The Social Philosophy of Albert J. Beveridge

*Daniel Levine**

Albert J. Beveridge was a successful lawyer in Indianapolis, a senator from Indiana for two terms (1899-1911), one of the standard-bearers for the Bull Moose party in 1912, and later a biographer of distinction. Starting from a poor, rural background, he achieved success through high intelligence, oratorical and political skill, and strenuous effort. Beveridge began his political career as a regular Republican then, about 1905, joined forces with the insurgent or Progressive Republicans and became one of the leaders of that group. His political career has been, and is being, dealt with by others.[1] These pages are concerned with the basic social philosophy which lay behind his actions through 1912. Beveridge's ideas about reform place him in that stream of Progressive thought which emphasized the importance of the national government in bringing about change. Herbert Croly and Walter Lipmann provided the philosophic basis for this group. Theodore Roosevelt, with strong support from Albert Beveridge, was its most potent political spokesman.

In various ways Beveridge extolled the power of the national government. In domestic affairs he urged the use of national power for everything from putting down the Pullman strike to limiting child labor. In foreign affairs he urged an expansion of American power and political control in the Caribbean and Far East. The characterization of Beveridge as a nationalist is beyond dispute. To say that he was a nationalist, however, is not enough. His nationalism was one manifestation of a more comprehensive social philosophy which rested on his ideas of race, order, and power.

Along with many other men of the late nineteenth century,[2] Beveridge believed that the ultimate force driving

---

* Daniel Levine is assistant professor of history, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.

[1] The standard biography is Claude G. Bowers, *Beveridge and the Progressive Era* (New York, 1932). See also Charles F. Remy, "The Election of Beveridge to the Senate," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXVI (June, 1940), 123-135; John Braeman, "The Rise of Albert J. Beveridge to the United States Senate," *ibid.*, LIII (December, 1957), 355-382.

[2] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1955), 131-144, 149-157; Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston, 1955), 170-201; George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York, 1958), 92-94.

human society was a deep racial or blood instinct. Each race, he thought, had a collective soul which harbored a drive in a certain direction. This drive had to be followed. "The key to my speech was racial," he wrote in 1900. "I consider conventional ethics and conventional morals man-made and therefore finite as of absolutely no moment compared to the higher and enduring ethic of our race."[3]

When Beveridge used the term "our race" he generally meant the Anglo-Saxon race. The Anglo-Saxons had produced the great explorers of Elizabethan days whose "blood within them commanded them" to seek out far lands. "Their racial tendency is as resistless as the currents of the sea . . . . " "God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world. . . . "[4] Beveridge viewed the Anglo-Saxons as congenitally a self-governing race. Therefore beyond any man-made law there was "institutional law with its roots springing from the very soul of our race."[5]

Americans and Canadians partook directly of this racial heritage. Close behind them were the Germans. The natives of southern and eastern Europe were not of the best type, although Beveridge had considerable regard for the Slavs. The lowest rung on the racial ladder was occupied by Asiatics. An Oriental, he thought, was not capable of refinement and education. The Chinese had deep character faults, the most important of which was too much regard for self and family and not enough for the community.[6] He insisted that the Filipinos, like children, were incapable of running their own affairs. They needed the guiding hand of traditionally self-governing Anglo-Saxons to lead them to the light.[7]

---

[3] Beveridge to John Temple Graves, January 26, 1900, Letterbook, Beveridge Papers (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.). Beveridge was as loose as his contemporaries in his definition of the term "race."

[4] U.S., *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 1, p. 711 (January 9, 1900).

[5] Beveridge, "Conservatism; The Spirit of National Self Restraint," speech delivered February 22, 1902, in Chicago, in Albert J. Beveridge *The Meaning of the Times and Other Speeches* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1908), 156; "True Liberty Under Law," *The Reader*, X (July, 1907), 149; "National Integrity," *ibid.*, VII (May, 1906), 570-571.

[6] Beveridge, *The Russian Advance* (New York, 1903), 176; see also pp. 34, 47, 283. "Our Canadian Cousins: How They Handle Their Immigration Problems," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 26, 1911, p. 9.

[7] U.S., *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 1, pp. 704-712 (January 9, 1900); *ibid.*, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 8, Appendix, 285-292 (June 3, 1902).

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

Frontispiece in Albert J. Beveridge, *The Meaning of the Times and Other Speeches* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1908).

Sometimes Beveridge's racism seemed to demand a rigid separation of the races. When he was defending colonial status for the Philippines, he said, "The prospect of Puerto Rican, Filipino and Hawaiian Senators and Congressmen, which is the ultimate conclusion of the argument of the Constitution extending over these possessions is not a spectacle to be viewed calmly."[8] In Asiatic Russia where he saw many races mingling freely he said that Anglo-Saxons were naturally startled by seeing this sort of racial harmony.[9] Later, however, when arguing for a unified state of Arizona and New Mexico, he emphasized the easy amalgamation of Spanish and American blood and gave racial mixing high credit for producing America's greatness.[10]

The second of Beveridge's basic beliefs was the importance of order in society. He defined liberty as that which is "realized only by him who obeys those common rules of action called laws by which alone liberty lives."[11] Civilization meant "liberty and law, . . . commerce and communication, . . . social order and the Gospel of our Lord. . . . "[12] He praised the Puritans because order was to them "as necessary as honesty; law as essential as liberty; government as important as resistance to wrong."[13] He praised the Jews and the Germans as people who had learned the value of social cohesion rather than conflict.[14] Richelieu, Edmund Burke, and George Washington were great not because of their wisdom or vision but because all three had brought order out of chaos.[15] Beveridge regarded the French Revolution not as a triumph of democracy but as a catastrophe because it had led to violence.[16] The need for order was another reason

---

[8] Beveridge to Larz A. Whitcomb, March 7, 1900, Letterbook, Beveridge Papers.

[9] Beveridge, *The Russian Advance*, 16.

[10] U.S.,*Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 4, pp. 3522-3523 (March 8, 1906).

[11] Beveridge, "Business and Government," speech delivered at Chicago, September 22, 1906, in *The Meaning of the Times*, 269.

[12] Beveridge, "The Star of Empire," speech delivered at Chicago, September 25, 1900, *ibid.*, 118.

[13] Beveridge, "Forefathers' Day," speech delivered in St. Louis, December 21, 1896, *ibid.*, 24.

[14] Beveridge, *The Bible as Good Reading* (Philadelphia, 1904), 61; Beveridge, *The Young Man and the World* (New York, 1911), 12-13.

[15] Beveridge, "Conservatism, The Spirit of National Self Restraint," speech delivered in Chicago, February 22, 1902, *The Meaning of the Times*, 153; MS speech, "Heroism and the Law," [1893?], Beveridge Papers.

[16] Beveridge, "Child Labor," speech delivered in the United States Senate, January 23, 28, and 29, 1907, *The Meaning of the Times*, 327-330.

that the United States should keep the Philippines: that natives "like all backward peoples need to be taught orderly continuous labor before anything else."[17]

Beveridge's attitude toward order was most strikingly illustrated in his reaction to czarist Russia. On his journey through Manchuria in 1901, he saw Russian methods of colonization. He was favorably impressed by the Russians' swift, brutal justice, and praised them for killing three thousand robbers in six weeks. Since the Russians were bringing order out of chaos, their methods were justified.[18] In the book, *The Russian Advance,* which he wrote about this journey, Beveridge devoted one chapter to comparing three Russians. He had high praise for Sergei Witte, finance minister, who was trying to reorganize czarist finance on European lines. He approved also of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, a close advisor to the czar and an archreactionary. Beveridge also visited a third Russian whom he denounced as an unrealistic dreamer who, if he had any effect at all upon the world, would have a bad effect. This man was a nobleman living the life of a peasant, Count Leo Tolstoy.[19]

Closely related to Beveridge's regard for order was his awe of power, almost without regard for who wielded it or for what ends. This was another reason for his high regard for Pobedonostsev. In the Bible, Beveridge admired above all others save Christ himself, David and Moses, the warrior and the lawgiver, power and order.[20] Puritans were good because they were "Honesty with Sword in hand; . . . Liberty on the charge. . . . "[21] Terms of praise he employed included "national manhood" and "master among nations."[22] He had tremendous respect for the Russian Orthodox church, not because of its doctrine or its moral teachings but because of the power it held over the Russian people and the fervency of the loyalty it inspired.[23]

---

[17] Beveridge, "Development of a Colonial Policy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences,* XXX (July, 1907), 12.

[18] Beveridge, *The Russian Advance,* 40, 43, 19-20.

[19] *Ibid.,* 426-461.

[20] Beveridge, *The Bible as Good Reading,* 19-29, 65-79.

[21] Beveridge, "Forefathers' Day," speech delivered in St. Louis, December 21, 1896, *The Meaning of the Times,* 21.

[22] U.S., *Congressional Record,* 56th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 8, Appendix, 279-286 (March 29, 1900).

[23] Beveridge, *The Russian Advance,* 33-39, 338-366.

These were the basic tenets of Beveridge's social philosophy: a firm belief in a blood consciousness which led each race to an inevitable destiny, a respect for power, pure and simple, and a desire for order in all social functions. All else was merely particularization of these basic beliefs.

Beveridge's nationalism was based on his desire for order and efficiency and his respect for power. His views were most clearly expounded in his speech on Governor John P. Altgeld's action in the Pullman strike of 1894. President Grover Cleveland had sent in troops to quell violence, and Altgeld had protested that the troops were not needed and that in fact the President had no right to send troops until the governor of a state requested such aid. Although Beveridge was a Republican, his speech, given at the height of the presidential campaign of 1896, supported the Democratic President.[24] Beveridge denounced Altgeld for supporting the proposition "that the general government cannot suppress red riot, extinguish the fires of arson and protect property from destruction and life from frenzy blinded mobs without the consent of the governor of the state." The Hoosier Senator called Altgeld's position "the principle of national decay."

Beveridge maintained that the federal government represented a single people divided into states merely for administrative convenience and that the president represented that single people. Every locality had a responsibility to the nation and must not be allowed to disrupt national affairs with local disturbances. The president should use his power to preserve order, for "hesitation of power is the food upon which mobs grow formidable and fierce. The danger that threatens our future is local demagogues—not federal despots. . . . "[25] In this speech Beveridge clearly stated his belief in order, power, and nationalism; and by calling the Pullman strike a local disturbance and equating it with "red riot" he showed a certain lack of comprehension of the economic developments going on around him.

As a nationalist, Beveridge praised all those in the past who had increased the power of the federal government. Thomas Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana and Andrew Jackson's actions in Florida were both patriotic. George Washing-

---

[24] Albeit Cleveland was not a candidate in 1896.

[25] MS speech, "Altgeld Speech," delivered in Chicago, October 29, 1896, Beveridge Papers.

ton, Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and above all, John Marshall were never tyrants or self-seekers; they were nation builders and deserved the thanks of the nation they wrought.[26] Not only the executive but also the legislative branch of the federal government had extensive power. A particular locality might not know what course was in its own best interest, but the federal government, with its broader constituency, would.[27] Beveridge derided the doctrine of states' rights as merely a device behind which evildoers hid for their own selfish ends. Since the federal government represented all of the people at once, and the states represented all the people divided into forty-six pieces, there was no danger of federal tyranny. The nation could not harm the states, for that would be self-harm.[28]

A logical outgrowth of Beveridge's praise for centralized power was his approval of concentration both in labor and industry.[29] He regarded huge business organizations as a natural outgrowth of industrialization. Just as the reaper consolidated the functions of many individuals, the corporation consolidated the functions of numerous small shops. The huge corporation, like the reaper, brought gains in efficiency and therefore lowered unit cost. Moreover, Beveridge thought that these corporations could not be effectively dissolved. He recognized that corporations occasionally abused their power, but he thought that these scattered abuses could be curbed with little difficulty. The only agent which could, in his

---

[26] Beveridge, "Government of Dependencies," *The Reader,* X (August, 1907), 260; Beveridge, "Nation," *ibid.,* IX (March, 1907), 358; Beveridge, "Vitality of the American Constitution," speech delivered in Pittsburgh, Pa., January 4, 1898, *The Meaning of the Times,* 6-10. This point of view is emphasized in Beveridge's biographies of Lincoln and Marshall; see *Abraham Lincoln* (2 vols., New York, 1928); *The Life of John Marshall* (4 vols., New York, 1916-1919).

[27] U.S., *Congressional Record,* 59th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 4, pp. 3515-3516 (March 8, 1906); *ibid.,* 2nd Sess., Part 2, pp. 1825-1826 (January 28, 1907).

[28] Beveridge, "State and Nation," speech delivered in Galena, Ill., April 27, 1907, *The Meaning of the Times,* 404-419; Beveridge, "Federalism in Canada and in the United States," *Review of Reviews,* XLIV (October, 1911), 471-476; Beveridge, "Our Canadian Cousins: The History of a Railroad Triumvirate," *Saturday Evening Post,* July 22, 1911, pp. 10-12, 32-33; Beveridge, "Nation," *The Reader,* IX (March, 1907), 356-357; Beveridge, MS speech, "Reply to Mr. Bryan," [1901?], Beveridge Papers.

[29] Beveridge, "The Organization of American Business," speech opening the Republican campaign in Colorado, 1902, *The Meaning of the Times,* 184.

opinion, effectively police the corporations was the federal government.[30]

For similar reasons, Beveridge acknowledged the necessity for labor to organize. He did not argue that labor had to organize in order to do battle with capital. Class conflict was not for him a pressing concern. He simply acknowledged that the new industrial system led naturally to labor organizations. These were useful, he thought, as schools for self-government, mutual improvement, and self-respect. How different these purposes were from those envisioned by Samuel Gompers, who saw labor as an army.[31]

Power, order, and efficiency, then, were qualities which Beveridge thought important in society. He did not, however, envision a static society. How did he think society developed? What caused change in history? Beveridge's answer was destiny—great irresistible forces drove human society onward, and men had to conform to them. One aspect of destiny was the blood-instinct, the racial genius which has already been touched upon. There were other forces too. One of these was simply an ineluctable process of social maturation. Beveridge had a clearly anthropomorphic view of society. Societies started as children, grew into youths, matured, and then declined into senility. Social organisms, like life itself, obeyed the laws of growth. In this conception of society as an organism he joined the Social Darwinists, who treated classes within a society and societies as a whole simply as enlarged single organisms.[32] In this type of organic society, with natural laws of growth, Beveridge felt that the task of a political leader was simply to set his nation on the path it ought naturally to follow. A mature nation should be expected

---

[30] Beveridge, "Our Canadian Cousins: How They Handle Their Currency Problems," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 17, 1911, p. 4; Beveridge, "Trusts and their Treatment," *The Reader*, X (June, 1907), 40-46; Beveridge, "Regulation, not Extermination," *ibid.*, IX (May, 1907), 579-588.

[31] Beveridge, "Mutual Confidence and Consideration," *The Reader*, X (September, 1907), 380-381; Beveridge, MS speech, "The Relation of the State to Labor," [1905? misdated 1900], Beveridge Papers. For Gompers' views see Daniel Levine, "Gompers and Racism: Strategy of Limited Objectives," *Mid-America*, XLIII (April, 1961), 108.

[32] Beveridge, "Development of a Colonial Policy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, XXX (July, 1907), 4-5; Beveridge, *The Russian Advance*, 12. Cf. Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, especially 143-201.

to engage in colonial endeavors, which could not be helped and should not be resisted.[33]

Beveridge considered other factors important in historical change. Economic development was one, but only one among many. Geography also was an important factor. Geography drove Russia east and Japan west. Beveridge accurately predicted in 1903 that the two would soon clash.[34] In the same way, economic development and geography were forcing the United States into the Pacific and the Caribbean.[35] Another force pushing this nation to expand was the duty to civilize the barbaric nations of the world. Beveridge believed that the civilized nations, having achieved social order, were not only justified in exporting order but would betray their duty if they did not.[36]

Like Theodore Roosevelt, Beveridge believed that one of the ways in which these divine drives could be fulfilled was by war. "We hearken not to rhymers on universal peace, for we know that with the sword the world has ever out of error carved its good estate. . . . I subscribe to the doctrine of war. It is the divine instrument of progress. Every lasting victory of human freedom was won upon the field."[37]

But Beveridge agreed with Robert La Follette that most changes within a society ought to be planned and worked out by experts. This point of view was partly an outgrowth of Beveridge's respect for centralized and efficient power, for he pictured a commission of experts handing down decisions which legislators and businessmen would be expected to follow. Partly too this view was a result of Beveridge's confidence in destiny, for the experts would not determine policy

---

[33] Beveridge to John Temple Graves, March 12, 1901, Beveridge Papers; MS speech, "The Young Men of America," delivered at a Republican mass meeting in Indianapolis, Ind., October 18, 1900.

[34] Beveridge, *The Russian Advance*, 122-137.

[35] Beveridge, "The Command of the Pacific," speech delivered in San Francisco, September 15, 1902, *The Meaning of the Times*, 189-197; Beveridge, "True Liberty Under Law," *The Reader*, X (July, 1907), 152; Beveridge, "Development of a Colonial Policy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, XXX (July, 1907), 4-5.

[36] Beveridge, "True Liberty Under Law," *The Reader*, X (July, 1907), 148-149, 155-156; Beveridge, *The Russian Advance*, 179; Beveridge, "The Star of Empire," speech delivered in Chicago, September 25, 1900, *The Meaning of the Times*, 129-130.

[37] Beveridge, MS speech "Memorial Oration," delivered May 30, 1892, at Mount Vernon, Ind., Beveridge Papers.

but merely the natural next step in an already destined direction. He thought that scientific method could lead to absolute truth, leaving little room for dispute. Beveridge praised the scientific method as employed in other countries: Canada's conservation measures, Germany's tariff commission, the careful planning which went into the freeing of the serfs in Russia.[38]

One of the major questions which all reformers have to face is that of the speed of change. Should changes grow gradually out of past customs and institutions, or should these customs and institutions be overturned to make room for new ones? Most people have, if not a consistent philosophy, some sort of feeling for one approach or the other. In his first speech as a senator, the speech urging the United States to keep the Philippines, Beveridge argued for a great departure in American policy and insisted that the nation should not be bound by the past. The United States should grasp destiny and ride it wherever it might go. He insisted that the founding fathers had intended the nation to be imperialistic, but he made no attempt to disguise the fact that he was urging a considerable departure. "The end of it all," he wrote in 1898, "is that here we are. This situation is upon us. We cannot step out of it as of an old pair of shoes, and the thing for us to do is bear ourselves in the noble way that characterizes the lordly blood of our imperial race."[39]

Beveridge insisted, still speaking of America's overseas expansion, that the nation's hands must not be tied by the past. New situations demanded new answers. Circumstances often required the exercise of powers not specified in the Constitution. That document was not made to freeze our institutions as they were in 1787. "The march of nationality is not to be withstood; and so the salvation of the constitution is in its capacity for growth."[40] "It has long been clear to

---

[38] Beveridge, "A Permanent Tariff Commission," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, XXXII (September, 1908), 421-422; Beveridge "The Insurgents," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 16, 1909, p. 4; Beveridge, "Our Canadian Cousins: Profiting by Our Mistakes," *ibid.*, September 9, 1911, p. 26; Beveridge, *The Russian Advance*, 11, 183, 322.

[39] U.S., *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 1, p. 711 (January 9, 1900); Beveridge to Robert J. Tracewell, September 30, 1908, Beveridge Papers.

[40] U.S., *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 8, Appendix, 281 (March 29, 1900); Beveridge, "Vitality of the American Constitution," speech delivered January 4, 1898, in Pittsburgh, Pa., *The Meaning of the Times*, 11-19.

me," he wrote, "that as a practical matter, no paper barrier would stand in the way of a mighty people's development."[41]

Beveridge remained fairly true to his idea of a destined development demanding new solutions which nevertheless retained links with the past. Over the years, however, he changed his emphasis, concentrating more and more on the links which each innovation had with the past. There may well be a political explanation for this. As he became more identified with the insurgent wing of the Republican party, he may have emphasized the conservative nature of his views in order to avoid being tarred with a radical brush. As early as 1902 he was calling himself a conservative, but his definition of that term was a loose one indeed. Conservatism simply meant change without violence.[42]

By 1906 Beveridge was clearly emphasizing the conservative nature of the reforms he had supported. He said that regulation of business must be worked out gradually as the situation developed. He insisted that laws such as the Hepburn Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act were simply natural products of a changing situation, not new social experiments.[43]

This conflict between conservatives and nonconservatives is closely related to a conflict over the importance of ideas to society. Conservatives think that innovations should grow naturally out of the past. They accuse nonconservatives of relying too heavily on ideas as generators of change. Beveridge said that "public policies are wise only as they express a people's development. This is why most of the plans of reformers fail, why most of the theories of dreamers are idle. They are born of some individual's thought. . . ."[44] In spite of the fact that he himself later became a recognized scholar and biographer, his contempt for theorizers and bookish men was complete in these years. About the only books he said were of any importance were the Bible, Shakespeare's works, and the writings of Bobby Burns—of all people. Going to

---

[41] Beveridge to Hon. George B. Cardwell, July 13, 1898, Beveridge Papers.

[42] Beveridge, "Conservatism: The Spirit of National Self Restraint," speech delivered February 22, 1902, in Chicago, *The Meaning of the Times*, 157.

[43] Beveridge, "Duties of the Present; Not Memories of the Past," speech delivered November 3, 1906, in Indianapolis, Ind., *ibid.*, 295-296; Beveridge, "Business and Government," speech delivered September 22, 1906, in Chicago, *ibid.*, 271-272.

[44] Beveridge, "The Command of the Pacific," speech delivered September 15, 1902, in San Francisco, *ibid.*, 189.

college had a limited utility, but young men should go if they could, because college would instill habits of hard work and order which would be useful later on. "The fourth quality in character," he wrote, "the lowest on the list is Intellect." Brains were abundant, he insisted; successful men could hire brains.[45] Beveridge thought that books were merely second-hand experience. Firsthand experience and action were much more important. In 1898 he wrote: "As to Gladstone himself, I cannot agree with you as to his greatness. He did not 'do things.' He talked. . . . Give me the men who *'do things.'* "[46]

In a sense the denigration of intellect, which Beveridge himself would probably have repudiated in later years, stands in contradiction to his belief that problems should be solved by experts. He probably regarded experts, however, not as theorizers or men of intellect but as technicians dealing with specific down-to-earth problems.

Beveridge's respect for men who " *'do things'* " led him at first to equate achievement with moral excellence, and wealth with achievement. Before he became senator, and during the first years of his senatorial career, he extolled wealth as synonomous with excellence. In a statement supporting Benjamin Harrison and the Republican party in 1892, Beveridge said, "Every step toward plenty and comfort is a step toward civilization. Every step toward want and misery and endless toil is a step toward barbarism."[47] In his speeches for the 1892, 1894, and 1896 campaigns, he consistently equated prosperity and wealth with virtue. In arguing for imperialism, he insisted that commerce was a method by which the savages could be civilized. Throughout his book, *The Young Man and the World,* he equated financial success with excellence. He extolled the career of Thomas R. Scott, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, saying that Scott's life "demonstrated that the very ultimate of achieving,

---

[45] Beveridge, "The College Man in Politics," speech delivered [November 24?], 1897, Beveridge Papers; Beveridge, "Our Canadian Cousins: Profiting by Our Mistakes," *Saturday Evening Post,* September 9, 1911, p. 27; Beveridge, *The Young Man and the World,* 15-16, 19-20, 83, 113.

[46] Beveridge to George W. Perkins, June 6, 1898, Beveridge Papers.

[47] "Speech for 1892 Campaign," Beveridge Papers. This a manuscript speech that was presumably delivered several times during the campaign.

the very crest of effort and reward may be reached by men who know neither Latin nor Greek."[48]

About 1906, statements began to appear in Beveridge's speeches and writings damning commercial standards. Perhaps he became disillusioned with material standards, but no evidence has been discovered of any soul searching on the subject nor even any evidence that Beveridge was aware of contradicting himself. As early as 1906 he hoped that "financial interests" would no longer be our national ideal.[49] By 1910 he insisted that "the curse of our present day is greed. We measure everything by dollars. We worship wealth."[50] His keynote speech at the Bull Moose convention in 1912 was interlaced with standard Progressive rhetoric against wealth.[51]

Perhaps this shift in emphasis also has a political explanation. In the rising tide of Progressive sentiment in the country, Beveridge may have seen a means for fulfillment of his own personal ambitions. The Indiana Senator aimed at nothing less than the peak of political power. Perhaps most politicians aim for the presidency, but Beveridge seemed to think that destiny would be shirking her duty if she did not place him in the White House. His political rise had been rapid, but his egotism grew even more rapidly. As a freshman senator he wanted a subcommittee chairmanship. He made a major policy address almost as soon as he had taken his seat. This speech irritated his Senate colleagues, but received enough national attention to fire his already heated ambition.

By 1900 he was perhaps envisioning himself as a successor to William McKinley in 1904. He wrote, with more optimism than good judgment, that "things are simply perfect here. I am in the inner inside circle. . . . " Then he spoke jubilantly of the formation of several Beveridge for President clubs.[52] After having been in public office for only

---

[48] Beveridge, *The Young Man and the World*, 118. This book, issued in 1911, stands in direct contradiction to the statements quoted below.

[49] Beveridge to David Graham Phillips, August 1, 1906, Beveridge Papers.

[50] MS speech, "Speech at Mounds Park, Ind., July 4, 1910," Beveridge Papers.

[51] Keynote Speech at the Progressive Party Convention, Chicago. The text appears in full in the Chicago *Daily News*, August 5, 1912.

[52] Beveridge to John C. Shaffer, January 26, [1900?], Beveridge Papers.

eleven months, he wrote to George H. Lorimer, publisher of the *Saturday Evening Post*, that his Philippine speech had received great support in the South, and that he, Beveridge, might be the man to bring some southern strength to the Republican party.[53] He wrote of this southern support to one of his friends and said that he would be very glad if he could "inspire [respect] in that finest and most unadulterated of the Anglo-Saxon race."[54]

Perhaps Beveridge's self-esteem should not be too harshly criticized, for it was not hidden by hypocritical modesty. It was like the simple egotism of a child who has no doubt that he is the precise center of the universe. "I have done some mighty big things over simply incredible obstacles, and I think before you get through these ought to be recognized," he wrote to his friend, David Graham Phillips, in 1908.[55]

To what extent was Beveridge a Progressive in the sense of consistently favoring national control of big business, social welfare legislation, and more direct popular influence on legislation? His record was not so much one of slow growth toward Progressivism as of sudden conversion. In the 1890's Beveridge's speeches were standard Republican oratory. He waved the bloody shirt with the best, praised prosperity and McKinley, wanted a high protective tariff, and damned the Democrats. In the early years of the new century he extolled everything American, and as late as 1904 he entitled a speech "All is Well with the Republic" which was a hymn to everything as it was.[56] These sentiments stand in sharp contrast to those of Robert La Follette, who from 1892 on saw impending doom unless basic changes were made in the nation.

Soon after the 1904 election, Beveridge had changed his views. By 1906 he could say that the Republican party "must not stop." We must turn to these new social and economic questions which have to do with the daily lives and happiness

---

[53] Beveridge to Lorimer, February 3, 1900, Letterbook, Beveridge Papers.

[54] Beveridge to John Temple Graves, January 26, 1900, Letterbook, Beveridge Papers.

[55] Beveridge to Phillips, November 15, 1908, Beveridge Papers.

[56] "Speech for 1892 Campaign," "Speech for 1902 Campaign," MS speech "All is Well with the Republic," Beveridge Papers.

of human beings.[57] He wrote exultantly to David Graham Phillips about Roosevelt's endorsement of radicalism in the inheritance tax.[58] In 1908, using language much like that of La Follette, he wrote to the President: "I dislike legislation which gives people the impression that something very much worthwhile has been done, when as a matter of fact very little has been done."[59] In 1910 and 1911 Beveridge was arguing for more direct popular influence in government and insisting that business and special interests must get out of government and let the people rule.[60]

By 1912 Beveridge was in the forefront of Progressivism. He was convinced that he had failed to be re-elected in 1910 not because he had been too progressive but because the Republican party had not been progressive enough.[61] He felt that the only way to recoup his losses was to continue as a vigorous Progressive, at least for the time being.[62] He supported Roosevelt in 1912 and delivered the keynote speech at the Bull Moose convention which endorsed woman suffrage, initiative and referendum, and a host of social welfare and business control measures.

All this is not to say that Beveridge was a complete hypocrite. Opportunism in some degree is a necessity in politics. Moreover, his ambition drove him to assume whatever political posture he thought could win elections, and he seems to have believed in whatever posture he assumed. More than this, however, his basic social attitudes, like those of Theodore Roosevelt, were adaptable to the needs of reform in the first years of the twentieth century. Before 1904 Beveridge had not shown any great awareness of social ills, but he had shown enthusiasm for centralized, efficient power.

---

[57] Beveridge, "Progressive Liberty," speech delivered April 11, 1906, in Indianapolis, Ind., *The Meaning of the Times*, 263.

[58] Beveridge to Phillips, April 18, 1906, Beveridge Papers.

[59] Beveridge to Roosevelt, May 27, 1908, Beveridge Papers.

[60] Beveridge, "Campaign Speech No. 2, 1910," "Campaign Speech 1911," Beveridge Papers; Beveridge, "Our Canadian Cousins, How They Break Their Trusts to Harness," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 1, 1911, pp. 10-11, 44-45.

[61] Beveridge to Roosevelt, November 16, 1910; Beveridge to Phillips, November 19, 1910, Beveridge Papers.

[62] In 1922 he returned to a more orthodox version of Republicanism when he was an unsuccessful candidate for the Senate. See Bowers, *Beveridge*, 509-513, 526-535.

One important, and politically successful, strand of Progressive thought considered centralized power the most useful tool for social reform. It was here that Beveridge found his political home.

Here then was a man who worshiped power, felt a mystical sense of racial and national destiny, gloried in war and material success, and favored centralization of government. A quarter of a century later similar ideas made themselves felt in Italy and Germany under Fascism. Does this mean that Beveridge was a Fascist, just a few decades ahead of his time. Certainly there were facets of his thought similar to the ideas of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, but there was one feature of his thinking which must forever rescue him from charges of Fascism. This was his quiet, unquestioning faith in the Anglo-American democratic process. No matter what his ambition or what his conception of destiny, he was dipped so deeply in representative democracy that, even in defeat, he never considered abandoning it. At another time, in another place, Beveridge's high regard for power and order might have led him in another direction. During the first decade of the twentieth century in the United States, it led him to Progressivism. Beveridge was not following reform, however, so much as power.