Leaders of Reform
La Forte, Robert Sherman

Published by University Press of Kansas

La Forte, Robert Sherman.
Leaders of Reform: Progressive Republicans in Kansas, 1900 -1916.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/81051

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2764748
Even before the Republican National Convention met in June 1908, Kansas progressives had expressed concern about William Howard Taft's qualifications to head a great reform crusade. Taft had never demonstrated political sagacity, nor did his conservative nature seem to fit him for the role of a reform president such as Kansas wanted. But Theodore Roosevelt endorsed Taft, and for the majority of Republicans this alone was adequate assurance that he would try to carry out the so-called Rooseveltian policies.\(^1\) If Taft did not, then Senator Joseph Bristow thought that Taft would be annihilated politically.\(^2\)

Senator Bristow, of course, did not anticipate this fate. He was nearly certain that the "big, amiable island of a man" from Cincinnati would uphold the achievements of Roosevelt's years and even advance them. But Bristow did not know about Taft's advice to Elihu Root to support the election of conservative senators during the 1908 campaign. He was not familiar with Taft's classification of Bristow, Robert M. La Follette, Albert Cummins, Jonathan Bourne, and others from the West as the "Bryan wing of the Republican party." Nor was he aware of what George Mowry later called the mental separation that Taft had made from the progressive-Republican group in Congress before his inauguration.\(^3\) He might well have been warned by Taft's cabinet selections. But in early 1909 Bristow was not one who doubted the new president's credentials
as a reformer. In fact, he agreed with Taft when the president withheld support from Kansas Congressman Victor Murdock and others during their fight to unseat the conservative Speaker of the House Joseph G. Cannon at the special session of 1909.4

One month after Taft was sworn into office, Bristow's attitude changed abruptly. He became disillusioned with the president and privately criticized him. Before the end of 1909, his complaints were being made publicly, and though Taft was a Republican president, Bristow openly disagreed with him on important issues. At first Bristow was almost alone among Kansans in his criticisms, but within a year most Kansas progressives joined him, and by mid 1910 Judge Nelson I. Case summed up the feelings of the progressives when he claimed that Taft was a dupe of grasping corporate greed. “Mr. Taft,” Case said, “evidently believed that if he took the leaders of the representatives of the special interests into his confidence he could influence, if not control, their action. . . . The whole country saw at once, what seems to have never penetrated his mental vision, that he had completely surrendered to the privileged interest and allowed them to dictate the terms of his capitulation.”5 In an emotionally charged speech, he continued:

Because my father helped to organize the [Republican] party and instilled into my boyish nature a feeling of party pride, because I shouted for Fremont in my boyhood, and marched in the parades and spoke for Lincoln in my early . . . manhood, and cast my first . . . vote for Grant, is no reason why I shall support aspirants for office today who are pledged to a policy absolutely at variance with my interest as an individual, are opposed to the principles of free representative government, are willing to give to rich corporations the people's heritage to natural resources.6

Judge Case listed the things Taft had done that he and other Kansans felt were wrong. Taft had sanctioned the Payne-Aldrich tariff, had supported Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger in his controversy with Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot, had backed the reactionary Joseph G. Cannon in his struggle against progressive Republicans who were trying to reform the House of Representatives, had upheld Attorney General George Wickersham in his prorailroad regulatory bill, and had done numerous other things that indicated that he favored conservative Republicans over their progressive brethren.7

Although it may have appeared that Taft was utter anathema to progressive Republicans in Kansas by 1910, such was not the case. The
reformers were not yet sure that Taft would fail to redeem himself during the last two years of his administration, and they were not sure how wise it would be to oppose the man who would probably head the Republican ticket in 1912. Republican candidates existed who could be challenged in 1910. Taft's position on the issues of the day aligned him against the Kansas progressives, and he kept regular Republican congressmen with him. Kansas regulars who faced renomination in the primary could be openly opposed by their intraparty rivals. Thus, the split that Taft helped to open in Washington carried over into Kansas in 1910, where an election that would have been moderately emotional became a mammoth donnybrook between standpat and insurgent Republicans. Taft alone was not responsible for this, but his failure to unite the party aggravated an already bad situation.

The trouble in Republican ranks, which reached floodtide in 1910, began as early as the previous election. In the 1908 primary, Congressman Victor Murdock made it a point to campaign against the Republican Speaker of the House—Joe Cannon—and the Republican rules enforced there. Murdock induced some progressive newspapers to support him, and he pressured a few other reluctant Republican congressmen in the state to agree, even if half-heartedly, with his attacks. Unexpectedly, Murdock's campaign did not cease after the primary, and while Democrats were making anti-Cannonism an issue in the general election, so was Murdock.8

The national fight against Cannonism, as it was called, did not begin with Victor Murdock, but the fiery, red-headed editor from Wichita gave it a vocal, persistent, and clever champion. Cannonism, as the term was used by Murdock and other critics, meant a system of government in which one man exercised extraordinary powers over three hundred and ninety-one representatives. It meant that a conservative, opinionated, crude politician from Danville, Illinois, could impose his will in large measure upon the House of Representatives. The system was not of Speaker Cannon's making; he had inherited it. But under his ironfisted management it rubbed sensitive congressmen raw as they watched him appoint committees, assign bills to the calendar, and control debate through an autocratic manner of granting recognition.9

Murdock joined in the protests against Cannon as early as 1907, after having served two undistinguished terms in office. A member of one of the most famous families in Kansas history, he was first elected to fill the seat that was vacated by Chester I. Long in 1903. His election, according to Mort Albaugh, political manager of the Seventh Congres-
KANSAS' CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS, 1898–1906

sional District, was arranged in the "same old way." With the help of Long, who was a friend of Speaker Cannon's, Murdock secured an appointment to the Post Office and Post Roads Committee. In 1905 the Kansas legislature reapportioned the state, which placed Murdock in the newly created Eighth District. Freed from Long's influence, he joined the antirailroad reform movement, which was strong in Wichita and throughout his new congressional area. Against the wishes of his former Seventh District friends, he was a candidate for the Senate in 1906.10

Murdock became involved in the fight against Cannon as a result of an amendment that he offered to the post-office appropriations bill in 1907. During an unofficial investigation of postal practices, Murdock discovered that railroads were paid for carrying mail on the basis of the tonnage transported per day. To arrive at the daily figure, postal officials took the total weight of all mail hauled during a week and divided that number by six, since earlier the railroads had not carried mail on Sundays. This meant that the volume of mail carried in a week by the railroads was smaller than what they were being paid to carry. Murdock's amendment would have corrected this discrepancy. Railroad officials, convinced that their compensation for carrying mails was too low anyway, opposed the Murdock measure. Speaker Cannon, apparently influenced by railroad opinion, kept Murdock's amendment from the appropriations bill. When the young congressman appealed Cannon's blocking tactic to the House floor, he was soundly defeated. Undaunted, he enlisted Senator Robert La Follette's help, but La Follette, who later
introduced a similar amendment in the Senate, was likewise thwarted by its leadership. Finally, through an executive order, President Roosevelt settled the affair by making the change that Murdock had suggested. The persistence shown by the Kansas congressman in the "false divisor" episode angered Cannon and made Murdock a marked man in House affairs. Thereafter, Cannon thought of him as a Republican who, like La Follette, was a "worse Populist than Bryan himself and more dangerous."^{11}

Murdock's insurgency against Cannon was the result not only of Murdock's views with regard to the Speaker's arbitrariness in the postal matter; it was in part the natural outcome of his personality. Murdock felt uncomfortable as an unnoticed member of the House. He entered the Congress hoping to be more than just another representative, but he remained unimportant. As a leader of a great popular uprising against a dictatorial Speaker, he could gain the recognition he desired. No longer would he be forced to feel as inconspicuous as he did on his third day in Congress, according to an overdramatized account that he wrote for *American Magazine*. Murdock reported that when he was going to the House chamber, he passed Speaker Cannon and rendered the usual "hello." "The Speaker," Murdock later recounted, "did not return my morning salutation. I argued that he was in a brown study over something and did not see me. But men are not blind in brown studies, except to those who are negligible. And the realization that I was negligible was a terrifying thing which awoke me in the dead of night and would not let me sleep."^{12}
There was still another facet to Murdock’s anti-Cannonism. He had seen a number of moderate reforms fail in the House because of Cannon’s hostility. As a champion of change and as a person interested in democratic government, Murdock wanted to eliminate what many felt was the biggest obstacle to progressive legislation in the capital. The only way to do this was to limit the powers held by Cannon or to remove him from the Speaker’s chair.

By 1908 a number of reformers had grown dissatisfied with Cannon. Murdock, by voicing his own complaints, expressed the sentiments of at least twenty-five other representatives. Taft had grown weary of Cannon and had indicated that, unlike Roosevelt, who had a working agreement with the Speaker, he would help opposition Republicans in Congress unseat the “Iron Duke of Danville.” Taft, however, wavered, and when time came for action, he convinced himself that in order to enact the Republican platform, Cannon would have to continue as Speaker. The loss of presidential support did not swerve Murdock and his fellow representatives from their plans to rewrite House rules and ultimately to remove Cannon. Murdock, who helped to plan the strategy to be used against Cannon, was joined in the insurgency by another Kansan, Edmond H. Madison, in late 1908. Madison was also a former adherent of the Long machine; but unlike Murdock, he did not have a reputation for championing radical ideas. As a moderate, he quickly became a leader of the disgruntled Republican congressmen.

The House insurgents, as those who opposed Cannon were called, refused to take part in the Republican caucus that was held just prior to the special session in March of 1909. They knew that Cannon would easily be renominated as the party’s candidate for Speaker at that meeting. If they attended the caucus, they would be bound by its decisions. Earlier, the insurgents had requested that the Rules Committee be enlarged from five to fifteen members, each representing a different geographical area of the country, that “Calendar Tuesday” be established, and that the Speaker not be allowed to appoint committees. Cannon and his house lieutenants opposed the entire program of the insurgents, but because of the popularity of the effort to establish “Calendar Tuesday,” they provided for “Calendar Wednesday,” late in the lame-duck session that had begun in December 1908. This proposal made every Wednesday a day when committees were to report to the House in alphabetical order, thus allowing consideration of bills that the Speaker had kept from the floor because of his scheduling.

On March 15, after he had been nominated by the Republican caucus,
Cannon was easily reelected. When the motion was made to adopt the rules for governing the House, Democrats and insurgent Republicans defeated it. Then, by a prearranged design, minority leader “Champ” Clark presented a list of modified rules. These were defeated when Cannon acquired the help of Tammany Hall Democrats. The rules finally adopted at the session were essentially the same as the ones that the House had used before, but “Calendar Wednesday” was slightly revised. A unanimous-consent calendar, which allowed unimportant legislation to be passed without the Speaker’s approval, was also created.  

Despite these accomplishments, Victor Murdock was angered by the quasi defeat of the insurgents in March of 1909. He had earlier written that five of the eight Kansas congressmen would vote with the insurgents. But when the fight developed, only Murdock and Madison voted against the established rules, while the other six representatives supported Cannon. When Cannon was elected for the fourth time as Speaker, Murdock was the only Kansan to cast a dissenting vote. He had asked Madison to join him in this vote, but the more moderate congressman from Dodge City had refused. Concerning Madison’s decision, Senator Bristow felt compelled to tell critics that the vote meant nothing and that “the real hero of the Kansas delegation was Ed Madison.” Bristow added that Madison had far more influence with the insurgent crowd than Murdock had, although Murdock had been given “more advertising out of the affair than anybody else.”

Bristow did not explain why Murdock had received more publicity, but there was an obvious reason. When he was younger, Murdock had worked as a reporter with journalists in Chicago and Washington. He had close contacts with leading members of the press in the capital. Moreover, he considered himself to be the semiofficial spokesman of insurgency, and after March 1909, he was selected as the press contact for the insurgents. He was less influential in insurgent councils than Madison, but his function as chief propagandist made him far more valuable to the anti-Cannon movement. In the long run, public scorn defeated Cannon, and Murdock played the premier role in developing a hostile public attitude.

Whether Cannon could have assuaged Murdock and the insurgents by anything short of surrendering his power is a moot question, but his actions during the special session of the Sixty-first Congress were not designed to pacify them. Most insurgent leaders were relegated to last place on their respective committees or were removed from them. Murdock, of course, was demoted; but Madison, despite his actions, retained
all his committee appointments and his seniority on them. During the insurgent effort to curb Cannon’s power at the beginning of the special session in March, Madison was one of the three moderate insurgents who were sent to confer with President Taft when Taft complained publicly about their actions. Madison was also the only insurgent who was appointed by the House to the joint committee to investigate the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy in January 1910.18

From the special session of March 1909 until January 1910, Murdock continued his campaign against the Speaker. He circulated a petition at the December 1909 session of Congress, asking for Cannon’s resignation. He wrote articles for magazines, deriding the Speaker, and he gave interviews in which he excoriated Cannon for his undemocratic, imperious, unfair manner. Murdock’s activities gained him the title of “the Red Insurgent,” while one writer compared him to Herr Joham Most, the anarchist. “His leather lungs, gift for sarcasm and drawling delivery,” wrote one reporter, “rub the acid of his words into the scars left on the regulars by his performance. The old guard . . . denounce him as a more ‘dangerous’ man than La Follette.”19

Murdock’s campaign against the Speaker bore unexpected results in March 1910. Cannon’s actions and his adverse press turned a number of important conservatives against him during 1909. Thus, when George Norris of Nebraska presented a resolution providing for revision of the rules on 17 March 1910, the insurgents were amazed to find a majority supporting it. President Taft had announced in February that he was not in favor of further attempts to change House affairs. To the disgust of the insurgents, he added that anti-Cannonism was being interpreted as a criticism of his administration. Nevertheless, Norris presented his resolution. According to Cannon’s private secretary, the House in the spring of 1910 was in a “happy frame of mind,” and “whenever the Speaker showed his head somebody was bound to heave a brick at him.”20 Norris’s brick struck home.

For two days frenzied maneuvering by Cannon and his friends kept Norris’s resolution from being considered. Then, on March 19, a vote was taken. Although minor changes were made, Norris’s plan was adopted. The Speaker was not to be allowed to sit on the Rules Committee, which would be chosen by a House caucus. Immediately after the Norris resolution passed, Cannon announced that the Speaker’s chair was vacant. Victor Murdock had waited for years for this moment and thought he would not be denied the opportunity of humiliating Cannon. But fainthearted supporters wavered, and the coup de grâce that he had
planned never fell on "Uncle Joe." To Murdock's chagrin, Cannon was retained to the strains of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," sung by regulars, insurgents, and Democrats alike.

Joe Cannon considered the insurgents' victory the equivalent to the achievement of the King of France, who marched forty thousand men up a hill one day just to march them down again. In one sense he was correct. The Rules Committee chosen by the House under Norris's plan included many of the same men that Cannon had appointed. Despite this and despite future complaints by Murdock, the victory in March was important. Cannonism, which symbolized everything that was considered wrong in the Republican management of Congress, had suffered a defeat, and this encouraged the insurgent and progressive cause. Even though insurgents were kept from the Rules Committee in 1910, eventually Edmond H. Madison was selected to that body. Moreover, while the Democrats in 1911 tried to reintroduce most of Cannon's old prerogatives in order to increase the power of Speaker Clark, they were unable to provide him with the same dominance that Cannon had possessed.21

From the viewpoint of the Kansas progressive movement, the most important result of the victory over Cannon was the way that it affected the relationship between insurgent congressmen and their regular counterparts. Five of the eight Kansas representatives voted with the Speaker and were, therefore, written out of the progressive movement. Daniel R. Anthony, who represented the First District, had been absent at the time of the struggle over the Norris Amendment, but his past action was taken to indicate that he would have voted with Cannon. In Kansas, where one straw vote indicated that 1,592 voters favored Victor Murdock's activities, and only 70 opposed, any indication that a man was not progressive (anti-Cannon in this instance) could be politically fatal. Some Kansas congressmen complained bitterly about being charged with aiding Cannon. In some respects their complaints were justified. Phil Campbell of the Third Congressional District, who had left a sickbed against his physician's advice in order to vote down Norris's Resolution, conceived of the affair as a struggle between Democrats and Republicans. He claimed that he had never kowtowed to Cannon and that he had still accomplished a good deal for Kansas. Congressman William Reeder of the Fourth District also viewed the "fiasco" as a Democratic ploy to discredit Republicanism. He said: "Cannonism is an illegitimate child, conceived by an unholy union, in which Democracy seduced an
unscrupulous element in the Republican party who were, and still are, attempting to wreck the party.”

Only Charles F. Scott of the Second District spoke favorably of Cannon. Scott, who had been elevated by the Speaker to the chairmanship of the Agricultural Committee, later wrote:

It is because I knew that in the very beginning the hue and cry against him was started through the meanest and most selfish motives, by men who could not compare with him either in personal honesty or in public service, that I would not join it. I knew perfectly well a year before the [1910] primaries, that I could have had [reform] . . . support . . . and could have been nominated without opposition if I had joined this hue and cry against Cannon. I knew that in refusing to do it I was very probably sacrificing my political life. You all harped a great deal about Murdock’s “courage” in coming out against him. Don’t you know that it took a lot more courage not to come out against him? Murdock followed the line of least resistance to save his political life. I lost mine rather than join in with what I knew to be an unfair and unwarranted assault upon a man who has rendered the country great service. . . . That is the trouble with all your direct government heresy . . . it makes cowards of men. It will fill Congress with a lot of moral cowards who will be for anything the people want whether it is right or not.

Although Scott was inaccurate about Murdock’s motives, his candor was a refreshing change from the sycophancy of regulars and progressives alike who tried to appear to be favorable to both sides in the Cannon controversy.

Madison, who received applause from progressives and conservatives, was a master of middle-of-the-road tactics. He refused to vote for the removal of Cannon in March 1910, and earlier he had supported the Payne-Aldrich tariff. Under normal circumstances these votes would have branded him a regular and an opponent of reform. But Senator Bristow and Congressman Murdock kept progressives from attacking Madison. Murdock appreciated Madison’s support in the rules fight when other Kansans backed out, and he believed that although Madison was no extreme progressive, he did stand for change. Bristow, likewise convinced that Madison was not an aggressive reformer, felt that the congressman’s "heart was in the right place." "Madison," Bristow wrote, "is apprehensive of the power of Morgan, Lobdell, Bone and Albaugh [in his district] and you can’t really blame him." Having been elected in 1906 in Long’s old congressional area, Madison did have to contend

144
with an active, powerful, conservative machine. But to assume, as Bris­
tow later did, that Madison was taking his political life into his own
hands when he stood for progressive legislation is wrong. Western
Kansas had become a progressive stronghold in the state, and this made
it necessary for Madison to identify himself with reform by 1910.25

Fortunately for Madison, in January he received an excellent oppor­
tunity to enhance his reputation as a progressive. His appointment to
the joint congressional committee to investigate the Ballinger-Pinchot
affair was hailed as a victory for progressive Republicanism. Although
his report on the controversy was not made public until September, there
was never much doubt about the conclusions that he would draw. His
qualifications to be a member of a committee to investigate conservation
were almost nil. His one involvement with conservation resulted from
a pork-barrel project that he had inherited upon taking office. Chester I.
Long, before leaving the Senate, had started an afforestation program
near Garden City, Kansas. This was one of several experimental forests
sponsored by Congress in arid areas. When Long failed to win reelection
in 1908, Madison, as the western-Kansas member of the state’s delegation
in Washington, fell heir to the project. Where nature had created short­
grass country, Madison, Long, and the Department of Agriculture un­
successfully tried to create a forest. When in 1910 the program came
under fire in Congress, Madison defended it on psychological grounds.
He said that if anyone had ever lived in western Kansas, “he would
know what tree hunger is, and he would understand of what value even
a scrub is to the people upon those wind-swept plains.”26

The Judge, as Madison was affectionately called, had been admitted
to the Kansas Bar in 1888 and had immediately been elected county
attorney at Dodge City. He had been an ardent prohibitionist in Ford
County, and a capable foe of Populism. In 1900 Governor William E.
Stanley appointed him to the Thirty-first District Court of Kansas, where
he remained until his election to the House in 1906. His sonorous voice
earned him the title of “Boy Orator” and made him popular as a stump
speaker. Like other progressives, he supported tariff revision, regulation
of the railroads, and the direct primary. There is some doubt about
whether he was considered a sincere insurgent by everyone when he
was appointed to the Ballinger-Pinchot investigating committee.27

The Ballinger-Pinchot affair, which Madison helped to investigate, was
(as Elmo Richardson has pointed out) a cause célèbre over two varying
opinions about conservation.28 Technically, Secretary of the Interior
Richard A. Ballinger entered into no dishonest arrangements, as was
charged by the progressives, but he did oppose Gifford Pinchot's view of conservation and, thus, a "Rooseveltian policy." Ballinger, who once had lived in Kansas but had spent most of his life in Seattle, Washington, was chosen secretary of the interior in order to assuage westerners who were distrustful of conservation. During his first few months in office he returned millions of acres to the public domain and stopped large expenditures by the reclamation service. As a result he aroused the hostility of Chief Forester Pinchot, who had developed conservation programs while James R. Garfield was head of the Department of the Interior.

The controversy resulted from the Cunningham claims to coal lands in Alaska. The claims, which were in the national domain, composed approximately 15 percent of the Bering River coal field and were scheduled for exploitation by unknown investors. In 1907 Ballinger, serving as commissioner of the land office, ordered the claims validated; but an investigation by Louis Glavis, an employee of the Interior Department, indicated that the claimants had violated federal law by intending to share part of the coal lands with a Morgan-Guggenheim syndicate, which had investments in the area. Despite this information, Ballinger cleared-listed the lands, only to have his decision reversed by Secretary Garfield. After leaving office in 1908, Ballinger was employed by the Cunningham claimants as a legal advisor, and when he was appointed Secretary of the Interior in 1909, Ballinger removed Glavis from the case. He then prepared to complete the validation of these lands to Cunningham.

Sensing a dishonest maneuver, Glavis asked Pinchot for help. The chief forester appealed to President Taft. After considering the complaint and talking with others, the president decided that Pinchot hoped to use the affair to embarrass the administration. Considering Pinchot's dissatisfaction with the policy of the Interior Department, Taft's assumption seems to have been correct. When Taft did nothing, Glavis, with Pinchot's help, published an article in Collier's, attacking Ballinger and questioning his honesty. This, plus other publicity, prompted Taft to remove Pinchot from his office as chief of the Bureau of Forestry. In turn, these developments caused a full-scale investigation of the affair by Congress in early 1910.29 Although no votes were recorded on the resolution calling for the investigation, the entire Kansas delegation seems to have supported it. The Senate investigators were appointed by the vice-president. When the House considered how its members would be named to the joint committee, it kept the Speaker from making the appointments, choosing to elect them instead. The vote to keep Cannon from appointing the
House members saw Murdock and Madison with the majority, while the other six Kansas congressmen opposed.  

Senator Bristow's reaction to the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy illustrated the way that Kansas progressive Republicans responded in general. At first Bristow thought that the matter was solely a question of two men favoring different conservation policies. Not particularly concerned with this phase of conservation and disliking Pinchot's eastern mannerisms, he concluded that the inquiry would prove that Ballinger was an honest man. Early in 1910 the senator was less certain of the secretary's honesty, writing that he had been told by men who had examined evidence in the case that Ballinger in one instance had violated the law. By April, as the result of newspaper and magazine reports, Bristow was condemning Ballinger. "I don't think," he wrote, "there is any danger of Madison . . . whitewashing Ballinger. . . . In my judgment it is the rottenest condition that has existed in any Department since the whiskey scandals of the Grant administration." He continued:

From my point of view, the criminality is on the part of the cabinet officer and his immediate subordinates who act under his direction, and the inferior officers were the ones who stood between the Government, or the people, and the plunderers. Glavis blocked the Guggenheims' game to loot Alaska, and for this invaluable service to the American people he is removed from office and stamped with official disgrace, the President denouncing him. . . . I don't say "poor Taft" any more. He is not entitled to pity. If he is so ignorant and indolent as not to know or realize what is going on in his administration—that Ballinger is the friend of crooks—it seems to me he is more an object of contempt than pity. If he does not know the characteristics of these men, then he is the worst man that has been at the head of the American Government since Martin Van Buren.  

Bristow was correct in assuming that Madison's report would condemn Ballinger. The majority of the joint committee, which reported in September 1910, exonerated Ballinger from fraud and corruption and lauded him as an efficient conservationist. The minority, composed of Democrats, said the opposite. But in a third opinion, which sustained Pinchot and recommended that Ballinger be removed, Madison wrote: "Mr. Ballinger's course . . . has been characterized by a lack of fidelity to the public interests."  

In a way perversely Kansan, Madison's report was considered by much of the Kansas press as the only accurate portrayal of the affair. The con-
gressional investigation did nothing immediately to affect the conserva-
tion policy in Taft’s administration. It did enhance Madison’s reputation
as a progressive, and it added to the progressives’ distrust of the presi-
dent. For the moment, Ballinger remained as secretary of the interior.
After the sensationalism connected with the controversy had moderated,
Ballinger resigned and was replaced by the proconservationist Walter
Fisher. But Fisher was no more acceptable to insurgent Republicans
than his predecessor, and in late 1911 Senator Bristow verbally attacked
the new secretary during a public appearance with him in Kansas.33

Joseph Bristow became an opponent of the Taft administration as a
result of tariff revision in the special session of 1909. Until that time,
Bristow had been a protectionist. But because the 1908 Republican plat-
form and the Kansas voters demanded change, he told the state legis-
lature that elected him that among his first duties would be a downward
revision of the tariff. President Taft had earlier written that he was
counting on Bristow to help him secure honest tariff revision, and the
senator had taken Taft’s remarks to heart.34

Bristow was apprehensive early in the special session when the Payne
bill was discussed by the House of Representatives. Before it passed on
April 10 he became convinced that many of its provisions were pure and
simple graft. “Between us,” he wrote Harold Chase, “I haven’t much
faith in a tariff revision such as we want happening.” Nelson Aldrich, he
noted, had packed the committee that would handle the measure in the
Senate with men who were opposed to revision, and Aldrich himself had
indicated that he was against any fundamental change in the import
tax. Bristow did not seem to be particularly agitated over these develop-
ments, and he gave no indication that he, along with La Follette and
others, would engage in a spectacular fight for a lower tariff.35

Tariff-making was a festering sore that plagued almost every Repub-
lican administration, but it was one that Theodore Roosevelt had pur-
posely avoided. His successor was not as fortunate. In 1908 both major
parties endorsed the idea of tariff revision. Once elected, President Taft
took this commitment of his party seriously, calling a special session to
deal with the matter. But Aldrich and Cannon, the most powerful men
in Congress, were not interested in upholding the Republican pledge.
Aldrich felt that existing schedules were too high, yet he wished to leave
the matter alone. His attitude was approximately the same as Cannon’s.
“The country,” Cannon later said, “at that time was prosperous, manu-
facturers were satisfied with their profits and workingmen with their
wages, and it did not seem to me either good business or sound politics
to dislocate business and bring about hesitation and uncertainty by a
tariff revision."36

The opinions of these men concerning the tariff were extremely im­
portant, as were the attitudes of other Republican representatives who
shared Cannon’s and Aldrich’s views. William A. Calderhead of the Fifth
Congressional District in Kansas was an excellent case in point. Calder­
head, a high protectionist on the Ways and Means Committee, summed
up his feeling on the 1908 tariff plank by informing a Washington contact
that he planned to adhere as closely as possible to the Republican plat­
form. But he added, “Don’t announce our position until we get safe
agreements for satisfactory tariffs on the products in which Kansas is
especially interested.”37

Considering that forty-six states and a number of territories sent men
to Congress in 1909 with attitudes similar to Calderhead’s, the tariff as
finally passed would understandably not have satisfied revisionists. Bris­
tow was not the only Kansan to become disenchanted by the tariff
proceedings. Both Victor Murdock and Ed Madison complained about
them while hearings were being held in the House. After the Payne
bill was sent to the Senate, Madison noted that it would have been
more of a revision downward if Representative Sereno Payne had ac­
tually had his way. Gloomily, he added that John Dalzell and Joseph
Fordney, who were ultra protectionists, had exercised the greatest in­
fluence in shaping the measure and would probably direct House affairs
when the amended bill returned from the Senate. The knowledge that
Calderhead, a member of his own state’s delegation, was going to be a
member of the conference committee to reconsider Senate and House
differences would not have cheered him.38

Madison was particularly surprised by Taft’s inaction early in the
session. Unknown to Madison, Taft was disheartened by the Payne bill
and by Aldrich’s intentions. The president had already considered
appealing to the public in order to force Aldrich’s hand. He thought
about vetoing the measure if it did not meet his desires. George Mowry
has suggested that Taft might have started using patronage to pressure
reluctant senators to support the administration’s wishes for a substan­
tial revision. Roosevelt had done so, and Taft later used the patronage
lever against progressive Republicans. In 1909, however, Taft chose a
course that was far more in keeping with his personality by refusing to
do anything at first.39

When the tariff bill arrived in the Senate, Aldrich’s intentions of raising
specific rates higher than those in the Payne bill became apparent. In
order to dramatize Aldrich's actions, in late May a band of insurgent Republicans combined to speak on different aspects of the legislation. They realized that their effort would not affect Aldrich's schedules to any degree, but they hoped to inform the public of what was being done wrong.

In dividing the schedules to be discussed, Bristow was given those concerning sugar and lead. In order to prepare himself, he did an amazing amount of letter writing and reading. His final position on the sugar schedule, however, was substantially the same as the one that he held when he began his research. He favored a reduction of the rate on refined sugar, but he wanted raw sugar to continue to have protection. He believed that one day Kansas would produce all the raw sugar that the United States could use. "I certainly would be in favor of free sugar," he wrote, "but ten years experience in beet sugar development convinces me that we will soon be producing more sugar than we consume." Like other Kansans, he opposed Cuban Reciprocity and duty-free sugar from the Philippines. His position was not that of a proponent of lower tariffs, but compared to Aldrich's, it seemed to be so.\(^40\)

Bristow's role in the debate over the lead and zinc schedules was far less spectacular than his role in the sugar controversy, but he was more consistent in advocating a lower rate. In this respect he differed with Campbell and Scott, who represented the zinc- and lead-producing areas of Kansas. In 1908 the state produced approximately one-half of the nation's total output of spelter. These men favored the continuance of protection for their industries.\(^41\)

Of course, Bristow's general attitude on the tariff was not totally dissimilar to the views of the other, the "regular," members of the Kansas delegation. As a moderate revisionist, Bristow's position in the topsy-turvy activity of tariff-making could be considered as one extreme. Calderhead was a protectionist, despite what he said about the party platform, and he represented the opposite extreme. The remaining members of the delegation were scattered between these men. For example, James M. Miller and Scott favored adding lumber to the "free list," although Miller, who represented the Fourth Congressional District, admitted during the debate that he would ultimately vote with the congressional leadership of his party on all schedules. His views about party discipline must have rankled the independent-minded progressives. "I am inclined, in legislative matters," he said, "to yield to the consensus of opinion of the party to which I belong, instead of adhering blindly to my own judgment upon a question of this character."\(^42\)
Party discipline was a force that influenced Bristow, no matter how he finally reacted. In reality, Bristow feared Democratic free-trade views. He and, for that matter, other insurgents would have agreed with Congressman William Reeder of the Sixth District when he stated:

The more nearly we permit Americans to do all the labor necessary to supply our needs and get good wages for this labor, the more prosperous all our people will be. I say this as a representative of a section which consumes a large amount of the goods manufactured by American workingmen; and we prefer to have those goods made by our own people, giving them their wages for their labor, rather than insist that our laboring people shall stand a cut in their wages to compete with pauper labor abroad.43

The lower-tariff posture of the insurgents was induced by the platform of 1908. If Aldrich had accepted moderate revision or if he had been less overt in fashioning higher schedules than those in the House version, most insurgents probably would not have become involved in the spectacular Senate debates.

From the point of view of the progressives, higher rates were not the worst feature of the bill. Aldrich, they believed, was using the measure to punish them by favoring the industrial East at the expense of their agricultural West. Midway through the session, Bristow wrote: “There is a combination here of New England, the Pacific Coast, and the Rocky Mountain states, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana that will put through the tariff bill that their people want. That is, they propose to levy tribute upon the remainder of the United States.” On another occasion he added: “This tariff is being revised by a band of legislative pirates . . . taxing the rank and file of the people to increase the profits of the owners of manufacturing establishments.” Here, his statement conflicted directly with Calderhead’s speeches in the House. During one oratorical display, Calderhead said: “The charge is generally made that the whole tariff is levied for the protection of the manufacturer. The general answer to it is that the man who has received the most protection from the tariff has been the farmer . . . and the wage-earner.”44

Until June, Bristow and other progressives wondered about Taft’s failure to act in behalf of revision, but they said little. Taft did not intervene to help them in their fight; nor did he hinder their activities. But as the debate reached a climax, he helped to defeat an income-tax addition to the tariff bill, which was supported by the progressives and opposed by Aldrich. By this time the debate had become more than just
a disagreement over schedules. Aldrich and his friends had stung Bristow's pride. "When I rise," Bristow wrote, "[I am] . . . greeted with sneers and insulting remarks from the Aldrich coteries. . . . But fortunately their methods irritate me and increase my determination . . . and if they can be more disagreeable to me than I will be to them . . . they are welcome to the satisfaction they get out of it."45

Bristow's support of the income tax was not vindictive; he favored it because he felt that it would be a fairer way to raise the national revenues that would be needed in order to replace those lost by a lower tariff. Taft, aware of the constitutional problem involved in an income tax, wanted a corporation tax instead; but he was willing to support an income tax as a constitutional amendment. Aldrich opposed both tax plans, but he accepted the president's proposal as the lesser of evils.46

Taft swung Republican senators to his views through a special message to Congress. Bristow's reaction to the speech was predictable. The president had "pulled the rug" from under them. "This corporation tax," he remarked, "is an aggravating thing, aggravating because the President joined with Aldrich to defeat us upon the only occasion when Aldrich was in any danger. If Taft had been with us, in favor of revision of the tariff, so that we could have gotten a decent tariff bill, we would not have cared so much about the corporation tax." Bristow voted against the corporation-tax amendment; but his Kansas colleague, Senator Charles Curtis, and a large majority in both houses supported it. The corporation-tax amendment not only separated the junior and senior senators from Kansas, it also caused an open difference between Bristow and Madison. In extended remarks to the House, Madison said that he believed Taft was wise in rejecting an income-tax law without first having the Constitution amended. He defended the corporation tax by saying that it was just and constitutional and that it was not a dodge to avoid a personal income tax. "I confidently predict," he noted, "that the history of the future will disclose that in its enactment, the President and his party met the exigency of the hour, and placed upon the statute books a wise and beneficial law."47

Before the conference committee met in July to reconcile differences with regard to the tariff bills, Bristow decided to vote against their report. Taft’s influence on the bill at the conference did not change Bristow’s resolve, and despite considerable improvements in it, Bristow voted against the law on August 5. In the House, Murdock was the only Kansan to vote against the measure. On a motion to recommit the bill he was joined in defeat by Madison. An overwhelming majority of Senate
and House Republicans supported Taft by passing the Payne-Aldrich Act.⁴⁸

According to Taft, the 1909 tariff law was "a good bill," which could be defended "as a revision substantially downward."⁴⁹ Many progressive Republicans in and out of Congress disagreed. Influential newspapermen throughout the Middle West were particularly incensed. Colonel William Rockhill Nelson of the Kansas City Star ripped Taft's picture from his office wall and replaced it with a photograph of Grover Cleveland. He wrote Bristow that the people had never been as aroused as they were now "to the extortion . . . being carried on under the guise of protection." He told William Allen White that Bristow and Murdock, the two Kansans who had voted against the law, were the kind of congressmen the state liked, but the rest were unwanted baggage. The Star's continual assault on the Payne-Aldrich Act caused President Taft to complain that the paper would not accept the fact that he was a Republican and not a "free-trade" Democrat like Colonel Nelson.⁵⁰

Harold Chase and Arthur Capper of the Topeka Daily Capital were also displeased by the bill, although not as much as Colonel Nelson. Opinion polls taken early in 1910 indicated that the people of Kansas agreed with Nelson. One group registered 1,582 negative votes on the measure, compared to 96 favorable replies. Another sampling showed that 1,063 voters disapproved of the law, while 49 felt it to be satisfactory. Despite his own opposition to the tariff, Bristow was amazed by the public's response. He wrote Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana that the people wanted him to discuss nothing but the tariff. "There is an ominous drift against President Taft in our immediate vicinity," he added. "There is . . . abroad a spirit of intolerant hostility to the tariff. . . . I have never seen in Kansas such a unanimous sentiment of approval as I find in favor of the insurgent Senators."⁵¹

Insurgents profited politically from dislike of the tariff, whereas Kansas politicians who voted with Taft were hurt by it. These other politicians included Scott, Campbell, Miller, Reeder, Calderhead, and Curtis. Even Anthony and Madison, who voted regularly with the insurgents in attempts to amend the schedules downward, were criticized. They, too, had voted for the final measure. Many of the congressmen complained bitterly when Bristow continued to speak against the tariff after the session had ended. Reeder, who openly criticized Bristow, was answered by the senator in curt fashion. "If Reeder wanted to be reelected," he said, "he ought to have stood by his constituents and not by Mr. Aldrich's."⁵²
Before September 1909 there had been little public criticism of President Taft, although Bristow had noted on a few occasions that the president had not upheld the 1908 Republican platform. Late in the month, however, Taft began a tour of the United States, starting in Boston, where he congratulated Aldrich as the Senate leader who worked for the welfare of the nation. Bristow dreaded Taft's tour, since he was sure that the president would say that the tariff bill was a good one, one that fulfilled the pledges made by the party. "He will make [the tariff] . . . a party measure," Bristow stated, "and put his administration behind it." If this should happen, Bristow knew that thenceforth an attack on the tariff would be tantamount to a rebuff of the president. On September 21, at Winona, Minnesota, Taft did discuss the tariff. As Bristow suspected, he defended the supporters of the measure, attacked its critics, and called the law the best tariff ever enacted by a Republican Congress, and thus the best ever passed.\(^53\)

The reform press was stunned. The supposed leader of progressivism had switched sides on them, now choosing to uphold the reactionaries. Progressive-Republican politicians were less surprised, but no less mournful. They had come to believe that Taft had deserted them, but now he was taking a position that could only hurt them politically if they remained silent. Naturally they did not intend to allow Taft's remarks to go unchallenged. They counterattacked. The time for silence was past; they believed that if their action split the party, such an eventuality was not of their making. "It is the plan of the Aldrich and Cannon crowd," Bristow wrote, "and Taft is in accord with them, to eliminate the progressive Republican from political life. . . . The fights heretofore have been merely skirmishes—the real battles are yet to come."\(^54\)

In Kansas, the Winona speech had a twofold effect. Regular Republicans took heart, but anti-Taft sentiment grew more bitter. In October, Bristow began to make a series of speeches against the Taft administration's tariff and against corporation congressmen. Regular Republicans began to refuse to appear on platforms with him, damning his antiadministration stand. Although the regulars were pleased with the president's position, William Allen White accurately interpreted the impact of Taft's actions on Kansas. Taft, he wrote, "has lost and the insurgents have gained, for they are now in the attitude of being persecuted by those in high authority."\(^55\)

As a result of Taft's actions on the tariff, progressive Republicans became apprehensive about the future of reform. Bristow wrote that it looked as if Wickersham, Bowers, Nagel, and Ballinger—all trusted rep-
resentatives of big business in the cabinet—were going to outline the policy of the administration regarding corporations. Bristow added that if he and his friends did nothing, the progressive revolution would be for naught. Unaided by Taft, progressives in Congress would have to enact progressive laws. Bristow recommended to Senator Moses Clapp of Minnesota that men of their views use the waterways convention in New Orleans in October to plan a program for the session of Congress that would convene in December 1909.

Although this meeting failed to materialize, sometime between September and December the progressives did manage to discuss what they would try to achieve at the coming session. Bristow later reported that Senator Cummins would manage their efforts on an interstate-commerce law; Borah would handle a proposed measure on postal savings banks; La Follette and Beveridge would concentrate on a revised tariff; and Bristow would work for the direct election of senators by constitutional amendment. Together, they were to "attack the selfish, corporation program of Aldrich and Cannon."  

Historians have often remarked that it was Taft's misfortune to have handled the Payne-Aldrich tariff, Cannonism, and the Ballinger-Pinchot affair badly. Thereafter, his reform accomplishments were suspect among insurgent Republicans. In the case of Senator Bristow this view offers a valid interpretation. The Mann-Elkins Act, parcel post, the postal savings bank, and numerous antitrust actions are listed as the main contributions made by Taft to progressivism. On each of these issues, Bristow opposed the president's measures or actions and disclaimed their progressive nature. As one would expect, in opposing Taft's program he often found himself at odds with other Kansas delegates in Washington, including Madison and Murdock.

Bristow, of course, was favorable to antitrust prosecutions, but he felt that Attorney General George Wickersham presented government cases ineptly, thus causing verdicts that were to the advantage of corporations. He, La Follette, and Cummins did not like the Postal Savings Bank Law, which was enacted at Taft's request. They believed that the legislation would allow deposits to be taken from western communities and placed in eastern banks. Handlers of the bill tried to persuade them that this would not be the case, but they were unconvinced and voted against the measure. That Taft made the bill a personal vote of confidence influenced them not in the least. The other members of the Kansas delegation voted with the president, except for Charles F. Scott, who failed to vote. Victor Murdock, an authority on postal affairs, was one of the
warmest supporters of the law. Murdock, who seems never to have liked Bristow despite their general agreement on issues, favored postal savings because it taught the lost virtues “of simplicity, of frugality, of thrift.” “It is useless,” he said during debate on the bill, “to obtain inspiration [for these virtues] from the example of our rich. They answer all criticism of extravagance by a grand spectacle of continued material success. Our rich are utterly hopeless and absurd, as a rule, in their manner of expenditure.”

The question of improved parcel-post service also placed Taft and Bristow in antipodal positions. As evidenced by the lack of activity in the Sixty-first Congress, none of the Kansas representatives was interested in becoming involved closely with that problem. To the extent that the president and Bristow were at variance, Taft seemed to take the more equitable stance. He wanted to extend the parcel-post service so that large packages could be shipped through the mails. Postage was to be prorated according to a series of established zones. Bristow’s difficulty with the proposed system was strictly political. Two powerful Kansas interests held opposite views regarding Taft’s proposed revision. Farmers, who would profit from being able to purchase large-sized items by mail order from Chicago or Kansas City, generally favored the suggested change. Small-town merchants, threatened by the loss of their rural customers, opposed it.

The solution to the parcel-post problem did not come until August of 1912, thus it had no bearing on Republican politics in 1910. The system adopted at that later date was the one advanced by Taft; of the Kansans who had been involved earlier, only Victor Murdock voted against the law. For several years Murdock had advocated a plan to give the government an absolute monopoly in the carriage of mail in order to avoid a perennial deficit. He argued that as things existed, the American Express Company took lucrative short-haul carriage away from the government and expected the Post Office Department to foot the bill on unprofitable long-haul business. A monopoly would allow the government to begin operating the Post Office Department in the black by balancing the unprofitable business against the profitable.

In discussing post-office finances, Murdock touched on another issue that occasioned disagreement between Taft and Bristow. In order to equalize the amount charged for carrying newspapers and magazines and the amount paid in costs by the government, and in order to eliminate a $17.5 million deficit, Taft proposed an increase of two and one-half cents per pound in rates on second-class mail. Bristow, representing
magazine and newspaper sentiment, was opposed. During the debate over rates on second-class mail, Congressman Reeder supported Taft’s objectives but recommended that magazines and similar matter be charged postage of one and one-half cents per pound instead of the existing one cent per pound. Reeder calculated that if periodical owners and advertisers absorbed their share of the increase, subscribers would pay about two cents more per year for subscriptions to monthly magazines. He argued that this increase would not stifle a free press, as some journal publishers claimed that it would.59

In a letter to a friend, Bristow had charged Taft with wanting to raise the rates in order to punish the Muckraker press. “This is,” the senator wrote, “the boldest move [ever] . . . made in the history of this Government to suppress free discussion of public men and affairs.” In response to a similar allegation published by the Farmers’ Mail and Breeze of Topeka, Reeder had answered: “When an editor goes so far as to deliberately publish falsehoods to discredit a great committee of Congress or public servants [Taft and the postmaster general] individually, he becomes a menace to honesty in politics and an enemy to our form of government.”60

Post-office affairs offered an opportunity for disagreement, but as was often the case in the progressive years, railroads drove an even deeper split between Republicans. The most divisive legislative issue to be introduced into the second session of the Sixty-first Congress was the so-called Mann-Elkins bill. In March of 1910 Bristow wrote: “This struggle is wider than a struggle over railroad rates or tariff schedules. . . . It is a conflict where representative Government, individual rights, the opportunities and liberties of the average man, are involved. The question is—Shall greed and avarice or justice and equity prevail?”61

A variety of factors conditioned Bristow’s opinion of the way in which the Taft administration proposed to amend the Interstate Commerce Act. First of all, Bristow believed that Attorney General Wickersham, a former employee of August Belmont’s, wrote the bill in cooperation with Aldrich, Cannon, and Elihu Root. In Bristow’s mind this trio represented the congressional bodyguard of corporate interests. Secondly, the Washington Post reported that before preparing the I.C.C. legislation, Taft, at J. P. Morgan’s behest, had met with William C. Brown of the New York Central and five other presidents of railroads. “Speaking to you personally,” an infuriated Bristow told Fred Trigg of the Kansas City Star, “I believe the crisis is approaching in the controversy between corporate interests which seek to govern and dominate the commercial
and industrial life of the country, and the people who are struggling for political and commercial independence." 62

The third cause for Bristow's alarm was the administration measure itself. The bill, as presented by Wickersham, had four features that were unacceptable to Bristow. Under it, railroads could pool traffic, incorporate nationally, and create what the senator called "pure monopolies." Previously the I.C.C. had defended its judgments before the Supreme Court, but Wickersham's bill would have transferred this activity to the attorney general's office, which would thenceforth have argued the commission's cases before all federal tribunals. Worst of all, the bill would have created a commerce court. "This Commerce Court," Bristow wrote, "is for the purpose of placing Federal Judges, appointed for life, over the I.C.C. and vesting in them far more power and authority than Federal Judges now have over its rulings." 63

To improve the bill, Bristow and other insurgent Republicans amended it over two hundred times during March and April. Of thirty-two recorded votes on amendments, Curtis and Bristow differed twenty-four times, with Bristow favoring amendment in every instance. 64 Led primarily by Senator Cummins, the insurgents forced an entirely new version to be written. They defeated national incorporation and eliminated the pooling of traffic. Their amendments made it necessary for railroads to go before the I.C.C. prior to raising rates. The insurgents were responsible for a revised commerce court. They allowed a wide latitude in appeals from it to the Supreme Court. They increased the I.C.C.'s power to regulate stock-watering, excessive rates, and other abuses. In all, by June 1910 Bristow could write: "We passed a pretty good railroad bill." 65

At the same time Victor Murdock was claiming that the Mann-Elkins Act was the first worthwhile change in railroad regulation that Congress had passed since 1887. His enthusiasm resulted from a belief that, at last, intermediate points (small towns) on railroads would receive rates comparable to through points (large cities). He felt that the day of discrimination between rates on long hauls and short hauls was over. In voting on the bill, both Curtis and Bristow supported the amended measure. The Senate version was rejected by the House, and a conference committee was created. Madison and Murdock voted against the rejection, Anthony abstained, and the other five Kansans voted for the rejection; but the entire ten-man delegation favored the report of the conference committee. 66

From Bristow's point of view the most unsatisfactory aspect of the
controversy over the Mann-Elkins bill related to President Taft's actions. Time and again Bristow complained that the president helped the reactionaries at the expense of the reformers who were responsible for amending the measure. "We are in the humiliating position," he lamented, "of having the President and the Democrats combine to help Aldrich when we get him in a corner." Taft's interpretation of what was happening differed considerably. He explained to his brother Horace that weak-kneed senators from the West ran every time "those Populist opponents of mine [from Kansas, Wisconsin, and Iowa] ... raise the flag of demagogy, and find some element in the legislation that I propose that savors of justice to corporate and banking interests." "They proceed," he added, "on the theory that any injustice or severity to wealth, vested interest, or corporations, must of itself bring about popular support."67

If he read the Congressional Record the day that Congressman Miller spoke regarding the president's railroad bill, he should have been pleased. "The American people," Miller said, "without regard to party, will give William Howard Taft credit for having kept the faith and the Republican party the credit for having put its platform promises into the statute books." Bristow's evaluation of Taft differed markedly. The president, Bristow had concluded, was a man of low character, low intelligence, and false sincerity. He said that he had finally sized up Taft, "that fat man with the big smile."68

Not surprisingly, Bristow had patronage problems in 1910. The oddity of the controversy that developed between the president and Bristow over patronage is that ultimately Bristow was allowed to select one of the four appointments allotted to Kansas senators. When Bristow first took office, he and Senator Curtis appeared to be ready to divide the appointments to the offices of district attorney, United States marshal, collector of internal revenue, and director of the pension agency in Topeka. Following the tariff struggle, Bristow publicly criticized the president's and Curtis's views. Curtis naturally decided to exploit this development.

Oddly enough, despite Bristow's opposition, Taft informed him that legislative attitudes would not affect appointments. On 27 December 1909, he called both Kansas senators to the White House to discuss patronage. Although Taft avoided the question of Bristow's failure to support administration positions, Curtis broached the subject violently. Calling Bristow a traitor to Republicanism and to the administration, Curtis demanded all four senatorial appointments. The president seemed
visibly embarrassed by Curtis's outburst, but he did not interrupt nor contradict him. Bristow, unprepared for the affair, was shaken. He mustered enough strength to reply that he had not forsaken the party platform and that he would not allow patronage to swerve him from supporting progressive reform. After returning to the Senate Office Building, he recovered sufficiently to write his Kansas confederates that "Curtis is the most deceitful, two-faced, hypocritical, boodling reactionary that I ever had anything to do with. I was amazed at his asininity, egotism, and gall!"69

After this occasion and because of his position on the administration's railroad bill and the postal savings bill, Bristow, like other insurgents, became convinced that patronage was being withheld from him. During 1910 Bristow did not receive any of the appointments made in Kansas. In February, Taft recommended Harry J. Bone for reappointment as district attorney. A little later, the names of two more Curtis nominees were sent to the Senate by the President—Freemont Leidy as collector of internal revenue and A. W. ("Farmer") Smith, an old Boss-Buster, as pension agent. The confirmations of Bone and Smith were delayed for some time because of Bristow's opposition. Bone mistakenly criticized Bristow in a letter that the senator gave to W. P. Dillingham, chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Out of courtesy, Bone's official appointment was held up for more than two years. In the case of "Farmer" Smith, Senate approval did not come until mid 1911, when members of the G.A.R. pressured Bristow to withdraw his objection.70

In mid 1911 Bristow was allowed to recommend his candidate for United States marshal. To the disgust of many progressives, he chose John R. Harrison, a former postal inspector who had worked with Bristow early in the decade. Presumably, the appointment of Harrison was the result of Curtis's refusal to support Taft's program of tariff reciprocity with Canada. Bristow demonstrated little interest in the selection and disregarded the advice of his friends when they told him that Harrison was a poor choice. Harrison was not a citizen of Kansas at the time. Bristow's reaction in this case was typical of his general attitude on patronage during most of 1910. He seemed to care little about who received what job, although he did oppose Bone and Smith.71

A minor reappointment attempt in June of 1910 did upset him. When Taft chose an anti-Bristow Republican to continue as postmaster at Salina, the senator became aroused. Not since the days of Thomas Hart Benton, he wrote, had a senator been overlooked in the selection of a postmaster for his hometown. Curtis and Taft, he charged, were drunk
with power and would stop at nothing to defeat and discredit reform. Bristow believed that the president was using the Salina appointment to show party leaders that failure to support administration candidates in the forthcoming primaries would result in the loss of federal favors. Neither precedent nor tradition nor any other humane consideration, Bristow noted, would stop Taft and his reactionary friends in their effort to purge the party of its progressive element. They would not succeed, he added.  

During 1909 and the first half of 1910 President Taft alienated the progressive wing of his party by a series of mistakes. In the process he dragged a number of politicians who were otherwise acceptable to reformers with him. There were, of course, the old enemies of the progressive faction, who were waiting to redeem their previous defeat at the primary in 1910. Combined with the new opponents of the progressives, this group seemed to represent a formidable opposition for the reformers. In 1908 Stubbs and Bristow had led the way for new-style Republicanism, and at the 1910 primary the governor once more would stand for office. The main event now, however, centered on congressional contests as the progressives accepted the challenge offered by their opponents and, with unflagging vigor, labored to remove their “unprogressive” Kansas brethren from the House of Representatives.