

Documents

THE RETURN OF THE PROGRESSIVES IN 1916

Edited by

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The Progressive Party of Indiana had made an auspicious beginning in 1912, for although the election had gone to the Democrats the Progressives had run ahead of the Republican ticket.¹ Two years later, however, the new party dropped far below its two rivals. Yet it remained a political factor of considerable importance, and speculation as to its probable influence in the next presidential election began immediately and continued unceasingly. At the Progressive National Convention of 1916 Theodore Roosevelt was nominated for President, but he rejected its proffered honor and bade his followers support the Republican nominee, Charles Evans Hughes. The Indiana Progressives were thereby confronted with the choice of going back to the Republicans, going over to the Democrats, or making a last ditch fight to maintain a separate state organization. The following letters, taken from the William Dudley Foulke Collection² of the Indiana State Library, Indiana History Division, reflect that situation.

In the first letter Foulke wrote to Theodore Roosevelt of the feeling among local Progressives that the party had been betrayed by its leaders. Roosevelt replied with strong indictments of President Wilson and expressed his opposi-

¹The party's prestige and position was indicated by the large number of state newspapers which became its champion, such as the *Indianapolis Star*, *Terre Haute Star*, *Richmond Palladium*, *Liberty Herald*, *Muncie Star*, *Goshen News-Times*, *LaGrange Standard*, *Lafayette Courier* and *Attica Ledger*.

²William Dudley Foulke (1848-1935) was a resident of Richmond, Indiana, for almost sixty years, and as civil service advocate, publicist, and author he was perhaps its leading citizen throughout most of that period. His wide ranging interests and versatility were indicated by his many publications on topics as diverse as the *Life of Oliver P. Morton* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1899) and *Some Love Songs of Petrarch* (London, 1915). The outbreak of the World War found him traveling in Germany, and at the request of the American embassy in Berlin he assisted Americans who desired to return to the United States. Upon his return to Indiana he became a leader among those who sympathized with the Allied cause. Despite the fact that his father was a minister of the Society of Friends, he was one of the most ardent of the military preparedness advocates. Foulke, a former Republican, had joined the Progressive Party in 1912, activated apparently by his liberal political philosophy (he had been a Mugwump in 1884) and by his admiration for Theodore Roosevelt.

tion to "maintaining the Progressive organization in the various states." The letter is of particular importance to American historiography because the papers in the Theodore Roosevelt Collection at the Library of Congress for the period since March, 1909, will not be available for a number of years. The last three letters are between Foulke and Harold L. Ickes,³ who as a former Progressive had been placed on the Republican national Campaign Committee with the special assignment of wooing those who had followed the Bull Moose standard in 1912.

Taken together these communications indicate that Hughes was more acceptable to the local Progressives than were the Republican state candidates.⁴ They demonstrate, also, that Progressives and Republicans found greater emotional unity in opposing Wilson than they did in pursuing the more positive aspects of the Hughes campaign. Foulke's singling out of California for special reference in the fourth letter would seem to have entitled him to wear the seer's mantle.

(1)

June 29th, 1916

My dear Col. Roosevelt:

I think you ought to know the condition of affairs in Indiana. At a meeting of Progressives from all parts of the state yesterday, the feeling of about two-thirds of those who attended was very bitter against you, Perkins, Garfield, Dye (our national committeeman) and others, for what they were pleased to call a betrayal of the party, and against the Republican machine and candidates, particularly Fairbanks, New, Watson and some of the men of the Republican State ticket. . . .

I am not sure that there is not some Democratic scheme behind it. I don't quite see how the campaign is to be otherwise financed. Many of those who attended, acted like wild men. I tried to call their attention to the greater need of the country and to dangers from without but to no effect. This was all a scheme they thought to run them back into the Republican party and the danger from within was much greater than that from without, etc.

³ He was to be chairman of the executive committee of the Illinois State Council of Defense during World War I and Secretary of the Interior in World War II.

⁴ The state ticket included James P. Goodrich for governor, Harry New for United States senator, and James E. Watson for United States senator. Together with Charles W. Fairbanks, the Republican choice for vice-president, this group was drawn from the ranks of those whom the Progressives in 1912 had labeled the "Old Guard." Ironically, from the standpoint of the Progressives, Hughes was to be defeated in the coming election (though he carried Indiana) and the Republican State candidates elected.

I saw this bitter feeling starting at Chicago⁵ and I tried to keep it down and was willing even to join in the telegram⁶ to you knowing that you would act later upon full information and do what was right, hoping in the meantime the feeling would cool down. But it is now more intense than ever and utterly uncontrollable. Of course you have done just right and every sensible man ought to know it, but their disappointment won't let them see anything else. I don't know what to advise. Probably it is best to let the thing run its course. I am not sure but that a communication from you yourself might inflame them the more.

Your friend,
(W. D. Foulke)

(2)

New York, July 5th, 1916

Dear Foulke;

I am really pleased that you should have given me the information that you have given me about Indiana. I am utterly unable to understand the attitude of Lee.⁷ For nearly two years I have been attacking Wilson as no Republican has attacked him, and I attacked him for a year when most of the Republicans, including Mr. Taft, were inclined to support him. The Progressives who then supported me, and who insisted upon my nomination, must have done so, if they were intelligent and sincere, because I represented extreme hostility to Wilson. It is therefore now utterly incomprehensible how these men can support Wilson.

I do not believe in maintaining the Progressive organization in the various states. They have become small derelict parties of the kind that are the natural prey of cheap crooks, and of those cranks whose crankiness has in it something sinister. Bainbridge Colby is taking substantially the attitude the people in Indiana of whom you speak are taking.

Some entirely honest Progressives will vote for Wilson, but I have no possible sympathy with the movement. It should be understood that the real Progressives have no sympathy with fake Progressives who are trying to run the party as an adjunct of the Democracy.

Faithfully yours,
(Theodore Roosevelt)

(3)

Chicago, Sept. 9, 1916

Mr. William Dudley Foulke
Richmond, Indiana

Dear Sir:—

Will you please let me know what the sentiment among the Pro-

⁵ Reference here is to the Progressive National Convention held at Chicago.

⁶ This was a telegram of remonstrance sent by the Progressive Convention after Roosevelt had provisionally declined its nomination for President.

⁷ Edwin M. Lee, chairman of the Progressive State Committee of Indiana who favored the continuation of the state organization and party.

gressives of your locality is on the National situation? Can you give me the names and addresses of Progressives, and tell me whom they are supporting for President? What ought to be done so as to enlist the enthusiastic co-operation of Progressives for Mr. Hughes?

Reports that are coming to me from all sections of the West are most encouraging. I am confident that not less than eighty-five percent of those who followed Col. Roosevelt in 1912 are now supporting Mr. Hughes.⁸ I hope and believe that this percentage will be materially increased before election day. At any rate, there can be no doubt that if the Progressives are back of Mr. Hughes in such substantial numbers as I believe them to be, the Republican National ticket will be elected with a rousing majority.

I hope that Progressives everywhere will get into this fight with enthusiasm. When Mr. Hughes has been elected, I want every fair minded man to recognize his victory was due, in no small degree, to the enthusiastic support accorded him by those of us who fought together under Col. Roosevelt's banner in 1912.

Please let me hear from you.

Very truly yours,
(Harold L. Ickes)

(4)

Sept. 12th, 1916

Harold L. Ickes
Republican National Committee, Chicago
Dear Sir;—

I think the majority of Progressives in this neighborhood are for Mr. Hughes though it is more divided than I should like to see it, the County chairman I think being for Wilson. The majority of us however will not support the Republican ticket all through. I shall certainly not vote for Mr. Watson after his Mulhall record in Congress and our present mayor, a Progressive tells me he intends to support a Democratic State ticket. He is probably for Hughes but not certainly. He wants to see what more Hughes says and does and is somewhat disappointed with his campaign.

I have received letters from California showing great disappointment there by Progressives. I cannot say there is great enthusiasm for Hughes and I think his main support is on account of the utter disgust and contempt for the hypocritical weathercock now in Washington.

Yours truly,
(Wm. D. Foulke)

(5)

Chicago, Sept. 14, 1916

Mr. William Dudley Foulke,
Richmond, Ind.
Dear Sir:

I appreciate very much your letter of September 12th. Mr. William D. Cousin, who is in Indiana at my request canvassing the situation by personal interview among Progressives, writes me that you have

⁸The election was later to prove these figures to have been substantially correct for Indiana.

promised to furnish him a statement on the National issues that we can use from these headquarters as publicity. I am very glad indeed that you are willing to do this, and I look forward with interest to seeing the statement.

I realize that the Progressives of Indiana have a situation to face that is distressing to most of them. I hope, however, that regardless of local matters, the Progressives of Indiana will do as you indicate they are likely to do, namely, support Mr. Hughes for President.

Very truly yours,
(Harold L. Ickes)

THE FIRST WABASH SONG

"The First Wabash Song" was printed in German in this magazine in the March, 1942, issue. The contributor, Professor Karl J. Arndt, expressed the hope that some poetic reader would do justice to the original German by providing a suitable translation in verse. Here are two translations which were printed in Louise M. Husband, "Comments on Things that Interest Me," New Harmony, Indiana, *Times*, June 19 and 26, 1942.

Translation of "Wabasch Lied"

by JOHN S. DUSS

Sad, indeed became the parting,
Gloom pervades the atmosphere—
All are yearning, all are wailing:
Ah! that I were with you there.
That would then be the sweet tone,
Together father and son.

Let us be forever steadfast
Let us be forever true
Through much sorrow, through much gladness,
We forsooth, will yet come through
Hark, the sounding melody:
Soon, the Wabash we shall see.

And the time in its extension
Soon will usher in the spring,
Two months, still of intervention—
Then our journey will begin.
Hark, the sounding melody:
Soon, the Wabash we shall see.

And this time will yet be coming,
When united we shall stay.
Live in peace among the righteous—
Ah, that this could be today.
Ah, then be rejoiced with me
Wabash environs to see.