Shaping Modern Liberalism

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Published by University Press of Kansas

Stettner, Edward A.
Shaping Modern Liberalism: Herbert Croly and Progressive Thought.

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analysis was less clear, and the logic less incisive. *Progressive Democracy* was originally delivered as lectures, and Croly was writing with the immediate political aim of supporting the progressive movement and particularly the Progressive party. Croly may thus have had less time to think his arguments through.

On the other hand, *Progressive Democracy* shows some very important changes in Croly's thought. The reliance on an elite of the able is now greatly diminished. In its place, Croly has accepted a democratic pluralism and the theory of direct democracy as a control over a strong executive. He has also become much more enthusiastic about individual rights. And he has explicitly endorsed the philosophy of pragmatism as a basis of social policy-making. In his analysis, Croly attempts to integrate these new elements into his previous theoretical assumptions. In the text, this integration is sometimes explicit, but it is sometimes only assumed. In the flush of progressive political optimism, and his own increasing reliance on human "brotherhood," Croly was perhaps hopeful that any theoretical problems could be overcome in practice.

*Progressive Democracy* was published in October 1914 in the face of two events that immediately cast doubt on Croly's analysis. One event was World War I, which had begun two months previously. After having written at some length on foreign affairs in *The Promise*, Croly had totally ignored the subject in *Progressive Democracy*. The second event that questioned his analysis was the poor showing the following month of the new Progressive party in the 1914 elections. This electoral defeat did not mean the end of the progressive movement as a whole, but it did mean that Croly's optimistic scenario would need revision and that his own partisan commitments would be shaken.

Fortunately, Croly had a vehicle at hand to deal with these developments. For the past year—since the summer of 1913—even as he was finishing *Progressive Democracy* Croly was preparing a new weekly magazine, a "journal of opinion," to argue the progressive cause. The first issue of the *New Republic* appeared the month after *Progressive Democracy* was published.
Domestic Liberalism in a “New Republic”

The New Republic’s birth actually took more than two years. It began to take shape off the coast of Asia, in January 1912, when Willard and Dorothy Straight took turns reading The Promise of American Life to one another on board the liner Gouvenor Jaschke. Willard Straight was a Cornell graduate who had worked for several years in various capacities in China—as a correspondent, a U.S. diplomat, and most important, as the negotiator for a group of American businessmen seeking opportunities in China. He also served as an adviser to J. P. Morgan in Asia. Willard Straight was a self-confessed imperialist and also a devoted supporter of Theodore Roosevelt. Dorothy Whitney Straight was the wealthy daughter of the late William C. Whitney, financier and secretary of the navy under Grover Cleveland. Dorothy had met Willard in 1906 in New York and again on a trip to China in 1909, and they had married in 1911. There was a connection to Theodore Roosevelt through Dorothy also, as she was a close friend of his daughter, Ethel Derby. Dorothy, like her husband, was committed to progressive causes.

As Dorothy later recalled of The Promise: “The impact on us was terrific. Croly had bowled us both over. We decided we must get to know the author right away.” On their return to the United States some months later, they invited Croly to meet with them to discuss politics generally, and especially to advise Willard on an educational project. Dorothy later recalled that during this discussion, “Herbert Croly told Willard that the real dream of his life was to have a journal of his own to edit. For its subject matter he would like to invite articles by distinguished
writers . . . on all the subjects and ideas, political and other, that needed airing." After a number of meetings, Dorothy and Willard agreed to provide the necessary funding. They continued this support jointly until Willard's death in the influenza epidemic of December 1918; then Dorothy alone covered the journal's deficits until Croly's death in 1930, and indeed well after that. Croly later wrote that the organization of the New Republic implied an unusual act of self-denial on the part of Willard and Dorothy Straight, who furnished the money for its publication. They were to . . . participate in its management only as one member of the group. While they were to be consulted about all important questions . . . they were not, so it was explicitly understood, to possess the power of vetoing the publication of any article which their associates all considered desirable. Of course they could always withdraw their financial support.

Willard and Dorothy apparently respected this agreement, and "the paper" managed to combine financial security with editorial independence.

With financial backing secure, Croly had to recruit a series of associates to staff the journal. One person he turned to was Walter Weyl, whom he knew from Progressive party meetings. Weyl had published The New Democracy in 1912 and was a well-trained economist. As he wrote in his diary: "I received yesterday a letter from Croly. A new paper. Wants me to go on it if it comes out; wants my affiliation at least. I am in entire accord. Meeting to be held with Willard Straight et al—about middle of November."

Croly also turned to Walter Lippmann, who had graduated from Harvard in 1910 and had just published A Preface to Politics. Croly wrote to Learned Hand in December 1913: "I have just been having some long sessions with Lippmann. I have tested him all along the line . . . and he seems always to ring true and sound. I am very happy about him." Two weeks later, Croly further noted that "Lippmann is as you say an interesting mixture of maturity and innocence. The Preface to Politics is an astonishing book for a fellow three years out of College to write; but no matter how he turns out as a political philosopher, he certainly has great possibility as a political journalist."

Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann wrote the bulk of the political pieces in the early issues, but the New Republic was not meant to concentrate only on politics, and Croly asked Philip Littell and Francis Hackett, along with many other contributors, to write on the cultural scene.

Croly also hoped to lure both Learned Hand and Felix Frankfurter
onto the paper. Both refused an editorial connection, but they did provide
Croly with many suggestions and with both anonymous and signed arti-
cles, as well as often joining the weekly meetings of the editorial board.
Both were thus full-fledged "New Republicans" along with the editors
and the Straights.\textsuperscript{13}

The paper attracted a large number of other important contributors.
Randolph Bourne submitted a wide range of articles, and Alvin Johnson
and George Soule (both later to become editors) wrote on economics and
many other issues. Other contributions came from an enormous number
of leading writers, critics, and philosophers, including John Dewey, Amy
Lowell, Rebecca West, Paul Rosenfeld, Lee Simonson, George Santayana,
Harold J. Laski, Graham Wallas, and Morris R. Cohen. It was indeed a
distinguished "paper."

Croly intended that the \textit{New Republic} would be the product of the
weekly editorial meetings, rather than his own creature, and indeed he
was sometimes outvoted in these meetings.\textsuperscript{14} Even so, he clearly played
the single most important role. As Lippmann wrote in 1914, "we are a
board of six editors, and Mr. Croly is the chief."\textsuperscript{15}

Lippmann described the purpose of the journal as follows: "We are
trying to produce a thoroughly American critical weekly, dealing with any
phase of things about which we can find satisfactory articles. The main
thing that we have in mind is the development of a certain critical intellec-
tual temper, rather than the giving of information or the pleading of spe-
cial causes."\textsuperscript{16}

Croly himself had described the purpose of the paper in more polit-
ical terms to Lippmann. He wrote that

The idea is to start a new weekly paper, modelled on the English
Nation and New Statesman. . . . The fundamental object of this paper
would be to give a more vigorous, consistent, comprehensive and
enlightened expression to the progressive principle than that which it
receives from any existing publication. But it would not be the organ
of any party, and it would not tie Progressivism down to any fixed
or narrow creed. It would conceive Progressivism as fundamentally
a human ideal, which under prevailing conditions must receive its
expression through the medium of political and economic democracy,
but which has its attention fastened on human beings and human
values. . . . It would stand . . . for moral freedom, intellectual in-
tegrity, social sympathy, and improved technical methods in all
the practical and fine arts. Its spirit ought to be aggressive, mili-
tant. . . . It would criticize uncompromisingly half-hearted perfor-
mannances, narrow ideas, popular shams, and cheap personalities, and it would try itself to embody a single-minded, whole-hearted and well-balanced liberalism.\textsuperscript{17}

The \textit{New Republic} was thus to speak for progressivism in the broad sense, a progressivism that Croly now began to call also by the name of "liberalism." This liberalism had both immediate political but also ultimate moral objectives. As he wrote several years later of the founding of the journal: "Its liberal philosophy would always be focussed in an immediate practical program which sought the amelioration and the increasing revelation of human life, but which would be flexible, realistic and popularly intelligible."\textsuperscript{18}

The far-reaching purposes that Croly hoped to achieve were made clear to the Straights from the beginning: "I am trying to do a very difficult thing. I am trying to make a radical social and political policy persuasive to an audience which is far less radical. I succeeded in my first book in doing something of the kind."\textsuperscript{19} Croly also stressed the "radical" aspect of the proposed program when writing to invite Randolph Bourne to submit regular contributions: "The idea is in general to start a new journal of political, social, economic, and literary criticism. It will be something like the New Statesman. . . . We shall be radical without being socialist, and our general tendency will be pragmatic rather than doctrinaire. We are [seeking?] to build up a body of public opinion behind a more thoughtful and radical form of progressivism than that which ordinarily passes under that name."\textsuperscript{20}

Croly's description of the program to Learned Hand was somewhat more moderate, especially as concerned the public circular to be sent to potential subscribers: "It does not seem to me wise, in a preliminary announcement, to go too much into detail. If, for instance, I should say that we intended to preach self-government in industry, the nationalization of railroads, a minimum wage, and all the other specific economic and political reforms which will constitute our program, I think we would run the danger of making both illusory friends and unnecessary enemies."\textsuperscript{21}

It thus seems clear that Croly expected to use the \textit{New Republic} to further the arguments that he had developed in \textit{The Promise} and \textit{Progressive Democracy}, not only the short-run arguments, but also his conviction that a substantial reform of American political values was necessary. He was convinced that the progressive movement was a salutary force, but also that it had a long way to go in achieving the necessary political, economic, and intellectual transformation of America.
CROLY'S GOALS in 1914 were lofty, but they proved hard to achieve in prac-
tice. He seems to have expected that he could develop and explicate a
more profound theoretical understanding of progressivism—of a modern
liberalism, as he was beginning to call it—while commenting on immedi­
ate events, even fitting that commentary within his general theoretical
framework. He also clearly expected to concentrate on domestic affairs
and to be able to support a growing Progressive party. In practice, of
course, American attention was focused more and more on World War I
and on the question of possible American participation. In addition, the
Progressives were badly beaten in November 1914, and the survival of the
Progressive party was at issue as the New Republic began publication.
Croly thus faced substantial obstacles in achieving the goals he had set for
himself and his paper.

Croly may have expected to be able to develop his political theory
further in the journal, but for the most part the pressure of commenting on
immediate issues overwhelmed his more theoretical concerns. Croly real­
ized this in late 1918 or 1919, when he began to work separately on a new
book that could explore issues in greater depth than was possible in
the New Republic. (I consider this book, The Breach in Civilization, in chap­
ter eight.)

Pending the opportunity to return to more leisurely writing, Croly in
the New Republic continued to argue a political theory very much like that
of Progressive Democracy in most respects. Of major importance, he re­
mained committed to democracy and did not return to the notions of elite
democracy that had tempted him in The Promise. This commitment to a
popular, progressive democracy is evident in many of Croly's articles and
editorials, such as a 1915 appeal for women's suffrage: "Universal suf­
frage is indispensable to ... political responsibility in a modern social de­
mocracy." Croly goes on to argue for a "really democratic representa­
tive system." 22

Croly also continued, and indeed amplified, the pluralist argument of
Progressive Democracy. In that work he had argued that humans commit
their allegiances to many groups, not just the nation-state that he had
concentrated on in The Promise. Croly now continued to argue against
exclusive state claims on individuals. In perhaps his most theoretical arti­
cle in the war years, "The Future of the State," Croly wrote that "if democ­
racy were confined to an exclusive choice between an indivisible state and
a dismembered society, I would accept the former as the alternative which
probably would allow a larger measure of human development." But,
happily, we are "not confined to such a choice." Rather, a "coherent na­
tional organization must be the reflection not only of independence of
character on the part of individual citizens, but of equally genuine inde-
dependence on the part of those associations which represent its fundamental industrial and social activities." Croly went on to describe the proper situation of such groups in many other articles, arguing, for example, for the legal recognition of trade unions.

The doubts that Croly expressed about the claims of the state in this continued reliance on pluralism were amplified in two areas in which his political theory can be said to change in these years: his growing acceptance of the concept of rights and the traditional (negative) understanding of liberty, and his adoption of the term "liberal" to describe his own philosophy.

We saw that in Progressive Democracy Croly was somewhat more accepting of the concept of "rights" than in The Promise. His writings in the New Republic show a further acceptance of rights although still without a full endorsement. Croly was still held back by his conviction that "abstract" rights could not be philosophically justified. For example, when arguing for women's suffrage he refused to ground the argument on rights: "Any graduate student fresh from the political science department of a contemporary university can triumphantly perform the work of demolition. Abstract rights of any kind have ceased to command very much reverence."

On the other hand, the events about which Croly wrote editorials in these years constantly reminded him of the value of individualism and individual rights and liberties. Three issues in particular seem to have been important. First, the New Republic was concerned to argue for the importance of academic freedom as a particular manifestation of the large principles of freedom of speech and of the press. Among Croly's frequent contributors were John Dewey and Charles A. Beard, both involved in issues of academic freedom and in the formation of the American Association of University Professors to support that principle. In a number of articles and editorials, the New Republic very strongly supported these efforts.

Second, the issue of conscription became important after the United States entered the war. After a slight hesitation, the editors of and contributors to the New Republic (with the signal exception of Randolph Bourne) came to support conscription as a necessity and as a democratic way of raising an army. They were even ambivalent about what exceptions could be made for conscientious objectors. These issues continually raised the question of how far individual consciences could be coerced by the state. By early 1919, the New Republic had come (retrospectively) to a position of strong support for conscientious objection, on grounds of the sanctity of conscience and individual liberties. "If a man's conscience forbids him to serve in war, or to perform any service that even indirectly bears upon
war, we are bound to respect it,” the editors wrote. “Our policy in the matter of conscientious objectors was a stupidity; in execution it was a black disgrace. . . . Let us grant amnesty [to those still in prison]. . . . This is not a radical issue, but an issue as old and as respectable as political liberty.”

The third issue that brought home the importance of traditional freedoms and the Bill of Rights was the issue of censorship during and immediately after the war. As we shall see in reviewing the position of the New Republic on the war, Croly and his associates became increasingly concerned about war hysteria and about various laws, especially the Espionage Act, that allowed government censorship and the denial of mail privileges to “subversive” groups and publications and the prosecution of offenders. This hysteria continued after the war in the “Red Scare” of 1919, and Croly’s New Republic took a very strong stand against it. Commending this stand, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote privately to Croly that “it seemed to me that we so long had enjoyed the advantages protected by bills of rights that we had forgotten—it used sometimes to seem to me that the New Republic had forgotten—that they had had to be fought for and could not be kept unless we were willing to fight for them.” Certainly the need to argue vigorously against censorship made Croly aware of the importance of individual liberties.

These issues thus led Croly and his associates to express increasing doubts about the claims of the nation-state. For example, in late 1917, Croly argued that “the state, by renouncing its absurd claims to impeccability and omnipotence in its relations with its own people” would be more likely to succeed both in negotiating with other states and in providing for human development. Harold J. Laski, who wrote often for the New Republic, argued that there was “something of splendor in a defiant challenge” to authority. Laski claimed that German thought had preached submission to the state, and he called on Germany’s opponents to oppose this view: “Rather let us follow our state where by its rectitude it demands our sympathy. . . . But we must not fail to register our disapproval where we deem its error crime. Our state, then, is to be but doubtfully sovereign.”

This theoretical questioning of the state somewhat parallels Croly’s adoption of the term “liberalism.” As we have seen, Croly rarely (but occasionally) used this word to describe his own theory in his previous work, but he did begin to use it more often as he developed his plans for the New Republic. In the following few years, Croly came to identify himself as explicitly “liberal.” For example, in the summer of 1915 he sought to disentangle “the cause of liberalism” from the war objectives of the allied powers. By the next summer, a New Republic editorial (unsigned
but very similar to Croly's previous language) argued that "American liberalism is seeking a radical transformation of the political and economic structure of the country." By mid-1916, the term "liberal" was in common use in the paper, and Croly clearly now thought of himself as a liberal theorist.

Croly never made it fully clear why he came to use "liberalism" as descriptive of his own theory, after previously having identified the term primarily with classical liberal theory. Perhaps the issues of individual liberty as raised in a war context brought him to change his views enough to think the term now appropriate. Perhaps the defeat of the Progressives suggested the need for a wider theoretical conception than "reform" or "progressivism," his former vocabulary. Or perhaps, as the Laski article suggests, American and British writers set themselves apart from German thought by consciously (or unconsciously) incorporating the traditional English emphasis on liberty into a new political theory. This identification could have been further strengthened in Croly's mind by a series of three articles that George Santayana published in the New Republic in the summer of 1915. Santayana's argument was quite complex, but among other points it counterpoised German conceptions of freedom to English "liberal freedom," which Santayana thought stressed individualism and the "liberty of liberalism." Finally, Croly was very admiring of the British liberal party, and he may have begun to adopt the term "liberalism" in part to show a transatlantic solidarity with the Asquith government. Whatever the reason, by 1916 Herbert Croly was writing an explicitly liberal political theory.

In summary, while the format of a weekly journal, and the pressure of commenting on both domestic and war issues, did not encourage a theoretical perspective, Croly did manage to provide some philosophic distance for his arguments. The theory that he advanced was substantially that of Progressive Democracy, but by 1919 he had come to emphasize important aspects of the classic theory of "negative liberty" (and even "rights") more fully. Croly particularly focused on the importance of political liberties, clearly giving a priority to free speech issues as a necessary element of a progressive political system. At the same time, he divorced these liberties from the laissez-faire arguments for property rights. Croly now considered himself a "liberal" and his journal a vehicle for liberal opinions.

It is clearly beyond the scope of this study to examine all of the domestic policy issues on which the New Republic took a position in these years. However, we can consider in general terms where Croly's journal stood
on political issues, on economic issues, and finally what partisan stands were supported.

The *New Republic*’s positions on domestic policy issues were very similar to Croly’s own previous positions. For example, a number of articles argued for the importance of centralized national power and economic planning. The editors also argued that within the national government it fell to the executive to provide the central leadership. For example, in the very first issue the editors called for an enhancement of presidential power over legislation. Six months later, the editors wrote that “the Presidency has in truth become the great representative agency in the national political system, the vehicle through which the prevailing national will gets itself expressed and the dominant public opinion comes to self-consciousness.” The journal also argued for the augmentation of the power of state governors, just as Croly had previously. The *New Republic* even went so far as to argue that reformers should support “preparedness” as a means of developing a more efficient domestic administration. Conversely, the editors were often critical of the “petty personal and partisan games” that the state legislatures and especially Congress played. They also argued that the states by and large were unable to deal with the exigencies of modern society.

Many positions taken by the journal reflected Croly’s suspicion in *Progressive Democracy* of political parties and his support of direct democracy and state administrative reorganization. For example, an editorial note in early 1915 claimed that “the American two-party system is intimately associated with fundamental defects in the traditional American political organization” and argued that parties were the “necessary enemy of direct popular political responsibility.” A note the previous week also called for easing the process of amending the Constitution, in line with Croly’s previous views.

The paper also gave extensive coverage to the results of initiatives, referenda, and recalls. For example, a special insert was prepared by Robert E. Cushman for the March 6, 1915, edition, analyzing the 1914 results (in which California alone had 48 referendum questions). The editorial introduction to this insert was extremely supportive of these progressive principles. Another special supplement, written by Charles A. Beard, reviewed the changes that had been effected in state constitutions and administrative policies during the progressive years. Beard specifically cited Croly’s books as important influences on these developments. In short, many of the positions taken by the *New Republic* were drawn quite directly from Croly’s previous writings. The best summary example is the conclusion of an article on parties in the second issue: “The American democracy will not continue to need the two-party system to intermediate
between the popular will and the governmental machinery. By means of executive leadership, expert administrative independence and direct legislation, it will gradually create a new governmental machinery which will be born with the impulse to destroy the two-party system, and will itself be thoroughly and flexibly representative of the underlying purposes and needs of a more social democracy.46

Among the other important issues the journal supported were three important liberal causes: birth control, anti-lynching pressure, and the nomination of Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court. The New Republic argued for birth control as both a "social question of the first magnitude" and a matter of personal privacy.47 Croly thus expanded his concern for personal liberty beyond strictly political liberties to a wider vision of individual liberty. The journal also argued very strongly against lynching,48 though less obviously for "negro rights" generally.49 Perhaps most important, the paper strongly supported Wilson's 1916 nomination of Louis Brandeis. The editors returned to this issue week after week as confirmation was delayed, effectively showing that much of the Boston opposition to Brandeis came from a small group of Brahmins who had been hurt by his many principled stands in previous years.50 In short, despite the increasing demands of the war, the early years of the New Republic evidenced a full domestic agenda and a strong commitment to liberal causes.

Major parts of the Wilson administration's most important economic legislation were passed in the hiatus between Croly's writing of Progressive Democracy and the first edition of the New Republic. In his book, Croly had praised the Underwood tariff, which was passed in October 1913, but Croly hadn't dealt with the three other major laws of Wilson's early years, the Clayton Act, the act establishing the Federal Trade Commission, and the Federal Reserve Act.

The Clayton bill was introduced in the spring of 1914, originally detailing a long list of illegal trade practices. The FTC originated in a bill filed by Rep. James J. Covington that would have created a weak "sunshine commission," which could have conducted investigations of business practices but would have little power. Both bills passed the House of Representatives in June 1914.51

At this point, many businessmen objected to the attempt in the Clayton bill to fine various business practices; conversely, the trade commission bill was popular. Wilson was therefore open to suggestions to amend the legislation, and the most important of these came from George Rublee, the former Progressive (and Cornish neighbor) whom Croly had tried to bring onto the New Republic. Rublee wrote a new bill that provided for a
much stronger trade commission, indeed, one close to Roosevelt's New Nationalism stands of 1912. At first the Democratic House voted this down, but Rublee was able to convince Brandeis to change his long-standing views on this issue and support a strengthening of the FTC bill in a major reversal of policy. Wilson then agreed with Rublee and Brandeis, and provided the political clout to pass the FTC legislation in September 1914. The act provided for a commission of five members with what seemed like reasonable power to regulate corporate behavior.

After the FTC legislation passed, the Clayton bill was further weakened and eventually passed in October 1914. In effect, it did not materially change antitrust policy from the earlier Sherman Act, but the provision of the act exempting organized labor from antitrust prosecution (with some exceptions) was important.

The passage of the Federal Reserve Act was even more complicated. It was clear even before Wilson was inaugurated that changes were necessary in the banking system, but there was considerable disagreement within Wilson's administration and the Democratic Congress as to the degree of national control that was desirable. Nearly a year elapsed before Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act in December 1913. The act balanced private and public control and regional and national functions, but in total it was a major innovation in the nation's economy and in Arthur Link's view was the "greatest single piece of constructive legislation of the Wilson era."

The reaction to these developments in Croly's new journal was quite positive. In the first issue, Wilson's achievements were praised: "During this [1914] campaign the Democrats made much of their legislative record, of which they could be justifiably proud. . . . Their Federal Reserve Act brought about a desirable centralization of the banking resources of the country. . . . The anti-trust legislation also proved to be better than the preliminary advertisements prophesied. The Trade Commission Act has fastened upon an administrative body an immediate responsibility for preventing unfair competitive methods." However, the editorial went right on to argue that Wilson's allegiance to his party had weakened the progressivism of these measures, and that much more was needed. "The work of a sincerely progressive democracy has only begun. The legislation passed by the Democratic party has not made any impression upon the more serious and difficult social and industrial problems of contemporary America. . . . Nothing of any importance has as yet been accomplished to bestow freedom and peace on the American nation."

Croly strengthened his criticisms two weeks later after Wilson had written a letter to Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo stating
that the administration had now righted most of the fundamental problems of the country.\textsuperscript{57} Obviously afraid that this meant Wilson would not push for further change, Croly attacked: “President Wilson could not have written his letter unless he had utterly misconceived the meaning and task of American progressivism. . . . Mr. Wilson’s sincerity is above suspicion, but he is a dangerous and unsound thinker upon contemporary political and social problems.”\textsuperscript{58}

However, in early January 1915, the \textit{New Republic} waxed more positive again, particularly praising the FTC and pointing out how much Wilson had changed his position: “The Trade Commission act represents a totally different approach [than the Sherman Act], a spirit strangely contradictory to the campaign theories of the President. . . . In this Trade Commission act is contained the possibility of a radical reversal of many American notions about trusts, legislative power, and legal procedure. It may amount to historic political and constitutional reform.”\textsuperscript{59}

In the following months, the editors spelled out their own more advanced economic program. They argued for a strengthening of unions beyond the recognition of the Clayton Act and indeed for government discrimination in their favor.\textsuperscript{60} They wanted programs created to give work to the unemployed, arguing that not even the meanest laissez-faire theorists could oppose government action in this area.\textsuperscript{61} They came out even more strongly for the nationalization of the railroads, as Croly had promised they would: “The nationalizing of the railroads has a chance of converting them into genuine agencies of the national economic interest.”\textsuperscript{62} And they praised administrative agencies such as the Children’s Bureau as “progressively useful agent[s] of a rising civilization.”\textsuperscript{63}

Wilson’s administration did continue to develop its domestic legislative agenda, particularly in the spring and summer of 1916. Among the important acts passed were the Kern-McGillicuddy Act, which provided workmen’s compensation for federal employees, and the Keating-Owen Act, prohibiting products of child labor in interstate commerce.\textsuperscript{64} These bills were passed by Congress under presidential pressure quite obviously to gain progressive support in Wilson’s re-election campaign. Also important was the Adamson Act legislating the eight hour day on the railroads.\textsuperscript{65}

These laws were important and certainly controverted Croly’s fears that Wilson’s party allegiances would hold him back from adopting progressive measures. Even so, Croly was not easily satisfied. Amid a few compliments, the \textit{New Republic} kept up a steady barrage of criticism. The editors found fault with the “quality of Mr. Wilson’s thinking,”\textsuperscript{66} and particularly criticized him for not raising administrative standards.\textsuperscript{67} Still, Wilson’s passage of so much legislation that, if not perfect, was neverthe-
less distinctly progressive brought the editors to a dramatic political choice: the possibility that the New Republic might endorse a Democrat in 1916.

This decision was an agonizing one for Croly. His policies on domestic political and economic issues in the New Republic had been remarkably consistent with his previous positions. But his partisan allegiances could not be similarly consistent, as the political world had changed dramatically since 1914.

We should recall that in Progressive Democracy Croly had still preferred Roosevelt to Wilson. That preference was shared by most of the other editors and particularly by the Straights, who were personally close to Roosevelt. It was reflected in the positions taken by the paper in its first months. Thus the editors praised Roosevelt’s forthrightness on the war in the second issue. In the spring of 1915, they continued public support, declaring that Roosevelt was “the man above all others who has carried new thought into the common consciousness,” though they also noted that “he is not as progressive as the best thought of this country....”

However, this public support (even if somewhat qualified) covered an increasing private rift, which had begun in December 1914 with a slight criticism of Roosevelt in the paper. Prior to that the editors had continued to be personally close to T.R. In fact, Croly had been visiting Roosevelt in August when the war had broken out, and Croly and Lippmann had lunched with him at Oyster Bay in November. However, in December Roosevelt had criticized Wilson’s Mexican policy in a way the editors thought unfair and prejudiced, and they said so.

Croly had warned Willard Straight of this comment, noting that along with their usual criticism of Wilson, “I may add that in order to make a good balance we have taken a crack at T.R. this week, basing it upon the article... in which he seems to hit at Mr. Wilson below the belt.” The next week Croly explained further: “The last issue is strong, I think.... Lippmann wrote the criticism of T.R., which was disagreeable but necessary. We had to begin sometime.”

Roosevelt was quite offended and said to Francis Hackett that the paper had been disloyal. Croly responded directly that he indeed had felt a strong sense of loyalty to Roosevelt and was grateful for past favors; however, the New Republic’s “whole future success in life depends upon the impression which it makes upon its readers of being able to think disinterestedly and independently.” Roosevelt replied coldly that there was no obligation either way in their relationship. After that, there were
no more lunches at Oyster Bay, though Roosevelt apparently did try to reconcile briefly with the editors in late 1915.  

These private divisions became increasingly public in 1916. In January, Roosevelt made a long speech which, in the editors' view, was meant to update his entire program in anticipation of a possible Republican or Progressive nomination. In a long article called "The Newer Nationalism," they dissected this program, finding it inadequately framed in terms of foreign policy and particularly inadequate in terms of a progressive domestic policy. Roosevelt was proving himself perhaps more Hamiltonian and less democratic than Croly had thought.

In April, the editors went further, praising many aspects of Roosevelt's policies, but commenting that "surround him with defense leagues, and he will go the militarist one better. Great leader that he is, there are few men so easily led." They concluded that "it is the business of the Progressives [at the upcoming convention] to do something more than nominate Theodore Roosevelt. It is their business to fight for the possession of his soul." No doubt thinking of their own ties, they added that "Mr. Roosevelt demands a kind of loyalty which many who admire him will not give."  

This editorial was ambiguous, leaving open the possibility that the New Republic might support Roosevelt if he ran on the Progressive (or even the Republican) ticket. However, Roosevelt slammed the door on that possibility by refusing the Progressive nomination and urging the remnants of the party to support Hughes, the Republican nominee.

To the editors, the only decent course left was to bury the Progressive party. It had, they wrote, played an important role. "For a while it looked like a serious as well as a gallant political adventure. Unfortunately, like so many other adventurous enterprises, it did not grow up to the necessities and opportunities of its own business." The Progressive platform of 1912 had been a "declaration of middle-class liberalism which sought to accomplish its social program by means of an increase in popular political power and responsibility." However, the party had become overly dependent on Roosevelt: "The soul of the Progressive party was sent to Oyster Bay for safe keeping." And Roosevelt was no longer progressive: his "platform of 1916 as an expression of political and economic radicalism is a joke." The closing sentence of this editorial brought a poignant close to many of Croly's political ideals of the last several years: "The Progressive party is dead, and with it must die the present hope of converting a national party into a faithful agent of progressive political and social ideals."  

The death of the Progressive party left many "homeless radicals"—more than a million, the editors estimated. The Socialist party was unsatisfactory, a "new form of [partisan] orthodoxy." Where could they go?
The editors invited the two major parties to bid for progressive support. As the campaign progressed, Lippmann, Weyl, and most of the other editors gradually endorsed Wilson, while Willard Straight chose Hughes. For Croly the choice was a hard one. There was much that was attractive about Wilson, and in a long editorial in late June, he stated the case for Wilson in very familiar terms:

In Mr. Wilson's present program there is scarcely a shred left of the fabric of his Jeffersonian revival. With every development of his policy he has been approximating to the spirit and creed of a Hamiltonian nationalist. Our own opinion of Mr. Wilson as a statesman has improved just in proportion as the indiscriminate and irresponsible individualism of his earlier views has yielded to a preference for responsible nationalistic organization. He is a wiser and safer political leader to-day than he was four years ago—one who has a better claim on the support of intelligent liberals.

However, Croly still harbored doubts, and it was not until mid-October, after a series of ambivalent editorials, that Croly finally printed a personal endorsement: "I shall vote for the reelection of President Wilson . . . chiefly because he has succeeded, at least for the time being, in transforming the Democracy into the more promising of the two major party organizations. To be entirely frank, the decision has been reached reluctantly and only after prolonged hesitation." This was hardly a ringing endorsement! Still, after weighing many factors, Croly had decided that "Mr. Wilson and the Democratic party have begun to perform that work of national reconstruction which the Progressive party declared indispensable to the welfare of the commonwealth. They have been adapting the political and economic organization of the country to its more pressing needs and to its better ideals. They have not gone very far, but they have at least started to fasten on the popular consciousness a new and better meaning for the American idea."

The election of 1916 essentially marked the end of progressive reform, as the war became even more dominant an issue when American entry became imminent in early 1917. What, then, was Croly’s opinion of what had been accomplished? Just before the election, the New Republic emphasized an essential continuity between Roosevelt and Wilson in the cause of progressive reform. Admitting that neither leader would have appreciated the analysis, the editors wrote that Roosevelt’s "indefatigable initiative and his exceptional gifts as an agitator were devoted to concentrating public opinion on the all-important task of democratizing the political system of the country and socializing its economic system." After
the Taft years, Wilson had again taken up the cause "and did more in four years to incorporate progressive principles into the national economic system than his predecessors had accomplished in twelve. . . . His work in this respect is clearly a continuation, if not a consummation, of that begun by Mr. Roosevelt. . . . Mr. Wilson wrote into law the connection between a progressive policy and national unity." 87 These phrases evoke the arguments of both of Croly’s books, and we may conclude that Croly thought that many of his political values had been realized by 1916.

That would be to misunderstand Croly’s thought. The Roosevelt-Wilson achievements were important, but they were only a start toward a really substantive reform program, as he often argued. Wilson may have achieved some of Croly’s short-term proposals for regulating the economy, but the long-run transformations remained unattempted. In a speech that Croly gave at a meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science earlier in the year, he had remarked that “the most conspicuous aspect of the progressive movement during the past fifteen years has been the contrast between the enormous effort and the meagre results.” 88 For Croly the idealist, much more was needed.

Of course, Croly could have applied much the same criticism to his own “paper.” Croly had managed to articulate a program consistent with his previous theoretical writings, but he hadn’t been able to advance that theory very much. The increased concern for individual liberty was an important point, further affirming Croly’s intellectual descent from classical liberty theory. But beyond that point, it had proven very difficult to pick a fully coherent route through the maze of political issues that demanded the editors’ attention. Still, Croly was hopeful that liberalism could be further clarified in theory and further embodied in public policy in a second Wilson administration. Unfortunately, as in later reform eras, the specter of war intervened, and when the war was over, America had become a very different society, much less receptive to liberal political theory.