

A STUDY OF THE EDITORIAL WRITINGS

OF

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

A THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM	1
Aim of the Study	1
Limitations of the Work	2
Review of the Literature	3
Methods of Procedure	4
Arrangement of Material	5
II. GENERAL THEORIES	7
The Young Stand-Patter	10
Bryan Versus McKinley	12
Theodore Roosevelt	13
The Transition	16
The Enthusiastic Convert	18
"Wail, for the World's Wrong"	20
Utopia--a la White	22
The New Deal	24
III. SPECIFIC MEASURES	30
The Redistribution of Wealth	30
Foreign Relations	32
Railroad Regulation	35
Trust Regulation	37
Tariffs	39
Injunctions in Strikes	43
Direct Primaries	45
Changes in the Gazette	45

CHAPTER	CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. PARTY AND CANDIDATES		49
	Harding and Coolidge	51
	Hoover	56
V. CONCLUSIONS		59
BIBLIOGRAPHY		61

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

William Allen White, editor of The Emporia Gazette, is probably the best known small town editor in the United States today. Certainly he is among the foremost editorial writers in the nation. His writings are quoted in periodicals all over the country. His "What's the Matter with Kansas?" and his "Mary White" are classics among newspaper editorials, and he is universally recognized as an astute interpreter of the Middle Western mind.¹

For nearly forty years, now, Mr. White has been writing for the editorial columns of the Gazette.² A study of his comments on the passing scene throws an interesting light on the personality of a man who is a recognized master in one of the comparatively new forms of literature--the newspaper editorial.

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study is (1) to present as nearly as possible an accurate picture of the editorial views of Wil-

¹ In 1934 the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Association, in awarding the Roosevelt medal to Mr. White, referred to him as "an editor who for 40 years has interpreted the West to the East, the East to the West, and American political leaders to the whole country. A progressive Republican, he has an abiding faith in American principles of society and government, matched by no one in his time, perhaps, except Theodore Roosevelt."

² Hereinafter Mr. White's newspaper will be referred to variously as The Emporia Gazette and the Gazette.

liam Allen White on some of the outstanding economic, political, and social issues of his age, (2) to investigate the consistency or inconsistency of his attitude, and, if possible, to discover a development, (3) to estimate tentatively whether his stand on specific measures and laws has been consistent with those views, and (4) to estimate tentatively also whether his support of political parties and candidates for office has been consistent with those views.

Limitations of the Work

Early in the course of the study it became apparent that it would be an almost endless task to study all of Mr. White's writings for the purpose of compiling all his views on all the issues of his time. It became necessary to make certain limitations in the scope of the work, as follows:

(1) The study was limited to expressions of opinion in the editorial columns of the Gazette between the years 1895 and 1934.

(2) Out of all these issues of the newspaper only certain years were chosen for intensive study. Because it was felt that national issues would be more in the limelight and would call for more voluminous comment during the years of national presidential elections, these years were the ones chosen for detailed study.

(3) Since it would obviously be impossible to reprint in this study all the editorials of even one year of the Gazette, the writer found it necessary to use his discretion

in choosing editorials or parts of editorials which seemed to reflect best the general trends of Mr. White's thought within that period.

(4) The choice of the particular economic and social issues on which Mr. White's views are reproduced was necessarily limited (a) by what subjects Mr. White saw fit to write on, and (b) by the writer's judgment of what were the important issues.

(5) It is to be borne in mind that like most editorials, those in the Gazette are unsigned. Consequently, some few of the ones quoted herein may not have been written by Mr. White personally. But since the editorials all appeared in an editorial column headed by Mr. White's name, it was assumed that the views they presented coincided with his.

Review of the Literature

The first step of the study was a search of previous writings concerning Mr. White, in an effort to ascertain what had already been written on the subject of this investigation. As a result of this search the writer discovered a small and interesting group of writings bearing on his subject, but no thorough scholarly work taking up the problem systematically in all its phases. A list of articles having a bearing on the matters covered by this thesis, and of others supplementary thereto, is given in the bibliography.

Of especial interest is The Editor and His People, a collection of Mr. White's editorials compiled by Miss

Helen Ogden Mahin.³ An entire chapter of that work, entitled "The Decay of a Conservative,"⁴ is devoted to a group of editorials showing the *Emporian's* shift of ground on economic and social subjects. Included in this chapter are a number of amusing comments by Mr. White himself. However, this book contents itself with presenting the editorials, making practically no attempt at analysis or interpretation.

A magazine article, "William Allen White and the Evolution of the *Emporia Gazette*," by Augusta W. Hinshaw,⁵ tells the story of the growth of the paper from early days, and makes some valuable conjectures as to the reasons for Mr. White's early conservatism. It also furnishes some important information as to the influence of Theodore Roosevelt on Mr. White.

But neither these nor the other writings furnish the detailed analysis necessary for a clear understanding of the White editorial policies. Because of this, the present survey was undertaken.

Methods of Procedure

After the particular subject of research had been determined upon, and the subject had been limited to meet the demands of this particular study, the actual reading of the

³ The MacMillan Company, 1924.

⁴ Pp. 236-303.

⁵ World's Work, Vol. LIX, Number 8, pp. 64-67 (Aug., 1930).

editorials was begun. The editorial pages of every issue of the Gazette for the years 1896, 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, 1916, 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1932 were the object of careful search in an effort to find statements having a bearing on the following three questions: (1) What was Mr. White's general attitude toward the economic and social system and its problems, including especially the relations between capital, labor, and government? (2) What stand did he take on specific issues having a social or economic significance? (3) What was his stand in the major political campaigns?

In addition to the intensive studies of these particular years, a less systematic search was conducted through papers of other years in which significant issues were before the people. Included in this search was the year in which the United States entered the World War, and the year following the election of President McKinley.

At the conclusion of the research the quotations that had been collected were arranged, studied, and compiled in the present form.

Arrangement of Material

The task of arranging in a readable sequence the many excerpts from Mr. White's editorials has been a complicated one. The problem has been to put the material in such form as would most conveniently illustrate the history of his shifting attitude, without sacrificing to that end the accuracy of the picture. Finally the following order of presen-

tation was determined upon.

In the first section are given general statements by Mr. White, showing his broad, theoretical viewpoint towards the economic and political system at different times during his career. These quotations have been arranged in chronological order, in such a way as best to illustrate the gradual swing towards an increasing degree of liberalism as their writer grew older.

The second section is a compilation of quotations showing the Gazette editor's reaction to specific issues and measures concerning the social welfare at different times during his career. The attempt in this section is to arrive tentatively at a conclusion as to whether he has been consistent with his broad theories when actual issues in everyday life have been presented to him for his support or disapproval.

The third section traces Mr. White's support of candidates for office. The question raised (and tentatively answered) in the chapter is this--Did Mr. White consistently support the candidate whose views on issues of the day most nearly coincided with his?

Following these three main sections is a chapter which sums up the findings of the study, and lists the conclusions that may be drawn from these findings.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL THEORIES

Back in the nineties, when William Allen White was just beginning work as editor of The Emporia Gazette, residents of the conservative East were having forced on their minds the disconcerting fact that something was happening in Kansas--something radical, dangerous, and immensely threatening to the status quo. The embattled farmers of the Middle West, banded together in the Populist party, were demanding, in loud and vigorous tones, such unheard-of reforms as the graduated income tax, initiative and referendum, railroad regulation, direct election of United States senators, government ownership of railroads and telegraphs, free silver, and greenbacks.¹

What is more, they were getting the votes. In the election of 1892 more than a million citizens had rallied to the cause of agricultural discontent and voted the Populist ticket.² And from Kansas had come Senator William A. Peffer, noted far and wide for having the longest whiskers in the senate chamber; Congressman Jerry Simpson, who gained undying fame as "Sockless Jerry"; Mary Elizabeth Lease, who went

¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, A Political and Social History of the United States: 1829-1925 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1926) p. 394.

² Woodrow Wilson, Division and Reunion (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1923: p. 317.

about the country admonishing the farmers to "raise less corn and more hell"; and countless others who injected themselves into the fight for reform.

No wonder it was, then, that people in other sections of the country turned to each other in amazement and asked, "What's the matter with Kansas?" In the midst of the turmoil appeared a young Kansas editor, William Allen White, who gave them an answer to their question. Not only in one editorial,³ but in scores of them, he defended the old order of laissez-faire capitalism and savagely attacked the Populist reformers. "While all the other states have been getting population and capital," he said, "Kansas and Nebraska Populists have been raising Cain with capital and driving people away from the state."⁴

In White's opinion, the Sunflower state needed more wealthy, "solid" men and larger investments of capital. Neither of these would stay while all these "Unsafe" experiments were being carried on.⁵ And he was suspicious of all re-

³ His famous editorial, "What's the Matter with Kansas?" was, he says, used in the 1896 presidential campaign and ". . . Chairman Hanna was kind enough to say that it helped materially to elect Mr. McKinley and a Republican congress."

⁴ The Emporia Gazette, November 1, 1900.

(Author's note: Since nearly all of the quotations in this thesis are from the editorial pages of the Gazette, only the date of the paper from which such quotations are taken will be given from now on. If a quotation is taken from another source, this will be indicated.

⁵ August 15, 1896.

formers.

The Gazette has a theory that professional reformers are frauds. . . . Isn't the average man . . . who attends to his own business and doesn't impute dishonesty to his fellows--isn't he more likely to turn out honest than the professional reformer?⁶

That was the William Allen White of the 1890's--conservative, suspicious of change, anxious to preserve the vested interests of the property owners. And yet, paradoxically enough, it was the same William Allen White who in 1917 wrote as follows:

We must renew the old fight. We must rally the radicals in every Kansas congressional district to the fight. Kansas must send a radical congressman from every district who not only believes casually in reform, but who would rather establish justice quickly than maintain prosperity, if the issue ever should come squarely on that line.⁷

It was the same William Allen White who a few months later in 1917 also wrote as follows:

The right of this country to an educated, well-fed, comfortably housed, home-dwelling citizenship is of more importance than any man's right to interest, profits, or rent, and more important than any man's right to work.⁸

The right-about-face is obvious. In fifteen years he had undergone a metamorphosis from a deep-dyed conservative to an out-and-out progressive, if not, indeed, a radical. The story of those intervening years is one of a gradual

⁶ August 12, 1897.

⁷ February 16, 1917.

⁸ April 10, 1917.

shift of emphasis from property rights to personal rights.

The Young Stand-Patter

As we have already seen, the William Allen White of the nineties was in favor of an untrammelled capital, and strongly opposed to "dangerous" changes. He was also strongly opposed to anything that smacked of a paternalism favorable to the little fellow.⁹

How God hates a whiner. . . . Able bodied men clamoring for the government to help them. . . . The spirit of the whiner has so blinded men that they say the success of Jay Gould and the failure of John Smith, who started out with the same education, the same health, the same opportunities, is due to the government. . . . In times of peace the man who is hard up has himself to blame, because when men are getting rich it is proof that men can get rich, and when a man can and doesn't, he should not whine and snivel and howl about the inequalities of legislation.¹⁰

He sneered at the idea that people could be poor for any other reason than their own laziness and poor management. Each individual had an equal chance to make good, he felt, and if that individual went under--it was his own fault. "Success," he writes, "doesn't lie in the government and the law, but in the individual. . . . The law cannot change it.

⁹ As we shall see, his opposition to government paternalism did not prevent him from favoring a high protective tariff for American industry. Nor did his statement that "you can't bring individual prosperity by national legislation" prevent him from advocating the high tariff on the ground that it would help the laboring man.

¹⁰ August 14, 1896.

Failure or success is an individual affair."¹¹

And again he strikes out at the idea of correcting maldistribution of wealth by passing laws. "Now all this talk, about bringing individual prosperity through national legislation, is folly. Success depends upon the man, not upon the laws."¹²

Mr. White at that period took the attitude that if things were left alone, progress was inevitable. And the cause of that progress would be nothing more or less than human selfishness. "The same selfishness that has made the world go spinning around the grooves of progress for the last million years, is still the dominant force of human nature."¹³

And through that progress would be brought about the good of all. In the following quotation Mr. White paints a picture of the entire nation marching forward to newer heights--with the Deity grotesquely enrolled on the side of the standpatters and the believers in laissez faire:

Today the average man's comforts were the luxuries of the last generation's rich. Tomorrow today's rich man's luxuries will be the comforts of the poor. These changes have not been brought about by law; no legislature has enacted that a sewing machine shall be in every house; there was no "divy" to get it; no making the plutocrats disgorge. Progress did it. The spread of average intelligence did it. The diffusion of brains did it. The evolution of man did it. And what is more, no law, no party, no states-

¹¹ August 14, 1896.

¹² August 25, 1896.

¹³ July 10, 1897.

man will bring about the blessings that are to come.
It will be progress--which is another name for God.¹⁴

Bryan Versus McKinley

In the presidential election of 1896 the issue was clear cut between the old system and the new. William Jennings Bryan, endorsed by the Democratic and the Populist parties, was running on a platform the most conspicuous plank of which was one calling for cheaper currency--the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1. On the opposing side was William McKinley, standing for "sound money" and backed by Mark Hanna and the conservative business interests of the East.¹⁵

Into this conflict between the debtor class, who wanted the government to aid them in decreasing the burden of their debts, and the creditor group, who wanted the government to let them alone in the possession of what they already had, Mr. White threw himself with fervor--on the side of those who had. Three months before the election he said:

. . . The question before the voters of this country--of Kansas, of Emporia--is shall American institutions prevail; shall every man have a right to enjoy the fruits of his endeavor, or shall political and financial anarchy prevail?

. . . The Populists demand that debts be cut in two. They lie when they say that the currency has been con-

¹⁴ July 31, 1897.

¹⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 338-405.

tracted. Every thief in jail has an excuse; he thinks he did right. He justifies himself. So the men who want to steal half their creditors' money justify their crime by talk about contraction of the currency. But it is a criminal's subterfuge. It is a rogue's sophistry.

In this American government paternalism plays no part. It is every man for himself. It is free for all, and in the end the keenest, most frugal, and most industrious win. . . . The lazy man, the spendthrift, the "poor manager" must go under.¹⁶

In the above editorial are found three elements of conservatism. They are (1) the call for the preservation of existing institutions, (2) opposition to government intervention for the assistance of the "little fellow", and (3) opposition to any restriction on the wealthy citizen in his pursuit of further wealth--that is to say, opposition to restrictions on capital.

Roosevelt

Near the turn of the century a change began to appear in Mr. White's attitude, a change which was eventually to lead to the utter right-about-face pointed out at the beginning of this chapter. It is interesting to note that it was at the time that this change was beginning to appear that Mr. White first met Theodore Roosevelt. White greatly admired Roosevelt, and followed the colonel all during the latter's political career.

¹⁶ July 31, 1896.

It was Congressman Charles Curtis, the Kansas Republican cohesive, who introduced the Emporia editor to the then Vice-President, Theodore Roosevelt. Their minds struck fire at once; Roosevelt invited White to lunch, where each took the other's measure and was dee-lighted. Later, when Roosevelt wielded the Big Stick, White's was the gratifying chore of raising intelligent whoopee whenever the Stick fell upon the greedy and removed from their seats traitors to the trust of government.

"Roosevelt bit me, and I went mad," White says.¹⁷

But even before this meeting, when Roosevelt was still governor of New York state, he had apparently caught the imagination and the admiration of the Emporian. At that early time we find the latter saying, "Not more than half a dozen men in American public life have first-class minds. Senator Lodge is one; Governor Roosevelt is another. . . ."18

And again Roosevelt is the subject of remarks such as the following:

Roosevelt, in his message to the New York legislature, sensibly remarks: "It is well to remember on the one hand that the adoption of what is reasonable in the demands of the reformers is the surest way to prevent the adoption of what is unreasonable, and on the other hand that many of the worst and most dangerous laws which have been put upon statute books have been put there by zealous reformers with excellent intentions."¹⁹

And this:

In a story written for boys, Gov. Roosevelt gives the following rule for success, which he has

¹⁷ Augusta W. Hinshaw, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁸ January 29, 1900.

¹⁹ January 6, 1900.

himself closely followed: "In life, as in a football game, the principle to follow is, hit the line hard; don't foul and don't shirk, but hit the line hard." It's a good rule for anybody.²⁰

All through the years Mr. White's admiration for Roosevelt continued. In 1912 he followed Roosevelt out of the Republican party; he followed him back in, and continued to follow him till his death.

Here are a few quotations from Gazette editorials written during the time Roosevelt was president.

. . . Roosevelt, a welter weight, a scrapper who wins by practical methods, a bench-legged bulldog with a scholar's head on his shoulders and a gentleman's heart, no more afraid of the people and their caprices than he is of booggers, frank as the sunlight and fair to his vanquished enemies as he is to his friends, a man of books, as inexorable as a steel trap to vice, whether it appears in his councils or over his gun-sight . . .²¹

The influence for Roosevelt, for clean politics, for high civic ideals, for political virtue will be and is now inestimable. He is today the greatest living American--not for his accomplishment--but for his influence.²²

If President Roosevelt never does another thing he will have been a great help to his countrymen. He has given them an object lesson in public integrity.²³

But with the common run of Americans, Roosevelt's name will always be linked with the names of Washington and Lincoln. He stands as the man

²⁰ June 1, 1900.

²¹ September 6, 1901.

²² November 22, 1901.

²³ December 17, 1901.

who started the war for industrial freedom in America, and the people will cheer him even if the politicians forget him.²⁴

The Transition

But whether or not it was due to the influence of Roosevelt, the fact remains that almost coincidentally with his accession to the presidency came a rather sharp change in the tenor of the Gazette editorials.²⁵

On November 2, 1901, just two months after the assassination of President McKinley, came the first hint in favor of a restriction on capital--the first hint of an abandonment of the old "let alone" idea.

Men who have grown rich during the last century have been new to their estate; they have not learned that there is something to wealth beside power. That something is an obligation. . . . Wealth must help the world. Rich men must contribute to the government more than their personal taxes and their charities. This contribution must

24 June 27, 1908.

²⁵ The hypothesis here, that Mr. White's change from conservatism to liberalism was caused largely by the influence of Theodore Roosevelt, was confirmed recently by Mr. White himself. In a speech before the Roosevelt Memorial Association on October 28, 1934, he said in part:

"I had a better opinion of Mark Hanna than of McKinley. Young Roosevelt disillusioned me. He made me see that Hanna and his gay and amiable but ruthless kind were responsible for presidents like McKinley and his kind.

"It was a shock. I was a young arrogant protagonist of the divine rule of plutocracy. I think I called it "brains!" He shattered the foundation of my political ideals. As they crumbled then and there, politically, I put his heel on my neck and I became his man. In the handclasp that followed and the gesture of good-bye he became my life-long liege and I a joeman in his service."

come, not as a voluntary offering, but as a right which society can demand! The tax system of Americans must be revised so that wealth will pay for something beside police protection. The world needs more schools, more parks, more music, more beauty, more equitable distribution of the blessings of civilization. . . . The rich man who enjoys much must pay his share.

. . . It is not charity but justice that the situation demands, not gifts but rights that are due society from wealth. "The old order changeth giving place to the new, lest one good custom should corrupt the world."²⁶

By 1904 we find that a complete change has taken place.

No longer is it White's idea that it is invariably a credit to a man to get rich, and a credit to the country that men are getting rich. Instead, he says:

Some men are proud of their money--though Heaven knows they shouldn't be, for too often they have cheated people out of it, and should be no prouder of their ill gotten gains than a man is of stolen money.²⁷

And although it was only a few years ago that he had hooted at any plan that smacked of a redistribution of wealth, he now began to doubt the value to the nation of having vast fortunes concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy individuals.

The problems facing the country which demand adjustment are problems concerning the equitable distribution of the wealth piling up in this country. Property rights are sacred, but because a man has cheated his fellow men out of millions as Standard Oil cheated them in the Amalgamated Copper deal is no reason why possession of stolen millions gives the owner a title. . . .

²⁶ November 2, 1901.

²⁷ July 19, 1904.

For one million dollars a man and his family may enjoy every possible luxury of this civilization. . . . When a man owns more than a million he is using the surplus to promote great deals, in which there are unfair profits. These profits come out of some one--partly out of the laborers at the factory, partly out of the general public. This is wrong.

How shall the iniquities of our industrial system be settled? Socialism cannot solve the problem . . . it may be years being settled. In the meantime the thing to do is to eliminate selfishness on the part of rich men and prejudice on the part of the poor man and meanness on the part of everyone.²⁸

The old editorial, "What's the Matter with Kansas?" was still Mr. White's most famous, despite the fact that his views had already changed immensely. He was not yet ready to recant and admit that he was in error, but he did make a sort of half-way compromise, admitting that the old editorial was "out of date"--". . . It has no more to do with present conditions than a description of the Garden of Eden has to do with Jackson County,²⁹ Mo. . . ."30

The Enthusiastic Convert

Like all new converts, Mr. White took to his new doctrines like a fish to water. In the following selection it is interesting to note with what suspicion and distrust he looks upon people having the same views he himself had once held.

²⁸ November 2, 1904.

²⁹ The home county of Kansas City--Kansas' own Sodom and Gomorrah.

³⁰ August 15, 1904.

In these days when reactionary sentiment is being manufactured by designing men that they may continue plundering the people, it is cheerful to reflect that the people are unmoved, and that they regard the stealing of the big sinners who steal by the millions with the same scorn that they regard the pilfering of those who tap tills and break locks. . . .

The ills of humanity are curable, and even though the socialist is wrong in his medicine there can be no question about the existence of the evils.³¹

He strikes out venomously at those wealthy men whom he had once held in such high regard. Bitterly he calls down public scorn on "millionaire corsairs" who preach in Sunday Schools in their old age.

The newspapers and magazines which have scourged so many frauds from the temple in recent years might do a real good by getting after these elderly guides who are trying to square themselves with heaven by expounding the Golden Rule after violating it all their lives.³²

Then, in the latter part of 1908, came two important statements of principle which mark a definite change in position-- a definite shift from one pole of opinion to the other.

The first of these was on August 1, 1908, when he said, "The function of a government is to take the best possible care of all its subjects." The second was approximately a month later, when he wrote as follows:

The federal government is bound to put more and more restrictions on the rights of capital. . . . Capital in its essence is a public and not a private trust. Men hold it in trust. They can oper-

³¹ February 1, 1908.

³² June 11, 1908.

ate it along certain lines, only as the public directly in-
 rects.³³

"Wail, for the World's Wrong"

From this time on we constantly find quotations which show that Mr. White had come at last to the conviction that the world was not what it should be, and further that something could and should be done about it, even though this might mean treading on somebody's toes. He had achieved a feeling of increased social responsibility. On February 12, 1912, for instance, he spoke of the high rate of infant mortality, and asked, "Can the low wages that impel improper housing and unsanitary methods of living have anything to do with it?"

Again in the same year we find another lengthy editorial showing a dissatisfaction with the existing system. Mr. White had come to realize that the poor were not all lazy or bad; that the economic and social system had something to do with making people what they were.

It is all very fine to say that we get what we deserve in this world. To a certain extent that is true. But there is a wide area of life's activities wherein it is not true. . . . It is the daughters of the poor who are lured into vice; it is the sons of the poor who are fed to the molochs of crime--not because they are bad, but because they are more sorely tried than those who lead sheltered lives. More men are driven to drink because they are poor and worried with the cares of poverty than are driven to poverty because of drink.³⁴

³³ September 12, 1903.

³⁴ March 25, 1912.

And not only did the economic system operate unjustly in making people poor, he felt, but also it acted in a queerly illogical manner in making people rich.

Men like Edison, and Hammond, and the great doctors, lawyers and educators receive but frugal returns for their service, and its value is unquestioned. Compared with Edison or Hammond or Marconi, or President Elliot, what has Thomas F. Ryan ever done for all his billions?³⁵

God put the oil in the ground, not John D. and Elbridge H. Gary. They deserve something for taking these natural resources out and distributing them; but not the billions they have taken and will keep taking unless the people organized in government stop the profiteering by taxes.³⁶

All in all, Mr. White was coming to take the stand that there was something radically wrong with the distribution of wealth.

Some day the restless consciences of employers will realize that labor is not getting a fair share; that the division of the profits of industry is entirely a matter of what capital can hold back; that it is not a matter of supply and demand but a matter of power in capital's hands.³⁷

Moreover, something must be done. No longer was our editor willing to leave the righting of wrongs to "progress, which is another name for God".

A social reconstruction must be made. . . . And whenever there is a chance to take a fairly effective whack at it [the "present social status"] the Gazette for one will take it. Moreover

³⁵ April 13, 1916.

³⁶ March 16, 1920.

³⁷ December 26, 1916.

no party, no caste instinct, no traditional prejudice or foolery about economic laws shall stop or hinder this paper from hitting the old iniquity of our present social order, and hitting it hard.³⁸

Utopia--à la White

Thus had Mr. White come to regard the social order as one filled with iniquities. The question then remains--what did he propose to do about it? How far did he propose to go with his restrictions on capital? How far did he propose to go with his protection of the poor?

Certainly he was not a communist. Early in the history of Soviet Russia he wrote:

Bolshevism cannot stand if it has communication and business dealings with the outside world. It will not spread if it is allowed to fail; but if it is repressed and fails under military pressure the fools who believe in the doctrine always will hold that they could have succeeded if they had not been oppressed. The way to kill Bolshevism is to let it compete with civilization, and fail of its own folly.³⁹

Further, he opposed socialism as being too radical a change.

Socialism is vast stupidity. It sees the gross injustices of organized society and is driven mad by them. The solution of the obvious ills of the world is evolutionary. The solution is found by putting the best heart and mind of the world to work on today's problem; the progress of the world must come one step at a time. But Socialism is a plan for an entirely new order dreamed out by men who

³⁸ October 25, 1916.

³⁹ January 5, 1920.

have faith only in material solutions for ills that are deep in human nature.⁴⁰

As a matter of fact, Mr. White's new progressivism did not prevent him from remaining thoroughly convinced of the benefits of the capitalistic system. "We believe in regulating the activities of capital," he said, "as the only way to stop the ultimate destruction of capital."⁴¹

With this in mind as a background, it will be possible to discern from the following quotation just what sort of government the sage of Emporia wanted to bring about. Writing on the Ebert government in Germany, he said:

The Ebert government, called socialist, was in its general aims about what the government of Roosevelt would have been in 1913 if he had been elected. It was not a working-class government; it was a middle-class government.

Surely Christ did not die in vain. Surely Jingoism and Bolshevism--one seeking to rule the world for one class by low cunning, and the other seeking to rule the world for another class by brute force--are not the only hope of the world.⁴²

And there we have it in a nutshell. The type of government Mr. White wanted--the type he tried to put in power when he supported Roosevelt--was neither socialism or communism on the one hand, nor fascism on the other. Class government, so long as it was by laboring men on the one hand, or by a wealthy "ruling class" on the other, was taboo. What the

⁴⁰ September 17, 1920.

⁴¹ April 24, 1916.

⁴² March 15, 1920.

world needed, then, was government by neither of these groups, but rather by a middle class of moderately well-to-do business and professional men--men, interestingly enough, of Mr. White's own particular economic group.

The New Deal

At the time that this thesis is being written (December, 1934) the government of this nation is undergoing a vast and possibly permanent series of changes. Out of the great economic depression of the past several years, and the popular unrest that has come about as its result, has arisen a conglomerate grouping of schemes for economic recovery, financial relief, and social and governmental reforms which has been given the generic title, "The New Deal."

It is yet too early to evaluate properly this new plan of government. The eventual results of the changes it has made are yet to be seen. Apparently this New Deal is to include in its makeup many of the reforms first advocated widely during the progressive movement at the beginning of this century. Administration leaders have stressed time and again that the welfare of the "forgotten man" is their primary concern. Apparently, too, it is the intention of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his followers to stay strictly within the limits of democratic government and the capitalistic system in working out their reforms.

It would appear, then, that to an overwhelming degree

the New Deal is proceeding along the lines which Mr. White has advocated for some thirty years. Since this is the case, it would seem natural that Mr. White would give his full support to the present administration. An interesting conflict comes in here, however. At election times, at least, Mr. White has nearly always been found on the Republican side. (see Chapter III) Furthermore, he supported Herbert Hoover in the election of 1932, and is still preserving a personal friendship with this opponent of many phases of the New Deal. In the light of this conflict, it is interesting to note what Mr. White's editorial attitude has been.

We find in the first place a warm sympathy for many of the ideals and aims of the New Deal, as when, in speaking of the Tennessee Valley power project, he says:

The president was considering not the invested dollar. He was thinking out loud about the rights of American consumers to have the cheapest possible rates for electricity rather than about the investors' right to make the highest possible rates on invested dollars. There is a deep difference in attitude. The consumer has been the forgotten man. Someone now is thinking of him.

It is a really new deal definitely different from the old deal. Whether you like it or not, take it or leave it. But don't fool yourself into thinking that the old deal stressing dollars over men will ever come back to America.⁴³

The inevitability of the governmental changes now going on seems to impress Mr. White.

Political freedom? Yes! The right of free

⁴³ November 21, 1934.

speech, free press, free conscience? Of course! The writ of habeas corpus, trial by jury? Certainly! But the right of every man to go his own economic way and play his own selfish, sordid or silly economic game according to the dictates of his own stupidity or his own ignorant cupidity--that day is gone. A larger economic liberty will be gained by the restriction of the men who now use their liberties for economic license.⁴⁴

So in theory, at least, the Emporian was often behind the president and his policies. At other times, however, he chose to take the part of a neutral observer. For example, in speaking of the fact that the Ku Klux Klan had come out against the president, he says:

. . . So the President is being attacked from two flanks; on the one hand the American Liberty league, organized by the big shot reactionaries in the counting house, on the other hand by the little shot reactionaries in the cow pastures.

Let us hope the American people will judge the New Deal coolly and on its merits, undisturbed by the racket which comes from either the counting house or the cow pasture.⁴⁵

And again:

Step by step he has walked through this depression with a firm purpose toward a definite solution of the perplexing problems that have come upon mankind. It may or may not be the right way. He may or may not win. . . .⁴⁶

All in all, he believed that the national Democratic administration should receive the support of the people--at least until the next election.

⁴⁴ August 15, 1934.

⁴⁵ September 13, 1934.

⁴⁶ October 24, 1933.

This is no time to carp. It's no time to play politics certainly. . . .

All Americans, of whatever party, faction or creed, should stand by the President. He is shirking nothing. His fellow citizens should grant him their patriotic cooperation.⁴⁷

The quotations given thus far might have come from a pro-administration paper. But at other times the partisan spirit does tend to creep into Mr. White's writings. He sees to it, for example, that the Republican party gets its full due of credit.

Under the leadership of President Roosevelt the country has felt a new impulse of courage. It has followed him willingly, though his leadership has taken strange paths into new and untried fields of social, political and economic endeavor.

Yet without the foundation laid in the three preceding years by Herbert Hoover the work of President Roosevelt could not have gone as far as it has gone. Hoover saved the major banks, the insurance companies and the financial structure of the country. . . .⁴⁸

Mr. White seems to look beyond the New Deal, and to hope for some candidate even more satisfactory than Mr. Roosevelt.

No one, of course, is satisfied with the New Deal--no one but a hidebound, yellow-dog Democrat who would let his party do the thinking. Nevertheless, Roosevelt has changed the psychological front of the American people. He is trying to change the emphasis of the recovery from organized wealth to the average men.

A leader like Roosevelt is necessary. He is not necessarily the only leader. Possibly he is

⁴⁷ September 8, 1934.

⁴⁸ November 30, 1933.

not even the best leader. But he is a leader and he is moving in the right direction in certain important phases of the situation. Until some other leader comes going in the same direction, either faster or surer, Roosevelt deserves the support and encouragement of the American people--which doesn't mean that we have to vote the Democratic ticket to give it to him.⁴⁹

All in all, it will not be in the least surprising to see Mr. White lending his best support to the Republican candidate for the presidency in 1936. For the Republican party, he says, is not dead.

Possibly within a year it may be up on its feet ignoring the New Deal with its own definite fighting plan for recovery. But it must have new leaders with modern ideals or go the way of the Whigs.⁵⁰

His attitude toward the president himself is probably best reflected by the following quotation from an editorial on Thanksgiving Day, 1934.

We should be thankful also for our leader. He is as blind as we; a blind leader of the blind. He is facile, he moves quickly, he is clairvoyant in his reading of the public mind, he is an incarnate popular referendum. Perhaps a wiser man, a more courageous man, a more determined, stubborn, clear-visioned, hard-headed, hot hearted man with a plan and a purpose, even though it were good and wise, might wreck this nation by his very virtues. But let us thank all the gods that be for this man zig-zagging from left to right, for this man who feels the public pulse, who listens at the grass roots, who has no rugged convictions. Our American President is a drillpoint seeking the softest rock in the tunnel we must bore through to the light of another, better day. So with all our hearts let us be grateful for this man of this hour whose very faults are

⁴⁹ August 23, 1934.

⁵⁰ November 15, 1934.

virtues in this uncertain time. For him and his kind heart that would help the common man--even though he be a blind leader of the blind--let us give due and proper thanks.⁵¹

Thus it is that what opposition Mr. White has toward the present administration is directed against the party and the president, and not against political measures that make up the New Deal. In fact, it has been in only comparatively minor matters that our editor has opposed the new legislation--price-fixing policies of the National Recovery Administration, for instance, and tendencies toward monopoly under the same act. Mr. White is still a liberal.

⁵¹ November 29, 1934.

CHAPTER III: Used to any official ac-

SPECIFIC MEASURES

In this chapter an attempt is made to present Mr. White's views on specific social and economic issues, to discover whether there was any change in these views through the years, and to inquire into the degree of conformity between these views and the doctrines set forth in the preceding chapter-- between theory and practice. We have already seen how in theory, at least, our editor had turned from the conservative to the increasingly liberal stand in politics. The question then arises: when specific issues and problems of government arose, did he take a stand on these consistent with his theoretical point of view? Was there in his attitude toward regulation of trusts, regulation of railroads and public utilities, the tariff, foreign relations, and other important issues of his day, a shift parallel with the shift in theories in government?

For purposes of clearness, this chapter is divided into sections, each dealing with one certain issue. Quotations and citations from the Gazette are given, reflecting the attitude of the editor of that paper toward each issue at different times during his career.

The Redistribution of Wealth

With his firm faith in the sanctity of the status quo,

The young Mr. White was bitterly opposed to any official action towards the "artificial" redistribution of wealth. All such plans, he felt, were impossible as well as dishonest. A man gets what he earns in this world, he thought, and nothing can be done to change it.

It is a favorite cry with the populists and socialists of the violent order that if a man grows rich he will take some other man's wealth. No more false doctrine was ever preached. The average well-to-do man has acquired his means by giving the world something. In return the world gives him wealth. It doesn't come from the mouths of the poor. The poor man will be poor no matter how many rich men there are.¹

With this doctrine so uncompromisingly stated in the latter part of the nineteenth century, it is interesting to observe the changing trends in the thought of our editor during the days of the "progressive era".

The problems facing Theodore Roosevelt are problems concerning the distribution of wealth. The poor man does not share the benefits of civilization commensurate with the work he does to make civilization. . . . The poor man has more than he ever had before. . . . But on the other hand he deserves more than he gets.

Laws to regulate and control trusts; laws to regulate and control public utilities--street railroads, telephones, public heating plants, telegraph companies, water companies, lighting companies, and all corporations which serve the people with the necessaries and comforts of life--and laws to regulate and control the man who unbridles his greed behind corporate organization to oppress the people and swindle them, must be made in the next generation if the country is to maintain its integrity as a liberty cherishing people.²

¹ September 30, 1897.

² November 9, 1904.

This new attitude still persisted, and in 1912 we discover Mr. White still firmly convinced that it was the duty of the government to play the part of a sort of super-Robin Hood.

The next step will be the establishment of a living wage in each trade below which an employer may not go in hiring men for his trade. . . . [This] will take from the man who gets what he does not earn and will give it to the man who earns what he does not get.³

Thus it was that all during the following years we find the Emporia Gazette enthusiastically supporting the graduated income tax, high inheritance taxes, and other plans which might tend to "take from the man who gets what he does not earn and give to the man who earns what he does not get."

Foreign Relations

In the field of foreign relations, too, we find a gradual liberalization of Mr. White's views. At the time of the Spanish-American War, he was on the side of the expansionists, believing with President McKinley that it was the manifest destiny of the United States to expand its sway over the Pacific. At the close of the war, when the issue of "imperialism" arose between Mr. Bryan and President McKinley, the Gazette expressed the view that our nation should retain possession of the Philippine Islands. "The white man's might has made right for three thousand years," he said. "It is

³ January 16, 1912.

in every deed or conveyance or legal instrument in the civilized world, and it's not going to change for Mr. Bryan."⁴

At the time of the World War, too, Mr. White fell in line with the war spirit of his time. "We can wage a war for lasting peace if we wage it vigorously. . . . Let us make ourselves the champions of republican government in the beginning of the world's republics."⁵

Today we are a united country, fighting not a war of vengeance, nor a war of defense, but a war for democracy, a war for Christian civilization against a power which outrages small nations, which murders non-combatants ruthlessly, which enslaves prisoners, which breaks its pledged word, which torpedoes food-ships to her own starving victims, which has thrown off every vestige of obedience to international law and now knows no law but German necessity.

It is well that we waited. For now we know that the blood we shed shall be shed in a holy cause.⁶

But in the next decade came disillusionment. Asking what citizens of the nation should do in case of another war, he says it depends on the kind of war. If it were a sane and a reasonable one, all should help.

But if it were some brawl with the South American republics--either to grab land or to collect worthless loans made by New York bankers to hired revolutionists, or to protect oil leases--then every man over age should be stamping up and down the land, demanding that the war cease, and that the enemy be granted an honorable peace.⁷

⁴ August 10, 1900.

⁵ March 27, 1917.

⁶ April 3, 1917.

⁷ August 2, 1924.

Then, referring to the American intervention in Nicaragua during the Coolidge administration:

Is it good Americanism to force our boys to shed their blood for property invested under speculative terms in unstable foreign countries? Which is the better kind of Americanism--to save the blood of our soldiers or to protect the dollars of our investors? That is what the American people must answer in the next few years when we formulate our South American policy.⁸

And in a burst of irony, referring again to American interference in the South American and Central American countries, he says:

Uncle Sam . . . proposed to go in and shed the blood of his soldiers for the dollars of his investors without let or hindrance. We've got lots of blood and we've got lots of dollars, and we are a proud nation willing to spend blood at any time to uphold our honor even if our honor in another's eyes seems greed. Surely we are right and everyone else on this continent is wrong.

Hurrah, boys, hurrah!⁹

With the years came disillusionment in regard to the great World War--the war that was to have made the world safe for democracy. On Armistice Day, 1933, we find this:

Fifteen years ago today came the Armistice, and we all thought it was to be a new world. It is! But a lot worse than it was before.

Ten million men were killed, as many more maimed, fifty billion dollars worth of property destroyed, the world saddled with debt.

And for what?

What was the good of it? Four years of peace would have made a better world.

Would it have been any worse if Germany had won? Ask yourself honestly. No one knows.

⁸ February 13, 1928.

⁹ February 16, 1928.

Pointing out the fact that democracy had been destroyed

in most of the countries of Europe, our writer adds:

War is the devil's joke on humanity. So let's celebrate Armistice day by laughing our heads off.

Then let us work and pray for peace, when man can break the devil's chains and nations realize their nobler dreams.

Railroad Regulation

Another subject on which there was a marked shift of opinion was that of governmental regulation of railroad rates. In the early days of his editorship Mr. White was thoroughly opposed to any action that would prevent the railways from running their own business in their own way. He laughed at the Populist outcry against prevalent abuses. "There is probably more clap trap and flap doodle in circulation concerning the railroads than there is current concerning any other topic," he said; adding that while the rail lines might have their faults, they were a product of the system of competition, "which has thus far been found to be the best that has been invented."¹⁰

Later on we find the following quotation: "The Gazette remarked a short time ago that lower freight rates would not benefit the farmer. . . ."¹¹

And in 1900 Mr. White goes so far as to poke fun at the

¹⁰ July 17, 1896.

¹¹ August 2, 1896.

railroad octopus; he seems at times even to doubt the existence of an octopus. Remarking on the fact that at the time of writing there were no state laws (and, of course, no effective national laws¹²) regulating rail transportation, he says:

The railroad octopus in the state is unchained;
he is roaming the hills and dales of the state dragging his lariat. . . .

The sun still rises in the east.

Water goes down hill.

Men love their wives and sweethearts. Children play merrily out in the twilight without fear; and the old bull octopus harms them not.

Can it be . . . that railroad laws are fifth wheels to wagons and that shippers and railroads get together as other people do--merchants and their customers, farmers and their patrons?

Is there really a natural law in the business world that operates when legislative enactment fails?

Well, well, well--!

Now what do you think of that?¹³

Thus it was that Mr. White was definitely against railroad regulation in the old conservative days. But on December 29, 1904, immediately after a railroad message to congress by his hero, Roosevelt, our editor, too, came out for rate regulation. And by 1905 he had definitely discovered that the octopus truly did exist.

It is funny--how we all have discovered the octopus; an animal whose very existence we denied ten or a dozen years ago.

The other day a pamphlet came to the Gazette

¹² Only the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887.

¹³ September 19, 1900.

which seemed about the right thing. It was going after railroad discrimination. It seemed sane and calm and well poised. The man who wrote it seemed to have his head full of facts ground through the wheels of logic. When, lo and behold, the pamphlet was written and printed in 1890, and was written by Percy Daniels!¹⁴ The sun do move. This is a funny world!¹⁵

In the years following the editor of the Gazette became as vociferous a crusader against the railroads as had been his Populist opponents in the early days. In 1908: "President Roosevelt . . . had seen what every one in Washington knew, that the railroads were robbing the people. . . ." ¹⁶ And again in 1917, praising a Kansas congressman for fighting the railroads, he says that the latter had been "robbing the post office department of millions of dollars by the use of an illegal and impossible divisor in weighing and accounting mail. . . . The robbery was crass. It was plain larceny." ¹⁷

So vanished a young man's illusions in regard to the railroads of his day.

Trust Regulation

On the subject of regulation of trusts, too, we find a shift toward the left. In the beginning Mr. White, true to his doctrine of laissez faire, was inclined to jibe not only

¹⁴ The populist lieutenant governor of Kansas in 1893.

¹⁵ April 11, 1905.

¹⁶ August 3, 1908.

¹⁷ January 17, 1917.

at all plans for curbing monopolies, but also at any suggestion that there might be a need for such action. On February 13, 1900, he was moved to indignation by the following statement by a liberal agitator of the day: "But let this trust monopolizing go on, and mark the change; then every little boy and every little girl born into this land under the Stars and Stripes except a favored few, will be born into a condition of slavery, the worst the world has ever known." "To which," says Mr. White, "the free born makes answer, 'Rats,' in tones as loud as his extreme fatigue will permit him to use without rupturing a blood vessel."

But less than two weeks later, on February 26, a specific situation had arisen--a specific abuse on the part of the "sugar trust", which called forth a little antagonistic comment.

The Gazette is not afraid of the trust bogie, but when any corporation develops the greed of a beast, it forfeits consideration of man. The trusts that oppose Puerto Rican free trade have no rights that a white man is bound to respect. If the Republican majority in Congress allies itself with the trusts in this matter--God help the country for the next four years.¹⁸

And only two months after the death of President McKinley, after the beginning of the anti-trust agitation by his leader, Roosevelt, we find that the conservative White has made a complete about-face.

The men who control the big financial concerns

¹⁸ February 26, 1900.

in Wall Street are just as blind and foolish as the Populist farmers of Kansas were in '90. . . .

They imagine that money is bigger than government, beyond control, and entirely an independent creation. The Republican party will seek to put the so called trusts under control; a bill may be urged for passage which as a law will compel the trusts to recognize control just as national banks do; to submit statements of earnings; to submit to occasional governmental examinations. This law would be a fair law.¹⁹

From this time on The Emporia Gazette was among the most vociferous in "viewing with alarm" the oppressive and un-American tactics of the big business combines, and in calling for their drastic regulation. Loud indeed was the praise of the Gazette on March 16, 1908, after federal Judge Kensaw Mountain Landis had fined the Standard Oil Trust an unprecedented sum and had ordered it to dissolve.

Tariffs

On the subject of tariffs we find a considerably slower evolution; nevertheless, there is a distinct change from a position favoring the high protective tariff to one demanding a lowering of those same duties.

In the McKinley campaign Mr. White was to be found in the forefront of those editors supporting the Republican position in favor of a higher tariff. In regard to the Wilson tariff bill, passed during the Cleveland administration, he said, "The injury to the business interests of the coun-

¹⁹ October 30, 1901.

try cannot be computed."²⁰ And again he discusses the effect of the low Democratic tariff on the farmers of the nation, saying that this tariff, which had put American workmen out of their jobs, was also hurting farm prices, by allowing low-priced Mexican cattle and other foreign farm products to compete with those of our own tillers of the soil.²¹

Then, following the election of McKinley, a bill calling for higher import duty rates was enacted.²² To this bill, the Dingley Bill, Mr. White attributed the "oncoming wave of prosperity."²³ Nor did it hurt the farmer. Said he, "The farmer is buying his protected calico cheaper than he ever did. He is selling his protected cattle at an advance over last year's price."²⁴ Protection, said our editor, does not increase prices unless the buyer gets "toney" and wants to get British goods.

Queerly enough, all these arguments in favor of a high tariff in America became null and void when Germany, too, sought to raise her tariffs. Mr. White quotes the Lawrence, Kansas, Journal to show why the high tariff he favored--for America--would not work--in Germany.

²⁰ July 2, 1896.

²¹ July 17, 1896.

²² Woodrow Wilson, op. cit., p. 319.

²³ August 21, 1897.

²⁴ October 28, 1897.

There is no real menace or loss to American industries, save temporarily, in the next to prohibitive duties levied by Germany against our food products. . . . Germany has committed a grave economic blunder in yielding to the demand of her agricultural population for high duties on American grain. Germany has struggled into a prominent place among the manufacturing nations of the earth. But to keep the price of labor at the lowest notch has been necessary in building up this trade. . . . And now she has deliberately increased the cost of living. . . . And she must increase the pay of these laborers or they will starve. And this means that the cost of her manufactures will be increased until her power of competition will be destroyed.²⁵

In 1904 the Gazette came out in favor of the following proposed tariff plank for the Republican party, supposed to have been originated by Senator Lodge of Massachusetts and President Theodore Roosevelt.

Protection . . . is a cardinal principle of the Republican party . . . but we recognize that particular tariff schedules are neither sacred or immutable. Rates of duty may be altered when changed conditions demand their alteration, but no revision should be undertaken unless clear that the benefits will more than compensate for the disturbance. . . . Nor can such revision be entrusted to any other than the party of protection.²⁶

Soon we begin to see Mr. White, although still favoring protection for the American industries, objecting to protective tariffs that are too high.

The tariff needs revision. There is no question that many of its provisions are outrageously high, and that the great mass of people are paying too much duty on certain things to protect industries, that do not need protection any longer.

²⁵ October 1, 1901.

²⁶ May 17, 1904.

But that does not mean that there is going to be a lopping off of those tariffs without giving the country some benefit. The Republicans will cut down schedules, but they will get reductions and trade advantages for every reduction this country makes.²⁷

In 1908 we find him talking about a tariff "equal to the difference in the cost of production here and abroad."²⁸

But he still was thoroughly opposed to the low-tariff policies of the Democratic party.

The iniquitous Wilson-Gorman tariff of 1894 . . . paralyzed American industry, forced the closing of hundreds of mills and factories, drove tens of thousands of wage-earners into idleness and brought want and misery to their families.²⁹

In the Taft-Bryan campaign in 1908 Mr. White favored Taft and a "tariff revision", fearing a business depression if Bryan, favoring "tariff for revenue" were elected.³⁰

Such an attitude persisted for a good many years. On May 13, 1924, we find Mr. White still saying he is "sound" on the Republican tariff attitude.

But after the passage of the unusually high Hawley-Smoot tariff bill, and after the beginning of the fourth decade of the century, we find a rather sharp change in attitude. On January 22, 1932, he speaks of the fact that American manufacturers were being driven by high tariffs to establish

²⁷ December 9, 1904.

²⁸ June 10, 1908.

²⁹ October 13, 1908.

³⁰ October 15, 1908.

plants in Canada, saying:

What now becomes of the beautiful theory that the American tariff gave a high standard of living to the American workman, lifting him off the world level? If the statesmen who jammed the tariff down our throats would consult the American workingmen, we wonder if he would prefer to be on the world level and have a job, or remain on the American level in the breadline?³¹

And again, when American farmers were demanding some sort of export subsidy, the Emporian advised them as follows:

Would not the farmer be wiser to turn his efforts toward kicking the snouts of the manufacturers away from the public trough--reducing tariffs and government subsidy of prices so that the farmer may buy his necessities at the same low world level on which he must sell his products?³²

Injunctions in Strikes

Among the planks of the Populist party was one opposing the use of court injunctions in strikes. In addition to his general opposition to the Populist movement, Mr. White saw fit, on September 7, 1897, to print an editorial directed specifically at this anti-injunction stand.

But on this subject, too, came a change, and on August 29, 1912, appeared another editorial specifically praising the platform of the Republican party in Kansas because of its labor planks. These called for the exemption of unions from the anti-trust laws, an eight-hour day for women, work-

³¹ January 22, 1932.

³² February 5, 1932.

men's compensation, etc., and more especially, called for the prohibition of "injunctions without a hearing and punishment for contempt of court not in the courtroom."

In the summer of 1922 Mr. White showed that he was willing to fight for what he believed to be his constitutional rights, in the face of an injunction issued by the Kansas Industrial Court. In his own irrepressible way, the Emporia editor defied the court to enforce an injunction which he believed to be illegal. Let him tell the story in his own words:

WE ARE FOR THE STRIKING RAILROAD MEN 100 PER CENT.

WE ARE FOR A LIVING WAGE AND FAIR WORKING CONDITIONS.

These words on a card in a number of Emporia show windows express a mild opinion of friendly sympathy with the strikers. The cards have been ordered out by the Kansas Industrial Court. The order is an infamous infraction on the right of free press and free speech. Certainly it has not come to such a pass in this country that a man may not say what he thinks about an industrial controversy without disobeying the law.

One of these cards went up in the Gazette window today. Instead of 100 per cent, we have started it at 49 per cent. If the strike lasts until tomorrow we shall change the per cent to 50, and move it up a little every day. As a matter of fact, the Gazette does not believe that any one--not even the Gazette--is 100 per cent right. But somewhere 49 and 100 per cent the men are right. And if the Industrial Court desires to make a test case, here it is. This is not a question of whether the men are right or wrong, but a question of the right of an American citizen to say what he pleases about this strike. And if 49 per cent sympathy is permissible, in the next fifty days we shall all see where violation of the law begins. The Industrial Court which we have upheld from its conception, and still uphold, will have the nicest little chance to see just where it is lawful for a man to express his sympathy with his friends and neighbors, even if in his heart he believes they have made a mistake in the time of their strike.

Either we have free speech and a free press in this country, or we have not. Now is the time to find out.³³

Direct Primaries

With typical conservative reluctance to make any change in existing conditions, the editor of the Gazette in 1897 was opposed to plans for introducing the direct primary to take the place of the convention system of making party nominations. On October 27, 1897, we find an editorial opposing this change, on the grounds that no law could do away with ignorance and apathy on the part of the voters. The only way to get better party nominees, said this editorial, was to educate the voters.

But time changes all things, and shortly after the turn of the century the Gazette enrolled itself on the side of the direct primaries. On July 14, 1904, appeared an editorial calling for a strengthening of the existing primary law in order to do away with fraud and corruption (a reversal from the attitude that laws could do nothing), and on January 29, 1903, appeared another editorial praising the direct primary as a telling blow at machine politics.

Changes in the Gazette

As the owner of the Gazette acquired an increasing inter-

³³ July 19, 1922.

est in the social welfare (or, as some cynics might say, as he acquired increased financial independence), we find appropriate changes in the advertising and editorial policies of the paper. Take patent medicine advertisements. In the early days the advertising columns of the Gazette were filled with ads of various remedies and nostrums. "Today take Foley's Honey and Tar. It Positively Prevents Pneumonia. . . ."

"Relentless Rheumatism Conquered--Dr. Holt's Rheumatic Remedy."

"Asthma, bronchitis, la gripe (sic) and all throat, chest and lung diseases are surely cured by it."

And in 1908 the Gazette was still defending the practice of publishing patent medicine advertisements.

The ultra virtuous paper that prides itself upon the absence of medicine advertisements from its columns is about as logical as the clothing merchant who would brag that he kept no pants in stock. . . . [A patent medicine advertisement] is as legitimate as the announcement of the dealer who sells hominy, hams or horses.³⁴

But eventually such ads were dropped from the paper. In 1912 Mr. White saw fit to congratulate Collier's magazine, which was conducting a militant crusade against the manufacturers of fake medicines.

Collier's has renewed its campaign against the fake patent medicine makers and such a holy war should be generally endorsed. The meanest swindler in the world is the one who trades on the misfortunes of invalids.³⁵

³⁴ March 13, 1908.

³⁵ February 17, 1912.

Collier's is doing a genuine public service in exposing the worthless nostrums with which sick people are goldbricked.³⁶

And by 1924 the Gazette was able to take a pleasantly superior air toward other papers in the state which were running advertisements for the patent medicines.

A lot of Kansas papers, whose editors know better are beginning to take patent medicine advertising which was thrown out years ago by the revolt of public sentiment. The advertising that they are taking is just as dirty as it was when the public sentiment rebelled. Evidently the editors think the people have gone to sleep.³⁷

And not only in regard to patent nostrums, but also on a number of other subjects of like nature the editor of the Gazette changed his mind considerably during the years. Let him tell his own story.

As we live longer in the newspaper business we see more and more things which shouldn't be in the paper. To put out the kind of paper we printed ten years ago would turn us yellow with mortification; and the Gazette of 20 years ago would stink to high heaven. Divorce news, other than the bare statement of the findings of the court, went out early in the game; resolutions of respect followed. Patent medicines stepped on the heels of resolutions of respect, and advertising of travelling doctors and painless dentists bumped into the patent medicines. The names of first offenders in police court, unless under unusual circumstances, dropped out after the quack doctors, and advertising of unlisted mining and promotion stock followed the first offenders. Now we are going to refuse after today to take any more advertising of the fellow who gives public notice of his re-

³⁶ May 10, 1912.

³⁷ February 18, 1924.

fusal to pay his wife's bills.³³

In addition to the issues discussed thus far in this chapter, Mr. White also came to favor numerous other laws and proposed laws which are generally considered to be "liberal" or "progressive", and which previously, either by implication or specifically, he had opposed. These are too numerous to be discussed in detail here. To mention only a few, they include popular election of United States senators, old-age pensions, widows' pensions, high inheritance taxes, franchise taxes, federal income taxes, state income taxes, health safeguards for laboring men, hiring of lawyers in court trials by the government ("free justice"); cancellation of the war debt (as early as 1920), the World Court, and the League of Nations.

38 January 2, 1917.

CHAPTER IV

PARTY AND CANDIDATES

The purpose of this chapter is to ascertain whether Mr. White has consistently supported the party and the man most likely to bring about the form of government he favored. In other words, has he put principle above party, or has party regularity taken first place in his mind?

As a matter of fact, Mr. White is on record as opposing a blind fealty to party, regardless of candidates and platform. In 1920, after the death of Theodore Roosevelt, he remarked on the fact that candidates for the Republican presidential nomination were displaying letters from T. R., saying:

And why not? They are not pulling these Roosevelt endorsements because he was a regular party man, but because he was a regular American! And isn't patriotism bigger than partisanship? A man who tries to make his party record more consistent than his patriotic record, could never write a letter that would get a man votes after his death.¹

And, for that matter, Mr. White in 1912 did bolt Taft in favor of the Progressive candidate, Theodore Roosevelt. But in the period between 1896 and 1932, during which there were ten presidential elections, this was the only instance in which Mr. White did bolt the Republican nominee. All this is in spite of the fact that this list of nominees included

¹ March 12, 1920.

Harding and Coolidge, men with whose principles, as we shall see, our editor was distinctly not in sympathy.

And even more definite is his record of party regularity in regard to county nominees. Here is the record.

July 5, 1904--Party loyalty is very properly not what it used to be . . . but . . . if the Republican ticket now before the people were not the best ticket that has been put out for years, the Gazette would not feel free to talk so freely about bolting. . . . It is stronger and better than the Democratic ticket in every way.

September 28, 1908--It has been many years since the Gazette has felt bound to ask its readers to support the Republican ticket from top to bottom and all around the edges. But this year . . . the Republican ticket is without flaw or blemish.

November 2, 1912--The voters of Lyon County never had better reasons for voting a straight Republican county ticket than they have this fall. . . . At no place . . . is there a logical excuse for scratching this gilt-edged Republican ticket.

September 6, 1916--The Republican county ticket is a strong ticket. It should have the support of every voter in the county who places good government above party success.

September 13, 1920--What a great ticket it is--the Republican ticket from top to bottom. Forgetting for a moment about the Presidential end--for the Gazette's support is conspicuous there--consider the state, district and county features of the Republican ticket. Did you ever see a stronger state ticket in Kansas? . . .

With such a ticket as confronts the Republicans of Kansas there is no excuse for any Republican bolting his ticket. The Gazette has never been in favor of "straight" voting. But this year it is about the only thing a Republican can do.

September 19, 1924--As county tickets go the Republican ticket is better than the Democratic county ticket . . . with two exceptions.

November 3, 1928--A straight Republican ticket with

no omissions or mental reservations is the best possible course for Kansas voters in next Tuesday's election.

August 22, 1932--Lyon county Republicans never nominated a better ticket than they are supporting today. From top to bottom it is a good ticket. For some reason lady luck has been good to the Republicans this year in that she has so arranged it that every Republican candidate is a little better qualified for the job than his Democratic opponent.

September 29, 1934--The Republicans never have put up a stronger ticket in Lyon county than is before the people for election today.

Harding and Coolidge

From this it would appear that Mr. White has been pretty consistently a party regular. Let us now consider two outstanding instances in which principle and party regularity definitely clashed--the instances of Harding and Coolidge.

On March 24, 1920, when Senator Harding was but one of many candidates for the Republican nomination, Mr. White wrote as follows:

Harding . . . is a product of our institutions; he hasn't had an idea in 30 years. He is against every advance made in this country in a dozen years. He has a record against every constitutional change we have made in the past decade. He has opposed every forward step that America has made either in war or peace. His public declaration is stupid where it is not crooked, sometimes both. . . .

He would out-Taft Taft in reaction, and out-Wilson Wilson in stubbornness, and split the Republican party on the old crack.²

This was Harding as the Emporia editor saw him before he

² March 24, 1920.

became the Republican presidential nominee. But once he became the party's choice, what a different picture of him we see painted in The Emporia Gazette! To be sure, the support he gets is a grudging one; nevertheless, he is supported. Mr. White says that while the Republican party could perhaps have chosen a candidate more to his own liking, still:

He is a clean, honest man. His Republicanism is unchallenged. He was by far the strongest man who could have been named by that convention. He can poll more votes than either Lowden or Wood. He has no burden of radicalism or militarism to carry. He will conform to Republican opinion when elected. And every man or woman who calls himself a Republican should vote for Harding. He will be supported by the Emporia Gazette this fall, along with the rest of the Republican ticket. Harding and Coolidge look good to me. . . .³

Interesting indeed is the following quotation, in which Mr. White, admitting Harding to be a hidebound conservative, nevertheless supports him with the pious hope that after his election he may become a liberal.

There can be no doubt that the Republican liberals are going to support Harding. . . . Yet Harding by no chance may be called a liberal Republican. But times change and men change. Mr. Harding at present may be a rather different man from the man who made the record which Senator Harding made and Governor Harding foreshadowed.⁴

Still more interesting is the latter part of this same editorial, in which the Emporian, admitting Harding to be the type who would depend on others for advice as to what to do,

³ June 14, 1920.

⁴ June 17, 1920.

expressed the wish that maybe he would take advice from the liberal members of his party.

And here is another reason for his favoring the nominee:

[Harding] . . . was clearly the choice of the convention and no man who calls himself a Republican has any right to bolt the nomination of Harding merely because he believes differently from Harding.⁵

This is rather a sharp contrast with the attitude Mr. White took in 1912, when he bolted the Republican ticket and gave his support to Theodore Roosevelt. At that time the fact that William Howard Taft was the Republican nominee did not appear to stand in the way of Mr. White's opposing him.

And later in the campaign we find that the Gazette is supporting Harding, conspicuous for his connection with the "Ohio gang" in Republican politics, for the amazing reason that Cox, his opponent, belonged to the party of Tammany!

Then, when the campaign was over, and Harding had been elected largely on the strength of his promises to restore "normalcy", Mr. White says, rather naively, "Here's hoping he will face forward--and forget the old 'normalcy'".

Such was the campaign of 1920. Now for that of 1924. In that year there were three major candidates for office--in addition to the regular party nominees, Robert M. LaFollette was running for president on the Progressive ticket.

This third party was not, indeed, a negligible factor in the race, receiving as it did some 16.5 per cent of the

⁵ June 24, 1920.

popular vote in the fall election.⁶

Now LaFollette was a man about whose views Mr. White had completely reversed his attitude since his early days on the Gazette. In the old conservative days he had held him in contempt, at one time quoting the Washington Post, which referred to LaFollette and other progressives as wild men and freaks. But as his own views came to be more and more like those of the Wisconsin senator, Mr. White's attitude toward him softened.

. . . His record vote is a guide in the Senate to the brave, statesmanlike course in every crisis. . . . For not once has he ever lined up with special privilege. Always has he been fighting for more equitable economic conditions for the people; always has he stood for broader and more democratic control of this government. The aristocracy of organized aggrandized wealth and crafty political plutocracy knows Senator LaFollette for its uncompromising foe.⁷

Toward President Coolidge, on the other hand, Mr. White's attitude was not nearly so sympathetic, as can be seen from the following quotation referring to the Teapot Dome scandal.

The thing goes deeper than Fall's bad taste in accepting loans which may be called bribes. The thing goes back to the reactionary policy of the men who dominate the Republican party.

The conservative, whether he is Democrat or Republican, believes that for the government to own and drill for oil for the navy is socialism. . . . So Fall and Denby and Daugherty were not shocked when the law was violated by the Teapot Dome lease. The lease was a policy that was a part of the Harding policy. It also is a part of

⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 564.

⁷ July 19, 1916.

the Coolidge policy. . . .

Until this country gets around to a progressive administration . . . the country will have just such scandals.⁸

Here we have Mr. White definitely on record as saying that such things as the Teapot Dome affair would continue until the country got around to a progressive administration. Yet in 1924, with Coolidge, Davis, and LaFollette as candidates, the Emporian swung his support to Coolidge.

Coolidge has more luck than the other two combined. Nothing can defeat him. The west is coming to him as the man who made the wheat and corn crop. The east is coming to him as the man who tamed the west by bringing in the big corn crop, and he may get some states in the solid south because they realize there is no use bucking a sure thing.

. . . He says little and thinks little. . . . In a safe day he is the apotheosis of safety first.

Why tempt fate by opposing him?⁹

And again, as in the preceding campaign, we find the air filled with fantastic explanations as to why the Republican candidate should receive the voters' support. Coolidge must receive a majority in the electoral college, says Mr. White, because otherwise the election of the president will be thrown into the house of representatives, where LaFollette has enough strength to cause a deadlock. Then it will be up to the senate to elect a vice-president who will serve as president. LaFollette will throw his strength to Charles Bryan of Nebraska, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee. Therefore

⁸ February 1, 1924.

⁹ July 30, 1924.

Unless the voters of the country give enough votes in the electoral college to elect Calvin Coolidge, America is up against a complete revolution in her political, economic and social organization; not a bloody revolution, of course, but one that will overturn the existing order and lead us into channels for which our people are not prepared. . . .

The country is not ready now to stand the shock that would come if an untried and inexperienced leader should take the helm, try to reverse the ship, and steer through the stormy waters ahead.¹⁰

Hoover

In the election of 1928, the race was between Herbert Hoover and Alfred E. Smith. Our editor had a great deal of respect for Governor Smith's economic and social views, even going so far as to compare him with his political hero, Theodore Roosevelt. He said: "[Smith] is a sort of Rooseveltian Democrat, who favors social and industrial justice even as Roosevelt did, and who goes in for a lot of things for which Roosevelt was denounced as a socialist." But he did not like Smith's "wet" stand on the prohibition question, and so supported Hoover.

After four years of the Hoover administration nearly all the progressive Republican senators, whose policies Mr. White had supported vigorously all along, bolted to the Democratic nominee, Franklin D. Roosevelt. But again the sage of Emporia decided to support the nominee of his own party.

¹⁰ August 19, 1924.

Thus we see that with only one notable exception Mr. White's views on social questions were not sufficiently strong to make him cross party lines. Indeed, on June 18, 1928, he boasted, "During the third of a century the Republican ticket has stood at the top of the editorial column of the Gazette every presidential election except 1912--the Bull Moose year."

Mr. White has his own explanation of this fidelity to party. Let him speak for himself, in the following quotation:

We once went out of the Republican party, banging the door, and took a look at it from the outside. The longer we looked the bigger it got, so we went in again, and again banged the door, and we have decided that we can do more good for the particular kind of deviltry that is in our heart inside the party than without.¹¹

And inside his party, it must be admitted, he has done a great deal to bring about the nomination of progressives for state and even national offices. But here, too, there are exceptions--times at which he has supported conservatives for the party nomination. An outstanding example was in 1928, when he favored Senator Charles Curtis, an outstanding Kansas conservative, for the Republican presidential nomination. Here is a statement he made at the time.

Isn't there something in politics more than the hard realities? Isn't sentiment worth while, gratitude worth while, decent neighborly association worth while? All these things are in the Curtis candidacy in Kansas, and they are a credit to human nature. The Gazette is proud to be lined

¹¹ August 18, 1922.

up under them, although it has never supported Curtis in the day when the fight was staged between the Progressives and the Conservatives.¹²

It will be seen, then, that in these latter years party regularity was a primary interest of the Emporia editor, at times even taking precedence over his liberal political views.

12 March 7, 1928.

to the Emporia editor
to progressive

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the facts compiled in the preceding chapters, we may arrive, at least tentatively, at the following conclusions.

(1) That Mr. White's theories of government definitely shifted from conservative to progressive, with changes in attitude as follows:

(a) From the belief in the near perfection of the existing social and economic order to a demand for thoroughgoing reforms.

(b) From the belief that the government should adopt a laissez-faire attitude in regard to invested capital to a demand for rigid regulation of the same.

(c) From an opposition to government action leading to redistribution of wealth to a support of such action.

(d) From an opposition to "government paternalism to a belief that it is the duty of the government "to take the best possible care of its subjects."

(2) That this shift of opinion took place largely during the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt, who may have been a major influence in causing Mr. White to change his mind.

(3) That the type of government Mr. White came to favor in later years was neither Socialism, Communism, nor Fascism,

but rather a middle-class government preserving the capitalistic system.

(4) That on certain issues of social significance Mr. White took the attitude consistent with his theories. The tariff issue appears to be the only exception to this general conclusion.¹

(5) That in the latter years Mr. White's fidelity to party frequently took precedence over his fidelity to his theories; and that because of party membership or personal friendship he frequently supported men for office who did not favor his plans or who even opposed them outright.

¹ See pp. 39-43.

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