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Insurgency in Minnesota

The Defeat of James A. Tawney in 1910

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THE REPUBLICAN PARTY was in serious trouble in the summer of 1910.¹ The eruption of bitter internal warfare threatened an end to the control of both branches of the federal government and most state governments which the Republicans had enjoyed for a decade and a half. A Democratic victory in the 1910 congressional elections seemed imminent, and party leaders worried about Republican chances in the 1912 presidential contest.

The internecine strife which split the party into two warring factions was essentially a power struggle between the Old Guard conservatives, or "standpatters," who dominated Republican congressional leadership, and the progressive "insurgents" who challenged that leadership. The progressives charged that the Old Guard ruled the party and the nation for the welfare of vested interests rather than for the people as a whole. The insurgent revolt in the Sixty-first Congress of 1909-10 was an integral

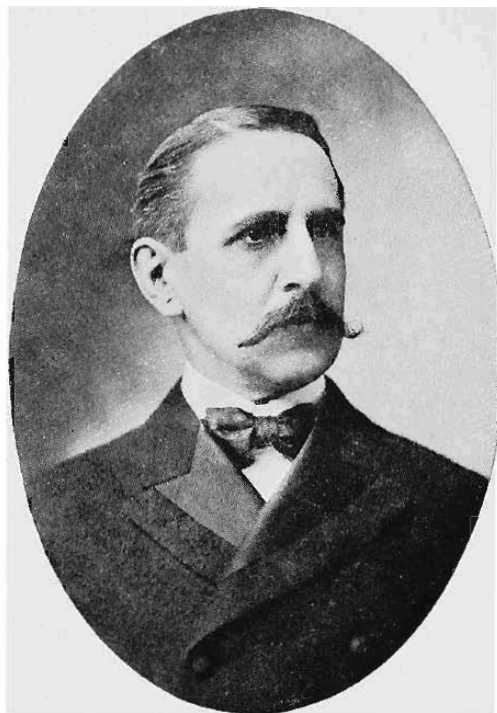
phase of the widespread progressive movement which permeated many aspects of American life in the early 1900s.

The defection of progressive Republican congressmen centered around the autocratic domination of the House by its colorful and irascible speaker, Joseph G. Cannon. The insurgents attacked Cannon's arbitrary exercise of his powers to block, delay, and water down progressive legislation. By the spring of 1910, the strength of the rebellious group, composed mostly of Midwesterners, had grown considerably. They attacked the legislative program which President William Howard Taft presented in January; after bitter and protracted struggles, they forced the regulars to accept their amendments to several administration bills. Their most notable achievement, however, was their victory in an epochal three-day battle to amend the House rules and strip the speaker of some of his powers.²

As summer approached, both factions marshalled forces for the coming primary elections. With Taft's quiet but active support, the regulars engaged in a massive effort to purge the insurgent congressmen, while local progressive groups prepared to replace prominent standpatters. The insurgents' patronage was curtailed and support from the national campaign committee was denied them; indeed, the administration

¹ The author is extremely grateful to Miss Vicki D. Sherwin for technical assistance and for help in preparing the manuscript of this article.

² By combining with the Democrats, the insurgents passed an amendment making the rules committee subject to election by the whole House and prohibiting the speaker from serving on it. A good account of the insurgent movement and the legislative battles of 1910 may be found in Kenneth W. Hechler, *Insurgency: Personalities and Politics of the Taft Era* (New York, 1940).



James A. Tawney

backed standpat elements in the insurgents' own home districts. Party regularity and allegiance to President Taft was the basis of the conservatives' campaign.³ Insurgent congressmen relied on progressive elements in their home states and a growing progressive temper across the nation.

A series of primary battles took place throughout the spring and summer, beginning in Ohio during May and ending in Minnesota on September 20. After a few minor victories by each faction, national progressive sentiment surged in late summer. One by one, the progressives scored impressive gains in August and September. Altogether, insurgent challengers unseated twenty regulars, many of them committee chairmen, while only one progressive incumbent met defeat. In the Midwest, ten standpatters were retired from Congress.⁴

By far the greatest progressive triumph was the final one — the defeat of James A. Tawney, representative from Minnesota's first district and chairman of the powerful appropriations committee. Tawney was the

most influential standpatter to be unseated in 1910, and progressives around the nation rejoiced at this devastating blow to the Cannon organization. Tawney's defeat for renomination by a young political novice was regarded as proof of the nation's progressive temper and the rejection by Republican voters of "Cannonism" and rule by special interests.

The victory over Tawney registered the high-water mark of the insurgent revolt. But when progressives described his defeat as a vindication of their principles and a return to true representative government, they allowed political rhetoric to cloud the realities of the situation. Although the ideological factor was probably the most important one, Tawney's defeat might not have been accomplished except for a combination of fortuitous local circumstances: quirks in the Minnesota primary law, widespread participation by Democrats, and the ethnic attraction of his opponent.

TAWNEY HAD BEEN a regular Republican since his entry into Congress in 1893. Throughout the insurgent revolt he resolutely stuck by Cannon and the House leadership except for a brief and unsuccessful fight for free lumber in the 1909 tariff debates. Extremely able and industrious, Tawney had risen quickly within the ranks of the party, reaching the chairmanship of the committee on appropriations in 1905. This post made him a key figure in the federal government; he was regarded as second only to Cannon in the power he wielded in the House. Since Cannon had aided Tawney's career, the Minnesotan stood by him faithfully.

³ George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 98, 107, 113 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1946); William P. Hepburn to George D. Perkins, February 21, March 2, 1910, George D. Perkins Papers, in the State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines, Iowa.

⁴ For a detailed account of the events of the summer and the midwestern primaries, see Roger E. Wyman, "Insurgency and the Elections of 1910 in the Middle West," unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1964.

Tawney was supreme in the realm of governmental expenditures. A diligent guardian of the public treasury, he never ceased to scrutinize appropriation bills to eliminate waste and to keep expenditures minimal; at the same time he was willing to vote considerable amounts for purposes he felt necessary, as, for example, a scientific tariff commission.

Tawney was also a steadfast believer in the supremacy of the legislative branch. The combination of his talent, strong beliefs, and powerful position made him a formidable opponent, as President Theodore Roosevelt discovered during his final years in the White House when Congress jealously sought to maintain its ascendancy over the executive. In 1908–09 Tawney became a chief source of the president's bitterness. A large and powerful navy had always been one of Roosevelt's fondest hopes, and he persistently wrangled with Congress over naval appropriations. In 1908 Congress withheld two of the four battleships he requested, and Tawney sought to have the number cut to one. After Roosevelt used the secret service to investigate land frauds, some of which involved congressmen, Tawney had the agency's appropriations cut in 1908 and limited its functions to deterring counterfeiting and protecting the president; the Rough Rider fulminated against this more than any other action of Congress. Roosevelt's pioneering work in the

field of conservation was regarded by conservatives like Tawney as another example of executive usurpation. One of the president's more important contributions in this area was the creation by executive order of the Conservation, Inland Waterways, and Country Life commissions. Just before Roosevelt left office, Tawney secured an amendment to an appropriations bill prohibiting the use of money by any agency not created by Congress, thus effectively halting the operations of these valuable but extralegal commissions.⁵

Tawney's diligence was apparent in electoral politics as well as in congressional matters. He seemed secure from defeat, if not invincible, in the ten counties of southeastern Minnesota which made up the first congressional district. Over the years Tawney had created an extensive and loyal political organization that provided him with huge victory margins. He never faced primary opposition until 1908. In that year he lost two counties but polled 57.4 per cent of the district's vote; in November his usual margin slipped somewhat but remained a comfortable 2,756 votes.⁶

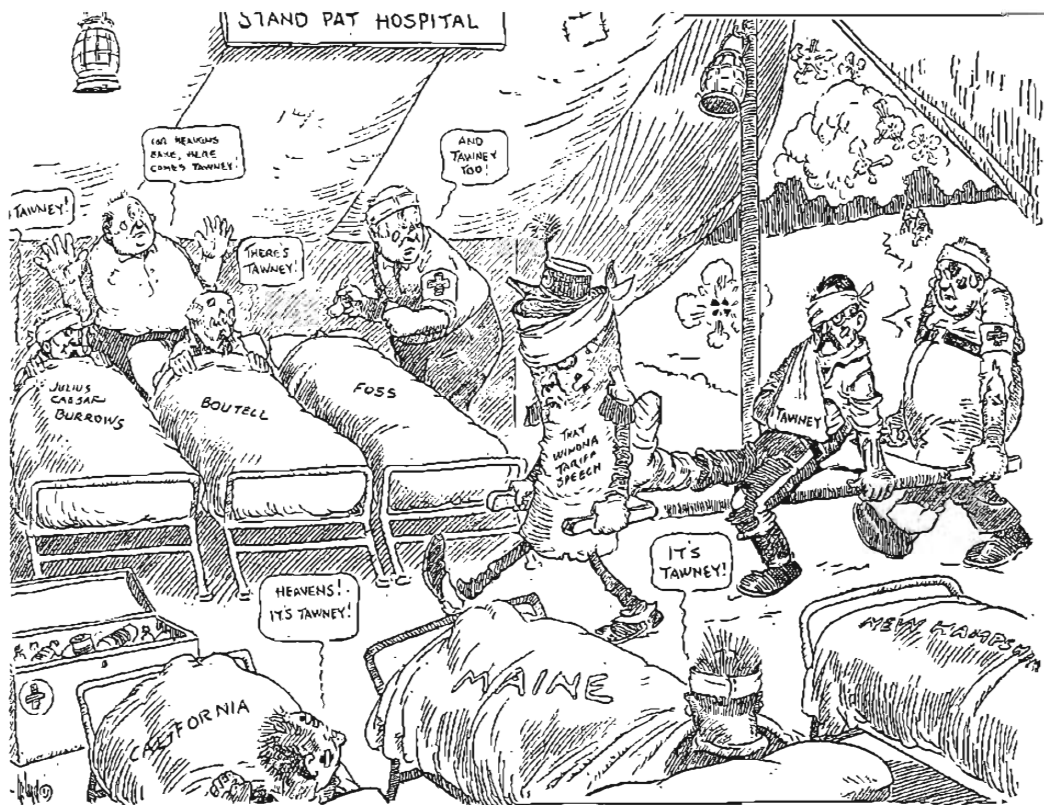
Tawney's formidable machine ran on federal patronage. He used the ingenious device of appointing publishers as postmasters, which gave him virtual control over the district's press and assured him of its loyalty at election time. This was perhaps his greatest political asset and was so recognized by the opposition; the few dissenting newspapers repeatedly denounced the Tawney "postoffice press."⁷ Postmasters and other appointees also formed vital links in Tawney's campaign organization. Indeed, it proved so efficient that Tawney rarely campaigned actively himself; he made only one major speech in the 1908 primary.

Patronage distribution was not Tawney's only strategy for continuing electoral success. He worked arduously to insure that his district received more than its share of federal buildings and other benefits from the pork barrel. He was instrumental in

⁵ *Congressional Record*, 60 Congress, 1 session, 4806, 4614–4616, 5554–5559; 2 session, 3118–3120. Cannon later told Taft he believed the source of disaffection between Tawney and Roosevelt lay in Tawney's opposition to naval construction. Archie Butt, *Taft and Roosevelt: The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, Military Aide*, 1:304 (Garden City, New York, 1930).

⁶ Tawney won 53.6 per cent of the 38,172 votes cast. See tables, p. 326, 327. Except where otherwise noted, all Minnesota election returns cited in this paper are from the *Legislative Manual* for the year following the election.

⁷ *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, August 24, 1910; Minnesota, *Legislative Manual*, 1911, p. 584, 585, 588, 592, 596. One anti-Tawney paper dubbed his loyal press corps the "cuckoo chorus." *Caledonia Journal*, quoted in the *Evening Tribune* (Albert Lea), September 18, 1909.



A postelection view in the Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch

protecting the district's dairymen from oleomargarine, and his fight for free lumber was popular in Minnesota. His influence in Washington made him a valuable asset to the whole state, a fact readily admitted even by progressives who opposed his conservative economic philosophy.

DESPITE TAWNEY'S apparent security, serious concern for his political future was voiced as much as a year before his defeat. In the early fall of 1909 Taft embarked on a nationwide speaking tour to increase support for his young administration, particularly to allay nascent discontent within the party and the nation over the recently enacted Payne-Aldrich tariff. Midwesterners vociferously complained that the tariff had sacrificed the region's agricultural interests for the benefit of influential eastern corporations and manufacturers. Tawney had been the only Minnesotan to vote for the final bill.

On September 17 the president's train reached Winona, Tawney's home. The ad-

dress which the harried Taft delivered there was a colossal political blunder. Speaking in the state where antitariff sentiment was probably the most pronounced, Taft stoutly defended the law, criticized those who voted against it, and lavished praise on Tawney for his support of it. After a long recitation of several schedules, Taft stated "without hesitation" that the law was "the best tariff bill that the Republican party has ever passed, and therefore the best tariff bill that has been passed at all." The president implied that it had been the duty of all Republicans to vote for it and praised Tawney's course: "I am glad to speak in behalf of what he did, not in defense of it, but in support of it."⁸

Reaction to Taft's intemperate remarks was immediate throughout the Midwest. For the first time the progressive Republican press criticized the president publicly and took a more antagonistic tone toward

⁸ *Presidential Addresses and State Papers of William Howard Taft From March 4, 1909 to March 4, 1910*, 225 (New York, 1910).

his whole administration. Minnesota insurgent Congressman Charles R. Davis contended that Taft's "most unfortunate" visit only served to widen the intraparty breach. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* believed the speech had arrayed the bulk of the local population against the president and continued: "Mr. Tawney was safe of his reelection until Mr. Taft reached Winona. Now, if he squeaks through it will be by the paint on his planks." Strangely, Tawney believed that Taft's speech was "well received" in Minnesota and advised that the Republicans print half a million copies for distribution.⁹

Preparations to defeat Tawney were made early in 1910. In March the Democrats chose Judge Harry L. Buck of Winona as their candidate, with the hope that he might win progressive Republican support. Soon afterward the progressive Republicans of the district quietly began sounding out anti-Tawney sentiment and searching for a strong candidate to oppose the congressman in the primary. Several possible contenders were considered and then withdrawn, while Tawney and his newspapers ridiculed their "Gaston-Alphonse act." By midsummer it seemed that Tawney might receive the nomination unopposed. On July 26, however, the progressive leaders met at Rochester and unveiled their candidate. He was Sydney

Anderson, a young lawyer and political neophyte. A native of Minnesota, Anderson was a Spanish-American War veteran who had settled in rural Lanesboro after practicing law for a short time in Minneapolis and Kansas City. His half Swedish, half Norwegian ancestry was a political asset in the heavily Scandinavian district.¹⁰

ANDERSON immediately announced that his campaign would be waged on progressive principles rather than personalities. A week later he outlined the basis of his campaign in a platform statement. After asserting that the major issue was "whether the people or the 'interests' shall rule this nation," Anderson attacked "Canonism" and the Payne-Aldrich tariff. He portrayed Canonism as a "menace to a government by the people" and a source of discrimination in favor of big business in taxation and national legislation.¹¹

On August 12 the First District Progressive League issued its own platform, which went beyond Anderson's statement of principles. It echoed the ever-present progressive concern with rule of "the people" as opposed to rule by "the interests," quickly linking Congressman Tawney to the latter. It lumped "Tawneyism" with "Canonism" and "Aldrichism" as detrimental to good government and an obstacle to progressive legislation. The league assailed Tawney's use of money and appointments to control the press, charging "misrule and gag-machine domination" of the district's politics. The platform endorsed the insurgency of most of Minnesota's congressmen and advocated downward tariff revision, stricter railroad legislation, and implementation of the Roosevelt conservation policies.¹²

Anderson's keynote address, delivered a week later, was typical of many he would give during the campaign. He dealt primarily with Tawney's record in Congress, presenting him as Cannon's chief henchman in opposing progressive legislation. In particular, Anderson assailed Tawney's support of

⁹ George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 1900-1912*, 249 (New York, 1958); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 19, 20, 1909; Tawney to John J. Esch, September 22, 1909, John J. Esch Papers, in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

¹⁰ Charles I. Reigard to Tawney, April 6, 1910; Tawney to Dunn and Carlson, May 4, 1910, (copy) Tawney Papers, in the Minnesota Historical Society; *The Public*, 13:290 (April 1, 1910); Joseph E. Chamberlin, in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 18, 1910; *Lanesboro Leader*, July 16, 1910; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 27, 1910; *Mower County Transcript* (Austin), August 3, 1910.

¹¹ *La Crosse Tribune*, August 4, 1910.

¹² *Evening Tribune*, August 13, 1910; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 12, 1910. Senator Nelson W. Aldrich of Rhode Island was the standpat leader in the Senate; his name was often linked with Cannon's as a representative of the privileged interests.



Sydney Anderson

the Payne-Aldrich tariff and his thwarting of Roosevelt's conservation policies. The young challenger also denigrated Tawney's efforts on behalf of the district: he claimed that most of the credit for antioleomargarine legislation belonged to other congressmen, not Tawney, and implied that Tawney's fight for free lumber in 1909 had been halfhearted. Throughout the campaign, Anderson hammered endlessly at Tawney's "standpattism" and his connection with Cannon and the "interests." In contrast, he promised to support the insurgents and to represent the people of the district.¹³

Anderson labored under considerable handicaps. He was little known and his supporters could not hope to match the efficiency and financial resources of the Tawney organization. Anderson's managers, however, made the most of what they had. Their basic strategy was to get as much publicity as possible. Accordingly, Anderson undertook an immediate and vigorous canvass of the rural areas, and as many speakers as could be found were enlisted to cover the district. The *La Crosse* (Wisconsin) *Tribune*, which had many Minnesota

readers, became an active agent in Anderson's campaign and was instrumental in persuading Wisconsin leaders to cross the Mississippi and preach the gospel of progressivism. More than a half dozen Wisconsin politicians answered the call during the final two weeks of the campaign, and Senator Robert M. LaFollette sent an open letter of support.¹⁴

A meeting of the National Conservation Congress in St. Paul on September 5-8 provided a wealth of ammunition for the insurgents. Because of it they were able to bring to the first district two nationally prominent progressives: Gifford Pinchot, conservation authority and confidant of Roosevelt, and Francis J. Heney, who was noted for his prosecution of graft and of land frauds. Meanwhile in St. Paul the well-known agriculturist Henry Wallace criticized Tawney for killing appropriations for the publication of significant findings of Roosevelt's Country Life Commission.¹⁵

Tawney and his supporters refused to take the candidacy of the young and inexperienced Anderson seriously. The efficient campaign organization that had disposed of primary opposition in 1908 was still intact. The Tawney press either ignored Anderson or belittled his campaign; other observers also testified to its futility.¹⁶

By the end of August, as prominent standpatters fell in other primaries, the contest in southeastern Minnesota began to attract national attention. Political commentators from around the country visited the district to assay political conditions there. One visitor commended Tawney's "able, honest, and useful" work in Congress. "But

¹³ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 20, 1910; *Minneapolis Journal*, August 30, 1910.

¹⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, September 16, 21, 1910; *Minneapolis Journal*, September 16, 1910. One technique employed was to send telegrams of congratulations to victors in the Wisconsin primary coupled with a plea for aid in the form of speeches. Copies are in the Esch and Herman Ekern Papers, in the State Historical of Wisconsin.

¹⁵ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 7, 1910.

¹⁶ See, for example, Charles B. Cheney, in the *Minneapolis Journal*, August 20, 1910.

he stands for the sort of things that the people are trying to get rid of. He is arrogant and tyrannical in the exercise of power that he has obtained by the long, careful, determined process of insinuating himself with the inner circles." Other correspondents made similar observations.¹⁷

Despite the growing interest in Anderson's campaign, the Tawney organization proceeded in its customary casual fashion. Tawney greatly underestimated the temper of the district, and his lofty aloofness only gave more substance to the progressive charge that the congressman was not representative of the voters and their sentiments. Tawney was finally jolted out of his complacency in the second week of September. The increasingly favorable impression that Anderson was making in his canvass, the entry of Pinchot and other prominent progressives into the campaign, and the specter of widespread Democratic participation in the primary frightened the Tawney forces into a belated frenzy of activity. They charged that Anderson was deliberately soliciting Democratic votes as well as espousing Democratic principles. Judge Buck, running unopposed, also recognized the possibility that hundreds of Democratic votes might be cast for Anderson and urged Democrats to abstain from taking Republican ballots. Reportedly Buck felt that Tawney would be easier to beat in November than Anderson; if Tawney were the nominee, Buck might get the progressive Republican vote.¹⁸

¹⁷ Chamberlin, in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 18, 1910. See also John Callan O'Laughlin, in the *Chicago Tribune*, August 26, 27, 1910.

¹⁸ O'Laughlin, in the *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 1910; *Winona Independent*, September 22, 1910. As late as September 10 Anderson's campaign manager wrote that Tawney had sent out little literature. Ole Levang to Herman Ekern, September 10, 1910, Ekern Papers.

¹⁹ Mimeographed campaign letters dated August 24, September 7, 1910, in the Tawney Papers; *Preston Times*, September 14, 21, 1910.

²⁰ "Leader Or Cipher?" and "Do you Want the Oleomargarine Law Repealed?" undated pieces of campaign literature in the Tawney Papers; *La Crosse Tribune*, September 14, 1910; O'Laughlin, in the *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 1910.

The Tawney campaign effort which swung into action in the final weeks of the canvass was conducted along three major lines: an assault on Anderson's inexperience, the branding of his platform and basis of support as more Democratic than Republican, and a defense of Tawney's record based on his influence in Washington and what he had done for the district. The congressman pointed out that Anderson had lived in the district for only three years and had previously held no public office. The young attorney had emerged only after the "so-called insurgents . . . failed to induce a Republican of standing to become their candidate." After stoutly reaffirming his own party loyalty, Tawney declared that Anderson's platform ignored the principles and policies of the Republican party. He contended that Anderson's managers had supported the Democratic congressional nominee in 1908 and would do so again if Anderson lost. Tawney's press went much further, bitterly assailing Anderson as the "assistant democratic" candidate.¹⁹

The heart of the Tawney campaign was a recitation of how much he had done for the district and how much he could accomplish in the future through his key position. Tawney disposed of the insurgent movement as a revolt by dissident "outs" seeking to overthrow the established party leadership. "The District is on the inside, it is getting substantially everything it wants," stated one campaign article. Tawney particularly stressed his diligent work to protect the dairy farmers. One pamphlet quoted other congressmen attesting to Tawney's effectiveness in preventing repeal of the oleomargarine tax law and denied that any new congressman could get such results. Tawney supporters also implied that he might become the next speaker of the House, in which case the district would reap both prestige and material benefit.²⁰

Prominent Minnesotans defended Tawney's record in Congress. The support of popular Scandinavian Senator Knute Nelson was an important asset. Nelson stated firmly

that Tawney was more responsible for anti-oleomargarine legislation than any other representative and had even aided the Senate in the matter. He contended that both houses of Congress had upheld Tawney's view on Roosevelt's unauthorized commissions, and he refuted the charge that Tawney had vitiated the investigation of land frauds. Nelson added that Tawney was "one of the ablest most industrious, and most energetic members" of Congress.²¹ Insurgent Minnesota Congressman Halvor Steenerson also defended Tawney, praising his efforts for free lumber and for appropriations for a tariff commission. The powerful National Dairy Union staunchly confirmed Tawney's support of the dairy interests. Its board of directors "assert[ed] boldly that no member of the Congress has done more in the past to defend these interests."²²

THE PACE of the campaign quickened as election day approached. Anderson continued his vigorous speaking tour of the district, and the Lanesboro band accompanied its home town candidate to provide added excitement. The progressives virtually ignored the river counties of Wabasha and Winona—Tawney strongholds—and concentrated on the rural areas. Both sides focused on Rochester and surrounding Olmsted County, which had supported Tawney heavily in the 1908 primary but had given him a bare plurality in the general election.²³ Rochester was the scene of major speeches by Pinchot and Tawney.

Both sides claimed misrepresentation of their positions. Forced to answer Tawney's challenge to his party loyalty, Anderson asserted his fidelity to Republicanism and its principles; his quarrel was "with the men who . . . sacrifice them upon the altar of the system." Tawney angrily declared that Anderson misrepresented his record on the tariff, conservation, and dairy legislation. Each side resorted to petty politics and chicanery as the battle progressed. In one town Anderson was denied use of the band-

stand to speak from when Tawney supporters threatened to withdraw band subscriptions; reports that the progressives were openly and extensively soliciting Democratic votes also persisted.²⁴

Pinchot vehemently assailed Tawney in a speech on September 5, branding him "the most dangerous opponent of the public welfare in the United States." He charged that "Tawney takes his orders from Cannon, and does his will," and rejected any possibility of Tawney becoming speaker of the House. "The people . . . would [not] tolerate casting out one twin [Cannon] and putting the other in his place." Most of the address was devoted to a detailed portrayal of Tawney as the archfoe of Roosevelt's most worthwhile conservation programs. He bluntly proclaimed that Tawney was Roosevelt's "bitterest enemy in the House."²⁵

The next day Roosevelt himself got into the act. In his speech to the National Conservation Congress in St. Paul, the popular ex-president took a sideswipe at Tawney for blocking his conservation commission. An indication of the progressive spirit of Minnesota was the noticeable difference in the receptions given to Roosevelt and Taft, who had addressed the Congress the previous day. The crowds were polite to the president but wildly enthusiastic over "T.R."²⁶

Tawney made only one major speech during the campaign. On September 13 three special trains carried faithful supporters of

²¹ Knute Nelson to C. L. Swenson, August 31, 1910. Nelson's letter was ostensibly in reply to one from Swenson; Tawney sent Swenson's letter to Nelson with one of his own, dated August 25, in which he solicited a public reply and suggested its contents. Copies are in the Tawney Papers.

²² *Minneapolis Journal*, September 7, 1910; *Daily Post and Record* (Rochester), September 12, 1910; Board of Directors, National Dairy Union to Tawney, September 10, 1910, Tawney Papers. William D. Hoard, ex-governor of Wisconsin and editor of *Hoard's Dairyman*, was instrumental in securing the resolution.

²³ *La Crosse Tribune*, September 19, 1910.

²⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, August 24, September 6, 14, 1910; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 6, 7, 1910.

²⁵ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 6, 1910; *Minneapolis Journal*, September 6, 1910.

²⁶ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 7, 1910.

"Our Jim" to Rochester for a huge rally. Tawney completely ignored Anderson and devoted his address to answering charges that Pinchot had leveled against him. He asserted that Pinchot's attack upon him was made because he "stood in defense of government by law as against government by executive choice and discretion and stood between him [Pinchot] and his lawless expenditure of the people's money." He defended his 1908 amendment and pointed out that it had passed both houses of Congress unanimously. On the tariff issue Tawney cited his fight for free lumber and named some leading insurgents who had helped to defeat it; he also boasted of his successful efforts to get \$250,000 appropriated for a scientific tariff commission. Pinchot was not the only one who saw him as a menace to the public welfare, he averred; so did the oleomargarine and ship-building industries and other powerful vested interests who were working to defeat him. Tawney also claimed he was a friend of Roosevelt, had voted for his legislation, and was a supporter of his policies.²⁷

The speech was an effective answer to Pinchot, but Tawney failed to confront the issue uppermost in the minds of many Minnesotans: his relationship to Cannonism. The *Pioneer Press* later reported that his skirting of the foremost issue dismayed even his ardent supporters; moreover, many felt Tawney's specious declaration of Roosevelt's friendship to be an insult to their intelligence.²⁸

²⁷ *Minneapolis Journal*, September 14, 1910; *Evening Tribune*, September 14, 1910.

²⁸ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 22, 1910.

²⁹ "Statement of Official Returns First Congressional District of Minnesota, Primary and General Elections, 1908 and Primary Election, 1910," copy in the Tawney Papers. The *Legislative Manual* of 1911 gives an erroneous total for Winona County; the actual figure for Tawney was 1,441, not 1,141 (p. 484).

³⁰ See, for example, *Collier's Weekly*, 46:10 (October 8, 1910); *La Follette's Magazine*, 2:12 (October 1, 1910); *Milwaukee Journal*, September 21, 1910.

³¹ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 22, 1910; *Nonpareil* (Council Bluffs, Iowa), September 22, 1910; *Milwaukee Journal*, September 21, 1910.

THE HEATED CAMPAIGN resulted in an unusually large turnout on September 20. The returns soon indicated that Anderson had scored a substantial victory. Tawney's large majorities in Winona and Wabasha counties could not offset the margins Anderson piled up in the remaining eight counties. The official canvass gave Anderson 13,447 to 10,653 for Tawney. With a 2,794-vote plurality, Anderson polled 55.8 per cent of the Republican vote.²⁹

Progressives around the nation heralded the defeat of the redoubtable Tawney as a great triumph for their principles and an indication that the people were opposed to Cannonism and all it stood for. The more rabid progressive organs rejoiced in Tawney's downfall, but many expressed mixed feelings because of his experience and legislative ability.³⁰ The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* of September 22 noted that "regardless of the manifest merits of the progressive movement, the defeat of Tawney cannot be viewed in any other light than that of a misfortune." The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on September 26 called Tawney a "brilliant and able representative," but like his constituents it "refused to excuse his association and alliance with elements and factors in public life which work evil to the public interests."

Others expressed less surprise at the results. Putting the election into the framework of the summer's events, they viewed it as part of a revolt of the common people to restore popular control over the government. The *Pioneer Press* contended that the result "well illustrates the power of the people in American politics," that they, and not leaders in Washington, were the real source of laws and government.³¹

Anderson acknowledged the aid of Roosevelt, Pinchot, and Heney, but credited his victory to his "educational campaign against Cannonism." Other factors reportedly affecting the outcome were Anderson's nationality and Tawney's complacency. But informed opinion almost unanimously cited the tariff and Tawney's connection with Cannon as

COUNTY	PRIMARY, 1908				PRIMARY, 1910			
	TAWNEY Repub.	KNATVOLD Repub.	KNATVOLD % R. Vote	FRENCH Dem.	TAWNEY Repub.	ANDERSON Repub.	ANDERSON % R. Vote	BUCK Dem.
Dodge	870	888	50.5	4	816	1,358	62.5	4
Fillmore	1,653	1,619	49.5	49	1,473	2,464	62.6	20
Freeborn	1,269	1,964	60.7	11	1,277	1,873	59.5	9
Houston	488	533	52.2	80	893	1,232	58.0	147
Mower	1,857	1,328	41.7	58	1,452	1,918	56.9	68
Olmsted	1,440	902	38.5	226	1,230	1,864	60.2	177
Steele	684	343	33.4	324	694	734	51.4	546
Wabasha	817	237	22.5	754	808	349	30.2	921
Waseca	747	294	28.2	499	569	1,049	64.8	245
Winona	1,626	376	18.8	1,624	1,441	606	29.6	1,760
	11,451	8,484	42.6	3,629	10,653	13,447	55.8	3,897

Vote for Congress in Minnesota's first district primary elections

the overriding factors in his downfall. Perhaps the *New York World* put it best: "We may gain a fair idea of the intensity of the revolt against tyranny in the Speakership and perfidy and corruption in tariff legislation when an enlightened district retires a man like Tawney for those reasons and overlooks wholly his courageous and patriotic labors in other directions."³²

The congressman had an entirely different explanation for his defeat. It was neither "the false representations of me made by my opponents" nor the exploitation of Roosevelt's popularity. "It was simply the vote of the Democrats in counties where there was no Democratic contest for the Democratic nominations." Tawney provided data to support his claim. In seven counties where there were no contests for Democratic nominations for local offices there had been less than 150 Democratic votes compared to more than 2,000 in November, 1908. "In a single precinct there were seventy more Republican ballots voted than were cast for President Taft in the same precinct two years ago."³³

Tawney further charged that Democrats had worked for Anderson throughout the campaign and had even boasted of their intent to cast Republican ballots. Anderson's victory meant that Democrats had determined the nomination of the candidates of

both parties. Tawney wrote Cannon that his defeat was "due entirely to political chicanery and debauchery, of the betrayal of my opponent for the nomination of his party into the hands of the Democrats." He also demanded that the primary law be amended to prevent such practices. Democratic participation in Republican primaries was so widespread in Minnesota in 1910 that many others echoed Tawney's desire.³⁴

Judge Buck, the Democratic nominee, deprecated Tawney's contention. He admitted that some Democrats took Republican ballots but insisted that Democratic leaders opposed the practice, and he cited his own plea for noninterference in the Republican primary. Moreover, he argued, just as many Democrats might have voted for Tawney as Anderson, and in any case the returns did not support Tawney's assertion.³⁵

Tawney and his ardent backers remained intensely bitter over the results. Tawney rejected pleas that he run independently, but he did consider refusing to endorse Ander-

³² *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 22, 1910; *New York World*, September 22, 1910.

³³ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 22, 1910.

³⁴ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 21, 22, 1910; *Minneapolis Journal*, September 22, 1910; Tawney to Joseph G. Cannon, October 4, 1910, quoted in William R. Gwinn, *Uncle Joe Cannon, Archfoe of Insurgency*, 234 (New York, 1957).

³⁵ *Winona Independent*, September 22, 1910.

GENERAL ELECTION, 1908

COUNTY	TOTAL VOTE	FRENCH Dem.	TAWNEY Repub.	% for TAWNEY
Dodge	2,083	781	1,302	62.5
Fillmore	4,700	1,902	2,798	59.5
Freeborn	3,886	1,710	2,176	56.0
Houston	2,538	1,015	1,523	60.0
Mower	4,006	1,626	2,380	59.4
Olmsted	4,261	2,048	2,213	51.9
Steele	3,530	1,760	1,770	50.1
Wabasha	3,860	2,018	1,842	47.7
Waseca	2,779	1,358	1,421	51.1
Winona	6,529	3,490	3,039	46.5
	38,172	17,708	20,464	53.6

GENERAL ELECTION, 1910

TOTAL VOTE	BUCK Dem.	ANDERSON Repub.	ANDERSON % for
1,390	438	952	68.5
3,427	1,221	2,206	64.4
3,451	888	2,563	74.3
2,258	853	1,405	62.2
3,430	1,349	2,081	60.7
3,909	1,937	1,972	50.4
3,416	1,578	1,838	53.8
3,606	1,711	1,895	52.6
2,481	937	1,544	62.2
5,763	3,904	1,859	32.3
33,131	14,816	18,315	55.3

Vote for Congress in Minnesota's first district general elections

son as the Republican nominee. His strong party loyalty overcame his personal pique, however, and the appearance of Scott Laird, editor of the *Winona Republican-Herald*, to speak at a congratulatory rally for Anderson was regarded as Tawney's personal endorsement and plea for party harmony. Tawney's support of Anderson was not enthusiastic, and some of the Tawney press openly backed Judge Buck.³⁶

Rumors of widespread conservative defection from Anderson continued up to election day. Many standpatters believed that a victory for Buck, in addition to punishing the progressives, would leave a clear field for Tawney in 1912; if Anderson won, however, he would almost be assured of re-nomination. Desertion of Anderson in favor of Buck did manifest itself on November 8, but was largely confined to Winona County and isolated pockets of disgruntled standpatters; it did not affect the outcome. Anderson defeated Buck easily, winning 55.3 per cent of the 33,131 votes cast. Anderson increased the Republican share of the vote considerably in areas where Taw-

ney had slipped in 1908 and in Scandinavian areas, and he surpassed Tawney's 1908 plurality by 676 votes.³⁷

THE TOTAL Republican primary vote was 4,165 votes larger than that of the previous primary, and greater than Taft's vote in the district in 1908. The counties showing the greatest increase in total vote all witnessed a marked decline in the percentage cast for Tawney. The surprising turnout was the result of Democratic votes and the effect of Anderson's whirlwind campaign upon Scandinavians and progressive-minded voters.

The fact of widespread Democratic participation emerges clearly from the returns. The primary vote in the seven strongest Anderson counties was considerably larger than the Republican vote in November, 1908. In Waseca County, with a substantial proportion of Democrats and few Scandinavians, the Republican turnout increased by 55 per cent and the Democratic vote was cut in half; Democratic support for Anderson was instrumental in cutting Tawney's share of the vote from 71.8 to 35.2 per cent. In Dodge and Fillmore counties the Republican primary vote exceeded that cast for both Anderson and Buck in November, 1910, and in four others it was more than 80 per cent of that total. The ludicrous primary totals for Buck of 4, 20,

³⁶ *Lanesboro Leader*, October 1, 1910.

³⁷ Standpat knifing of Anderson was particularly obvious in the town of Chatfield and the village of Wykoff, Tawney strongholds in Fillmore County. See *Lanesboro Leader*, September 25, November 12, 1910.

and 9 in Dodge, Fillmore, and Freeborn counties indicated that not even Democratic election officials and poll watchers voted their own ticket. One supporter wired Tawney on election day that "Dem's. here are working the 'Anderson racket' for all that it is worth," and similar complaints came from all parts of the district.³⁸

The Minnesota primary law, which applied only to local, legislative, and congressional offices, was partly to blame for the widespread Democratic participation. In 1910 the Minnesota Democratic party was rent with factional strife over the issue of liquor regulation. Had the state-wide offices been included in the primary election, it might have provided a strong deterrent to voting in the Republican primary. In addition, the fact that the primary was open, requiring no statement of party affiliation or registration as a party member, made crossover voting extremely easy.³⁹

Democratic participation in Republican primaries prior to 1910 seems to have been commonplace in some parts of the first district, although never before reaching such runaway proportions. The Democratic congressional candidate in 1908 received totals of 4, 49, and 11 votes in Dodge, Fillmore, and Freeborn counties compared to Buck's 4, 20, and 9 in 1910. In those counties no Democratic slate existed for local offices; the only chance for Democrats to maintain a voice in local affairs was to choose between rival Republican candidates. This seemed to be the accepted practice, and such candidates openly solicited the votes of Democratic friends and neighbors. Their ballots for or against Tawney may have been incidental to their participation and not the motivation for it.⁴⁰

Scandinavian solidarity was also a factor in producing a heavy turnout and boosting Anderson's majority. As in most mid-western states during this era, nationality was a prime determinant of voting behavior. In general, American-born Minnesotans of American parents and voters of Scandinavian ancestry were more Republi-

can than Democratic. Most non-Scandinavian foreigners, particularly Germans and Poles, tended to vote Democratic. For example, Wabasha and Winona counties, with few Scandinavians and large German and (in Winona) Polish populations, were the only counties in the district to support Democrats consistently.⁴¹

Anderson's heaviest vote was polled in counties with large Scandinavian populations. Scandinavians were prominent among Anderson's campaign workers, and Norwegian progressives from Wisconsin campaigned for him. Several Tawney supporters lamented the solidarity of Scandinavians behind one of their own in the election. "When a Norsk, Swede, or a Dane calls on the Scandinavians," one remarked, "it is politics and principle to the devil, as shown by the vote."⁴²

Of the three major factors which determined the outcome—the issues raised by the progressives, Democratic participation, and ethnic bloc voting—the most crucial role was played by the issues. Tawney's ability, prestige, and popularity could not

³⁸ J. B. Kendall to Tawney, September 20, 1910, Tawney Papers.

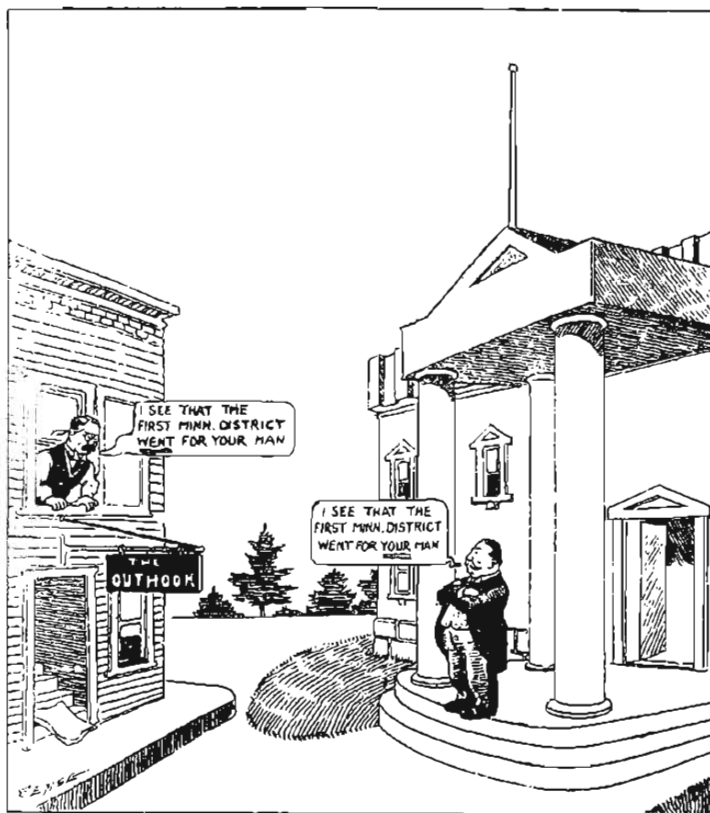
³⁹ Minnesota, *General Laws*, 1901, p. 297-305. At a special session of the legislature in June, 1912, provision was made for "candidates for all elective offices within the state" to be on the primary ballot, and the following year a bill providing for primary nomination of United States senators was passed. *General Laws*, 1912, p. 4-22; 1913, p. 756-758. For a general discussion of the primary laws, see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 4:365-374 (St. Paul, 1930).

⁴⁰ The pro-Tawney *Preston Times*, September 28, 1910, blasted Democratic votes for Anderson but did not seem to mind those cast for "local favorites" among Republican aspirants for local offices.

⁴¹ The application of statistical techniques to the election data points out the extent of ethnic voting in the district. By using correlational analysis, the following correlations between Republican vote and the percentage native-born of native parents plus Scandinavian stock was obtained: .861 for 1906, .748 for 1908, and .835 for 1910. The Scandinavian percentage also correlates strongly with the anti-Tawney primary vote. The correlations are .879 for Tawney's opponent in 1908 and .523 for Anderson.

⁴² E. F. Greening to Tawney, September 25, 1910. See also Earl Stout to Tawney, September 21, 1910, both in the Tawney Papers.

*A comment on the
primary by the St. Paul
Pioneer Press,
September 22, 1910*



erase the fact that he had aligned himself on the unpopular side of these issues. Anderson's victory, however, was not a clear-cut mandate for progressive principles. It is extremely doubtful, moreover, that the impressive margin that Anderson polled could have been achieved without the extra votes provided by Democrats and fellow Scandinavians. These three factors were closely interrelated, and the extent to which the latter two operated in affecting the outcome was in part determined by the force of the issues and the sheer vigor of the progressive campaign. The magnitude of Anderson's victory would have been impossible without any one of the three factors.

The election serves to illustrate the multifaceted nature of electoral victory in the progressive era, as well as the triumph of the new type of politics that developed

concurrently with the progressive movement. Tawney represented the old politician — a rigid partisan whose campaigns were based on strict party loyalty and whose victories were the result of smooth party organization rather than personal appeal to the electorate. In contrast, Anderson's campaign represented the new political style that emerged in the progressive era. Its appeal was nonpartisan and based on abstract principles and ideology — popular rule versus special interests, democracy versus bossism. Its elements of success included good political sense, vigorous campaigning, attractive candidates, and at times a sprinkling of demagoguery. Anderson's victory — the upset of an experienced, talented, and entrenched political veteran by a dedicated and eager novice through an appeal to the voters in the name of greater democracy — was typical of many which occurred in the Midwest in 1910 and throughout the progressive era.

THE CARTOON on page 320 is from the *Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*, September 21, 1910; other illustrations are from the society's picture collection.



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