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Abstract

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Keywords

German-Americans, progressive, progressivism, immigration, reform

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Comments

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Political Loyalties, Immigrant Traditions, and Reform: The Wisconsin German-American Press and Progressivism, 1909 - 1912

by Gerd Korman

Progressive leaders held that German-Americans supported them in their bid for national power. This author takes a look at the other side, at the terms of the German-Americans themselves, and finds—quite another story.

Four years after the election of 1912 Theodore Roosevelt maintained that many German-Americans had rallied to the bellow of the Bull Moose because they better understood than did native Americans the social welfare reforms advocated by the Progressive party.¹ If the views of Wisconsin's German-American editors² are typical of the views of most German-Americans,³ Roosevelt was right in assuming that the accomplishments of Bismarckian Ger-

many helped German-Americans to endorse the social welfare proposals of his party. But, he did not realize to what extent American conditions had permeated German-Americanism; he did not understand the desire of German-Americans for a stable political system; he did not comprehend the complexity of the ingredients making up German-Americanism. Wisconsin's German-American editors did not commit themselves to progressivism. They reacted to the progressive movement on their own terms, not on Roosevelt's terms or on those of any other progressive.⁴

On the one hand, the economic planks of outstanding progressive leaders were generally acceptable to the editors of Wisconsin's German-American press.⁵ Robert M. La Follette asked for an amendment to the Constitution making possible a federal income tax law, employer's liability laws, and progressive labor legislation, including collective bargaining rights for labor, more effective anti-trust leg-

¹Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* (Madison, 1946), 320.

²This study is based on nine German-language papers published in Wisconsin. They were carefully selected on the basis of 1) political allegiance, 2) circulation, 3) place of publication, and 4) the number of journals owned or controlled by particular publishers. The newspapers selected were the following: Appleton *Gegenwart*, La Crosse *Herold und Volksfreund*, La Crosse *Volksfreund*, Milwaukee *Germania Abendpost*, Sheboygan *National Demokrat*, La Crosse *Nordstern*, Plymouth *Correspondent*, Madison *Wisconsin Botschafter*, Milwaukee *Vorwärts!*. In this article the views of *Vorwärts!* were not included except when the paper was in agreement with the rest of the press. The Social-Democratic *Vorwärts!* was excluded because its frame of reference differed so markedly from non-socialist publications.

³The general proposition that editorial opinion in Wisconsin's German-American press reflected German-American attitudes is, of course, open to serious question. The limited application of this proposition as used in this paper, however, probably has some validity, and for the following reasons: 1) the views of this press on prohibition, women's suffrage, immigration, and supporting candidates of German origin who sought nomination from Democrats and Republicans echoed the sentiments most German-Americans had voiced since the Civil War; 2) after the unifica-

tion of Germany most German-Americans not affiliated with Social-Democracy tended to glorify the accomplishments of Bismarckian Germany; 3) the subject at hand is progressivism, and the Germans of Wisconsin lived in what had been one of the most progressive states in the Union since La Follette had become governor in 1900. If Wisconsin's German-American press gave little evidence of having accepted progressive reforms on progressive terms, it seems unlikely that German-Americans outside Wisconsin accepted these terms.

⁴This also appears to have been true of the nation's German-American press. George Sylvester Viereck, a supporter of the Progressive party, claimed in 1912 that America's German-American press had lost the old German idealism of the "forty-eighters" without replacing it with the spirit of a new America. *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, September 10, 1912. For the change in the social and political views of the German-American press after the unification of Germany see Carl Wittke, *We Who Built America* (New York, 1939), 210-211.

⁵*Nordstern*, October 28, 1910, and May 21, 1912; *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, April 26 and July 12, 15, and 31, 1909; *Herold und Volksfreund*, May 15, 1909; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, August 24, 1909; *La Crosse Volksfreund*, June 5 and 30, 1909; *Gegenwart*, March 18, 1909.

islation, and increased use of co-operatives.⁴ Roosevelt at Armageddon demanded a national income tax, an increase of governmental authority over industrial combinations, conservation of natural resources, and social welfare legislation patterned after Germany's industrial insurance programs.⁵ The extent of the German government's participation in Germany's industrial society was as well known to the editors as it was to the progressives.⁶ They understood the political function of these reforms in a Germany that had a strong socialist movement. They realized, particularly those in Milwaukee, whose papers had to compete with the German and English language organs of the city's aggressive Social-Democratic party, that industrial reforms could weaken the program of American Social-Democracy.⁷ They did not oppose the nationalization of railroads and telegraph systems.⁸ They supported the progressive program of conservation and endorsed some of the labor reforms.⁹ They claimed labor had the right to strike peacefully. They felt that civil courts did not adequately protect the rights of workers. The editors insisted that criminal courts, where guilt had to be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, should have jurisdiction over acts of

violence committed by striking workers.¹² They supported the eight hour day for employees of the federal government, a child welfare law, employer's liability laws, and workmen's compensation laws.¹³

On the other hand, the German-American papers of the state were lukewarm toward the political proposals espoused by such progressive leaders as La Follette, Roosevelt, William Jennings Bryan, and Woodrow Wilson. Granted, the editors supported demands for the direct election of senators, accepted proposals for direct primaries in the nomination of presidential electors, and sometimes even acquiesced in pleas for initiative, referendum, and legislative recall;¹⁴ they scoffed at the notion that the application of tricks in the mechanics of democracy would improve the quality of the electorate. They doubted that specific reforms would improve existing conditions without some harmful effects.¹⁵ The editors wanted a stable political system that did not infringe upon the traditions of the German community. They feared an increase in the power of the majority because such an increase might bring women's suffrage, temperance legislation, immigration restriction, and, possibly, the revival of laws preventing the teaching of German in the schools of their communities. The German-American newspapers simply suspected the man with the gleam in his eye, he who strove for a homogeneous society on his own terms.

Wisconsin's German-American newspapers constituted an old immigrant press in one of America's most progressive states. Most of their readers had come to Wisconsin in the years before 1890.¹⁶ By 1910 they found themselves outnumbered by their own second generation, and the increase in the native pop-

⁴*Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1910, pp. 670-672 and 674-675.

⁵Mowry, *Roosevelt*, 265-266; Theodore Roosevelt, "My Confession of Faith," in George H. Payne, *The Birth of the New Party* (H. E. Rennels, n.p., 1912), 244-245.

⁶Charles McCarthy, in *Wisconsin Botschafter*, June 19, 1912; Roosevelt, "Confession of Faith," 249; Benjamin P. DeWitt, *The Progressive Movement* (New York, 1915), 7.

⁷For a history of Milwaukee's Social-Democratic party see Marvin Wachman, *History of the Social-Democratic Party of Milwaukee 1897-1910* (Urbana, 1945).

⁸*Herold und Volksfreund*, January 20, 1912; *Plymouth Correspondent*, February 17, 1912; *Gegenwart*, September 27, 1910. The *Herold und Volksfreund*, for example, wondered how long it would take "progressive America" to catch up to Germany in the provision of insurance programs to protect workers injured in the pursuit of their occupation.

⁹Ray Stannard Baker, "Will Morganheims Control," in *La Follette's Magazine*, 2:7 (September 3, 1910); Gifford Pinchot, "Conservation and the Cost of Living," in Payne, *Birth of the New Party*, 160-161 and 163; *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1910, p. 674; *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, July 23 and 27, 1909, and September 3, 1910; *La Crosse Volksfreund*, July 14 and 23, 1909, and September 4, 1912; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, August 31, September 14 and 28, and November 2, 1910; *Nordstern*, April 23 and August 6, 1909; *Gegenwart*, August 25, 1910.

¹²*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, July 29, 1909; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, September 14, 1909.

¹³*Ibid.*, August 17 and 31, 1909; *Gegenwart*, August 29, 1910; *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, August 27, 1912.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, June 12, 1912; *National Demokrat*, June 17, 1911; *Herold und Volksfreund*, March 30, 1912; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, April 3, 1912; *La Crosse Volksfreund*, April 3, 1910; *Gegenwart*, August 29, 1910.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, April 25, 1912; *Nordstern*, July 11, 1909; *La Crosse Volksfreund*, May 19 and September 4, 1909; *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, June 5, 1909.

¹⁶Reuben G. Thwaites, "The Foreign-born Population of Wisconsin," in State Historical Society of Wisconsin, *Proceedings*, 1890, p. 57.

ulation and in the immigration from eastern and southern Europe had sharply reduced the proportion of Germans living in the state.¹⁷ The circulation of their leading newspapers in Milwaukee, now, in 1910, was completely overshadowed by that of the English-language press.¹⁸ Symbolically, George Brumder, owner of the Germania publications, died in 1910, shortly after predicting that in five years German dailies would no longer be sold on the streets of Milwaukee.¹⁹ Still, in the years from 1909 to 1912 German-American newspapers flourished in the state. Seventy-nine German journals were published in forty-one cities, towns, and villages. Of the seventy-nine papers thirty-six were published in five places in the state: Milwaukee counted twenty, Appleton and La Crosse five each, and Manitowoc and Sheboygan three each.²⁰ The editors and owners of these publications still maintained their own press club, which met each year to discuss questions and problems that were of interest to its members.²¹

Thus did German-Americanism in Wisconsin have its spokesmen who could and did reflect the similarities and conflicts of interest between its declining identity and the progressive movement. The editors, partly because of their economic stake in it, stressed the use of the German language in the home; some even printed articles insisting that German was the holy language of Lutherans.²² They fought prohibition and women's suffrage, opposed all attempts to restrict immigration, and attacked all those who, they claimed, were tainted with Know-Nothingism. They sympathized with the problems of workers in an industrial society.

¹⁷United States Census, 1910, vol. 3, p. 1082; John A. Hagwood, *The Tragedy of German-America* (New York, 1940), 202.

¹⁸Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee: The History of a City* (Madison, 1948), 265.

¹⁹Interview with George Brumder, Jr., August 18, 1952.

²⁰United States Census, 1910, vol. 3, pp. 1069-1071; *American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia, 1901), 1159.

²¹*Verhandlungen der 28. Jahressitzung Verein der Deutschen Presse von Wisconsin* (1910). For background material on the editors of the German-American press of Wisconsin see Gerd Korman, *Wisconsin's German-American Press and the Progressive Movement*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1953, pp. 6-8, 12-16, and 26-30.

²²*Herold und Volksfreund*, February 17, 1912; *Gegenwart*, April 11 and 25, 1912. See also *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, April 21, 1912.

They took pride in Germany's industrial and economic legislation and wished America would follow these paths of the Fatherland. They distrusted all forms of radicalism and would at best accept only those reforms that brought a moderate change in the political system they held so dear.

Party regularity was at least as important to the editors as was their pride in the accomplishments of the Fatherland. They were either Democrats or Republicans who fought for German-Americanism within the party of their choice.²³ So long as candidates had not been nominated and platforms not written they insisted on adequate representation and the protection of their traditions. Once candidates had been chosen and the platform accepted, loyalty to the party took precedence over most of the interests and social values associated with German-Americanism.

These elements of German-Americanism determined the editorial positions of Wisconsin's German-American press during the political campaigning from 1909 to 1912. These were the editors' reference points, their touchstones, their criteria when they supported particular candidates or endorsed certain views. These elements made up their own particular *Weltanschauung* in the years when progressives made their bid for national power.

Often the German-language papers favored German-American political candidates because of their national origin. In 1910, for example, when the state's Republican party split over Robert M. La Follette's progressivism, the Democratic journals urged Charles Weiss's gubernatorial nomination on the basis of his German extraction.²⁴ The Republican papers asked in that same year for Gustav Kuestermann's re-election to Congress because Kuestermann was a German-American. *Germania* and *Nordstern* told their readers that, for fear Wisconsin might lose its only German repre-

²³During the election of 1910 the Democratic *National Demokrat* and the Republican *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost* demonstrated that the support of German-American candidates was subordinated to party loyalty. They criticized each other for supporting only those German-American candidates who belonged to their respective parties. *National Demokrat*, October 18 and 26, 1910; *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, October 5 and 27, 1910.

²⁴*Herold und Volksfreund*, August 27 and 31 and September 3, 1910; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, August 31, 1910; *National Demokrat*, August 31, 1910.

sentative, "we feel obligated to call upon the German citizens to support their industrious and tested representative in the House."²⁵

There were other instances when national origin was the basis for opposing or supporting a particular candidate. *Nordstern* once exclaimed, "German citizens, vote as you please but vote against the German hater [Charles H.] Rawlinson."²⁶ When the progressive Republican State Central Committee sought to replace Frank C. Tucker as the candidate for attorney general, the *Germania* urged that Philipp Lehner, a German-American, would be an excellent choice. As there were so few German-American candidates in the Republican party Lehner's nomination would help demonstrate that the party acknowledged its debt to the Germans of Wisconsin.²⁷

To German-Americans prohibition had always been a "piece of sumptuary legislation that violated every concept of personal liberty and tolerance."²⁸ During the first decade of the twentieth century, when reformers like William Jennings Bryan and Chase Osborn advocated temperance legislation, the National German-American Alliance fought all attempts to legalize prohibition.²⁹ In 1910 the German Press Association of Wisconsin agreed with the Alliance.³⁰ This feat of prohibition was strong enough for each German-language paper to subordinate its desire for harmony in its party to its anti-prohibitionary position

when it seemed that temperance legislation in the state was about to become a reality. In 1909, for example, when a local-option bill was discussed in the progressive Republican Wisconsin legislature, the Republican *Germania* threatened to work for the overthrow of its party in the event the bill became law.³¹ After the defeat of the bill the *Wisconsin State Journal* maintained that the threat of the German-language daily had killed the measure and speculated as to how many Germans placed the saloon over loyalty to party, home, and church.³² *Germania* replied in a vein that clearly showed it placed the drink question above party allegiance.

"Of course the Germans in Wisconsin do not place the saloon above party, or church and home; church and home have nothing to do with the question at all. The Germans of Wisconsin at all times, however, place the defense of personal liberty and the preservation of the good name of the state above the party."³³

The German-American press strenuously opposed women's suffrage. In 1912, when Wisconsin progressives fought for this measure, the state's German-language papers associated opposition to it with the cause of Germanism. They agreed with the many immigrants who held that a woman belonged in the home.³⁴ They used the arguments of clergymen and the National German-American Alliance and predicted the pollution of home and family if wife and mother became active in politics.³⁵ "We Germans do not consider our women folk inferior to men. We hold women high in our esteem and refuse to see them degrade themselves by participating in the struggle for political power."³⁶ *Germania* stated the case of the German-American press succinctly when it exclaimed:

"Protect your family, your noblest possession. Save your women and daughters from political intrigue! Our German housewives

²⁵*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, August 24, 1910; *Nordstern*, September 2, 1910.

²⁶*Ibid.*, November 4, 1910. Rawlinson was a candidate for county clerk.

²⁷*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, September 24, 1910.

²⁸Wittke, *We Who Built America*, 258.

²⁹Clifton J. Child, *The German-Americans in Politics 1914-1917* (Madison, 1939), 10; box marked "Wisconsin Politics, 1906-1909," in State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

³⁰*Verhandlungen der Deutschen Presse von Wisconsin* (n.p., 1910); Child, *German-Americans in Politics*, 5. The Social-Democratic party of Milwaukee also opposed prohibition. Wachman, *Social Democratic Party of Milwaukee*, 80. The extent of the brewing industry's contribution to the anti-prohibition stand of the state's German-language press is difficult to determine, but see the following for indications of the friendly ties between Gustav Pabst and the press and the brewer's participation in Wisconsin politics: *National Demokrat*, September 14, 1910; Thomas C. Cochran, *Pabst Brewing Company: The History of an American Business* (New York, 1948), 266 and 312; *Milwaukee Journal*, September 19, 1910; *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1910, pp. 613 and 688.

³¹*Wisconsin State Journal*, April 1, 1909.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, April 2, 1909.

³⁴Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Boston, 1952), 218.

³⁵*Herold und Volksfreund*, March 6 and June 1, 1912; *National Demokrat*, February 10, 1912; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, October 18, 1912; *Nordstern*, January 5, 1912; *Gegenwart*, October 21, 1912; *Plymouth Correspondent*, February 28, 1912.

³⁶*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, November 4, 1912.



The German Press Club of Milwaukee about 1900

Left to right, standing: Herman Pabst, Henry J. Stark, George Parker, (unknown), (unknown), Ernst Borchert, Otto Schrach, Frederick Pabst, Gustave Pabst, Bates; seated: Schucht, John S. Pierce, A. C. Morrison, (unknown), Frank Falk, Oscar Mueller, Fred J. Theurer.

do not want the franchise. . . . We want to keep our home, hearth, and family free from political intrigue. . . ."⁵⁷

The immigration question became relevant in shaping the attitudes of Wisconsin German-language journals toward progressives when Woodrow Wilson campaigned for the presidency. In the early months of 1912 the papers, the Democrat's supporting Champ Clark and the Republican's in the role of general opposition, tried to ward off Wilson's nomination largely because of his alleged friendship toward prohibitionists and alleged hostility toward immigrants from eastern and southern Europe.⁵⁸ Through the weeks preceding the convention, when Wilson was clarifying his views on progressive reforms, the papers

hammered on the two points.⁵⁹ The Republican *Germania*, for example, repeatedly told its readers of mass meetings and demonstrations held by Hungarians, Poles, and Italians protesting against Wilson's debasing remarks in his *History of the American People*. Wilson, it charged, simply did not understand the mentality of immigrant communities. The German daily wondered how any Democratic immigrant could support Wilson's nomination;

"Nationalities that have not yet been indicted by the Governor of New Jersey are requested to present themselves so that . . . Wilson may take care of any oversight he may have committed."⁶⁰

PICTURE: from an original photoprint presented by John G. Gregory to the Society's biographical file. The subjects were identified by Mr. Frederick Pabst in 1956.

⁵⁷*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, February 14, March 26, and April 3, 1912; *National Demokrat*, February 28, 1912; *Forwärts!*, March 9, 1912.

⁵⁸*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, March 23, 1912.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House* (Princeton, 1947), 383-385, 387, and 389; William F. McCombe, *Making Woodrow Wilson President* (New York, 1921), 99.

Once it was clear to the editors that the nominated candidates and the platforms of 1910 and 1912 did not threaten German-American interests, party regularity made the journals use the issues of prohibition and immigration on behalf of their respective parties. In the election of 1910, when La Follette fought to retain his seat in the Senate, the Democratic German-language papers did not come to his aid. Ignoring progressive reform measures, they asked German-Americans to vote Democratic because the Democratic platform opposed county option in Wisconsin.⁴¹ The Republican party did not mention the issue in its program and to the Democratic journals this was the significant difference between the two platforms, each of which they labeled progressive.⁴²

Republican papers could not point to any anti-county option plank in their party's platform, but they were quick to deny that a particular progressive Republican candidate whom they supported was a prohibitionist. *Germania*, for example, made certain its readers knew progressive Henry F. Cochems was "right" on the drink question. When Victor Berger, editor of *Vorwärts!* and, in 1910, opponent of Cochems in the Fifth Congressional District, charged that his progressive Republican rival had aided Indiana prohibitionists in 1907, the Republican *Germania* defended Cochems and informed its readers that on checking the facts it had found that the Social-Democrat's claim was not true.⁴³

In 1912, when Wilson received the Democratic presidential nomination, the German-language Democratic papers accepted the choice of their party and insisted that Wilson was "right on prohibition and immigration." They now appeared to believe him when he said that he was not a prohibitionist, and that he favored the exclusion of only such immigrants as had been induced to migrate by agents of steamship companies and other business organizations. Wilson, they declared,

stood for the humane treatment of newcomers, for broadcasting to immigrants correct information when they landed, for protecting the new arrivals from fraud, and for helping them fulfill their expectations in coming to the United States.⁴⁴

The Republican *Germania* actually agreed with Wilson's position on immigration as stated by him during the election campaign.⁴⁵ This, however, was an election. Hence, while Democratic papers accepted the campaign statements at face value, the Republican editor of *Germania* joined *Vorwärts!* in digging up instead the passages on immigrants in the *History of the American People* of many years before to condemn the Democratic candidate. The foreign-born citizens, too, *Germania* claimed, remembered the remarks Wilson had made. They doubted that he was a friend of immigration and immigrants.⁴⁶

Germania and the Republican *Nordstern* took the Democratic papers to task for defending Wilson's views on prohibition. The Democratic journals at this time maintained that German-Americans actually agreed with Wilson. The drink question was a social and moral issue rather than a political one, they asserted, and it was up to each community to decide whether or not it was wet or dry.⁴⁷ The Republican papers disagreed. In the first place, they said, Wilson's statements were campaign oratory and could not be trusted.⁴⁸ Second, and more important, German-Americans were not in favor of local option.

"Is it not enough that we have to fight prohibition year in and year out in the states, that we should elect a president who is in sympathy with prohibition?"⁴⁹

In 1912 party regularity prevented most of the German-American editors from committing political apostasy in the interests of progressivism. Although the journals had agreed with much of La Follette's progressivism in 1910 they denied him support when he sought

⁴¹*National Demokrat*, August 31 and November 5, 1910; *Herold und Volksfreund*, September 3, October 15 and 26, and November 5, 1910; *La Crosse Volksfreund*, August 24, 1910; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, August 31, October 5, and November 2, 1910.

⁴²*Herold und Volksfreund*, October 26 and November 25, 1910; *National Demokrat*, October 26, 1910.

⁴³*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, November 1, 1910.

⁴⁴Link, *Wilson*, 494; *Herold und Volksfreund*, October 5, 1912; *National Demokrat*, October 16, 1912.

⁴⁵*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, July 31, 1912.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, October 11, 1912; *Vorwärts!*, October 26, 1912.

⁴⁷*Herold und Volksfreund*, August 24, 1912; *La Crosse Volksfreund*, September 18, 1912.

⁴⁸*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, September 3, 1912; *Nordstern*, September 7, 1912.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

the presidency. La Follette could not gain the endorsement of the Democratic papers simply because he was a Republican, and he could not, in 1912, keep the support of the important Republican *Germania*. Then La Follette, who had been "right" on German-American issues, not only espoused women's suffrage and judicial recall, but openly challenged President Taft for the presidential nomination of the Republican party.

Two years before, at a time when he was out of favor with the Taft administration, La Follette had sought re-election to the United States Senate. Since he stood on a progressive platform that rebuked much of Taft's legislation and policies, his nomination in the Republican party had led to a rump Republican convention held by his opponents who considered themselves the state's Administration men.⁵⁰ With the exception of the *Nordstern*, the German-language papers in the state had endorsed with reservations La Follette's views on state and national issues. The Democratic journals had expressed opinions and had headlined a number of their stories in a manner indicating that they were close to, if not in agreement with, many of La Follette's ideas.⁵¹ *Vorwärts!* occasionally had also spoken kindly of La Follette and his program.⁵² Milwaukee's *Germania* had endorsed La Follette although it did not like those planks in his platform that it considered too extreme in their ideological formulation and too intense in their insurgency. The paper did not care for the rebuke of Taft and such planks as initiative, referendum, and recall.⁵³ Some of the planks were sheer "phantasy [phantastische Schwaermerei]."⁵⁴ Yet the daily had tried, in 1910, to dissociate La Follette from those whom it labeled "zealots" by insisting that after La Follette had incorporated all his more moderate principles into the platform the "zealots" had used the document as a sounding board for their emotions.⁵⁵ Furthermore, *Germania's*

support of outstanding insurgents in other parts of the country, its demand for a downward revision of the Payne-Aldrich tariff, its endorsement of much of the platform, and the complimentary tone with which it usually referred to La Follette and those who campaigned for him, showed that in 1910 the paper was much closer to La Follette than to the standpatters.⁵⁶

By January, 1911, after the National Progressive Republican League had been formed, it was plain that *Germania* was leaving La Follette. The paper did not like the League because it feared the organization hoped to capture control of the Republican party.⁵⁷ The Republican daily admitted that the organization included some "honest reformers" but also found that the "mixed company" making up the League included prohibitionists like William R. Stubbs and Chase Osborn, wild-eyed reformers like Jonathan Bourne, Jr., and men like Gifford Pinchot, who sought only to revenge themselves upon the Administration.⁵⁸ The paper realized La Follette was one of the logical candidates whom the organization would propose as the Republican nominee for the presidency. *Germania* therefore made haste to warn the Senator to dissociate himself from the "zealots" if he did not want to alienate the "liberal minded public."⁵⁹ When La Follette declared himself a candidate for the nomination and worked with "ultra-radicals" he lost the support of the daily.

To *Germania* "zealots" were primarily prohibitionists and other reform extremists. During most of Taft's administration La Follette was not a "zealot." The paper assumed that, although the President and La Follette were political opponents, the party was big enough to hold both men as long as they did not compete for the same political office. Thus *Germania* could endorse the Senator while supporting the President. When, in January, 1912, La Follette officially declared himself and opened the campaign for his own presidential nomination, *Germania* joined with *Nordstern* in opposition to the bid, against his own party's president, of the Wisconsin Senator.

⁵⁰*Wisconsin State Journal*, June 10, 1910; Mowry, Roosevelt, 111.

⁵¹*Herold und Volksfreund*, September 10, 1910; *National Demokrat*, September 10, and October 19, 1910.

⁵²*Vorwärts!*, October 9, 1910.

⁵³*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, September 29, 1910.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, May 31, June 4 and 5, and July 1, 1909, August 2, 17, and 31, September 14, 21, and 22, 1910.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, January 25, 1911.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, January 23, 1912.

While *Germania* would have supported Taft no matter what La Follette's early campaign program might have been, the daily made it clear to its readers in January of 1912 that it would no longer go along with "Battle Bob's" kind of progressivism. In the editorial entitled "Up to Here and No Further" *Germania* took the Senator to task:

"In the belief that he was an honest reformer [the citizens of Wisconsin] have made great concessions to La Follette, and have accepted some things to which they were really opposed. When, however, La Follette advocates women's suffrage and the recall of judges, Wisconsin public opinion decisively says: Up to here and no further."⁶⁰

Wisconsin's German-American press also opposed Theodore Roosevelt when he made his second bid for the presidency. Both before and after the Progressive party nominated him the press charged Roosevelt with insincerity. The papers had not supported La Follette's candidacy, but they knew that La Follette and not Roosevelt represented thoroughgoing progressivism within the Republican party.⁶¹ Roosevelt could not really consider himself any more progressive than the President, for Taft, with less "noise," had carried out Roosevelt's policies. Roosevelt had always been a compromiser. Progressivism was simply Roosevelt's latest line with which he hoped to capture the presidency.⁶²

The press did not trust Roosevelt's "Confession of Faith" or his platform. *Wisconsin Botschafter*, a Democratic paper, noted that the platform made rosy promises to everyone.⁶³ *Germania*, a Taft paper, ridiculed Roosevelt's claim that he was fighting in the interests of and for the people.⁶⁴ *Vorwärts!*, supporting Eugene V. Debs, insisted that Roosevelt, presenting himself as the savior of industrial America, was exploiting a reform drift for personal gain.⁶⁵ Even *Nordstern*, which by early April, 1912, had endorsed

Roosevelt for the presidency, did not take Roosevelt's statements at their face value.⁶⁶ If their newspapers are any criterion Roosevelt's Progressive views clearly did not receive the endorsement of most German-Americans of Wisconsin.

To spokesmen interested in perpetuating German-Americanism an increase in the power of the majority, insurgency, and party bolting was too high a price to pay for the progressivism of a Roosevelt or a La Follette. Wisconsin's German-American press distinguished between the economic and political reforms espoused by progressives. For the press these two kinds of reform were not two sides of the progressive coin. The editors accepted and endorsed conservation measures, a downward revision of the tariff, anti-trust legislation, welfare legislation on behalf of the workingmen, and other proposals that would have the state participate more effectively in the industrial life of the nation. They at best only acquiesced in the initiative, referendum, and recall, and rejected outright the recall of judges and women's suffrage. Economic reforms, they felt, did not in any way threaten their German-American interests. Political reforms did pose such a threat.

In the years from 1909 to 1912 Wisconsin's German-American newspapers did not commit themselves to progressivism. Their approval of certain aspects of progressivism, their support of some progressives or their opposition to others had little to do with progressivism. The reasons for their endorsement of the economic reforms were rooted in the programs of Bismarckian Germany. The reasons for their acceptance or rejection of political candidates were rooted in an allegiance to a political party and in a German-American identity.

Wisconsin's German-American press reflected the complexity of ingredients constituting German-Americanism when the progressives made their bid for national power. This complexity raises a fundamental question about the nature of the support accorded the progressives at that time: here was one group that made its political decisions in terms of its own identity. How many other groups supported or opposed progressives on their own terms instead of on those espoused by progressives?

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Vorwärts!*, March 9, 1912; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, February 14, 1912; *National Demokrat*, February 27, 1912; *Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, February 23 and June 25, 1912.

⁶²*Vorwärts!*, March 9, 1912; *Wisconsin Botschafter*, February 14, 1912; *National Demokrat*, February 27, 1912.

⁶³*Wisconsin Botschafter*, August 9, 1912.

⁶⁴*Milwaukee Germania Abendpost*, August 6, 1912.

⁶⁵*Vorwärts!*, June 22, 1912.

⁶⁶*Nordstern*, September 13, 1912.