

Note from the Editor

In their different ways, the essays in this issue spark reflection over the shadow that the Progressive Era (as opposed to progressivism itself) cast over subsequent decades. In May 2007, a week before writing this, I served on the thesis committee of an MA student in another country. The student, who had written about the short-lived debate right after World War II over the proposed international supervision of nuclear weapons, sought to understand the deeply felt doubt that the main U.S. negotiator, then-elder statesman Bernard Baruch, exhibited towards cooperation with the Soviet Union on such a momentous matter. I suggested that Baruch's suspicions began with the very negative initial impressions that he and others involved in managing the U.S. effort during World War I had of the Bolsheviks and their revolution. Not just strong anti-Soviets, but some characters who stood for a more accommodating stance had their political start in the Woodrow Wilson administration. This includes Joseph E. Davies, controversial envoy to the USSR during Franklin Roosevelt's administration, whom Elizabeth Kimball MacLean has spent years studying. As MacLean explains in this issue, Davies' political origins were more typically progressive than Baruch's. A key figure in implementing the New Freedom's business policies and an architect of the Federal Trade Commission, the Democrat Davies shared the vision more commonly associated with the Republican progressives and the Bull Moosers of expert, public sector oversight and management of the corporate economy.

Right after World War II, urban affairs experts engaged in another high-minded debate that proved short-lived: over the potential of public housing to undermine urban racial segregation, which like the nuclear arms race did not yet seem to some observers to be hopelessly inevitable. Behind Peter Cole's essay on Local 8 of the IWW's Marine Transport Workers, an effort to build an interracial union among Philadelphia longshoremen, lurks the menace of insurmountable racial division within the urban working class. Other menaces lurk behind Cole's story that would not become widely understood until the 1950s and beyond. These include industrial and commercial decay in the old Northeast port cities, along with the power exerted in the transportation business by unscrupulous, unsavory firms with political connections, operating at times in league with the arguably corrupt leadership of mainstream unions.

The frequently distressing confusion of entertainment, glamor, and politics was already evident by 1962, when Daniel Boorstin published his polemic, *The Image, or What Happened to the American Dream*, an early entry in a deservedly thriving genre of American public affairs writing. Arguably the

first generation to undertake the systematic manipulation of mass media for political effect, Progressive Era activists quickly succumbed to the temptation of the image, as the sad story of woman's suffrage advocate Inez Milholland reveals. A very old moral theme, meanwhile, appears in the pressure exerted on her by colleagues to continue campaigning in fall 1916 after her serious illness became evident: the tendency of activists to lose sight of personal obligations in their devotion to a worthy cause. As Ann Marie Nicolosi notes, Milholland's own sister contemplated ways to "capitalize her illness" for politics. Milholland's widower, the Dutch bohemian businessman Eugen Boissevain, later became identified with another legendary, sad figure whose image evoked sexual and cultural radicalism, Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Alan Lessoff

JOSEPH E. DAVIES

FOR U. S. SENATOR



WILSON WANTS HIM
WISCONSIN NEEDS HIM

Authorized by Democratic State Central Committee.



Poster issued by Wisconsin Democratic State Central Committee for 1918 Senate Campaign of Joseph Davies. Courtesy Library of Congress.