

less health care, less respect. Progressives fairly readily accepted the inequitable arrangement of segregation. They did so because usually there were worse alternatives....

Nationwide, lynchings escalated in the 1880s and peaked at 230 in 1892. The numbers fell off somewhat because black men took pains to avoid trouble. Even so, there were 115 reported lynchings in America in 1900; 106 of the victims were black. Essentially unchecked by local, state, or national government, white Southerners usually invoked some imaginary assault on a white woman in order to murder a black man. There were hangings, shootings, burnings, castrations....

To more-moderate whites, including progressives and the wealthy, it seemed as if the South had gone out of control. These men and women were disgusted by the lynch mobs.... Obviously, there had to be some new means of stabilizing race relations.

As Jim Crow took hold with progressive support or acquiescence, the highest levels of the federal government did virtually nothing to help black Americans. Not surprisingly, the conservative United States Supreme Court gave segregation its imprimatur. In 1896, a majority of the justices ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation was legal on Louisiana trains as long as blacks were provided "separate but equal" accommodations....

Today, it is hard to believe that a majority of progressives actively opposed FDR presidential nominee Franklin Delans Roosevelt—but they did....

Tellingly, one of Roosevelt's first acts as President in 1933 was to support the repeal of prohibition, the ultimate symbol of the progressives' attempts to constrain individualism and pleasure. Explaining his position the year before, Roosevelt termed prohibition a "complete and tragic failure" caused by "this very good reason: we have depended too largely upon the power of governmental action...." Unlike many committed progressive activists, Roosevelt understood that liberalism needed to strike a new balance between the individual and the state.... For all the growth of federal regulatory power during the 1930s and 1940s, Roosevelt's New Deal was less ambitious than the progressives' bold bid to create the middle-class paradise.... Roosevelt himself underscored the difference in ambition when he mentioned his old boss, Woodrow Wilson, during a campaign speech in 1932. "It is interesting, now, to read his speeches," Roosevelt observed. "What is called 'radical' today (and I have reason to know whereof I speak) is mild compared to the campaign of Mr. Wilson."...

American Progressivism in the Wider Atlantic World

DANIEL T. RODGERS

"Was there a world outside of America?" the muckraker Ray Stannard Baker tried to recollect his state of mind as an apprentice journalist in Chicago in the

1890s. "If there was, I knew next to nothing at all about it—as a reality... I knew something of European history—the old tyranny of kings, the absurdity of aristocracy, the futility of feudal wars—out of which America, the wonderful, had stepped proudly into the enlightenment of the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. I was a true geocentric American."

In the face of a provincialism this profound, it is hard to resist a knowing smile. Every serious reader of the past instinctively knows what Baker had yet to learn: that nations lie enmeshed in each others' history. Even the most isolated of nation-states is a semipermeable container, washed over by forces originating far beyond its shores. Even the most powerful act their part within world systems beyond their full control.

If complicity in world historical forces marks all nations, it especially marks outpost nations, like the United States, which begin as other nations' imperial projects. From the earliest European settlements in North America forward, the Atlantic functioned for its newcomers less as a barrier than as a connective lifeline—a seaway for the movement of people, goods, ideas, and aspirations. A key outpost for European trade and a magnet for European capital, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century United States cannot be understood outside the North Atlantic economy of which it was a part....

Social politics is a case in point. Of studies of progressive and New Deal politics there is no end. On the roots of the impulse to limit the social costs of aggressive, market capitalism, some of the very best American history writing has found its focus. As befits a large-order event, large-scale explanations have been employed to understand it. Thus the rise of the interventionist state in America has been traced to the shock of particularly rapid industrialization, the thin and distended nature of the mid-nineteenth-century American state and society, the status anxieties of a declining middle class, the scientific ambitions of a new elite of experts and professionals, the social maternalism of middle-class women, the demands from below of farmers and wage workers, and the demands of industrial capitalists at the top for a more rationalized social order than capitalist competition, by itself, could create. But an unspoken "geocentrism," as Baker styled it, frames them all.

Familiar as these explanations are, they leave unstated what every contemporary who followed these issues knew: that the reconstruction of American social politics was of a part with movements of politics and ideas throughout the North Atlantic world that trade and capitalism had tied together....

Every age, even the most calculating and material, needs a symbol, and Gustave Eiffel, who knew a promotional opportunity when it came his way, was eager to provide one. A "factory chimney," critics called his tower at its birth in 1889, "gigantic and hideous." An upended illustration of the principles of railroad bridge design, it defied the scale of the city below it. The tile roofs of old Paris's neighborhoods, the mansards and boulevards of the Second Empire, even the great towers of Notre Dame (as the sketches by Eiffel's engineers pointedly showed) all shrank to Lilliputian dimensions beside this display of engineering hubris. The Eiffel Tower was an advertisement for the tradition-shattering,

revolutionary possibilities of industrial technology. Little wonder that Paris's artists immediately petitioned to have it torn down.

Eiffel's tower had a second purpose as well. Built for the Paris exposition of 1889, it was designed as a giant billboard for a great, temporary market of the wares of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. The exposition's official purpose was to celebrate the centenary of the French Revolution and, in its reflected glory, the still fragile political fortunes of the Third Republic. In fact, trade—not politics—had dominated every world exposition since the iron and glass Crystal Palace Exposition in London in 1851, and the Paris exhibition was no exception....

[I]n 1900, the French convened a still larger fair on the same site, this time to inventory the century itself. The Eiffel Tower was repainted a bright yellow for the occasion, its gas jets replaced by hundreds of new electric lights to keep it abreast of the onward rush of technological progress. On the fairground itself, a still larger stock of goods—the largest to be displayed in this fashion anywhere until the world's fairs of the 1930s—was crammed still more tightly into still more numerous galleries. The 1889 exposition, despite its planners' intentions, had been largely a French affair. This time both Germany, ostracized in 1889, and the United States were represented in force, elbowing Britain for exhibition space and prestige in their race for industrial primacy....

For the 1900 exposition, the Musée Social's organizers determined to lay on a much more elaborate and centrally placed social economy display. In the meeting hall of the social economy pavilion they convened a summer of international conferences on phases of the *question sociale*. For the pavilion's display rooms, they solicited the best examples of practical social amelioration the nations of the Atlantic economy could muster. If there were in the industrialized countries social designs to compensate for the privations and pains of the market revolution, here one might hope to find their outlines.

At first glance, the sheer confusion of issues assembled under the social economy umbrella was all but overwhelming. The French tried to make order out of the whole by carving it into subsections: apprenticeship and the protection of child workers, wages and profit sharing, workers' and employers' associations, farm credit, regulation of the conditions of work, workers' housing, cooperative stores, institutions for the intellectual and moral development of workers, savings and insurance institutions, hygiene (by which they meant not only public sanitation but the public battle against intemperance, slums, and the moral contamination of poverty), poor relief, and a residual category for whatever public or private initiatives for the well-being of the citizens were left over....

To move through the social economy exhibit hall, however, was to discover how far from unified the social economy experts were on solutions. From nation to nation, the shifts in theme were abrupt and arresting. The Russians brought a temperance exhibit. The Italians displayed the work of cooperative savings banks. The Belgians emphasized low-cost workers' housing. Great Britain, its government distracted by the escalating military hostilities in South Africa, barely mustered an exhibit at all. On one wall of the British alcove hung a chart illustrating the growth of the consumers' cooperative movement. On the other hung one of

the maps created for Charles Booth's monumental survey of poverty in London—the class relations of the city outlined, street by street, in bright washes of wealth and dark masses of poverty.

In retrospect, Booth's poverty maps seem the most prescient exhibit of the display. It was the German exhibit, however, that stayed longest in visitors' minds. Even non-Germans in Paris were compelled to admit that Germany was the fair's overall victor in the contest of prestige. Germany's national pavilion boasted the exhibition's tallest tower, next to Eiffel's. The most impressive industrial exhibit was the Germans'. In deference to French sensibilities, the Germans had left their huge Krupp cannons and overt military displays at home, but their imperial ambitions were everywhere on exhibit.

In the social economy building, the Germans ignored the complex French categories. In the middle of their alcove they mounted instead a large, gilded obelisk representing the benefits the imperial social insurance funds had distributed to German workers since their inauguration sixteen years earlier. Compulsory, state-administered insurance against the risks of industrial accidents, sickness, and old age was Germany's great social-political invention of the 1880s. The second prong of Bismarck's campaign to crush the German socialists, state social insurance was Bismarck's device to win over the loyalty of the urban German masses through the preemptive, top-down "socialism" of the state. In a symbolic display of imperial largesse and power, surrounded by photos of the hospitals and sanitariums its agencies administered for the welfare of German workers, the state commanded the German exhibit, without a hint of competition.

The Germans spoke on the subject of the state with peculiar authority and zeal in 1900. From the imperial art collection in the German national pavilion to the gilded obelisk in the social economy palace, the German exhibits radiated the message of government's fostering and protective hand—over culture, art, labor, and the ravages of economic misfortune. What better alternative was there to the insecurities and predations of the market but the massive, countervailing, paternal power of the state?...

A visitor to the social economy building... would not have had an easy time locating the American exhibit. Despite its economic muscle in 1900, the United States was in many ways the exposition's stepchild. It had wrangled space in the front row of national pavilions only through vigorous effort. There, wedged between competitors, the American commissioners built a plaster building made up of the usual Greco-Roman architectural borrowings. The interior, however, they fitted out with American newspapers, typewriters, stenographers for hire, a telegraph, a money exchange, and a ticker tape—everything an American businessman on vacation might need. The Americans were the *nouveau riche* in Paris in 1900, scrambling hard for status, more eager than any others for the shoptalk of commerce. The German pavilion radiated learning, art, and empire. The French dwelt on politics and solidarity. The American pavilion, behind its classical false front, was about business.

In the social economy building, the same national themes recurred. There, too, the Americans scrambled for place. Squeezed into a tiny, twenty-seven-foot-square alcove, they crammed into their exhibition space a larger stock

Arrangements for the largest body of material in the American exhibit, however, fell to a fledgling social betterment clearinghouse, the League for Social Service. Organized two years earlier, it styled itself a general clearinghouse for information concerning "everything that tends to the social betterment of humanity." Its moving spirit, William Tolman, was in many ways typical of those now forgotten figures who shaped the early years of American social politics. From the position of general agent of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Tolman had been drawn into the Reverend Charles Parkhurst's antivice crusade in the 1890s, and from there into Mayor William Strong's reform administration in New York City, where he had made his particular concern the provision of public baths à la Berlin and London—no slight matter to a city population jammed together, more than two thousand persons to a city block, without benefit of bathrooms....

For the social economy display, however, Tolman hung the walls with photos of the work of self-enlightened capitalism. The endeavors of the nation's model industrial employers were represented there: the Heinz company's spotless factory workrooms, the Cleveland Hardware company's employee restaurant, the employee housing constructed by the Westinghouse Airbrake firm, and the elaborate employee morale work of the National Cash Register Company in Dayton, Ohio. In the realm of *prévoyance* the welfare capitalist theme continued; the biggest, most eye-catching displays were those of the Prudential, Metropolitan, and Equitable life insurance companies. The normally acute reporter *L'Exposition de Paris* never saw past the life insurance company advertisements; Charles Gide thought the American exhibit formless. But the message of the American display was clearer than Gide sensed: the most promising counterforce to the injuries of industrial capitalism was the enlightened conscience of capitalism itself...

The new Atlantic economy of the late nineteenth century was to encourage a new Atlantic-wide politics. From its first stirrings in the 1890s, the new social politics was to emerge as a powerful political force by the 1910s, with representatives in every capital in the North Atlantic world. Even the Americans, so distant from the chief centers of policy and intellectual innovation, were to be drawn in.

Those who forged the new social politics in the generation before the First World War never shared a common name. Some of them never found a consistent referential language even for themselves. William Beveridge referred to

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himself variously as a "Tory democrat," a "Labour imperialist," "very nearly" a socialist, and a Liberal. Frederic C. Howe, the American municipal reformer, called himself a single-taxer, a "liberal," a "reformer," and a "radical."...

One comes close to a common denominator, however, with "progressive." As a political designation it was English before it was American, born in the heated municipal politics of 1890s London before crossing to the United States in the first decade of the new century....

By the first decade of the twentieth century there was no party system within the North Atlantic economy that had not been profoundly shaken by the new social politics. In Britain, the Liberal government of 1906-1914 embarked on a flurry of legislation that, a quarter century later, still stuck in Franklin Roosevelt's mind for its daring. For the aged poor, it inaugurated an old-age pension system borrowed from New Zealand; for the crippling economic effects of sickness, a program of compulsory wage-earners' health insurance borrowed from Germany; for the most exploited of workers, a set of Australian-style wage boards empowered to establish legal minimum wages; for the sake of fiscal justice, progressive land and income taxes; for the unemployed, a German-style network of state-run employment offices; and, for workers in trades of particularly uneven labor demand, an untried experiment in pooling the risks of unemployment through state-administered insurance....

On both sides of the Atlantic, politicians rode the new issues to power and popularity: David Lloyd George and the young Winston Churchill in Britain, Georges Clemenceau in France, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson in the United States. Parties and pressure groups drew up sweeping social programs. For the rest of the twentieth century, although parties split and polarized over the new issues, no politics could be divorced from social politics....

Within Europe itself, one of the most striking signs of the new transnational social politics was the phenomenon of legislation passed from one nation to another, sometimes despite acute distrust and rivalry. An early example was British-modeled factory legislation, which began to turn up in France, Germany, and elsewhere in the 1870s. A generation later, borrowings of this sort formed a crazy quilt of transnational influences and appropriations. Danish old-age pensions were imported (via New Zealand) to Britain, British industrial liability codes to France, and French subsidarism to Denmark, Holland, and Scandinavia, even as more radical French progressives turned to German-style compulsory state insurance....

The settlement house movement was one of transatlantic social Protestantism's most striking productions. Here the innovators were English. From the opening of Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel at the edge of London's East End in 1884, Samuel Barnett's institution was a magnet for American visitors. Jane Addams made visits in 1887, 1888, and 1889....

Inevitably, American and English settlement house developments diverged. Rooted in a women's college network unknown in England, the American movement was much more quickly and deeply feminized than its English model. Sharing neither the Oxford cultural pretensions of Toynbee Hall (with its fine arts exhibits and reading rooms wreathed in pipe smoke) nor its residents' easy,

Oxbridge-greased access to government policy making, the American settlement houses were more alert to issues of family, immigrants, and neighborhoods. But the social investigations that from the outset kept the American settlements from becoming mere charity outposts were a direct offshoot of the London original. And the American settlement house residents worked extremely hard to sustain the English connection....

Weave as it did the interests and experiences of American and European progressives together, bind them as it did in a common understanding of the forces at work on both sides of the Atlantic, this evolving web of connections could not erase two enduring peculiarities of the transatlantic progressive relationship. The first was the asymmetry of the exchange. The second was the mediating effects of travel.

That American progressives should have found themselves drawing so much more heavily on the experience and ideas of their European counterparts than Europeans did on theirs was no historical given. In the transatlantic radical world of the 1880s, the biggest splash of all had been made by the American radical economist Henry George....

One of the painful signs of this imbalance was a marked contraction of European progressive interest in American politics. Where American attention to British progressive politics was "coherent and continuous," Kenneth Morgan writes of this period, the influences in the other direction were "intermittent and partial at best."...

Alfred Zimmern's seven-month pilgrimage in search of progressive America in 1911 and 1912 was more telling and more poignant. Fresh from studying civic republicanism in ancient Athens, Zimmern arrived in the United States fired with ideals of civic political culture, both ancient and modern. He worked hard to locate the centers of political vitality in the New World. In New York he looked in at the United Charities Building, hunted up the city's leading socialists, lunched with Theodore Roosevelt, and attended a mass meeting of protest and remembrance for the 146 garment workers who, locked in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company's loft, had been killed in a factory fire....

"Lots of new ideas," Zimmern wrote his sister, "which may be applied at home." But from there on, progressive America unraveled for him. The more he talked with Americans, the thinner his confidence wore. The raw, unmitigated capitalism of Chicago unnerved him. The U.S. Steel Corporation's model city, Gary, Indiana, seemed to him a monstrous "fortress." Six months after he began, he wrote home: "I have long ago given up looking at America as the land of progress. The only question left in my mind is how many years it's behind England. I think it's somewhere in the eighties and not going our pace at that."

By the time Zimmern picked it up, the metaphor of American behind-handedness was already a hardened trope among European progressives. Sometimes it was used as a general rhetoric of dismissal, as when E. R. Pease of the Fabian Society concluded, on reading John Graham Brook's latest account of labor relations in the United States, that "in the things that pertain to man as a social and intellectual being, America is decades, if not centuries, behind us."

Sometimes it was employed more precisely. Thus in labor legislation the British Labourite J. R. Clynes put the United States twenty years behind Britain in 1909; in trade union development, fifteen years....

The metaphor of laggards and leaders also helped to shield American progressives from the charges of political utopianism their antagonists were poised to hurl at them. It made their idealism hard-headed and practical. "Many persons think that the progressive movement proposes to usher in the millennium by legislation," Benjamin De Witt wrote in 1915. "Nothing could be farther from the minds of the men and women who call themselves progressive. What they propose to do is to bring the United States abreast of Germany and other European countries in the matter of remedial legislation." To catch up to the "civilized" nations of the world was a running progressive theme. Seconding Theodore Roosevelt's nomination at the Progressive Party convention of 1912, Jane Addams made the point official: "The new party has become the American exponent of a world-wide movement toward juster social conditions, a movement which the United States, lagging behind other great nations, has been unaccountably slow to embody in political action."...

What riveted the attention of most American admirers of European city life, however, were the absences: "No offensive bill boards; no heaps of offal and rubbish, no long stretches of untidy vacancy held for speculation in the midst of the city; no tumble-down tenements; no ragged, inebriate pedestrians," the National Municipal League's president William D. Foulke wrote of Frankfurt in 1911. No wretchedly paved streets and packed streetcars, no corrupt city bosses, no waste, no lawlessness, no anarchy. The "not's" multiplied as the European cities took shape in reverse of the American cities to which the reformers could not avoid contrasting them. Everything played into these judgments, from the width and paving of the streets and the comparative hideousness of the advertisements to the political convictions of the observers. The reflections and mirrors, the inner eye always focused on America while the outer eye saw Europe: all of this affected judgments.

But admirers of European civic life like Howe were not politically naive. Howe knew the difference between the Junkers and the forces expanding, as he put it, like molten lava below the crust—even if, for his purposes, he chose to elide party divisions as unimportant. He was under no illusion that the European cities moving rapidly into new realms of provision and collective enterprise were democratic in the American understanding of the term. The word portraits of handsome city baths and well-run municipal streetcars in which writers like Howe invested so much were more than travelogue prose. They were part of a struggle to socialize the language of democracy—to balance its rhetoric of rights and privileges with a new rhetoric of services, outcomes, and results. In their stress on cities that *did* things, they tried to forge a language of democratic, civil action rather than mere democratic forms. The German city, Howe admitted, in almost the same words Boston's Josiah Quincy had used sixteen years earlier, was not democratic in its administrative structure; but it was "democratic, even socialistic, in its services."...

Among advanced urban progressives in the early-twentieth-century United States, it is hard to exaggerate the ambitions bound up in these half-imported visions of cities free of their swarms of contractors, grafters, entrepreneurs, and franchisers, of cities conscious of their own administration and directing their own fate. Or to exaggerate their sense of affinity with events across the Atlantic. That the American issue might be thought to turn, even for a moment, on the experience of Glasgow streetcars—this was the primary event. “You know that one of the best governed cities in the world is the great Scotch city of Glasgow,” Woodrow Wilson casually told a crowd in Fall River, Massachusetts, in the campaign of 1912. “They are ’way ahead of us,” Lincoln Steffens wrote of the European municipalizers. “Liberals and radicals all of them, they are in harness and down to the details.”



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