liberal leaders will stand behind you more readily than behind anyone else." [27]

The Wisconsin governor spent the summer and fall of

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[27] George F. Rowe to Gordon Sinykin (Governor LaFollette's assistant), June 25, 1937, Philip LaFollette Papers; Rowe to Philip LaFollette, June 25, 1937, Philip LaFollette Papers.

1937 giving speeches and interviews and writing articles for The Progressive about the new political alignment that he saw coming soon. At the end of June, 1937, he hinted to the readers of The Progressive that he was planning to take leadership of a new national party within the next few years. He spoke during the next few months at Des Moines, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. In Iowa, he criticized the Republican party for having its feet in 1937, but its thinking in 1837, and said that the Democratic party was infested by reactionaries who were preventing Roosevelt from taking more advanced positions. In Nebraska, he went further, predicting that the Middle West would lead the movement for political realignment, and that 1940, rather than 1942 or later, would witness the rise to prominence of a national progressive party. In an interview with a New York Herald Tribune correspondent in October, the governor refused to talk about his own personal political ambitions or those of his brother. He predicted a drastic revision "on a realistic basis" of the traditional political party lines for the 1940 and 1944 presidential elections. He thought it still a possibility that the two major parties might become liberal and conservative organizations, rather than the traditional coalition of both political philosophies in each party. [28]

During the fall and winter, Philip LaFollette was

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[28] The Progressive, June 26, 1937; New York Times, August 1, 1937; September 7, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, October 10, 1937.

active in gaining support for a new political party. He held a series of meetings with progressive leaders and followers in his state office in Madison. Farm, labor, small business, and white collar groups came to speak to him. He worked to gain the backing of progressive groups in Iowa and California, but with the exception of Mayor LaGuardia of New York City, he never consulted with major national progressive leaders. The recession which hit the country in the last months of 1937 spurred the Wisconsin governor on. In mid-October, his brother laid the cause of the recession on the doorstep of the White House, blaming it on the drastic reduction in public expenditures. He promised to renew his fight for a broader income tax base and higher surtaxes on middle bracket and high incomes. Philip urged his brother to extend his attack upon Roosevelt's economic policies and to help him work towards a progressive conference to determine progressive reaction to the retreat of left wing views within the administration. By early December, Governor LaFollette was convinced "that FDR is drifting, and confused." [29]

By this time, Senator LaFollette had prepared, with the assistance of a progressive associate, David K. Niles, a list of people who might be invited to a conference to discuss

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[29] Donald R. McCoy, "The National Progressives of America, 1938," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIV (June, 1957), 80; Young (ed.), Adventure in Politics: The Memoirs of Philip LaFollette, p. 252; New York Times, October 17, 1937; Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., November 27, 1937 and December 5, 1937, LaFollette Family Papers.

the future of the Wisconsin progressive movement. The list included the names of Senators Nye, Frazier and Shipstead, along with labor, intellectual, journalistic and political leaders from around the country. Senator LaFollette doubted that such a meeting could take place without careful planning. Eventually, plans for a conference were shelved altogether. This proved to be a majcr mistake on the part of the LaFollette brothers, since their new party would seem to many as a purely LaFollette venture. As the year came to an end, the LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, published an editorial expressing fear that President Roosevelt was "veering to the right" and "making overtures to big business" to take the country out of the recession. The journal issued a warning to Roosevelt: "If Mr. Roosevelt gives in to these forces he is lost. He will be in the unfortunate position of losing his hold on the vast majority of liberal minded voters who elected him . . .Every sincere liberal and progressive in the nation hopes these rumor stories out of Washington are untrue. It would be a source of keen disappointment if Mr. Roosevelt deserts the policies that won him their support." [30]

As the new session of Congress opened in January, 1938, Senator LaFollette outlined before a national radio audience

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[30] David Niles to Philip LaFollette, December 6, 1937, Philip LaFollette Papers and LaFollette Family Papers; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, December 7, 1937, LaFollette Family Papers; The Progressive, December 11, 1937.

the most important problem which the Congress faced--unemployment. Although the country had already gone through eight years of economic crisis, there were still millions of people who were unemployed. He declared that the federal government had brought on the recession by reacting to critics of government spending with attempts to balance the national budget through cuts in relief projects. Higher taxation and a greater level of government spending were necessary to find employment for those in need. The senator continued: "Business must be encouraged to do its share for the country, but we must never forget that in a democratic country the people have a right to demand that government keep order in our economic house as well as police our streets. The President has said that 'this generation has a rendezvous with destiny.' We are very late. We must hurry if we are to keep that appointment." In another radio address in mid-January, the senator pointed out that the cries for a balanced budget and reduced expenditures had also been heard from 1929 to 1932 and had led to disaster. Private investment alone could not increase the national income. The federal government had to increase expenditures on public works to provide mass purchasing power. LaFollette continued to criticize the government's relief policies during February, characterizing it as "an attempt to bail out this ocean with a tin dipper." He called for the establishment of a permanent public employment agency, and suggested a broad program of conservation and construction activities

for the preservation and protection of the nation's resources. Housing, education, health and food distribution, LaFollette asserted, were fields in which people could be employed by the federal government. [31]

While Senator LaFollette was speaking out on government spending and the recession, his brother was actively working towards his goal of a new third party, beginning with the 1938 elections. At the end of February, the Wisconsin governor declared in a radio address that a new American political movement was under way with the purpose of preserving democracy from foreign entanglements and assuring that it worked at home. He said an end to the unemployment problem was essential, even if the American economic system had to be changed. He implied that neither the Democratic nor Republican parties had solved the nation's problems. The Republican party looked to the past rather than the present, and the Democrats looked to the present and not to the future. He concluded that only discontented people would find dictatorship attractive, whether of a Fascist or Communist variety. At a meeting of sixty members of the Wisconsin Progressive State Central Committee, LaFollette requested their assistance in making a decision on whether the third party should be organized immediately, or whether the

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[31] New York Times, January 3 and 14, 1938; Congressional Record, Appendix, January 13, 1938, 188-190; Copy of Robert LaFollette, Jr. Address, January 13, 1938, LaFollette Family Papers; The Progressive, January 22, 1938; New York Times, February 20 and 21, 1938; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 21, 1938, 732-733.

Progressives in Wisconsin should continue to work for the realignment of the existing parties along liberal and conservative lines. Actually, he had already decided to make the move towards a new party. [32]

The governor suggested that his brother come to Wisconsin for a few days to discuss the situation. Senator LaFollette indicated that demands upon his time and energy were too heavy for him to be able to leave Washington. Thus, the organizational work of the new party was done solely by the Wisconsin governor and his close associates. By late March, Philip LaFollette had held meetings with about 850 rank and file members and leaders of the Wisconsin Progressive Party, as well as with progressive members of the AFL, CIO, and various farm groups. He had discussed with these people whether he should run for re-election as Governor, run for the Senate, or retire and devote his energies to formation of the national movement. By early April, he had prepared rough drafts of four planned radio addresses, as well as one of a speech announcing the formation of a national party. He passed these on to his brother for commentary. [33]

Apparently, Senator LaFollette was not keen about his

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[32] New York Times, March 1, 1938; The Progressive, March 5, 1938.

[33] Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., March 17 and 22, 1938, LaFollette Family Papers; Madison Capital Times, March 27, 1938; Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., April 8 and 18, 1938, LaFollette Family Papers.

brother's plans to start a new party. Basically more shy and cautious than Philip, Robert had been less willing to organize the Wisconsin Progressives in 1934, but he had gone along with his brother's plans. While disillusioned with Roosevelt's economic policies, the senator did not think that a new party could succeed under the particular circumstances which America faced in 1938. Accordingly, he left the planning to his more aggressive and ambitious brother, who was thought by many to have his eye on the White House in 1940. Senator LaFollette did give a pro forma endorsement to his brother's organization, but he continued to plead a heavy workload in Washington as his reason for not appearing at the meeting at which Philip LaFollette was to unveil the new movement. When President Roosevelt announced, in early April, plans to increase funds for pump-priming to take America out of the recession, the senator expressed his pleasure that the Chief Executive had finally recognized his earlier error in cutting relief funds. [34]

Governor LaFollette went ahead with his plans for four radio addresses to the nation. He also announced that a meeting of progressives would be held in Madison on April 28 to inaugurate a new movement. In his radio addresses, the Wisconsin governor declared that the Roosevelt administration could have prevented the recession if they had prepared

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[34] Personal Interview with Morris H. Rubin, editor of The Progressive, August 6, 1970, Madison, Wisconsin; New York Times, April 9, 1938.

a constructive program to solve the depression, but the government had preferred to "tinker and patch". Nine years after the depression began, half of the people were in as poor condition as they had been in 1931. LaFollette told his radio audiences that he and his brother had become alienated from the New Deal ever since Roosevelt changed his course on relief and public works spending in June, 1937. Able-bodied men and women, he asserted, must be put to work at productive enterprises to insure the return of prosperity. He announced that he had invited almost four thousand people to the Madison meeting. While indicating that most of those expected to attend were from the Mid West, he gave out no list of names. LaFollette had consulted with about 1200 people in his Madison office over recent months, but the big weakness of these meetings was that they had included almost no figures of national reputation. [35]

Senator LaFollette announced on April 25 that he was standing with his brother for the formation of a new party, which he called "inevitable". On the eve of the meeting, Arthur Krock of the New York Times expressed the view that the LaFollette brothers were attempting to split Franklin Roosevelt's coalition and to succeed him as the heads of liberal and radical groups in America. Senator Norris urged third party advocates to wait and see whether the President

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[35] New York Times, April 21, 22 and 23, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 21, 22 and 23, 1938; Madison Capital Times, April 21, 22 and 23, 1938; New York Times, April 24, 1938.

would seek a third term before inaugurating a new party. President Roosevelt told newsmen that his administration would not have a representative at the LaFollette conference, although Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, a close friend of the LaFollette brothers, planned to attend as the representative of the New York City mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia. Roosevelt expressed no objection to another liberal organization's formation, saying it was good for America. Madison's progressive newspaper, The Capital Times, which was edited by William T. Evjue, editor of The Progressive, lashed out at Governor LaFollette's planned third party as a divisive action. The newspaper indicated it would refuse to support the venture if it required repudiation of the President. LaFollette was only dividing the liberals' ranks and strengthening the nation's conservatives by his actions. The paper urged the LaFollettes to work with Roosevelt to improve the New Deal, rather than abandon him in a time of trouble. Other unnamed progressive leaders thought a strong and articulate third party movement would force Roosevelt further to the left and would, therefore, regain for him the support of many progressives who had become disillusioned with him. As far as Philip LaFollette's own ambitions were concerned, these progressives thought he was willing to wait until 1944 or 1948 to seek the Presidency. Mayor LaGuardia publicly expressed approval of the idea of a new alliance of progressives and liberals, but did not

go to Madison. [36]

On the evening of April 28, 1938, Governor LaFollette announced the formation of the National Progressives of America before a crowd of 7500 persons at the University of Wisconsin stock pavilion in Madison. Four thousand people were jammed into the pavilion, while the rest of the crowd stood outside and heard the governor's speech over loudspeakers. It was immediately apparent that no nationally known progressive figures were present, including the governor's own brother, who remained in Washington to take part in a debate over a naval bill. However, the senator sent a telegram of endorsement and good wishes to the meeting. "Today it is an issue between progressives, who favor the widest possible enjoyment of our abundant wealth, and reactionaries in both old parties, who would go back to the discredited system of withholding the very necessaries of life by monopolistic control of production and distribution, in order to maintain unlicensed profits. The outcome of this contest will determine whether the American people are to go forward with an ever higher standard of living and wider opportunity, or remain chained to a system that sacrifices

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[36] Madison Capital Times, April 25, 1938; New York Times, April 26, 1938; Madison Capital Times, April 26, 1938; New York Times, April 27, 1938; Madison Capital Times, April 28, 1938; New York Times, April 28, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 28, 1938.

human values to speculative gain." [37]

In his speech, which lasted more than an hour and a half, Governor LaFollette blamed both major parties for failing to solve the problem of the depression. Admitting that President Roosevelt had basically good intentions, the governor declared that he was "hamstrung" by reactionaries within his own party. Thus, a new party, not committed to old-fashioned capitalism, socialism, communism or fascism, was needed to alter the American economic system. The New Deal had erred in curbing production in the factory and on the farm. This was the wrong policy to follow at a time when people were hungry. Public and private borrowing of funds to maintain the American standard of living was not the answer, because wealth must be produced through useful work. However, LaFollette declared he was against a political philosophy such as socialism, which put everyone on the same economic level. He asserted that his new party was against "coddling" and "spoonfeeding" of farmers and workers. He also opposed efforts to manage and control business and industry. His speech appeared vague and contradictory, and would lead shortly to much criticism from liberals and

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[37] New York Times, April 29, 1938; Madison Capital Times, April 29, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 29, 1938; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Alvin C. Reis, Chairman of Progressive meeting, April 28, 1938, LaFollette Family Papers and Philip LaFollette Papers; The Progressive, April 30, 1938.

progressives. [38]

LaFollette urged government ownership and control of money and credit, the modernization of government with the granting of extra powers to the executive branch to accomplish the nation's goals, security based on a decent annual income for all, and aid to every citizen by giving him the opportunity to help himself. He also warned against any foreign power trespassing in the Western Hemisphere. LaFollette called his party the equivalent of a religious cause. As he spoke, the American flag and the red, white and blue party emblem were draped on the stand. The emblem consisted of a blue cross on a field of white, surrounded by a circle of red. The cross was designed to symbolize the part in government played by citizens at the voting booth, as well as the prosperity produced by the multiplication of wealth. The circle was supposed to represent the unity of the American people under certain principles in which they believed. Governor LaFollette dominated the meeting with his oratory and appearance. It was obvious to all present that he was the motivating force behind the new party. But the atmosphere of the meeting, as well as the governor's vagueness, led to harsh criticism. [39]

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[38] New York Times, April 29, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 29, 1938; Madison Capital Times, April 29, 1938; Congressional Record, Appendix, April 28, 1938, 2002-2006.

[39] New York Times, April 29, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 29, 1938; Madison Capital Times, April 29, 1938; Congressional Record, Appendix, April 28, 1938, 2002-2006.

Public reaction to the new party movement was not long in coming. Charles McNary, the Senate Republican leader and mild progressive, thought its real significance lay in the "retreat of the liberal forces from the Roosevelt banner." Senator Norris was uncertain about the effect the new party would have, but he indicated he would oppose it if it divided liberal forces. He continued to be fearful that it might assist the election of a reactionary to the White House in 1940. If the party promised to extend the President's policies and consolidated with Roosevelt liberals, Norris said he would be glad to endorse it and fight within its ranks. Wisconsin Progressive Congressman Thomas Amlie feared that the new party would lead to a split in the ranks of progressives in the state. The Wisconsin Socialists, certainly, could not be expected to retain their alliance with the Progressive Party after the governor's criticism of Socialist views. Socialist leader Norman Thomas approved of LaFollette's analysis of the shortcomings of the New Deal, but criticized his willingness to attack socialism and his decision to avoid repudiation of capitalism. Senator Borah said his main interest still lay in the reorganization of the Republican party. John L. Lewis, the labor leader, would not say whether labor would merge with the National Progressives. The leaders of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor

party doubted that it would merge with the LaFollette party, because it would thereby lose identity as a distinct radical organization. Senator Shipstead saw the movement as a "symptom of economic unrest" and blamed liberals for weakening their own cause. Mayor LaGuardia made it known that although Adolf Berle had represented him at the Madison meeting, he was not joining the governor's party at the present time. He still considered President Roosevelt the leader of the progressive forces of the nation. His strong friendship with Governor LaFollette led him to a decision to avoid any substantial comment about the new party. Senator Wheeler of Montana declared that the National Progressives would have no chance to succeed unless both major parties nominated reactionaries in 1940. He emphasized that he was remaining a Democrat. It was apparent that there was no jumping on the bandwagon by liberals and progressives of national stature. [40]

The nation's leading newspapers devoted much editorial attention to the LaFollettes' new party. The New York Times asserted that some of the governor's statements "must have seemed to many of his followers to have a strangely conservative ring . . ." The LaFollettes' decision to form a new party showed, the paper declared, that they were convinced

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[40] Madison Capital Times, April 29, 1938; New York Times, April 30, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 30, 1938; New York Times, May 1 and 5, 1938.

that the President's prestige had declined irreparably with the advent of the recession and the defeats on the Supreme Court and reorganization proposals. The New York Herald Tribune, a conservative Republican newspaper, hailed the advent of the new party, entitling its editorial "Fresh Air From Madison". The paper praised LaFollette's criticism of the New Deal "myth" of overproduction as the source of the nation's economic problems. Walter Lippmann analyzed the new party in his Tribune column. He saw it as one different from traditional progressive thought since the World War and irreconcilable with the philosophy and practices of the New Deal, most farm and labor organizations, and leading liberal periodicals, such as The Nation and The New Republic. The only way, Lippmann believed, that this party could succeed in its goal of becoming national in scope was through gaining the support of these groups. The Wisconsin governor was the first possible progressive presidential candidate since the war who was not interested in supplanting private initiative, but instead anxious to promote it. He was placing emphasis on the production of wealth, rather than on distribution of income. Lippmann approved of the new venture, terming Philip LaFollette a man of "truly liberal spirit" who might give American democracy a new hope. Dorothy Thompson, another prominent Tribune columnist, found much to praise in the LaFollette speech, but thought practical proposals were lacking, the only one mentioned being the nationalization of the banking system. Miss Thompson saw much in the LaFollette

appeal that smacked of fascism, including the banners, the religious crusade, the emotional appeal, and the exaggerated nationalism. She warned that freedom came before and was more important than prosperity. [41]

The Washington Post declared that Governor LaFollette's speech had consisted of "glittering generalities". He had failed to give any idea of the methods he would employ to create more jobs, to eliminate relief abuses, and to give the people economic security. The Post called upon LaFollette to issue a more substantive party platform. The Washington Star approved of LaFollette's criticism of the New Deal, but indicated its disagreement with the governor's proposals for the granting of more power to the executive branch and the control of the banking system. A Star columnist, Owen L. Scott, warned that the National Progressives could be the beginning of an American brand of fascism. He called the governor's speech detailing these proposals as a totalitarian move. Scott was concerned by the religious note in the speech and by the swastika-like banners on the platform from which LaFollette spoke. Raymond Clapper and Heywood Broun, columnists for the New York World Telegram, both were critical of the new party. Clapper called LaFollette's speech "a skillfully disguised job. It had a challenging ring, a call to action, a touch of religious fervor and a bracing tonic of fighting patriotism in it." But

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[41] New York Times, April 30, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 30 and May 2, 1938.

his appeal was along the same lines as that of Fascist and Communist dictators in speeches to the masses, although this might not be his intention. Broun called LaFollette's speech a "thoroughly reactionary utterance". Herbert Hoover could agree with the governor's statements, especially those sections on his opposition to "coddling" and "spoonfeeding" the American people. Broun declared that apparently Philip LaFollette was unaware of the machine age. Distribution, as well as production of goods, was a major problem for modern industry. Columnist Jay Franklin of the New York Post was equally disturbed by LaFollette's references to "coddling" and "spoonfeeding". LaFollette was seemingly endorsing rugged individualism and repudiating a liberal policy towards labor at a time when seventy-five percent of the people were living in an urban, industrial environment. Franklin declared: "Phil LaFollette should be told that ours is an age of filling stations, not of covered wagons; of factories, not farms; of pay rolls, not frontiers." [42]

The leading liberal journals devoted much space to an analysis of Phil LaFollette and his new progressive party. The first reaction of The New Republic was to express agreement with LaFollette's criticism of the New Deal, but also to indicate its fear that a new party might just split

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[42] Washington Post, April 30, 1938; Washington Star, April 30 and May 8, 1938; New York World Telegram, April 30, 1938; New York Post, May 12, 1938.

liberal forces and give the 1940 election to a conservative Republican. The necessity of a new party could only be determined by the actions of President Roosevelt during the remainder of his term in office. The journal was more critical of Phil LaFollette in a later editorial, especially of the vagueness of his speech, and thought that it was unlikely that the new party would offer the American people a program superior to that of the New Deal. But the National Progressives would assist in keeping Roosevelt from moving to the right, because of the ever present threat that liberals would turn to Philip LaFollette. In addition to publishing a report on the founding of the National Progressives, The New Republic also printed a column by Heywood Broun that was highly critical. Bruce Bliven, editor of The New Republic, wrote the governor, asking for clarification of his attitude toward labor, small farmers and relief. Bliven asked for a more definite program, rather than the vague generalizations of the April 28 speech. He was concerned that the National Progressives seemed to be Fascist oriented. No formal reply was ever published in the pages of The New Republic. [43]

The Nation thought that the new party was poorly

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[43] "A Third Party in 1940?" The New Republic, XCIV (May 4, 1938), 382-383; "The Progressives and the Future," The New Republic, XCV (May 11, 1938), 3-4; Robert Morss Lovett, "April Hopes in Madison: The National Progressives Are Launched," The New Republic, XCV (May 11, 1938), 13-14; Heywood Broun, "Phil LaFollette Sounds Off," The New Republic, XCV (May 11, 1938), 16; Bruce Bliven to Philip LaFollette, May 10, 1938, Philip LaFollette Papers.

timed. It called upon progressives to be circumspect. "The progressive cause and the American future are not to be identified with the political fortunes of any dynasty, whether it be the patrician Roosevelts or the fighting LaFollettes. Whoever aspires to lead the progressives must earn that leadership by his concern for the interests of the vast American majority and by proof that he can unite the best resources of that majority." The Nation wondered whether the National Progressives were to the left or right of the New Deal, whether it was truly progressive or really conservative. The journal pointed out that Governor LaFollette was appealing to the middle class by calling for a reinvigorated capitalism, increased production and a frontier-populist type of individualism. The New Deal had appealed to labor and to the problems of distribution, social security and social services. It had also concentrated on class needs and the economic base of political power, while LaFollette focused on the subject of nationalism. The Nation was concerned that conservatives were praising the new party while liberals were keeping their distance, and pointed out that LaFollette had expressed admiration of the economic performance of Nazi Germany during the past few years. It expressed serious suspicions of the symbols and rhetoric of the Madison meeting. Like many other liberal spokesmen, the journal declared that LaFollette should issue a definite program if he wished to attract progressive support. Paul Y. Anderson wrote an article for The Nation, predicting that the LaFollette

progressive group would prove to be a dud, and would only contribute to a reactionary triumph in 1940. Anderson said that the National Progressives were strictly a family enterprise and that certain passages in the April 28 speech made Phil LaFollette sound like a combination of Huey Long, Adolf Hitler, and Billy Sunday. [44]

Max Lerner went to Wisconsin to interview Phil LaFollette for an article in The Nation. Lerner came away convinced that LaFollette was "a man of enormous ambition and personal mastery, grooming himself for a great destiny and believing utterly in that destiny." The governor was depicted as definitely estranged from Roosevelt and the New Deal and anxious to witness the President's loss of popularity and power. A temporary split among progressives between the Democratic party and his National Progressives was unavoidable, but eventually the new venture would gain support of most progressives, the governor asserted. Lerner noted that LaFollette was more precise in his criticism of the New Deal than he was in his proposals for change. The Wisconsin governor told Lerner that a concrete program was unnecessary for the present, since only intellectuals and opponents of a new party would be concerned about specific programs. Third parties, he declared, had often failed in the past because their programs were too specific. Lerner

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[44] "LaFollette Thunder," The Nation, CXLVI (April 30, 1938), 492-493; "The New Progressives," The Nation, CXLVI (May 7, 1938), 519-520; Paul Y. Anderson, "LaFollettes' Bid For Power," The Nation, CXLVI (May 7, 1938), 524-525.

wrote that the governor's eyes glowed when he spoke of the creation of a mass movement around himself. LaFollette defended the new party's symbol and evidenced no concern that he was being labeled a fascist by some commentators. His party, which he predicted would be the leading one in the nation within a few years, would be based upon the middle class, the vast majority of the American people. Lerner concluded that Phil LaFollette was an impressive person, but he harbored suspicions of the governor's motives and intentions. [45]

Common Sense, a monthly magazine promoting advanced liberal thought, was equally suspicious of Phil LaFollette. Editor Alfred M. Bingham privately expressed his disappointment with the new party. Critical of LaFollette's failure to consult any leading progressive figures in the fields of government or journalism, and also of his platform and manner of announcement and organization of the new party, Bingham pointed out that only conservatives seemed to be praising the National Progressives. He wrote: "The general reminiscence of Facism has struck all our intellectual friends. The adaptation of the swastika (unconscious no doubt) and the whole dependence on pronouncement by the one leader with no democratic formulation is obvious." In an editorial, Bingham indicated his belief that the new party was a trial balloon that would fail because it could not by

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[45] Max Lerner, "Phil LaFollette: An Interview," The Nation, CXLVI (May 14, 1938), 552-555.

its very nature unite progressives. It would also alienate many potential supporters who were committed to an expansion of the New Deal program. [46]

Faced with large scale apathy among leading progressives and criticism from the nation's liberal press, Phil LaFollette and the National Progressives also came under a barrage of opposition from the editor of the Madison Capital Times and The Progressive, William T. Evjue. Evjue wrote in the Capital Times of the "show" held in Madison, which "was suggestive of the thoroughness of the technique of Berlin or Munich." The newspaper called upon LaFollette to give details of his program and to refute the charge that the National Progressives would divide liberal forces in 1940. Evjue declared: "Old Bob LaFollette never asked the people to sign a blank check." [47]

Ignoring the criticism from many corners, Governor LaFollette went forth with his plans for the new party. The day after his Madison speech, he went to Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to appeal for the backing of that state's liberals. He also delivered a nationwide radio address. In an interview, he admitted that selling a new party to the

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[46] Alfred M. Bingham to Mrs. Kate Richards O'Hare, May 4, 1938, Thomas R. Amlie Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; "Progressives, What Now?" Common Sense, VII (June, 1938), 3-5; Ruben Levin, "A New Party Is Launched," Common Sense, VII (June, 1938), 17-19.

[47] Madison Capital Times, May 1, 1938; William T. Evjue, A Fighting Editor (Madison, Wisconsin: Wells Printing Company, Inc., 1968), pp. 562-568.

nation would be a "long hard pull". The National Progressives must first organize on the state and local level before it could make a move for national leadership. He compared the New Deal era to that of the Revolutionary and Civil War periods, when new political movements were founded. The governor predicted that his party would run congressional candidates in at least ten states in the fall election. He revealed that the final split with Roosevelt occurred in July, 1937, when the brothers spent a weekend with the President on his yacht on the Potomac. On that occasion, Roosevelt rejected for the sixth time a plea from the LaFollettes to adopt an aggressive program of relief, which would act on the theory of prosperity through abundance, rather than scarcity. The President at that time expressed the view that the depression was over. This, the governor said, had alienated the LaFollette brothers from the New Deal.[48]

His speeches and interviews in regard to the new party could not hide the fact, however, that Phil LaFollette had little substantial support for his venture. When the articles of association of the new party were published, no people were listed as co-founders of the party with the Wisconsin governor. This led to a widespread suspicion that LaFollette's party would be a failure before it had really begun. However, during May, the governor wrote his brother

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[48] New York Times, April 30, 1938; Madison Capital Times, April 30, 1938; May 1, 1938; New York Times, May 1 and 2, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, May 1 and 2, 1938.

that much correspondence had been received about the new party, and that most of the letters and telegrams seemed to be favorable. "Everything considered the reception was better than we could have expected. Of course the old guard papers have played it because of their dislike of Roosevelt. But we must not forget that they have been whacking at us for thirty or forty years and a few days news won't counter-act, but can't help improving, their onslaughts of three decades." [49]

The public reaction of the Roosevelt administration to the new party was contradictory. President Roosevelt showed no concern to newsmen that the National Progressives might be a threat to the New Deal. He said the beginning of a new party was a healthy development for American politics, and that he welcomed any organization of liberals and progressives. However, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, the progressive Republican representative in the cabinet, declared that the LaFollette brothers were more likely to retard or even to wreck the cause of liberalism by beginning a new party. The only hope for a progressive movement in 1938 and after, Ickes asserted, lay in the hands of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Liberals should remain united behind the President "as long as he shows the necessary qualities of leadership." In private, Ickes called Phil LaFollette a "prima

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[49] New York Times, May 3, 1938; Madison Capital Times, May 3, 1938; The Progressive, May 7, 1938; Philip LaFollette to Robert LaFollette, Jr., May 5, 1938, LaFollette Family Papers.

donna" with overpowering ambition and fascist tendencies. [50]

On May 9, 1938, Senator LaFollette delivered a nationwide radio address, appealing for support from liberals for the National Progressives of America. There were still reports that he was less than enthusiastic about the new venture, but he now issued criticism of Roosevelt's economic programs and the factionalism in the Democratic party which was preventing advanced liberal reforms. He praised the President as "one of the great liberal leaders of modern times" who had lost his effectiveness due to party division. The senator was obviously trying to defend his brother's new party while avoiding a complete break with the New Deal. In a letter to columnist John Chamberlain, the senator attempted to resolve the charge that the National Progressive insignia was similar to a Fascist swastika. Then in mid-May, he was invited aboard the President's yacht for a weekend cruise. Politics were discussed in a casual manner, but it was primarily a social occasion, demonstrating that Roosevelt retained his respect and admiration for him, despite his suspicions of Phil LaFollette's motives. The President privately believed that the National Progressives of America was solely the governor's vehicle for political power, while his brother had reluctantly gone along with the move out of family loyalty. [51]

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[50] The Progressive, May 7, 1938; New York Times, May 6, 1938; Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), II: 379-380, 385.

[51] Speech of Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr., May 9,

By the end of May, Governor LaFollette had received more than 25,000 letters on the new party. Offices had been opened, and literature had been produced for national distribution. But the National Progressives continued to face harsh criticism for its manner of organization, its rhetoric, its lack of a substantial program of principles and well known supporters, and its one man leadership. A Gallup poll showed that sixty percent of the voting population of the country had heard of the new party, but only one out of eleven would be willing to join the organization. The governor now decided to make a speaking tour of New England during early June. He delivered speeches promoting the new party in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts. Upon his return to Madison, he said he had found enthusiasm for change. However, there was no immediate planning to establish the party in New England for the fall elections. Instead, the governor now concentrated upon his own immediate political future. He faced a decision on whether to run for re-election to the state house, or to retire and plan the future of the national party he had founded. In late June, he held a

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1938, Philip LaFollette Papers and LaFollette Family Papers; Congressional Record, Appendix, May 9, 1938, 2675-2677; Madison Capital Times, May 10, 1938; The Progressive, May 14, 1938; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to John Chamberlain, May 13, 1938, LaFollette Family Papers; New York Times, May 14, 15 and 16, 1938; Madison Capital Times, May 14 and 16, 1938; The Progressive, May 21, 1938; Ickes, Secret Diary, II: 393-395; Personal Interview with Morris H. Rubin, editor of The Progressive, August 6, 1970, Madison, Wisconsin.

conference with the Wisconsin Progressive delegation in Congress, including his brother, as well as editor William T. Evjue. In late July, Philip LaFollette announced his intention to seek re-election to the Governorship. [52]

LaFollette faced a tough re-election battle because of his controversial record as governor. On Primary Day, the Republican party gained 50,000 votes while the Progressives lost 20,000. This was the weakest personal showing of the LaFollettes since the inception of the Progressive Party in 1934. It served as a warning of a possible defeat for Philip LaFollette in the November election. William T. Evjue wrote in The Capital Times: ". . .Bob and Phil must step on the gas between now and November if the Progressives are to emerge victorious at the general election." LaFollette's opponents for the Governorship were a conservative Democrat, Robert Henry, and a conservative Republican, Julius Heil. Suddenly, at the beginning of October, the Democratic candidate withdrew and threw his support to Heil in a blatant attempt to defeat Phil LaFollette by uniting the opposition behind the stronger candidate. The state Democrats later substituted another candidate, but the alliance between conservatives in the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held up to Election day, and Heil

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[52] New York Times, May 27 and 29, 1938; Madison Capital Times, May 29, 1938; New York Times, June 4, 5, 6 and 23, 1938; Madison Capital Times, June 22 and 23, July 22, 1938; New York Times, July 24, 1938.

easily defeated LaFollette by a margin of approximately 183,000 votes. LaFollette had failed to achieve half of the vote of Heil in many counties that had previously been progressive strongholds. Virtually the whole progressive state and national ticket had been swamped by the Republican landslide. [53]

LaFollette declared after his defeat that the election results demonstrated that reactionaries were assuming control of both major political parties, and that the fight for the National Progressives of America had only begun. But his overwhelming defeat had killed any chances for the new party's success. It remained on paper for a few years, but the extensive publicity given to the founding of the party in April, 1938, was just a memory by the beginning of 1939. William T. Evjue published an editorial blaming the electoral defeat on Philip LaFollette's decision to form the National Progressives, which had alienated liberal voters from the Wisconsin Progressives. LaFollette had dreams of running for President sometime in the future, but after the debacle of 1938, his ambitions were wrecked and he never held public office again. [54]

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[53] Madison Capital Times, September 21, 1938; New York Times, September 25, October 2 and 29, November 9, 1938; Madison Capital Times, November 9, 1938.

[54] New York Times, November 10, 1938; Madison Capital Times, November 10, 1938; New York Times, November 13, 1938; The Progressive, November 12, 1938.

Hopes of extending the New Deal through the revival of President Roosevelt's prestige and authority within his own party proved to be just a dream, and the attempt to start a new organization which would attract the support of progressives and liberals also proved to be a failure. The growing strength of the conservative coalition in Congress and the specter of Fascism spreading throughout Europe and Asia turned attention away from reform on the domestic level. The focus was on foreign affairs by the end of 1938. Should the United States remain neutral while Fascism spread throughout Europe and Asia? This was the question which the progressives faced throughout the 1930's. Foreign policy was to prove to be a major battleground between the progressive Republican Senate bloc and Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEUTRALITY DEBATE, 1933-38

By the 1930's, the members of the progressive Republican Senate bloc had acquired a reputation not only as mavericks in domestic affairs, but also as major spokesmen of isolationist sentiment in foreign affairs. While the spirit of isolationism was widespread and claimed adherents across the entire political spectrum, the progressive Republicans were among the most outspoken supporters of the non-involvement policy. Their suspicions of Europe dated from the First World War and the large scale disillusionment which followed the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. A brief examination of the foreign policy attitudes of the progressives during the World War and the 1920's is essential, since ultimately, this shaped their views toward President Roosevelt's foreign policy in the 1930's.

The "old" progressives, those with a national reputation before 1917, were George Norris, William Borah and Hiram Johnson. The attitudes of these men, the only members of the progressive bloc to have the opportunity to vote on the First World War, are instructive of later progressive sentiment.

Norris was one of only six senators to vote against America's entrance into the war. Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr.'s father joined Norris in opposition. In later years, the two men were depicted as courageous figures who had stood against the overwhelming tide of war sentiment. After LaFollette's death in 1925, Norris, as the sole remaining member of the Senate who had voted against war, was the subject of adulation in editorials and public oratory. He became a folk hero to isolationists who pointed out that the Nebraska senator had been correct in 1917, and that America never again should become involved in foreign quarrels. Norris had felt in 1917 that the United States should not endanger its own democratic institutions by militarizing itself to fight other nations' power struggles. America, he warned, would become a victim of the war, rather than one of the victors. The nation should continue to follow a policy of non-intervention, a tradition for over a century which had led America to her greatness. Norris was suspicious of the role which economic motives and British propaganda played in moving the United States towards entry into the war. He never recanted his view of 1917, even when he became the sole progressive Republican to support much of Franklin D. Roosevelt's foreign policy in the late 1930's. Instead, he distinguished the situation of 1939 from that of twenty-two years earlier.

Borah and Johnson supported war against Germany in 1917. Their rationale was that German submarine warfare

threatened America's national interest. But, since both were extremely suspicious of the motives of Great Britain and France, they demanded that the nation retain its independence from Europe. They asserted that America should have no part in quarrels between other powers, that it should only fight to preserve the national honor and the freedom of the seas. Neither regretted his vote, because both continued to see American involvement as ordained by Germany's hostile actions. Their views on neutral rights and freedom of the seas were to distinguish them from other progressive Republicans during the 1930's, when neutrality legislation was adopted by Congress. Borah and Johnson vehemently opposed the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. Norris and LaFollette joined them as members of the Irreconciliables, a group within the Senate adamantly opposed to any American participation in the League of Nations.

The Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations became the major battleground of isolationists and internationalists during 1919 and 1920. The progressive Republican isolationists were concerned that American sovereignty and independence would be compromised by membership in the international organization, and that Great Britain and France would involve the United States in future power struggles. The Versailles Treaty was regarded by Borah, Johnson and Norris as a victor's peace which possessed the seeds of war within it. Woodrow Wilson had not made the world "safe for democracy". America had undergone a loss of innocence by entering the war and had suffered many casualties. Never again, these

progressive senators asserted, would the United States drag itself into war for other countries' national interests.

During the 1920's, progressive Republican involvement in isolationism grew. As new members joined the "Sons of the Wild Jackass", they expressed their agreement with the old progressives who had set the standard from 1917 to 1920. Robert LaFollette, Jr. took the lead from his father, expressing similar isolationist sentiments. As his father's assistant, he had witnessed the vicious attacks upon the Wisconsin senator for opposing entry into the World War, and the bitter struggle over the Versailles Treaty and League of Nations. LaFollette entered the Senate in 1925 a convinced isolationist, determined to preserve democracy at home from international power conflicts. Arthur Capper indicated his isolationist sentiments soon after he came to the Senate in 1919, when he opposed American entry into the League of Nations. A Quaker and a pacifist, Capper proposed a resolution to implement the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 which renounced war. Capper wanted a trade embargo on nations which violated this treaty. The Kansas senator developed a favorable attitude toward the World Court, but basically followed the isolationist line.

Gerald P. Nye supported entry into the World War as a North Dakota journalist in 1917, even denouncing Senator Robert LaFollette, Sr. for his criticism of the war declaration. But, by the time he reached the Senate in 1925, Nye had been converted to isolationism. He fought against entrance into the World Court during the late 1920's. His great moment as an isolationist spokesman came during the

years of the New Deal. First, he headed the famous Munitions Committee of 1934-1936, which investigated the role of munitions makers, bankers and propagandists in American entrance into the World War. Then, he fought with all his strength for the nation's complete isolation from the developing threat of Fascism in Europe. Nye proved the most controversial member of the progressive Republican Senate bloc in foreign affairs.

Henrik Shipstead was another vehement spokesman for isolationism, from his entrance into the Senate in 1922 until his defeat for renomination in 1946. A true "irreconciliable", Shipstead continually proclaimed that he was fighting for America's basic principles as expressed in Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine. Lynn J. Frazier, the most reserved member of the progressive bloc, indicated his basic isolationism as he promoted resolutions for peace during the late 1920's and the 1930's. The other members of the progressive bloc never became closely identified with foreign policy controversies. Charles McNary avoided a leading role, committing himself to reconciling progressive and conservative Republicans as Senate Minority Leader. Peter Norbeck, who certainly held isolationist views, seldom expressed himself, due to serious illness before his death in 1936. James Couzens and Bronson Cutting also died before they could become intimately involved in the neutrality controversy.

Five of the progressive Republican senators -- Borah, Capper, Johnson, LaFollette, and Shipstead -- served as

minority members of the Foreign Relations Committee throughout the 1930's, a position that gave them great publicity as spokesmen for isolationism. After Borah's death in January, 1940, Nye replaced him on the committee. But the North Dakota senator's activities on the Munitions Committee and the Military Affairs Committee had already given him a public standing as a leading isolationist. Norris did not serve on the Foreign Relations Committee, but his status as an elder statesman and the only surviving progressive to vote against entry into the World War gave him a platform for his views on foreign problems in the 1930's. While members of the minority party and few in number, the progressive Republican senators were able, because of their tremendous prestige and reputation, to exert an influence on American foreign policy greater than their numbers might indicate.

The first glimmer of future controversy over foreign policy came soon after Roosevelt's inauguration. In the spring of 1933, the Roosevelt administration considered the possibility of consultation with major European powers to preserve peace. Collective security would be promoted by presidential declaration of an arms embargo against aggressor nations. This idea was blocked in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Hiram Johnson, who offered an amendment which stipulated that any embargo levied by the President had to apply impartially to all belligerents. This changed what was designed as a collective security measure into an

isolationist attempt to avoid any entanglement in foreign wars. The Democratic chairman of the committee, Key Pittman of Nevada, indicated that the members would not accept the arms embargo resolution without the Johnson amendment. Roosevelt, without consulting Secretary of State Cordell Hull, approved the amendment. Hull, a firm believer in collective security, attempted to change the President's mind, but Roosevelt would only agree to drop the whole embargo issue. Thus, the Johnson amendment destroyed the administration's attempt to cooperate with Western European nations against potential aggression from the growing Fascist powers. Roosevelt was apparently unwilling to fight for the cause of collective security at a time when he was gaining solid support for his New Deal program from isolationist leaders in Congress. [1]

Borah, formerly chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and now its ranking minority member, set the mood and tone of progressive Republican isolationist sentiment with an address before the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City on January 8, 1934. His address, entitled "American Foreign Policy in a Nationalistic World", was reprinted in Foreign Affairs and also in the Congressional Record at the request of Senator Norris. Borah declared that the internationalists had attempted ever since 1919 to draw the

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[1] New York Times, May 25 and 26, 1933; Robert A. Divine, The Illusion of Neutrality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 53-55.

country into a position of responsibility in the adjustment of international problems. Borah contended that foreign policy based upon internationalism could not succeed because the world had not changed since the end of the war. Armaments buildup and the balance of power continued to dominate European affairs as they had in 1914. It would be a long time, he thought, before there would be any justification for the United States to engage again in a foreign war. America had major domestic problems to solve, and therefore should not devote its energies to interference in other nations' quarrels. The fight against nationalism by internationalists had failed. He advocated a foreign policy of political isolation for the United States. The "nonentangling alliances" of Washington and Jefferson's era should be continued. The World War, he asserted, had been an aberration.

The Idaho senator declared his belief in a foreign policy which offered peace, trade and commerce, and friendship with all nations, but no political commitments to any. Borah desired to promote and strengthen what he called Americanism, which he defined as belief in the worth, efficiency and grandeur of constitutional democracy and civil liberties. Asserting himself in favor of the foreign policy of the nation's first Chief Executives, he said this was a call for freedom of action and independence of judgment, not isolation. Borah said it was a hazardous enterprise for America to name or chastise aggressor nations, or to accomodate our foreign policy to certain nations' interests. The Idaho senator concluded: "Here in its God-ordained home between two oceans,

watchful of its own interests and vigilant in the defense of its own rights, it covets nothing of others save the peace and friendship of all. It does not, and it never has, shrunk from its duty to civilization. It will not disown any obligation which human liberty and human justice impose upon a free people. But it does propose, I venture to prophesy, to determine for itself when civilization is threatened, when there may be a breach of human rights and human liberty sufficient to warrant action, . . ." [2]

The growing strength of isolationist sentiment in America and the increasing role of the progressive Republicans in this crusade was evident from two developments in 1934. First, Hiram Johnson successfully sponsored the passage of the Johnson Act, which prohibited further loans to foreign nations who had defaulted on their debts to the United States. This effectively cut off the government's financial dealings with the major European powers, none of whom had repaid their World War debts. Secondly, a general revulsion against war as an instrument of national policy had developed from the disillusionment over American involvement in the World War. The growth of the peace movement led to a call for a congressional investigation of the role of the munitions makers and bankers in bringing about conflict between nations. Dorothy Detzer of the Woman's International League for Peace and

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[2] New York Times, January 9, 1934; William E. Borah, "American Foreign Policy in a Nationalistic World," Foreign Affairs, XII (January, 1934), 3-12; Congressional Record, January 10, 1934, 315-317.

Freedom and Senator Norris agreed that Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota should be the man to lead the investigation.

On February 8, 1934, Senator Nye introduced Resolution 179 to the Foreign Relations Committee, calling for a thorough examination of the munition industry's effect upon American foreign policy. Nye's resolution was later combined with one introduced by Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, which advocated taking the profits out of war. On March 12, Senate Resolution 206 was proposed, calling for a special Senate committee. Borah delivered a speech in support of the proposed inquiry. He discussed the position, power, and activities of the munitions makers in the buildup of armaments before the World War. He accused the munitions industry of having issued false propaganda, regarding military and naval stockpiling by rival nations. Borah feared that another arms buildup was in process. He urged that the manufacture and sale of munitions be taken away from private interests, because of their power to shape the nation's foreign policy. He called for elimination of war profits and government control of the munitions industry. He attacked proponents of armaments as international criminals, making profits on other peoples' deaths. His comments were part of the debate over a naval construction bill that came up for a vote on March 6.

Nye joined the attack, calling the bill one for the financial relief of the munitions makers. It was wasteful, he said, for the government to spend a billion dollars on the navy while Congress was considering cuts in veterans

benefits and other domestic legislation, because of the lack of a balanced budget. America was still suffering ill effects from entrance into a war that had seen major profits by the munitions makers. While favoring preparedness, Nye believed that a vastly increased naval force would only encourage war. America's expenditures for war preparation were the greatest in the world, and yet could not guarantee peace. Munitions makers, he asserted, could not thrive in a world at peace. Nye requested that the Senate abandon the naval construction program until a thorough investigation of the munitions makers could be undertaken. The Senate spurned his advice and passed the bill overwhelmingly by a vote of 65-19. Seven progressive Republicans (Borah, Capper, Frazier, LaFollette, Norris, Nye and Shipstead) voted against, while only Bronson Cutting and Hiram Johnson voted with the majority. Johnson, as a Pacific Coast senator, felt a large navy essential to protect America from possible Japanese agression.

After a month of attempts to avoid a vote, the Nye-Vandenberg resolution was adopted on April 12. Vice President John Nance Garner was authorized to designate seven senators for the committee. Since Nye had promoted the original resolution, he was named head of the Munitions Committee, which had four Democrats and three Republicans, including Vandenberg, as members. Ironically, an isolationist and member of the minority party was given a position which would greatly increase his exposure to the American press and people.

Nye now began an eight year period as one of the most

controversial members of the Senate. Secretary of State Hull was apparently unhappy over the choice of a Republican isolationist as chairman, but he promised to cooperate with the committee. Nye proceeded to demand almost confiscatory taxation of incomes of the wealthy in time of war to take the profit out of promotion of international conflict. He also called for approval of cash and carry laws to govern commerce in case of war abroad. This would require American goods going to foreign ports to be shipped in foreign vessels, so that our ships would not be liable to attack by belligerents. The senator soon proposed two additional resolutions, one requiring the calling of a plebiscite of the American people before Congress could vote a declaration of war, and the other calling for establishment of a Peace Division in the State Department with the appointment of an Assistant Secretary of State for Peace. The plebiscite proposal was to be introduced many times by progressives within the next seven years. In May, 1934, President Roosevelt praised the Nye Committee's investigatory plans, and indicated that the executive branch would cooperate with the committee to the fullest extent possible. [3]

As soon as the hearings opened in September, the North

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[3] Congressional Record, February 8, 1934, 2153; March 12, 1934, 4229; New York Times, February 9, 1934; Wayne S. Cole, Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), pp. 69-72; Congressional Record, March 5, 1934, 3688-3691; New York Times, March 6, 1934; Congressional Record, March 6, 1934, 3780-3784, 3813, 3812-3813; Cole, Nye and American Foreign Relations, pp. 71-72; New York Times, April 24, 1934; Congressional Record, April 12, 1934; 6472-6475, 6454; April 19, 1934, 6898; New York Times, May 19, 1934.

Dakota senator became a national figure. He led harsh questioning of witnesses and delivered many public and radio addresses on the findings of the investigators and proposals for removal of abuses. The hearings demonstrated that munitions makers indeed had a close association with the War and Navy Departments between 1914 and 1917, and that they worked behind the scenes to promote heavy appropriations for defense. The munitions industry was shown to be dependent upon foreign wars to remain prosperous when America was at peace. The profits of munitions makers were publicized for the first time. The sensational disclosures pushed the country toward isolationism, and Nye played a key role in the passage of neutrality legislation during the next few years. The cause of collective security was seriously harmed by the Nye Committee hearings.[4]

Isolationists in Congress gained a major victory when they defeated President Roosevelt's proposal in January, 1935, for American entrance into the World Court. Created by the League of Nations, the Court was an independent judicial organization open to all nations. To confirmed isolationists, it represented political entanglement in the affairs of other nations, and interference by other countries in the sovereignty of the United States. Roosevelt thought that with a large Democratic majority in the Senate, he would have no

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[4] Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 74-76, 80; John E. Wiltz, In Search of Peace: The Senate Munitions Inquiry, 1934-36 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963).

problem gaining approval of the proposal, this despite earlier rejection of membership in the Court during the 1920's. Hiram Johnson was bitter over the President's decision to promote the World Court. He wrote his son: "I have been hoping against hope that the President would not force the World Court upon us, at least, in the early part of this session. Yesterday, however, notwithstanding the fact that he did not refer to the subject in his message on Friday, I learned that the infernal thing was to be shoved out of committee this week, and was to be driven through the senate at the earliest possible time. . . ." [5]

On January 9, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 14-7 to report the World Court proposal favorably. Five of the seven negative votes were cast by progressive Republicans -- Borah, Johnson, LaFollette, Shipstead and Cutting (who had just joined the committee in what was to prove to be only a few months membership until his tragic death). Senator Capper joined the majority side which sent the proposal to the Senate floor for debate.

Johnson and Borah declared they would lead the isolationists' struggle against American entrance. Early indications were that no more than twelve senators would vote against the President, with the five progressives on the Foreign Relations Committee and Nye among those definitely in

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[5] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 6, 1935, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

the opposition. Republican Senate leader McNary doubted that the opposition was powerful enough to wage a prolonged fight against adoption. McNary, as well as the administration, seriously underestimated the perseverance of the isolationist group, both progressive and conservative.

Johnson led off with a statement to the newspapers before the beginning of formal debate. Membership in the World Court, he said, would abrogate America's traditional policy of non-interference in international power politics. Johnson wanted the Senate to insist upon an amendment to the pending resolution, upholding the policy established by George Washington and pursued in all treaties since his administration. If America joined the World Court, it would be in the League of Nations within a short time. America would again become involved in war instead of the promotion of peace. The nation, Johnson contended, would be called upon to defend the decisions of the Court with military support. On January 16, Senate debate began, with Johnson delivering an impassioned speech against the "nefarious contraption" that liked to "meddle and muddle" in the affairs of nations. At a time when "all Europe sits over a volcano" because of concern over the intentions of Hitler and Mussolini, the United States, he asserted, should vow to avoid all involvement in European affairs. The Treaty of Versailles had caused Europe's troubles, and the World Court was a result of that agreement. It was a political organization with ulterior motives. America, Johnson declared, should concentrate on solving its domestic economic problems, especially the finding of

employment for eleven million workers. [6]

The day after Johnson's two and a half hour speech, Norris submitted a resolution providing that no dispute or question affecting the United States should be presented to the World Court without prior approval by two-thirds of the Senate. This reservation was to be included in the American pact of adherence to the World Court. However, on January 23, President Roosevelt declared his opposition to the Norris amendment as a limitation on the constitutional prerogatives of the executive branch in foreign affairs. Roosevelt's statement harmed the chances for a favorable vote. Borah had already issued a scathing attack upon the Court on the Senate floor. Before crowded galleries, he asserted that the United States could not join the World Court without being drawn into the political affairs of Europe. That body was political in nature, rendering advisory opinions often influenced by certain nations' political and economic interests. Shipstead also spoke up, expressing the view that the United States was entering upon a period when history seemed likely to repeat itself. Again, the world was speaking of peace and planning for war, as evidenced by the major arms buildup in the world's leading nations. Shipstead called himself "an apostle of peace". He remained convinced that the League of Nations and the World Court were not instruments of peace. The

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[6] New York Times, January 10, 12, 13 and 17, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, January 13 and 17, 1935; Congressional Record, January 16, 1935, 479-483.

Versailles Treaty, which had created them, would eventually lead to war, the Minnesota senator asserted. The Kellogg-Briand Pact had been a failure also, as the have-not nations were committing aggression and the victors of the World War were desperately attempting to gain American support for another crusade against tyranny. [7]

The Senate voted on the Norris reservation on January 25. Before the vote, Norris declared that he had complete confidence in President Roosevelt, but believed the Senate must consider the dangers of leaving to future Presidents the power to determine what controversies should be submitted to the World Court. Norris feared that America would become entangled in international power politics through Court membership, and that its interests would be ignored by judges who had lived under different societies with varied value systems. The Senate defeated the Norris proposal 47-37, with all twelve progressive Republicans in the minority. This was a victory for the administration, but it also signified that the progressives would refuse to support the President's goals in foreign policy. Senate leaders still believed that ratification of American membership in the World Court was likely, by a small margin above the two-thirds support necessary. [8]

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[7] Congressional Record, January 17, 1935, 562; New York Times, January 18, 24 and 22, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, January 22, 1935; Congressional Record, January 21, 1935, 695-696, 702; January 24, 1935, 873-876.

[8] Congressional Record, January 25, 1935, 964-966, 977;

Johnson delivered another lengthy speech before the final vote, reciting the views toward international organization of Presidents from George Washington to Theodore Roosevelt. Then the Senate proceeded on January 29 to reject a number of amendments designed to restrict the American connection with the Court, all receiving the unanimous support of the progressive bloc. Norris announced before the final roll call that he was forced to vote against the administration because of the failure of any restrictive amendments suggested in the Senate. The final World Court vote was 52-36, seven short of the two-thirds necessary for approval. Senate leaders declared that intensive propaganda efforts by Father Coughlin and the Hearst newspapers had played an important role in the defeat.

Probably just as significant was the opposition of eight progressive Republicans (Borah, Frazier, Johnson, LaFollette, Norbeck, Norris, Nye and Shipstead) who tended to support Roosevelt on many of his New Deal domestic programs, but felt compelled to oppose him on principle over the World Court. The three "old" progressives had again assumed an effective leadership role in the cause of isolationism. Borah declared that the World Court defeat was the most significant development in American foreign policy since the World War. It would prevent forever, he said, the entry of the United States into entangling alliances with European

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New York Times, January 26 and 28, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, January 26, 1935.

nations. Johnson was delighted at the result, telling his son: ". . .I think, my lad, I won the toughest and the biggest and most far-reaching contest legislatively in which ever I have been engaged." The President "used all his power, and I confess I did not like it. . . ." LaFollette's journal, The Progressive, declared that the progressive bloc had held the balance of power, and had "played a leading part in sending down to defeat the measure that would have involved this country in the sordid politics of Europe and obligated this country to participate in future foreign wars." The magazine criticized Roosevelt for raising the issue, terming it a serious mistake in administration strategy. George Norris regretted voting against Roosevelt, but without the reservation he had offered as part of the treaty, "I am not willing and was not willing to go into the Court. In my opinion, this reservation, if agreed to, would have left our country free from any danger of European entanglements." [9]

Four members of the progressive bloc voted for American membership in the World Court. Arthur Capper had supported American membership during the 1920's, and he still believed, despite his general isolationist sentiments, that

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[9] Congressional Record, January 28, 1935, 1039-1044; New York Times, January 29, 1935; Congressional Record, January 29, 1935, 1142-1143, 1147; New York Times, January 30, 1935; New York Herald Tribune, January 30, 1935; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 31 and February 10, 1935, Johnson Papers; The Progressive, February 2, 1935; George Norris to Reverend Ray J. Harmelink, February 5, 1935, George Norris Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

"it would have been a big step in the direction of World Peace and better understanding between nations, . . ." Bronson Cutting and James Couzens had never committed themselves to the isolationist cause during their Senate careers. They did not, however, express specific reasons for supporting the administration. McNary had indicated his endorsement of the President's proposal before the debate began, and he also lacked a reputation as a die-hard isolationist. While the progressive bloc had not united unanimously against the World Court, the most prominent members of the group had joined together and assisted in dealing Franklin D. Roosevelt one of his first major setbacks. The progressive attitude toward any American involvement in the affairs of other nations, especially those in Europe, was clearly set forth for those who had any doubt. The defeat of the World Court marked the beginning of a move toward formal neutrality legislation, which prevented the establishment of a collective security policy until the outbreak of the Second World War.[10]

The revelations of the Munitions Committee, along with Mussolini's threat to invade Ethiopia and Hitler's announcement that Germany was rearming, led to a progressive backlash against arms spending. In March, the War Department appropriation bill sailed through the Senate by a 68-15 vote, but eight progressives (Capper, Couzens, Cutting, Frazier, LaFollette, Norris, Nye and Shipstead) were among those in

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[10] Arthur Capper to R.M. Parks, February 7, 1935, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka.

opposition. In May, the Navy Department appropriation bill passed the Senate by a 55-18 vote, but six out of nine progressives voting (Capper, Frazier, LaFollette, Norris, Nye and Shipstead) were in the minority. Nye made a motion to recommit the naval bill a few days before the final vote, but he was supported by only thirteen other senators, including six progressive colleagues, while fifty-eight senators opposed his suggestion. Fear of war plagued the minds of many of the progressive Republicans. Lynn Frazier introduced a resolution at the opening of the session, proposing an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting war. Arthur Capper attacked the failure of the leading world nations to honor the Kellogg-Briand pact. Nye delivered many addresses in the Senate and on the public platform during 1935, expanding his condemnation of the munitions industry and demanding that profits resulting from war be heavily taxed. He urged Roosevelt to call an international disarmament conference, and said the administration should spend more on solving the unemployment problem and curb the strengthening of the army and navy for war. [11]

On March 19, Roosevelt met with the Nye Committee and suggested they study the neutrality issue. At the end of the month, the North Dakota senator proposed neutrality legislation

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[11] Congressional Record, March 8, 1935, 3214; New York Times, March 9, 1935; Congressional Record, May 24, 1935, 8161; May 20, 1935, 7833; January 4, 1935, 104; January 15, 1935, 444, 444-461; New York Times, February 10, 1935; Congressional Record, March 8, 1935, 3189-3193.

in a public speech. Declaring that the President had voiced a determination to keep America out of war at any cost, Nye asserted that the world situation was as dangerous as before the World War broke out in 1914. He proposed a strict neutrality policy for the country, with abandonment of all intentions of profiting through trade with belligerents. Use of the American flag on cargoes intended for nations engaged in war would be outlawed. He also suggested an embargo on all munitions of war to belligerent nations, and the drastic curbing of passports to Americans wishing to travel in the war zone, so as to avoid the kind of incidents which stirred up animosity between the United States and Germany between 1914 and 1917. In early April, Nye and co-sponsor Bennett Clark, Democratic senator from Missouri, introduced two joint resolutions dealing with neutrality in the event of war in Europe or Asia. Resolution 99 called for regulation of passports in time of war, and Resolution 100 prohibited the extension of credits or loans during wartime. On May 7, Nye and Clark proposed a third resolution, putting an embargo on arms shipments to all belligerents. The exporter would have to ship goods at his own risk. Progressive uncertainty over President Roosevelt's commitment to neutrality was evident in Hiram Johnson's comment to his son: "I believe that Roosevelt is constantly standing against taking us into the European mess, and this despite the attitudes of members of his own household. . . .How long he will withstand the pressure I don't know, but if he weakens, we'll let out a

yell that can be heard all over." [12]

As the sentiment for neutrality legislation increased, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee agreed to report out the Nye-Clark resolutions. Hull, with Roosevelt's approval, attempted to postpone their consideration. The administration believed that rigidity deprived the executive branch of control over foreign policy. By July, a struggle ensued between administration forces urging a discriminatory arms embargo and the Nye group demanding an impartial, mandatory policy. The State Department and the Foreign Relations Committee could not come to a compromise. On August 19, the Nye bloc threatened a filibuster until action was taken on a neutrality program. The Foreign Relations Committee had adopted the impartial arms embargo, and Roosevelt was unwilling at this point to commit his prestige to a bitter struggle for the discriminatory legislation favored by Hull. The filibuster thus began and ended within three hours. Committee chairman Key Pittman presented to the Senate a neutrality measure calling for an impartial arms embargo, a prohibition of travel by American citizens on vessels of warring nations, a ban on the shipment of munitions on American ships, and the establishment of a National Munitions Control Board. The Senate passed the bill on August 21. Belated administration pressure led to House changes in the bill, including a

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[12] Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, p. 86; New York Times, March 31, 1935; Congressional Record, April 9, 1935, 5286-5287; May 7, 1935, 7042; New York Times, May 8, 1935; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 19, 1935, Johnson Papers.

limitation on the embargo to a six month period. The Senate accepted this provision and passed the neutrality resolution on August 24 by a 79-2 vote, with all nine progressive Republicans present in the majority. Hiram Johnson made an interesting statement before the vote. He declared that while the purpose of the legislation was to keep America out of war, it would not prevent hostilities unless the people were determined to stay out at all costs. The bill represented the victory of isolationism over internationalism, however, and this was of great symbolic significance. The California senator was adamant that never should one man be given the power to determine when and how neutrality should be practiced. He believed that the impartial arms embargo would turn out to be partial to that side that could produce or buy its own arms elsewhere. He concluded that Congress should pass the bill, but should be under no delusion that war would definitely be prevented. [13]

The Neutrality Act of 1935 provided for a mandatory embargo to be applied not to all war materials, but only to implements of war to belligerents. American vessels could not carry munitions to nations at war. The President had discretionary authority to proclaim that American citizens traveling on belligerent ships did so at their own risk, and to apply the embargo to other countries when they entered a

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[13] Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 98-108; New York Times, August 19, 1935; Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 109-115; New York Times, August 22, 1935; Congressional Record, August 24, 1935, 14434, 14430-14432.

war already in progress. The act combined some presidential discretion with the required arms embargo. It was due to expire on February 29, 1936.

In October, 1935, Italian troops invaded Ethiopia. President Roosevelt, inconsistent and indecisive during the months of debate over neutrality, now invoked the legislation without hesitation. Although war had not been officially declared, a proclamation was issued, imposing an arms embargo on both sides in the conflict. Americans were warned to avoid travel on belligerent ships. Businessmen were also cautioned to avoid trade with the belligerents, even in raw materials, because it would be conducted at their own risk.

Borah warned against attempts by propagandists to draw America into the war. Shocked by Italy's use of planes to bomb women and children in Ethiopia, he asserted that modern warfare was mass murder, savagery and barbarism. He demanded complete neutrality. Norris wrote that public opinion should stand behind the President. The country must sacrifice some profits if it did not wish to sacrifice its men through involvement in another European war. Financial investment in the war would lead again, as it did in 1917, to military intervention to protect the investors' interests. Nye expressed emphatic opposition to any American cooperation in League of Nations economic sanctions against Italy, although he professed no sympathy for Italy's cause. Johnson sent a friendly warning to Roosevelt in November: "Will you

pardon me for what I am sure is an utterly unnecessary suggestion; but I happen to know that certain gentlemen are on tinterhooks, hoping and praying that in the present world crisis something will be done which may be distorted into an endeavor on the part of our country to be a part of the League of Nations or of England's policy. It will enable them to make an issue of internationalism next year, and while I feel sure that they are bound to be disappointed, nevertheless I felt that you would not take amiss this well-meant word of mine." During November, Borah warned the Congress and the administration that they should exercise caution in amending the neutrality laws in 1936. Any changes must not, the senator asserted, be interpreted as supportive of League sanctions against Italy. [14]

As the 1936 congressional session opened, the Roosevelt administration introduced new legislation suggested by the State Department. While calling for a continuation of an impartial arms embargo and a mandatory ban on loans, the proposed legislation contained discretionary features which gave the President some flexibility in administering the law. Under the terms of the bill, Roosevelt could limit the export of certain raw materials selected by him to the normal pre-war level. He could also exempt short term commercial credits

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[14] New York Times, October 8, 1935; George Norris to Richard Manthey, October 14, 1935, Norris Papers; New York Times, October 27, 1935; Hiram Johnson to Franklin D. Roosevelt, November 18, 1935, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park; New York Times, November 29, 1935.

from the ban on loans, and could declare all commerce with belligerents was at the traders' risk. An aggressor nation which controlled the seas could be subjected to severe American restrictions on trade, while the victim of that nation could continue to get financial assistance and raw materials. Presidential discretion was the keynote of the State Department proposal.

The Nye-Clark neutrality bloc called for a continuation of the mandatory arms embargo. Therefore, they were pleased by that part of the administration plan endorsing their view. But they were strongly opposed to the grant of any discretionary powers to the President, wishing to force Roosevelt's adherence to a rigid policy, with all contingencies determined in advance by Congress. Roosevelt aimed at the retention of enough authority to control the future of American neutrality.

Borah and Johnson publicly emphasized their disagreement with any restrictions on traditional American trading rights in time of war. The two "old" progressives thus parted with the rest of the progressive bloc on this point. They continued to be strong nationalists, as they had been during the World War, unwilling to surrender the nation's right to freedom of the seas. They could be termed "belligerent" isolationists, while the Nye group, including most of the rest of the progressive bloc, were "timid" isolationists, determined to stay out of foreign conflicts even at the

expense of America's trading rights. [15]

Capper demanded that Congress pass permanent neutrality legislation to prevent American entrance into another European conflict. War, he said, was a "colossal crime and a stupendous folly, the curse of nations, and the misery of their people." A Midwest poll of 100,000 people disclosed popular support for a national policy of refusing loans or supplies for war purposes to belligerent countries. The poll also showed large-scale support for the taking of profits out of war by the nationalization of industry, the manufacture of munitions only in government plants, the banning of compulsory military training in colleges and universities, and a national referendum to gauge popular support before a congressional vote on a declaration of war. [16]

Johnson not only opposed the Nye program, but also disagreed with the administration measure because it gave the President "power no other living man has" that could plunge the nation into war. He wrote his son early in the session: "All the pacifist societies, all the internationalists, and the League of Nations' people, want a law which will give absolute discretion to the President to do anything he sees fit under any circumstances, and of course, this would transfer to him, in one fashion or another, the war-making power. I will not give this power of the Congress to the Executive,

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[15] Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 136-139; New York Times, January 5, 12 and 14, 1936.

[16] Congressional Record, January 16, 1936, 500-501; New York Times, January 17, 1936.

no matter who the Executive is." [17]

On February 13, a group of thirteen senators led by Nye and including progressives Frazier, LaFollette and Capper, announced they would oppose a compromise resolution proposed by Senator Elbert D. Thomas of Utah, calling for an extension of the 1935 legislation until May 1, 1937, with the addition of a ban on loans to belligerents. The group decided to offer an amendment extending the legislation only three months, which would force definite action on a permanent measure before the end of the session. The Senate defeated this strategy by a 61-16 vote, and other amendments to the Thomas bill, dealing with trade quotas to belligerents and a warning to American nationals that they would trade at their own risk with belligerents, were overwhelmingly defeated. On February 18, the Thomas bill passed by voice vote, and the extension resolution was signed on February 29 by President Roosevelt.

The Neutrality Act of 1936 extended the arms embargo and travel restrictions of the 1935 law. Loans were also prohibited, and the President's freedom in the conduct of foreign policy in the event of war was further curbed. He could not restrict trade in raw materials, was limited in his discretion in invoking the arms embargo, and was compelled to extend the embargo to new belligerents in a war already in progress. While progressives had differed on the form of

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[17] New York Times, January 26, 1936; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 26, 1936, Johnson Papers.

neutrality, all of them had held to the belief that the executive branch should not have discretion in invoking the arms embargo. Fear of presidential power over foreign policy had united the progressives, even before the major domestic controversies regarding presidential ascendency had yet developed. In October, 1936, Hiram Johnson wrote his son that he feared the Roosevelt attitude toward foreign policy in the future. The senator was convinced that the President was gravitating towards an internationalist policy, and that he was "afflicted with delusions of grandeur." [18]

Roosevelt, in a major address on foreign policy at Chautauqua, New York, during the 1936 presidential campaign, indicated his agreement with the basic view held by Senator Nye and his followers--that the neutrality problem was basically economic, one of bankers and financiers attempting to draw the nation into a defense of their interests. However, he felt that only the executive branch could handle the day-to-day problems of war and peace. He termed the concept of discretionary powers in the hands of the President as essential for American security. Roosevelt was trying to offer a bridge between the extreme viewpoints held by the isolationists and the collective security supporters.

Nye defended his neutrality views in an Armistice Day address, shortly after Roosevelt's sweeping re-election

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[18] New York Times, February 14, 1936; Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 152-158; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., October 5, 1936, Johnson Papers.

victory. He announced that he planned to fight for his strict neutrality program in the new session of Congress. He repeated the main points of his program, again declaring his opposition to discretionary powers in the hands of the Chief Executive, and his strong support of a popular referendum before America participated again in a foreign war. His address and his stature as the leader of a strong sector of public opinion served as a warning of the coming struggle over neutrality in 1937. [19]

In January, 1937, Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Key Pittman sponsored a comprehensive neutrality bill which continued the ban on arms, loans and travel, and added a mandatory cash and carry feature. This bill was regarded as generally acceptable to the Nye-Clark group, although they proceeded to introduce their own, very similar bill. The House Foreign Affairs Committee produced a bill different primarily in its call for discretionary, rather than mandatory, cash and carry. During February, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted to recommend adoption of the Pittman resolution. All members of the committee, with the exception of Johnson and Borah, supported it. Johnson predicted after the vote that the measure would fail to keep America out of war. Borah asserted that the cash and carry provision

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[19] Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 163-165; New York Times, November 12, 1936.

favored those nations with large navies, Great Britain and Japan. The bill also failed to control war profits. Other nations, Borah declared, would resent the favoritism shown by the United States toward the naval powers. He continued to emphasize the necessity for defense of traditional national rights of trade as he had in 1917. He rejected the Nye thesis that economics had caused American involvement in the World War. Johnson supported Borah, declaring that Americans should be permitted to trade as usual. Obviously, American ships would be subjected to search and seizure by belligerents and to the perils of blockade, but they must be willing to take this risk if they desired to continue trade. This was better, Johnson asserted, than to "scuttle and run", and to become, ultimately, the allies of the strongest naval powers. He denounced the Nye neutrality bloc for being in favor of peace at any price. [20]

Capper declared himself in support of the Pittman bill, defending the view basically advanced by Nye and the majority of progressive Republicans. The Kansas senator believed that the resolution would preserve peace. Neutral rights could not be protected, he said, except by war. If America insisted upon its right to trade with belligerents directly or indirectly, then the nation would again be forced into war as in 1917. Capper was unwilling to cast his vote to send

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[20] Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 173, 175, 179; New York Times, February 21, 1937; Congressional Record,

American youth overseas to fight another war for the principle of freedom of the seas. War, he asserted, was futile, brutal, degrading and costly. Therefore, the nation must adopt a definitive foreign policy to keep America isolated from war. The cash and carry plan embodied in the Pittman bill seemed likely to aid that cause. The Senate proceeded to adopt the Pittman resolution on March 3, by a vote of 63-6. Capper, Frazier, LaFollette, McNary, Norris and Nye joined the majority, while Borah and Johnson were joined by four New England senators in vehement opposition. Freedom of the seas had lost out to mandatory cash and carry.

The House adopted its own resolution, with its discretionary cash and carry feature, later in the month. A conference committee spent much of April attempting to reach a compromise between the mandatory and discretionary bills. Finally, the House version was the one basically adopted, angering the Nye group in the Senate. On April 29, the Senate passed the conference report by a 41-15 vote, with Nye, Frazier and Capper joining Hiram Johnson in opposition. The rest of the progressives were not recorded on this vote, except for Borah, who switched to support of the legislation because discretionary cash and carry, which he had tried to add to the Senate bill before passage, had been accepted. Johnson again contended that the neutrality resolution would not keep America out of war, and that it actually gave the

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March 1, 1937, 1677-1683; New York Times, March 2, 1937; Congressional Record, March 3, 1937, 1778-1779; New York Times, March 4, 1937.

President the ability to steer the nation into a conflict. Nye, unable to support a bill which gave the President more power in foreign affairs, yet disagreed with Johnson that the bill called for abandonment of freedom of the seas. Foreign trade was unimportant, the North Dakota senator asserted, next to the possibility of staying out of war. In time of war, he contended, freedom of the seas did not exist anyway. Nye concluded that the nation should not again fight for a few people's profits. [21]

The Neutrality Act of 1937 had both mandatory and discretionary aspects, with the major purpose to keep the United States out of future wars. The Nye Committee thesis that munitions trade, loans and travel had created incidents which led to American entry into the World War was counterbalanced by the cash and carry plan, which gave the President discretionary authority to ban the use of American ships and ports in trade with belligerents. The Neutrality Act was a compromise which satisfied no group entirely. The isolationists were opposed to the permissive nature of cash and carry. The collective security advocates disapproved of the mandatory restrictions on arms, loans and travel. Those for freedom of the seas, including Borah and Johnson, were generally displeased with the entire legislation. [22]

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[21] Congressional Record, March 3, 1937, 1784-1785, 1807; New York Times, March 4, 1937; Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 190-192; Congressional Record, April 29, 1937, 3942-3943, 3954, 3957, 3959-3961, 3962; New York Times, April 30, 1937.

[22] Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 193-198.

The split within progressive Republican ranks over freedom of the seas was further demonstrated by the vote on the Naval appropriations bill in March. Nye led the opposition to the bill, dismissing the argument that increased expenditures were required because the nation was in danger of attack, especially by Japan. Frazier asserted that the demand for increased naval appropriations was a sign that the government was preparing for another World War. America was violating the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Frazier said, and was disregarding the serious unemployment problem of the nation in its mad rush toward spending tremendous sums for war preparation. Capper saw no justification for such enormous and extravagant expenditures. The nation, he affirmed, was abandoning its policy of arming only for defense. A peace-loving nation should not, the senator asserted, spend more than a billion dollars a year preparing for war. These three senators, along with Robert LaFollette, Jr. voted against the bill, while Borah, Johnson and Charles McNary supported passage, which was accomplished by a 64-11 vote. [23]

Within a few months of passage of the third neutrality act, Japan pushed into north China and the Spanish Civil War became a full scale staging ground for Fascist military forces. As the world moved from one crisis to another, the progressive Republican Senate bloc reacted in horror to the international developments. In a major Senate speech in early May,

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[23] New York Times, March 23, 1937; Congressional Record, March 22, 1937, 2540-2542, 2548, 2554.

Borah denounced the spread of "arbitrary power" since the World War, and the curtailment of civil liberties in Fascist and Communist countries, asserting that there could be no compromise between democracy and those forms of government. Criticizing the ends, means and methods of Fascist states, he asserted that Fascism represented a return to the barbarism of Attila, a repudiation of civilization. He depicted the massacre of Ethiopians by the Italian army as an example of "reversion to the savagery of the cave man. It is an attempt to found government upon the primitive passions of the horde." He also denounced the bombing of Guernica, the ancient Basque capital, in Spain, as the "most revolting instance of mass murder in all history." Speaking with newspaper reporters after his speech, Borah stated that concentration of wealth and political power were the basis for Fascism, and deplored the fact that Fascist philosophy was popular and respectable in upper class society. In late June, in a speech delivered in support of the War Department appropriation bill, which passed without a roll call vote, Borah declared that the United States should have an army and navy adequate to defend itself from foreign and domestic threats. Unleashing another attack upon Fascism, the Idaho senator charged Germany with making of war in Spain while talking of peace. He warned again of Nazi and Fascist influence upon America, especially its youth. [24]

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[24] Congressional Record, May 6, 1937, 4236-4237; New York Times, May 7, 1937; The Progressive, May 15, 1937;

After the Japanese-Chinese conflict began at the Marco Polo Bridge in July, 1937, the question arose as to whether the discretionary aspects of the Neutrality Act would be applied in the absence of a declared war. In a radio interview during August, Nye asserted that the law should be invoked as the best means to keep America out of the conflict. The administration, however, was reluctant to take action, because it would benefit Japan, with its large supply of arms and its control of the seas. Nye declared: "Congress and the American people are being kept in the dark as to what policy this Government does intend to follow." Nye doubted that Roosevelt would refuse to carry out a law adopted by both houses of Congress. The President finally decided in mid-September to curb the carrying of arms to either China or Japan by government-owned ships, and he warned that other vessels flying the American flag and attempting to transport arms, were doing so at their own risk. Roosevelt's refusal to invoke the Neutrality Act formally angered many isolationists, already wary of presidential discretionary powers. [25]

Isolationists were even more disturbed by Roosevelt's speech in Chicago on October 5, 1937. In what came to be known as the Quarantine address, the President compared the widespread terror and lawlessness in the world to physical disease. He called for efforts to restrain those responsible,

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Congressional Record, June 23, 1937, 6214-6215; New York Times, June 24, 1937.

[25] Congressional Record, Appendix, August 20, 1937, 2257-2258.

as well as positive efforts for peace. Hiram Johnson was highly critical of Roosevelt's comments. In a telegram to former Roosevelt advisor Raymond Moley, he declared: "No responsible head of a government should ever threaten unless he is prepared to go the full length to carry his threat into execution, . . ." Johnson feared that Roosevelt "has taken the path to war and finally the whole situation will degenerate . . ." In a letter to Moley a few weeks later, Johnson indicated he was ready for combat with the internationalists. They were motivated, he said, by "a strange mixture of idealism and toadyism, and, of course, in many instances these two traits are conmingled with love for some foreign country and a lofty contempt for patriotism." Nye assailed Roosevelt's speech as likely to draw America into another war. "The same forces which were at work destroying our spirit of neutrality and peace twenty years ago are once again engaged at that task."

Borah told a Wall Street attorney that America must attend to its own affairs, and that America should only fight if other nations attacked first. A democracy should be well prepared in case of invasion. "But this running around over the world trying to placate every situation and adjust every controversy is not the business of a democracy. A democracy must live at home or have no life. Totalitarian states which have absolute control over their subjects and may send them into any way that personal discretion or ambition suggests may engage in combat against aggressors, and so forth, but democracies cannot do so." While concerned about the welfare

of all mankind, Borah was most concerned about the fate of America. Shipstead, in a radio address during November, asserted that warmakers were actively propagandizing to draw America into another crusade. He implied that because of discontent at home over economic problems left unresolved, politicians were concentrating upon the "sins" of other countries. The Minnesota senator said he had no sympathy with the idea that Americans must be "missionaries with bayonets". War was immoral, he declared, and the United States could not force other nations to be virtuous. He warned the American people to ignore "high-powered salesmanship" promoting involvement in another major conflict against tyranny. The United States, Shipstead asserted, was in no danger of being attacked. Should such an unlikely event occur, America could take care of itself. America had no need for alliances. [26]

As the threat of Fascism and war in Europe increased, progressive senators drew attention to a proposal, set forth by Democratic Representative Louis Ludlow of Indiana, for a constitutional amendment requiring a nationwide referendum before Congress could declare war. The measure would not apply if the United States were invaded. The Progressive Party platform of 1924 contained this idea and Senator Nye had promoted it in the Senate and in addresses around the

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[26] Hiram Johnson to Raymond Moley, October 11 and November 1, 1937, Johnson Papers; New York Times, November 3, 1937; William Borah to Robert R. Reed, November 9, 1937, William Borah Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Congressional Record, Appendix, December 1, 1937, 257-258.

nation since 1934. Others, including Senators LaFollette and Capper, had also endorsed the concept. Now, the supposed danger represented by presidential refusal to apply the arms embargo to the Japanese-Chinese war led to a renewed interest in the proposal. LaFollette and Capper sponsored similar amendments. LaFollette's bill was more precise. It prohibited conscription, for example, until the referendum had been held. The Wisconsin senator said no more momentous decision loomed for American democracy than the question of when and how war should be waged abroad. A congressional declaration of war could transform America into an armed camp, curb civil liberties, send millions of men to slaughter, and burden the nation with billions of dollars in war loans and a heavy national debt. Therefore, LaFollette contended, the people should have the ultimate authority over the question of war. [27]

The Japanese attack on the American gunboat Panay in China in December, 1937, strengthened the fear of war among progressives. LaFollette wrote his brother Philip: "F.D.R. is apparently getting ready for increased armaments. The indications are that the first dose will be about 50 million above the budget estimates which are the highest in our peacetime history -- 1 billion dollars. . . .There can be no doubt that the State Department has been encouraging the press to use the Panay incident for all it was worth to batter down

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[27] Congressional Record, November 16, 1937, 24; November 17, 1937, 61; New York Times, November 17, 1937; The Progressive,

the 'isolationist' sentiment in the country." The senator's journal, The Progressive, declared in an editorial in January, 1938: "President Roosevelt's attitude on foreign relations and his attitude on war and militarism is the side of President Roosevelt and his administration that this newspaper likes the least. . . .Mr. Roosevelt astounds liberal supporters by his continual boosting of bigger navy and bigger army proposals, and it is pretty obvious that such military machines are not necessary for national defense." [28]

After the Ludlow war referendum resolution failed to pass the House in early January, Capper wrote William Allen White that the Panay affair had harmed the cause, but he was determined to continue the struggle for a constitutional amendment. The senator told the readers of Capper's Weekly: "I consider war the greatest evil of our time." Nye criticized the naval appropriations bill then under consideration, asserting that American manufacturers were selling war supplies to Japan. These materials, the senator charged, had probably been employed against the gunboat Panay. Nye complained about the continually growing bureaucracy of the navy; it was already powerful enough to defend the nation and should not have the opportunity to pursue adventurism in foreign policy. The promotion of a larger navy was ". . .part of a campaign

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December 4, 1937.

[28] Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Philip LaFollette, January 6, 1938, Philip LaFollette Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; The Progressive, January 15, 1938.

of getting the United States ready for a slaughter of its men on foreign fields, to fulfill its hopes and ideas in foreign capitals. And it will get the food of the unemployed down to dry crusts in order that the money may be thrown into the ocean in useless ships." Even Johnson, long a supporter of a large navy, was surprised by the administration plan. He wrote his son: "I don't know how long it will be before a minority in the Senate, in behalf of the Country, will have to filibuster on some outrageous plan of the President. He slowly but surely is taking us into a league of nations, and endeavoring to set at naught the long, gruelling fight we made seventeen years ago. While I favor a big Navy, I am somewhat alarmed by his activity in that direction now. We may need it to whip the Japs, but we don't need it as an auxiliary of Great Britain." [29]

At the end of January, Johnson declared that Congress was entitled to know what the foreign policy of the country was, and what plans the leadership had for America. He denounced the concept of foreign policy formulated in secret meetings of the President and his advisors. The senator requested passage of a resolution asking for information from the executive branch. Johnson engaged in debate with Senator Pittman on his demand. Was the President, he asked the

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[29] Arthur Capper to William Allen White, January 8, 1938, William Allen White Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Capper's Weekly, January 22, 1938; New York Times, January 17, 1938; Congressional Record, Appendix, January 16, 1938, 238-239; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 29, 1938, Johnson Papers.

chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, threatening an "aggressor" nation such as Japan or Germany in his Quarantine address? Borah joined the debate, warning that the nation was risking war by allowing the world to believe that it was in a tacit alliance with Great Britain in opposition to "aggressors". Johnson wrote his son that, while he was not opposed to more government funds for the navy, "which as a resident of the West Coast I do not begrudge", the American people ". . .are entitled to know the policy that actuates the expenditure." LaFollette charged that war-scare tactics were being employed to persuade Congress to approve a costlier arms buildup. Naval expansion, he feared, was related to a change in foreign policy, which was being kept from the American people. He opposed any alliance of the United States with Great Britain, and any other program which turned the nation's attention and energies away from national economic rehabilitation. Nye also indicated his intention to strive for a holding action on the passage of the naval bill until the government clarified its foreign policy. Frazier saw a war coming, sufficient evidence being the defeat of the Ludlow Amendment, due to administration pressure. [30]

On February 7, Johnson, stubbornly refusing to drop the issue, again offered a resolution calling upon Secretary of State Hull to disclose to Congress any agreements or

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[30] Congressional Record, January 31, 1938, 1263; February 1, 1938, 1326-1327; New York Times, February 1 and 2, 1938; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 5, 1938, Johnson Papers; New York Times, February 4, 1938.

understandings involving naval cooperation with Great Britain or any other nations. Hull immediately wrote Senator Pittman, denying there were any arrangements with other nations for a joint naval policy. Johnson initially indicated satisfaction with the reply, but declared he would continue to observe future events closely, since the true motivation for the President's Quarantine speech had not yet been explained. Two days later, the California senator, hearing new stories of secret alliances with Great Britain, had a change of heart on the Hull statement, and demanded a concise definition of administration objectives. Johnson told his fellow senators that he believed Hull had acted in good faith in denying the existence of secret agreements, but he believed that other government leaders might have entered into understandings without Hull's knowledge. Borah declared that he would support the administration program for increased naval armaments only if he was convinced that it was purely for defensive purposes. Norris doubted that secret agreements existed, but LaFollette believed there had been a modification in the nation's foreign policy, because the administration demand for nearly a billion dollar naval program could not, in his view, be justified as solely for national defense. Johnson was convinced that Roosevelt " . . . does not know what his foreign policy is; and Hull, notwithstanding the newspaper praise heaped upon him, is simply a

'dumb Dora'." [31]

The rumors of an Anglo-American alliance revived the movement in the Senate for a national referendum on war. On February 25, twelve senators introduced Joint Resolution 270, proposing a constitutional amendment for popular approval on entrance into an offensive foreign war. Five of the twelve co-sponsors were progressive Republicans, including Capper, Frazier, LaFollette, Nye and Shipstead. The amendment, broader in scope than the Ludlow proposal, was not to apply when a nation in the Western Hemisphere was attacked. LaFollette, the designated leader of the group, asserted that the amendment would not affect national defense or harm representative government. It would, however, act as a "democratic check on a completely unlimited executive power." Disillusionment over the World War and its effects upon the world had led to a widespread feeling that America should not be "catapulted into future foreign wars by the oversight, decisions, or mistakes of any one man." LaFollette continued: "The war referendum is an attempt to reestablish the intent of the framers of the Constitution that the power of the President to make war singlehanded should be circumscribed by reasonable limitations." [32]

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[31] Congressional Record, February 7, 1938, 1532; February 8, 1938, 1622; February 10, 1938, 1764-1765; New York Times, February 8, 9 and 11, 1938; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 12, 1938, Johnson Papers; New York Times, February 14, 1938; The Progressive, February 19, 1938; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 19, 1938, Johnson Papers.

[32] Congressional Record, February 25, 1938, 2410-2411;

LaFollette took his campaign for the war referendum to the public in March. At an anti-war rally of 4500 people in New York, he called for the adoption of the amendment, citizen resistance to a naval buildup, wartime taxation measures to take the profits out of war, and the preservation of democracy by government spending on conservation, housing, education and social security. Another war, he asserted, would cost the nation $100 billion and lead to a greater depression than the one America had been suffering through for the last nine years. The only means by which America would again become involved in a major conflict was through secret agreements with foreign nations, and the continuation of the missionary belief that the United States must police the world. Peace, LaFollette declared, could not be salvaged by organization of another holy crusade. [33]

The spring of 1938 was a turning point in the international situation, as war continued in Spain and China and Hitler annexed Austria. In this setting, the progressive bloc, with the major exception of George Norris, persisted in calling for an isolationist foreign policy. Borah declared the naval expansion program a major step toward war and economic bankruptcy. He believed that the President had more than national defense in mind in his request for heavy

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New York Times, February 26, 1938; The Progressive, March 5, 1938.

[33] Congressional Record, Appendix, March 6, 1938, 898-899; New York Times, March 7, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, March 7, 1938; The Progressive, March 12, 1938.

expenditures. In a radio address, the Idaho senator deplored the German annexation of Austria, but blamed it on the unjust Versailles Treaty. Democracy in Europe could not be saved by an American alliance, which would only bring war and result in a totalitarian government in the United States. The way to preserve democracy in America from the threat of Fascism and Communism, he declared, was to concentrate on solving domestic economic and social problems, thus proving democracy to be the best form of government. Nye, in a public debate with columnist Dorothy Thompson of the New York Herald Tribune continued his campaign against collective security. Engagement in another war, he asserted, would bring fascism to America. Alliance with Great Britain and France against the Fascist powers would signify American commitment to the defense of their empires, which had been acquired by subjugation of millions of people in Asia and Africa. Nye pointed out that those two nations had attempted to bargain with Italy and Germany. He ridiculed the President's concept of "quarantining aggressors". The war referendum was again endorsed as the best way to avoid war, although Roosevelt had campaigned against it. Collective security was in reality "collective suicide". America's historical and geographical position, Nye concluded, made it essential that it maintain the Western Hemisphere as one area of sanity in the world. Capper told the readers of Capper's Weekly in March, 1938, that ". . .what is going on today in Europe is a strong warning to the United States to mind its own business and keep out of foreign wars." The Kansas senator continued: "I

intend to vote against the naval expansion bill, because I believe it proposes to authorize the construction of a navy manifestly for the purpose of influencing the European situation, and is far beyond our own needs for an adequate national defense." [34]

When the naval expansion bill reached the Senate floor in April, it was subjected to immediate and bitter attack by the progressive Republicans. Gerald Nye called for an end to the discretionary aspects of the 1937 Neutrality Act, and repeated his demands for legislation that would prevent America from defending its commerce and citizens anywhere in the world. The North Dakota senator denounced the change in foreign policy since the Quarantine speech towards the direction of secrecy and deception, something contrary to the desires of the American people. [35]

LaFollette, at a Chicago meeting of anti-war groups, again declared himself unalterably opposed to armaments expansion. In a Senate address on the day that his brother Philip was announcing the formation of the National Progressives of America, the Wisconsin legislator emphatically proclaimed that the nation was in no danger of attack in the near or distant future. Advocates of a super navy were

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[34] New York Times, March 7, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, March 7, 1938; Congressional Record, Appendix, March 28, 1938, 1217-1219; March 24, 1938, 1177-1178; New York Times, March 25, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, March 25, 1938; Capper's Weekly, March 26, 1938.

[35] Congressional Record, April 20, 1938, 5571-5574; April 21, 1938, 5623; April 27, 1938, 5826-5827; New York Times, April 21, 1938.

attempting to alarm the people in order to prepare them for war. LaFollette accused the administration of formulating a new foreign policy in violation of tradition and without the approval or knowledge of Congress or public opinion. He proclaimed that he was only an isolationist in the sense that he wished to isolate the nation from war. In favor of peaceful cooperation with foreign nations, he rejected a role for America as the "guardian angel of the world's morals." In a strong attack upon Great Britain, he called for cooperation with that nation only when it had declared a love of peace and democracy and had agreed to yield its imperialistic, exploitive control of millions of people in its widespread colonial empire. Collective action in the recent past had only resulted in the triumph of fascism and communism and the advent of the Great Depression. This should serve, LaFollette concluded, as a warning against collective security. [36]

Capper was very concerned that passage of the naval program would convince Roosevelt that America should be thrust into the maelstrom of world power politics. Government expenditures were already excessive and had created a tremendous national debt. The legislative branch had been wise in denying Roosevelt the power to reorganize the Supreme Court and the executive departments, he said, and it must now prevent him from assuming the power to draw America into the

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[36] New York Times, April 25, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, April 25, 1938; Congressional Record, April 28, 1938,

defense of some nations against others. Capper believed that the threat of dictatorship was greater from this bill than the two previous struggles between the President and Congress. Frazier predicted war in a short time if the naval bill were adopted. He pleaded for world disarmament and peace, since another war would probably lead to the annihilation of mankind. Borah feared that passage of the naval expenditures would cause a new arms race. While the crisis in Europe might concern Americans as individuals, it should not concern our government as it had no effect upon American security. "The controversy in Europe," Borah affirmed, "is not between democracy and autocracies. The conflict is over the division of territories growing out of the World War." [37]

As the Senate was debating the naval bill in 1938, twenty-seven members jointly introduced a bill to take the profit out of war by heavy taxation. This legislation had been introduced for many years by Senator Nye and others, and the same five progressives who had backed the war referendum amendment endorsed this action--Capper, Frazier, Nye, LaFollette and Shipstead. Despite oratory by progressives, the naval expansion bill was adopted 56-28 on May 3. All eight progressive Republicans present voted in the minority. Johnson,

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5890-5901; New York Times, April 29, 1938; The Progressive, April 30, 1938.

[37] Congressional Record, April 28, 1938, 5906-5909; New York Times, April 29, 1938; Congressional Record, April 26, 1938, 5778, 5780-5782; New York Times, April 27, 1938; Congressional Record, May 2, 1938, 6044-6045; New York Times, May 3, 1938.

absent for the roll-call, left word that as a supporter of a large navy, he would have supported passage. [38]

As Senate progressives fought to maintain American neutrality and curb the American arms buildup, their nominal leader in reform activities, and the only progressive opponent of entrance into the First World War still in public life, George Norris of Nebraska, began to diverge from the group during 1938. In March, in a letter to Freda Kirchwey, editor of The Nation, he indicated that, while still opposed to naval expansion and to American intervention in other nations' controversies, he believed that the policies pursued by Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan would require an eventual modification in the Neutrality Act. In an interview given to the magazine U.S. News, Norris expanded on this statement, asserting that the United States should assure that it was better armed than any of the Fascist powers, which he condemned as wild, indecent and dishonorable in their relations with other nations. These international outlaws had already provided more justification for a declaration of war in 1938, Norris asserted, than Germany under the Kaiser in 1917. He hoped, however, that America could avoid war, and upheld the general progressive viewpoint that the naval construction bill was unreasonably large. During debate on the proposed legislation, Norris reiterated the views he had expressed in the two magazines, but refused to support passage of the bill.

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[38] Congressional Record, April 27, 1938, 5824; May 3, 1938, 6135.

In July, 1938, Norris wondered whether the United States should join with Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union in a world war to destroy Fascism. He still indicated that he could not vote to put America into war again, despite his sentiments. [39]

The events at Munich in September, 1938, only confirmed the determination of the rest of the progressive bloc to fight against modification of America's neutrality policy. The dismemberment of the democratic republic of Czechoslovakia, through agreement of the leaders of Great Britain and France with Hitler and Mussolini, seemed further proof of the corrupt nature of European power politics. As 1939 began, the progressive Republican Senate bloc, with the sole exception of the wavering George Norris, was firmly committed to a continuation of the desperate struggle to keep the nation out of war.

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[39] George Norris to Freda Kirchwey, March 19, 1938, Norris Papers; New York Times, March 28, 1938; New York Herald Tribune, March 28, 1938; Congressional Record, Appendix, March 28, 1938, 1193-1194; "How to Keep Out of War," The Nation, CXLVI (April 2, 1938), 376-377; Congressional Record, April 27, 1938, 5854; New York Times, July 12, 1938.

CHAPTER X

THE LOST CAUSE, 1939-41

The events at Munich in September, 1938, were momentous developments in international relations. The Munich agreements intensified the struggle between isolationists and internationalists in the United States. The Roosevelt administration was determined to alter American neutrality policy. The progressive Republican Senate bloc was primed for its last great struggle to keep America out of war.

As the new session of Congress opened in January, 1939, President Roosevelt, in his Annual Message, placed emphasis upon the march of aggressors in Europe and Asia and expressed concern for American security. He requested a strengthening of national defense and a revision of the neutrality laws, but unwilling to provoke a major battle in Congress, did not offer a specific program. Senator Pittman, Foreign Relations Committee chairman, immediately announced plans to conduct a series of hearings on neutrality revision over the next few months.

The progressives expressed their displeasure with Roosevelt's address. Capper declared: "I was not impressed

by the alarm the President seemed to express as to the possibility of international disturbances. I don't think that we're in any great danger." Nye re-introduced two joint resolutions, one prohibiting the shipment of arms, ammunition and implements of war from the United States to foreign nations, and the other proposing an amendment to the Constitution for the requisition of property in time of war. Frazier also proposed again an amendment prohibiting participation of the nation in foreign wars. [1]

On January 24, Nye delivered a radio address, criticizing the administration's request for a record defense budget. He demanded that Roosevelt issue a declaration of American foreign policy, which would be subject to the approval or disapproval of Congress and the American people. He speculated that American policy was being formulated by the British Foreign Office. There was no need for a one and a half to two billion dollar defense budget, Nye asserted, if America wished simply to protect itself from invasion. The country, the North Dakota senator concluded, should make war against suffering at home, rather than against foreign nations. [2]

A major controversy at the end of January affected the debate over neutrality. An experimental American bomber crashed in California, killing those aboard, including an

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[1] New York Times, January 5, 1939; Congressional Record, January 4, 1939, 70.

[2] Congressional Record, Appendix, January 24, 1939, 282-283.

official of the French Air Ministry. This was proof that the Roosevelt Administration was encouraging the sale of military aircraft to Western European nations threatened by Fascism. News of the crash provoked the wrath of the isolationist bloc, especially its progressive Republican members. Hiram Johnson's voice thundered with a demand to know if America was to be pushed into a war without the people being aware of the real motivations of the government. Had it not been for the accident, he declared, the Congress and the people would never have known of the military sales. Bitter over the secrecy practiced by the administration, he demanded once again a statement of the government's foreign policy. [3]

Nye, along with other members of the Military Affairs Committee, was invited to the White House for a conference regarding the development. The committee members were sworn to keep the briefing confidential, a fact which irritated the senator. Despite the official secrecy, the newspapers leaked information on the meeting, indicating that Roosevelt had stated that the frontier of American defense lay on the Rhine. The President denied the accuracy of the story, but denounced Nye for the leak. Actually, Senator Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota had given out the information, but this controversy ended personal relations between Nye and the President. The North Dakota senator announced that he would refuse to attend any executive sessions of the committee until the

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[3] Congressional Record, February 1, 1939, 1015-1016.

record of past meetings, such as the one in the White House, was fully disclosed to the American people. He accused the President of a complete retreat from the determination to keep America out of war he had expressed in 1936. [4]

Other progressives commented on the controversy. LaFollette declared in a public address: "It is a burlesque of representative government if our foreign policies are formulated secretly by the Chief Executive." Capper wrote Alf Landon that he was opposed to secret conferences between the President and congressional committees, because it forced the members to avoid public comment. Capper was convinced that ". . .the President would not be very much disappointed if the international situation should result in dragging the United States into a foreign war." He hoped that the nation would remain out of war, however, because "We owe it to our own people now to give attention to our own problems first." In a newspaper interview, LaFollette observed that if the United States supplied war materials to any group of nations, it was violating the neutrality laws and exposing the country to certain involvement in any future foreign war, which would destroy American democracy. In a speech in New York City, Nye asserted that the United States could not and should not attempt to police the world. Roosevelt was making the same errors as Woodrow Wilson, trying to gain the support of the

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[4] Personal Interview with Senator Gerald P. Nye, March 30, 1971, Washington, D.C.; Congressional Record, February 1, 1939, 1010; New York Times, February 2, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, February 2, 1939.

citizenry for a holy crusade. He called upon the President to be neutral in thought and action towards the international crisis. A few days later, Nye introduced a bill, placing statutory restrictions upon the sale of American airplanes to foreign nations. [5]

During February, Johnson wrote his son: "The President, in my opinion, cares no more for what may happen to us in a war, than the man in the moon. He has developed the dictator complex, . . .He will do anything for applause, . . ." Johnson believed that the major group applauding the President's changing foreign policy were the Jews, who he termed "the class which cheers him vociferously for aiding their people, who neither live here, nor have anything in common with our country." The senator continued: "Naturally, like any normally constituted human being, I hate the persecutions to which the Jews have been put, and I will go any fair lengths, save the ruin of my own country, to aid them; but I will not go to the length of fighting for citizens of other nations, who have been badly and shamefully treated, nor that these citizens of other nations may vindicate their rights or punish their wrongdoers. This is the basis of the struggle here, and I don't know but what somebody ought to say it openly, but everybody

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[5] New York Times, February 6, 1939; Arthur Capper to Alf Landon, February 9, 1939, Alf Landon Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka; New York Times, February 12 and 13, 1939; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 12, 1939, 558-559; New York Times, February 19, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, February 19, 1939, Congressional Record, Appendix, February 18, 1939, 648-650; New York Times, February 21, 1939.

is afraid -- I confess I shrink from it -- of offending the Jews." Johnson did issue a public statement, asserting that hysteria and war propaganda were being encouraged by advocates of collective security. "In my opinion, war is not imminent and the propaganda that is being so elaborately and extravagantly used at present is seeking to take us into war." Nye, during debate on expansion of the Army Air Corps in late February, said that he was convinced that there would be no war in Europe in the next two years unless the United States encouraged it by trading arms. At this time, a group of twelve senators re-introduced the Ludlow Amendment proposal, with the same progressive Republicans as co-sponsors. [6]

While the progressive isolationists were attacking the administration's secretive foreign policy, George Norris was confirming the split that he had developed with his colleagues. In February, 1939, he wrote former Congressman Victor Murdock of Kansas of his disillusionment with "some of our old Progressive 'war horses'" who had displayed "bitterness against President Roosevelt that I can not explain and do not understand." Norris continued: "It seems to me all these party and all these petty jealousies ought to be forgotten in times like these. As I construe the past, all such differences

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[6] Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., February 11, 1939, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; New York Times, February 24, 1939; Congressional Record, February 28, 1939, 2001-2003, 1976; New York Times, March 1, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, March 1, 1939; The Progressive, March 4, 1939.

were laid aside, at least temporarily, when the country was faced with danger such as that which confronts it now, and the thing that worries me and is almost heartbreaking to me is that such enmities and bad blood do not quiet down as I think they have quieted down in our past history. . . . I can not talk with some of the best friends I have in the Senate because they at once become angry, excited and illogical, if I dare to suggest that the President in any given action has not exceeded his constitutional right." In March, Norris replied to a constituent's letter on the Ludlow Resolution, indicating his disagreement with his progressive colleagues' viewpoint. During the interim period while such a resolution was being considered, Norris declared, the nation would be unable to prepare for military action to thwart a danger to our security. This would prove a serious handicap once war had been declared. [7]

In early March, the Senate debated the administration's proposal for increased funds for defense, including an amendment for the manufacture of six thousand more airplanes. Johnson reviewed the development of American foreign policy within the last year. Asserting that he was not a Nazi, Fascist or Communist sympathizer and that he detested dictators of any stripe, he contended that there was no reason to build so many new airplanes, since there was no danger that the

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[7] George Norris to Victor Murdock, February 11, 1939, George Norris Papers and Victor Murdock Papers, Manuscript

country would be attacked from the air. He recalled President Roosevelt's earlier commitments to remain out of European quarrels, and again demanded that America fight only defensive wars in the future and take part in no entangling alliances. He denounced Roosevelt for issuing an invitation to the French to send a secret mission to buy American airplanes. Johnson's voice rose in the Senate chamber as he declared that war was terrible, that he hated it with a passion, and that dictatorship would be the result. He later wrote his son of his conviction that Roosevelt was allied with Britain and France against Italy and Germany. The President wanted to take America into war to bring fame upon himself as a great war leader, the senator contended. Anyone courageous enough to fight against the tide "will be hooted down in the fashion with which we became so familiar twenty years or more ago. . .but some of the little fellows are so obstinate, they tempt their fate, and, of course, I am one of those." [8]

Capper, Frazier and Shipstead also delivered statements of opposition to the defense bill. Their points were similar: that America must not police the world, that it should not allow munitions makers to draw the nation into another European war, that America was safe from invasion, and that the

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Division, Library of Congress; Norris to Dr. Leland H. Evans, March 17, 1939, Norris Papers.

[8] Congressional Record, March 2, 1939, 2131-2133, 2137-2139; New York Times, March 3, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, March 3, 1939; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., March 19, 1939, Johnson Papers.

country should concentrate on its domestic problems. The Senate proceeded to pass the aircraft amendment 54-28, with the six progressive Republicans present voting against and the other three leaving notice that they would have voted with their colleagues. On the final vote on the entire bill, five voted against (Borah, Capper, Frazier, Nye and Shipstead), while the remaining four (Johnson, LaFollette, McNary, Norris) voted with the majority in the overwhelming 77-8 tally. [9]

A few days later, the neutrality bloc, led by Nye, announced they would filibuster, if necessary, to prevent passage of any administration proposal for repeal of the neutrality laws. On March 19, Senator Pittman proposed, with administration support, what he termed the Peace Act of 1939. The measure called for repeal of the arms embargo and adoption of cash and carry for all trade with belligerent nations. Borah immediately declared his disagreement. He favored instead legislation prohibiting the sale of all munitions to any nation engaged in war. Johnson and Capper also attacked the Pittman proposal. Fifty senators, including progressives Nye, Capper, Frazier, LaFollette, and Shipstead, co-sponsored a much revived bill to tax the profits out of war. This was in response to the increasing threat of military conflict due to Hitler's takeover of the remains of Czechoslovakia in mid-March. Nye now demanded that all arms trade with warring countries be banned, that American ships be prohibited from

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[9] Congressional Record, March 3, 1939, 2204-2205; March 6, 1939, 2271-2272, 2277, 2285; March 7, 1939, 2377.

transporting any commodities to belligerents, and that American citizens be forbidden to travel on ships of those nations. Along with Clark of Missouri and Homer Bone of Washington, he introduced a bill with these provisions. As the Foreign Relations Committee began hearings on the Pittman bill, the North Dakota senator delivered a radio address on his strict neutrality program. Meanwhile, Shipstead denounced war propaganda and called for the saving of democracy at home before America again took part in a crusade abroad. [10]

The neutrality hearings lasted throughout most of April and May. The progressives continued to agitate against the Pittman proposal. Borah warned that naming aggressors and granting economic support to their enemies was "the most subtle and effective method yet conceived of bringing us into all the European controversies of any moment." The United States must not, he declared, act as a moral censor. In a letter to college students, Borah asserted that the war which was threatening Europe was not over a question of democracy or totalitarianism, but rather a "sordid, imperialistic" conflict. The European powers "all alike violate treaties, disregard the most fundamental principles of right, pursue methods which inevitably lead to war, and then call upon the United States. . .to save them from their own intolerable and

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[10] New York Times, March 10 and 20, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, March 20, 1939; Congressional Record, March 20, 1939, 2926; New York Times, March 22, 1939; Congressional Record, March 21, 1939, 3020; March 28, 1939, 3395; New York Times, March 29, 1939; Congressional Record, Appendix, April 4, 1939, 1317-1319; April 2, 1939, 1316-1317.

vicious methods." While he abhorred the doctrines of Nazism and Communism, America should deal with it only when and if it came to American soil. Borah predicted in late April that Hitler would avoid a major war and that Great Britain would continue its appeasement program. LaFollette, Capper and Shipstead spoke in support of Nye's strict neutrality program. LaFollette also testified for the war referendum amendment before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Only Norris supported the Pittman bill. He expressed the belief that a majority of Americans sympathized with England, France and China in the prevailing international situation. The Nebraska senator stated: "If we can pass a law that will rebound to their benefit, without violating the principles of neutrality, that is the kind of a law I want to pass." As the neutrality hearings ended, the progressives were divided into three categories. Borah and Johnson, as long time defenders of freedom of the seas, wanted total repeal of all neutrality legislation. Nye, Capper, LaFollette, Shipstead and Frazier wanted rigid neutrality legislation. Norris endorsed the Pittman cash and carry proposal. [11]

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[11] Congressional Record, April 8, 1939, 3970; New York Times, April 9 and 14, 1939; Congressional Record, Appendix, April 11, 1939, 1468; New York Times, April 24, 1939; Form letter reply on Neutrality by Robert LaFollette, Jr., May, 1939, LaFollette Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; New York Times, May 11, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, May 11, 1939; The Progressive, May 13, 1939; Congressional Record, Appendix, May 18, 1939, 3544-3545; April 20, 1939, 1727-1729; Congressional Record, May 9, 1939, 5276-5277; Congressional Record, Appendix, May 16, 1939, 2025-2026; Speech of Senator Henrik Shipstead on Neutrality, May 16, 1939, Henrik Shipstead Papers, Minnesota Historical

Disagreement over the neutrality question within Congress led to calls for adjournment until 1940, with further study of the subject in the interim. But Hiram Johnson demanded that the legislative branch remain in session until the foreign situation was clarified. Hitler was placing demands upon Poland, and England and France had guaranteed that nation's borders. Johnson expressed apprehensions that Roosevelt would take action to involve the United States in the war while Congress was away from Washington. He proclaimed: "We must be on guard. . .every minute of the day and every minute of the night in the days to come, to see that we shall not participate in a war which is none of our concern, . . .Let us be ourselves and, for the people of the United States, let us keep out of war." This dramatic statement provoked widespread applause from a crowded Senate gallery. [12]

At the end of May, the Roosevelt administration, determined to make a concerted effort for congressional passage of an arms embargo repeal and a cash and carry system, prodded the House of Representatives to take action. Senate isolationists made preparations for battle. Thirteen of them gathered in Nye's office on June 16, and announced the beginning of an "uncompromising fight". Among the thirteen

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Society, St. Paul; New York Times, April 30, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, April 30, 1939.

[12] New York Times, May 3, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, May 3, 1939; Congressional Record, May 2, 1939, 4999-5000.

were seven progressive Republicans (Nye, Borah, Johnson, LaFollette, Capper, Frazier, and McNary). By early July, the number of opponents to the repeal of the arms embargo had increased to an estimated thirty-four members. This bloc, consisting of all progressive Republicans but Norris, and a nearly equal number of Republicans and Democrats of varied political viewpoints, met in Hiram Johnson's office and decided to begin a filibuster if necessary. Johnson wrote his son: "There are of course not enough to whip the Administration in its foul designs, but we have enough to keep the subject indefinitely before the Senate." The next day, he met with LaFollette, Nye and Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan to consider a motion in the Foreign Relations Committee to postpone consideration of any neutrality legislation until the next session of Congress. On July 11, the committee, by a vote of 12-11, decided to defer the issue until 1940, with LaFollette, Borah, Capper, Johnson and Shipstead providing five of the majority's total votes. This decision destroyed months of effort by the Roosevelt administration. [13]

On July 14, the President sent a special message to Congress, requesting an immediate amending of the neutrality laws to eliminate the compulsory arms embargo. This was the first time Roosevelt had formally requested specific modifications in neutrality policy. Secretary of State Hull, in a

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[13] New York Times, June 17 and July 8, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, July 8, 1939; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., July 8, 1939, Johnson Papers; New York Times, July 9 and 12, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, July 9 and 12, 1939.

detailed statement, declared that the present law gave aggressors the advantage. Borah, who had recently denounced Great Britain and France for their abandonment of Czechoslovakia at Munich and asserted there was no difference between democracies and dictatorships regarding the wanton breaking of treaties and disregard of international law, stated that the Roosevelt and Hull messages had not changed his mind on American sale of armaments to the European "imperialists". Johnson said Hull and Roosevelt were calling for intervention and military alliance on behalf of one group of nations against others, rather than for true neutrality and peace. [14]

The administration had committed itself to an attempt to convince the Senate to override its own Foreign Relations Committee and consider immediate action on neutrality. A half dozen leaders, including McNary and Borah, were invited to the White House on the evening of July 18. The President and Secretary of State spoke of the danger of war in Europe and attempted to enlist the support of the legislative leaders to bring the issue to the Senate floor. Borah disputed the view that war was imminent in Europe. Stating that he had his own confidential sources of information, Borah provoked an emotional scene in the White House, with Hull and Roosevelt obviously upset. Realizing that he would have no cooperation from the Republican leadership, the President finally decided to abandon attempts at promoting neutrality

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[14] New York Times, July 15 and 7, 1939; Congressional Record, July 6, 1939, 8674-8675.

revision for the time being. However, he indicated he might take the issue to the country. [15]

Johnson, pleased at the results of the conference, declared: "If he goes we will go too, upon the slogan that this country wants no war." Charles McNary wrote a constituent after the White House meeting: "It is not my intention, by vote, to transfer unusual powers to the President in the matter of neutrality." Nye declared that the unsuccessful attempt of the administration to repeal the arms embargo was proof of intent to assist France and Great Britain. The nation could stay out "if we will curb Executive power to secretly move toward war." The North Dakota legislator suggested the formation of a joint congressional committee which would consult secretly on all major decisions of foreign policy with the executive branch, before final action was taken. LaFollette disagreed with the President's contention that a congressional coalition had tied his hands, preventing moves for world peace by failure to amend the neutrality laws. "The way to stay out of Europe is to stay out," the Wisconsin senator stated. Echoing Borah's views at the July 18 White House conference, Nye declared in mid-August that there was less chance of war in Europe than there had been a few months earlier, because Congress had refused to consider neutrality revision. This had served as a warning to the Western nations

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[15] Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), I: 649-650; New York Times, July 19 and 20, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, July 19 and 20, 1939.

that the United States would not be their arsenal in another military conflict. Nye concluded that Roosevelt hoped for the outbreak of war, but that the probability was remote. [16]

On the morning of September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. The Second World War had begun, as England and France announced they would come to the aid of Poland. War on Germany was declared on September 3. President Roosevelt immediately called for a special session of Congress to change the neutrality laws in order to aid the Western powers, although he would emphasize to the American people that the arms embargo harmed American security. A tough battle lay ahead, as the isolationist bloc, which had thwarted the President's plans in recent months, was steadfastly dedicated to the prevention of American entanglement in the European crisis. The progressive Republicans, with the exception of George Norris, were in the forefront of this most significant foreign policy issue since the Senate battle over the Versailles Treaty and League of Nations during 1919-1920.

At the outbreak of European war on September 3, LaFollette declared that he was convinced that if ". . . we

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[16] New York Times, July 20, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, July 20, 1939; Charles McNary to Mrs. Harriet Gilbert, July 21, 1939, Charles McNary Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Congressional Record, July 29, 1939, 10399-10406; New York Times, July 30 and August 10, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, July 30, 1939; The Progressive, August 19, 1939; New York Times, August 17, 1939.

can but remain free from any foreign entanglements we can solve the problems of this country . . .We must avoid a blood transfusion that will bleed us white of man power and resources." He indicated he still opposed a repeal of the arms embargo and the sale of munitions and arms on a cash and carry basis. Nonwar goods should be sold only for cash, he added. Frazier, having just returned from a European vacation, told in an interview of his hopes that America would remain out of the war, but did not deny that the opponents of involvement had the disadvantage. He condemned the idea of war credits to any foreign nation, and termed the war as "insane and futile". In a later interview, Frazier declared that the President probably favored the entrance of the nation into the conflict on the side of England and France. However, if Roosevelt called Congress into special session, he would face strong opposition to the repeal of the arms embargo. Frazier doubted there would be any action on neutrality until the new session of 1940. McNary reported a phone call from the President, telling of White House plans to hold a special session, and requesting the Republican leader's cooperation in expediting the matter. McNary pledged this, but not his support on specific administration plans. Capper predicted a special session would be convened before September had ended. He indicated that he would fight repeal of the neutrality laws. "I am standing with Bill Borah, Bennett Clark and others in opposition to repeal. I feel very deeply on this question. It is not our war and we have no

business breaking into it. We got the worst of it before and it would be very foolish to break into another war." [17]

Borah forecast another bitter donnybrook between the White House and the Senate isolationist bloc. The veteran of many foreign policy battles declared there would be no compromise, that he and other isolationists would "fight to the last ditch" any effort to limit debate on neutrality amending. His sole purpose was to keep America out of war. If the administration's conduct of foreign policy were permitted to continue unimpeded, the nation would be in the conflict within a short time. Nye also insisted on a full and open debate, and thought it would be many weeks before a vote could be taken. Hiram Johnson demanded a "prohibitory embargo against all nations at war." This was the only way, he asserted, that America could remain impartial and secure from involvement in the conflict. He said he stood with the Roosevelt of 1936, who had favored an isolationist policy, rather than the Roosevelt of 1939, who was marching down the road to war. [18]

Two weeks after the beginning of the war in Europe, Roosevelt called Congress into special session for September 21. Borah now delivered a radio address, designed to set the

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[17] New York Times, September 4, 1939; The Progressive, September 9, 1939; New York Times, September 6 and 8, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, September 6, 1939; Arthur Capper to Victor Murdock, September 12, 1939, Murdock Papers.

[18] New York Times, September 12, 13 and 18, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, September 12, 13 and 18, 1939.

tone for the "peace bloc". The senator made the blunt assertion that repeal of the arms embargo would be the equivalent of entrance into the war. America must establish its freedom from Europe once and for all time, and it must determine its national policy upon love of itself rather than hatred of other nations. The news of Russia's invasion of Poland, as part of the Soviet-Nazi pact in August which led to the outbreak of war, led Borah to state that the sad event should strengthen the nation's determination to keep out of the morass. Nye predicted that the pro-embargo forces in Congress would be greater in number, and he believed that Congress would refuse to lift it. McNary said before the opening of the special session that he agreed with the President that political partisanship had no place during this crucial time. But the Republican leader indicated he favored the continuation of the present neutrality act, because any modification would be regarded as favoring one group of nations over the others. Johnson said he believed the profit motive was the major reason for the concerted campaign to repeal the arms embargo. [19]

On September 21, President Roosevelt went to Capitol Hill to deliver his message requesting revision of the neutrality laws and repeal of the arms embargo. The best way to keep America at peace, he declared, was through a return to international law. He disguised his private view of

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[19] New York Times, September 15, 18, 20 and 21, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, September 15, 1939.

concern for the fortunes of England and France, because he knew that would only strengthen the isolationist forces. Within a few hours after his speech, a group of twenty-four senators gathered in the office of Hiram Johnson and resolved to pursue the goal of preventing adoption of the administration plan. All the progressive Republicans except McNary and Norris were present. LaFollette delivered a pep talk, declaring his conviction that the isolationist bloc could prevent modification of the neutrality laws if the campaign against the President were well organized and public opinion were aroused in a manner similar to the reaction against the League of Nations, the World Court, the Supreme Court bill, and government reorganization. At a meeting the next day in Borah's office, LaFollette and his brother Philip discussed their plans further, but apparently there was dissension. Within a few hours, a few of the senators had backed off from such a large scale offensive, and Borah and Nye declared that the brothers should abandon their activities due to the disagreement over strategy. Senator LaFollette questioned at that point whether the battle was not already lost because of lack of unity behind his proposal. He wrote his wife: "The fight against the League of Nations, the World Court, the Supreme Court bill and the first reorganization bill were all won because there was a determined effort to make vocal the opposition in the country to these measures. I am convinced that an overwhelming majority of the people are against the repeal of the arms embargo but unless that

opposition is brought to bear on the Congress the President has all the advantage in the struggle." [20]

LaFollette, Johnson, Borah and Nye held consultations with other isolationist senators during the following few days, and they decided to request ample time for a serious debate on the President's proposal. If they were granted the full debate they desired, they promised to avoid a filibuster. Borah issued a statement to this effect, as a symbol of cooperation with administration supporters. After another conference in Hiram Johnson's office, Johnson told newsmen: "We are going to have a bully fight. We think it will last a long, long time, and we expect to win." On September 28, the Foreign Relations Committee, by a 16-7 vote, approved and sent to the Senate floor the resolution sponsored by Chairman Key Pittman for the Roosevelt administration. Borah, Johnson, Capper, LaFollette, and Shipstead voted against the Pittman bill, but they made no motions and offered no amendments in the committee room. They had decided to record their vote quietly and to save their rhetoric for the struggle on the Senate floor. [21]

A month-long campaign against Roosevelt's request now

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[20] New York Times, September 22, 1939; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dearest, September 23, 1939, LaFollette Family Papers.

[21] New York Times, September 23 and 24, 1939; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dearest, September 24, 1939, LaFollette Family Papers; New York Times, September 27 and 29, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, September 27, 1939.

began. It was a futile battle from the beginning, and was compounded by some isolationists' refusal to consider the more active campaign suggested by the LaFollette brothers. But, whatever it lacked in strength, the isolationist bloc made up in dramatic and emotional rhetoric. The progressive bloc was in the forefront of the debate, denouncing internationalism and increased executive power.

Capper and Nye addressed a mass meeting sponsored by nine peace societies dedicated to a continuation of the neutrality laws. Both also made radio appeals for public support. Nye, in a radio debate with Pittman, challenged claims of administration supporters that a majority of the Senate favored the Pittman resolution. When Senate debate began on October 2, the eyes of the nation were on the leading spokesmen for the two sides, Pittman and Borah. The Senate floor and galleries were packed as they had not been since the Supreme Court fight in 1937. After Pittman had defended the arms embargo repeal and the cash and carry system as necessary, Borah rose to deliver what was to be his last great oration before his death in January, 1940. The veteran of thirty three years in the upper chamber and of many famous legislative-executive struggles caused a great stir in the galleries as he addressed himself to the embargo issue. The neutrality laws prevented the sale of arms, the Idaho senator emphasized. It was not America's business whether the legislation operated neutrally in Europe. It was meant to be impartial, to avoid taking sides in European conflicts. Repeal

would show that the United States favored the Western powers, and would therefore be an unneutral act. Cash and carry, Borah said, would eventually draw the nation into the conflict. The cry for repeal came from the "war hounds of Europe", not the American people. The war was "nothing more than another chapter in the bloody volume of European power politics. . ." The Munich conference was a perfect example of power politics and imperialism. Borah asserted that the Nazi philosophy was not the major issue in the war, but rather the desire of various nations for power and territory. The senator did not see the conflict as a battle for democracy and civilization, as Great Britain and France were depicting it. He concluded that he did not wish the nation to take any steps which would aggravate the possibility of involvement. At the end of his speech, the galleries broke into widespread applause. Colleagues rushed up to shake his hand. Newsmen noticed that Borah seemed to gasp for breath a few times during his two hour presentation. [22]

On October 3, Senator Norris came to the support of the Roosevelt administration proposal in a radio address.

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[22] New York Times, September 30, 1939; Arthur Capper speech, September 29, 1939, Arthur Capper Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka; Congressional Record, Appendix, September 29, 1939, 87-89; September 30 and October 1, 1939, 83-85; New York Times, October 1, 2 and 3, 1939; Congressional Record, October 2, 1939, 66-75; New York Herald Tribune,

The Nebraska senator believed that the nation could stay out of the war but still assist the side which represented humanity, civilization, and liberty, by repealing the arms embargo and providing for cash and carry. If the laws remained unchanged, then the United States would be indirectly assisting the barbarous, inhuman, uncivilized dictators of Europe. LaFollette contended in another radio address that America should ignore the situation in Europe, keep the arms embargo, and concentrate on making democracy work at home. The Western powers did not practice democracy in their empires, although they professed it. Again, the Wisconsin senator warned that involvement in war would only destroy the country's way of life and tradition of civil liberties. The United States should concentrate its efforts on providing a strong army and navy to defend itself in the Western Hemisphere, and also should build up its foreign trade with Latin America, avoiding the alienation of either side in the European conflict through arms trade with one group of belligerents. [23]

On October 5, Nye said he favored the enactment of cash and carry for noncontraband goods, but wanted the arms embargo continued. Senator Borah offered the Nye proposal

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October 3, 1939.

[23] New York Times, October 4, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 4, 1939; Congressional Record, Appendix, October 3, 1939, 128-129; New York Times, October 5, 1939; Congressional Record, Appendix, October 4, 1939, 144-145; The Progressive, October 14, 1939.

the next day as an olive branch to the administration. But the White House, believing it had the votes to pass the repeal, ignored Borah's proposal. The progressive Republican senators now took turns speaking for their cause on the Senate floor. Between October 12 and 20, LaFollette, Nye, Frazier, Shipstead, Capper and Johnson successively spoke against changes in the arms embargo. McNary, Capper, Borah, Nye and Johnson delivered radio addresses between October 15 and 24. LaFollette, in a three hour address, called the supporters of arms embargo repeal "interventionists" who wished to ally the United States with Great Britain and France in the European war. He challenged again the assumption that these two nations were trustworthy partners. War, he declared, was a temptation to those people weary of the struggle against the domestic economic crisis, but it would lead to even greater economic problems. LaFollette created a stir in the galleries when he recalled his father's anti-war stand in 1917, and he received applause from the people there at the conclusion of his address. Newsmen labeled it the most dramatic one during the special session. [24]

Nye, the most active of the progressives in debate during the session, delivered three lengthy speeches within twelve days. He challenged Roosevelt to think of America

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[24] New York Times, October 6 and 7, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 6, 1939; Congressional Record, October 5, 1939, 113-114; New York Times, October 13, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 13, 1939; The Progressive, October 21, 1939; Congressional Record, October 12, 1939, 321-335.

first. He suggested that the President act as a mediator for peace, a role that could be held only so long as the arms embargo continued. Nye blamed France and Great Britain for the rise of Hitler, the result, he said, of the unjust Versailles Treaty imposed upon the Germans. As he had done many times within the previous five years, the North Dakota senator spoke of the position of the munitions makers and financiers in drawing America into World War I. There was no such thing, he said, as steps short of war, without ultimate involvement in it. The war was a struggle for empire, and it would be suicidal for the nation to get involved. In speeches on October 23 and 25, Nye ran into a line of criticism from pro-administration senators, who pointed out that he had favored the repeal of the arms embargo in 1938 to aid Loyalist Spain, something Nye later said he regretted suggesting. During his first address on October 13, Nye was interrupted by Norris, who bitterly criticized him for stating that everyone who favored the repeal of the arms embargo wanted to send American troops to fight in Europe. Norris said he did not care if Hitler was angered, and that he did not believe that repeal of the arms embargo would lead to war. The Nebraska senator's face was flushed with anger, and he failed to ask Nye for permission to interject his comments, a Senate courtesy. [25]

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[25] Congressional Record, October 13, 1939, 360-383; October 23, 1939, 728-755; October 25, 1939, 846-850; New York Times, October 14, 24 and 26, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 14, 24 and 26, 1939; Congressional Record, October 13, 1939, 367; New York Times, October 14, 1939; New York

Frazier delivered a rare floor speech on October 14. He urged that the United States take no action that would appear to be in support of Great Britain and France. He warned against allowing profits or propaganda to sway America toward entrance into the war. War was a crime against humanity and the destroyer of democracy. He pleaded for the country to divorce itself from European controversies, as it had since its founding, except for World War I. Frazier declared that the nation had appropriated enough money in the previous six years to arm itself adequately against the unlikely possibility of foreign attack. On October 16, Shipstead and Capper made their appeals for continuation of the neutrality laws. The Minnesota senator denounced propaganda that America must act as a missionary, punishing aggressor nations which violated treaties. "If that is to be our policy, we shall have to punish other nations to the end of time," he said. All nations had, at one time or another, broken treaties and committed aggression. He proceeded to a discussion of the Versailles treaty and its aftermath during the 1920's and 1930's and a commentary on the worthlessness of peace treaties throughout history. He concluded: "I do not believe we can save democracy by a war of extermination, even though it is labeled a war to prevent a war of extermination." Capper followed with a plea for defeat of the bill because it represented "a definite step toward

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Herald Tribune, October 14, 1939.

war." He did not believe that ". . .we can enter the war a little way and then withdraw when the war becomes hotter. We cannot, logically or psychologically, be half in and half out of this war, . . ." He continued: "Let us save our boys for something better than fodder for Europe's battlefields during this latest of the long succession of wars that Europe has fought over boundaries and power." While he had personal sympathies for England and France, he believed in putting the nation's welfare first. Capper concluded with a pledge that he would never vote to send American soldiers to Europe and declared: "I feel more intensely about these things than I have ever felt about any other issue before the Senate." On October 21, Capper delivered a radio appeal of similar nature. [26]

McNary discussed the neutrality issue over the radio on October 15. The arms embargo had been adopted only after careful deliberation, and he felt it should be repealed only if it served America's domestic interests. The nation should retain its arms supply for its own defense, the Oregon senator concluded. Hiram Johnson was given the honor of summing up the general case for the isolationist bloc. Speaking for more than an hour on October 20, he pleaded against taking "the first false step" to war. America, he dramatically

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[26] New York Times, October 15, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 15, 1939; Congressional Record, October 14, 1939, 397-403; New York Times, October 17, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 17, 1939; Congressional Record, October 16, 1939, 449-456, 461-466; New York Times, October 22, 1939.

exclaimed, was in the "shadow, walking down the bloody path of war." He denounced England for playing power politics, and the League of Nations supporters, who he believed were driving the nation toward participation in the conflict. Hitler would never conquer Europe, Johnson insisted, and America was in no danger of attack from Germany. The isolationist bloc, the California senator asserted, had only American interests in their mind and heart. As he spoke, the galleries were packed with spectators. His voice was hardly above a whisper, causing his colleagues to crowd near his desk to listen. On October 24, the senator delivered a radio address. "I am neither pro-British nor pro-French nor pro-German nor pro-Russian. I am simply a humble American, with my whole heart bound up in the United States, with no other love for any nation except my own, and I am deciding this question of the repeal of the embargo solely as an American." Borah and Nye also issued final appeals over the radio in an attempt to stir public support for retention of the embargo. At the same time, Norris told an interviewer that America had more cause to go to war in 1939 than in 1917, but that the psychology of the American people would keep the nation out of the conflict. [27]

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[27] New York Times, October 16, 1939; Congressional Record, Appendix, October 15, 1939, 307-308; New York Times, October 21, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 21, 1939; Congressional Record, October 20, 1939, 628-632; Congressional Record, Appendix, October 24, 1939, 561-563; October 22, 1939, 461-463; New York Times, October 23, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 23, 1939.

On October 25, the Senate defeated, 67-22, an amendment introduced by LaFollette, proposing establishment of an export control board to place quota restrictions on all exports to warring nations. Seven progressives voted in the minority, Norris with the majority, and Borah was absent. Before the roll call, LaFollette argued that the nation could best insure itself against an economic stake in the war by limiting exports to peacetime levels. The Wisconsin senator also offered another amendment to the pending bill, providing for a war referendum before soldiers were sent overseas. This much discussed and rejected idea was subjected to immediate criticism by LaFollette's close associate, George Norris. The Nebraska senator said such a requirement would impede the defense of the nation, giving the enemy a strategic advantage. Congress, Norris asserted, had the responsibility as the representatives of the people to declare war under the Constitution. Borah, despite his opposition to embargo repeal, also announced he could not support the LaFollette amendment. The proposal was soundly defeated 73-17, with six progressive Republicans in the minority, and Borah, McNary and Norris in the majority.

The vote on the Pittman resolution was now at hand, and Borah and Nye conceded that they could not prevent passage, having only about thirty senators' support. The final roll call demonstrated that they were completely accurate, as the Senate passed the repeal of the arms embargo and the adoption of cash and carry by a 63-30 vote. All the

progressives but Norris were on the losing side. A substitute bill suggested by Nye had been defeated by a 67-22 vote. On November 3, after House passage, Congress gave final aproval to the neutrality resolutions, with the Senate vote of 55-24 showing the same lineup of the progressive Republicans. Borah and Johnson, as members of the conference committee, refused to sign the conference report. [28]

With the defeat of the isolationist bloc accomplished, Roosevelt began to plan future foreign policy regarding the European war. In a confidential letter to progressive journalist William Allen White of the Emporia Gazette in December, the President expressed fears of the future if Germany and the Soviet Union jointly succeeded in conquering the European continent. "What worries me, especially, is that public opinion over here is patting itself on the back every morning and thanking God for the Atlantic Ocean (and the Pacific Ocean). . . .The Lord and you know perfectly well that Roosevelt and Hull fully expect to keep us out of war--but, on the other hand, we are not going around thanking God for allowing us physical safety within our continental limits. . . . Things move with such terrific speed, these days, that it

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[28] New York Times, October 26, 1939; Congressional Record, October 25, 1939, 856; October 27, 1939, 986-989, 994-996, 998, 999; The Progressive, November 4, 1939; New York Times, October 26 and 28, 1939; New York Herald Tribune, October 26 and 28, 1939; Congressional Record, October 27, 1939, 1024, 986; November 3, 1939, 1356; New York Times, November 4, 1939.

really is essential to us to think in broader terms and, in effect, to warn the American people that they, too, should think of possible ultimate results in Europe and the Far East." [29]

By early 1940, Germany and the Soviet Union had occupied and divided Poland, and Finland was fighting a desperate battle for survival from Russian attack. Since Finland had continued to pay its World War I debts to the United States during the 1930's while other countries had defaulted, there was great public sympathy for her. This led to calls for financial aid for Finland. The progressive Republicans divided on this evenly, with Frazier, LaFollette, McNary and Shipstead in favor, and Capper, Johnson, and Norris opposed. Nye was not present for the vote, but had indicated that giving aid to Finland would be another step toward war. Capper said the bill's passage would set a pattern for later actions, so despite his sympathies for that beleaguered nation, he could not support aid. Johnson echoed similar sentiments in a short comment before the Senate adopted the bill 49-27. [30]

The progressive Republicans continued to fight against the growing interventionist trend during 1940. LaFollette

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[29] Franklin D. Roosevelt to William Allen White, December 14, 1939, William Allen White Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[30] New York Times, January 11, 1940; Congressional Record, February 13, 1940, 1389, 1401-1402, 1405.

introduced a resolution on March 13, calling upon the Military Affairs Committee to conduct a full investigation of whether foreign purchase of arms was delaying the equipping of the American military forces. However, two weeks later, the committee voted against adoption of the resolution, because this would provoke another controversy over aid to Great Britain and France. Senator Nye commenced a vigorous two year speaking tour until Pearl Harbor, attempting to sway American public opinion against support for the Western nations and the country's entrance into the war. The North Dakotan became the most controversial member of the Senate during 1940 and 1941. An example of his rhetoric was a speech in New York City during March, 1940, in which he termed President Roosevelt "Cheerleader No. 1" for neutrality in the mid-1930's, but now attempting to lead America into the war. Questioned whether democracy would be imperiled by a Hitler victory, he declared: "What bunk!", and went on to say that the combined armies of all of the major powers of Europe, as well as Japan, could not come within striking distance of America's shores. If Hitler won the war, Nye declared, it would take him at least a generation before he had the capacity to even consider conquering the United States. These kinds of comments subjected Nye to much criticism and ridicule by opponents. Meanwhile, Hiram Johnson wrote his son during April, 1940, that the nation was coming ever closer to war, and that if Roosevelt campaigned for and won a third term in the White House, he was certain the country would be

in the war shortly thereafter. [31]

In the spring of 1940, Germany occupied Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland and France, and nearly succeeded in destroying the retreating British forces in France. Roosevelt made a public statement ridiculing the policy of isolation, declaring his sympathy with Great Britain and France, and promising to send both nations all available equipment in their fight against Fascism. The President also announced the nomination of two internationalist Republicans to the cabinet, Henry Stimson as Secretary of War and Frank Knox as Secretary of the Navy. This was an open attempt to gain Republican support for aid to the Western allies. Nye accused the President of playing politics in his appointment of Stimson and Knox and indicated he would fight their confirmation. He denounced Roosevelt for pursuance of a disastrous foreign policy, encouraging France to fight on when he knew the United States could not assist them under existing federal laws. Terming the President's policy one of "dangerous adventurism", Nye boldly stated that Roosevelt should resign so that confidence in the national government could be restored. When the vote on confirmation of Stimson and Knox was taken on July 9 and 10, only McNary and Norris supported the administration. Nye, Capper and Shipstead delivered short comments opposing confirmation because it would

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[31] Congressional Record, March 13, 1940, 2765; New York Times, March 14, 29 and 24, 1940; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., April 28, 1940, Johnson Papers.

represent support for American intervention in Europe. LaFollette wrote in The Progressive that Stimson and Knox were reactionaries, and therefore, he could not in good conscience support their nominations. [32]

During the summer of 1940, with the Battle of Britain commencing, Congress debated the administration's request for a Selective Service system and universal military training, which was sponsored in the Senate by Democrat Edward Burke of Nebraska. With the exception of Charles McNary, now the Republican Vice-Presidential nominee on Wendell Willkie's ticket, all the progressive Republicans bitterly opposed this legislation which they thought would transform America into a military camp. Capper, in a radio debate with Burke, asserted that compulsory military training in peacetime was "repugnant" to American democracy, and "strikes at the heart of personal liberty and personal freedom." This was the wrong way, the Kansas senator declared, to reach preparedness for possible war, because it was the method of Hitler and Stalin. Capper also delivered a radio address and Senate speech on the subject. More significantly, Norris, who had supported all administration defense proposals in recent years, announced in mid-July that he was opposed to the Selective Service bill. America, he said, was not surrounded by hostile forces which could mount a surprise invasion, as was

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[32] Congressional Record, June 21, 1940, 8791-8798; New York Times, June 22, 1940; Congressional Record, July 9, 1940, 9313-9316, 9324-9325, 9337-9339, 9341; July 10, 1940, 9411-9412; The Progressive, July 13, 1940.

the case with Holland, Belgium, and Denmark. The nation would have many years to prepare for invasion, and the navy and air force would have to be eliminated before such an undertaking could have a chance of success. In a letter to a constituent which was released to the newspapers, Norris stated: "To compel our young men to serve in the army in time of peace is to me abhorrent. I do not see the necessity or the reason for it. It is contrary to our history . . .the continuation of a policy of compulsory military training would gradually change our nation and the attitude of our people. To a very great extent, they would be drawn gradually but inevitably from their peace-loving ways into those of a nation whose chief object would be to destroy other nations." Norris gave vent to his feelings twice on the Senate floor, once during general debate on the bill and again when the conference report was being considered. [33]

Nye was the most active opponent of the military conscription bill, delivering at least two radio and three public addresses, as well as remarks in the Senate chamber, during the month of August. The senator said the call for military service in time of peace was the result of hysteria and propaganda encouraged by industrialists and munitions makers

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[33] New York Times, July 1, 1940; Congressional Record, Appendix, July 28, 1940, 4601-4602; Congressional Record, August 19, 1940, 10474-10478; New York Times, July 14 and 26, 1940; New York Herald Tribune, July 26, 1940; George Norris to Reverend G.A. Moon, July 23, 1940, Norris Papers; New York Times, August 13, 1940; Congressional Record, August 12, 1940, 10113-10119; September 13, 1940, 12106-12107.

who wanted to drag America into the war. Again, as he had called for since 1934, the North Dakotan demanded the taxation of war profits and the nationalization of war industries. Depicting the uncertainties that the nation's young people would face if military conscription were adopted, he asserted that there was no need for such a large armed force unless someone had plans to take America into the war on the side of Great Britain. While willing to give his endorsement to increased appropriations for national defense, he was absolutely opposed to the concept of the United States as the world's guardian. [34]

LaFollette stated his opposition to the Selective Service bill in the pages of The Progressive in early August. Adoption of compulsory military training, the Wisconsin senator wrote, would produce drastic economic, social and political consequences. It would introduce regimentation into American life, a danger to any democracy in peacetime. To his family, he wrote: "It seems a crime to fasten such a system on the country when it is clear men can be gotten under the voluntary system." Later in August, LaFollette wrote his family that the propaganda for the legislation was heavy, "but I am going to resist the drift to war all I can." In a radio address in early September, the Wisconsin senator spoke feelingly of his conviction that America was going down the

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[34] Congressional Record, Appendix, August 9, 1940, 4996-4998; Congressional Record, August 23, 1940, 10804-10812, 10819-10822.

same road, making the same errors as it had in 1917, when his father led the opposition to the war fever. Propaganda was bombarding the senses of the American people and fomenting fear and hysteria. "These fears we must resist, for they are designed to becloud our reason and if successful will end in disaster for our country. I appeal to the people who do not want our Nation plunged into the holocaust, not to be sucked along the road to war by easy stages and fake reasoning." Hiram Johnson spoke twice in the Senate against universal military training, calling it the "most sinister bill that ever was passed during my long service as a United States Senator." Lynn Frazier, in the last speech of his Senate career (he had just been defeated for renomination by William Langer), asserted that the legislation was an abridgement of civil liberties and therefore unconstitutional. He pointed out that the conscription of wealth and property was labeled socialism and communism, but the forced service of men was really more along the lines of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. Despite progressive protests, the Selective Service bill was adopted by the Senate on August 28 by a 58-31 vote, only Charles McNary supporting passage. On September 14, the conference report was adopted 47-25, with the progressive Republicans again in the minority. [35]

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[35] The Progressive, August 10, 1940; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Dearest Ones, August 13, 1940; To Dear Ones, August 24, 1940, LaFollette Family Papers; Congressional Record, Appendix, September 11, 1940, 5649-5650; Congressional Record, August 9, 1940, 10090-10091; September 9, 1940 11777; August 19, 1940, 10485-10487; August 28, 1940,

As the Battle of Britain was raging and the Selective Service bill was being considered, William Allen White's Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies promoted the sale of old-age destroyers to Great Britain in exchange for bases on various island possessions in the Western Hemisphere, this to be accomplished by an executive agreement. On September 2, 1940, this exchange was announced. It was regarded as the end of true American neutrality in the war. The United States, openly aiding Great Britain, was now a nonbelligerent, rather than a neutral. Roosevelt was bitterly denounced by isolationists for this deal. LaFollette was upset because he believed it would take two years to replace the old equipment. America, he asserted, could have taken the British bases as payment for the World War I debt. "Unless we stop in our tracks there will be no end to the policy of taking everything that Britain wants and labeling it surplus or overage and obsolete. . . .You and I have been told for months that this Nation must strengthen its defenses, must build an impregnable military machine capable of protecting ourselves from any aggressor or combination of aggressors. . . . But all the while we are voting more money to prepare to defend this hemisphere against all comers, we are dissipating strength by sending huge quantities of guns, planes, and warships across the ocean." Nye said that transferring the destroyers was equivalent to an outright declaration of war. He denied that Britain was or should be America's first line of defense. Again, he asserted that the war was simply a

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11142; September 14, 1940, 12160.

struggle to save the British Empire. [36]

Franklin Roosevelt's decision to seek an unprecedented third term stirred much controversy. After the repeal of the arms embargo in the fall of 1939 had been achieved, Senator Capper wrote Alf Landon: "There is a growing feeling that Roosevelt will run for a third term. It is admitted that he can have the nomination with practically no opposition if he wants it." In February, 1940, Capper delivered a Lincoln's Birthday address in Baltimore. He said that a third term would represent a denial of the traditions of American government. The President had "mesmerized" himself with his own charm. No president, Capper concluded, should be permitted to hold the office for more than eight years. Nye called on Roosevelt to follow the advice of earlier Chief Executives who had refused to seek a third term. In June, he demanded Roosevelt's resignation to restore faith in the Presidency in a time of foreign crisis. Shipstead, running for re-election as a Republican after earlier campaigns as a Farmer-Laborite, announced before the party primaries in Minnesota that he was against a third term. In late August, he declared his intention of supporting

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[36] New York Times, August 6, 1940; The Progressive, August 24, 1940; Congressional Record, Appendix, September 11, 1940, 5649-5650; August 25, 1940, 5660; New York Times, August 26 and September 2, 1940.

Republican presidential nominee Wendell Willkie. [37]

Hiram Johnson was also running for re-election in 1940. The public split between the aging progressive and Roosevelt had grown to a chasm between 1937 and 1940. The President widened the gap further when he announced at a press conference that he no longer considered Johnson a true progressive. The statement was made when the President was asked if he considered Johnson a Democrat, since his name had been entered in that party's primary, as well as the Republican and Progressive contests. Roosevelt responded that no one in his "wildest dreams" could consider Hiram Johnson a Democrat or a liberal. Despite their friendship of thirty years' standing, and his recollections of Johnson's services in the early progressive movement in California and on the national level, he believed that Johnson had become a reactionary within the last three to four years. Johnson immediately retorted that Roosevelt was again attempting to purge his opponents, as he had been unsuccessful in doing within the Democratic party in 1938. The President would still have considered him a liberal or progressive, Johnson remarked, had he supported him on his Supreme Court packing plan and his foreign policy. He proclaimed pride in his record in the Senate, and said the people of his home state would not wish him to be simply a blind supporter of any administration's

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[37] Arthur Capper to Alf Landon, November 7, 1939, Landon Papers; New York Times, February 13 and 22, June 22, 1940; Congressional Record, June 21, 1940, 8791-8798; New York Times, August 2 and 28, 1940.

domestic and foreign policies. Despite Roosevelt's criticism, Johnson won the nomination of all three major parties in California by landslide proportions.

After the primaries, Johnson told his son that while he lacked enthusiasm for Willkie because of his general support of Roosevelt's foreign policy, "I could not be for a third termer, and I could not be for a man who asserted that I am unfit to be Progressive." Willkie, hopeful of gaining Johnson's endorsement, praised him in a Los Angeles campaign speech during September, terming him a "great fearless liberal leader." On October 18, Johnson announced his support of the Republican ticket in a nationwide radio address. The third term issue, he said, transcended all others in the campaign. Roosevelt was precipitating a domestic crisis which threatened the future of American democracy. The senator admitted he did not agree with Willkie on all issues. However, he emphasized the refusal of earlier Presidents to consider a third term, because of the threat to American liberties of one person remaining in office indefinitely. On Election Eve, Johnson again endorsed the Republican nominee in a one minute statement. Roosevelt could not be trusted to keep America out of war, Johnson declared. "I am convinced that a vote for Willkie means a vote for the real defense of our nation and a vote to keep the United States free from involvement in Europe's inferno." [38]

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[38] New York Times, August 3 and 4, 1940; New York Herald Tribune, August 3 and 4, 1940; New York Times, August 29, 1940;

LaFollette, the sponsor of the anti-third term resolution directed at President Coolidge in 1928, had become less enamored of Roosevelt since his re-election in 1936. He had supported his brother's unsuccessful attempt to form a new national progressive party as a successor to the New Deal, and both LaFollettes had become critical of the administration's economic and foreign policies. However, in the fall of 1940, LaFollette was seeking re-election to the Senate as a Progressive. To some observers' surprise, he declared his endorsement of a third term for the President. Despite his distaste for the foreign policy views of both Roosevelt and Willkie, "On the record as made by the candidates for President, the American way of life has a better opportunity of working out its destiny in the next four years under the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt." LaFollette pledged to the voters of his home state that he would continue to resist any action to send American soldiers overseas. In late October, Roosevelt's running mate, Henry Wallace, endorsed the Wisconsin Progressive's re-election to the Senate by inference in a Madison campaign speech. The support came after White House consultation with the LaFollette campaign organization, and it represented both the President's repudiation of the state Democratic organization and his continuing close,

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Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., September 1, 1940, Johnson Papers; New York Times, September 20 and October 19, 1940; New York Herald Tribune, October 19, 1940; Congressional Record, Appendix, October 18, 1940, 6472-6474; Hiram Johnson to Tom Lewis, November 4, 1940, Johnson Papers.

though somewhat strained, relationship with LaFollette.[39]

George Norris was the sole progressive who had remained loyal to Franklin D. Roosevelt through all of the crises of confidence in his leadership. Norris's views on America's role in world affairs had been transformed by the threat of Fascism. While opposed to the military conscription bill and still unwilling to commit himself to vote for the sending of American soldiers overseas, he did not issue denunciations of the administration's foreign policy because of his basic sympathy for Great Britain and France. He had not always trusted them, but saw no choice when faced with the obvious malignancy represented by Hitler and Mussolini.

In August, 1939, in response to a telegram from Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, requesting a statement on the need for liberalism in the 1940 presidential campaign, Norris wrote that Roosevelt might feel compelled to become a candidate for a third term because of the obstructionism to his policies by many Republican and Democratic reactionaries. "I would be glad to have it known that so far as I am concerned I am exceedingly anxious that no mistake be made and that no reactionary be nominated, but that, on the other hand, a thorough progressive should be nominated. That inasmuch as President Roosevelt is the one outstanding man who represents the principles of progressive government, it seems

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[39] New York Times, October 1, 1940; New York Herald Tribune, October 1, 1940; The Progressive, October 5, 1940; New York Times, October 23, 1940; New York Herald Tribune, October 23, 1940.

inevitable that he should be the nominee." While opposed in principle to a third term, Norris believed that the conditions confronting the nation, as well as the lack of alternative progressive candidates, made the third term less objectionable. He was convinced that Roosevelt had no ulterior motives, that he had no desire to increase his power and become a dictator, as some progressive Republicans, as well as conservatives of both parties, believed. Norris wrote Interior Secretary Harold Ickes in September, 1939, that he could not comprehend the maliciousness and hatred that so many men in public life had toward the President. In December, in a public statement, the Nebraska senator urged Roosevelt to avoid declaring his intentions for 1940 until the necessary time, and to ignore the attacks of his enemies. Norris implied that Roosevelt was indispensable to the continued triumph of progressivism on the national level. If the President showed his hand on the question of a third term, Norris said he might split the liberals and help nominate a reactionary. The senator concluded that Roosevelt should not consider dropping the possibility of re-election until his policies had been vindicated and a decent alternative arose. [40]

In May, 1940, Norris declared that he did not see how the President could refuse another nomination, with such

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[40] George Norris to Claude Pepper, August 11, 1939; Norris to Pepper, August 28, 1939; Norris to Harold Ickes, September 8, 1939, Norris Papers; New York Times, December 4, 1939.

unsettled foreign conditions. He thought that Roosevelt had no intentions of running for a third term before the Nazi attack on France. Now, Norris asserted, the Democratic party and the nation needed his leadership during this crucial moment in history. In a letter to a constituent in June, the senator affirmed his belief that Roosevelt had no intention to draw America into the war. He was effusive in praise of the President's leadership. "He has done so many good things. He has made a fight for the common people of America under circumstances so exasperating and so difficult that it seems to me, even though it means his life, he ought to stay in the position where he is now. When we look over the field and see the candidates who are seeking the nomination in one party or the other for the office of President, it seems to me that every citizen with a drop of liberal blood in his veins ought to be convinced that our one hope in this dilemma is Roosevelt." After the President's renomination, Norris defended it and said that most of the people opposed to a third term were enemies of Roosevelt of long standing. [41]

In September, an independent progressive movement for the re-election of the President was formed, with Norris and Mayor LaGuardia of New York City as its leaders. The two men met with Roosevelt at the White House to pledge their support. The President responded that the nation must remain

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[41] New York Times, May 26, 1940; George Norris to Jackson H. Ralston, June 8, 1940, Norris Papers; New York Times, July 19, 1940.

progressive, if democracy was to survive. Norris was named the honorary chairman of the committee, which had representatives from twenty-two states. The organization aimed to attract progressive support to Roosevelt in much the same way as the earlier efforts in 1932 and 1936. But no member of the progressive Republican Senate bloc endorsed the Norris committee, not even LaFollette who later supported the President's re-election. Foreign affairs had caused a permanent split in the formerly warm relationship between Roosevelt and many members of the progressive bloc. In a lengthy Senate speech at the end of September, Norris denounced Wendell Willkie's candidacy for the White House. He accused the Republican nominee of loyalty to the power trusts, corporations and monopolies. The Nebraska senator, despite his seventy-nine years, embarked on a series of public appearances during October. He emphasized the inexperience and corporate background of Willkie, contrasting it with the success of Roosevelt and his New Deal program during the previous eight years. [42]

Roosevelt won re-election with 55% of the vote and nearly a five million vote margin over Willkie. Now he could assert that the nation had given his foreign policy a mandate. Isolationists were gloomy about the future of

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[42] New York Times, September 25 and 28, 1940; New York Herald Tribune, September 25, 1940; Congressional Record, September 27, 1940, 12723-12743; Text of speeches of Senator Norris in 1940 campaign, Norris Papers; Congressional Record, Appendix, October 15, 1940, 6401-6403; New York Times, October 27 and November 3, 1940.

their struggle, but remained determined to continue it.

In the fall of 1940, after the announcement of the destroyers for bases deal, the America First Committee was organized by R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., a Yale Law School student, and General Robert E. Wood, Chairman of the Board of Sears Roebuck and Company. The committee campaigned before the 1940 elections and throughout 1941 against American aid to Great Britain, which they felt would only lead to direct military intervention. Many of the nation's leading public figures spoke under the auspices of America First, contending that Germany was no threat to American security, that the European war was simply the typical power struggle that had been going on for centuries, and that the American democratic system would be destroyed by involvement in the conflict. These ideas were the basic ones that had been promulgated by the progressive Republican senators in their years-long battle against the abandonment of isolationism from political and military conflicts abroad. Among those who became active America Firsters were Charles Lindbergh, Burton K. Wheeler, Philip LaFollette, and Gerald P. Nye. Four of the six other progressive Republicans still in their Senate seats in 1941 (Capper, Johnson, LaFollette, Shipstead) joined Nye in contributing to the America First campaign, either by general endorsement or an occasional address or statement

released through its headquarters. [43]

In December, 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote President Roosevelt of the grave condition that his nation faced. He requested more American supplies for the war effort, by loan of money and leasing of equipment. Roosevelt now drew up the concept of Lend-Lease, in order to give Great Britain the munitions it needed to defeat Hitler. On December 29, in a fireside chat, the President told the nation that America must be "the great arsenal of democracy". A bill was formulated and numbered H.R. 1776 and introduced into Congress on January 10, 1941.

Hiram Johnson had predicted during December that America would soon be in World War II. "Those in command of us are perfectly mad to be a part of the game. When it is propitious, from their point of view, they'll take us in." The Lend-Lease bill seemed to him and other progressive Republicans as an obvious, but dangerous, move. Johnson called the bill "monstrous". Although no appeaser, he was unwilling to change the American form of government just to please the needs and desires of Great Britain. "The bill presents squarely to Congress whether it shall create a dictatorship . . . .It is up to Congress now to determine whether our government shall be as ordained or become a member of the totalitarian States." The day before the third inauguration

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[43] See Wayne Cole, America First: The Battle Against Intervention (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953).

of Roosevelt, the senator wrote his son of the coming "coronation". "Damn this ceremony tomorrow. . . .This probably may be the last ceremony of the inauguration of a President that we'll ever have. It is quite within the bounds of possibility . . . ." The Californian again took the leadership of the isolationist opposition, including Capper, LaFollette, Nye and Shipstead. In mid-February, plans were readied to push amendments to prohibit the transfer of any part of the American navy to Great Britain, and to bar the use of American warships to convoy goods abroad. In a radio address on February 24, Johnson appealed for public support of the small Senate bloc fighting the proposal. "Our band is small but determined, and will fight to the end. We need your help. This is your fight. Our backs are against the wall,. . ." [44]

Capper wrote William Allen White, leader of the leading interventionist organization but also a close friend, that the Lend-Lease proposal "goes too far in surrendering the powers of Congress. I believe it comes pretty close to setting up a dictatorship." A few days after its introduction, Capper attacked the measure on the Senate floor. The bill, he said, gave the President absolute control of American foreign policy. Great Britain was not to be regarded as our

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[44] New York Times, December 5, 1940; New York Herald Tribune, December 5, 1940; New York Times, January 11 and 12, 1941; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson, Jr., January 19, 1941, Johnson Papers; New York Times, February 15 and 25, 1941; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 24, 1941, 826-828.

Maginot Line. America must defend and watch out for itself. The nation would pay a heavy price in blood, sweat, tears, taxes and postwar depression, the senator warned, if it engaged in the war. America should give assistance to Great Britain, but only that which was not at the expense of the nation's security and defense. The Kansas senator delivered two radio addresses and another floor speech during January and February. [45]

Shipstead termed the Lend-Lease bill "a blank check upon the entire resources of our country to guarantee the military victory of one of the belligerents." In two Senate speeches and a radio address, the Minnesotan declared that, if Great Britain was indeed fighting America's battle, then it was essential that this country declare war, rather than deceive the people. The security of America should not be based upon other nations' military might. The senator continued: "If and when the bill becomes a law our national sovereignty will be merged with and subordinated to an unnamed foreign power or powers whose policy we do not know, whose secret understandings as the result of this war with foreign powers we do not know, and whose policy, whatever it may be, we agree blindly to accept and to guarantee with the financial and human resources of the United States. In other

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[45] Arthur Capper to William Allen White, January 11, 1941, White Papers; New York Times, January 15, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, January 15, 1941; Congressional Record, Appendix, January 21, 1941, 168-170; February 7, 1941, 612-613; Congressional Record, February 22, 1941, 1271-1275.

words, the unnamed foreign power or powers will call the tune, and we will pay the cost with our money, our resources, and the precious blood of American boys." [46]

LaFollette denounced the Lend-Lease bill as one that demanded "that Congress abdicate vital and important powers." It was a bold attempt, the senator wrote in The Progreesive, to create a presidential dictatorship in foreign affairs. LaFollette thought this was the most crucial foreign policy question since the armed ship bill of March, 1917, which his father had bitterly attacked. Congress, the senator charged, would only function as a rubber stamp under this bill. He wrote Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter of his "concern for the ultimate survival of the democratic spirit here at home." In a fiery Senate speech, LaFollette declared he was not a pacifist, that he was for defending America in the Western Hemisphere, but that he opposed any attempt to make the world "safe for democracy." Great Britain was fighting for herself, not America. America must prove that democracy could function at home before it commenced to police the world. The senator solemnly declared that he would never give his vote for another "bloodbath" and for a move toward totalitarianism. [47]

Nye delivered at least eight speeches against Lend-Lease

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[46] New York Times, January 13, 1941; Congressional Record, January 16, 1941, 150; February 25, 1941, 1346-1350; Congressional Record, Appendix, March 8, 1941, 1078; New York Times, February 26, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, February 26, 1941.

[47] New York Times, January 11 and 12, 1941; The

over the radio or at public gatherings, and about twelve hours of oratory in the Senate, more than any other member of that body. Administration supporters accused him of encouraging a war psychology by continued statements that war was imminent if the bill passed. His attacks on Great Britain as the world's leading aggressor caused many people in the country to speculate whether he was pro-Fascist, which he heatedly denied. With Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, he demanded that Roosevelt ask the belligerent nations for a statement of their war aims, their conditions for peace, and "any and all secret treaties for disposition of territorial spoils." [48]

Charles McNary and George Norris were the only progressive Republicans to support Lend-Lease. McNary originally declared himself against it, "because it grants extraordinary and total power to one person." But he voiced hope for modifications which would permit him to support the President. After some changes were made in the final form, the Oregon senator supported it. Norris approved of the principle of

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Progressive, January 18, 1941; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Felix Frankfurter, January 30, 1941, Felix Frankfurter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Congressional Record, February 24, 1941, 1299-1308; New York Herald Tribune, February 25, 1941; The Progressive, March 1, 1941.

[48] New York Times, January 11, 12, 20, 27, February 2, 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, March 2, 3, 9, 1941; Congressional Record, January 27, 1941, 310-311; February 18, 1941, 1108-1112; February 25, 1941, 1363-1368; February 26, 1941, 1406-1413, 1420-1422, 1423-1425, 1432-1435; March 4, 1941, 1722-1733; March 8, 1941, 2082-2096; Congressional Record, Appendix, March 24, 1941, 1333-1339.

Lend-Lease legislation, but thought a time limit should be placed on the powers given to the President. In a radio address, he endorsed the legislation as a means to help Great Britain win the war and avoid American commitment of its own men. He denounced the Axis powers for their lack of humanity and civilization, and asserted: ". . .The defeat of Hitler is necessary, not only to preserve a peace-loving world, but to preserve our own happiness, and ultimately, our own existance." The Nebraska senator admitted being troubled by the possibility of war, which he dreaded as much as in 1917. But the situation had changed, and America must risk the possibility of involvement to preserve sanity in the world. [49]

On March 7, as the Senate was preparing for a roll call vote on the bill, Hiram Johnson and George Norris introduced amendments. Johnson proposed that funds be provided to send American soldiers overseas only in time of actual hostilities. This amendment was designed to carry out Roosevelt's campaign pledge that he would never send American youth to fight another war in Europe. Speaking with emotion and indignation, the California senator pleaded with his colleagues to keep true to this promise. "All you need to do is to stand up, to have the guts that God gave you, to have the nerve which

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[49] New York Times, January 23, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, January 23, 1941; Charles McNary statement to the Press, January 22, 1941; McNary to Alfred A. Huber, April 2, 1941, McNary Papers; New York Times, January 23, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, January 23, 1941; New York Times, February 27, 1941; Congressional Record, Appendix, February 26, 1941, 873-875; Thomas N. Guinsburg, "The George W. Norris 'Conversion' to Internationalism, 1939-1941," Nebraska History LIII (Winter, 1972), 477-490.

should be in you, to have the decency which should actuate you. Every man of you should have all of these characteristics in order that you may save from bloody graves the boys of America." At the conclusion of his brief comments, the Senate galleries broke into widespread applause. Norris, to calm fears of many that the Lend-Lease bill authorized Roosevelt to order the army to Europe, proposed amending the legislation with a denial of that belief. On the Johnson amendment, which was defeated 56-35, all of the progressive Republicans except Norris supported the Californian. The Norris amendment, defeated 52-39, saw all seven progressives in the minority. [50]

Only McNary and Norris supported final passage of H.R. 1776, when the 60-31 vote was recorded on March 8, 1941. LaFollette assessed the defeat of the isolationist bloc in a letter to General Robert E. Wood of the America First Committee. "The ties of party loyalty combined with some Republican support and terrific Administration pressure proved to be more than the opposition could overcome." But the Wisconsin legislator believed the fight had been essential, and that it was not yet time to concede the cause of keeping America out of war. Capper wrote Alf Landon of his belief that American troops would be sent to Europe within a few months. On the Lend-Lease vote in the Senate, Capper wrote:

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[50] Congressional Record, March 7, 1941, 1961-1962, 1975-1978; New York Times, March 8, 1941.

"I think the opposition forces really made a good showing in the Senate when they mustered 31 votes against the Lend-Lease bill in the face of the fact that Roosevelt has a tighter grip on Congress than any President ever has had in our time." [51]

On March 24, the appropriations bill for the Lend-Lease program came up for a Senate vote, passing 67-9. Only Capper, McNary and Norris of the progressive bloc supported passage. Gerald Nye denounced it as "a serious threat to our strength and our democratic system." Nye, Capper, LaFollette, Shipstead and Democrats Wheeler and Clark of Idaho re-introduced once again a war referendum amendment. Only a majority vote of both houses of Congress was necessary to make this concurrent resolution effective. This idea had no chance of passage, but it remained a symbol of the die-hard isolationist spirit among most progressives in the Senate. [52]

Although cognizant of the fact that they were in the minority and rapidly losing their strength and prestige, the progressive Republican isolationists refused to give up their

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[51] Congressional Record, March 8, 1941, 2097; New York Times, March 9, 1941; Robert LaFollette, Jr. to General Robert E. Wood, March 11, 1941, LaFollette Family Papers; The Progressive, March 15, 1941; Arthur Capper to Alf Landon, March 12, 1941, Landon Papers.

[52] Congressional Record, March 24, 1941, 2509; New York Times, March 25 and 28, 1941; Congressional Record, March 27, 1941, 2610; New York Herald Tribune, March 28, 1941.

cause. Shipstead, at an America First rally in Minnesota, accused the advocates of war of lying to the American people by their contention that the various actions of the President and Congress since the fall of 1939 had moved the nation further away from war. In an Independence Day address in his home state, Shipstead attacked the President and his cabinet for war-like statements and actions. The senator asserted: ". . .We must repudiate for all time the abominable suggestion that Americans should clothe any man with dictatorial powers. We are against communism and fascism; we are against Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin; we will not tolerate either communism or fascism in this country and we will not set up a Hitler, even if the individual who greedily reaches for that power bears a more honored name." This bitter personal attack on Roosevelt showed the depth of alienation felt by many progressives toward the President by 1941. In another address, Shipstead was critical of American occupation of Iceland without congressional approval. LaFollette wondered if the Four Freedoms speech of Roosevelt meant anything once Russia had become an ally after the Nazi invasion in June, 1941. Capper was critical of Roosevelt's orders that American ships be convoyed and shoot at Italian or German vessels that threatened attack. Johnson challenged those who favored intervention in Europe to present a resolution declaring war to the Congress. In a radio address under the auspices of the America First Committee, he said that Roosevelt "speaks with the confidence of a Hitler or a Mussolini" and that he

"puts to blush even these two braggarts." The Californian denounced the President for speaking continually of the Four Freedoms and his aim of bringing these freedoms to everyone in the world. "How he is going to do it is a deep, dark mystery, but he speaks as if it were easy of accomplishment and never gives a thought to the agony and the anguish and bloodletting that will have to accomplish it." The Atlantic Charter, announced after Churchill--Roosevelt conferences off Newfoundland in August, was attacked by the California senator as a violation of the Constitution. [53]

During the spring and summer of 1941, Gerald Nye pursued, amidst much public controversy and criticism, his denunciation of Roosevelt's foreign policy. He introduced legislation to prohibit convoys and to investigate the public opinion polls, the motion picture and radio industries, which he believed were propagandists for interventionist spokesmen. At an America First gathering, he named the heads of the eight major film companies, and was immediately accused of anti-Semitism, because most were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. In September, at the opening session of hearings on the motion picture resolution, Nye denied he

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[53] New York Times, May 11, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, May 11, 1941; New York Times, July 5, 1941; Congressional Record, Appendix, July 4, 1941, 3506-3508; July 19, 1941, 3539-3540; Statement of Robert LaFollette, Jr. to Richard Neuberger, of the Portland Oregonian, August 15, 1941, LaFollette Family Papers; Congressional Record, September 15, 1941, 7404; Congressional Record, Appendix, May 31, 1941, 2594-2596; New York Times, June 1, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, June 1, 1941; Congressional Record, August 19, 1941, 7206-7208; New York Times, August 20, 1941.

was anti-Jewish and pro-Nazi. The former charge was made, he said, by Jews who "were feeding their persecution complexes to their own detriment." He requested that the investigation undertake a thorough inquiry of pro-Nazi, pro-Fascist and pro-Communist, as well as anti-totalitarian films.

Probably Nye's most controversial public appearance was at the Steuben Society Dinner in New York City on September 20. Before this German organization and a nationwide radio audience, Nye appealed for "all loyal Americans" to oppose President Roosevelt's policy of aiding those who were fighting Nazi Germany. He attacked peacetime conscription, Roosevelt's "shoot on sight" orders to the navy, Lend-Lease aid to Great Britain, and support of Stalinist Russia in its struggle against Nazi invaders. He accused interventionists of labeling loyal Americans, such as Charles Lindbergh, Burton Wheeler and himself as anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi. This charge had arisen again when, on September 19, Nye agreed with a Lindbergh speech which asserted that the Jews were a major factor in the movement toward intervention in World War II. While Nye was speaking, various groups were picketing outside, and a heavy police detail was on duty. At a Newark, New Jersey meeting a few days later, Nye called the prevailing situation one of presidential war, but asserted that Roosevelt was afraid of asking for a declaration of war because Congress would reject it. At an America First rally in Brooklyn, with five hundred policemen on guard against disorder, Nye again denied that he and other

non-interventionists were anti-Semitic. [54]

Once Roosevelt had ordered the convoying of American ships and given "shoot on sight" orders to the navy, he was confronted with the problem that the 1939 Neutrality Act prohibited the arming of American merchant vessels and their entry into war zones. With Iceland under American control and Roosevelt's evident desire to help the British merchant marine by the sending of American ships with Lend-Lease supplies, the President decided to request revision of the remaining sections of the neutrality legislation. The attacks on the American ships Greer, Kearney and Reuben James during September and October helped to increase pressure on Congress to do the President's bidding. Norris thought repeal of the Neutrality Act would mean war. He doubted whether Congress would approve a declaration of hostilities, but he agreed with the administration's defense of freedom of the seas. America could not, he asserted, recognize any German attempt "to map off the oceans and tell us where we can and cannot go." [55]

LaFollette attacked repeal or modification of the

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[54] Congressional Record, April 29, 1941, 3374; May 6, 1941, 3606; June 9, 1941, 4851; August 1, 1941, 6565; Congressional Record, Appendix, August 1, 1941, 3736-3738; New York Times, August 2 and September 10, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, September 10, 1941; Congressional Record, October 6, 1941, 7627-7630; New York Times, September 21, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, September 21, 1941; Congressional Record, October 6, 1941, 7626-7627; Congressional Record, Appendix, September 23, 1941, 4567-4568; New York Times, September 23, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, September 23, 1941.

[55] New York Times, September 24, 1941.

remaining sections of the Neutrality Act because it represented another step toward war, and it was a violation of Roosevelt's pledge to keep America out of the conflict. Roosevelt's request was the equivalent of war on the installment plan and would "short-cut the power of Congress to decide whether we shall enter the war." On October 14, eleven isolationist senators, including progressives Johnson, LaFollette, Nye and Capper, met in Johnson's office to lay plans to oppose the Roosevelt proposal. On October 25, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved 13-10 a measure to repeal the 1939 law. The five progressives on the committee--Capper, Johnson, LaFollette, Nye and Shipstead--voted against the proposal. As the meeting ended, Shipstead declared: "This is the last of the many steps taken in the last three years leading us into war. And it may be the final step. The subtle program of the war party stands barefaced before the world."

Despite defeat in committee, the progressives yet used their last ounce of strength to condemn the measure in floor debate. Nye declared that America would be in a shooting war as soon as the neutrality legislation was repealed. LaFollette called the impending vote one on war or peace, and he warned again that democracy could not flourish if the nation went to war. Capper asserted that he could not join in support of a "nightmare" brought about by subterfuge and lies. Shipstead declared that the isolationists had been "loyal to the sovereign", the American people. They would never regret

their stand for peace, the Minnesota senator said of himself and his colleagues. Johnson, in a radio address and in brief comments before the vote to repeal passed on November 7, declared his love for his country and his sadness at its future. ". . .There are not many more years of service that I can render or for which I shall survive, but so long as I live, and am a sentient being I shall stand up just as an American, let the abuse be what it may, and fight as well as God has given me the ability to fight, with every fiber of my being for my country." Calling himself an "emotional, old man", he warned the Senate that every member who voted to repeal the Neutrality Act would live to regret it to the last day of his life. [56]

The Senate proceeded to approve the repeal of Sections 2, 3 and 6 of the 1939 Neutrality Act by a 50-37 margin. McNary joined all other progressive Republicans, except George Norris, in the irreconcilable minority. Ships could now be armed, and they were permitted to sail to ports of warring nations. Exactly a month later, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. On December 11, Nazi Germany declared war on the United States. All the progressives supported the

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[56] New York Times, September 28 and October 13, 1941; The Progressive, October 18, 1941; New York Times, October 15, 26 and 30, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, October 15, 26 and 30, 1941; Congressional Record, October 29, 1941, 8305-8308, 8316-8318, 8321-8325; October 31, 1941, 8385-8389; November 3, 1941, 8421-8423, 8425-8426; November 7, 1941, 8602-8607, 8671; Congressional Record, Appendix, November 7, 1941, 5040-5042; New York Times, November 8, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, November 8, 1941.

declaration of war. America had finally entered World War II. [57]

Isolationism in the United States had been dealt a mortal blow, and with it, the public image of the progressive Republican Senate bloc. This group of colorful mavericks had been repudiated. They were to suffer loss of their prestige, and in some cases within the next few years, electoral defeat. Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had cultivated their friendship and alliance in the early years of the New Deal, had totally alienated them from his leadership by 1941, with the exception of George Norris and sometimes Robert LaFollette, Jr. The decline of the progressive Republicans was indeed an indication of a vast change in the nation and its two major political parties.

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[57] Congressional Record, November 7, 1941, 8680; New York Times, Novemebr 8, 1941; New York Herald Tribune, November 8, 1941.

CHAPTER XI

THE DECLINE OF WESTERN REPUBLICAN PROGRESSIVISM

America's entrance into the Second World War doomed the survivors of the progressive bloc to a rapid political decline, and electoral defeat for some of them. The isolationist cause was dealt a death blow. With the rise of an internationalist spirit among the American people, the spokesmen for isolationism were accused of having misled the country as to the safety of America from foreign attack and the danger of Fascism. The progressive Republicans still serving in the Senate saw their basic principles dismissed as outmoded and illogical. Death or political oblivion would occur to six of the seven remaining progressives. But they remained true to their principles, refusing to recant their beliefs despite the rapid withering of public esteem.

The progressives who had supported Lend-Lease, Charles McNary and George Norris, died in 1944. McNary, still Republican Minority Leader at his death in February of that year, had endorsed the concept of an international organization to maintain peace in a public statement five months before. Norris, victim of a strong conservative tide in Nebraska in the 1942 elections, had suffered his first and only political defeat when Republican Kenneth Wherry won his seat

in the Senate. Disillusioned over his forced retirement by the voters, Norris isolated himself for a period of months from public view, but then he publicly endorsed the resolution of Senator Tom Connally of Texas for American involvement in a new international organization. He approved of President Roosevelt's handling of the war effort and declared that unless some outstanding man came along within the next year, he was willing to back Roosevelt for a fourth term. During 1944, Norris worked on his memoirs. After Roosevelt's nomination for a fourth term, he issued a statement of support, asserting that a change in leadership during the war "would be a mistake, a tragic mistake." Two months later, the "gentle knight of American Democracy" was dead. The New York Times declared in an editorial: "Probably no Senator in his time left a deeper impress on a changing America . . . . He was uncompromising and incorruptible." [1]

Of the five other progressives, only Arthur Capper left public office by his own decision. Reelected to a fifth Senate term in 1942, Capper joined in support of the Connally Resolution in the fall of 1943, and he supported the establishment of the United Nations at the end of the war. In 1948, Capper, now eighty-three years old, decided to retire, his public reputation intact. While he had been an isolationist before Pearl Harbor, Capper had never been as vehement in support of that viewpoint as the other four

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[1] New York Times, September 11 and November 8, 1943; July 9 and September 4, 1944.

surviving progressives - - Gerald Nye, Hiram Johnson, Robert LaFollette, Jr. and Henrik Shipstead.[2]

On November 5, 1943, the United States Senate voted on the Connally Resolution. The final vote, with the announced positions of absentees counted, was 90-6. Johnson, LaFollette and Shipstead were three of those in opposition. Nye voted with the majority, but challenged the need for the resolution. McNary and Capper also voted for the resolution as expected.[3]

Nye, who had been the most controversial member of the Senate during 1940 and 1941, was rejected for reelection by North Dakota voters in 1944. In his farewell address in the Senate, Nye told his colleagues that they stood between the United States and another world war. He predicted a return to the old balance of power system in Europe and imperialism in Asia. The only way to keep out of a third world war, Nye declared, was "by minding our own business, keeping out of entangling alliances, developing our markets in this hemisphere and devoting our strength honestly and solely to the defense of our own territories." With this statement, Nye retired to private life, becoming more and more conservative in his attitudes on politics during his long period of retirement until his death in 1971.[4]

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[2] New York Times, October 29, 1943; July 27, 1945.

[3] New York Times, November 5 and 6, 1943.

[4] New York Times, December 20, 1944.

Johnson, aging and sickly during most of the war, spoke out before he cast his vote against the Connally Resolution. His voice full of emotion, the old, bitter progressive of bygone days declared: "God save the United States of America. God give to her all she should have. God preserve her in the days to come. I know what they will bring. I have been through such days. But God be good to us and permit us to resist and permit us to be the country we have ever been." He indicated that if he still had his former strength, he would have fought the Connally Resolution in committee and on the floor. In July, 1945, Johnson, again seriously ill in the hospital, declared in a public statement that he was opposed to American membership in the United Nations, which had recently been created in San Francisco. A few weeks later, the cantankerous old progressive died, marking the end of an era. On the day of his death, the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. American foreign policy would never be restored to Hiram Johnson's dream of isolationism. The New York Times asserted: "He went down with his colors flying. The veteran isolationist died as the dust arose over Hiroshima and the myth of isolation was shattered into bits. . . ." [5]

LaFollette's fortunes sagged during the war. In March, 1943, he warned against American involvement in an international organization until it was clear what kind of peace would be established after the war. In May, 1944, he expressed concern

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[5] New York Times, November 6, 1943; July 15, and August 7, 1945.

over the failure of the allies to make a clear statement of their war aims. He was critical of Roosevelt and refused to commit himself to endorsement of the President for a fourth term. The Wisconsin Progressive Party platform of 1944 contained LaFollette's sentiments toward Roosevelt and his handling of the war. Turner Catledge of the New York Times commented that LaFollette had not given up his isolationist beliefs and that his criticism of the President demonstrated that the twelve year alliance between the New Deal and Wisconsin Progressives was over. Addressing the Progressive state convention, LaFollette called for a foreign policy based strictly upon America's national interest. The New Deal, he declared, was a casualty of the war. It had reneged on its promises and was permitting the war effort to be directed by the forces of "monopoly and reaction". The state convention endorsed LaFollette's views on American foreign policy by an overwhelming vote of 666 - 2. LaFollette told the convention they should be thankful that they had maintained their independence and had not allowed a "political pied piper" to lead them into the Democratic party. In October, 1944, the Wisconsin senator demanded that American foreign policy be divorced from the "imperial designs of Mr. Churchill" and "the Soviet drive for power of Mr. Stalin". He called for more of the Four Freedoms, instead of the Four Horsemen - - imperialism, spheres of influence, special privilege and exploitation. He refused to endorse Roosevelt, causing a split among Progressives in Wisconsin, many accusing him of desiring to

keep the support of the large German and Polish vote in Milwaukee for his upcoming reelection campaign in 1946. [6]

After the Second World War finally ended in the spring of 1945 in Europe, LaFollette delivered a three hour Senate speech attacking the United Nations organizational setup. He accused the Soviet Union of violating the Yalta agreements and said Prime Minister Churchill had been dogmatic and arrogant in his position on the British Empire. The world was travelling the same road that it had after World War I, the Wisconsin senator asserted. He criticized the UN plan to allow one of the five major powers in the Security Council the right to veto military action against a peacebreaker. However, when the Senate voted on the ratification of the UN charter, LaFollette voted for American membership. [7]

By 1946, the Wisconsin Progressive Party organization had become a shambles. The Progressives had lost their hold over the state during the war, and LaFollette sensed that the third party could not win any more elections, that he must take the Wisconsin Progressives back into the Republican party. Henry Wallace and other Democrats tried to convince LaFollette to bring his progressive following into the Democratic party, but to no avail. On March 17, the party convention voted to end its twelve year independent existence and to rejoin the Republican party. The final vote

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[6] New York Times, March 24, 1943; May 8, 9, 10, 1944; October 16 and 20, 1944.

[7] New York Times, June 1 and July 29, 1945.

was 284 to join the Republicans, 77 to retain the progressive label, 51 to join the state Democratic party, and 3 to join the Socialists. LaFollette declared that the Democratic party organization in Wisconsin was too weak to act as a vehicle for the passage of progressive ideas. At the end of March, LaFollette announced that he was a candidate for re-election to the Senate as a "progressive Republican". He would run, he declared, on his record of service to the people of his state and his promotion of liberal causes. [8]

LaFollette was challenged in the Republican primary by an obscure circuit court judge, Joseph R. McCarthy. Few political observers thought LaFollette was in trouble. The family name had been in public office since 1900. However, the Wisconsin senator, involved in formulating congressional reorganization legislation, did not come home to campaign until only a few days before the primary. Conservative elements in the Republican party emphasized his abandonment of their organization in 1934, and many progressives were critical of his decision to join that party again. The LaFollette reign in national politics came to a sad conclusion on Primary Day, when McCarthy eked out a victory by about 5,000 votes. The Wisconsin senator lost much of his usual support in urban areas. Many liberal and labor votes had gone to the liberal Democratic nominee for the Senate, Howard McMurray, thus taking away LaFollette's strength. Had he

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[8] New York Times, March 17 and 18, April 1, 1946.

agreed to run on the Democratic ticket, he would have gained the united support of liberals and labor. The New York Times thought LaFollette's isolationist record had harmed him among many liberals who had been Roosevelt supporters. "Yet not many hats will be thrown in the air to celebrate the Senator's defeat, despite his isolationism . . . . Among the isolationist group, LaFollette was the best of the lot. No demagogue, an able and industrious Senator, he was unfortunate in inheriting his international position from his father, . . ." [9]

Henrik Shipstead continued his campaign for isolationism from international power politics during and after World War II. During the 1944 presidential campaign, the Minnesota senator attacked Roosevelt's conduct of foreign policy over the previous twelve years. He blamed the President for the outbreak of the war. Europe had been at peace, Germany was not a military threat, and Japan was not America's arch-enemy when Roosevelt took office. The diplomatic and economic policies of the administration, he asserted, had helped these countries to become threats to the peace of the world, and American backing of Great Britain and France had led to bloodshed. Shipstead was one of only two senators (along with William Langer of North Dakota) to vote against the ratification of the UN charter in July, 1945. [10]

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[9] New York Times, June 19, August 13 and 15, 1946.

[10] New York Times, September 20, 1944; July 29, 1945.

Shipstead was an excellent target for internationalists when he ran for reelection in 1946. He had rejoined the Republican party during the late 1930's after nearly three terms in the Senate as a Farmer-Laborite. But the Minnesota Republican party was led by Harold Stassen, prominent presidential possibility and leading spokesman for internationalism, who proceeded to promote Governor Edward Thye for the Senate nomination. Political observers thought Shipstead's strength lay in the German and Scandinavian voters in the state. During the primary campaign, Shipstead boasted of his vote against the United Nations charter. Polls predicted Thye would defeat Shipstead over the issue of foreign policy. On Primary Day, Shipstead was repudiated by the Minnesota voters, losing renomination in a landslide in both urban and rural areas. Shipstead won only about 40% of the votes statewide. The New York Times declared that the voters had turned against the incumbent almost certainly because he was a "unreconstructed isolationist". [11]

The decline and fall of the Western progressive Republican Senate bloc was the direct result of their reactions to New Deal domestic and foreign policies, as well as the changing nature of American politics. Principle, personality and political factors all played key roles in progressive judgments on Franklin Roosevelt's administration. A general

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[11] New York Times, June 17, July 8, 9, 10, 1946.

explanation for the defection of the progressive Republicans (with the exception of Norris and to some extent LaFollette) can be developed from the available evidence.

The western progressives had been nurtured on a belief in the basic goodness of the small town, agrarian West. They had grown to adulthood in an atmosphere of mistrust of the Eastern moneyed interests - - banks, the stock market, corporations. They feared economic centralization of power in the form of trusts, holding companies and other types of monopoly because it represented a departure from the provincial America that they wanted to preserve, where economic competition and opportunities had flourished. As promoters of democratization of government and its greater concern for the problems of the common people, the western progressives welcomed enhanced presidential leadership in economic and social affairs to better the lives of the farmer, worker and consumer. But this did not mean that the progressives desired a vast centralization of power in the Presidency, with the resultant dimishing role of the representative branch of the federal government, the Congress. A truly representative government also meant to the progressives that the party which controlled national affairs should not have reactionary machine elements as a basic part of its political strength, because that would corrupt the good motives and intentions of any administration. As firm believers in the uniqueness and superiority of American institutions, the western progressives considered political isolation from international power politics essential to

keep the nation democratic and virtuous. The American experience in the First World War made them nostalgic for the America of the nineteenth century, which had prospered and grown to greatness while isolated from foreign wars and controversies. These various principles guided the western progressive Republican bloc's reaction to the New Deal.

The progressives were disturbed that the national government's reaction to the onset of the Great Depression was to preach the virtues of individualism and laissez faire, while people were in dire need. The national government's lack of concern for the average American pushed the progressives towards a leadership role in promoting aid for the unemployed through relief and public works. The Republican party's conservative and business orientation made an alternative essential for the 1932 presidential election. The individualism of the progressives and their minority position in the party prevented any success in a challenge to Hoover's renomination. But Franklin D. Roosevelt represented a hope for many, if only his good intentions were pursued. Thus, all the progressives except Capper and McNary (the two most loyal to the Republican establishment) supported Roosevelt or remained neutral in 1932.

The Roosevelt attempt to attract progressive support during the 1932 campaign and his overtures to bloc members to join his cabinet was a good sign that a truly progressive administration was about to begin. In keeping with their individualistic, independent nature, however, the progressives

refused to join the cabinet so that they might be free to criticize the administration when deemed necessary and help promote legislative passage of his program when it was progressive. Wanting the New Deal to succeed, the progressives tried to steer Roosevelt toward reforms that they favored. The First New Deal program of cooperation with big business, economic planning and deflation therefore disturbed the progressives. Roosevelt, however, cultivated good relations with a number of the members of the bloc and always seemed to be willing to listen. The President encouraged them to give advice and finally agreed in 1935 to their entreaties for a large scale reform program that became known as the Second New Deal.

However, at the same time that the western progressives were experiencing their greatest triumphs, Roosevelt's handling of Bronson Cutting's re-election contest and his decision to push the World Court issue, as well as his denunciation of the Supreme Court's decision on the NRA, troubled many of the progressives. Many began to evaluate Roosevelt as a personally charming man who, however, possessed a streak of egotism and ruthlessness and was determined to pursue his goals despite opposition from the progressive bloc. By the election of 1936, many of the progressives, formerly willing to grant powers to the President to deal with the depression, had begun to express public and private concern about the leanings of the New Deal. The executive power had increased tremendously, government bureaucracy had multiplied, and federal spending had skyrocketed, with

Roosevelt creating larger deficit budgets every year. The powerful role of the corrupt city machines and Southern conservatives in the New Deal coalition had become apparent, and the actions of the Democratic National Chairman and Postmaster General James Farley promoting political patronage for loyal Democrats had irritated the progressive Republicans, who believed that the Democratic party organization was hopelessly reactionary, even if the President was a liberal with basically good intentions.

With the beginning of Roosevelt's second term, progressive faith in the President disintegrated when, without consulting them, he promoted the "packing" of the Supreme Court. Although the progressives agreed with Roosevelt that the Court was an impediment to the New Deal, all but LaFollette and Norris feared his drive for increased presidential power. This concern over a too powerful Presidency shaped their reaction to the government reorganization bill and to Roosevelt's desire for discretionary authority over American neutrality policy. Their deep suspicion and mistrust of Roosevelt's intentions was magnified by the President's growing internationalist stand and denunciation of Fascist aggression in Europe and Asia. Convinced that Roosevelt was extending the executive branch's power to the detriment of Congress, and the political power of the Democrats to the disadvantage of the Republicans, the majority of the western progressives rejected any further extension of government authority over labor and agriculture, which the legislation of 1938 promised, and they attacked

WPA involvement in politics. The left-leaning western progressives, the proponents of a "New Deal" before Roosevelt's election to the White House, now had moved to the right of Roosevelt, and had become indistinguishable from the conservative critics of New Deal reforms in the Democratic and Republican parties.

Unwilling to trust Roosevelt any longer, the members of the bloc, with the exception of LaFollette and Norris, became more and more reactionary. Roosevelt had destroyed their dream of a progressive democracy in which the President and Congress, working together, promoted economic equality and opportunity and destroyed the influence of political bossism. Instead, Roosevelt had catered to certain interest groups - - labor unions, Southern conservatives, city machines and urban dwellers, including the large immigrant masses. He had upset the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches, and his probable legacy was a powerful Democratic party, controlled by groups alien to western progressive ideals, and an America perverted by international involvement, committed to war, violence and bloodshed as essential in its role as an "international policeman". The final blow to western progressivism in the Republican party was their repudiation by the voters, who no longer felt that these men represented their views on national and international issues. Their progressive backgrounds hurt them in their conservative constituencies, and their isolationism harmed them in an era of growing internationalist spirit. American politics

had indeed changed.

To this discussion of progressive principles as a factor in rejection of the New Deal by most members of the bloc must be added the all-important consideration of personality. As a group, the progressives were supreme moralists, extremely self-righteous, stubborn, strong-headed and strong-willed. As usually proves true for all reformers, they saw their views as that of the forces of light against the forces of darkness. As mavericks and individualists, they were also the leading prima donnas of American politics. It would have been a major feat for any president to retain their support throughout his years in office. These senators, after all, were all leaders, not followers. They would not hitch their futures to the whims of any President, let alone each other. Many were regarded at one time or another as possible candidates for the White House. Borah, Norris and Johnson had been potential candidates for many years, and younger progressives LaFollette, Nye and Cutting were the subject of speculation during the New Deal years. Such legislators would never give up their cherished independence to advance the fortunes of a leader who possessed as much egotism as they did. A personality conflict was inevitable between the progressives, believers in their own righteousness, and Roosevelt, believer in his own leadership. As long as he consulted with them, humored and flattered them, they would cooperate with his administration. Once he began, after the sweeping mandate

of 1936, to ignore them and to expand the executive branch's power in domestic and foreign affairs, their alienation from and animosity toward the New Deal was not surprising. They saw their own importance dwindling under Roosevelt's administration, and this convinced many of them to bolt the New Deal.

The role of politics cannot be ignored. Elected originally to public office under the banner of the Republican party, the majority party in the nation since the Civil War, the progressives had never had much regard or respect for the Democratic party leadership on the national or local level. Although constant critics of the Republican party's ties with big business and finance, they also had no faith or trust in the city machines - Solid South coalition that dominated the Democratic party organization. While both parties' leadership were reactionary and corrupt, the progressives believed that the Republican party had better potential as a reform party because of the historical record under Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt and the large number of state Republican reformers during the Progressive Era.

Roosevelt represented such an improvement over Hoover that many of the progressives were willing to support him and ignore party lines, in their desire to help the nation. But their suspicion of the Democratic party organization never waned. None of those who endorsed Roosevelt in 1932 or 1936 accepted Roosevelt's offer to join the

Democratic party. They insisted on remaining Republican or ran as Independents or Progressives. The President was separated from his party in progressive minds. As the movement of the New Dealers towards the institutionalizing of a new dominant reform political coalition became obvious, the progressive Republicans either attacked Roosevelt personally or worried about the reactionary Democrats who might succeed him in national office. The New Deal alliance of the Solid South, city machines, labor, ethnic groups, and blacks represented the death of the western, small town, agrarian domination over political and social reform. The guarantor, welfare state had replaced the broker state. The old-style reform politics was dead.

The only progressives who remained Roosevelt supporters in the late 1930's - - LaFollette and Norris - - were also those with the weakest Republican ties, and the most advanced progressive philosophies. Both had left the Republican party to run as independents. Both were willing to adjust to the changing nature of American society and the industrialization and urbanization of the country. They were often to the left of Roosevelt, desiring the New Deal to go further toward advanced economic and social reform than Roosevelt was willing to or able to accomplish. Bronson Cutting was the only other progressive who seemed to have the potential to accept the new America, due to his New York background. His premature death makes it impossible

to judge what his ultimate attitude toward the New Deal might have been.

The Second World War confirmed the transformation in American politics. The Democratic party emerged from the war with its coalition intact. The Republican party was determined to repeal the New Deal legislation under Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman. Although controlled in presidential election years by Eastern interests who backed New York Governor Thomas Dewey, the Republican party had much of its strength in those western states which had formerly elected progressive Republicans to public office. Now, those states and others in the heartland of the country elected Republicans of a conservative or reactionary nature to succeed such prominent progressives as Robert LaFollette, Jr., George Norris, Hiram Johnson and Gerald Nye. Joseph McCarthy, Kenneth Wherry, William Knowland, and Milton Young were the new representatives of Western Republicanism. The western states, long known for their insurgency, had now turned to the political right, condemning what they called the "Eastern liberals" who controlled both major party organizations for the benefit of urban America. Actually, the liberal coalition which controlled the Democratic party in national politics was more broadly based, taking in the surviving insurgency of the Midwest. However, in coalition with southern Democrats, the western conservative Republicans were to prove to be very effective in bottling up further

reform legislation during the late 1940's and 1950's. Only with the nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964 did the western Republicans again gain control over the national apparatus of the Republican party.

The Democratic party, expanding its commitment to liberal reform under the leadership of Harry Truman, Adlai Stevenson, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, gained strength in thosewestern states where progressive Republicans had once been the prominent reform spokesmen. Those states which had sent Republican insurgents to the nation's capital in the years before 1940 are now represented by liberal Democrats such as Frank Church, Philip Hart, John Tunney, Alan Cranston, William Proxmire, Gaylord Nelson, George McGovern, Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale. In Oregon, Wayne Morse, elected as a progressive Republican in 1944 as McNary's successor, soon became disenchanted and joined the Democratic party during the early 1950's. An examination of the Senate's membership since the early 1950's would indicate that western Republicans have been overwhelmingly conservative, with only a rare exception such as Thomas Kuchel, Mark Hatfield or Charles Percy. The main reform sentiment in the Republican party today comes instead from Eastern liberals, such as Jacob Javits, Clifford Case, Edward Brooke, Charles Mathias and Richard Schweiker.

The decline and fall of the western progressive Republican bloc in the Senate was a sign that American

politics had been basically transformed. The Democratic party and the New Deal had supplanted the Republicans as the party of advanced liberal reform. But the progressive philosophy, while outmoded and insufficient to meet the problems of an industrialized, urbanized world power, did leave a legacy to the nation, which may not have been appreciated at the time of their decline in the 1940's, but seems valid in the America of the 1970's. The progressives had expressed concern over the growing power of the Presidency in domestic and foreign affairs, his ability to take power away from Congress and to involve the nation in foreign wars. America, having experienced the wounds of Vietnam and Watergate, certainly can now appreciate this concern. The power that big business and public utilities exert over the American people today was seen as a growing evil by the progressive Republicans. The progressive bloc's commitment to morality in government stands out in stark contrast to the record of many present day figures in American politics. The issues and controversies that the progressive Republicans engaged in during their long, distinguished careers in the Senate are still far from solution. The progressive agenda still awaits fulfillment.

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