Shaping Modern Liberalism

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Shaping Modern Liberalism: Herbert Croly and Progressive Thought.

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On the publication of *The Promise of American Life* in the fall of 1909, Croly sought to make this identification personal as well as intellectual. He asked his friend Learned Hand (or Hand volunteered) to send a copy of *The Promise* to Roosevelt. Accordingly, Hand wrote to Roosevelt: “I think that Croly has succeeded in stating . . . the bases and prospective growth of a set of political ideas which can be fairly described as Neo-Hamiltonian, and whose promise is due more to you, as I believe, than to anyone else.”97 Roosevelt replied on April 22, 1910, acknowledging the receipt of the book.98 Then Croly and Hand waited.

Some months later the desired result occurred. Roosevelt wrote to Croly:

My dear Mr. Croly: I do not know when I have read a book which I felt profited me as much as your book on American life. There are a few points on which I do not entirely agree with you, yet even as to these my disagreement is on minor matters. . . . I shall use your ideas freely in speeches I intend to make. I know you won’t object to my doing so, because, my dear sir, I can see that your purpose is to do your share in any way for the betterment of our national life. . . . Can’t you come in to see me at the Outlook office? I want very much to have a chance to talk to you.99

The political theory of *The Promise of American Life* was launched into national politics.
Progressivism and
"Progressive Democracy"

Croly's *The Promise of American Life* was well received. The book never sold particularly strongly, but it became well-known in just the circles that Croly sought to influence—the political and intellectual leaders of the country, and particularly those committed to reform.¹ As Alvin Johnson, an associate of Croly's on the *New Republic*, later wrote: "It was a powerful book, powerfully hard to read; but if one worked one's way through the involved sentences and the long-worded abstractions, one found a real philosophy of American progressivism."

Many other readers came to the same conclusion over the next several years, especially after Theodore Roosevelt had praised *The Promise* as "the most profound and illuminating study of our national conditions which has appeared for many years." Croly would perhaps have been slightly less pleased with Roosevelt's conclusion that "especial emphasis is laid on the assertion that the whole point of our government experiment lies in the fact that it is a genuine effort to achieve true democracy."³ But he was no doubt most happy that Roosevelt adopted his "New Nationalism" terminology in a series of speeches he made in the later summer of 1910. This association with Roosevelt propelled Croly into a national spotlight. Indeed, Learned Hand wrote to Croly in February 1911: "My dear friend, you are becoming an authority. I have no doubt that in a few years, myths will be established about you. Perhaps you will take on the form of the Sun-God. . . . What with the Colonel giving you such a splendid send-off, and a second edition coming out, you are quite the rage."⁴ The years 1910 to 1914 were thus years of political involvement for Herbert Croly.
These were also years of intellectual growth and development. Croly’s views on both theoretical and practical issues changed, partly, I think, because of the political successes of progressivism, and partly because of his own reading and thinking about politics. By early 1911, Croly had concluded that The Promise was “out of date” and must be “practically rewritten in case it is to have any permanent value.” It was also the case that while Croly was enormously pleased with Roosevelt’s use of his ideas and became a close supporter, he was also uneasy about some of Roosevelt’s formulations of progressivism and about the way politics distorted theoretical positions. Some of his writing in the period was thus meant to “rescue the features of the New Nationalism from the disfigurement that infant received at the hands of T. R. and his critics.” In the course of this rescue, Croly developed “some new stuff” that would form the basis of a more elaborate treatment of politics.

The result of this rethinking and reformulation was Croly’s second major work of original political theory, Progressive Democracy, which was first delivered as the Godkin Lectures at Harvard in 1913–1914 and then published in late 1914. A reformulation of Croly’s political theory in some crucial areas, this book also showed Croly to be more fully committed to the progressive version of reform than in The Promise. Progressive Democracy is written much more from “within” progressivism, and it both benefits and suffers from that identification.

Another aspect of Croly’s life in the years from 1910 to 1914 needs to be mentioned. Croly gained prominence from The Promise, but the book didn’t make him rich. To support himself, he continued to write articles for the Architectural Record. He also undertook an authorized biography of Mark Hanna with the intellectual and financial support of the Hanna family, particularly Hanna’s progressive son, Dan. Even with these means of support, Croly’s finances were often precarious, and this was one factor that encouraged him to accept the post of editor of the New Republic in 1914. While this decision to “hitch myself to a desk in New York,” as Croly described it to Hand, gave him an unparalleled opportunity to write for a large weekly audience, it also marked an end to a period in which Croly had the freedom to develop his theory in a more leisurely or disinterested fashion. It is to the elaboration of Croly’s thought in the years 1910 to 1914 that we now turn.

Croly’s first political writing after the appearance of The Promise was an article on the current political scene in the May 1910 North American Review. In The Promise, Croly had avoided too many explicit comments on the political parties (as opposed to the party system). Still, it was clear
where his allegiances lay. The Democratic party, he had written, was confused by trying to incorporate both the populist William Jennings Bryan and the conservative Alton B. Parker. Democrats were still too tied to local interests—the "party of secession" hadn't adopted a national perspective, they had never really developed a "progressive national idea." (Interestingly, in this discussion, Croly came very close to linking "progressive" and "liberal." The specific subject was William Travers Jerome, the Democratic district attorney, who had claimed that the Democrats were the party of "liberal ideas." Croly disagreed: "If by 'liberal' we mean, not merely radical and subversive, but progressive national ideas, the application of the adjective to the Democratic party is attended with certain difficulties.")

On the other hand, Theodore Roosevelt had restored the Republican party "to some sense of its historic position and purpose." However, "the Republican party is still very far from being a wholly sincere agent of the national reform interest." So neither party was pictured as ideal in *The Promise*, but the Republicans had more possibilities.

In the *North American Review*, Croly stressed that "new economic and political conditions" required a close evaluation of the extent to which either party could be "responsible for the formulation and execution of a national policy." His conclusions still favored the Republicans. They were judged "more national," whereas the "tendency of irresponsible individualist Democracy is factious and distracting."

However, the bulk of the article is a more subtle analysis of the ability of the Republicans to undertake reform. The party had built a hugely successful economic system in the late nineteenth century (a theme Croly was to elaborate shortly in his biography of Hanna). However, economic privilege had gotten out of hand, and an "artificial and overheated" economy had developed, which the Republicans were foolishly trying to protect. Two contemporary policies confirmed this judgment in Croly's view. First, the Payne-Aldrich Tariff of 1909 was an attempt to safeguard the "domestic capitalists" in their "home market." Second, Croly argued that "any permanent and dangerous economic privileges enjoyed by individuals or corporations must depend upon the appropriation of certain natural resources." This Republican policy of fueling economic development by "giving away" national property primarily for the benefit of the few "could not last." Severe changes thus were called for in the economy and particularly in the tariff and conservation areas. However, the Republican party was not responding and was therefore "facing one of the most difficult and dangerous crises of its career." It was a party "committed by its traditions" to a national view, but it wasn't adapting quickly enough to new circumstances. Instead, it was splintering into two wings, "regular
Republicans” and “Insurgents.” The “regular Republicans” around Taft were competent “public-spirited administrators.” But public opinion had moved much faster than they had. National policies were not forthcoming from this group.

Croly was ambivalent about the insurgents. They were not always very national in their perspective either: “They are suspicious of the East . . . suspicious of much in contemporary economic and political life, which is essential to American national efficiency. They have made a bugbear of monopolies . . . . They have not as yet thought out either the meaning of their insurrection, the consequences of their reforms or the principles which underlie their programme.” Still, they were “fighting for certain reforms, the adoption of which is essential both to the redemption of the traditional responsibility of the Republican party and to the economic welfare of the American people.” On balance, Croly was negative: the insurgents had “all the earmarks of agitators rather than statesmen, and not one of them can be named (unless Theodore Roosevelt is still to be classed as an insurgent) who is capable of inspiring general confidence and becoming a national political leader.” Croly’s hopes clearly lay with Roosevelt.

This is an interesting article in a number of respects. It continues much of Croly’s nationalist emphasis. On the other hand, it suggests a more radical vocabulary. Croly had previously not used such terms as “capitalist” with quite the same tone. Perhaps the Payne-Aldrich Tariff made him more cynical about business. Croly’s emphasis on the conservation issue and his linkage of that issue to a change in the economy in recent years was also new. Of course, conservation was particularly identified with Theodore Roosevelt, and Croly was in this sense signaling his support of T.R. In Roosevelt’s last years as president he had appointed the National Conservation Commission, with Gifford Pinchot as chair, to survey America’s natural resources. The commission had reported in December 1908, after surviving hamstringing by Congress (perhaps confirming Croly’s low view of a legislature’s ability to take a national view). Even as Croly was writing his article, the Ballinger-Pinchot affair, which drove a further wedge between Taft and Roosevelt, was coming to a head. Croly’s emphasis on the conservation issue very clearly tied his analysis to these specific political events, as well as to the Roosevelt cause.

We might note that Croly’s connection of the importance of the exploitation of resources to the growth of monopolies in an “overheated” economy, and hence the connection of conservation to broader changes in economic policy, was a common theme in the period. For example, some months later, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner delivered a presidential address to the American Historical Association in which he argued
that in the generation since the closing of the frontier, America had wit­nessed a tremendous change: "a wonderful chapter, this final rush of American energy upon the remaining wilderness." The country had gained enormous industrial production in a very short time, but it was also "peculiarly the era when competitive individualism in the midst of vast unappropriated opportunities changed into the monopoly of the fundamental industrial processes by huge aggregations of capital as the free lands disappeared." In Turner's analysis, the political system had responded with such federal programs as the conservation movement, the strengthening of the ICC, and the "recent legislation for pure food and meat inspection." This impulse was continuing in current politics: "We have the voice of the insurgent West, recently given utterance in the New Nationalism of ex-President Roosevelt, demanding increase of federal authority to curb the special interests, the powerful industrial organizations, and the monopolies, for the sake of the conservation of our natural resources and the preservation of American democracy." Aside from the more favorable tone toward insurgency (which Croly might have accepted somewhat more fully after Roosevelt's western tour in support of many insurgents), Croly would have agreed completely with Turner and would, of course, have been pleased to see his "New Nationalism" phrase in common use.

Croly's own article in the May North American Review had only mentioned Roosevelt (who was hunting in Africa while Croly was writing) in passing. However, Roosevelt's return the following month and his subsequent letter to Croly indicating that he would use Croly's ideas and then Roosevelt's dramatic series of speeches on his Western tour in August and September brought Croly to a more complete commitment to the Roosevelt cause.

Roosevelt's speeches were meant to support various western Republican candidates, most of them insurgents in the view of Taft and his allies (though Roosevelt's association with the insurgents was incomplete; witness his refusal to visit Wisconsin or support Robert M. LaFollette). As John M. Cooper has pointed out, Roosevelt in 1910 was not constrained by office or personal candidacy. Hence he was free to speak out, and he did so in a systematic series of speeches that quickly became known as the "New Nationalism." The most famous of the speeches was given at Osawatomie, Kansas, on August 31, 1910. Here, in the peroration of the speech, Roosevelt declaimed that "the American people are right in demanding that New Nationalism, without which we cannot hope to deal with new problems. The New Nationalism puts the national need before
sectional or personal advantage.... This New Nationalism regards the executive power as the steward of the public welfare." 23

The phrase "New Nationalism" was Croly's, and there seems little doubt that Roosevelt had taken it from The Promise. But what else did Roosevelt borrow? What other ideas did he use "freely in speeches I intend to make"? Historians have differed substantially on this question. 24

Roosevelt's own view of the origins of his "New Nationalism" was clear in a speech he gave in Syracuse, New York, just after the western tour. Roosevelt responded to the severe criticism the Eastern establishment had made of his speeches by arguing that "the New Nationalism really means nothing but an application to new conditions of certain old and fundamental moralities.... In my western speeches I said chiefly what I again and again said in messages to Congress when I was President. I very slightly developed the doctrines contained in these presidential addresses in order to meet the development of the new conditions." 25

David Levy argues that Croly actually helped Roosevelt work on the Osawatomie speech. 26 Whether or not this is so, I do think there are some instances in which Croly's thought can be discerned in Roosevelt's arguments. Croly's ideas seem particularly present in those parts of the speeches dealing with economic regulation. Yet, as we have seen, a great many of Croly's views were based on Roosevelt's policies and even sometimes on his messages. The phrasing about "combinations in industry" and particularly the "commission principle" could have come from Croly, but much of the substance of even these arguments had indeed been part of Roosevelt's policies earlier. There is also a lot of phrasing in the speeches, even on topics that Croly covered, that does not use terms that Croly commonly used. For example, Roosevelt argued in Syracuse that "we believe also in steadily using the power of the government to secure economic democracy as well as political democracy." 27 Croly would have agreed, but he did not use this terminology in The Promise. In short, it seems that there was some influence from Croly on Roosevelt, but it is more clear that Roosevelt had earlier influenced Croly. It is also clear that Roosevelt was correct when he said that he was drawing primarily on his own previous policies. Perhaps reading Croly had helped in the "development" of T.R.'s ideas, but the bulk of the influence ran the other way.

It should be remembered that the ideas about economics that Roosevelt likely borrowed from Croly were Croly's short-term suggestions—and not all of these. For example, Roosevelt didn't mention Croly's short-run "excess profits" tax. More importantly, Roosevelt steered away from any mention of such long-term solutions as nationalization of semimonopolistic industries in the New Nationalism. For this reason, Croly would have thought Roosevelt's formulation inadequate.
Indeed, Croly had some private reservations about T.R.’s 1910 speeches. For instance, he remarked to Hand that Roosevelt wasn’t displaying the “qualities of patience and forbearance” that were necessary for leadership. He also wrote that “the more I watch the effect of T.R. on different classes of men, the more it looks to me as if his particular influence was really trembling in the balance. He has to go about things differently, and if I get the chance, I shall tell him so. Me Big Injun.” Hand agreed: “Really if we are to have our New Nationalism with no more light than this, it’s doubtful whether we want it at all!” It’s impossible to know exactly what features of Roosevelt’s speeches were bothering Croly and Hand. Roosevelt had articulated progressive positions, but he also had tried to avoid a full break with Taft and the regular Republicans. This straddling could certainly have led Croly to think Roosevelt inconsistent. In any event, it is clear that Croly was not fully satisfied with either the program or more particularly the politics of the first statement of the New Nationalism.

In fact, the 1910 elections didn’t turn out especially well in either Croly’s or Roosevelt’s opinion. The Democrats gained control of the House of Representative and many governorships. While the Republicans retained control of the Senate, they were dependent on the western insurgents for their majority, which was an unstable situation. Some candidates that Roosevelt had endorsed had done well, but others such as Henry L. Stimson in New York and Albert J. Beveridge in Indiana had lost. As Croly remarked to Hand, “it is all going to be an awful mess for the next few years.” But he did admit that the Democrats “are entitled to their innings. Let us see what they can do.”

The 1910 election might in fact have shown that progressive reform was changing and deepening in ways that Croly did not immediately appreciate. Some historians have suggested that if progressivism was indeed primarily a middle-class, “native stock” movement in its origins (and even that is questionable in some interpretations), many different progressivisms soon emerged. One of the strongest of these newer reform currents was an “urban liberalism” primarily supported by “new stock” men who were Democrats. In this view, other groups were becoming progressive and turning to the Democratic party as an acceptable vehicle for reform. Thus John Buenker argues that “urban liberalism . . . provides much of the explanation for the resurgence of the Democratic party in the north-eastern industrial states.” These changes were positive additions to progressivism. The diffusion of a reform impulse through many groups in American society would clearly strengthen progressivism. In addition, most of the national progressive legislative triumphs would be achieved by the Democrat Woodrow Wilson, who entered the national scene on his
election as governor of New Jersey in 1910. However, these developments lay in the future. Croly was not optimistic about the reform possibilities of "the Democracy" in 1910-1911.

The political situation from the 1910 elections to the summer of 1912 was "a mess" as Croly had predicted. Pressure built on Roosevelt to run for the Republican nomination against Taft, but he resisted that pressure until early 1912. Croly made it clear that he would be in the Roosevelt camp if one formed, but in the meantime he continued to develop his ideas and to work on the Hanna biography.

One of Croly's interesting contacts with other progressives in this period was with the Oregon leader William S. U'Ren, who had been active since 1900 in pushing for the initiative, referendum, and recall. Modified versions of the initiative and referendum had been accepted in Oregon in the early years of the century, and in 1908 U'Ren's People's Power League had successfully fought for a state constitutional amendment implementing the recall of all elected officials (apparently including at least some judges). In late 1911, U'Ren wrote to Croly that he had "read your 'Promise of American Life' a couple of weeks ago with much interest and pleasure. Also with profit. In nearly all of it I am in accord with your views."

Of course, Croly's views on direct democracy had been at best lukewarm in The Promise, but he had singled out Oregon's as an intelligent attempt to combine these measures with the principle of executive authority.

The specific occasion of the correspondence with U'Ren was a meeting of the American Political Science Association in late December 1911, at which Croly presented a paper on "State Political Reorganization" and U'Ren served as a discussant. In this paper, Croly indicated a change in his position on direct democracy from the doubt of The Promise to a more enthusiastic acceptance. While Croly repeated some previous reservations, he now argued that direct democracy was a valuable way to get around the responsiveness of state legislatures to "special interests" as opposed to the interest of the whole people. The tone of Croly's remarks was much more welcoming to the progressive initiatives. Croly now celebrated the democratic virtues of citizen involvement more strongly than in The Promise. Noting that "during the past decade a decided change has taken place in the public attitude," he proclaimed that "the watchword of the 'Progressives,' has become 'trust in the people' and such a trust constitutes manifestly the only possible foundation on which a democracy can erect an enduring superstructure of political institutions."

Croly also continued to urge that executive responsibility be strengthened, even as the recall served as a democratic check on executive power.
He argued that initiatives and referenda should be limited in number so as not to confuse the voters. However, Croly specifically approved U'Ren's People's Power League proposals to combine a strengthened executive (and a reconstituted legislature) with direct democracy. In Croly's view (adopting the phrase he would use as the theme of his next book), a "progressive democracy is bound to be as much interested in efficient administration as it is in reconstructive legislation."  

In his response, U'Ren reacted positively to Croly's arguments for executive responsibility, but he strongly defended direct democracy as necessary to control corruption and overthrow "government by plutocracy in the American states and cities." He asked Eastern progressives like Croly to trust that Oregonians were not going too far too fast. Direct democracy was not an end; however, it was a necessary means to achieve the end of progressive reform.  

Another discussant of Croly's paper was Chester H. Rowell, a California progressive. He did not comment very specifically on Croly's points, but rather argued the more general case that progressivism was by now a dominant political movement that took many forms. Rowell endorsed the initiative, referendum, and recall, but he argued that progressivism was more than direct democracy and that Croly had taken too narrow a view of the subject. In what was perhaps a criticism of Croly for not getting more involved in politics, Rowell noted that "the philosophic analyst is not a good soldier. He reads papers before the Political Science Association, for the delectation of posterity." From his involvement with Roosevelt, Croly no doubt already was aware of these tensions between participating in reform and keeping one's distance to allow sufficient perspective.  

For the moment, Croly chose to remain the outsider. Indeed, his major work in 1911 was the Hanna biography. However, even this work continued some contact with progressives. Most importantly, Croly met and corresponded several times with Roosevelt to get his perspective on T.R.'s vice presidential nomination in 1900 (the biography quotes Roosevelt at length). Croly also spent time in Cleveland, meeting with Mark Hanna's former associates but also with his son, Dan, an Ohio progressive, and he traveled to California in February 1911 and met with William Hunt and other progressives.  

Croly's biography is largely a straight recounting of Hanna's life, which is presented favorably, although as representative of a different historical period. Croly makes some of his own views clear, as in commenting that by 1900 "the ordinary patriotic American was inclined to accept the process of consolidation [of business] as inevitable and desirable." In a discussion of Hanna's effectiveness at raising campaign con-
tributions from corporations, Croly somewhat excuses Hanna's practices, saying that he developed the technique and "removed from it, so far as possible, the taint of ordinary corruption." Moreover, in Croly's argument, Hanna pushed this practice so far that the political system had rebelled against it, so that by 1912 the "prevailing tendency of politics [is] to ignore business in the treatment of business questions." Both of these points were optimistic conclusions for the time, and they reflect Croly's larger optimism that a disinterested government could effectively regulate giant corporations without business being able in turn to control the regulation process.

Croly's central argument is that Hanna was the creature of his time, that his dealings were honorable given current political morality. This judgment fits into Croly's own overall analysis of American history, as developed in The Promise, but the verdict on Hanna must have seemed rather too favorable to a number of progressive readers.

The years 1910 and 1911 were thus a period of political transition for Croly. The publication of The Promise had brought considerable political prominence, but Croly's personality was such that he was distinctly uncomfortable taking a leading political position. Probably for this reason, because he needed to complete Hanna for financial reasons, because he preferred his role as a critic, and because the political situation was too cloudy, Croly didn't attempt to convert his new prominence into a political career. At the same time, he did establish closer ties with several leading progressives, ties that influenced his evolving theory. In particular, the developing strength of the progressive movement began to confirm Croly's earlier hope that progressivism could serve as a vehicle for the implementation of "national democratic" reform. For this reform to work, however, a forceful leader was necessary. Croly continued to cast Roosevelt in this role.

By February 1912 Croly had finished Marcus Alonzo Hanna, and the political situation was close to a decisive development. Croly and Hand had been speculating about Roosevelt's intentions for several months, and each had met with Roosevelt to discuss politics. Croly was unsure if Roosevelt would be successful in gaining the nomination over Taft, but his own support was clear: "If he does run, a good strong argument can be made on his behalf." On February 22, Roosevelt announced that he was indeed going to run for the Republican nomination, and Croly immediately pledged his support.

Croly was in contact with Roosevelt during the spring and sent him
some proposals about state administrative reform and about the direct democracy issue. However, he was not actively involved in Roosevelt's campaign for the Republican nomination. However, once Roosevelt was denied the nomination and bolted the convention to form the Progressive party, Croly was an enthusiastic supporter. The new party, he wrote to Hand in July, "contains more promise for future good government than any recent movement in American politics. You will find it driven by the logic of its own... situation towards nationalism." Roosevelt and his supporters were "the men who want to do something and who are willing to use the agency of the government for the realization of their program." On the other side, while Wilson could make claims to being a progressive, his party could not: "You will find the Democracy gradually pushed into a dogmatic states-rights position."

Croly met with Roosevelt during the campaign, but aside from private advice his most visible public support was an article arguing the Progressive cause that appeared just before the election in the American Magazine. Identified in large print by the magazine as "The Man From Whom Col. Roosevelt Got His 'New Nationalism,'" Croly wrote with authority and passion for the Roosevelt camp. His thesis was that Roosevelt was the leading progressive political figure and deserved the support of all progressives for his past accomplishments. Croly was at pains to argue that progressives should not support Wilson because his party would limit any possibility of reform. On the contrary, "a thoroughly progressive party and a thoroughly progressive platform call more loudly for allegiance than can any single leader." In phrases that T.R. himself might have regretted, Croly declared that Roosevelt's "leadership is indispensable just at present... But in the long run a national party waxes as big as its purpose and program."

Croly's article only slightly reworked some old themes from The Promise, but he also used some interesting new language. The Progressive party, he wrote, "takes over the Democratic tradition of popular rule; it takes over the Republican tradition of national responsibility; and by virtue of a combination of the two principles it will hereafter make the American nation expressly responsible for the realization of a social democratic ideal." Croly's use of "social democratic" probably shouldn't be emphasized, but it did suggest an interesting evolution in his thought. The article also combined Croly's own themes of a purpose and of faith and brotherhood with the religious imagery of progressivism. Roosevelt's speech to the August Progressive convention had been entitled "A Confession of Faith," and Croly echoed that theme in his appeal to all progressives to unite behind T.R.: "Those who lack the faith, let them remain..."
outside; but if a man has seen the light and shared the faith, the National Progressive party has a right to claim him as its own."57 Croly had signed on to the cause.

THE OTHER AREA in which Croly contributed to the Progressive campaign concerned the central issue of the regulation of business. This issue was a difficult one for both the Progressives and the Democrats in 1912. The Progressives were split between two contrasting views—the position that the Sherman Antitrust Act should be strengthened, and the position that bigness was inevitable and that national regulation of corporations was the answer. In this division, Croly was clearly in the latter camp. But translating these arguments into attractive party positions proved difficult.

The political difficulties within the Progressive party were evident in the platform hearings in early August. A number of proposed planks had been submitted calling for regulation by what was coming to be called a federal trade commission, including planks by Croly, Learned Hand, and their friend George Rublee.58 But other drafts had stressed the trust-busting approach. Roosevelt tried to compromise these approaches, supporting a full plank on regulation but also allowing a short paragraph that called for strengthening the Sherman Act. Political confusion ensued when these statements were read at the convention. George W. Perkins, the Morgan partner who was a major financial backer, left the hall protesting that the Sherman Act paragraph shouldn’t have been included. After quite a furor, the platform committee agreed it should have been omitted, and the short paragraph was dropped from the written text. Several days after the convention, most members of the platform committee, on further reflection, thought they had in fact approved it.59

The political fallout from this confusion was very harmful to the Progressives. Many people assumed that Perkins had dictated the removal of the paragraph, and this only strengthened the impression that the House of Morgan was supporting Roosevelt. In fact this was not true, as Perkins was acting quite on his own and against J. P. Morgan, Jr.’s wishes, but the impression persisted.60

Compounding the confusion, Roosevelt repeated a compromise position in his early campaign speeches. For example, in his “Confession of Faith” he argued that the “antitrust law must be kept on our statute-books, and . . . rendered more effective.”61 But Roosevelt also went on to argue that the concentration of industry was inevitable and economically advantageous. “It is utterly hopeless to control the trusts merely by the antitrust law.”62
From the start of the campaign, then, Croly was getting a painful lesson in how politics and politicians could distort a theoretical argument. The later weeks of the campaign proved yet more difficult, as even Roosevelt’s compromise position was attacked by Wilson and his supporters as a position in favor of “monopoly,” without any acknowledgment of the qualifications that Croly would have wished to emphasize.

Wilson’s own “New Freedom” position was also somewhat unclear. For instance, he could assert (on September 17): “I am for big business and I am against the trusts.” Louis Brandeis soon became Wilson’s main adviser on economic issues, and Brandeis furnished Wilson with much material emphasizing the importance of competition. However, later in his campaign Wilson usually spoke not simply of competition but of the “regulation of competition,” comparing his position to what he said was Roosevelt’s call for “regulated monopoly.” The Wilson camp tried to suggest a larger difference than probably existed between the “New Freedom” and the “New Nationalism.”

Brandeis also published a series of politically effective articles in Norman Hapgood’s Collier’s Weekly, arguing his position on competition. He even wrote editorials for Hapgood to publish praising his own articles!

Croly and Hand tried to furnish material to Roosevelt to rebut the Wilson-Brandeis arguments. Hand wrote to Frankfurter that he and Croly were “each independently trying to say something about the trust plank to meet Brandeis’s effort to throw us into the camp of the monopolists.” Unfortunately, we don’t have copies of Croly’s suggestions. However, it is unlikely they had much effect, for Roosevelt continued to straddle the issue, for instance writing to Collier’s that “I am not for monopoly. We intend to restore competition.” In the emotional speech he made in Milwaukee on October 14 after having been shot, Roosevelt emphasized his performance as president in reviving both the Sherman Act and the Interstate Commerce Act—neatly having it both ways.

In another major theme of the campaign, Wilson attacked Roosevelt as proposing a paternalistic “government of experts.” Roosevelt countered this accusation by terming Wilson’s statement that “the history of liberty is a history of the limitation of governmental power, not the increase of it” as “outworn academic doctrine . . . . It is simply the laissez-faire doctrine of . . . three-quarters of a century ago.” Croly would have agreed with Roosevelt’s comments (though Wilson’s statement was hardly typical of his position), but Wilson’s charges were perhaps uncomfortably close politically to being an accurate representation of The Promise of American Life. Croly probably saw in this campaign that some of his ideas were not as feasible politically as they were convincing in a more complete theoretical presentation.
The outcome of the 1912 election was clear by the last weeks of October. Wilson had successfully portrayed himself as a progressive and indeed had attracted some substantial progressive support, especially in Eastern urban areas. Croly's appeal to all progressives to become Progressives was heeded by too few voters. Wilson had also gained the support of organized labor, in fact distorting the Progressive position as opposed to the right to organize, despite Roosevelt's protestations to the contrary. Most important, Wilson held his party together, and while he didn't win by a majority of the popular vote, he had a healthy plurality and a large majority in the Electoral College, as well as a Democratic Congress.

Croly's own reaction to the election is not recorded, but he must have been severely disappointed. He must also have been frustrated at the degree to which his ideas had been distorted in the political arena. Roosevelt had spoken for regulation, but the New Nationalism as preached on the stump had been quite different from the New Nationalism of Croly's book. Wilson's attacks on monopolies and paternalism had also been clever political distortions of the Progressive position. Of course, if Croly could have seen how the Wilson administration would develop, he might have been encouraged by the new president's acceptance of the need to "regulate competition." As Thomas McGraw has argued, this statement "did not reflect a coherent strategy or a detailed program." Nevertheless, it was an opening, and in 1914 Wilson developed it into a proposal for a Federal Trade Commission. Perhaps the Progressive insistence on a regulatory commission was ultimately to bear fruit, but that result lay in the future.

Croly's own immediate future lay in writing. After the election, Roosevelt offered Croly a position in the new Progressive party offices, but Croly refused. We don't have Croly's letter, but Roosevelt's response admitted that Croly's writing "will have more weight if you are not an officer of the Progressive Party." Croly soon moved to Washington for the winter of 1913 and took up the work that became *Progressive Democracy*.

*Progressive Democracy* is quite a different book from *The Promise of American Life*. It strongly reflects Croly's participation in progressive politics, and while the book treats both theoretical and policy issues, it often emphasizes the latter, whereas *The Promise* had been more strongly theoretical. As *Progressive Democracy* was clearly meant to speak directly to the progressive movement, and even for the Progressive party, it is appropriate to begin with Croly's partisan positions and then consider the theory and the policy recommendations that flow from the theory.
Croly begins with the assertion that since the 1912 election, "a movement of public opinion, which believes itself to be and calls itself essentially progressive, has become the dominant formative influence in American political life." Even as late as 1904, when Mark Hanna died, "standpattism" was in control, but in the intervening ten years progressivism has become a systematic and "self-conscious" force that has gone well beyond such "superseded reform movements" as populism. Progressivism has shown that America can still renew herself: "Progressivism testifies and insists that the national will . . . has not been enfeebled." In short, Croly is most optimistic about the potential of the progressive movement.

The initial success of the movement was due largely to Theodore Roosevelt: "More than any other single leader, Theodore Roosevelt contributed decisively to the combination of political with social reform and to the building up of a body of national public opinion behind the combination. Under his leadership as President, reform began to assume the characteristics, if not the name, of progressivism." That initial impetus has been continued by the Progressive party, which "has done more to make the progressive idea count at its proper value in American public opinion, and to make possible the realization of a certain portion of the progressive program, than has any other agency of progressive expression." The Progressive party has thus been the most full expression of the movement, which "needed a partisan organization whose dominant purpose was the advancement of progressive policies." Croly even argues that the creation of the Progressive party has forced the Democrats leftward and has strengthened the progressive cause within Wilson's party.

Croly's opinion of Wilson was ambiguous in 1914 and in fact seems to change in the course of the writing. Early in Progressive Democracy, Croly calls Wilson "sincere" in his progressivism but charges that Wilson has tried to keep his commitment vague. He also supports Roosevelt's campaign charge that Wilson's statements are laissez-faire theory warmed over. Continuing his earlier emphasis on the need for a collective purpose, but now increasingly using "social" rather than "national," Croly wrote: "Not a word that President Wilson uttered during or since the campaign indicated any tendency on his part to substitute for an automatic competitive economic regime one in which a conscious social purpose . . . was to play a decisive part. The 'New Freedom' looks in general like a revival of Jeffersonian individualism."

However, later in his analysis, Croly is distinctly more favorable. He terms the Underwood Tariff of 1913 "the only tariff bill of the last seventy years which represented an honest attempt to subordinate special interests to the national economic welfare." Croly also praises Wilson personally as a "wise, firm, yet conciliatory man" (in words he would retract in
However, Croly’s conclusion is still negative. Wilson has been trying to “persuade the American people that the Democracy is peculiarly entitled to be the instrument of progressivism.” Yet he has too often “placed an interpretation on progressivism which associates it with a revival of the old Jeffersonian individualism and expressly distinguishes it from a social democracy.” Croly admits that “in practice the ‘New Freedom’ has approximated in certain respects to the ‘New Nationalism.’” But he is convinced that Wilson’s ties to his party will ultimately limit his success.

Croly did see that if Wilson “succeeds for a sufficiently long time in keeping the leadership of the Democratic progressives without breaking with the Democratic conservatives, he will make the position of the Progressive party extremely precarious. It may fall to pieces.” His point was prophetic, but despite these worries Croly was optimistic about the Progressive party—and with some reason. It should be remembered that in spite of their defeat in 1912, the Progressives had done quite well in many parts of the country in the fall of 1913. For example, they had elected twenty-three legislators in New York as opposed to four in 1912. Croly and many other Progressives were optimistic that such successes would continue.

Croly thus supported the Progressive party in his new book. However, his major purpose in writing Progressive Democracy was to provide a program for the progressive movement as a whole and also to explain the political theory of reform to those not yet committed. In his view, many Americans still clung to outdated conceptions, and they deserved a complete explanation of progressive values. If “progressivism is to be constructive . . . it must be prepared to replace the old order with a new social bond. . . . The new system must provide. . . a new faith, upon the rock of which may be built a better structure of individual and social life.” Croly hoped that the “value of the book” would lie in the “spirit which characterizes the attempt” to define this new program for supporters and potential supporters.

In The Promise, the basis of Croly’s social ideal had been a combination of nationality and democracy. In Progressive Democracy, both of these elements are still present, but they are redefined and the balance between them is altered. Croly has a new understanding of society, and hence of a nation, and he is much more committed to democracy.

Croly still occasionally uses the term “national democracy,” but particularly as his analysis proceeds the “faith” that Croly provides for progressivism is described as a “progressive democratic ideal” or a “pro-
gressive democratic faith."\(^{87}\) Croly's imagery is often heavily religious—even more so than in *The Promise*. For example, the analogy of the nation as a schoolhouse, in which everyone had a role, is now replaced by a Calvinist religious analogy of "individual and social life" as a "journey of a company of pilgrims in the dark over a rough and dangerous country."\(^{88}\) Progressive democracy is the faith that ties these pilgrims together.

However, a closer look at this "pilgrim analogy" reveals a very significant change in Croly's thought. In *The Promise*, he had written of individuals and of their commitment to national democracy. But *Progressive Democracy* emphasizes that the pilgrims often form groups: "Individual pilgrims or groups of individual pilgrims can live spiritually upon the will to realize some specific social program and purpose."\(^{89}\) Thus groups have purposes too, and these can be beneficial to the overall community so long as they don't "allow the competition fundamentally to divide them one from another. Their rivalry [must] be subordinated to a sense of unity derived from their faith in the holiness of the city."\(^{90}\) Thus the faith of progressive democracy "makes not for an indiscriminate fusion, but for a genuinely social union, constituted both by individuals and by those smaller social groups which give direction to so much of individual life."\(^{91}\)

When he moves out of this analogy, Croly addresses this change in his theoretical assumptions quite explicitly. He notes that "one particular school of philosophical idealists had always been attributing, on what were essentially pragmatic grounds, this kind of reality to social combinations. Society was as real to certain of the idealists as were individuals."\(^{92}\) I think Croly is referring here to Josiah Royce and George Herbert Palmer, and particularly to T. H. Green. He is perhaps remembering that in talking of loyalty to communities Royce had argued that humans joined many such communities, not only the nation that Croly had previously emphasized.

However, it is not primarily his idealist training that has brought Croly to a pluralist position. Rather, "it has been reserved for recent social psychologists to give a concrete account of the way social minds are formed."\(^{93}\) Croly has now learned that society is "made up of an innumerable number of smaller societies. Men and women become associated together for the accomplishing of an infinitely large and various number of purposes, and each of these different associations constitutes a society: . . . Every church, every club, every political and military organization, every labor union, every family . . . constitutes a society."\(^{94}\)

Croly was no doubt influenced by reading social psychologists. But his political experiences of the last few years had also convinced him of the importance of groups in American politics. Considering primarily reform groups, Croly noted that "the number of civic societies, voters'
leagues, ballot associations, woman's suffrage unions, single-tax clubs and the like are increasing steadily and are exercising more and more influence upon the political action of their members."94 Indeed, his lengthy consideration of William U'Ren's Oregon program in *Progressive Democracy*, which we will consider in connection with his other policy recommendations, involved Croly in a complex interweaving of group allegiances, executive responsibility, and elements of direct democracy. Thus Croly's views changed because of his reading and reflection about politics, but also because of his involvement with progressive reform and simply because of his observation of changes in American society.

We must remember that at the same time that he accepts pluralism, Croly does not want to abandon the nation. In his view, groups "necessarily seek some form of mutual accommodation and adjustment... Out of these joint responsibilities and common purposes a social ideal gradually emerges. Society comes to be conceived as a whole... into which the different centres of association must be fitted."95

Croly's democratic theory also evolved in very significant ways, for *Progressive Democracy* is much more enthusiastic about democracy than *The Promise* had been. Even Croly's historical analysis (which is less incisive than in the earlier book) now finds democracy to be the single dominant theme of the American nation. For example, Croly now emphasizes New England town meetings ("importance... can scarcely be overestimated") whereas he had previously ignored this tradition of direct democracy.96 Jefferson is not Croly's hero (there are no real heroes in *Progressive Democracy*—even Lincoln is ignored), but the Republicans under Jefferson are praised for accepting the federalist political structure. Croly almost credits Jefferson with fusing democracy and nationalism.97

As in *The Promise*, Croly is convinced that the American people are committed to democracy,98 and it must be a part of the ideal for that reason alone. But where in the earlier book his own sympathies lay with nationality, Croly is now a committed democrat. Indeed, his optimism about democracy was such that Holmes wrote that he was "moved and cheered by your hopefulness," also noting: "I don't care so much for morals as an end as you seem to."99 Holmes was accurate in his understanding both of Croly's optimism and his faith.

In *The Promise*, Croly had tried to develop a theoretically sophisticated understanding of democracy and of the relation to democratic theory of majority rule, equality, and freedom. *Progressive Democracy* does not develop these arguments further. Rather, Croly is content to assert that "democracy does not consist of a devouring popular sovereignty to which all limitations are essentially obnoxious. Many severe limitations are imposed upon it as a condition of its own self-expression."100 At the same
time, there can’t be limitations on the suffrage; everyone must vote: “De-
mocracy is not government by peculiarly qualified people or by a pecu-
liarily qualified part of the people. It is or it should be government in
which the largest possible proportion of the adult citizenship of the coun-
try effectively participate.” These passages point in different directions.
They could be reconciled, but Croly never really resolves them—he sim-
ply assumes that democracy is something close to majority rule, with
some restrictions which he doesn’t spell out.

What is crucial in Croly’s democratic understanding is what is left out
from his previous formulation. In The Promise, Croly had obviously been
uncomfortable with democracy and particularly with the related concept
of equality. While he did endorse a limited understanding of equality, he
emphasized the special role of able individuals within a generally demo-
cratic nation. We even suggested that Croly could be said to hold a theory
of “democratic elitism.” In Progressive Democracy, the emphasis on able
individuals has vanished. There is simply no indication that Croly be-
lieves anyone is more able than anyone else. Croly has thus come to a
very significant acceptance of equality, though without any explicit argu-
ment for or definition of that concept. The theory in essence assumes dem-
cratic principles and virtually assumes a definition of democracy as so
obvious that it doesn’t need explication.

A central question is how this change came about in Croly’s thought.
Since Croly doesn’t signal the change, he doesn’t supply an answer, but
one supposition would be that his reading of other progressives such as
John Dewey would have influenced Croly to a more democratic posi-
tion. Since Croly refers to Dewey in the closing section of Progressive
Democracy, this suggestion is certainly plausible. Croly was also acquaint-
ed with Walter Weyl, who would join him on the New Republic and whose
New Democracy had been published in 1912. Croly could have been influ-
enced to a greater acceptance of democracy by Weyl’s emphasis on de-
mocracy, especially industrial democracy.

My own sense is that Croly primarily accepted democracy because he
was so optimistic about progressivism and about the popular support that
he saw growing for progressive reform. He assumed that Americans were
committed forever to the progressive faith, and he in turn committed to a
conception of a pluralist, democratic state. He might also have reflected
that a Woodrow Wilson would have a harder time attacking this new
message than the elitism of The Promise!

Six years later, when he reflected on the progressive movement with
a hindsight born of a war and its attendant experiences, Croly ruefully
remarked that he and all progressives had been incredibly optimistic not
to worry about the danger posed by the state. But, of course, he had
worried about the state—he had insisted that it be democratic. What he really hadn’t worried enough about or thought through fully enough was whether a democratic state needed to be restrained in some form.

Perhaps this charge is not fully accurate, because there are other concepts that we need to examine, the concepts of rights, freedom, and individualism. Croly does not usually link these explicitly to his democratic theory in Progressive Democracy, but they are important both in themselves and in relation to his democratic positions.

We saw that Croly had not emphasized the concept of “rights” in The Promise. While he hadn’t been opposed to personal or even to property rights when limited, this concept was so identified with conservative arguments at the time that Croly did not emphasize it. In another important evolution in his thought, Progressive Democracy is significantly more open to the concept of rights.

This openness can be seen in Croly’s historical analysis, in which he acknowledges that “early American democratic law-givers” were as committed to the conception of individual rights as they were to democracy: “Both the political experience of their own forbears and a radical analysis of the origin and meaning of society demonstrated the existence of certain individual rights as incontestable, indefeasible and inalienable as the right of the people to institute and alter their form of government.” He goes on to admit that “thus the definition and fortification of a bill of civil rights constituted the core of any stable and fruitful system of popular government.” This is essentially an argument that early Americans were both liberal and democratic, a very substantially different historical picture from The Promise.

However, Croly soon returns to an earlier theme. These rights were important, but they became rigid and were made to stand against rather than with democracy. “At this point the inalienable right of the people to institute governments began to conflict with the equally inalienable liberties of the individual. . . . The indefeasible popular political rights were contradicted by the equally indefeasible popular civil rights.” Given this choice, Croly regrets that America too often chose a rigid conception of individual rights, but he certainly does not totally reject the need for rights.

Croly returns to this choice—which is, of course, a central question in much of American political thought—in his discussion of the progressive conception of “popular sovereignty.” Here he identifies rights with “constitutionalism” and again denies that progressive democracy should be totally opposed: “The new assertion of popular political power and
responsibility is not equivalent to the substitution of democratic absolutism for democratic constitutionalism. Constitutionalism necessarily remains; but the constitutions are intrusted frankly to the people instead of the people to the constitutions.” When democracy and rights are pushed to extremes, then, Croly picks democracy—but he would like to hold to both values.

Two more brief points are relevant to Croly’s conception of rights. We saw in The Promise that Croly was not strongly committed to issues of racial or gender equality. This is substantially true also of Progressive Democracy; however, he does write with considerably more fervor about the evils of slavery as a violation of human rights, and he also seems to accept women’s suffrage as imminent. Secondly, Croly specifically endorses the concept of private property and just as specifically calls for its modification. “But to modify is not to eliminate.”

In Progressive Democracy, Croly does not emphasize the concept of freedom as fully as he did in The Promise. An acceptance of negative freedom (which is close to the concept of rights) is implied in several passages. The references to positive freedom are just slightly more extensive. For example, Croly recognizes that economic deprivation limits freedom: “If wage-earners are to become free men, the condition of freedom must somehow be introduced in the wage system itself.” He also writes: “Upon the rich have been conferred the opportunity and the obligation of living; upon the poor, the opportunity and obligation of let-living.” Positive freedom, a full opportunity to live without fear or want, is not available to the poor.

Croly is much more concerned to discuss the related concept of individualism. We saw that in The Promise he had held to a core notion of individualism while attempting to reconcile that concept with nationality and the national democratic ideal. Progressive Democracy continues that commitment to individualism, now in the context of a progressive democratic ideal. The work constantly refers to a “better structure of individual and social life” or “the high ideal of individual and collective life implied by progressive democracy” or the “sacred individual and the sacred community.” Croly thus stresses an “interdependence” between individual and society, but he assures us that “the two ideals cannot become sufficiently interdependent without retaining a large measure of independence.”

I argued previously that Croly’s thought exhibits important continuities with classical liberal theory in part because of this very conscious effort to stress individualism even in the context of a strongly social emphasis. This balance can been seen in Progressive Democracy in a passage that exhibits signs of both John Dewey’s and Josiah Royce’s influence:
"The fulfillment of democratic purposes depends upon the existence of relatively authentic knowledge, the authority of which a free man may accept without any compromise of his freedom. . . . All along the line science is going to demand of faithful and enlightened men an amount of self-subordination which would be intolerable and tyrannical in any but a self-governing community." A core emphasis on individual choice ("free man may accept") is evident in this passage, combined with intimations of positive freedom in the sense of fulfillment within a moral community based on truth ("science").

Croly's theory in Progressive Democracy thus exhibits a series of balances or reconciliations—between pluralism and the nation, between democracy and rights, and between individualism and a moral community. It seems as if Croly is very conscious of the evolution of his thought from The Promise in several important respects. Progressive Democracy is more democratic, more pluralist, more accepting of individual rights. But Croly is also unwilling or unable to settle into a new and more fully consistent theoretical formulation. Just as progressivism was exhibiting a range of new, exciting political possibilities, Croly’s Progressive Democracy shows a range of theoretical directions, all of which are carefully balanced, but none fully selected.

To these balances, we can add another and perhaps even more difficult balance, that between pragmatism and religious conviction. Croly’s approach is very consciously and explicitly pragmatic. For example, he writes that “any specific formulations of social law [have] a merely temporary and instrumental value. They have their use for a while and under certain conditions. . . . In this sense democracy is necessarily . . . allied to pragmatism.” The “immediate program” of progressive democracy “must be continually reformed and readjusted as a result of the experience gained by its experimental application.”

At the same time that Croly advocates an experimental approach, he argues from an explicitly Christian point of view, and relies heavily on the concept of human brotherhood, as he had in The Promise. Croly's religious convictions are evident throughout the work, but especially in the concluding chapter. Here Croly argues that "the progressive democratic faith, like the faith of St. Paul, finds its consummation in a love which is . . . at bottom a spiritual expression of the mystical unity of human nature." This progressive faith "cannot be imposed upon reluctant democracies." But if the faith is once accepted, human nature will be transformed. Croly describes this transformation in his last paragraph: humans "will live in an atmosphere of restless and relentless curiosity the object of which will be the knowledge of others and of one's self." The new "social culture . . . might make every woman into something of a novelist and every
man into something of a playwright. ... A society of this kind could put up with almost anything but shirking and shamming. It would be bathed in eager, good-humored and tireless criticism, and the bath would purify as well as cleanse."122 This is a utopian picture of a progressive heaven on earth.

I think the grounds of Croly's reconciliation between pragmatism and religion are clear in his comment that "The goal is sacred. The program is fluid."123 Croly's goal in *Progressive Democracy* was "human regeneration" as he so often put it, and this was fixed, if indefinite. The program was progressive democracy, and this was experimental. Thus Croly could now embrace democracy and reject elitism; he could resurrect rights and adopt pluralism. These were important parts of the pragmatic progressive program, but they were ultimately less significant than human brotherhood.

**Croly's Policy** recommendations are more straightforward, but their relation to his theoretical positions is evident. Many of these recommendations are similar to those in *The Promise*. For example, Croly still emphasizes the need for national action: "Progressive Democracy will need and will value the state governments; but they will be needed and valued ... as parts of an essentially national system."124 Government at all levels must be willing to act: "A positive comprehensive social policy implies a strong, efficient and responsible government."125

Croly also continues to rely heavily on the bureaucracy. The "large volume of progressive social legislation" inevitably requires bureaucratic support.126 But this bureaucracy is now experimental—it is actively engaged in pragmatic programs of social improvement. Croly gives us a striking image of a modern bureaucracy as opposed to the more conservative picture of the courts:

In the past, common-law justice has been appropriately symbolized as a statuesque lady with a bandage over her eyes and a scale in her fair hands. The figurative representation of social justice would be a different kind of woman equipped with a different collection of instruments. Instead of having her eyes blindfolded, she would wear perched upon her nose a most searching and forbidding pair of spectacles, one which combined the vision of a microscope, a telescope, and a photographic camera. Instead of holding scales in her hand, she ... would have a hoe with which to cultivate the social garden, a watering-pot with which to refresh it, a barometer with which to measure the pressure of the social air, and the indispensable type-
writer and filing cabinet with which to record the behavior of society; and be assured that our lady would be very much happier. . . . For having within her the heart of a mother and the passion for taking sides, she has disliked the inhuman and mechanical task of holding a balance between verbal weights and measures, the real and full value of which she was not permitted to investigate.\textsuperscript{127}

This is the picture of an active, committed government, relying heavily on social scientists to run key parts of the system. Indeed, in what was an infelicitous phrase in 1914, Croly referred to the governmental bureaucracy as a "general staff for a modern progressive democratic state."\textsuperscript{128}

Croly is aware that bureaucrats can fail to meet these goals. A bureaucrat can fall into a "routine" and avoid responsibility, or can become "obsessed with his own official importance and [attach] a kind of infallibility to . . . his own judgment. . . . As a matter of fact, many officials succeed both in being the victims of routine and of acting on occasions most arbitrarily."\textsuperscript{129} But as he had been in \textit{The Promise}, Croly was (overly) optimistic that in a democratic state, public opinion would prevent administrators from becoming "an agency of oppression."\textsuperscript{130}

Croly's reliance on a bureaucracy had been reflected in his earlier desire to establish a national graduate school of public administration. It was also paralleled by a general emphasis on administrative research in the Progressive party. To further its aims, the party had established the Progressive Service at a December 1912 meeting that both Croly and Walter Weyl attended.\textsuperscript{131} The service included the National Legislative Reference Bureau in New York to aid Progressives to draw up model legislation, with Walter Weyl, Gifford Pinchot, Jane Addams, and Benjamin Lindsey on the directing committee. These services, which were strongly supported by Roosevelt, were active throughout 1913 and part of 1914. Croly thus had a partial model available of what a progressive bureaucracy could do.

In \textit{Progressive Democracy}, Croly was still skeptical about legislatures: "All American legislative bodies, Congress included, have proved wholly incapable of saving themselves from the enervating and disintegrating effect of excessive indulgence in special [interest] legislation."\textsuperscript{132} Croly is also negative about political parties, as he had been in \textit{The Promise}. Parties, he declared, had weakened "administrative independence and efficiency" and "interfered with genuine popular government."\textsuperscript{133}

In another emphasis consistent with his former positions, Croly stressed executive leadership as central for progressive reform. "Executive leadership provides popular opinion with an able and indispensable in-
strument of . . . collective action." As he had been earlier, Croly was convinced that "Progressive democracy needs executive leadership."\(^{134}\)

The major change in Croly’s program between *The Promise* and *Progressive Democracy* concerned direct democracy. Where he had been quite doubtful about, though not totally rejecting of, the initiative, referendum, and recall, Croly now supported these measures much more enthusiastically. This change reflected his new openness to democracy, and it also resulted from his contact with progressive reformers, particularly William U'Ren.

In parts of his analysis, Croly expresses a few lingering doubts.\(^{135}\) If not instituted with the right intentions, direct democracy may “merely become a source of additional confusion and disorganization.” But if done right, it can “bring with it a positive inspiration and genuine social energy.”\(^{136}\) In Croly’s system, direct democracy was particularly important as a control on the executive and the bureaucracy. Americans had traditionally relied on the legislature or parties to control the executive, but these were prey to special interests. Even worse was a reliance on the courts, because they usually defended only property. However, the initiative, referendum, and especially recall would allow the coupling of strong government with effective popular control.\(^{137}\) Croly was optimistic that modern technology and particularly the ease with which people could keep in touch with political events through mass-circulation newspapers (“the active citizenship of the country meets every morning and evening and discusses the affairs of the nation with the newspaper as an impersonal interlocutor”) allowed effective popular control. “Public opinion has a thousand methods of seeking information and obtaining definite and effective expression.”\(^{138}\) We could return to ancient Athens or the New England town meeting: “Pure democracy has again become not merely possible, but natural and appropriate.”\(^{139}\)

When Theodore Roosevelt reviewed *Progressive Democracy* (together with Lippmann’s *Drift and Mastery*, terming both books “impossible to review save in way of calling attention to their excellence”), he singled out Croly’s comments on direct democracy and argued himself that direct democracy offers “not only the best but the only real remedy . . .” for the abuses that progressives were attacking.\(^{140}\) By 1914, even the eastern progressives had become converts to direct democracy.

Croly’s views on direct democracy, executive responsibility, and his pluralism are integrated in the extensive commentary that he provides on William U’Ren’s Oregon proposals. Croly had certainly been influenced by meeting with U’Ren, and he presented this plan in an extremely favorable light in an entire chapter, entitled “Visions of a New State.”\(^{141}\) In the
Oregon proposals, the governor would have been greatly strengthened "as chief of the state administration." Most important, "all appropriation bills must be introduced by him. He and his cabinet prepare the state budget and submit it to the legislature very much as does the English ministry." This plan was very similar in principle to Croly's own views on the executive—indeed, one wonders if U'Ren had been somewhat influenced by Croly.

The most radical aspect of U'Ren's plan was a dramatic reorganization of the legislature. No longer would it be organized by parties. Rather a proportional voting system (Croly is inexact on the details) would encourage the direct representation of interest groups: "If the labor unionists could command one-twelfth of the votes, they could elect one-twelfth of the assemblymen; if farmers constituted two-fifths of the population, they could . . . command a corresponding minority in the assembly." Croly thought this form of representation would normally consist of "the fundamental economic and social classes in the community, such as organized labor, business men, the learned professions, and the like," but any group that felt strongly about a cause could seek representation. U'Ren was trying to build Arthur Bentley's groups directly into the legislature, bypassing the existing party system entirely, but the system also has echoes of a Hegelian state, with strong executive leadership and the various social groups integrated into the national whole.

Croly pronounced that U'Ren's system was optimally democratic. The executive would represent the "prevailing majority," while the legislature now would speak for "minor phases of public opinion." The initiative, referendum, and recall then would represent the ultimate popular sovereignty in the system.

Croly did admit that the initiative and referendum could be dangerous when few people voted. He also saw that gaining popular support for such radical changes would not be easy. Indeed, Oregon voters had twice "emphatically repudiated" parts of the U'Ren plan. But Croly's judgment was that U'Ren had shown a "disinterested preoccupation with the welfare of the American democracy," and that the plan was a model for wider consideration.

As we have seen, Croly was skeptical about the courts. He even praised Thomas Jefferson for seeing that John Marshall had usurped power, and he condemned later leaders for assenting to this judicial supremacy. Croly did think that the courts were becoming slightly more hesitant to overrule legislatures, as indeed they were (briefly) after *Muller v. Oregon* (208 U.S. 412; 1908), with its famous "Brandeis Brief." "The police power is being emancipated from the restrictions under which it has until recently been exercised." Croly was hopeful that such judicial self-
restraint on property rights would continue. However, he strongly urged that Article V of the Constitution, the process of amendment, be greatly liberalized to “make the Constitution alterable at the demand and according to the dictates of a preponderant prevailing public opinion.” He did not worry that individual rights would thus be endangered: Croly’s commitment to democracy over-ruled such concerns in this height of progressive optimism.

It is ironic that Croly does not devote much attention to the issue of government regulation of business in Progressive Democracy. The fame of The Promise probably rested more on this than any other issue, and in 1912 Croly had been trying to answer Brandeis’s arguments for competition. But here Croly really does not deal with the specific topic of regulation at all.

He does write about more general trends in economics, perhaps seeking to place the regulation issue in a more inclusive theory. He argued that business was rapidly changing: “industrial pioneers” were being replaced by a “scientific management” that was very similar to a public bureaucracy. Indeed, “the successful conduct of both public and private business is becoming more and more a matter of expert administration. Both are coming to meet on the same plane of scientific method and social responsibility.” Social science would thus serve to rationalize business just as it was rationalizing government. Indeed, Croly’s argument presages Franklin D. Roosevelt’s comment that “the day of enlightened administration has come.”

Croly’s was basically an optimistic picture of a socially responsible business community, but he saw that many businessmen would not behave responsibly, and many workers would not take kindly to the increased regimentation of modern methods: “Scientific management is an exacting master. The workers are required to submit to an amount and degree of regimentation not dissimilar to that required of an army.” The solution was to marry scientific management to increased worker control in a “self-governing work-shop.” Workers should not continue as “dependents,” but as they are “made jointly responsible . . . for the success of their work, they may be converted to scientific management.” These would be “self-governing communities” whose increased efficiency would, Croly was confident, compare favorably to the old “business autocracies.” Industrial democracy would be allied to progressive democracy.

Croly argued that unions were an essential part of this process. Workers could not be left to face employers on their own. Indeed, workers
would need to become very conscious of their interests in the pluralist state. However, if they expressed a “class ideal” in the short run, in the longer run everyone must realize that it was only in a “genuinely democratic industrial system” with cooperation among all sectors that true “individual and social fulfillment” could result. “Progressive democrats of all classes” needed to work out this industrial “self-government.” Indeed, in words that Jane Croly would have been proud of, Herbert Croly even argued that modern democracy “is proposing not only to emancipate the workers from dependence upon the property owners, but it is proposing to emancipate women from economic dependence on men.”

Croly’s previous economic theory of The Promise has been read with two different emphases. Regulation could mean significant restriction on business; or it could mean a rationalization of the business climate ultimately in business’s favor. The same is true of Croly’s emphasis on “scientific management” in Progressive Democracy. We could emphasize the degree to which business would have to share power and profits with its workers; or we could view Croly’s plan as an attempt to bribe workers to accept a corporate efficiency in which they would gain a little but the owners would gain a lot.

I think that the interpretation of The Promise that views regulation as pro-business pays too little attention to Croly’s long-run proposals. Similarly, in Progressive Democracy, it must be clear that Croly had a long-run goal of a gradual equalization of economic position. He was well aware that the current economic system embodied severe inequalities of wealth, and for that reason, Brandeis’s rhetoric about believing in private property and yet insisting “upon the rule of special privileges for none” was a “flagrant self-contradiction.” Croly was himself not willing to abolish private property, and so these inequalities would continue. However, a progressive democracy must “seek to revise the distribution of privileges in the interest of those classes, if any, which are at present economically disenfranchised.” Society had to intervene in favor of the workers and other disadvantaged groups. Croly does not give any further specifics, but the implications of the policy are, I think, more radical than conservative. At the same time, it is clear that Croly is also in favor of increased productive capacity, organized by a technological bureaucracy, and put at the service of the nation. Once again, we see a “balance” in Croly’s thought in which very different emphases are held in suspension.

Such was Croly’s description of what he now explicitly termed a “new and more liberal progressivism.” Progressive Democracy was an attempt to reconstruct his political theory and its attendant policy recommendations in light of the advances of the progressive movement. The book was, I think, less strong theoretically than The Promise. This historical