Theodore Roosevelt And The Progressive Party: The Fine Line Between The Personal And The Political

Master's Thesis in North American Studies

Leiden University

By

Mitchell Zee

S1413864

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Supervisor: Dr. Eduard van de Bilt

Second Reader: Dr. William Michael Schmidli

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Introduction

Declining Vigor

Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th president of the United States, is one of the most well-known presidents of all time. Universally recognized as one of the best presidents of the US, he can be said to have transformed in many ways the presidency to what it is today. When he was president from 1901 to 1909, his seemingly inexhaustible energy drove him to take a more active role as president than most of those before him. Famous are his trust-busting, the promotion of conservation and the passing of both the Meat Inspection Act and Pure Food and Drug Act. This all stemmed from his belief that a strong government was needed in order to protect the people. Even before he became president, Roosevelt's exploits, especially during the Spanish-American War as Colonel of the Rough Riders, were well known among the American people. In Roosevelt's case, a strong presidency and a strong individual occupying the office of president were intertwined.

However, a period of Roosevelt's life that is less well known and has not received the same scholarly attention as his presidential period are the years following his presidency. In these years, Roosevelt would join the Progressive Party, a third party that came to be because of the increasing tension between Republican progressives and conservatives. Progressive Republicans split from their conservative party members and created the Progressive Party in 1912, which they believed would replace the conservative Republican Party. Roosevelt became the head and face of the party, confident he could defeat both the conservative Republicans and the Democratic Party. Though Roosevelt managed to best William Howard Taft, his Republican opponent, in the popular vote, he did not have the electoral votes to show for it. With the Republicans votes split in two, Woodrow Wilson of the Democratic Party managed to claim victory. Roosevelt decided to stay with the Progressive Party, in the hopes of strengthening it

in the following years, after which it would be strong enough to win in the 1916 presidential elections. However, quite the opposite happened. In the years leading up to the 1916 elections, the party faced numerous political setbacks, the biggest in 1914, when almost no progressives were elected to Congress. Still, at the time of the 1916 elections, some progressives were still hopeful that the great Theodore Roosevelt would be able to lead them to victory. However, when the time finally came, Roosevelt, shortly before the elections, announced he would not be running as a candidate for the Progressive Party. Roosevelt's leaving would prove to be the final nail in the coffin for the Progressive Party.

This thesis aims to show that during the time when Roosevelt was involved in the Progressive Party between 1912 and 1916, his individual circumstances and weaknesses would have political ramifications. As I will argue, Theodore Roosevelt left the Progressive Party due to personal troubles influencing his political confidence. My analysis will take a similar approach as Andrew S. Trees in his study on the Founding Fathers.[1] In this study about the relationship between the personal and the political during a few years of Roosevelt's career, I will rely in particular on primary documents in the form of correspondence written by Roosevelt himself to make my argument. The sources consist of letters written throughout the period 1912 to 1916. I have chosen these years, as Roosevelt officially joined the Progressive Party in 1912 and left it at the end of 1916. Correspondence outside of these years had little to no relevant relation to Roosevelt's feelings concerning the state of the Progressive Party. As the primary focus of this paper is to analyze Theodore Roosevelt and how his personal life relates to his political ambitions in this period, letters that he himself did not write or oversee the writing of have purposefully been left out of the analysis.[2] This was done in order to get the most pure

[1] Andrew Trees, *The Founding Fathers and the Politics of Character* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[2] Letters that Roosevelt did not write himself but did oversee the writing of or dictate include those his assistant wrote during the 1912 presidential campaign and a letter his wife wrote while he himself was in the hospital after being shot in Milwaukee.

representation of Roosevelt. The majority of the sources were gathered from the Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library of Dickinson State University. Some additional sources from the Roosevelt Institute of American Studies have also been used. When excerpts from primary sources are used, the original spelling has been retained. The analysis will be done chronologically instead of thematically, in order to best show the change in Roosevelt's attitude through the years.

Several works that laid the foundation for research into Roosevelt and his time with the Progressive Era have been used to provide some context for the situation Roosevelt found himself in. Most notable among these works is George E. Mowry's *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* (1946).[3] It was the first book to deal with this period of Roosevelt's life. It provided valuable insight into the tumultuous inner workings of a hastily constructed third party. However, Mowry's main purpose was to redefine Roosevelt as a progressive Republican, as most authors had regarded Roosevelt as a conservative. While Mowry admitted that Roosevelt contributed significantly to the Progressive Party, mainly due to his political weight, he also blamed Roosevelt the most for the fall of the Progressive Party. The purpose of this paper will not be to prove Roosevelt was either a progressive or a conservative or to confirm Mowry's thesis that Roosevelt had caused the downfall of the Progressive Party. Instead, this paper will attempt to provide a more nuanced answer *why* it was that Roosevelt left the party in 1916. To this end, as was mentioned before briefly, my analysis will take a similar approach to that of Andrew Trees. In his book *The Founding Fathers and the Politics of Character* (2004), Trees shows the complicated world of politics by looking at the writings of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison. In doing so, he demonstrates that the line between one's personal and political world can be thin and is often crossed. Through his

[3] George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1947).

analysis Trees shows the difficulty these Founding Fathers had in translating their personal convictions into the American national identity after the Revolution.

By analyzing Roosevelt's letters in a similar manner, I aim to argue that the Progressive Party ultimately failed because Roosevelt lost faith in his political power and skill due to problems and disappointments in his personal life. I intend to show the gradual loss of faith Roosevelt had in himself. I will begin by providing context in the form of the creation of the Progressive Party in Chapter One. Despite Roosevelt's direct involvement being minimal in the beginning, it provides an image of the point from where Roosevelt's decline in faith and belief started. Chapter Two will deal with the period of the 1912 presidential campaign. It was in this period that Roosevelt started to lose faith first in the party, rather than himself. This is important, as it is in stark contrast to later years, where Roosevelt seemed to reflect more inwards and see past failures as his own, rather than that of the Progressive Party. This process, as I will show in the following chapters, is what resulted in Theodore Roosevelt leaving the Progressive Party, which quickly resulted in its disappearance.

I realize that the relationship between the personal and political is a complex issue, involving many aspects of politics. Here, in my depictions of Roosevelt's political career I perhaps overly emphasize the relevance of the personal aspects of his political decisions. Moreover, I realize that it is always difficult to assess the "true" motives underlying individual behavior. Nevertheless, on the basis of a close reading of Roosevelt's private correspondence I hope to show that his personal situation and feelings mattered in his Progressive Party moments.

Chapter One

Split in the Republican Party

While Roosevelt would turn out to be a major player within the Progressive Party between 1912 and 1916, his involvement in the party prior to its official formation was decidedly less active. In the next part we shall discuss the formation of the Progressive Party and the events leading up to it. Roosevelt was traveling through Africa and Europe from March 1909 until June 1910. Because of this, he had very limited access to information from the States. However, in Roosevelt's absence, Taft's presidency would turn out to be a breeding ground for progressive resentment towards more conservative Republicans. This chapter will serve to explain how the foundations for the Progressive Party were formed and will serve mainly to provide context and a general introduction. Because Roosevelt was traveling at the time, he was unable to be directly involved in creating the party. However, while Roosevelt was in Europe, he would continuously receive request from acquaintances asking him to lead the party. Roosevelt's response to these request show his initial thoughts on running for president once more. The letters will show the fine line between Roosevelt's personal and political ambitions.

1.1 The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act

During his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt had implemented policies and reforms that were fairly progressive. Most well-known for breaking trusts, regulating the railroad enterprise and making sure pure food was available to all, with his Square Deal policy he wanted to make sure the average citizen would be treated fairly. While Roosevelt may not have managed to successfully implement all his ideas and regulations, he had spared no effort in trying.[4] At the end of his second term he nominated William Howard Taft for the presidency, as he had no intention at this point to run, in his eyes, for a third term.[5] Roosevelt saw Taft as the perfect candidate, as they had become good friends over the years and Taft had shown to share many of the same progressive ideas as he himself had. Therefore, he trusted Taft would continue on the progressive course he had plotted for the Republican Party. While serving as governor

[4] Cadenhead, *The Paradox of Progressivism*, 254.
[5] Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), 422.

general of the Philippines and after that secretary of war under Roosevelt, Taft had been a stalwart supporter of Roosevelt's policies. Even in his inaugural address, Taft assured the people he would continue on a path similar to that of his predecessor:

> I have had the honor to be one of the advisers of my distinguished predecessor, and, as such, to hold up his hands in the reforms he has initiated. I should be untrue to myself, to my promises, and to the declarations of the party platform upon which I was elected to office, if I did not make the maintenance and enforcement of those reforms a most important feature of my administration.[6]

The excerpt from Taft's inaugural address shows that at this point in time, even Taft himself was still intending to continue as though nothing has changed. However, soon after his inaugural address, Taft would stop tracing Roosevelt's steps.[7] While his actions would not mirror his words, it would not be entirely fair to resent Taft for the upcoming shift in policy despite his promise to keep things the same. After all, Roosevelt had made a similar promise when he had become president after McKinley's death, only to similarly abandon this promise in practice to create his own policies.[8] Nevertheless, during the Taft administration, a rift would grow within the Republican Party between those with conservative and progressive views. While the rift within the party was not originally caused by Taft, some of his actions would lead to increased frustration and distrust within the party, primarily among those with progressive ideas.[9] Taft often ignored the progressive side of the Republican Party Roosevelt had identified more with, opting instead to side with members of the Old Guard.

The Old Guard was made up of conservative Republicans. Two important members belonging to this cabal of conservatives were Joseph G. Cannon and Nelson W. Aldrich. Cannon, who could be considered the leader of the conservative Old Guard, had been the speaker of the House of Representatives for nearly six years when Taft entered the White House as president. In the years prior he had managed to build up a reputation as a shrewd politician and a great orator. During Roosevelt's presidency, the two often clashed, as Cannon used his influence as speaker to halt the more progressive bills and legislation that entered the House,

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[6] "Inaugural Address of William Howard Taft". Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Library. Inaugural Addresses Of the Presidents Of the United States: from George Washington 1789 To George Bush 1989 http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/taft.asp (accessed: September 11, 2017).
[7] John Allen Gable, *The Bull Moose Years: Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Party* (London: Kennikat Press, 1978), 8.
[8] Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 381.
[9] Cadenhead, *The Paradox of Progressivism*, 187.

much to the annoyance of the progressive oriented representatives.[10] An equally important player on the conservative side was Aldrich. Aldrich had been in the Senate since before Roosevelt was president, and had already made himself a man of great influence. Roosevelt had managed to work with them fairly well for some years, although in later years this happened "with increasing friction".[11]

Roosevelt had advanced and strengthened reforms and progressive ideals during his terms, but the conservative Republicans had for a long time been historically stronger.[12] When Roosevelt left the White House and decided to go on a tour through Africa and Europe, conservative Republicans like Aldrich and Cannon took this chance to increase their influence and power.[13] With Taft in the White House, this task was made considerably easier. While it can certainly be argued that Taft truly did believe in the ideals of Roosevelt, he often lacked the fervor Roosevelt possessed. Furthermore, Taft's eyes had never been set on the presidency, but rather on the Supreme Court. Therefore, Taft was far more content with deferring to the judgement of others than Roosevelt was.[14] Due to the strong influence and presence of Cannon and Aldrich especially, Taft more often than not decided on following their advice, instead of that of progressive Republicans. One such occasion that would prove to be of major detriment to progressive's trust in Taft would be the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act.

Tariffs had always been a sensitive subject, as there never was a true consensus over what course to take.[15] During his time as president, Roosevelt had avoided the difficult subject of tariffs relatively well by focusing on other issues he deemed more relevant to the people.[16] When Roosevelt left office, he was confident Taft would handle this delicate matter in a way conforming to his own ideas. Roosevelt at that point in time had no reason to think otherwise, as Taft, during his campaign for presidency, had declared multiple times he intended to go for a downwards revision of tariffs.[17]

However, when Taft decided to address the tariffs, he did this in a way that further alienated the progressive Republicans. Similar to the Ballinger Affair, Taft supported regulations on tariffs that were supported by the conservatives. The act was passed in 1909 by

[10] Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 32.
[11] Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 382.
[12] Gable, *The Bull Moose Years*, 7.
[13] Ibidem, 8.
[14] Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement,* 40.
[15] George M. Fisk, "The Payne-Aldrich Tariff," *Political Science Quarterly* 25 (1910): 35.
[16] Fisk, "The Payne-Aldrich Tariff," 37.
[17] "And during the campaign [Taft] had made many exceedingly emphatic speeches declaring for a revision downward." *Letter to Pinchot*, 2, Roosevelt Institute of American Studies, reel 90, series 1.

Congress and it was the first change to tariff law since 1897, back when the Dingley Act had been passed.[18] A tariff bill sponsored by Sereno Payne, which called for reduced rates, was passed by the House of Representatives. Also during this time, Nelson Aldrich substituted a bill in the Senate that would increase rates and make fewer downwards revisions. Progressives fought against what was called the Aldrich Bill, but without support from the president, both bills were accepted and quickly signed by Taft. Despite that the act was not notably protectionist and thus not extremely conservative, progressives still viewed the whole ordeal as reason to lose trust in the president, as he had not only done the opposite of what he had promised, albeit slightly, but also because he continuously ignored the progressive's call for support. Taft had chosen the side of the conservatives over that of the progressives. Trust in Taft began to falter. As a correspondent of Pinchot wrote: "Yet during the historic fight over the tariff bill he [Taft] gave not the slightest aid or support to those who were fighting to redeem the party pledges, but, on the contrary, was in constant consultation with the men I have named. This really did arouse the people."[19]

The lack of support Taft offered to the progressives is emphasized. Aside from the progressives being displeased, a larger part of the population had also taken notice of the tariff change. Tariffs had historically been a more sensitive subject that the general public was interested in. An extra, most likely overlooked, effect of the tariff would be the increase in cost of paper. This riled several newspapers against the Taft administration, which would have a negative impact on the trust in the administration.[20]

The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act was for many progressives the push they had been waiting for to split from the Republican Party and start a party of their own. Furthermore, the act made apparent the dissatisfaction of the people with the Taft administration. Due to the disparity between the promises Taft had made in his presidential campaign and the actions he had undertaken as president, many people were dissatisfied with the current administration.[21] This did not reflect well on the image of the Republican Party; not only had Taft himself failed to live up to many of his promises, but this had caused a major schism within the party itself.

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[18] Stanley D. Solvick, "William Howard Taft and the Payne-Aldrich Tariff," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 50 (1963): 424.

[19] The men referred to in this passage were Sereno Payne and Nelson Aldrich, who were largely responsible for the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act and other conservative Republians, like Elihu Root, who had played a role in the firing of Gifford Pinchot. *Letter to Pinchot*, 2, Roosevelt Institute of American Studies.

[20] Fisk, "The Payne-Aldrich Tariff," 35.

[21] "Warn Republicans; Ex-Gov. Herrick Charges Party With Extravagance. Garfield Asks For Action; Ex-Secretary Says People Demand Progressive Laws.," *Washington Post*, March 24, 1910, Roosevelt Institute of American Studies, reel 90, series 1.

Roosevelt, in a personal letter, stated the Democratic Party in contrast had been "behaving fairly well" and that "unless there is a cataclysm all that they have to do is behave well in order to win the next presidential election".[22]

1.2 The Ballinger Affair

A development that worried many progressives was the replacement of certain progressives who had served dutifully under Roosevelt with more conservative oriented individuals. A change that roused many progressives was the replacement of James R. Garfield. Garfield had worked under Roosevelt together with Richard A. Ballinger as Secretary of the Interior.[23] Garfield was a veteran of the Roosevelt administration. Starting in 1902, he became an adviser to Roosevelt as a member of the United States Civil Service Commission. After holding this position for a year, he became Commissioner of Corporations at the Department of Commerce and Labor in 1903. Here he had to perform inspections of several big industries, like the railroad and meat-packing industries. He held this position until 1907, when he was appointed Secretary of Interior, until Taft replaced him with Richard Ballinger two years later. Ballinger had previously served as Commissioner of the General Land Office. This replacement frightened progressives and conservationists alike, as Taft had previously promised to keep Roosevelts cabinet officers. Yet now one of Roosevelt's chief conservationists had been replaced this early in Taft's presidency. While replacing members of a former administration was not uncommon, as Roosevelt himself had even done it, their fears seemed justified as Ballinger, within merely six weeks after taking office, had reversed policies put in place by Garfield, which resulted in restoring roughly 12.000 km² of ground for private use.[24] This was a cause for concern for progressives and conservationists alike, as not only the land was now free to be bought and used again for large scale resource winning, but large corporations would be able to create a monopoly on the resources gathered in the area. These were two things that the Roosevelt administration had tried to prevent. Starting what would later be known as the Ballinger Affair, Gifford Pinchot, who Roosevelt had appointed as first Chief of the United States Forest service, accused Ballinger of acting out of special interest, as it turned out that

[22] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Robert Bacon*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o214826. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[23] Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 561.
[24] John T. *Ganoe*, "Some Constitutional and Political Aspects of the Ballinger-Pinchot Controversy," *Pacific Historical Review* 3 (1934): 323.

Ballinger had certain connections with the corporations that were buying up land that Ballinger had restored for private use.[25] Because Pinchot eventually went against Taft on the matter of whether Ballinger should undergo Congressional hearings, he was fired and Taft subsequently cleared Ballinger of practically all wrongdoings.[26] The lack of thoroughness regarding an investigation into Ballinger's dealings with the private companies and the subsequent quick dismissal of the investigation by Taft angered progressives. Both Pinchot and Garfield had been avid supporters of Roosevelt's progressive policies, so they were troubled by the entire Ballinger ordeal. Not only had they lost their position to continue progressive policies to more conservative orientated Republicans, it also showed that Taft was not as consistent in sticking to the progressive agenda as he had first promised. This instilled fear in the progressives and the divide between the progressives and the conservatives began to grow.

1.3 The Republican Party Torn

The Payne-Aldrich Act had changed the way Americans viewed the Taft administration, while the Ballinger Affair had severely hurt Roosevelt's belief in Taft personally. Roosevelt began to view Taft as less qualified than when he had endorsed him. Pinchot at one point visited Roosevelt in Europe, most likely to discus in more detail all that had happened in the past few months. Before this many letters had been sent to Roosevelt by friends and political acquaintances urging him to run for president once more when he would return. His answer to each letter was the same:

> The situation is very difficult. Not only the Taft but the La Follette men have been wishing me to state that I would not accept the nomination if nominated. I shall never make such a statement, because I shall never say that I shall shirk a duty if it comes clearly and unequivocally as a duty. But I very emphatically do not want the nomination. The trouble is that it is very difficult to get people to understand that one may be sincere in not wanting the nomination, and yet equally sincere in saying that if the nomination came not as a result of intrigue, but of a real popular demand, it could and [must not] be refused.[27]

[25] Goodwin, *The Bully Pulpit*, 607.
[26] Ibidem, 619.
[27] *Theodore Roosevelt to John Callan O'Laughlin. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1454.26 (19). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o278422. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.*

This excerpt shows how Roosevelt carefully crafted his argument; while initially declining the nomination, he leaves essentially all paths open to return.[28] While this might be seen as unnecessary, it is not unlike Roosevelt to phrase his motivations in such a way that it seems as if he speaks for the people. And while this may seem like a noble gesture, it can easily be argued that Roosevelt at this point was quite confident he would get the consent from the people. Almost all the letters on the subject of Taft that Roosevelt received ended with the correspondent asking Roosevelt to yet again run for the office of president in order to right the wrongs Taft had done in their eyes. This undoubtedly gave Roosevelt's ego a boost, as letters practically begging for his return kept coming in. Though Roosevelt certainly did not hide his disappointment in Taft, he made it clear he would only run against Taft if it was by popular demand.[29]

While for a time Wisconsin Senator Robert M. La Follette was a popular candidate among progressive Republicans, talk about a Roosevelt nomination did not stop.[30] With popular demand culminating in a formal request from the Governors of seven states, Roosevelt finally announced his candidacy.[31] Roosevelt began a campaign across the country to garner as many votes as possible to secure the Republican nomination. However, many of the Republican delegates were conservatives and had cast their votes for Taft.[32] The Republican primaries started on June 18, but soon it became apparent Roosevelt had not managed to convince enough of Taft's delegates to join his progressive cause. Though Roosevelt managed to get the most popular votes (over a million compared to Taft's 800.000 and La Follette's 300.000), he lost the race in terms of delegates. Managing to get 466 delegates, he still lost to Taft, who had managed to get 566 delegates on his side. Roosevelt blamed the defeat on the influence the Old Guard had on many delegates, giving Taft more votes than Roosevelt believed he had truly deserved.[33]

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[28] "Pinchot May See T.R.," *Washington Post*, March 23, 1910, Roosevelt Institute of American Studies, reel 90, series 1.
[29] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Ben B. Lindsey*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o221644. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University, and *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to John Callan O'Laughlin*, and *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph Bucklin Bishop*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. bMS Am 1514 (129). Harvard College Library.http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o282629. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[30] Thomas H. Russel, *The Life and Work of Theodore Roosevelt*, 1919, 241.
[31] Russel, *The Life and Work of Theodore Roosevelt*, 242.
[32] Gable, *The Bull Moose Years*, 17.
[33] Roosevelt would continue denounce these kind of backdoor politics over the course of the next few years.

Nevertheless, determined not to let this be his ultimate defeat, Roosevelt and others, including Pinchot and Garfield, decided to split from the Republican Party and form their own third party, in the middle of the Republican primaries on June 21: the Progressive Party.

The road that lead to the creation of the Progressive Party was a troublesome one. Many of Taft's decisions had created considerable controversies, most notably the Payne-Aldrich Tarff debacle and the Ballinger Affair. The latter had significantly increased the rift within the Republican Party. The thought of splitting from the conservative Republicans became more common among progressives. While progressive Republicans had continuously been disappointed with how Taft had treated some of Roosevelt's former administration members, they begrudgingly accepted the situation and kept waiting, hoping Taft would turn around.[34] This change never happened, however, and the progressives would turn to more active opposition after the introduction of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act.[35] Progressives began to ask Roosevelt to challenge Taft as a progressive and win back the Republican Party. Roosevelt, however, replied to everyone he would only accept the position if the people desired it so. Yet despite his constant refusal, Roosevelt's characteristic confidence can be traced in his letters. When he came back to the United States and accepted the nomination, he was no doubt quite confident he would be able to beat his former Secretary of War in the Republican primaries. Even after losing the primaries, Roosevelt confidently announced his candidacy as the presidential candidate for the Progressive Party.

[34] *Letter to Gifford Pinchot*, March 24, 1910, Roosevelt Institute of American Studies, reel 90, series 1.
[35] *Letter to Gifford Pinchot*, March 24, 1910.

Chapter Two

The 1912 Campaign

"There are always hard things in life; the lives that are worth living but yet contain only happiness are very very rare. But I have never been able to be sorry for people who knew both sadness and joy. My pity is reserved for those who know neither. Never to have striven, that is the really bad thing, infinitely worse than to have striven and failed; and almost always real success means a chequered record of both success and failure."[36]

In a letter to Cecil Spring Rice, a good friend and British Ambassador to the United States from 1912 to 1918, Roosevelt writes this passage to his friend to remark on the troubles Spring Rice and his family recently faced. While the sentiment at the time was directed to someone else, it would be equally applicable to Roosevelt himself near the end of 1912. This chapter will show how Roosevelt's correspondence during 1912 slowly began showing his political fatigue and wavering spirit. Three important points in Roosevelt's campaign will be used as key moments to show his thoughts concerning the campaign and his role in it. These moments are: the National Progressive Convention that was held in Chicago on August 6, the failed assassination on his life in Milwaukee and the presidential election on November 5.

The 1912 elections can be described as a melting pot of different progressive platforms. The Republican primaries had both Roosevelt and La Follette compete for the Republican ticket in the name of progressivism, while the Democrats would elect Woodrow Wilson as their candidate. Roosevelt was well aware that the presence of three candidates was a problem for Republicans. The problem was two-fold: not only were the votes split in general between Taft, who represented the conservatives and Roosevelt and La Follette, who represented the progressives. At first Roosevelt had hoped to find a solution that could bring him and La Follette together, so they would stand strong as one progressive voice. However, Roosevelt quickly dropped the idea, as he believed La Follette to be too radical and believed he only acted out of self-interest. While La Follette had certainly been popular among progressives for a while, with Roosevelt back in politics his popularity had dwindled. With the formation of the Progressive Party on August 7 following the Progressive National Convention in Chicago, the race for the 1912 elections had truly begun. With La Follette out of the race at this point, Roosevelt had to

[36] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Cecil Spring Rice*. Sagamore Hill National Historic Site. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o279152. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

contend with Taft and Wilson. Despite the absence of La Follette, whose candidacy had previously posed a problem by splitting the progressive Republican votes, Roosevelt and his running mate Hiram Johnson had to campaign vigorously. Setting up a third party out of seemingly nothing brought with it uncertainties that some of Roosevelt's previous supporters were not willing to overlook. This led some to retreat to the Republican Party, despite its conservative platform.

2.1 The National Progressive Convention: Full Of Hope

Roosevelt gave his speech that outlined the Progressive Party platform on August 6 during the convention in Chicago. In it, he bean by stating how the old parties are ill-equipped to deal with the current social and economic issues the United States are facing as "neither the Republican nor the Democratic platform contains the slightest promise of approaching the great problems of today either with understanding or good faith."[37] To solve these issues, Roosevelt states it is of increasing importance to have a strong coherence between state and national affairs, something that an efficient government is able to accomplish.[38] The platform called for a number of changes in the social sphere, several political reforms and measures that would lead to a more direct democracy for the people. Regarding the social sphere, the most notable changes Roosevelt advocated were the establishment of a national health service (one that would be overseen primarily by the federal government), social insurance (to provide for the elderly, the unemployed, and the disabled), multiple regulations that would affect labor (including a minimum wage law, the introduction of an eight-hour workday) and the abolition of child labor. Political reforms included women's suffrage, the direct election of Senators and primary elections for state and federal nominations. Finally, the platform wanted the following changes to create a more direct democracy: The recall election (citizens may remove an elected official before the end of his term), the referendum (citizens may decide on a law by popular vote), the initiative (citizens may propose a law by petition and enact it by popular vote) and judicial recall (when a court declares a law unconstitutional, the citizens may override that ruling by popular vote).

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[37] *Theodore Roosevelt's confession of faith before the Progressive National Convention*. Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o291875. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[38] "Our aim should be the same in both state and nation; that is, to use government as an efficient agency for the practical betterment of social and economic conditions throughout this land." [38] *Theodore Roosevelt's confession of faith before the Progressive National Convention*.

An important and unique part of the program was the inclusion of women's suffrage. Neither Taft nor Wilson had endorsed women's suffrage on the national level. Jane Addams, the famed suffragette and social worker of the time, was even included in the progressive campaign. At the convention in Chicago she even gave a seconding speech for Roosevelt's nomination. Correspondence after the convention shows Roosevelt's eagerness to include not only Addams, but other women in the movement and politics in general. Writing to Addams shortly after the convention, Roosevelt says:

> I prized your notion not only because of what you are and stand for, but because of what it symbolized for the new movement. In this great National Convention starting the new party women have thereby been shown to have their place to fill precisely as men have, and on an absolute equality. It is idle now to argue whether women can play their part in politics, because in this convention we saw the accomplished fact, and moreover the women who have actively participated in this work of launching the new party represent all that we are most proud to associate with American womanhood. My earnest hope is to see the Progressive Party movement in all its State and local divisions recognize this fact, precisely as it has been recognized at the National Convention. Our party stands for social and industrial justice, and we have a right to expect that woman and men will work within the party for the cause with the same high sincerity of purpose and with like efficiency. I therefore earnestly hope that in the campaign now opened we shall see women active members of the various State and County Committees. […] While I am now addressing you I desire that this shall be taken as the expression of my personal hope and desire by all members of such State and County Committees, and I believe that I express the feelings of the great majority of progressives in making this request.[39]

This support for women's suffrage would continue to play a big part in Roosevelt's campaign. He would continue to correspond with Addams, requesting her advice, asking her to write articles or that she be a speaker to advocate the Progressive Party's support not only for women's suffrage, but also for women and children's working rights.[40] However, the written

[39] *Telegram from Theodore Roosevelt to Jane Addams*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o230361. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[40] *Telegram from Theodore Roosevelt to Jane Addams*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o230308. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University. *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Jane Addams*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o207435. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University, and *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Jane Addams*.

form of the speech Roosevelt gave at Chicago contained a passage that caused confusion regarding Roosevelt's actual stance on women's suffrage.[41] The passage was the following: "In those conservative States where there is genuine doubt how the women stand on this matter [women's suffrage] I [Roosevelt] suggest that it be referred to a vote of the women, so that they may themselves make the decision."[42] This caused confusion, as this would mean that there existed certain conditions that had to be met before suffrage would be given to women, which would imply Roosevelt did not wholly support women's suffrage. However, in a letter sent to Frances Kellor, Roosevelt's secretary assures Kellor that the passage was meant to be removed from the text before the actual speech and that Roosevelt "was never strongly in favor of the method", but thought it might appeal to those women against who were against suffrage.[43]

The last essential point Roosevelt addresses is the need for more direct involvement of the people. This increase in popular rule would be brought about by introducing a number of measures, namely the introduction of presidential primaries, the election of United States Senate by popular vote, a short ballot, and the use of initiative, referendum and recall. The first of these measures, the presidential primaries, relates directly to Roosevelt's personal situation, as he believes that during the Republican primaries, "if I could appeal to the rank and file of the Republican voters, I could generally win, whereas if I had to appeal to the political caste […], I generally lost".[44] During the primaries Roosevelt already showed his lack of trust in the current system that favored representatives instead of the people, believing there was little chance for him to win, as "the game" (as he referred to it) was played not by those interested in "putting into effect the will of the people", but politicians only interested in winning said game for personal gain.[45]

After the Chicago convention, which Roosevelt described the event as "a miracle" where "everybody was pleased and all came away full of enthusiasm".[46] However, despite all this enthusiasm, Roosevelt's own hopes of winning were low. In a letter to Arthur Hamilton

[41] *Letter from Secretary of Theodore Roosevelt to Frances Kellor*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o230252. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[42] *Theodore Roosevelt's confession of faith before the Progressive National Convention*.
[43] *Letter from Secretary of Theodore Roosevelt to Frances Kellor*.
[44] *Theodore Roosevelt's confession of faith before the Progressive National Convention.*
[45] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph M. Dixon*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o38934. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[46] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to J. J. Curran*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o229985. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

Lee, an English soldier, diplomat and politician whom he had met when Lee became an honorary member of the Rough Riders, he admitted that "Wilson […] is a strong candidate. My judgement is that he will win […]. There is of course a chance that my movement may gain strength enough to enable me to beat Wilson, but I think this very improbable."[47] Despite this grim prediction, Roosevelt still expressed he truly believed in the Progressive Party, as its creation alone was enough in his eyes to start a change in America's democracy.[48]

2.2 The 1912 Campaign: Revitalized Faith

A few days before what would become one of his most memorable speeches, Roosevelt wrote his son Kermit, telling him of the campaign. He writes him the campaign is continuing normally, but that "it grows harder and harder week by week".[49] He adds, however, that between him and Wilson, he was less troubled by fatigue, as Wilson "is already losing his voice". Roosevelt devotes a significant part of the letter describing how unfair the campaign has been, claiming almost all political bosses are against him personally, which combined with low funds, stifles the party severely. Though enthusiastic supporters believed the party would win with a landslide, Roosevelt himself did not have any faith in this. Although he was confident he would beat Taft, defeating Wilson was not something he foresaw happening, as he had expressed earlier on in the campaign. Despite all this negativity, he did still believe the progressive cause was one he happily fought and would continue fighting for, and that the campaign had been impressive, despite the opposing forces. This attitude of on the one hand a lack of hope of winning the election, but on the other steadfastly believing in the cause is something that is prevalent in Roosevelt's correspondence during the campaign.

An important point in Roosevelt's campaign occurred on October 14, when he was to give a speech in Milwaukee. While exiting his car to head for the auditorium where the speech would take place, Roosevelt was shot in the chest. Fortunately due to the metal case for his glasses and the folded manuscript for the speech he was about to give, the bullet did not pierce his body, but stayed lodged in his chest, barely missing his lung. Had the bullet missed these

[47] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Hamilton Lee*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o230076. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[48] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Hamilton Lee*.
[49] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (91). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281578. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

objects, the shot would have most likely been fatal. Roosevelt refused medical treatment, insisting he give his speech, despite just barely surviving an assassination. Thus he went on stage and delivered his speech. While the speech itself did not contain any new noteworthy additions to the existing party platform, the fact that Roosevelt had given the speech despite being shot, showed people around the country that he was serious about the cause he and his party were advocating. For prior to this event, Roosevelt's motivations for getting back into politics had been questioned. He had needed to defend himself multiple times as he was being accused by some to be running for president primarily for selfish reasons. The accusations were based on a particular statement he had made at the end of his presidency. At the time, Roosevelt had stated he would not be running for a third term, as he thought it unwise to break with the custom of not serving more than two terms that previous presidents had set.[50] Incidentally, John Shrank, the man who had attempted to assassinate Roosevelt was put in a mental institution, for the reason why he had tried to assassinate Roosevelt was because he had been having disturbing dreams about William McKinley and he was convinced no president should serve more than two terms.[51] When Roosevelt had returned to the political scene to run for office in 1912, people rightfully pointed out the apparent inconsistency between his words and deeds. In the beginning of his campaign, Roosevelt defended himself by explaining what he had meant exactly when he had said years prior he would not run for a third term. In one particular letter, Roosevelt compared his current situation with refusing a cup of coffee:

> What I had to say referred to the next Presidential nomination in 1908, and was universally accepted at the time as so referring. To have had me qualify it by putting in something like "three consecutive terms" would have shown preposterous selfconsciousness (sic) on my part, and would have been accepted universally as meaning that I intended to become a candidate in 1912. As a matter of fact it did not occur to me that I ever should be a candidate again; and on the other hand, as I remember saying to a reporter at the time, it was as preposterous to ask me whether I expected to be a candidate in 1912, or whether my declaration applied to 1912, […] 1924, or 1928. In other words, as the whole reason for the third term tradition could only apply to a third consecutive term, I felt that it would be misleading, for it would open itself to misconstruction, if I spoke with the meticulous accuracy which some good people

[50] Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 422.
[51] Theodore Roosevelt Association, "It Takes More Than That to Kill a Bull Moose: The Leader and The Cause".
http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/site/c.elKSIdOWIiJ8H/b.9297449/k.861A/It_Takes_More_Than_That_to_Kill_a_Bull_Moose_The_Leader_and_The_Cause.htm (accessed May 20, 2018).

> apparently think necessary. Frequently when asked to take another cup of coffee at breakfast, I say "No thank you, I wont (sic) take another cup". This does not mean that I intend never to take another cup of coffee during my life; it means that I am refusing for that breakfast, and that my remark is limited to that breakfast, and no one would apply it otherwise.[52]

Following the failed attempt on his life, people were more convinced of Roosevelt's honest intentions. Roosevelt's attitude in personal correspondence, outside of the public eye, can support the honesty of his intentions. As his private correspondence has shown, Roosevelt had little faith in a victory for the Progressive Party from the beginning. Furthermore, come October, it seemed as if most of his characteristic vigor had left him, often writing he was tired of politics. The election had not even taken place and Roosevelt was already showing considerable reluctance to continue the fight as the leader of the party. There was a short period where Roosevelt regained some of his vigor, which ironically was the result of the assassination attempt. After giving the speech, Roosevelt did accept medical aid. He was transported to Mercy Hospital in Chicago, from which he wrote a letter, or rather had it dictated and signed by his wife Edith, as he could not use his right arm, to his son Kermit, describing to him the attack on his life. While normally being confined to a bed and not being able to do anything did not fit within Roosevelt's active and lively character, he remarks in the letter that his forced bedrest was actually a relief from the strain of the ongoing campaign.[53] Roosevelt begins the letter rather humorously, writing that "Well, this campaign proved as exciting and as dangerous as any of our African hunts!"[54] He then continuous by saying he was not able to get a look at his assailant's face, as he was shot when he rose up from taking a bow and immediately buckled down after being shot. Despite practically everyone deeming the attacker, John Shrank, a lunatic, Roosevelt does not believe this was the case, as he tells Kermit that "He [Shrank] is not a lunatic at all. His choice of a gun showed that he was an experienced man-killer."[55] Roosevelt also tells his son that he was confident he could give his speech as he did not cough up blood after he was shot and thus, he deduced he "was pretty sure the wound was not a fatal one".[56]

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[52] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Edward Sanford Martin*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1863 (406). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o283477. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[53] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (92). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281581. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[54] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Ms Am 1541.1 (92).
[55] Ibidem.
[56] Ibidem.

Four days before the election, Roosevelt sends Kermit another letter, in which he seems more optimistic about his chances of winning. Though he is still realistic, estimating the chances of winning are only "one in three or four", it shows a more optimistic outlook than in his previous letters. However, what is interesting about this letter is that Roosevelt clearly shows he is fatigued by politics of the past year, as he states that although he has been glad to be in the fight, he feels discomfort "at the thought of ever again having to undertake such a contest."[57] This is further emphasized when he states that he hopes that "four years hence the Progressives will have developed some other leader who can carry on the battle."[58] All of the fervor that Roosevelt previously had in advancing the progressive cause seems to have ebbed away. While this sentiment is not wholly surprising, as Roosevelt had expressed he was tired of politics both mentally and physically before, the strain the campaign has had on him now culminated in this letter. It is in stark contrast with the tone with which Roosevelt wrote to Charles Sumner Bird the day before the election.[59] On November 4, Roosevelt cheerfully wrote "Win or lose, I am proud beyond measure to have had my share in this battle for decency and common sense".[60] However, this enthusiasm would be short lived.

2.3 The 1912 Presidential Election: A Blow To His Confidence

While the election is going on and the results are coming in, Roosevelt writes Kermit a letter in which he is convinced of his coming defeat. Roosevelt is clearly disappointed while writing the letter. Even though he himself had admitted multiple times before that he did not think there was a big chance the Progressive Party would win, he had still hoped to do better than the results he had received thus far. He tells Kermit he wants to do nothing with politics for at least a year, or at all.[61]

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[57] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281584. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[58] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*.
[59] Charles Sumner Bird was a leader of the Progressive Party in Massachusetts and one of its main financers. Sherman, Richard B. "Charles Sumner Bird and the Progressive Party in Massachusetts." *The New England Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1960): 325-340, 325.
[60] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Charles Sumner Bird*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1540 (240). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o279820. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[61] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (94). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281585. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

The prediction Roosevelt had made regarding the outcome of the election proved correct; while the Progressive Party had beaten Taft and the conservative Republican Party, they had lost to Wilson and the Democratic Party. Roosevelt and the Progressive Party had managed to get a significant number of popular votes, just over 4.1 million, which amounted to 27.4% of the total of votes, the highest percentage a third party has ever gotten in an election. However, this percentage was not reflected in the electoral votes, of which the progressives only received 88. They only carried 8 states. Wilson received nearly 6.3 million popular votes, which was 41.8% of the total of votes. The number of electoral votes he received was much higher relatively, with 435. The Democrats carried 40 states. Taft was close to Roosevelt in terms of the popular vote, with almost 3.5 million votes, which was 23.3% of the total. He carried just 2 states, which resulted in 8 electoral votes. Eugene Debs, running for the Socialist Party, got 900.000 popular votes, and no electoral votes.

Roosevelt's correspondence in the period after the election shows a mixed bag of emotions. It is mostly a combination of a still active belief in the cause of progressivism, but with a strong element of political fatigue. While Roosevelt does express the wish that he wants to see the Progressive Party continue, he is reserved about the idea to participate himself in the same way he has thus far done. He had already expressed his desire to stay out of politics for at least a year to Kermit, and he repeats this sentiment to others, saying he hopes to be able to stay out of the public eye for a while.[62] Furthermore, he emphasizes that he hopes the Progressive Party finds someone else to lead it in the coming years. One of Roosevelt's acquaintances wrote him a letter following the election in which the man most likely talks about the results, but how the Progressive Party has to go on, with Roosevelt at the helm. This much can be gathered from Roosevelt's response, as he writes:

> I value your letter, first because of its very kind spirit toward me, and next because of the sounds sense which, as usual, you show. There is only one point in your letter which gives me a little uneasiness, and that is the apparent implication that I must lead next time. I have had too much experience in the past to make any definite promises even to myself; so all I can say is that it would be a real misfortune if we did not develop someone else to lead the fight in 1916.[63]

[62] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to George E. Miller*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o231408. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[63] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to George E. Miller*.

Roosevelt expresses his surprise about the impression that he would be running again as the party's candidate in 1916. Roosevelt is very hesitant to accept this. However, Roosevelt's reluctance to lead the party again did not mean he had lost all interest. While he wanted to avoid taking a leading role, other letters show he was willing to assist the party in other ways.[64]

On November 11 Roosevelt again wrote Kermit, telling him of the aftermath of the election. Roughly a week had passed since his last letter to Kermit, which Roosevelt wrote in the middle of the ongoing election, and the tone of the letter shows Roosevelt is more positive than before, as he is clearly pleased with how the Progressive Party "handsomely" managed to beat Taft.[65] He tells of how, despite losing, many progressives are still full of energy and ready to continue fighting. However, it is clear Roosevelt himself does not fully share their enthusiasm. While he is pleased with having beaten Taft, he continues to express doubts and concern regarding the future of the Progressive Party. He is still entertaining the idea of staying out of the public eye for the foreseeable future and again expresses his desire that another person must take up a leadership role, though he is doubtful this will happen.

> I am having my hands full in trying to avoid being in the limelight and yet in trying not to discourage honest people, devoted people, by seeming to abandon them just because I am myself defeated.[66]

Roosevelt clearly struggles with his personal desire to largely leave politics and his feeling of duty to the cause of progressivism. His desire for a new leader would only grow stronger as time went on, as this would significantly lift the burden that he felt was on his shoulders. In his eyes the Progressive Party's best chance for survival would be to stay a third party and not align themselves in any way with the other parties. He mentions that some within

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[64] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to James K. Hackett*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o231387. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University, *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Clara Cahill Park*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o231415. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University, and *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Andrew A. D. Rahn*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o231420. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[65] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (95). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281587. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[66] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt.* Ms Am 1541.1 (95).

the party had wanted to change the name of the party to "the Progressive Republican Party", though he thinks this is a terrible idea, as it would alienate progressive Democrats.[67]

After two terms successful terms as president, Roosevelt had now encountered failure and, with it, sadness. For though he had striven to win both the Republican primary nomination and the presidential election, he failed at both. However, Roosevelt did fight, even though he never truly believed he could win. As his passage says, "Never to have striven, that is the really bad thing, infinitely worse than to have striven and failed". Even while fighting against seemingly impossible odds, Roosevelt kept believing in the cause, something his speech in Milwaukee is a perfect example of. Yet, the period after the elections shows a Roosevelt more at odds with himself than in the previous months. Before the election Roosevelt had at times shown fatigue when talking about the campaign. However, this was mostly physical fatigue. After losing the election, Roosevelt began to express far more explicitly how he had become fatigued mentally through the political turmoil. While still expressing an interest in the Progressive Party, he would prefer to avoid any active role. This sentiment is especially clear in the letters to Kermit. While the Progressive Party started united and with a leader, its future was unsure as they were preparing for the next elections. With Roosevelt's personal feelings mirroring the internal struggles of the party, the following years would prove difficult for both the Progressive Party and Roosevelt himself. In the next chapter the increasing conflict surrounding Theodore Roosevelt will be discussed.

[67] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Seth Bullock*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o231566. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

Chapter Three

Losing Faith

"If a man does not have an ideal and try to live up to it, then he becomes a mean, base and sordid creature, no matter how successful. If, on the other hand, he does not work practically, with the knowledge that he is in the world of actual men and must get results, he becomes a worthless head-in-the-air creature, a nuisance to himself and to everybody else."[68]

Roosevelt wrote this passage to Kermit at the end of January in 1915, speaking about his political life. Before the passage, he says he has always striven to find the balance between doing "what you would like to do and what you have to do, between the ideal and the practical."[69] If that balance is not kept, a man turns either into a "mean, base and sordid creature" or a nuisance. While Roosevelt most likely did not consider himself to have lost this balance, it might be argued that in the years after 1912, especially from 1915 onward, there were those around Roosevelt who would consider this an apt description of the former president.

This chapter will focus on the last years of Roosevelt's direct involvement in the Progressive Party, before he would decline the nomination for the presidential election in 1916. The numerous problems and setbacks the party had to deal with will be looked at and discussed from Roosevelt's perspective. His correspondence will show how his feelings and attitude towards the continued losses the party had to endure, and his relation with the party more generally slowly changed. While 1913 and the beginning of 1914 are light in terms of political action, due to Roosevelt's expedition in South America, these years will still be briefly touched upon. The latter half of 1914, as well as 1915 and 1916, will show a Roosevelt who got back into politics, even though he, as will become clear, never committed himself as he had done before.

3.1 Post-Election 1912 and 1913: After Armageddon

Late 1912, after the election, the disappointment caused by the defeat in the elections had already begun to foster problems within the young party. With the election over, the party

[68] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1541 (240). Harvard College Library.http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281112. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[69] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. MS Am 1541 (240).

had lost its immediate goal. Although enthusiastic members were already looking towards the Congressional elections in 1914 and the next presidential elections in 1916, these were still relatively far away, and problems began to arise regarding how to prepare the party for the upcoming battles. Numerous problems, both internal and external, in the upcoming years would hinder the Progressive Party in holding on to the momentum they had created for themselves.

"At the moment my chief task is to prevent the Progressives from fighting one another. The good Pinchots and their kind, the advanced radicals, want to fight Perkins and others, who as a matter of fact have been even more useful than the Pinchots in helping us in this fight. I think I shall be able to keep both sides together. But it is very weary work, and it is irritating now because I ought not to be required to do such work. As I have said often, this whole business of leading a new party should be for an ambitious young colonel, and not a retired major-general."[70]

After the loss in November, unrest within the party began to rise quickly. A big problem that would persist throughout 1913 was the argument that would break out surrounding George W Perkins's involvement in the Progressive Party. Being a founding member of the party alongside Roosevelt and the executive secretary, Perkins had played a large role in the party. Perkins was a leading executive in insurance, steel and banking, and had close ties to J. P. Morgan. Due to his work, he had active ties to big business, something that the more radical progressives were squarely against. The problem began when shortly after the election some members within the party would express their concern regarding Perkins's relation to big business. Furthermore, they accused him of being responsible for dropping a trust busting plank during the convention earlier that year, as he had opposed the anti-trust platform of the Progressive Party (though he had supported idea of the regulation instead of dissolution of trusts that Roosevelt had advocated in his New Nationalism speech).[71] The dropping of this plank had shocked many within the party due to Roosevelt's established reputation as the trust buster. Perkins himself believed in "good trusts", as he believed that "The fundamental principle of life is co-operation rather than competition. Competition is cruel, wasteful, destructive, outmoded; co-operation, inherent in any theory of a well-ordered Universe, is humane, efficient, inevitable and modern."[72] Several prominent members within the party began demanding that Perkins

[70] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (96). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281590. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[71] Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* 292.
[72] John A. Garraty, *Right-hand man: the life of George W. Perkins* (1978), 216.

resign from office. Men like Amos and Gifford Pinchot led the movement, while others like Hiram Johnson gave it their support.[73] Roosevelt, however, vehemently defended Perkins. In a letter to Gifford Pinchot, he expressed his belief in Perkins:

> With Perkins I have now been intimately associated for nine months. He has shown himself entirely disinterested, and very efficient. […] He has championed with the utmost zeal every plank in that platform, and has no more hope of reward than you have had, and I believe has been actuated by the same high spirit of unselfish devotion to a great cause. […] I shall stand by him just as I should stand by you. […] If Perkins had been excluded from all share in the management, if we had lost his very great organizing ability, his devoted zeal and the money which he so generously gave […] why, I think our whole campaign would have gone to pieces.[74]

While opponents of Perkins could question Roosevelt's words regarding the zeal with which Perkins acted for the party, they could not ignore the point concerning funds Roosevelt rightfully mentions. Indeed, as Roosevelt asserted, Perkins had provided the party with a great deal of money, both directly and indirectly.[75] The infighting troubled Roosevelt greatly. Without internal cohesion, he doubted the party would be able to keep going. As he wrote Kermit: "I gravely doubt whether we can make the new party permanent anyhow; if we fight in our own ranks, the task becomes not merely doubtful but impossible."[76] On top of this, the man at the center of the problem was one of the most important financiers of the young party. Without Perkin's financial support and connections, the Progressive Party would have a difficult time surviving the coming years. Due to Roosevelt staunchly backing Perkins, most of those who were against Perkins's continued involvement had little choice but to accept that, for the foreseeable future, Perkins was there to stay. Driving Perkins away would have made things significantly more difficult than they already were, but risking Roosevelt's support would have meant the end for the party, as at that time Roosevelt was still very much the face of the party. Thus, the conflict surrounding Perkins decreased in intensity, though the conflict would never truly be resolved.

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[73] Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 294.
[74] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Gifford Pinchot*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o231703. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[75] In the same letter, Roosevelt remarks that Perkins ties brought in others, like Frank Munsey, another wealthy businessman, who provided significant funds to the Progressive Party.
[76] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (97). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281591. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

When Christmas came around, Roosevelt wrote a letter to Kermit to tell him about the wonderful days had, although they had missed him greatly.[77] Roosevelt continued to report on other happy events that had taken place concerning friends and family. However, the letter ended on a more somber tone, as Roosevelt told his son that "I hated to have to get into the fight myself and have no idea whether the Party has or has not any future."[78] Clearly exasperated for the time with the political party, Roosevelt had decided to concentrate on finishing his autobiography in the next few months. Interestingly enough, though the 1912 elections had finished while Roosevelt was still writing and despite mentioning Wilson and his New Freedom platform, Roosevelt wrote nothing of the 1912 elections and the Progressive Party. Perhaps the omission was because Roosevelt deemed it was still too soon to write a fitting verdict concerning the impact of the election. Or perhaps it was simply because Roosevelt did not want to recount this painful defeat in his soon to be published autobiography.

Though 1912 ended on a sad note, with conflict between important party members, 1913 would prove to be a relatively quiet year for Roosevelt, at least in terms of politics. Few of his letters discuss the intricacies of the political scene concerning the Progressive Party. This was not too surprising; given the results of the election, Taft was nearing the end of his term and did not set out to bring any changes to domestic politics. Furthermore, Roosevelt's in the first half of 1913 was occupied with other business, like his autobiography. Another great deal of his time was spent preparing for his trip to South America.

At the end of January in 1913, Roosevelt wrote the following passage in which he discusses his political life to Kermit:

> Politically, I am having the usual exasperating time. While the Progressives did very much better than the Republicans in the popular vote and in the Electoral College, they elected very few Congressmen or State officials, and now there comes a period of necessary inaction which is especially trying to such a heterogeneous volunteer force. One set of them, typified by Munsey, wishes to make some kind of plan for union with the Republicans; another set, typified by the Pinchots, wants to go off into some brand new crusade to make a new issue, they don't much know what. Of course the real need is to keep quiet and do nothing until the Democrats at Washington can have time to

[77] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (98). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281593. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[78] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (98).

> develop their policy. Our future will depend much more now upon what the Democrats do than upon anything our own people do. […] If Wilson does so well that the Progressives of the country are satisfied to accept his leadership, then there will be no need of my doing anything whatever in politics, even if I do not support Wilson myself. But if he does not do well, or if in spite of his doing well Democracy does so badly that it is evident that he and his party together can accomplish nothing, then doubtless there will be plenty of work ahead in which I shall have to take part, much though I hate doing so. [79]

The passage is enlightening as it portrays Roosevelt's thoughts on the past, present and future of the party. Roosevelt is all too aware that while the party had an impressive result in the popular vote, this did not translate at all into actual elected officials. Thus, the party had in essence not improved since it was started half a year ago. The lack of actual influence is further demonstrated as Roosevelt notes that the best course of action for the party would be to wait and see what the Democratic Party would do, thus only reacting to their opponents instead of taking an active role. Roosevelt remarks that if the Democrats do well enough, he would see no reason to get back into politics. Whether this rather finite statement was the result of Roosevelt experiencing a break from politics after 6 months of continuous campaigning or his excitement generated by his upcoming travels is difficult to say with certainty. Most likely it was a combination of both. Regardless, the true outcome of the situation Roosevelt would find himself in turned out to be the complete opposite. Shortly after he came back in May 1914 from his expedition in Brazil, war in Europe would break out. Wilson's refusal to involve the United States in the First World War would turn out to be unacceptable to the former Rough Rider.

3.2 1914: Another Election Lost

Though he had been away from politics for almost a year, the expedition had tired him out greatly, wreaking his aging body with disease and exhaustion. Nevertheless, after recovering enough, Roosevelt set out to prepare for the United State House of Representatives elections that would take place on the 3rd of November later that year. While preparing for this domestic event, an international one of great importance would commence on the 28th of July:

[79] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (99). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281595. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

the First World War. The outbreak of this major event would take a not insignificant part of Roosevelt's attention and energy. Few letters in which he discussed domestic politics did not contain a paragraph on how Roosevelt despised Wilson's neutrality.

Wilson had decided the United States should stay neutral and refused to enter the war. Roosevelt, who was never one to shy away from a fight, considered this stance a stain on the American character and an unacceptable course of action. In personal as well as political terms, he disagreed with Wilson's non-activist position. Though he had told Kermit in early 1913 that he would not get back into politics if Wilson proved to be adequate, Wilson's neutral stance was enough to bring Roosevelt back.[80] From the onset of the war he would continually criticize Wilson and his administration for not taking a more active role in the conflict. This critique would continue for the next few years. However, Wilson would steadfastly ignore it, and other than some international support from European countries, like Great Britain and France, Roosevelt gained nothing domestically with his constant badgering of Wilson. It even alienated him from some of his party members, as most progressives were pacifists and were against involvement in the war.

Correspondence from after his return gives a seemingly contradictory image of Roosevelt's feelings towards the campaign he had delved into once more. In several letters, he continues to state he still believes in the cause the Progressive Party has been fighting for since the beginning of 1912. Only the Progressive Party, according to Roosevelt, was fighting for social and industrial justice, as well as giving more power to the people.[81] For now, Roosevelt's trust in the party and the hope that its cause would eventually triumph was alive. However, at this point, hope and belief was all the party really had. Several major figures of the time had already left the party since its defeat in 1912, and had gone back to their old party, with most of them retreating back to the Republican Party. The upcoming elections in November would be important, as the outcome would determine the relevance of the Progressive Party.

Despite the aforementioned trust Roosevelt still had in the cause, it seemed the trust he had in himself was beginning to falter. Shortly after beginning the campaign for the elections in November, Roosevelt wrote John Callan O'Laughlin, a journalist and friend, that he felt as if most of the country was against him:

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[80] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. Ms Am 1541.1 (99).
[81] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Irving E. Vernon*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210473. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

> I have about reached the conclusion that the feeling in this country is thoroughly hostile to me and that my advocacy does damage to, instead of helping, a cause or an individual. […] Now, while I have in no manner changed, there have been such changes in the currents of thought and such effect has been produced by the ceaseless campaign of lying and slander that not only all bad men but a very large number of ordinary decent men are convinced that I am a bad man or else a thoroughly wild and unsafe man.[82]

This feeling of animosity that Roosevelt felt a large number of the American people had against him is something that he refers to often in his letters from this point on. As will be discussed later, this feeling would increase later on, as Roosevelt would more publicly begin to criticize Wilson after the elections in November. Roosevelt already "felt so out of sympathy with much of the pacifist movement" at this stage, but this would increase in the years to come.[83] Roosevelt's feelings of disillusionment with the American people in many ways reflect how he began to think of the party at this time. While Roosevelt was of course not the only important player within the party, many still relied on him and his image heavily. Roosevelt had realized from the beginning that much of the party's weight rested on his shoulders. With the animosity towards him seemingly growing, and the trust he had in his political influence and strength faltering, Roosevelt's feelings about the party began to mirror those he had about himself. A mere month before the elections in November, Roosevelt wrote how both he and the party were "in an entirely hopeless struggle."[84] If he himself could not succeed on the political battlefield, then what chance did the Progressive Party have?

The results of the elections seemingly confirmed Roosevelt's feelings; the Progressive Party had only managed to gain victories in California and Louisiana, though even these could not be seen as rays of hope in an otherwise grim future for the party. Roosevelt ascribed the loss to the general population being tired of reformers, himself in particular.[85] Roosevelt was clearly disappointed by the results, even though he had fully expected the party to not do well.

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[82] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to John Callan O'Laughlin*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1454.26 (38). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o278441. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[83] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Albert Apponyi*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210458. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[84] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Robert Harry Munro Ferguson*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210515. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[85] *Letters from Theodore Roosevelt to Henry Coe*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210566. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

He saw little hope for both himself and the party, as he wrote that he would go "out of politics" and that no one should be "under the delusion as to the Progressives or Republicans nominating me in 1916."[86] A week after the elections, he wrote his daughter Ethel: "As of course I expected the Progressives went down to utter and hopeless defeat; I don't think they can much longer be kept as a party."[87] On the same day he wrote to his new daughter in law Belle Roosevelt (earlier that year she and Kermit had married), that "the Progressive Party has practically come to an end."[88] In another letter he wrote that "nothing whatever more can be done with the Progressive party."[89] It is with these dejected thoughts that Roosevelt begrudgingly went into 1915.

3.3 1915: Broken Faith

"I believe the Progressive Party has vanished into the Ewigkeit."[90]

With these words Roosevelt described to Kermit the situation the Progressive Party found himself in halfway through January 1915. After the rather disappointing elections last November, the situation seemed hopeless for the Progressive Party. They had only managed to get small wins in California and Louisiana, though these victories were achieved more because of the specific people running in these states than the presence of strong progressive support. Roosevelt comments on this in a letter congratulating his once running mate Hiram Johnson on the victory he achieved in California, writing that "Evidently yours was even more a personal than a Progressive victory."[91]

1915 shows a Roosevelt who had been dealing with two consecutive defeats. It is clear from his more personal letters that he had little faith in a progressive victory. In letters to his

[86] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Leslie Combs*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210567. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[87] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Ethel Roosevelt Derby*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1834 (847). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o286207. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[88] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Belle Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1454.46 (2). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o279745. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[89] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Dehon Hill*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210607. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[90] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1541 (239). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281111. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[91] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Hiram Johnson*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210558. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

family and close friends it can be argued he is not even trying to hide his tiredness and solemn feelings. While in other letters he keeps expressing faith and hope in the party, the reality was most likely very different. Though he had displayed similar feelings before, there are notable differences compared to earlier years. Since the war had started, Roosevelt had been immensely irritated with Wilson at every turn. No matter what Wilson did domestically, Roosevelt detested Wilson's unpreparedness for war and the position of neutrality Wilson was sticking to. Roosevelt's disdain for Wilson's foreign policy had already caused some friction around 1914 between Roosevelt and several members of the Progressive Party, due to many being pacifists. However, during the campaign in 1914 Roosevelt had decided to stay relatively quiet on the subject so as to not agitate other progressives and jeopardize the campaign.[92] After the campaign, Roosevelt became more vocal about his dislike of Wilson's foreign policy. This gradually resulted in a more strained relationship between him and the bulk of the pacifist progressives. In a letter to Raymond Robins, who served as chairman of the State Central Committee of the party and was a candidate for United States Senator from Illinois in 1914, Roosevelt even attacks the pacifist movement directly: "During the last five years the professional pacifists have wrought greater mischief to the American character than either the corrupt politicians or the crooked business man."[93] This was not a light accusation to make, as corrupt politicians and crooked business men were the main groups the party had been fighting against for the past years. For Roosevelt to define the pacifists like this shows his utter disdain for them.

Another factor contributing to Roosevelt feeling detached from politics was the libel suit that was started against him at the time. William Barnes, a newspaper editor and member of the New York Republican State Committee, had charged Roosevelt with libel because the former president had accused Barnes of being corrupt and working with members of the Democratic party as part of the 'development of a bipartisan boss rule' in New York in July 1914.[94] On May 22, 1915, Roosevelt was proven innocent and Barnes was proven guilty of corruption. While the libel suit was going on, Roosevelt expressed that he had the feeling that everyone wished for his defeat. This likely contributed to the alienating feeling Roosevelt felt

[92] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Francis J. Heney*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o211135. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[93] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Raymond Robins*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o290074. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[94] John Robert Greene, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Barnes Libel Case: A Reappraisal," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1989): 95-105, 95.

towards the American people. Even though his trust in the Progressive Party had diminished greatly, it is clear he had lost the most trust in himself. In years prior he had expressed not wanting to get into politics and when he was in it, he wanted to get out as soon as possible. Yet in 1915 his feelings are different. Before he wanted to quit just because he was physically tired of politics, but since the second half of 1914 he had felt out of touch with the American people. He believed most people were thoroughly sick of him and that he would do more harm than good. When discussing whether he would run as presidential candidate again in 1916, he wrote that "I believe that the bulk of our people would accept my candidacy as proof of greedy personal ambition on my, and would be bitterly hostile against me in consequence, and bitterly hostile therefore to the cause for which I stood."[95] This is a completely different attitude from what he had early in 1912. Back then, he kept saying he would only run as candidate should the people require that of him. He kept saying this even when a significant number of people were ready to support him. Now, three years later, the political mood had completely changed. People were no longer clamoring for Roosevelt, even amongst his party. This caused Roosevelt to begin distancing himself from the party in more than just words. This can be seen in his correspondence. In several letters, Roosevelt gives advice to his correspondents regarding certain political matters. However, he explicitly asks those he writes to not mention to others the advice came from him, as he is afraid it would lead to others asking for his advice, which he wants to avoid. "I also told them they ought not [illegible] quote me because if I appeared to be giving advice […] I would immediately be asked to give advice in all kinds of [illegible]."[96]

Another sign that added to the idea that Roosevelt was taking more definitive steps to leave the party was the fact that Roosevelt was hoping for and somewhat actively working towards support from the Republican Party. In 1915 this was of a different nature than in 1912; when Roosevelt had lost the Republican nomination in 1912, he had worked hard to pull as many progressive Republicans away from the Old Guard dominated party as possible. The fact that he failed in doing so most likely added to his shift in attitude towards his old party. Roosevelt was painfully aware of the weak position the Progressive Party had across the country. He considered the small victories that the party did get as more personal ones rather than truly progressive victories. Because of their declining presence in all the states, Roosevelt and other influential members of the party did not believe the progressives would even be able

[95] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Raymond Robins*.
[96] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Matthew Hale*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o212522. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

to run a straight ticket next presidential elections.[97] Thus, he expressed to some that the best option for the survival of the party would be to work with the "Progressive and Liberal element" of the Republican Party, if they managed to nominate a candidate that had at least some progressive tendencies.[98] There was still no instance in which Roosevelt would align himself with the Democratic Party, no matter how much he was against corrupt Republican leadership, as he continued to regard Wilson's presence in Washington "as a national calamity".[99] Roosevelt personally hoped the Republicans would succeed in nominating someone he could truly support, as this would completely eliminate the need for him to run again.[100]

It seemed the unsuccessful years after 1912 had given Roosevelt a new perspective regarding the party he had once been part of. His disdain for the Old Guard bosses had become overshadowed by his fatigue with politics. In 1912 Roosevelt had hoped the Progressive Party would have become the dominant opposition party against the Democratic Party, just as the Republican Party had done in 1854 against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill when they became the anti-Democrat party instead of the Whig Party.[101] The progressives failed to achieve this goal: Roosevelt laments that they had been too focused on opposing Republican leadership instead of challenging their principles.[102] In Roosevelt's eyes the people did not care how corrupt the party may have been, as all they cared about was prosperity.[103] He claimed the party program was too advanced for the average man. Writing to Charles J. Bonaparte: "Our typical leadership was also a little too advanced along the lines of morality and leftiness (sic) of aim for the average man to follow."[104]

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[97] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to James M. Ingersoll*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o211913. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University

[98] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Irving E. Vernon*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o211500. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[99] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Irving E. Vernon.*

[100] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1541 (239). Harvard College Library. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o281111. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[101] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Medill McCormick*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o211495. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[102] "In warring with the Republicans we were really warring on the present personnel of the party leadership and not on its inherited principles." *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Medill McCormick*.

[103] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Hiram Johnson*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o211454. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

[104] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Charles J. Bonaparte*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o210562. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

While 1915 was not a year of much political activity for Roosevelt or the Progressive Party, it was already difficult enough to maintain the party after having suffered losses in both 1912 and 1914. This struggle is clear throughout Roosevelt's correspondence, as his concerns regarding his involvement in the party begin to grow. While he claims he still believes in the cause the Progressives in essence adhere to, his belief in himself and his ability to lead the party to victory are declining steadily. 1916 would most likely be the last chance the Progressive Party would get in proving it was there to stay. However, while others within the party were getting ready for a fight, Roosevelt, in stark contrast to his famous vigorous attitude, seemed to have already given up.

3.4 1916: Abandoning The Party

1915 had been a year in which Roosevelt lamented the second defeat of the Progressive Party, something he took more personally despite not being a main candidate like in 1912, which only added to his somber outlook on the coming presidential election in November. Roosevelt had hoped the Progressive party would have built itself up and blossomed into a new opposition party after it was defeated in 1912, but these hopes had been practically completely dashed after the party had failed to get a significant victory in the 1914 House of Representatives elections. With the presidential elections coming up in November, Roosevelt and the Progressive Party were about to face what would be their last true fight.

With the election approaching, candidates needed to be selected for each party. The Democratic Party stuck with its incumbents: Wilson as president and Thomas R. Marshall as vice-president. The Republican National Convention took place in Chicago from June 7th to the 10th. At the end of the convention, Charles Evans Hughes had won the nomination for presidential candidate and Charles W. Fairbanks, former vice-president of Theodore Roosevelt from 1905 to 1909, was to be the vice-presidential candidate. Hughes had been an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court since 1910. He had not actively sought the nomination, though he had expressed he would accept it if he was nominated. Others, like conservative New York Senator Elihu Root and liberal Massachusetts Senator John W. Weeks had been seeking the nomination, but Hughes was preferred by the party leaders as he was a more moderate candidate, something that was considered to be necessary in order to mend the split within the Republican Party that had occurred in 1912.[105] Hughes beat out both Root and Weeks by a large

[105] Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 346.

margin.[106] Though some had voted for Roosevelt, he himself had been confident he would not receive the nomination.[107] After the Republican National Convention there were still progressives who wanted Roosevelt to run on a third ticket. Roosevelt had already declined a nomination for a position in the Senate earlier that year: "I do not believe it would be well for me to go to the Senate. I think that my acceptance of the nomination would inevitably give rise to the belief that I had supported Hughes, and disappointed the Progressives who wished me to run, because I wanted something in return, and was accepting payment."[108] The letter shows Roosevelt had a tentative attitude towards Hughes. The letter dates from June 16th, barely a week after the Republic National Convention. Later that month, Roosevelt would write a letter in which he elaborates about his troubles with the possible progressive ticket and his attitude towards Hughes's nomination:

> I am having my own troubles with my fellow Progressives. They are wild to have me run on a third ticket. They feel that the Republican Convention was a peculiarly sordid body, a feeling with which I heartily sympathize. They feel that Mr. Hughes was nominated largely in consequence of the German-Americans who were against me […]. But Hughes is an able, up-right man whose instincts are right, and I believe in international matters he will learn with comparative quickness. […] Under these circumstances there is in my mind no alternative but to support him. At his worst he will do better than Wilson, and there is always the chance that he will do very well indeed.[109]

Though at first it seems as if Roosevelt had more faith in Hughes than his previous letter would indicate, the letter still contains hints of displeasure. While he speaks positively about Hughes, it seems he only does so when comparing him to Wilson. Roosevelt's initial assessment of Hughes is not that he will definitely do well as president, but that it will be impossible for

[106] On the first ballot, Hughes received 253 votes, while Weeks and Root received 105 and 103 respectively. This margin between Hughes and the others increased even more with the second ballot, with Hughes receiving 328 votes, Weeks 102 votes and Root 89. The third ballot resulted in a deciding victory for Hughes, having received 950 votes, while Weeks and Root had dropped to 3 and 0.
[107] "I don't believe that the Republican politicians will permit my nomination." *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to John Campbell Greenway*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o290264. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University. After the first ballot, Roosevelt had received 85 votes. After the second he had 81 and he ended up with 19. While comparing Roosevelt's results with those of Root and Weeks shows Roosevelt still held some relative popularity, it did not challenge that of Hughes at all.
[108] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Willard Dickerman Straight*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o290590. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[109] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to James Bryce*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o290597. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

him to do worse than Wilson. This is more a comment on Wilson's inaptness as perceived by Roosevelt more so than it is an approval of Hughes's skill and merit. This attitude towards Hughes shows how eager Roosevelt is to leave the political scene, as he does not fully support Hughes, but sees him as a satisfying enough option that he himself does not have to intervene any longer. By giving Hughes his support, Roosevelt in essence was leaving the Progressive Party to fend for itself. All this can be supported by another letter Roosevelt wrote a few days later:

> I thought all along that everybody knew I would not agree to run if Mr. Hughes was nominated. I do not personally like Mr. Hughes, and I am very much disappointed in his actions during the last six months; but I really cannot overstate the abhorrence I have for what Mr. Wilson has done in his office, and the danger he was (sic) wrought to the American character; and I am not willing to be instrumental in continuing him in power. There were various candidates among the Republicans, the nomination of whom I would have regarded it as making it our duty to run a third ticket, because under such circumstances the election of Mr. Wilson would have been a somewhat less evil than the election of the Republican, but this is not so with Mr. Hughes. Among the rank and file of those who supported us four years ago, I believe that at least three quarters would refuse to follow us in fighting against Mr. Hughes, and I think they would be right in so doing.[110]

This letter clearly shows Roosevelt is not a strong supporter of Hughes. Roosevelt mentioned in the letter he had tried to get Leonard Wood the nomination, as he believed Wood would be a candidate "under whom both parties could join."[111] Wood, however, only managed to get a single vote at the convention. Despite Hughes not being his first choice, Roosevelt accepted the outcome of the convention without truly challenging it. The situation began just like it had in 1912; many progressives were unhappy with how the Republican Convention had gone, and so they turned to Roosevelt, most likely both expecting and hoping he would once more lead the party against the Republicans and Democrats as he had done years before. However, as had become clear from his correspondence, Roosevelt's vigorous energy for politics had steadily been dwindling. Near the end of June, Roosevelt wrote a letter in which he states more clearly why he will not run as a candidate for the Progressive Party and instead

[110] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to A. L. Key*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o213783. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[111] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to A. L. Key.*

backs Hughes. His reason is simple; "If I should accept the third party nomination it would mean the re-election of Mr. Wilson, and that I cannot afford to take such a course unless I believe Mr. Hughes' election would be worse for the country than the election of Mr. Wilson."[112] Ironically, this was exactly the way Wilson was elected in 1912. Had Roosevelt not run as a third candidate, he would not have split the Republican votes between him and Taft. It seems that the setbacks the party had endured over the last years, and the fact that Roosevelt at worst thought that Hughes would at least do better than Wilson and Taft, had caused Roosevelt to reflect on his earlier defeat and taken the opposite course he did in 1912.

After it became clear that Roosevelt would not accept the nomination of the progressives, many of them had the feeling they were being abandoned by their leader. Roosevelt saw it differently. In his eyes, he had not abandoned the party or the progressives, but they had forsaken him.[113] He argued that the bulk of the men who followed him in 1912 had already joined the Republican Party in 1914, whereas he had not.

The years after the tumultuous campaign of 1912 would prove to be less eventful, yet more tiring nonetheless. Immediately after the Progressive Party had lost the election in November, conflict began to emerge between key members of the party. Those who thought themselves true progressives, as they wanted nothing to do with big business, began attacking George Perkins. Roosevelt, however, kept backing Perkins. He invested a significant amount of energy in decreasing the conflict between members of the party, yet would not manage to completely heal the rift that had opened. 1913 would have been an opportunity for Roosevelt to sit back and focus less on politics, as the progressives could not do much until the House of Representatives elections in 1914. When those elections came around, the Progressive Party suffered a loss Roosevelt had expected, but had still hoped would have been less hard. With the political climate turning against him, Roosevelt felt increasingly alienated from political life throughout 1915. Arguably the greatest contributing factor to his drop in popularity was his constant criticism of Wilson, especially the president's neutral policy concerning the war in Europe. The belief and trust Roosevelt had in himself as a figure who could lead the Progressive Party to victory had all but been broken, and with it, his trust in the party as a whole. Thus, when the presidential elections in 1916 came around, Roosevelt left the Progressive Party to

[112] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Pearl Wight*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o213791. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.
[113] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to J. A. H. Hopkins*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o213795. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

fend for itself and settled for begrudgingly supporting Hughes and the Republican Party, doing so more to go against Wilson rather than truly believing in Hughes and the fragile alliance between the progressive and conservative Republicans.

Conclusion: The Burden On His Shoulders

When Roosevelt exclaimed on August 6, 1912 amidst a progressive crowd in the Chicago Coliseum that "We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord", no doubt everyone present wholeheartedly believed victory for the Progressive Party was assured later that year. William Howard Taft and the Old Guard that pulled his strings and the Democrat Woodrow Wilson, with his New Freedom, the counterpart to Roosevelt's New Nationalism, could not possibly defeat the zealous, in both belief and energy, Theodore Roosevelt. The Rough Rider almost immediately set his sights on Wilson, as he deemed him his most troublesome opponent. Although Roosevelt showed some doubt when considering if the Progressive Party could actually win, he gave one of his strongest and arguably most impressive speeches just after he was shot. Returning with more faith in the party than before, Roosevelt continued his campaign until the elections in November. This would be the last time Roosevelt was in such high spirits in regards to the Progressive Party.

Although the Progressive Party gathered a substantial percentage of the popular vote, the split between the Republican Party and Progressive Party had caused the Democratic Party to win the elections. Following this defeat, the Progressive Party as a whole, but Roosevelt in particular, began experiencing difficult times. Conflict between the more business orientated George Perkins and the trust-busting progressives like Amos Pinchot put Roosevelt in an awkward position, somewhere in between the two opposing sides. Though he tried to mediate the situation at the expense of considerable time and energy, it would prove fruitless in the end, as the resentment would only fester over the course of 1913.

Because Roosevelt was away for the last half of 1913, being on a trip to South America, he experienced relatively few political troubles. However, the expedition in Brazil that took most of the first half of 1914 would prove to be devastating for Roosevelt's aging body. Having just recovered from malaria, Roosevelt returned in May 1914 to campaign for the elections that would take place later that year. It is here that Roosevelt's decrease in faith, mostly in himself, begins to show. This decrease was mainly because Roosevelt thought there was a growing animosity amongst not only political figures, but also the general population, towards him. Though Roosevelt attributed the change in attitude to the people instead of himself, it was his constant criticism of President Wilson that drove many to develop a disliking to Roosevelt. Even within his own party, progressives started to question Roosevelt as he kept attacking Wilson for his policy of neutrality regarding the war in Europe, while most progressives were pacifists and supported this neutral stance. This wedge between the people and Roosevelt,

which he himself was largely responsible for, would never truly close, at least not in Roosevelt's mind. When the elections finally came around in November, the Progressive Party experienced a crippling defeat. The party had lost all the popularity it seemingly had in 1912. Roosevelt noticed this, and blamed himself for the party's defeat. He began to wonder if his presence within the party was hurting its cause rather than helping it.

This loss of confidence Roosevelt had in himself grew throughout 1915. He felt he was no longer able to bring the progressives the victory they had sought in 1912, and believed anybody else would be better suited for the task. Roosevelt slowly began distancing himself from the Progressive Party. In 1915, he could do this relatively easily, as no imminent political events were to take place. However, when talks about the presidential campaign in 1916 were beginning, Roosevelt declined to be on the Progressive Party ticket. In sharp contrast to 1912, he steadfast refused to be a candidate, even though he was the only one that the progressives believed had a chance of winning. But despite other progressives still showing their faith in the political weight Roosevelt carried with him, he himself believed not a word of it. At this point, Roosevelt refused to run at all. He was not going to run as a progressive, as that would only take votes away from the Republican candidate and let Wilson take the win like he did in 1912. He would have run on the Republican ticket, yet he made practically no effort to get a nomination, as he believed the Republican bosses would never accept his nomination and would do everything in their power to stop him. Thus, Roosevelt opted to support Charles Even Hughes. Though Hughes had some progressive tendencies, which is why Roosevelt even supported him at all, he did so begrudgingly.

Roosevelt, a man who had once fought for every cause which he believed in with a fervor and zeal unmatched, now settled for a candidate he had no real faith in, only to keep Wilson from winning, and even at this he would not succeed. The weight of the progressive cause Roosevelt had taken on his shoulders in 1912 had proven to be too heavy to carry. After nearly four years of defeats and personal setbacks, the burden of leading the Progressive Party to victory had broken Roosevelt's faith in himself. Devoid of his usual energy, Roosevelt left the Progressive Party quietly. Though he himself at one point claimed otherwise, it could be argued that Roosevelt in his mind had abandoned the party months before the 1916 elections. Thus, when the elections finally came, the Progressive Party, without Roosevelt as its Atlas to bear the weight of the party on his shoulders, crumbled and fell. In America's third-party history, the Progressive Party's lack of success has to be explained on the basis of not simply political but also personal circumstances.

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