

“Traitor State”: A Crisis of Loyalty in World War I Wisconsin

By

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DEDICATED

to

My uncle **Major William F. Bellais**,
who supported me throughout my Ph.D. journey,
but passed away shortly before it was done

and to

Professor Lee Palmer Wandel,
who provided the guidance I needed to get this dissertation started.

ABSTRACT

Shortly after the United States became a belligerent in World War I, a Kentucky newspaper editor declared Wisconsin the “Traitor State”—a conclusion he based on the significant percentage of Wisconsin’s national representatives voting against entry into the war, the governor’s push against a selective service draft, a mis-reported fact that the state had not filled its draft’s quota, a large and outspoken Socialist Party, but most importantly because of the state’s senior U.S. senator Robert M. La Follette, a Progressive Republican, who continued to vociferously argue that the country should not be involved in the European War. Over the next year and a half, the state’s self-described “militant patriots” or superpatriots attempted to disprove this epithet and show instead that Wisconsin was filled with loyal, patriotic citizens. They began their mission using propaganda and education, but later resorted to intimidation and vigilantism. This work argues that the turning point between these two methods was the special senatorial election held in the Spring of 1918, when the state needed to replace its recently deceased junior senator with either a potentially disloyal representative along the lines of La Follette or an appropriately loyal one who would help dispel its traitor state reputation. This election was the state’s “crisis of loyalty.” Although the loyalist candidate won, a significant percentage of the voting population, especially among German Americans, voted for the allegedly disloyal candidate. Embarrassed by this result, the state’s superpatriots, usually members of a community’s elite, began to lash out at those they perceived as disloyal, focusing primarily on German Americans and on farmers, who they found difficult to influence. The resulting vigilantism was affected, however, by the prevalent and popular Progressive Movement, which privileged restraint and control over violence. Wisconsin can be considered a microcosm of a larger movement of intense superpatriotism that swept through the country during World War I. This monograph provides a detailed examination of this unique Wisconsin situation with the idea that it can be used to help explain the broader phenomenon of American superpatriotism during and since the Great War.

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*WHi=Wisconsin Historical Society image

WISCONSIN LOYALTY

EVERY MOTHER'S SON
WILL BACK YOU
UNCLE SAMMY

WORDS & MUSIC
BY
E. RICHARD
KARLE

DEDICATED TO
MY BELOVED
STATE-WISCONSIN



Wm. A. KAUN MUSIC CO.

MILWAUKEE, WIS.

CRAFTON
STUDIOS

Sheet Music, "Wisconsin Loyalty: Every Mother's Son Will Back You Uncle Sammy," 1917

Introduction

“Of course Wisconsin is loyal, the great majority of her people are loyal, but a few, who have assumed to speak for others, have given Wisconsin the reputation abroad, of having within her borders a large percentage of people who want Germany to win this war.”

Loyalty Legion speech, n.d. (late 1917)¹

“We are not far enough advanced to be dogmatic about it, but suggest that duty and love combined are something like the equivalent of loyalty.”

Capital Times, February 3, 1919²

On April 6, 1918, the one-year anniversary of America’s entrance into the European War, almost two thousand student cadets gathered at the University of Wisconsin’s Armory in Madison at the beginning of their two-and-a-half-mile march to the University’s Stock Pavilion where they, along with eight thousand other attendees, planned to hear patriotic speeches by those eager to “whip up enthusiasm” for the war effort. A cold steady rain made the march unpleasant and by the time they arrived at the unheated building, the young men were soaked to the skin and shivering in their heavy wool uniforms. They, along with everyone else, looked forward to a handful of rousing patriotic songs and a few brief speeches, so they could return home to dry and warm themselves. Their hopes were dashed when Robert M. McElroy, a Princeton professor serving as the educational director for the National Security League during World War I, took the podium and droned on for over two hours. By the time McElroy began his third hour of oration, most of the audience had left with the exception of his fellow speakers on the podium and the cadets, who began to show their displeasure by stamping their feet, snapping their rifle triggers, and generally being noisy. Irritated by the cadets’

¹ Speech made by unknown Loyalty Legion member to a manufacturers group, n.d., but appears to be from late 1917, Wisconsin Loyalty Legion (WLL) papers, Box 4, miscellaneous letters and speeches folder.

² “Loyalty” (editorial), *Capital Times*, February 3, 1919, 4.

seeming indifference to his patriotic message, McElroy allegedly decided to get a rise out of his audience by emphatically declaring, “I think you are a bunch of damned traitors!” When his audience did not respond to this taunt, he added, “I’ve often wondered what it be like to speak before a Prussian audience. I think I now know.”³ Still, no response.

McElroy’s visit to Madison had been part of a speaking tour through the western states for the National Security League, a volunteer organization that promoted patriotism, nationalism, and Americanism beginning in World War I. His purpose was, in part, to promote these concepts, but also to find out if these states were patriotic or rife with pro-Germanism. Upon his return to the east coast, the National Security League issued a statement that during his trip, McElroy had discovered that while many “foreign born” living in the west had become true Americans, there was still a significant amount of pro-Germanism, apathy, and ignorance of patriotic concepts amongst Americans, foreign and native, living in western states. McElroy specifically mentioned seeing “young men clad in the uniform of the American Army beneath which were concealed the souls of Prussians.” Two days later, the *New York Tribune* asked him to elaborate, which he did by describing his experience at the University of Wisconsin.⁴

McElroy probably thought he had an easy target in Wisconsin, since even before America’s entrance into the war, others throughout the country had questioned the

³ From the *Rutland News*, Rutland Vermont, as reported in the *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, St. Albans, Vermont, April 22, 1918, 5; National Security League Hearings before a Special Committee of the House of Representatives, 65th Congress, 3rd Session, H. Res. 469 and H. Res. 476, part 6, January 11, 1919, 521-522, 525-526; Paul Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: War, A New Era, and Depression, Vol. V* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 41.

⁴ National Security League Hearings, 524-525. These pages refer to Exhibit A, National Security League press release, “National Security League Leader Says West Needs Arousing on War—Dr. Robert M. M’Elroy, League’s Educational Director, Finds Pro-Germanism, Apathy, and Ignorance in Western Tour,” April 15, 1918 and Exhibit B, *New York Tribune* article, “West is Crowded with Pro-Germans, Dr. M’Elroy Says—Government Should Investigate University of Wisconsin, He Declares,” April 17, 1918.

loyalty and patriotism of its leaders and citizens. By July 1917 it had earned the epitaph “Traitor State.” Just days before his speaking engagement at the University, the state had gone through an election which many had viewed as Wisconsin’s chance to prove its loyalty to the nation. The election results had been promising, but not definitive. So, the editors of the *Rutland (Vermont) News* were probably not surprised by McElroy’s story and could easily wonder, “Is it possible that in Wisconsin...there is such open evidence of pro-Germanism, as alleged? If so, it is high time for a thorough investigation of the situation.”⁵ McElroy’s hometown newspaper, the *Trenton (New Jersey) Evening News* also commented on the story by noting the state’s poor reputation and reminding its readers about the politician behind it all, “It will probably surprise no one to learn that evidence of disloyalty and treason should be found in a state represented in the United States Senate by [Robert M.] La Follette nor even in the University of Wisconsin, which has shown pro-German tendencies.” The paper’s editors added, “If Wisconsin desires to appear as one hundred per cent loyal in the eyes of the people of the United States, it must demonstrate its loyalty by actions and not professions.”⁶ Over the next few months, Wisconsin’s leaders in patriotism would try to do just that.

McElroy, in his dramatic statements, had created a public relations nightmare for the state and especially the University of Wisconsin, which pushed back with force by pointing out that he had conveniently left out important information and had not been quite truthful in his declarations. University leaders asked those who had been on the dais with McElroy what they had heard and it soon became clear that while he may have uttered thoughts about the cadets being traitors and Prussians, he did so more under his

⁵ From the *Rutland News*, as reported in the *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, April 22, 1918, 5.

⁶ “Disloyalty in Wisconsin,” *Trenton Evening News*, Trenton, New Jersey, May 2, 1918, 6.

breath than with clear and loud statements. He also omitted the fact that the cadets were drenched and cold and that he misread his audience by presenting a lengthy diatribe instead of a brief oration. As a result of his long speech, several of the cadets ended up in the infirmary and two private citizens who attended passed away from exposure.⁷ The National Security League at first refused to acknowledge these errors, even after a review of the incident by its president, but were later brought to task during a two-month-long House of Representatives hearing. The organization was also chastised by George Creel, director of the Committee for Public Information, the federal government's propaganda agency during the war, who wrote that "Few instances have struck me as more disgraceful than the McElroy affair...The National Security League seems to put press notices above patriotism."⁸ McElroy may have been censured, but his narrative fit into a home front discourse by the country's self-described militant patriots that labelled Wisconsinites as potentially disloyal and possibly seditious and traitorous. Several decades later, however, historians Horace Peterson and Gilbert Fite in *Opponents of War, 1917-1918* (1957) wrote that this "childish" incident represented "the conceit, the foggy mentality, and hysteria" of the World War I superpatriot.⁹

McElroy represented the quintessential American superpatriot of the World War I era, a white-collar, politically conservative, Anglo-American who defined patriotism as an unquestioning belief in devotion to country, the righteousness of the American way

⁷ National Security League Hearings, 526. Information from Exhibit C, "Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin Adopted April 24, 1918."

⁸ Letter from George Creel to William E. Dodd, September 23, 1918, as quoted in Horace C. Peterson and Gilbert Fite, *Opponents of War, 1918-1918* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), 108.

⁹ Peterson and Fite, 108.

of life, the inability of America to be morally wrong, and the superiority of the American military, along with an intense hatred of the German foe, who McElroy and his compatriots viewed as evil and godless.¹⁰ These superpatriots spoke of loyalty and patriotism in nativist and nationalistic terms that did not allow for dissent or challenges. Those who did not agree with their ideas of patriotism could not be considered one hundred percent American and had to be punished, often with intimidating tactics up to and including violence.

Superpatriotism,¹¹ an extreme form of nationalism, needs to be separated from patriotism. According to historian Merle Curti the latter can be “defined as love of country, pride in it, and readiness to make sacrifices for what is considered its best interest,” while nationalism supports the idea that one’s country is superior to all others and its interests separate and more important than other nations—essentially an excessive and aggressive form of patriotism.¹² Superpatriots make nationalism an emotive force that places “nationalistic pride and supremacy above every other public consideration,” according to political scientist Michael Parenti.¹³ Beyond this pride, they believe that their country is endowed with a superior virtue, a unique history, and a special place in the world.¹⁴ Parenti, who has studied superpatriotism in the United States, believes American superpatriots have several distinctive characteristics, a few of which can be directly tied to the World War I era, specifically a support of militarism; a

¹⁰ Some of this definition is pulled from the description of war proponents in Peterson and Fite, 12.

¹¹ I will be treating “hyperpatriotism” and “superpatriotism” as synonyms throughout this work. Superpatriotism was used during the war, while hyperpatriotism appears to have been created afterwards. Both words are frequently used by historians. At the time, the preferred term was “militant patriots.”

¹² Merle Curti, *The Roots of American Loyalty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946, viii; See also “Nationalism vs. Patriotism,” letter to the editor, *Washington Post*, February 20, 2014.

¹³ Michael Parenti, *Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 26.

¹⁴ Michael Parenti, *Superpatriotism* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004), 2.

reliance on machismo rhetoric; an uncritical readiness to follow national leaders, especially the president; and, the use of it by politico-economic leaders to “mask class privileges and mute class conflict.”¹⁵ All of these features appeared in Wisconsin during the months the United States participated in the Great War and will be seen throughout this work.

Besides the rampant nationalism and superpatriotism that existed throughout the United States during World War I, political science professor Murray Levin has argued that American elites, including those in Wisconsin during World War I, have a history of promoting political hysteria and repression when they believe their power is being challenged, by creating a crusade to purge an imaginary threat or evil. He suggests that the repression of this threat can be cloaked in a democratic American façade that appears practical, pluralist, lawful, and not particularly violent as the elites rely on legislatures and the courts to support their crusade, along with carefully created marketing campaigns that reinforce the righteousness of their passion and the ugliness of the enemy.¹⁶ Although Levin was primarily interested in the Red Scare and McCarthyism, his discussion of American nationalism and hyperpatriotic instincts offers insights into Wisconsin’s bout with superpatriotism during World War I, especially in regards to the state’s German-Americans.

As a way to diminish and control those who have challenged their authority, superpatriots, including those from World War I Wisconsin, tend to deploy words such as patriotism, American, loyalty/disloyalty, and traitor as weapons against those they

¹⁵ Parenti (1994), 35.

¹⁶ Murray B. Levin, *Political Hysteria in America: The Democratic Capacity for Repression* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 4-8.

perceive as a threat. Their definition of these terms often appears extreme and seems to take a fascist approach that brooks no disparagement of American icons nor dissent against governmental decisions (at least the ones they agree with). They see dichotomies such as patriot vs. traitor, loyalty vs. disloyalty, and American vs. un-American in black and white terms; there are no gray areas. One either accepts their narrow definitions of these terms or one is an enemy of the nation.

This mindset is apparent in the following analysis of Wisconsin's World War I hyperpatriots. In the name of national security during a time of war, they wielded these concepts as a cudgel to destroy those who contested America's role as a belligerent in the European War, seemingly ignoring the first amendment right of freedom of speech. While this blatant flaunting of the Bill of Rights seems apparent to us today, at the time these rights only provided protections against acts of the national government, not those of the states, allowing state and local governments to punish with impunity those who spoke out or gathered together to question governmental actions. Wisconsin's superpatriots had no problem denying their fellow citizens any perceived rights they might have as an American, and Wisconsin's courts and governmental entities generally supported them in their attempts to search out and annihilate the threat of any disloyal, traitorous, or un-American Wisconsin citizen.¹⁷

¹⁷ Jack N. Rakove, "Bill of Rights," in *The Concise Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History*, eds. Michael Kazin, Rebecca Edwards and Adam Rothman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 40. After World War I, the Supreme Court began to support the idea that the Bill of Rights applied to state governments as well as the federal, an idea generally referred to as the Incorporation Doctrine. The Court's 1925 ruling in *Gitlow v. New York*, which restrained state governments from violating freedom of speech, represented the first time the Incorporation Doctrine went into effect.

The intense wave of superpatriotism that was experienced in Wisconsin also swept through all of America during the war, and could be found in almost every city, town, and county in the country. The Midwest was definitely not immune. Besides Wisconsin, nearby states also went to disturbing extremes in their practice and understanding of what it meant to be a patriot during war time. Minnesota's Commission of Public Safety, for example, used its "almost dictatorial powers," according to Minnesota historian Carl Crislock, not only against German Americans, but primarily to defeat trade unions and the Nonpartisan League, viewed as disloyal leftist organizations that did not adequately support the war effort by the state's seven commissioners.¹⁸ In a similar vein, Iowa's governor, William L. Harding, issued a proclamation forbidding the use of foreign languages in any public place, including churches and on the telephone, stating, in essence, that freedom of speech only extended to the English language.¹⁹

Wisconsin was also rife with superpatriots, but they had a unique problem not found in any other state of the union—they lived in the "Traitor State," a concept that began to emerge in the months before America entered the war, but solidified during the summer of 1917. This epithet arose from a triad of issues that were unique to the state, at least in combination. To begin with, Wisconsin had a large and vocal German population that represented around one third of the state's residents, according to the

¹⁸ Carl H. Crislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety during World War I* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991), x.

¹⁹ Crislock (1991), 270.; Carl H. Crislock, *Ethnicity Challenged: The Upper Midwest Norwegian-American Experience in World War I* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1981), 81-82. Crislock notes that the text of Harding's proclamation was published in English in the *Lutheraneren*, a Norwegian language newspaper, on June 12, 1918. Also see Nancy Ruth Derr, "Iowans during World War I: A Study of Change Under Stress," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1979).

1910 census, and who had been strong advocates for neutrality in the early years of the war.²⁰ Other states had large German populations, but they often consisted of pacifist groups, such as the Amish or the Mennonites, who did not participate in politics.

Wisconsin's Germans, in contrast, expected to be and were active participants in the state's political arena. Once the United States entered the war, these Germans came under suspicion, although not immediately. Combined with a potential filial connection to the enemy country, many of these Germans, especially in Milwaukee, associated with the Socialist Party. Perceived as a questionable leftist organization at best before the war, it raised nativist ire when its leaders condemned America's entry into the European War the same week the country declared war on Germany. Finally, Wisconsin was home to the "Kaiser's Senator," Robert M. La Follette, a Progressive Republican who also spoke out against America's participation in the war before and after Congress and President Woodrow Wilson decided to send troops to Europe. With his strong ideals and combative personality, he became a lightning rod for those eager to label anti-war representatives as disloyal and was the first reason Wisconsin became labelled the "traitor state."

Wisconsin's superpatriots were keenly aware of the national perception. By the summer of 1918, they bridled at allegations from across the nation that Wisconsin was acutely lacking in patriotic zeal. While the *Los Angeles Times* declared from the west coast, "There is probably more disloyalty per square foot in Wisconsin than anywhere else in the country," the *Washington Post* chimed in from the east with the opinion that "there may be few spots as intensely pro-German as there are in Wisconsin." Perhaps,

²⁰ One third of Wisconsin's residents in 1910 had either been born in Germany or had a parent who was born in Germany.

worst of all, the *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser* damned Wisconsin as “the American hot bed of disloyalty.”²¹ This is the rhetoric they were responding to when they set out to prove these commentators wrong, sometimes using extreme measures.

Wisconsin’s World War I-era superpatriots were the state’s elite—men who not only used the war to support their businesses and political ambitions but who also invoked their privilege, supported by class, race, ethnicity, religion, and heritage, to demand an unquestioning allegiance to the United States’ war effort as proposed by President Wilson. In Wisconsin these men and women rallied a substantial portion of the state’s residents into a patriotic fervor, while managing to suppress and sometimes punish those who questioned their actions. They probably did this more to defeat their primary adversary, the powerful German-American political juggernaut, than to conquer the Kaiser and Germans abroad. Yet, as with superpatriots since, they used clumsy, violent, and frequently dishonest methods to reach their goals—ones that, once the sense of palatable fear passed, could be recognized as both undemocratic and unconstitutional.

As early as September 1917, a worry arose among those who espoused a superpatriotic approach to the war that they may be considered no better than the “Prussians” (whose militaristic tendencies were supposed to have infected all of Germany) American soldiers were fighting on the battlefield. Wisconsin’s superpatriots, as well as those around the country, believed the crisis created by the war allowed them to ignore rights provided by the Constitution in order to make sure the war was won by

²¹ “Wisconsin’s Bolsheviki,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1918, section II, 4; “The Heroic Hour,” *Washington Post*, May 18, 1918, also Ira E. Bennett, *Editorials from The Washington Post, 1917-1920* (Washington, DC: Washington Post Co., 1921), 235; “The Situation in Wisconsin,” *Montgomery [Alabama] Advertiser*, April 19, 1918, 4.

the Allies. In the months immediately after the war ended, the irony that in the midst of fighting a war against Prussianism, Wisconsin's superpatriots practiced a domestic oppression that would equal any practiced by the Prussians was laid out by Charles D. Stewart in his *Atlantic* article "Prussianizing Wisconsin."²² Stewart described several times the state's superpatriots acted unconstitutionally and chastised them for their behavior. In a way, he captured the paradox of American superpatriotism from any era: in demanding that all Americans experience patriotism as they do, espousing the belief that the United States is superior to all other nations, while, at the same time, undermining the basic tenets of American democracy and thus the foundation of its greatness.

This work looks at Wisconsin's World War I-era superpatriots in depth and attempts to understand who they were, what created their mindset, how they reacted to current events, and how those reactions changed over time. While concepts of loyalty and patriotism in an American context have been researched and discussed by historians for almost one hundred years, this more extreme version of patriotism, along with its practitioners, has not been studied as thoroughly. I argue that to understand American history through most of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first an understanding of the superpatriotism that arose during World War I is imperative. Looking at Wisconsin's World War I superpatriots, who could be argued saw themselves as most under threat by being labeled "traitors," provides a microcosm of the superpatriotic mindset in one of its most intense forms. This monograph provides a detailed examination of this unique Wisconsin situation with the idea that it can be used

²² Charles D. Stewart, "Prussianizing Wisconsin," *Atlantic Monthly* 123 (January 1919), 99-105. This article is discussed at length in the chapter 6.

to help explain the broader phenomenon of American superpatriotism during the World War I era.

While there are no monographs that provide an overview of the hyperpatriotism that dominated the World War I American home front, the topic has appeared in other works related to the war experience with four major themes emerging over time. The first time historians challenged the positive narrative that all Americans embraced the war effort and worked together to win the war, as proposed in many state-sponsored narratives immediately after Armistice was declared, including ones written about Wisconsin's war experience, occurred in the 1930s. These early works focused almost exclusively on the German-American experience and the destruction of their culture in America. By the 1930s, most Americans had come to realize that the war was not going to make the world safe for democracy or be the war to end all wars, as President Woodrow Wilson had claimed when America was on the precipice of entering the European conflagration. This change of heart made it an appropriate time to begin analyzing what really happened during World War I and how it changed America. In the post-World War II era, interest in the previous war emerged again, especially after Senator Joe McCarthy began his unsuccessful hunt for communists, creating a new era of superpatriotism. Political scientists and young historians began drawing parallels between discussions of loyalty and the suppression of free speech in both eras. A third wave of writing on the Great War's American home front occurred in the late 1970s and 1980s, as historians began to suggest links between the progressive movement and the war effort with an occasional discussion on how the former inadvertently encouraged a

rise of superpatriotism. Finally, today, we are in the midst of a fourth surge of interest in the World War I American home front, one that is partially interested in the propaganda and manipulation used to convince Americans to go to war, often making parallels to the Iraq Wars of the 1990s and 2000s, but also in tying the war to significant changes in the ways Americans viewed their national identity and citizenship. The current discussion of the World War I home front can be tied, in part, to acknowledging the war's centennial, but also seems related to a parallel that both eras (World War I and today) experienced regarding the ascent of conservatives who promote an extreme form of patriotism that ignores the Bill of Rights, while at the same time espousing a love of country and democracy. This work will draw from all four theme eras, but fits solidly within the last as the author saw World War I-era history seemingly repeat itself in many current events as she wrote this work.

Beginning in the 1930s, historians have shown that the vitriol thrown at America's German Americans and their culture during the war led to the dismantling of their political power, along with their social organizations, and hastened their assimilation into the American mainstream.²³ This phenomenon occurred in Wisconsin as well. The war gave the dominant political culture, Anglo-American Protestant migrants from New England, known colloquially as "Yankees," and their descendants, an opportunity to remove their fiercest political rivals, the German Americans, who

²³ The first books on this topic were Carl Wittke's *German-Americans and the World War* (New York: J.S. Ozer, 1936) and Clifton J. Child's *The German-Americans in Politics, 1914-1917* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939). However, the seminal book on the topic is still considered to be Frederick C. Luebke's *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois Press, 1974). Wittke may have been the first historian to cover the hysteria targeted at German-Americans in his chapter "Furor Americanus."

challenged and aggravated the nativists with their foreign language, education, religion, and drinking habits, along with their arrogant attitude about the superiority of Germany's art, music, and literature. By the summer of 1918, the Yankees could argue that German Americans and their culture were the antithesis of everything patriotically American. To avoid being the target of vigilante behavior, German-Americans in Wisconsin changed their names and the names of their businesses and generally eliminated any German practices and identifiers from their life.

Despite this, my research shows that the presence of a large number of those with German ancestry was not a factor in the rise of superpatriotism in World War I Wisconsin, at least not at first. Until the primary in a Senate special election held in March 1918, Wisconsin's loyalists were clear in their statements that they did not see German Americans collectively as the enemy, although they did attack German culture and language and sometimes viewed individuals as suspicious, disloyal, or traitorous. This did not mean that Wisconsin's German Americans had an easy time, since the federal government looked on them with suspicion from the beginning and even required all men of German descent to register as "enemy aliens" in January 1918 and women later in the year.²⁴ However, once Wisconsin's loyalist leaders analyzed the primary election results, they realized that areas of the state with significant concentrations of German Americans tended to vote for candidates who had been identified and labelled by the superpatriots as disloyal. Once this analysis became

²⁴ See Lee Grady's article on registering enemy aliens in Wisconsin for a discussion of this phenomenon. Lee Grady, "America's "Alien Enemies': Registering as German in Wisconsin during World War I," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 102, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 4-17.

public, hatred of and violence against German Americans and all things German escalated dramatically within the state.

German Americans were not the only groups targeted by Wisconsin's militant patriots, Socialists, frequently German, and Progressive Republicans, who generally did not support the United States entrance into the war, also experienced their ire. In each of these two groups, a single man became the main target. Among the Socialists, Victor Berger, editor of the Socialist newspaper the *Milwaukee Leader*, spent the war beleaguered not only by the state's extreme patriots, but also by the federal government, which charged him with writing treasonous and seditious editorials and took him to court under the Espionage Act. Among Progressive Republicans, Senator Robert La Follette experienced the most vitriol, especially during 1917, when the nation's newspaper and magazine editors railed against his alleged disloyalty for not supporting the war, and members of the U.S. Senate tried to expel him for his supposedly treasonous words and behavior. In fact, his out-spoken rejection of America's entrance into the war (supported by nine of Wisconsin's eleven U.S. Representatives), along with a strong anti-war Socialist party, seems to have led to Wisconsin's identity as a traitor state, rather than its large German-American population.

The history of Wisconsin's bout with superpatriotism during World War I can be put into a broader discussion of how loyalty to the American nation has been defined over time and whether one can be still be considered loyal when speaking out against the country's government, representatives, and/or its symbols. John H. Schaar, one of a number of political theorists who became interested in concepts of loyalty in the 1950s,

argues that for most of the nineteenth century, Americans were disinclined to pledge loyalty to abstract political concepts and distant governments, due in large part to a belief in individualist doctrines and a strong dislike for and wariness of politicians. The Civil War, he suggests, with calls for national union and unity led Americans to seriously consider embracing loyalty to country. In the post-Civil War period, Scharr describes the two forms of loyalty that emerged: an earlier, rational one dedicated to pluralistic and extranational principles that was challenged, primarily during World War I, by one he describes as “irrational, nationalistic, and conformist.”²⁵ While this is evident in many cases of political extremism in Wisconsin during the war, later historians challenged the idea that it was “irrational” and examined the war in the context of the progressive movement with its emphasis on rationality and control.

What this nationalistic and conformist form of loyalty promoted during the war was a suppression of anti-government rhetoric. Interest in this suppression, beyond just German Americans, first emerged in the 1950s, and Horace Peterson, along with Gilbert Fite who finished Peterson’s work after his death, wrote the seminal work on the topic. In *Opponents of War, 1917-1918* (1957), they not only covered the different groups who came under attack, but were the first to identify and describe the characteristics of America’s superpatriots from the First World War.

In the wake of this monograph, interest in Wisconsin’s superpatriots swelled with a slew of theses and dissertations written on the topic during this time. A few of them turned into articles, making them the first published works on the subject. John Finnegan’s article on the preparedness movement (1964), an antecedent of the

²⁵ John H. Scharr, *Loyalty in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1957), 88.

superpatriotism of World War I, is one of these. In it he describes this movement as a “somewhat exaggerated response to the pressure of the time” by the urban upper-middle class, a theme that was repeated once America entered the war. In a similar vein, Lorin Cary wrote an article about the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion (1969), a superpatriotic group founded during the war, in which he argues the Legion “exaggerated the extent of superpatriotism” and mistook support of the war effort as support for its goals, leading to its quick demise after the war ended.²⁶ For many years, Cary’s article existed as the main work on Wisconsin’s superpatriots. Much of this early writing on World War I Wisconsin, published and unpublished, appears to be in reaction to the suppression of speech by superpatriots during the McCarthy era, an idea the authors sometime mentioned in their introductions or conclusions.

Wisconsin’s experience with superpatriotism during World War I makes more sense if put into the context of the Progressive Movement, which was at its peak throughout the war and very popular in Wisconsin. To be clear, this work defines Progressivism as a movement which prioritized reason, order, and efficiency, exemplified by new managerial and bureaucratic institutions led by experts, often academics. It can be contrasted with the anti-elitist populist approach to government

²⁶ John P. Finnegan, “Preparedness in Wisconsin: The National Guard and the Mexican Border Incident,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 47, no. 3 (Spring 1964): 199; Lorin Lee Cary, “The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, 1917-1918,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 53, no. 1 (Autumn 1969): 50. Both of these articles were based on the author’s master’s theses. Note that both authors use “exaggerated” to discuss the actions of Wisconsin’s superpatriots during the war. This is a common theme in writings on World War Wisconsin. For overviews of the political situation in Wisconsin during the war, two state histories, Robert C. Nesbit’s *Wisconsin: A History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973) and the Wisconsin Historical Society’s *History of Wisconsin Series* volume 5, *War, A New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1990), have been the best resources, but they do not go into depth into the superpatriotic movement, although they do discuss the actions of its participants and those they targeted.

from the nineteenth century, which promoted individualism and often relied on emotion, charismatic leaders, and occasionally violence.

Professor Herbert Margulies may have been the first historian to tie progressivism with World War I, and he did so in a Wisconsin context. His overall argument centers on his belief that the war caused the decline of the progressive movement, as led by Robert La Follette, but not progressivism in general. Margulies describes the war shattering factional alignments within the state's progressive movement, arguing that La Follette's organization "broke beyond repair" when Progressive Republicans originally joined with their old enemies (Stalwart [conservative] Republicans and Democrats) to embrace President Wilson's patriotic propaganda and rally round the flag. He later notes that this "war-born loyalty group" did not last, but by the spring of 1918 had subdivided into three segments: Democrats, superpatriotic Republicans, and moderate Republicans; the latter two both being a form of Stalwart Republican. The progressives had been subsumed into one of those three segments.²⁷ Besides these factional schisms, Margulies argues, the progressive movement's demise in Wisconsin could also be tied to the newly increased strength of the Stalwart Republicans, especially the moderate faction (made up of those, such as Wisconsin Governor Emanuel Philipp, who had not embraced superpatriotism nor the Progressive Movement during the war), and voters' interests turning toward liquor (prohibition) and anti-Catholicism issues and away from progressive concerns, along with La Follette's polarizing techniques. Margulies does acknowledge, however, that

²⁷ Herbert F. Margulies, *Decline of the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1968), 242.

neither La Follette nor progressive-inspired reformism were destroyed by the war, but actually showed a revival in the post-war years.²⁸

About a decade after Margulies's work, professors David M. Kennedy and Ellis Hawley tied progressivism to World War I on a national level.²⁹ Kennedy in his seminal work on World War I and American society illustrates how President Wilson adroitly convinced progressives, who generally embraced non-violence and pacifism, to accept America's entrance into the European War by couching it in terms that would particularly appeal to them, especially the idea that this would be a war for democracy, a war to end all wars, and a crusade to redeem barbarous Europe from militarism.³⁰ This acceptance, along with their rationalization of wartime vigilantism, Kennedy argues, lays bare "the assumptions, ambitions, and limitations of the progressive mentality" better than a study of the movement in peacetime.³¹ Hawley, on the other hand, and later Michael McGerr, following in Margulies's footsteps, have closely tied the progressive movement to World War I and concluded that the war marked the culmination of the movement's objectives, but also its destruction.

World War I provided progressives with an opportunity to show Americans how a war effort could be managed. Hawley argues that while war managers urged harmony

²⁸ Margulies, 283-288.

²⁹ Professor Paul L. Murphy in his 1979 book on World War I and civil liberties briefly addressed the Progressive Movement and World War I around the same time as Kennedy and Hawley did, but to a much more limited extent. Murphy argues that during World War I, progressives, who advocated using a centralized and "paternalistic" federal government as an active instrument of social control, created federal policy that repressed "individualism and diversity of opinion" as a way to secure allegiance from all Americans, especially those whose loyalty was suspect. This approach, Murphy believes, fit in with their desire to curtail "evil" behavior by "evil" individuals, such as those selling impure food and drugs, exploiting women and children, or corrupting the political process. Paul L. Murphy, *World War I and the Origin of Civil Liberties in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 25.

³⁰ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, 2004 edition), 51.

³¹ Kennedy, 373. Kennedy discusses vigilantism and progressivism on pages 73-83.

and cooperation among ethnic groups, they also created a “repressive loyalty apparatus” that ended up being appropriated by superpatriots and used against “un-American” elements. The targets of the apparatus, he continues, saw the progressive bureaucracies “as instruments of monopoly, tyranny, terrorism, injustice, profiteering, or sectional advantage.” He adds that Midwesterners were particularly angry over loyalty measures, among other things, which produced among them a “marked revulsion” against President Wilson and his war managers.³²

Michael McGerr takes Hawley’s ideas and builds on them. He agrees that World War I was progressivism’s climax, but also “its death knell,” because contradictorily the progressive war managers “produced disorder instead of order” and “chaos instead of control.”³³ He sees the managed portion of the loyalty campaign as a manipulative approach to remake Americans into a homogenous, loyal population made up of middle-class people “who banished individualism, disciplined pleasure, eliminated class differences, and elevated women.” McGerr agrees with Hawley that these war managers lost control of their campaign to purge disloyalty by turning significant portions of it over to local officials and private citizens, often superpatriots, who used extreme measures to create a loyal populace.³⁴ By failing to contain the loyalty campaign, along with other examples of increased federal authority, such as conscription and prohibition, Americans began to view the progressive government, as exemplified by Wilson, as “dictatorial and autocratic.” This push back on progressivism, especially by

³² Ellis W. Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for Modern Order: A History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1979), xv, 27, 37.

³³ McGerr, Michael E., *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003), xvi.

³⁴ McGerr, 288-290. Civilian members of the American Protective League displayed some of the most egregious behavior.

conservatives, led not to a cohesive population, McGerr argues, but a return to America's individualist and reactive past with people primed to attack those they identified as radicals and treasonous, such as the newly created Bolsheviks, leading to the postwar Red Scare.³⁵

In this work, I will primarily use Progressivism to discuss the paradox it created regarding vigilantism, especially the tension between the Progressive desire to be rational and in control versus the need to control the thoughts and behavior of others during wartime, most effectively, but not always, with violence. Professor Paul Murphy has argued that Wilsonian leaders, who usually identified with the progressive movement, had few qualms about extending Progressive forms of social control into restraints against wartime disloyalty and dissent. He notes that Wilson divided wartime repression into one with a positive spirit, a temporary form which included educating people to see the value of their sacrifice, and one with a "mean" spirit, marked by insensitive behavior by public officials and private citizens, including vigilantism. Wilson worried the latter form would impede his higher mission to make the world safe for democracy and preserve Western capitalism.³⁶

Wilson very clearly condemned mean-spirited repression and vigilantism, but seemed blind to the fact that Progressive beliefs, including the ideas that shared convictions made a society and that persuasion rather than law was the preferred way to govern, could perversely sanction noxious kinds of oppression and contribute to the

³⁵ McGerr, 302, 305, 310.

³⁶ Murphy, 252.

hysteria that led to vigilante behavior.³⁷ He, and other national progressive leaders, did not seem aware that the actions of federal agents, which at times could be intolerant, insensitive and destructive of individual rights, usually in the name of legitimate national policy, encouraged political hysteria and similar behavior among private citizens.³⁸

Vigilantism, at least as practiced in the United States during World War I, had an embedded paradox: those who identified themselves as dedicated to supporting a nation of laws, had to break the law to enforce it. Former Attorney General Charles Bonaparte (1906-1909), possibly in an attempt to address this paradox, stated in 1890, as a lawyer, that the purpose of vigilantism was not to violate the law, but to vindicate it.³⁹

Progressives, such as president Wilson, tended to conflate vigilantism with spontaneous mob violence perpetrated by lower class men, while separating it from vigilance, which Wilson tied to service, voluntarism, and its embodiment of American democracy. It is this latter form, perpetrated by elite leaders with a middle-class rank and file, that fits with in this paradox. Since, as historian Christopher Capozzola has pointed out, vigilantism is not about violence, but about law, and the vigilantes desire to establish order on its behalf, even as they operate outside of it.⁴⁰ Within this context, federal and state leaders who supported the progressive movement could rationalize invasive activities during the war.

³⁷ Kennedy, 74. See also William Thomas, *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008) for an overview of the actions taken by federal agents to suppress dissent during World War I with an emphasis on what took place in Wisconsin.

³⁸ Murphy, 253.

³⁹ Kennedy, 79.

⁴⁰ Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118, 143.

This paradox over vigilantism played out in Wisconsin as its conservative elite struggled with the role that violence should play in controlling obvious displays of disloyalty. While not politically progressive, they did embrace ideas of rationality and control espoused by progressives. As a result, their “flying squadrons,” which swooped down on allegedly disloyal Wisconsinites, often included a stenographer, a photographer, and a color guard—creating a “civilized” form of intimidation. While these squadrons frequently included rough men to be their muscle, their overall goal was to avoid violence. This was in stark contrast to the mob violence perpetrated by groups such as the Knights of Loyalty in the Ashland area who used tarring and feathering as persuasive techniques—an approach to controlling the disloyal which conservative elites condemned publicly, but recognized as effective, in at least silencing the supposedly disloyal.

At the same time, these conservatives, who were generally resistant to the progressive idea of bringing more government into their lives, embraced the ideas of World War I progressives to stand behind and support the federal government, along with its emblems and its approach to solving civil issues, including disloyalty and dissent. Yet while promoting the concepts of “law and order” within the context of a governmental bureaucracy, they ultimately put more emphasis on “order” than “law,” when they felt the latter was not producing the societal order they demanded and required. This anti-government/pro-government dichotomy and tension is a defining characteristic of superpatriots, who appear to promote American institutions and democracy, while at the same time ignoring or undermining them.

The extreme patriotism combined with vigilantism and progressive attitudes that were the hallmarks of the World War I experience seem to have wrenched Americans out of the 19th century and into the 20th century, where new ideas about citizenship and identity were created, others shed, and some reinforced. A handful of historians have discussed this phenomenon, each having a different take about what changed or was reinforced, although an underlying concept seems to be that America's elites, usually identified as conservative white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the professional and business classes, used the war to solidify their power by undermining those who did not fit into their definition of an American citizen and identifying these people as potentially subversive to the American way of life.

With the influx of immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anglo-Americans became concerned that the United States was being overrun by unassimilated foreigners, including Germans, who elites worried came with the purpose to destroy the country and the American way of life. Historian Zachary Smith has argued that this long-standing apprehension about threats to national and ethnic security and identity required Anglo Americans, especially elites, to reassert their power and identity during the war. He suggests they responded by identifying Germans, but especially German Americans, as the "enemy Other," who they feared would subordinate their Anglo-Saxon identity and take control of the United States.⁴¹ To do this, they first had to separate white Germans from white Anglos. Smith believes they accomplished this goal by using Darwinian concepts of racial progress that posed the possibility of advanced white races devolving into a lesser or regressed state. He also

⁴¹ Zachary Smith, *Age of Fear: Othering and American Identity during World War I* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 2-3, 101.

argues that Anglo Americans combined this belief with the idea that the war needed to be viewed in apocalyptic terms, where “the pagan or satanic German Other would ensure the annihilation of white Anglo-Saxon identity,” thereby preventing or at least slowing down the second coming of Christ and the resulting millennium.⁴² To prevent this loss of control, Anglo elites portrayed German Americans as a threat to Anglo-American power and identity, an idea vigilantes used to justify their behavior against enemy alien Others.⁴³ Although Smith does not state this explicitly, the Anglo elites’ emphasis on race and religious fundamentalism as a way to take control during the war could be seen as not only reinforcing these aspects of American identity, but playing an important role in justifying the rise in superpatriotism at the time.

American identity can also be closely tied to ideas of citizenship, specifically what a citizen owes to the state and what a citizen expects in return to maintain an alliance to the state. Christopher Capozzola, a historian of the American home front during World War I, posits that a citizenship of obligation dominated the American mindset up to and including the World War I era. This form of citizenship required loyalty to the nation, conforming to the norms of a community, and a desire to work. Within the American context, this form of citizenship, according to Capozzola, arose from a combination of beliefs, including republican traditions that privileged the common good over individual liberty, Christian beliefs that emphasized virtue, and an inherent paternalism that required obedience to social hierarchies. In the early twentieth century, this sense of obligation appealed to conservative elites who used it to uphold the status quo, as well as to progressive elites who wanted to use it to create a nation based on shared sacrifice. A

⁴² Smith, 7.

⁴³ Smith, 100.

citizenship of obligation in the United States, Capozzola contends, has always coexisted with a citizenship of rights. These rights, which the state provides, represent the terms with which American citizens will recognize the authority of the state, follow its laws, and support it in times of duress. However, during World War I, Americans focused more on obligations than rights.⁴⁴

Supporting the war effort became one of those obligations and those who chose not to fulfill their duty—avoiding the draft or refusing to buy Liberty Bonds, for example—experienced consequences that infringed on their rights. Most of these people eventually found themselves coerced into volunteering their support for the government’s war effort, creating a paradoxical “culture of coercive voluntarism,” which seemed antithetical to a citizenship of obligation. Otherwise they took silence as their obligation or duty, often a coerced behavior that required them—usually German Americans—not to speak against the war effort.⁴⁵ Capozzola argues that this forced citizenship of obligation, which became rife during the war, marked its downfall. As people’s rights came under attack, a backlash against obligation and volunteering occurred. As McGerr also noted, this created a return to a nineteenth century form of citizenship that emphasized individual rights and put individualism at the center of political life in America. Capozzola believes that this emphasis on individualism has corroded America’s common culture and civic associations, leading to a less cohesive national identity.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Capozzola, 6-7.

⁴⁵ Capozzola, 8.

⁴⁶ Capozzola, 213.

Wisconsin's World War I-era superpatriots can be put into the context of Smith's idea that Anglo Americans saw their way of life under threat and Capozzola's concept of citizenship through obligation and voluntarism. The Yankee faction in Wisconsin saw their power endangered by an out-spoken, articulate, and often persuasive German-American political contingent which challenged their values and beliefs regarding religion, education, and temperance among other issues. They used the war, especially after the senatorial election, to paint their opponents as dangerous "enemy Others" who threatened an established American identity and needed to be made, at least, impotent politically, if not completely destroyed. Within Wisconsin with its unusually large and politically active German-American bloc of citizens this became an extremely important, if not always explicitly stated, goal of the superpatriots—one that was completely and successfully achieved. They achieved this objective, in part, by emphasizing the idea of obligation as the primary form of citizenship, but, as Capozzola points out, often resorted to intimidation and violence to accomplish it.

With the hundredth anniversary of the war on the horizon, a handful of Wisconsin history scholars turned their attention to the events of World War I and produced three books, all of which reinforce the story told previously by graduate students and academics, but which are more available to the general public. As with other monographs on the topic, the authors of these books present the superpatriots, both official and voluntary ones, as attackers of constitutional rights, while holding up La Follette and Berger, and a few others, as courageous for standing up to them. Richard L. Pifer, in his publication *The Great War Comes to Wisconsin: Sacrifice, Patriotism,*

and Free Speech in a Time of Crisis, even describes the two men, along with Governor Philipp and Milwaukee Mayor Daniel Hoan, as those who gave “voice to reason” within a “security-conscious, super-patriotic climate,” and, while flawed, each “tried to lead with humanity and respect for people and the law.”⁴⁷ He compares these leaders to their superpatriot antitheses, specifically Wheeler Bloodgood, a founder of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, and Roy Wilcox, a state senator during the war, who do not fare well in Pifer’s telling of Wisconsin and the Great War.

Two other authors have also commented on Wisconsin, World War I, and the advent of a heightened superpatriotism with the hope of opening the public’s eyes to the consequences of embracing the latter. In *A Crowded Hour: Milwaukee during the Great War, 1917-1918*, author Kevin J. Abing writes that this era, believed by many contemporary Americans as a time when America would save the world for democracy, “was hardly one of the country’s or city’s [or Wisconsin’s] shining moments.”⁴⁸ He concludes by quoting from a 1919 speech by Berger, “I’ll tell you what you got out of this war. You lost your liberties,” and adding that the results of the war, at least in Milwaukee, were “anxiety, acrimony, patriotism, and hysteria, [and] the supreme disillusionment with American democracy.”⁴⁹ Throughout his book, he lays these consequences at the feet of men such as Wheeler Bloodgood, John Stover, the head of

⁴⁷ Richard L. Pifer, *The Great War Comes to Wisconsin: Sacrifice, Patriotism, and Free Speech in a Time of Crisis* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2018), 238, 246. Pifer wrote this book after retiring as an archivist at the Wisconsin Historical Society. He is primarily interested in ways war can threaten closely held ideas of freedom and liberty within the United States (245 and back cover).

⁴⁸ Kevin J. Abing, *A Crowded Hour: Milwaukee during the Great War, 1917-1918* (Charlestown, SC: Arcadia Publishing, Fonhill Media LLC, 2017), 10. Abing has served as the archivist at the Milwaukee County Historical Society for many years. Abing believes the war, through the actions of the superpatriots, changed Milwaukee, which “became poorer for it” due primarily to the disappearance of the city’s German heritage and the weakening of its Socialist party and labor unions (10).

⁴⁹ Abing, 185, 193.

Milwaukee's American Protective League, a volunteer spy organization, along with the other leaders of the Loyalty Legion, among others. In *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent*, William H. Thomas focuses on the destructive effects the Department had on American constitutional rights, especially in Wisconsin, and illustrates its leaders' willingness to combine their repressive efforts with "locals who claimed to have special insight into the sources of disloyalty."⁵⁰ In all three cases, the nation's, state's, and city's superpatriots are presented as destructive to Americans' civil liberties.

All three authors, who were writing after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the resulting Patriot Act, also warn that superpatriotism and its damaging tendencies have not disappeared. Thomas worries that the "expanded authority [created by the Patriot Act] will be used to monitor and intimidate dissenters."⁵¹ While Pifer, after acknowledging Americans' capacity for "prejudice, intolerance, and injustice," reminds his readers, perhaps with the various Gulf Wars in mind, that engaging in war can lead to "potentially disastrous outcomes we cannot predict."⁵² Finally, Abing hopes that shining a light on Milwaukee's World War I experiences will show "the folly behind targeting a specific ethnic group during a time of crisis, not unlike current suspicions in today's world of international terrorism."⁵³ Thomas, Pifer, and Abing, in each of their writings, acknowledge the power superpatriotism had over Wisconsin's leaders during World War I and seem to hope by exposing it to an audience who may be unaware of its

⁵⁰ William H. Thomas, Jr., *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 145. This book is based on Thomas's 2002 dissertation, "The Department of Justice and Dissent during the First World War," at the University of Iowa.

⁵¹ Thomas, 7.

⁵² Pifer, 247.

⁵³ Abing, 10.

consequences in that place and time, prevent its reoccurrence and destructive tendencies in the volatile present.

My work goes beyond what has been done before by focusing exclusively on Wisconsin's World War I superpatriots and by putting them into a broader context. It also attempts to make the narrative more cohesive by looking at their behavior chronologically and mapping out how it changed over time, especially as their frustration mounted with their inability to convince every Wisconsinite, at least those who could vote, to support their cause. It centers this increasing frustration around the special election for U.S. Senator in April 1918 following the untimely death in October 1917 of Wisconsin's junior U.S. senator, Paul O. Husting, who can arguably be considered the leader of the state's loyalist movement and who most superpatriots held up as the ideal of a Wisconsin national representative. With his death, the nation (or at least the nation's newspaper editors) created a crisis for Wisconsin: would Husting's replacement be a loyalist as he had been or more in the mold of La Follette, by this time described as the "Kaiser's Senator"? The state's reputation appeared to hang in the balance, or at least Wisconsin's superpatriots believed it to be. By the time of the election, they had spent money and effort using propaganda, education, and some humiliation and intimidation tactics to convince other Wisconsinites of the correctness of their cause.

To track this history, I have not only used the records left by many of the actors and their organizations of this story, but have relied heavily on the nation's and state's newspapers, the most significant social media of the time, and especially on the opinion

pieces of their editors. Most, but not all, newspapers in Wisconsin, as with most of the country, became rousing supporters of the war effort and often the mouthpieces for the superpatriots. Within the state, the Loyalty Legion, the leading volunteer organization for Wisconsin's superpatriots, knowing the importance of the newspapers role in forming opinions, created the Wisconsin Patriotic Press Association. Newspaper editors who joined the group pledged to back loyalist candidates, while also exposing members of their communities who they identified as traitors and disloyalists. Only a few editors were able to withstand the appeal and those who did, such as Victor Berger and his *Milwaukee Leader*, suffered terrible consequences. Of all the state's newspapers, the one with the largest circulation was the *Milwaukee Journal*.⁵⁴ Although it was a Democratic newspaper in a predominately Republican state, it bought into the superpatriotic message as early as February 1916 when it began its "Campaign for Americanism," and continued to be a voice for the Loyalty Legion and other superpatriots throughout the war. Because of this, along with being the most significant newspaper in the state, located in its largest city, I have relied on it to bring a consistent message throughout this work.

History has not treated kindly the superpatriots of World War I, including those from Wisconsin.⁵⁵ Historians who have studied them recognize the irony of their position—angrily demanding overt professions of patriotism to a democratic nation, while undermining the basic tenets of that democracy. Yet superpatriotism in the United

⁵⁴ Finnegan, 10.

⁵⁵ See the conclusion for a discussion of post-war attitudes by contemporaries and historians toward the superpatriots.

States has not disappeared. It continued after the war into the Red Scare and had another significant flare up during communist scare of the McCarthy era. In the late 2010s and early 2020s, superpatriotism re-emerged as a dominant force in American politics in a form that has some similarities, but also differences with its World War I precedent. In line with Zachary Smith's discussion, today's superpatriots feel their view of the American way of life is being threatened by an "enemy Other," in this case primarily Latin Americans and Muslim Americans. They have lashed out at these alleged enemies in the context of white supremacy (although the idea of "white" has grown to include more than just Anglo Americans) and often within a framework of Christian fundamentalism, which they view as an essential element of American identity. Like their predecessors, they have sometimes turned to violence, often in frustration that other Americans, frequently "liberals," are not embracing their ideas. However, unlike the World War I superpatriots, this violence is not being done to force the enemy Other, by whatever definition they use, to meet the obligations of the state and to do their duties as citizens, but instead as a way to demand their individual rights, even if these rights are opposed to the nation's common good.

Superpatriots have been around since at least World War I, and probably earlier, but only infrequently take control of the national narrative. When they have, their extremism has appealed to a sizable portion of the general American public. Yet they have tended to take their cause to extremes, inviting an eventual (if temporary) backlash. Whether this will happen after the current outburst is still to be seen. However, understanding the history of superpatriotism in this country and its origins in World War I, through the specific example of Wisconsin's experience with the

phenomenon, can help historians understand, at least in part, the reasons superpatriotism occasionally flourishes in a constitutional democracy like the United States of America.

Chapter 1: **Championing the Cause of Peace, Neutrality, & Preparedness, 1914-1916**

*“Milwaukee People: Will you walk to show your faith? Do you love this nation first last through thick and thin? There are those who doubt it.... Let the whole American people know us as we are.”*⁵⁶

Milwaukee Journal announcing a Preparedness Parade, June 20, 1916

Even with storm clouds overhead and periods of drizzling rain, over 30,000 participants marched in Milwaukee’s Preparedness Parade on July 15, 1916, while another 150,000 people lined Grand Avenue and Wisconsin Street. Some of the audience hung out of windows to catch a glimpse of the three-and-half mile procession; others took in the spectacle from balconies and bleachers. Together they watched soggy musicians from fifty bands and damp veterans, especially grizzled, feeble ones from the Civil War tramp down the street. Drenched representatives from 300 organizations, including thousands of employees from local factory and department stores, also marched while carrying American flags and displaying other national emblems in great profusion. Wisconsin Governor Emanuel L. Philipp stood at the corner of Tenth Street and Grand Avenue, where, bareheaded and wet, he saluted every flag that passed for three and a half hours. Despite the rain, many of the participants and attendees considered the day a success. The *Waukesha Freeman*, for example, called the parade “the greatest in the history of the city.”⁵⁷

After a year of struggling to be recognized by Wisconsin citizens, the organizers of the parade, who were members of the Milwaukee chapter of the National Security

⁵⁶ *Milwaukee Journal*, June 20, 1916 as quoted in John P. Finnegan, “The Preparedness Movement in Wisconsin, 1914-1917” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1961), 62.

⁵⁷ *Waukesha Freeman*, July 20, 1916, 6.

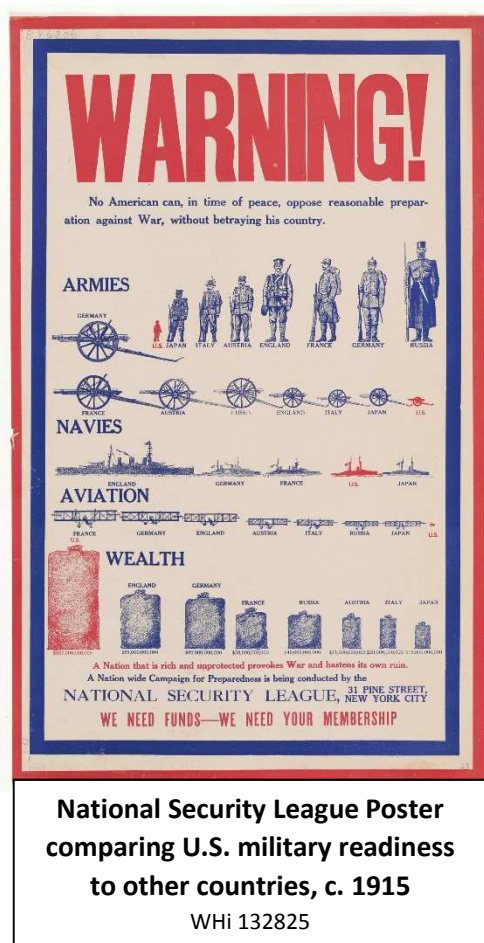
League (NSL), finally felt they had had a successful event. Following examples set by other Midwest cities, including St. Louis, Des Moines, and Chicago, league members organized this Preparedness Parade not only to illustrate Milwaukee's patriotic fervor, but more importantly to bring the message to the city's residents of America's urgent need to be prepared for war, especially in the face of the European War raging across the Atlantic.

The League, founded in December 1914 by a New York City lawyer, had been urging military preparedness for about a year by the time of the Milwaukee parade. Originally, the organization had just focused on keeping abreast of the United States' military readiness. However, by the summer of 1915, when the organization sent a representative to Milwaukee, the NSL had become more obviously pro-interventionist and conspicuously anti-pacifist, possibly because of newly acquired support from arms manufacturers coupled with the horrific sinking of the *Lusitania* by German war ships that killed dozens of Americans.⁵⁸

The NSL representative who came to Milwaukee found an eager ear in Augustus Vogel, owner of one of the largest industries in the city, the Vogel and Pfister Leather Company, who soon assumed the role of local League president. Vogel, like many other Milwaukee business and professional men, had concerns about the defense of the United States should it be attacked by one of the hostile nations in the European War, Britain, France, Germany, or even Japan. This educated and influential constituency had read about the disturbing discrepancies between the United States' army and naval forces and those of European nations. They noted, for instance, that Switzerland had a

⁵⁸ Finnegan, 42. The sinking of the *Lusitania* occurred on May 7, 1915.

larger standing army than America, ignoring for the moment that belligerent nations surrounded the small, land-locked country, a situation much different from geographically-isolated United States.⁵⁹ On December 10, 1915 the *Milwaukee Journal* increased the concern of League members by printing frightening statistics from the War College in Washington, DC. Germany, the College's experts estimated, would be able to land 827,000 troops on America's shores in thirty days; France, 404,226; and Japan 238,367, although they would need forty-one days to do so.⁶⁰



NSL members around the country, including those in Milwaukee, alarmed by these numbers specifically and America's military situation in general, began urging an increase in the nation's military budget. Milwaukee members sought out new adherents throughout Wisconsin to help promote this message. However, in a state where one-third of the population was made up of German immigrants or their descendants, a proposal that could possibly lead America into war with Germany would not be widely accepted. In fact, the NSL probably never had more than 2,600 state citizens join its ranks.⁶¹ The League's message

⁵⁹ Preparedness advocates frequently compared Switzerland's military readiness to America's and noted that the European country had universal military training, which they frequently supported. See Finnegan, 23, 36; also Racine Trades and Labor Council letter to the editor that stated, "We are in favor of the Swiss system of military preparedness. A rifle and ammunition in every man's home is an armed nation." "Voice of the People," *Racine Journal News*, October 21, 1915, 12.

⁶⁰ Finnegan, 31. Finnegan suggests in his thesis that these numbers were probably not realistic.

⁶¹ Finnegan, 142.

became even less compelling when some of the marchers revealed that their employers had coerced them to participate and that they had only appeared in the parade to save their jobs. The day after the event, the German-language paper *Milwaukee Vorwaerts* accusingly editorialized that the League had used “thoroughly un-American” methods to engineer their event. “It was,” the editors concluded, “a forced parade, to which employees were sent like dummies, whether they liked it or not.”⁶²

With this incident, the League ominously foreshadowed the approach that its members, under a different rubric, would take once America entered the war. Historian John P. Finnegan has written, “The activities of the preparedness advocates...served gradually to condition the people of Wisconsin to increased and unprecedented defense measures...and tended to remove the [preparedness] issue from the sphere of rational discussion and turn it into the touchstone of Americanism.” Members of Milwaukee’s National Security League, Finnegan noted, became the leaders of the Wisconsin’s hyperpatriotic organizations once America entered the war.⁶³ Before that happened, however, other Wisconsinites would come forward to urge a rational discussion of America’s role in the European War.

Beginning on August 1, 1914, the day World War I began in Europe, Americans examined and debated the role the United States should play in the European War. Opinions ranged from a pacifism that abhorred all war through to a belief in maintaining a neutral stance where all warring parties would be treated equally, to preparedness, mentioned above, that did not flinch at the thought of war and urged

⁶² Translated in the *Milwaukee Leader*, July 16, 1916, as quoted in Finnegan, 69.

⁶³ Finnegan, 72, 148.

Americans to be ready for the worst. Individuals, however, could also be found in the interstices of these opinions. A pacifist might be willing to go to war if America was attacked, for example. An advocate of neutrality could have come to this position after deciding that the United States should not be involved with Europe's corrupt monarchies as they tried to destroy each other or, like a significant minority in Wisconsin, by seeing it as a capitalist war existing essentially to make money for financiers and capitalists. German-Americans, who generally favored neutrality, worried that British propaganda presented Germans as sub-human, non-English speaking aggressors who needed to be put down, while they saw their friends and family back home as educated, cultured, and beloved human beings. They hoped neutrality would force the United States to treat the Central Powers in the same manner as the Allies. Those supporting preparedness could simply want their country ready for attack, while others, such as former President Theodore Roosevelt, were eager to get into the midst of the conflict. Until a month before America entered the war, no opinion or position held a dominant sway over Wisconsin's collective consciousness.

The overarching question discussed and debated during the two and half years Americans watched the war from afar was which of these positions could be considered the most American, the most loyal, the most patriotic. In March 1917, the month before the United States joined the war on the side of the Allies, hyperpatriots in Wisconsin and throughout the country answered this complicated national question on their terms, and, for the next eighteen or so months, urged, beguiled, and forced anyone who could not see the wisdom of their position to at least outwardly accept their view that the Allies fought for American democratic ideals. They even took this position a step farther, by declaring that to say or think otherwise was treasonous or seditious behavior. Before

the hyperpatriots had the upper hand, however, Wisconsinites struggled for ways to react appropriately to the outbreak of war in Europe.

As war raged in Europe in early August 1914, Wisconsin's gubernatorial election dominated the political agenda of the state. The same week Germany, France, England, Russia, Austria, Hungary, and Serbia declared war on each other, Robert La Follette Sr., Wisconsin's senior senator in Washington and the state's former governor, chose "to declare war on the candidacy of Emanuel L. Philipp for the Republican nomination for governor," in his journal, *La Follette Weekly*.⁶⁴ La Follette had made his name in early-twentieth-century Wisconsin by championing a progressive agenda that encouraged government to improve the social and economic welfare of Wisconsin's middle-class and working-class citizens. The progressive movement hoped to break down the power that business and industrial leaders had wielded in state decision making by replacing political cronyism and nepotism with a dependence on academic experts. In the end, La Follette's progressivism split the state's Republican Party into La Follette supporters or Progressives and a more conservative faction, who called themselves Stalwart Republicans.⁶⁵



Robert M. La Follette, 1915
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⁶⁴ "La Follette Attacks E.L. Philipps Next," *Sheboygan Press*, August 3, 1914, 2.

⁶⁵ See Herbert F. Margulies, *Decline of the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1968) for a thorough discussion of the progressive movement in Wisconsin.

Philipp, a self-made millionaire who had never held office before, considered himself a member of the latter group. He had made his money owning refrigerated train



Emanuel Philipp, 1910

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cars and renting them, primarily to Milwaukee breweries, and had been active in supporting the railroads' interests. As a candidate, Philipp criticized the high cost of supporting the progressive agenda and feared that reliance on academic expertise would lead universities to encroach into the affairs of state instead of allowing duly-elected politicians to do their duty. During the course of his campaign, he summed up his position, "I am in favor of strict economy of state affairs, substantial reduction in

taxation and a curtailment of all useless state activities."⁶⁶ He planned to achieve his goals, he frequently stated, by running the state like he had run his business. At a campaign stop in Oconto, for example, he noted,

From a financial standpoint it will be a loss for me to spend two years away from my business in case I am elected [but] if the voters think I can do them a service heading the government and in conducting it in the same way in which I have conducted my own business, I am willing to do so.⁶⁷

At first, neither La Follette nor Philipp made any public statement about the fighting overseas. La Follette may have been hampered by eating a tainted sardine sandwich during the first days of the war, which confined him to home for several weeks, under

⁶⁶ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 16, 17, 1914, as quoted in Robert S. Maxwell, *Emanuel L. Philipp: Wisconsin Stalwart* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 86.

⁶⁷ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 21, 1914 as quoted in Maxwell, 88.

orders to follow a diet of buttermilk and oranges, although he did make statements about votes in the U.S. Senate.⁶⁸

One month to the day after the war began, Wisconsin held primary elections and, to La Follette's dismay, Republicans chose Philipp over his preferred candidate, Andrew H. Dahl, a loyal La Follette lieutenant. The Democrats elected John C. Karel, a conservative, and the Socialists (also known as Social Democrats) picked Oscar Ameringer, a trade unionist, to represent their party. Progressive Republicans decided to field their own candidate, state senator John J. Blaine, in response to Philipp's election. On November 3, Wisconsin turned out to vote and gave Philipp the governorship, but chose Democrats and Progressives for all other national and state positions.

In any case, both La Follette and Philipp agreed with President Wilson when he declared neutrality the official policy of the United States on August 19, 1914, a position consistent with the country's historic aversion to entangling itself in European wars. Wilson urged Americans to "act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned." Wilson went on to ask Americans to be

neutral in fact as well as in name during these days that are to try men's souls. We must be impartial in thought as well as in action, must put a curb upon our sentiments as well as upon every transaction that might be construed as a preference of one party to the struggle before another.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ "Would Support Cummins," *Racine Journal News*, August 3, 1914, 7.

⁶⁹ Woodrow Wilson, "American Neutrality: An appeal by the President of the United States to the Citizens of the Republic, Requesting Their Assistance in Maintaining a State of Neutrality During the Present European War," August 19, 1914, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., S. Doc. No. 566 as quoted in Richard L. Pifer, *The Great War Comes to Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017), 36.

Wisconsin historian Paul W. Glad has suggested that a neutral stance by Americans provided “a model of international behavior for peoples of the world and [preserved] the benefits of peace for American citizens.”⁷⁰ A strong, honest neutrality appealed to both La Follette and Philipp, a stance they maintained for the next two years, even though Wilson gradually moved away from it to side with the Allies.

German-Americans, especially in Milwaukee, would also take on the banner of neutrality, but in late July and early August 1914, many of them struggled over how to respond to the declarations of war spreading across Europe. At first, their support leaned toward Germany and the Kaiser. In fact, on August 7 the *Milwaukee Free Press*, a German language paper, accused Jewish Austria-Hungarian immigrant Victor Berger of



Victor Berger, 1923

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criticizing the German war effort and having the “palpable purpose to arouse prejudice against the German emperor, the defender of western civilization.”⁷¹ By the time the European War began, Berger had served one term in the U.S. House of Representatives (1910-1912) and had been the editor of the *Milwaukee Leader*, a Socialist newspaper, for a number of years, making him a well-known presence in the city. Berger wrote to his wife Meta the same day, “The Free Press attacked me bitterly this morning

(Friday) as a sort of a traitor to the German race because I do not sufficiently adore the

⁷⁰ Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940*, vol. V (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1990), 1.

⁷¹ “As for Mr. Berger,” *Milwaukee Free Press*, August 7, 1914 as quoted in a footnote in Michael Stevens, editor, *The Family Letters of Victor and Meta Berger, 1894-1929* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1995), 180.

German Kaiser.”⁷² He responded publicly in the *Milwaukee Leader* by noting that Socialists or “Social Democrats of all countries bitterly opposed this war—and especially did the Social Democrats of Germany, Austria and Hungary oppose it.”⁷³ The day before, however, he had complained to Meta that the staff at the *Leader* were “thoroughly pro-English” and anti-German, adding,

The news all comes by the way of London and is colored that way anyhow. Now, the majority of our readers are of German descent and are protesting. Moreover, it seems that the *insane* Kaiser has made a bad mess of it. In short, I wish, the cruel war was over.⁷⁴

He, like most German-Americans, had trouble defending the actions of the German military and government, and soon came ‘round to supporting a strong American neutrality that did not give preference to either side.

Not every Wisconsin resident agreed with Wilson’s neutral approach to the belligerents. Some, such as University of Wisconsin English instructor and Shakespeare scholar, Julia Grace Wales, wanted the president to pro-actively seek peace. Wales, a Canadian in her mid-30s, had returned to the University’s campus in the fall of 1914 horrified with the events and carnage unfolding in Europe. She found herself more interested in brainstorming ideas to end the war peacefully than in her university-related tasks. The *Wisconsin State Journal* later chronicled her experience and noted that “the horrors of the war had sickened her physically.... She dreamed of them.” She pondered over the crisis until finally she evolved a plan.⁷⁵ She wrote out her plan long-hand over the winter break.

⁷² Victor Berger (Milwaukee) to Meta Berger, August 7, 1914 as quoted in Stevens, 180.

⁷³ Victor Berger (Milwaukee) to Meta Berger describing his response in the *Milwaukee Leader*, August 10, 1914 as quoted in Stevens, 181.

⁷⁴ Victor Berger (Milwaukee) to Meta Berger, August 6, 1914 as quoted in Pifer, 40.

⁷⁵ From *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, May 12, 1915 as quoted in Walter I. Trattner’s article “Julia Grace Wales and the Wisconsin Plan for Peace,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 44, no. 3 (Spring 1961): 203.

Wales's proposal combined, in her mind, rational and scientific thought with Christian principles. She believed there were those trying "to take the Christian attitude," in the midst of all the suffering caused by the war. She aimed to bring that outlook to a peace effort. At the same time, she argued, "Today if our scientific spirit and intellectual development are worth anything, we should be able, under the stress of emergency, to break through the paralysis of tradition and seek a rational way out, before the inexorable forces of nature shall have wrung from us the uttermost farthing."⁷⁶

Her published plan suggested forming an International Commission of experts



Julia Grace Wales, 1915

(scientists not diplomats) from the thirty-six neutral nations, who were to act as a court of continuous mediation. Belligerent nations would submit proposals or suggestions to end the war that met two basic tenets: the suggested peace could not lead to the humiliation of any nation; nor could it be a compromise "which might later result in a renewal of the war."⁷⁷ Wales's plan, as

historian Walter Trattner described it, was not an actual plan for peace, but one that set up the creation of machinery that could produce a peaceful outcome.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Julia Grace Wales, "Continuous Mediation without Armistice" (Chicago: Woman's Peace Party, 1915), 3.

⁷⁷From a mimeographed version of "Continuous Mediation without Armistice" as mentioned in Trattner's article, 205.

⁷⁸ Trattner, 205

By the end of 1914, trench warfare had taken hold of European battlefields causing the war to stagnate, while at the same time creating unimaginable body counts. The war was obviously not going to end soon. Wisconsinites, like Americans generally, had to settle in for the long haul. Those mentioned above, Governor Philipp, Senator La Follette, former U.S. Congressman and Socialist newspaper editor Berger, and English instructor Julia Grace Wales, all who had chosen stances outside the preparedness movement, would become Wisconsin's most prominent voices of their respective positions for the next two years. Once America entered the war in April 1917, their views would be described as un-patriotic and un-American. In the meantime, however, they championed their causes and strove to get their positions heard and supported.

Julia Grace Wales was eager to find a peaceful solution to the war and moved first. In January 1915, she showed her ideas to Louise Phelps Kellogg, an historian and librarian at the Wisconsin Historical Society, who urged the English instructor to share them with the Wisconsin Peace Society, founded three years earlier in Madison. Peace Society members, seeing the wisdom of the plan, printed it and sent the proposal to peace activists around the country, who quickly became enthusiastic for the newly named "Wisconsin Plan." In a National Peace Conference held on February 27 and 28, 1915, attendees adopted the plan and appointed a delegation to take it to President Woodrow Wilson and to Congress.

In Wisconsin, state senator George B. Skogmo also advocated for Julia Grace Wales's continuous mediation plan. On March 16, he introduced resolutions encouraging President Wilson to take action on the Wisconsin Plan. In them, Skogmo and his supporters favored efforts that allowed the belligerent nations "without fear or

compromise or loss of dignity to consider the possibilities of bringing the war to a close on an honorable basis.”⁷⁹ The Senate passed the resolutions the next day, and the state assembly, after prompting by Governor Philipp, did so on April 1.

In late March, social activist Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago-fame invited Wales to join her at the Women’s International Peace Congress in The Hague. They set sail for the Netherlands on April 13, 1915, along with forty other delegates. To their pleasant surprise, the Peace Congress unanimously accepted the Wisconsin Plan, had it printed in three foreign languages, and disseminated the pamphlet throughout Europe.⁸⁰

Days before the American delegates left for The Hague, however, criticism came from the larger-than-life former president and preparedness advocate Theodore Roosevelt, who denounced the pacifists traveling to the Netherlands in a letter to the national headquarters of the Women’s Peace Party in Washington, DC. He characterized them as “a menace to the future welfare of the United States,” “silly and base,” and “influenced by physical cowardice.” Roosevelt continued his invective by describing pacifism as an “ignoble abandonment of national duty.”⁸¹ Belle La Follette, wife of Senator Robert La Follette and an ardent pacifist herself, lashed back in a public reply. “The trouble with Mr. Roosevelt,” she declared, “is that he is intoxicated with a false idea of war,” adding, he believes “that war is the only means of settling international differences.” On the other hand, the Women’s Peace Party, an organization which she

⁷⁹ “Skogmo Introduces Badger Peace Plan in State Assembly,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, March 16, 1915, 2. Also in Jack Frooman, “The Wisconsin Peace Movement, 1915-1919” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1949), 76.

⁸⁰ Trattner, 207.

⁸¹ “Colonel Arouses Women Pacifists,” *The New York Times*, April 11, 1915; “Mrs. La Follette Tells Quizzers Peace is Right,” *La Crosse Tribune*, May 19, 1915, 2. The letter was not published at the time, so Roosevelt’s comments are pulled from reactions that appeared in newspapers.

helped create in January 1915, found war to be “the negation of progress and civilization” and a force that tramples “liberty and humanity underfoot.” Peace advocates, she continued, have studied history and believe it demonstrated that even “imperfect and temporary plans of mediation, conciliation and arbitration have been more effective than war in securing justice.”⁸²

Although there were other critics in Europe and the United States beside Roosevelt, American peace advocates believed strongly in the Wisconsin Plan and, like the Wisconsin legislature, wanted Wilson and Congress to acknowledge it and begin implementation. In October, the San Francisco International Peace Conference sent David Starr Jordan, founding president of Stanford University in California, along with the executive director of the Emergency Peace Federation, Louis P. Lochner, a 1909 University of Wisconsin graduate, to meet with President Wilson and Secretary of State Robert Lansing in Washington. Neither man showed much interest in the plan, both worrying that it would be unacceptable to the Allies.

As Julia Grace Wales’s peace plan gained momentum, Senator La Follette proposed his own peace plan. Unlike Wales, who saw the European War as a breakdown of Christian values and rational thought, La Follette argued that capitalism, especially as related to arms and ammunition, had made the war possible, as well as desirable to American financiers. To negate their power, he supported a permanent peace proposal, which prevented private companies from manufacturing equipment and supplies used exclusively for military or naval purposes, as well as prohibiting their exportation. By this time in his career, La Follette had gained a national reputation for an aggressive

⁸² “Mrs. La Follette Tells Quizzer,” 2; According to the *La Crosse Tribune*, her original comments appeared in *La Follette’s Magazine*, May 19, 1915.

speaking style and a tendency to steamroll those who disagreed with him. With his powerful oratory, combined with natural charisma, energy, and an intelligent, well-educated wife behind him, he had managed to change the nature of government in Wisconsin by supporting the general public against the greed of corporations, to found a new party, and to create a following. Despite the prestige he acquired, not everyone took seriously his suggestion that peace could be attained by prohibiting capitalists from manufacturing munitions. The *Chicago News*, for example, responded, “The cause of peace is not promoted by such superficial gallery plays as the senator from Wisconsin is staging at Washington.”⁸³

American Socialists, who in Wisconsin were primarily German-American, tended to agree with La Follette that war usually resulted from the rivalry of capitalistic-imperialistic powers seeking ways to expand their influence, and few, if any, supported what was going on in Europe. This did not mean Socialists were against all wars. Milwaukee Socialist Victor Berger, while he did not support offensive wars—especially those with capitalist overtones—did believe a populace should be prepared to defend itself against invaders. Berger, like other American Socialists, assumed that their European compatriots would challenge the monarchically-driven martial surge that spread across the continent in the summer of 1914 and instead join working class peoples across national borders and together rebel against the war. He had his hopes dashed, along with many other American Socialists, when they did not.⁸⁴ By late September 1914, Berger explained this break with socialist principles by concluding the

⁸³ “Mr. La Follette’s Peace Plan,” *Racine Journal News*, February 17, 1915, 4, with a *Chicago News* byline.

⁸⁴ Glad, 10-11.

Germans were defending their homes and families from Russian “Cossack outrages” and, by this logic, not participating in Kaiser-driven hostilities.⁸⁵

Victor Berger, among others, led Wisconsin’s Socialist Party (centered in Milwaukee), in the years before World War I. He had been born in Austria-Hungary and immigrated with his parents as a young teenager to Bridgeport, Connecticut. At the age of twenty-one, he decided to call Milwaukee his home and found work there as an editor for a number of German-language newspapers. He established the *Milwaukee Leader*, a daily Socialist newspaper, in 1911. As a rising Socialist leader, Berger split with the European, Marxist approach to socialism and pursued causes more closely aligned to La Follette’s progressive movement. Both La Follette and Berger worked toward making government more efficient, honest, and responsive to all of their constituents, not just powerful businesses and the wealthy. Berger’s party also supported the municipal ownership of utilities, which led to his brand of socialism being called “sewer socialism.”⁸⁶ Berger had mixed feelings about which side was more culpable in the European War. This internal conundrum could be seen in a May 15, 1915 editorial he wrote after the sinking of the *Lusitania* that denounced Germany’s decision to attack the ship, while at the same time protesting American passengers’ presence on board a vessel carrying war ammunition. He concluded, “The Lusitania incident was a hellish incident. But war is hell and we want no war with Germany.”⁸⁷

Berger was just one of the leading members of Wisconsin’s Socialist party who searched for appropriate but principled ways to respond to the war. At one extreme,

⁸⁵ “The Kaiser and the International Socialist Peace Conference,” *Milwaukee Leader*, September 28, 1914, 8 as quoted in Edward J. Muzik, “Victor L. Berger: A Biography” (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1960), 256; Muzik, 264.

⁸⁶ Pifer, 20.

⁸⁷ “There Must Be No War with Germany,” *Milwaukee Leader*, May 18, 1915, 8, as quoted in Muzik, 269-270.

Berger continued to insist on American neutrality for the war's duration and suffered threats to his occupation and liberty for doing so. At the other end, Algie M. Simons, an Anglo-American Socialist who worked at the *Milwaukee Leader*, left the party to become one of the directors of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, Wisconsin's largest volunteer hyperpatriot organization.⁸⁸ Most, however, sought a way to oppose the war on Socialist terms, while still appearing patriotic and loyal. Daniel Hoan, the Socialist mayor of Milwaukee beginning in 1916, clearly supported neutrality and best represented this moderate view.

Almost immediately after his election, Hoan was put to the test, when Milwaukee business leaders proposed the Preparedness Parade mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Socialists did not support the build-up of a national military or “military



Daniel Hoan, c. 1920
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preparedness” but could be attacked as un-American if they did not. Hoan also had to acknowledge that Milwaukee's trade unions, which provided much of the party's financial resources and saw the parade as the work of Milwaukee's manufacturers and capitalists, could pull their support if Hoan backed the parade. The parade's chairman, M.C. Potter, offered the mayor a compromise by suggesting the title of the parade be changed to “A National Civic Demonstration.” Milwaukee Socialists and trade unions

agreed to support the parade with this name change, although Milwaukee's newspapers continued to describe it as a “Preparedness Parade.” Hoan's moderate approach angered

⁸⁸ Glad, 11.

many in the national Socialist party, but he made his position clear in a February 15, 1917, letter to the Woman's Club of Wisconsin stating, "While I personally believe every living soul would regret to see our country involved in a war, still if war should come, then the loyal support and assistance of every citizen will be absolutely necessary."⁸⁹ Until that time, however, he wished for and urged Milwaukee citizens to support neutrality.

At first German-Americans in Milwaukee did not take his advice. During the U.S. congressional race in November 1914, for example, they attacked candidate Berger for not being sufficiently pro-German, which may have led to his loss to the incumbent Republican, although he did beat the Democratic candidate.⁹⁰ A month later, they showed their strong support for the German government and military on December 11, 1914, when a large number of them turned out to hear the former Secretary of State of Colonial Affairs for Germany, Dr. Bernhard Dernburg, who lived in the United States during 1914-1915, give a speech defending Germany's invasion of Belgium.⁹¹

Fairly quickly, the majority of Wisconsin's German-Americans stopped backing the Kaiser's army yet continued to feel a strong kinship with Germany, their "Fatherland," and a desire to help sustain friends and family who still lived there. As Dr. Leo Stern, assistant superintendent of Milwaukee public schools and president of the Wisconsin German-American Alliance, told an editor for *The New Republic*, "I should like to know why I should not love the country where my parents are buried, where my

⁸⁹ Robert C. Reinders, "Daniel W. Hoan and the Milwaukee Socialist Party during the First World War," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 36, no. 1 (Autumn 1952): 49.

⁹⁰ Stevens, footnote, 182.

⁹¹ Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee: The History of a City* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1948), 456.

sisters are buried, where I received my fundamental education.”⁹² This emotional attachment had led Stern and his fellow Alliance members to raise \$61,000 in Milwaukee (\$67,000 all together in Wisconsin) for relief work in Germany by the end of January 1915.

German-Americans in Milwaukee demonstrated the lengths to which they were willing to go to help Germans back home by holding a charity bazaar at Milwaukee’s Auditorium early in 1916. The bazaar raised money for German, Austrian, and Hungarian widows, orphans, and wounded veterans who were suffering, even starving, because of England’s ability to control the high seas and limit trade to the Central Power countries.⁹³ When the editors of the *Grand Rapids [Wisconsin] Tribune* first heard about the event in late December 1915, they asked “everyone who has a heart for the sufferings of his fellow men” to support the bazaar. They went on to urge their readers to “join hands in the beautiful spirit of yuletide love, and make this bazaar an eloquent witness of the humanitarian and liberal spirit of the population of Wisconsin.”⁹⁴

The “Charity Bazaar for the Benefit of War Sufferers in Germany, Austria, and Hungary” began on March 2, 1916, with much fanfare and lasted five more days. Visitors who arrived the first evening walked into a hall filled with pergolas and arbors covered with “a riot of apple blossoms” and proceeded to the Iron Cross booth, a symbol of Germany’s military potency, to enjoy the opening ceremonies. At exactly 8:00 PM, the German ambassador to the United States, Count Johann von Bernstorff, pressed a

⁹² Francis Hackett, “How Milwaukee Takes the War,” *The New Republic* 3, no. 37 (July 17, 1915): 272.

⁹³ Several cities around the United States held similar bazaars, which turned out to be the most successful way to raise money for “war sufferers.” New York City may have held the first in December 1914, raising \$500,000. Other cities that held bazaars between autumn 1915 and spring 1916 included St. Louis, Philadelphia, San Francisco, New York City (again), as well as Milwaukee. Information from Clifton James Child, *The German-Americans in Politics 1914-1917* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939), 38.

⁹⁴ “Charity Bazar for War Sufferers,” *The Grand Rapids Tribune*, December 29, 2015, 1.

button in Washington, DC, that sounded a bell throughout the building setting “the machinery of the bazaar in motion.” Besides welcoming and patriotic speeches, the ceremony that followed consisted of the Milwaukee Liederkrantz singing “America” and German songs, uniformed German and Austrian veterans presenting arms, and Emil von Schleinitz, editor of the *Germania-Herold*, driving the first gold, silver, and iron nails into the Iron Cross.⁹⁵ For the rest of the week, attendees could purchase their own nails to drive into the wooden cross and, by the end of the event, had raised \$3,000 doing so.⁹⁶ Besides this booth, visitors could choose from a smorgasbord of German and Austrian events and activities, such as the Wiener café, the Biedermeier garden, the Leipzig fair, and a re-creation of Old Heidelberg, along with food booths, concerts, raffles, and



Charity Bazaar Poster, 1916
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⁹⁵ “The Huge Charity Bazaar Will Be Opened Tonight,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, March 2, 1916, 4; “Big Charity Bazaar to Result in Record,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, March 3, 1916, 7.

⁹⁶ The Iron Cross was first used as a military medal by King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia following the Napoleonic Wars. King Wilhelm I of Prussia recommissioned the Iron Cross for the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. From that time through World War II, it was seen as a generic German decoration, not just Prussian. Since it was part of the Nazi regime, the German government no longer issues, or even recognizes, the Iron Cross as a German symbol.

displays, including a massive replica of the German cruiser SMS *Emden*, which had been sunk in a battle with an Australian warship.⁹⁷

Described by the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* as a “stupendous affair,” the charity bazaar attracted almost 150,000 attendees and raised over \$150,000. After witnessing the bazaar in progress, the *Daily Northwestern* editors wondered at “a real democracy all through the great municipal building. Everybody was gracious to everybody else. Artificial distinctions were nearly forgotten while all sold or bought for the cause of the great charity.”⁹⁸ The charity bazaar’s gracious and democratic atmosphere existed at a time when most Americans still supported the position that the United States would remain a neutral nation during the course of the European War.

By the time of the bazaar, most German-Americans in Wisconsin had embraced President Wilson’s plea for “a true spirit of neutrality.” News, often from English sources, of the “atrocities” the Kaiser’s army had inflicted on Belgium’s population in the early months of the war and the May 7, 1915, sinking by the German navy of the RMS *Lusitania* with Americans aboard, made this position more tenable than outright support of Germany. However, as *The New Republic* editor pointed out in the summer of 1915, this was not hard for Wisconsin German-Americans to do, since those who had immigrated to the state more closely associated themselves with “the tradition of 1848 or the tradition of social democracy than the tradition of imperial Germany.” These immigrants and their descendants supported Germany, he continued, “but this does not

⁹⁷ The SMS *Emden*, launched from Danzig, Germany, on May 26, 1908, fought in several naval battles during the early months of the war but was run aground and later sunk during the Battle of Cocos on November 9, 1914, by the Australian light cruiser HMAS *Sydney*.

⁹⁸ “Big Charity Bazaar to Result in Record,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, March 3, 1916, 7.

mean that the bulk of them desire at practically any cost, even to America, the triumph of German arms.”⁹⁹

Luckily for Wisconsin’s German-American population, Governor Emanuel Philipp had become an outspoken proponent of neutrality by the time of the bazaar. Philipp, who had been born in Honey Creek, Sauk County, Wisconsin to Swiss-German immigrant parents, pledged to support Wilson’s position of neutrality as soon as he took office in 1915. According to biographer Robert S. Maxwell, Philipp took this stand because he “saw the war as essentially a struggle for commercial supremacy between Germany and England with over tones of ancient dynastic and political rivalries among the other participants.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, Philipp saw it as a war about economics and not about moral values. He believed Americans should stay away from Europe at all costs, not even sailing on their vessels or in their waterways.

In a 1915 speech Philipp went so far as to state that he would not only withhold armament and other military supplies from the belligerents, but humanitarian aid as well, stating, “If bread is one of the elements that they must have to continue the war, let us cease to furnish that, too.”¹⁰¹ He strongly believed that the best way to keep America out of the war was not to provide help to either side. In a strange turn of events, Philipp agreed with his foe La Follette and not with his ally, former President William Taft. The latter embarrassed Philipp during a visit to Madison in 1915, when he spoke of the country’s constitutional right to sell food and arms to any of the belligerent nations,

⁹⁹ Francis Hackett, “How Milwaukee Takes the War,” New York: *The New Republic*, July 15, 1917, 272.

¹⁰⁰ Robert S. Maxwell, *Emanuel L. Philipp: Wisconsin Stalwart* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 112.

¹⁰¹ Maxwell, 111-112. When defending this speech in 1918, Philipp added the words “except to the suffering non-combatants.” Other published versions, did not include this phrase. See “Gov. Philipp Denounces Newspapers,” *Capital Times*, August 7, 1918, 4.

while Philipp sat on the platform behind him.¹⁰² Wisconsin's legislature, however, supported Philipp and passed a joint resolution asking Wilson to maintain a neutral stance for the duration of the war.

Charles D. Stewart, one of the governor's closest friends and confidants, felt Philipp's embargo of food, munitions, and weapons to all belligerents was foolish. In a letter describing his feelings about thirty-five years later, Stewart wrote that Philipp "evidently thought that was the most neutral thing to do, whereas it was the opposite of neutral—it was all against England and in favor of Germany." Stewart's opinion reflected that of Theodore Roosevelt and other militant Americans, who argued that since Germany had built up a considerable war machine and England had not, an embargo favored Germany. Stewart believed that Philipp had played parochial politics with regard to the German vote and should have stayed away from making statements about national policy. He also thought it cost Philipp the chance to be Roosevelt's running mate in 1916.¹⁰³ Others, including his biographer, saw the embargo statement as a sincere one by Philipp and not a political ploy.

By August 1915, Philipp had combined his belief in "honest neutrality" with the idea that an adequate preparedness program, which included building up the American army and its arms supplies, was also needed. As a result, he created a committee to coordinate preparedness and security actions around the state. In this manner he attempted to appease both ends of the spectrum, neutralists and pacifists to his left and preparedness advocates and war militants to his right.

¹⁰² This incident ended their friendship.

¹⁰³ Charles D. Stewart to Clifford Lord, director of the Wisconsin Historical Society, January 2, 1953, 7-8, Charles D. Stewart (CDS) papers, WHS. Stewart's actual words were, "Governor Philipp cooked his goose nationally by this embargo stand."

At the end of 1915, peace activists such as Julia Grace Wales were not ready to give up their cause and accept neutrality or preparedness as the American approach to the European War. When President Wilson rejected Wales's "Wisconsin Plan" in October, Detroit industrialist and avid pacifist Henry Ford stepped up to take the peace process into his own hands. During the next month he began organizing a peace expedition to Europe. With the aid of American pacifists, he hoped to rouse citizens of neutral European nations into demanding continuous mediation and, through that process, bring an end to the war. Ford sent out invitations to peace activists throughout the United States, including Wales. Most declined his offer, primarily because Wilson and Congress had not sanctioned the enterprise. Wales agreed, after some deliberation, to support Ford's mission and sail on his "Peace Ship." Shortly before the ship left its dock in Hoboken, New Jersey, on December 4 for its fourteen-day trip, Ford told newspaper reporters, "I am sailing with firm belief that good will come of this mission. My message to you, boys, is this: Fight for peace, against preparedness."¹⁰⁴ A few days later, Wales wrote to a friend in Madison that there was no mistaking Ford's idealism; it was transparently serious. "He has the eyes of a visionary," she added.¹⁰⁵

Two others with University of Wisconsin connections joined Miss Wales on board the Scandinavian ship, *Oscar II*: student John P. Frazee, a senior at the time, and Wisconsin graduate, Louis P. Lochner, who had been the executive director of the Emergency Peace Federation in Chicago and, as a secretary to Ford, served as head of publicity for the peace trip. Miss Wales and Mr. Frazee, who had been among the first to

¹⁰⁴ "Send Off for Ford Ship Greatest in History of N.Y.," *Wisconsin State Journal (Sunday State Journal)*, December 5, 1915, 1.

¹⁰⁵ "Letter Tells of Ford Peace Trip," *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 7, 1916, 7.

board, witnessed the spectacle of around 15,000 spectators laughing, cheering, and singing “Onward Christian Soldiers” and American patriotic songs as the ship pulled away from her pier.¹⁰⁶ This may have been the last of the celebrating, since the amateur peace mission fell apart quickly and eventually failed miserably.

Three days after leaving port, Wilson decided to increase the budgets of the United States Army and Navy in obvious support of preparedness, much to the consternation of those aboard the Peace Ship. While the majority of the pacifist passengers were horrified by the president’s decision, a minority saw it as a patriotic and appropriate move. Dramatic arguments ensued, creating a riff among the participants. A few days later, an influenza outbreak spread among the travelers, including Ford, and by the time *Oscar II* docked in Oslo, Norway, one person had died. When the Norwegians, who generally supported preparedness, did not welcome the American pacifists with open arms, the American press was ready to declare the trip a fiasco. With so much ignominy surrounding the voyage, Ford quietly slipped onto another ship four days after landing in Norway and returned to the United States. With this debacle, interest in a peaceful settlement of the war lagged both nationally and in Wisconsin for most of the next year.¹⁰⁷

Wisconsin members of the Woman’s Peace Party did make an attempt to revive peace activity in the state in the fall of 1916. A handful of Madison women, including Louise P. Kellogg, Wales’s friend and confidante, called for a meeting on November 18. At the gathering, Belle La Follette spoke to around eighty women about the Peace

¹⁰⁶ “Send Off for Ford Ship,” 1.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara S. Kraft, *The Peace Ship: Henry Ford’s Pacifist Adventure in the First World War* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1978), 152-157; Mary Jean Woodard Bean, *Julia Grace Wales: Canada’s Hidden Heroine and the Quest for Peace, 1914-1918* (Ottawa, Canada: Borealis Press, 2005), 191-211. Lloyd Bingham, the expedition’s social director, died on December 22, 1915 (207).

Party's history and goals and suggested actions for the group to undertake.¹⁰⁸ On February 24, 1917, the Madison branch listened to Louis Lochner's presentation on "the alarming spread of the military spirit in the United States," which concluded with him urging the peace activists to write their congressmen.¹⁰⁹

At the same time the Woman's Peace Party made inroads into Wisconsin's capital city, another small group of women interested in the peace movement associated itself with Madison's Young Women's Christian Association. This unnamed group, which held its first meeting on September 30, 1916, decided to focus its energy on rousing interest in peace activities among University of Wisconsin's women and, by the second week of November, had gathered the names of one hundred campus members willing to support their endeavors.¹¹⁰

Finally, a number of Milwaukee activists created a local branch of the Woman's Peace Party in February 1917. But it was all, for the most part, too late. Wisconsin members of the Party, mostly educated and professional women, had worked tirelessly, some for over two years, to secure peace in Europe and prevent the United States from joining the conflict. Their hope and activity ended when President Wilson called for war with Germany on April 2, 1917. The Woman's Peace Party began to disintegrate shortly after this announcement.¹¹¹ On April 20, the Madison branch executive board sent a circular letter to its members acknowledging the new reality and suggesting that the "first and chief duty of every citizen [is] to be loyal and effective, supporting with good will the sovereignty under the care of which he lives." They recommended their

¹⁰⁸ Frooman, 234.

¹⁰⁹ Frooman, 254-255.

¹¹⁰ Frooman, 236-237.

¹¹¹ Glad, 8.

members volunteer for the Red Cross during the time of crisis, but also noted that they continued to “oppose all measures that tend to fasten on our country permanent militarism” and hoped “that a lasting and just peace and a world federation may be the outcome.”¹¹² After these statements, Wisconsin peace activists generally remained silent for the duration of the war.

As pacifism lost momentum, the preparedness movement in Wisconsin slowly picked up steam. Late in 1915 the Wisconsin branch of the National Security League (NSL) got themselves organized. By the end of November, they had set up a headquarters in downtown Milwaukee, successfully encouraged Governor Philipp to appoint fifteen Wisconsin mayors to a League committee, and sent a delegation to a Midwest NSL convention in Chicago. On November 27, newspaper columnist Ellis Usher in the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* was ready to declare that Wisconsin was “in line” to defend the country. He “heartily approved” of the work the organization was doing to “organize public sentiment in favor of better naval and military preparedness...and for the stiffening up, at home and abroad, of respect for American efficiency in case of war.” As an aside Usher, who would become a mouthpiece for Wisconsin hyperpatriots during the war, commended Wisconsin’s relatively new junior senator Paul O. Husting for the courage he showed when giving an address full of “patriotic support of the president and government of the United States” to a primarily German-American audience in Mayville. Husting concluded his remarks to the local Gesangverein Teutonia, a singing club celebrating its sixty-third anniversary, by

¹¹² Executive Committee of the Madison Branch of the Woman’s Peace Party circular letter, April 20, 1917, Louise P. Kellogg papers, WHS as quoted in Frooman, 257.

reminding his listeners, “Our country should be our first, our second, and our last consideration.”¹¹³

Husting, a lawyer in his late 40s, had been born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin and served two terms as a state senator before becoming a U.S. Senator. In 1914, he campaigned as a Democrat for the U.S. Senate in reaction to La Follette’s progressive agenda and won. He did not attract much attention in the six months after his March 1915 inauguration, but in the fall Senator Hustling began giving lectures equating preparedness with patriotism. He followed up this message, during the spring of 1916, by speaking out against



Paul O. Hustling, c. 1910

German-American organizations “that create agitation of an unpatriotic nature.”¹¹⁴ Wisconsin newspaper editors took note. The *La Crosse Leader-Press*, for example, declared “Husting No ‘Pussy-Foot’” for his patriotic positions, his support of preparedness, and for knowing “just where he stands when there is a choice between this country and any other in the world.”¹¹⁵

As Hustling’s star began to climb, national events coalesced to make the preparedness advocates’ message more palatable to many Americans. Mexican Revolutionary general Pancho Villa inadvertently made a case for preparedness when he

¹¹³ Ellis B. Usher, “Wisconsin in Line to Defend Country,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, November 15, 1915, 1.

¹¹⁴ “Husting Urges Drastic Attack on Hyphenates,” *La Crosse Tribune*, June 15, 1916, 1. The editorial assumes that Hustling was referring specifically to the German-American Alliance, although he did not mention it by name.

¹¹⁵ “Husting No ‘Pussy-Foot,’” *La Crosse Leader-Press* as quoted in the *Marshfield Times*, May 3, 1916, 3.

boldly attacked a small town in the three-year old state of New Mexico on March 9, 1915.¹¹⁶ He compounded the outrage in early May, when he returned to the United States to raid two Texas towns. Angered by this incursion on American soil, President Wilson sent American general John J. Pershing with thousands of U.S. Army regulars to capture Villa and bring him to justice.¹¹⁷ Despite every effort to catch the “bandit,” including invading Mexico, Villa eluded the American military. Preparedness advocates used this failure as proof of United States Army’s shortcomings. The *Marshfield Times* pointed out that Mexico’s “imbroglio with Uncle Samuel has demonstrated beyond all doubt that the United States is not at present prepared for war, even with a third-rate power.” It went on to declare that “we are in no shape to ‘talk turkey’ to any foreign nation, or even to keep our international boundary lines safe against moving picture bandits.” The newspaper’s editor urged military preparedness, so Uncle Sam can tell the rest of the world to keep ‘hands off’ North and South America.” For that to happen, he concluded, the United States needs “sufficient national policemen, afloat and ashore.”¹¹⁸

The spectacle of an American general chasing Villa around the Mexican countryside led to the passage of the National Defense Act, also known as the Hay Bill after its chief proponent U.S. Representative James Hay of Virginia, on June 3, 1916. The act federalized the National Guard, guaranteeing it a role in any national mobilization, and created the Reserved Officers’ Training Corps (R.O.T.C.). Wilson immediately called up the National Guard to protect the nation’s border with Mexico. In

¹¹⁶ Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico, a small town about three miles from the Mexican border. The attack turned into a full-scale battle when the U.S. Army got involved. The 13th Cavalry Regiment pushed Villa and his forces back in to Mexico. Eighteen Americans, soldiers and civilians, were killed.

¹¹⁷ This response is generally known as the Punitive Expedition.

¹¹⁸ Preparation for Peace,” *Marshfield Times*, May 3, 1916, 3. Pancho Villa starred in several films about his life between 1912 and 1916, including *The Life of General Villa* (1914) produced by D.W. Griffith.

Wisconsin, the state's National Guard gathered at Camp Douglas over a four-day period in late June. Young men eager for adventure trained at the camp for a little over a week, while friends and family watched as they ate picnic lunches on the surrounding hills and bluffs. On July 1, Wisconsin's National Guard entrained for San Antonio, Texas, arriving a few days later. Instead of finding adventure, Wisconsin's troops found heat (sometimes surpassing 100 degrees), sub-standard housing, and tedium. The National Guard troops who arrived from several states were generally too raw to be used in any actual military maneuvers and, after three months of drilling and training, were sent home.¹¹⁹

In the midst of this debacle, Charles Evans Hughes accepted the Republican nomination for president with a speech that emphasized the need for military preparedness. He began by stating, "Adequate preparedness is not militarism. It is the essential assurance of security; it is a necessary safeguard of peace." Hughes described America's situation as "shockingly unprepared." With all of the nation's regular troops at the Mexican border or in Mexico, along with the entire National Guard, the United States summoned "practically all our movable military forces in order to prevent bandit incursions...it is inexcusable that we should find ourselves in this plight."¹²⁰

In the following weeks, a number of Wisconsin newspapers took up Hughes's call for preparedness. The editor of the *Janesville Daily Gazette*, for example, agreed with the candidate that preparedness "does not mean war but it means be ready for an emergency." The federalized National Guard, it continued, "means preparedness. It is

¹¹⁹ The story of Wisconsin's National Guard and the Mexican border can be found in John P. Finnegan, "Preparedness in Wisconsin: The National Guard and the Mexican Border Incident," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 47, no. 3 (Spring 1964): 199-213.

¹²⁰ "Hughes Sounds Keynote in Speech of Acceptance," *Racine Journal-News*, August 1, 1916, 3.

not a warlike move. It is a peaceful move.”¹²¹ A few days later, the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* supported the preparedness movement by writing of its dismay that Wilson’s administration had only recently recognized the importance of preparedness and, in a belated response, begun building up the United States military.¹²²

As more Wisconsinites saw the validity of preparedness, some still felt compelled to speak out against it. La Follette may have been one of the loudest. In a speech to the U.S. Senate he condemned the changing sentiment when he decried “the cheap skate of a business man” who could get a column urging preparedness on the front page of a newspaper, “whereas a man who was against preparedness was denied any space at all.”¹²³ Richard Lloyd Jones, editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal* and a La Follette supporter, disagreed with those who saw preparedness as precursor to peace. On August 4, 1916, he wrote, “It is not the great navy as a navy which is likely to menace peace. It is a great navy conjured up by those who have something to gain by its operations.” Jones went on to suggest the creation of a permanent, non-partisan, non-military Council of Peace. Instead of spending money on preparedness for war, he concluded, spend one percent of that amount “on preparedness for peace.”¹²⁴

Over the course of 1916 preparedness advocates became more sophisticated in selling their message to Americans, including a number of Wisconsinites. They learned their ideas had more power if they were tied to patriotism. At the same time a series of events coalesced that seemed to reinforce their point. La Follette and his supporters asked Americans to question the motives of these advocates and learn if they benefitted

¹²¹ “Preparedness,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, August 9, 1916, 4.

¹²² “In Preparedness the Administration has Followed, Not Led,” *Stevens Point Daily Journal*, August 15, 1916, 3.

¹²³ “La Follettism,” *Sturgeon Bay Advocate*, August 3, 1916, 2.

¹²⁴ “Preparedness for Peace,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 4, 1916, 10.

financially from a war preparedness policy, either directly or indirectly. A positive patriotic message turned out a lot easier to sell than one full of negativity and distrust. As 1917 began, acts by the German military and government turned the message of promoting preparedness to one of active involvement in the European War.

Chapter 2: “Unpatriotic Remarks”: The Move from Preparedness to Hyperpatriotism, January to April, 1917

“Disloyalty is but treason in its incipient stage.”¹²⁵
 Wisconsin State Senator Timothy Burke, April 24, 1917

In 1892, five-year-old Frank Raguse left Germany with his parents, two older brothers, and a baby sister for Baltimore, Maryland. In the following weeks the Raguse family made their way to Milwaukee, where his father and brothers found jobs as laborers. Frank attended school through eighth grade and then became a laborer himself, working at a variety of unskilled jobs. Over the next few years, Frank immersed himself in working-class politics and became an active supporter of the Socialist Party. In November 1916, Milwaukee’s 8th district elected him, a twenty-nine-year old teamster, to Wisconsin’s state senate.¹²⁶ Frank’s tenure would be short, less than two months. His ousting began with an incident that occurred the evening of April 24, 1917, and was described by the *Eau Claire Leader* as “the most sensational episode of the legislative session.” The *Leader*’s editor also noted, “[It] stirred the dignified and patriotic senate to a high pitch of excitement.”¹²⁷ By this time, only weeks after the United States had entered the European War, Wisconsin already had a growing reputation as a hotbed of potential treason, and preparedness advocates, turned war-supporting hyperpatriots, meant to squelch any signs of disloyalty, especially those displayed by a Socialist state senator.

¹²⁵ “Raguse Stirs State Senate,” *Eau Claire Leader*, April 26, 1917, 3.

¹²⁶ Information about Raguse’s early life comes from Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, *The Wisconsin Blue Book 1917*, Madison: Democrat Printing Co., 1917, 507; census records, city directories, and family genealogies on Ancestry.com.

¹²⁷ “Raguse Stirs State Senate,” 3.

The episode began when a resolution by state senator Roy Wilcox came to a vote. Wilcox, who would soon be a leader of Wisconsin's hyperpatriots, wanted the state to print and distribute 50,000 copies of President Wilson's April 13 congressional address, which listed the reasons America would fight with the Allies in the European War, as a way to encourage patriotic war support among Wisconsinites. Senator Raguse, infuriated by Wilcox's willingness "to spend a million for patriotism," rose from his seat and declared, "There are only two ways to create patriotism—to destroy property or lives." He suggested the *U.S.S. Maine* had been blown up during the Spanish-American War "to create patriotism," but noted more recently "people have refused to become patriotic by the blowing up of the *Lusitania*." He added, "Eighty-five per cent of the people of this country own no land, and people who own no land are without a country and are not patriotic." In his concluding statements, Raguse called the resolution "class legislation" and moved that it be indefinitely postponed.¹²⁸

The Senate Room immediately filled with angry retorts from many of Raguse's indignant colleagues incensed by his remarks. Some questioned his understanding of patriotism, others wondered if he had just committed treason under the pending Espionage Act, and a handful demanded Raguse retract his remarks or be expelled. In the midst of these strong emotions, the other two Socialist senators spoke of their patriotism and pride of country. When Senator Timothy Burke had the floor, he thanked these two colleagues for their remarks, but went on to speak of the humiliation Wisconsin had suffered in the last few months by having its loyalty questioned, adding,

¹²⁸ The Frank Raguse incident was repeated in several Wisconsin newspapers, including a detailed version in "Threatened to Expel Senator," *Stevens Point Daily Journal*, April 26, 1917, 4 and "Raguse Stirs State Senate," 3.

The remarks made by the senator from the eighth are remarks that are probably direct violations of the recent act of congress relating to this subject. That a Wisconsin senator should get up and make such a statement which I claim borders on disloyalty, and disloyalty is but treason in its incipient stage—is a disgrace.

Burke called on Raguse to retract his remarks or “be expelled from the senate for expressions and words that border on disloyalty.” Raguse immediately retracted his words, adding, “[I] used those words because I have read them several times in the newspapers and I simply repeated those statements.” Lieutenant Governor Dithmar, the presiding official, accepted the retraction and stated, “The record is closed.”¹²⁹

Dithmar may have closed the record, but Burke, a Stalwart Republican from Green Bay, realized that a chance to expel one of the three Socialists from the Wisconsin senate could not be passed by. Overnight he wrote out a retraction for Raguse to sign, which required the young senator to claim American citizenship, reaffirm his allegiance to the United States, and retract and apologize for comments deemed unpatriotic by his opponents. Burke submitted it to Socialist Senator Louis Arnold who found it acceptable, but asked that Burke and his fellow senate members take into consideration Raguse’s youth and inexperience. Senator M.W. Perry dismissed Arnold’s concern by stating the senate “was not the place for young and inexperienced men to insult the flag.”¹³⁰ When first presented with the retraction, Raguse agreed to sign the document, but after a night’s reflection changed his mind. On April 26, the senate, by a vote of 30 to 3 (the three Socialists), demanded Raguse agree to the retraction prepared by his

¹²⁹ “Raguse Stirs State Senate,” 3. Burke was referring to the Espionage Act, which had passed the Senate on February 20, 1917, but would not be passed in the House until June 15, 1917. Its purpose was to prohibit interference with military operations or recruitment, prevent insubordination in the military, and to prevent the support of United States enemies during wartime.

¹³⁰ “Raguse Must Make Full Retraction,” *Racine Journal News*, April 26, 1917, 8.

political opponents. Raguse refused, declaring that not only had he not received a fair hearing, but was being asked to retract his Socialist principles. The senate immediately voted to expel him, again by a vote of 30 to 3. Raguse vowed to run for the same seat again and to show his patriotism by joining the military.¹³¹

Frank Raguse's sudden expulsion from the state senate could possibly have happened in any state, but by late April Wisconsin's loyalty, especially that of its political representatives, had been questioned on a national scale. Senator Burke spoke of this humiliation when he condemned Raguse immediately after the young Socialist's incendiary remarks, stating, "Wisconsin and Milwaukee are very much advertised throughout the union [as disloyal], and yet, no state in the union is more loyal than Wisconsin. We have been humiliated in Washington and we have been humiliated at home."¹³² This sense of humiliation was a cumulation of several events that occurred in March and April of 1917, beginning with U.S. Senator Robert M. La Follette's unpopular reaction to President Wilson's demand to arm the nation's merchant marine and continuing through Governor Emanuel Philipp's rejection of conscription to raise troops. These, along with a number of other actions by the state's leaders, had led many outside the state to question the loyalty and patriotism of Wisconsin's citizens, since they had elected these representatives. By the time of Raguse's removal, the state's hyperpatriots had already begun building organizations and arranging events to combat the negative

¹³¹ "Senate Takes Quick Action in Unseating Raguse," Grand Rapids [WI] *Daily Leader*, April 27, 1917, 1; information on why Raguse decided not to sign the retraction comes in part from Rand School of Social Science, Department of Labor Research, *A Political Guide for the Workers 1920* (Chicago, IL: Socialist Party of the United States, 1920), 119-120.

¹³² "Raguse Stirs State Senate," *Eau Claire Leader*, April 26, 1917, 3.

perception of Wisconsin's loyalty. These, however, would be just the first steps in their attempts to reclaim the good name of Wisconsin.

On January 31, 1917, Germany, reeling from the British blockade of its North Sea ports and believing Britain and France were receiving war materiel from the United States, announced it would resume submarine (Unterseeboot or U-boat) attacks on any ships in the war zone, including passenger vessels from non-belligerent countries. A few days later a German U-boat sank the *U.S.S. Housatonic*, carrying over 400,000 bushels of wheat, near England's Scilly Islands. Without knowing if the American crew aboard the *Housatonic* had lived or died, Wilson immediately severed relations with Germany by tendering German Ambassador Count von Bernstorff his passport and sending him home. Later reports made clear that the crew had survived because the U-boat commander, after sending warning shots across the ship's bow, had let those on board abandon ship. He did, however, ignore the pleas of the *Housatonic's* captain to spare the vessel, replying, "You are carrying foodstuffs to an enemy of my country, and though I am sorry, it is my duty to sink you." He then struck the ship with a single torpedo. It sunk in twenty minutes. The Germans towed the American crew close to land, abandoning them when an English ship came into view.¹³³ The German Navy soon learned that warning shots made it easier for Allied ships to sink their fragile U-boats

¹³³ "Life in 1917: Sinking of Housatonic Brings World War I Closer to Home," University of Wisconsin Camp Randall 100 website: www.camprandall100.com/2017/09/30/life-1917-sinking-housatonic-brings-world-war-closer-home

and discontinued the practice. Americans called this new approach to naval warfare barbaric and uncivilized.¹³⁴

While the sinking of American ships, such as the *Housatonic*, did not lead immediately to war with Germany, it did encourage Wisconsin preparedness advocates to speak out. On the same day the *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison) reported the sinking of the *Housatonic*, it carried an editorial calling the Kaiser “the big brutal bully of the world,” and declaring, “Germany insults civilization” by sinking non-combatant ships. The editorial cautioned now was the time “every American is called to prove his Americanism...Every American voter must be one-hundred per cent an American citizen. Anything less is TREASON.” It also questioned the patriotism of German Americans, noting that there had been a rush of German citizens living in the United States to become naturalized, arguing, “The fellow who seeks citizenship in this country for no higher or purer motive of patriotism and conscientious devotion to the principles of American democracy, is to be viewed with grave suspicion.”¹³⁵

In the early days of February 1917, Wisconsin’s preparedness advocates made clear their approval of Wilson’s response to Germany and, irrespective of political party, actively united behind the president, “the silent man in Washington, who is bearing the brunt of this national crisis.”¹³⁶ Ellis Usher, for example, advised his readers to follow the counsel of former President Taft and rally behind the president.¹³⁷ Their reasons for

¹³⁴ Richard L. Pifer, *The Great War Comes to Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017), 54-55.

¹³⁵ “For Our Country,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 4, 1917, 14.

¹³⁶ “Stand by President,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, February 6, 1917, 8. This article reported that the Oshkosh Knights of Columbus pledged to stand by Wilson “in any crisis that might develop.”; “Our Flag—Display It!” and “Many Flags are Displayed,” *Grand Rapids Daily News*, February 9, 1917, 1.

¹³⁷ Ellis Usher’s column ran in several Wisconsin papers under a variety of titles, including the *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, 4, and *Janesville Daily Gazette*, 4, on February 10, 1917 and the *Eau Claire Leader*, 3, on February 11, 1917.

doing so usually involved patriotic rhetoric, but Civil War veteran Charles Sechler in a letter to Wisconsin's Secretary of State, may have captured the real motivation, one tied to an honorable masculinity, when he wrote, "Better war than dishonor. In every age some must suffer, perchance die, that succeeding generations may have the inviolate right to live unafraid in a country that has good red blood in its veins."¹³⁸

Wisconsin's junior U.S. Senator, Paul O. Husting, added to this call for an all-American patriotism that supported President Wilson, when he publicly castigated La Crosse attorney Frank E. Withrow in an open letter. Withrow had chaired a Socialist meeting in his city on February 11, where resolutions had been passed stating that the working men and women of La Crosse County did not support murder of themselves or others "to protect the profits of our greedy enemies within our nation" and resolved to support an embargo to all belligerents and a bill that would forbid American ships to enter the war zone. Withrow sent a copy of these resolutions to President Wilson, Senators La Follette and Husting, and U.S. Representative John J. Esch.¹³⁹

In an open letter dated February 17, 1917 and published in several newspapers around the state, Husting chastised Withrow. "The government," he wrote, "has been most grievously and lamentably harassed in its diplomatic efforts and has been measurably weakened...in its strenuous efforts...to preserve an honorable peace" by those, like Withrow, who questioned President Wilson's actions. He reminded Withrow that Germany was the aggressor and in "THE WRONG," while America was on the side of "RIGHT, JUSTICE and HUMANITY." He finished by asking all Americans "to join

¹³⁸ Charles Sechler (Sechlerville) to Merlin Hull, February 8, 1917, Merlin Hull (MH) papers, Box 7, WHS.

¹³⁹ "Keep Out of War by Stopping Ships Insist Socialists," *La Crosse Tribune and Leader-Press*, February 12, 1917, 1, 6.

hands firmly in supporting OUR PRESIDENT AND OUR COUNTRY in and thru this crisis.”¹⁴⁰ The *Wisconsin State Journal*, one of many Wisconsin newspapers to print Husting’s letter, took delight in his answer to Withrow, whom they described as a “peace-at-any-price advocate.” A *Journal* editorial that included Husting’s letter stated,

The pacifists who are protesting to the President would be much more logical and to the point if they protested to the Kaiser. The German-Americans who are so active in the peace-at-any-price propoganda are directing all their efforts to the tail end of their own hyphenation [and should address] their pleas for peace to the Kaiser.¹⁴¹

Although Withrow would have probably described himself as pro-neutrality rather than pro-pacifism, a number of Wisconsinites wrote to Husting to thank him for his anti-pacifist stance in reply to Withrow. University of Wisconsin electrical engineering professor Cyril M. Jansky, for example, appreciated the senator’s “stand with reference to the Peace at any Price propoganda that had been carried on in the interest of Germany.” Husting’s letter, he continued, expressed the sentiments of loyal and patriotic Americans.¹⁴² In retrospect, Husting’s well-publicized response, which appears to be the first to attack and denigrate a Wisconsin citizen for having an opinion different from his and other self-identified patriots, foreshadowed the use of coercion and public spectacle Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots would employ to control discussion about the war.

Tension ratcheted up at the end of February, when British authorities turned over to the United States ambassador a decoded telegram written by German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmerman. In the telegram to Germany’s Mexican ambassador,

¹⁴⁰ “Senator Husting’s Americanism,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 20, 1917, 8. The *Journal* used capital letters for emphasis, not Senator Husting.

¹⁴¹ “Senator Husting’s Americanism,” 8.

¹⁴² C.M. Jansky to Husting, March 14, 1917, Paul O. Husting (POH) papers, Box 10, folder 6, WHS.

Zimmerman proposed an alliance between that country and Germany should America enter the war against Germany. He offered Mexico significant financial aid and the return of lost territories in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The day after seeing the telegram, an angered Wilson had had enough and proposed to Congress that the United States should begin immediately arming its merchant marine ships against possible attack.

When Senator Robert M. La Follette became the leader of those national representatives who decided to fight Wilson's proposal, formally the Armed Ship Bill, self-described patriotic Americans saw in his behavior the first inklings that Wisconsin might have a potential problem with treasonous representatives. As for La Follette, he had been wary of the preparedness movement and its desire to shore up the military since its inception. He questioned supporters' motives and thought that capitalist greed hid behind their patriotic patina. While Wilson did not seem to share this concern, he did agree with La Follette that the European War was a transgression of progressive principles (ones that privileged science and education) and, at least at first, that the United States should remain staunchly neutral. The president and the senator began to drift apart in November 1915, when Wilson, in concession to preparedness advocates, called for building up the country's military. By February 1917, Wilson had come around to the preparedness movement's perception that Germany was more dangerous to the United States than the Allies and abandoned the idea of neutrality. With this change of attitude, La Follette lost respect for Wilson.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Nancy C. Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2008), 239-243.

With La Follette's lack of trust in the preparedness movement and concern that Wilson had fallen for its rhetoric, he along with eleven other congressmen conducted a filibuster against the Armed Ship Bill on March 4, 1917. La Follette and his allies argued that arming the merchant marine was too expensive, gave the president too much power, and would lead the United States into war.¹⁴⁴ When the filibuster succeeded, an annoyed President Wilson denounced the twelve legislators who participated in it as "A little group of willful men, representing no opinion but their own," but his ire and that of many of his supporters focused on their leader, La Follette.¹⁴⁵ To them the senator's actions put the country's safety and commerce at risk. They began to wonder, what kind of American would send such an unpatriotic man to the United States Senate? As the backlash against La Follette grew, Wisconsin found itself firmly placed under the national microscope.

Over the next several weeks, La Follette's "treasonous" attitude made national news and led to reactions around the country. Wheeling, West Virginia millionaires Archie W. Paull and J.C. Brady, for example, immediately called a mass meeting to denounce La Follette as a traitor and to prevent him from speaking at a local synagogue later that week.¹⁴⁶ Editors of the *Butte Miner* told their readers that La Follette and his congressional "coterie" would rather support the Prussian monarch Kaiser Wilhelm than their own president.¹⁴⁷ While the *Helena Independent* wondered if Herr Zimmerman would have created "a subsidiary principality with La Follette [as] grand

¹⁴⁴ Pifer, 55.

¹⁴⁵ President Wilson ignored the filibuster and had the merchant marine armed anyway.

¹⁴⁶ "La Follette is Denounced as Traitor to U.S.," *Jackson (Michigan) Citizen Press*, March 6, 1917, 1.

¹⁴⁷ "America's Disgrace," *Butte (Montana) Miner* as published in the *Idaho Falls Times*, March 8, 1917, 4.

duke.”¹⁴⁸ Back home, Wisconsin legislators made it clear that their Senator had misrepresented the state and regretted that he could not be recalled or impeached.¹⁴⁹ By March 7, Husting’s brother Peter had recognized a change in sentiment. “The results of the past week,” he wrote,

Coupled together with your unflinching stand all along, has more than completely reversed the conditions as they appeared a year ago. And in comparison with the inexplicable antics and attitude of ‘Fighting Bob’ it has placed you up with the Major Leaguers while Bob is having a berth fitted out for himself in the minors.¹⁵⁰

The national press explained La Follette’s behavior, as well as that of the other “willful men,” by their need for support from their German-American constituencies. The *Lexington (Kentucky) Herald*, for example, noted the day before the filibuster, “One of the alarming phases of the present situation is that practically every member of the Congress of the United States...who represents a State with any considerable German population has failed to stand up straight for genuine Americanism.” A list of the more grievous offenders, the *Herald* continued, included Senator La Follette and Representative Henry A. Cooper of Wisconsin, who had voted against the Armed Ship Bill in the House.¹⁵¹ The *Herald*’s comments reflected a trend that began in the early months of 1917 and continued throughout the war of national newspapers speaking about Wisconsin’s patriotism in terms that questioned the quality and Americanism of the state’s representatives rather than the support of its German-American population. The *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* recognized this tendency when it stated, “The entire

¹⁴⁸ “The Kaiser’s Share,” *Helena (Montana) Independent*, March 28, 1917, 4.

¹⁴⁹ “Act Derided in Home Town,” *Jackson (Michigan) Citizen Press*, March 6, 1917, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Peter Husting to Paul Husting, March 7, 1917, POH papers, Box 10, folder 5, WHS.

¹⁵¹ “German-Americans Not of Teutonic Blood,” *Lexington (Kentucky) Herald*, March 3, 1917, 4.

state has been placed under suspicion by the ill-advised action of some of its official misrepresentatives.”¹⁵²

Even though Wisconsin’s German population did not come under attack in the national press, a number of Wisconsin newspaper editors could not help but notice that the four U.S. Representatives from Wisconsin who had voted with La Follette came from Milwaukee or nearby districts with significant German-American populations.¹⁵³ The *Daily Northwestern* stressed the consequences of this German-influenced voting by remarking, “This coincidence is not being overlooked by outside paper[s], which do not hesitate to connect it with the pro-German sentiment in Milwaukee and adjoining sections of Wisconsin, and which also raise the question of the true loyalty of the Badger metropolis.”¹⁵⁴

Milwaukee businessman Alvin P. Kletzsch fed this fear when he told the *Milwaukee Journal* that his colleagues in New York, Washington, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Boston all thought of Milwaukee “as a hotbed of sedition” with a population ready to overthrow the government and establish the Kaiser as their leader. Kletzsch spoke of the impression “all over the country that Milwaukee is a German city...and that [its citizens think they] are subjects of Germany.”¹⁵⁵ The *Journal* asked a number of leading Milwaukee citizens to respond to Kletzsch’s comments. Most blamed the actions of “pro-German fanatics and extremists” for the negative perception, while Captain Thaddeus

¹⁵² “In an Unenviable Light,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, March 12, 1917, 4.

¹⁵³ These included William J. Cary (4th District, Milwaukee), William H. Stafford (5th District, Milwaukee), Henry A. Cooper (1st District, southeast Wisconsin), and John Mandt Nelson (3rd District, southcentral Wisconsin).

¹⁵⁴ “In an Unenviable Light,” 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Milwaukee Journal*, February 21, 1917, 1 as quoted in Jean L. Berres, “Local Aspects of the ‘Campaign for Americanism’: The *Milwaukee Journal* in World War I” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1977), 126.

M. Wild thought Wisconsin's unfortunate reputation came from "the spirit of foreignism pervading the entire state." Not everyone agreed with Kletzsch's premise that eastern businessmen were speaking badly of Wisconsin and Milwaukee. Meat-packing magnate Patrick Cudahy, for example, thought all this talk was rumor and gossip and should not be taken too seriously.¹⁵⁶ Cudahy's reaction has been supported by a survey of national newspapers from small and large municipalities around the United States during the months of February and March 1917, which did not corroborate the *Daily Northwestern* or Kletzsch's worries that the national press perceived the state and its largest city as an epicenter of potential treason.¹⁵⁷

Few newspaper editors outside of Wisconsin showed much interest in the loyalty of average Wisconsinites or Milwaukeeans during the months of February and March 1917; their concern focused on the state's leaders. To this end, the *New York Herald* wondered in mid-March whether Wisconsin's Governor Emanuel Philipp stood with the president or not. Over a week had passed since La Follette's filibuster, the *Herald* noted, and Philipp still had not made a formal statement about the Wisconsin senator and the ruckus he had created in Washington. Philipp replied with a terse statement declaring, "The people of Wisconsin do not want war and wish that the President avoid it, if he can do so without the sacrifice of our national honor." He affirmed, "If war must come, the President of the United States may rely upon it that the people of this state will support him and their country with a whole heart and with all the strength they possess."¹⁵⁸

Within Wisconsin, Democrats, Stalwart Republicans, and others who did not support

¹⁵⁶ "Black Eye Due to Fanatics?" *Milwaukee Journal*, February 23, 1917, 1; "Says Milwaukee is Wronged," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 24, 1917, 1.

¹⁵⁷ The survey was done by the author of this manuscript.

¹⁵⁸ "Governor Declares the State Patriotic," *Racine Journal News*, March 16, 1917, 1.

his more moderate beliefs would use this statement against him throughout the war, claiming he had not been sufficiently patriotic. The *Milwaukee Journal* declared that an additional assertion by Philipp in the same message to the *Herald* which read “our grievance against Germany rests entirely upon her interference with our commerce” to be utterly repugnant. The *Journal*’s editors thought that the governor’s decision to overlook the loss of American lives caused by Germany’s submarines would be another heavy blow against “the fair name of Wisconsin’s Americanism.”¹⁵⁹ In spite of such statements, others agreed with the *Eau Claire Telegram*’s editorial on March 17 that the governor’s “utterance, firm and well-balanced, and to the point, reflects credit on the state, and the state needed it.”¹⁶⁰

While the voices and opinions of Wisconsin newspaper editors could lead readers to assume most Wisconsinites supported Wilson and Husting and were displeased with La Follette’s actions, letters to U.S. Representative John J. Esch from the 7th congressional district in west central Wisconsin from his constituents during the month of March actually illustrated a range of opinions. These correspondents cannot be considered “average” Wisconsinites, since all of them were men who appear to have or had held positions of authority within their communities, but their letters do show that at this time in Wisconsin there was no coherent view as to what America’s role should be in reference to the European war. Esch’s more moderate stance, when compared to those of La Follette or Husting, may explain why a number of his constituents felt comfortable writing him with their concerns about the increasingly belligerent actions

¹⁵⁹ “Gov. Philipp’s Words,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 23, 1917, 16.

¹⁶⁰ *Eau Claire Telegram* as quoted from Philipp’s speech “What Wisconsin Has Done in the War” given in Waukesha, Wisconsin, on August 6, 1918 and later published as a booklet. Further information about the original telegram also found in the booklet.

taken by the president and Congress. In fact, March 1917 may have been the last time during the war that some of them thought they could speak out against Wilson and preparedness advocates without repercussions.

Not all of Esch's correspondents disagreed with the preparedness movement. A handful entreated him to support the president during this national crisis and defend the country's honor and manhood by supporting war with Germany. E.S. Minon of Milwaukee probably best summed up this latter view when he wrote,

There is nothing to be gained by a milk and water policy in case of war. If we are going to protect and honor and save this country from further disgrace let us do it like men and in man fashion and that can and should be done by an out and out declaration of war.¹⁶¹

This type of rhetoric did not appeal to Esch, who in several of his responses emphasized a need to keep "cool heads" and not be swayed by "every exaggerated rumor or report." He frequently described the United States as neither aggressive nor warlike, but instead a country made up of people who prefer peace and respect for their rights. Esch also wrote he could only support Americans at war if the country's existence as a nation or its honor was threatened.¹⁶²

In many of his replies, Representative Esch made it abundantly clear he wanted the United States to stay out of the European War, an opinion held by many of his correspondents. Esch began receiving letters as early as February 26 asking him to protest America's potential fight with Germany and to not give the president unlimited powers if the United States should go to war. Several of these early communications

¹⁶¹ E.S. Minon (Milwaukee) to John J. Esch, March 27, 1917, John J. Esch (JJE) papers, Box 41, WHS.

¹⁶² John J. Esch to Ernest A. Siefert (Reedsburg), March 1, 1917; John J. Esch to Rev. J. Stucki (Black River Falls), March 2, 1917; John J. Esch to Rev. J.L. Panzlau (La Crosse), March 2, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

noted that 90 percent of his constituents preferred neutrality over going to war against Germany.¹⁶³ Those who gave reasons for their position often spoke of a war between Germany and America as one meant solely to satisfy the greed of capitalists, an opinion held by La Follette and the Socialist Party. Reverend George Reichert of Prairie du Sac captured this sentiment in a telegram to Esch:

Do not let the buzzard usurp the proud position of the American eagle for we see no national honor in feasting on the already bleeding and famished peoples of Europe...If necessary, we shall shoulder our musket to fight [for the cause of peace], but---not a drop of blood for the munition vendor, who is ever ready to sacrifice the small man on the altar of greed.¹⁶⁴

Another writer described capitalistic motives for the war as “plutocratic patriotism for profit” and facetiously urged Esch to support La Follette or give Wilson monarchical powers, disband Congress, and come home.¹⁶⁵ Others argued that American money should not be spent on a war in Europe or worried that entering the war left the United States to “the mercy of the enemy within and without.”¹⁶⁶

While Esch consistently stated the United States should stay out of the war, he did support what he called “armed neutrality.” To him this meant making no distinctions between the belligerents, especially when asserting the American right to send ships carrying non-contraband materials to neutral ports.¹⁶⁷ To this end he voted to

¹⁶³ Rev. Philip Schneider (Prairie du Sac) to John J. Esch, February 26, 1917; C.M. Cronk (Norwalk) to Hon. Henry Bennett and Hon. Miles L. Hineman (Madison), copy sent to John J. Esch, March 3, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

¹⁶⁴ Reverend George Reichert (Prairie du Sac) to John J. Esch, undated, but received by Esch on March 2, 1917, WHS, JJE papers, Box 41.

¹⁶⁵ C.M. Cronk (Norwalk) to Hon. Henry Bennett and Hon. Miles L. Hineman (Madison), copy sent to John J. Esch, March 3, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

¹⁶⁶ Archibald Kellogg (Baraboo) to John J. Esch, undated, but obviously sent during March 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

¹⁶⁷ John J. Esch to F.F. Mueller (Reedsburg), March 14, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS. This letter was in response to Mueller’s question, “What is Armed Neutrality?” See Mueller to Esch, March 10, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41. Esch wrote to Mueller that armed neutrality “is the arming of merchant vessels to protect themselves against hostile attack while on the high seas and engaged in lawful business.”

increase spending for the military and to arm the merchant marine. In his responses to those who wrote him for or against the Armed Ship Bill, he frequently mentioned that the United States had armed the merchant marine before, in 1798 and 1800, without going to war and often added that doing so may actually be the “safest avenue toward peace,” since proof and assertion of America’s power would discourage Germany from attacking. Esch went one step further in support of the Armed Ship Bill and stated that the United States may have “a moral duty to assert its rights on the high seas.”¹⁶⁸

This discussion of morality, along with honor and manliness, seemed to pervade the discussion of whether the United States should enter the European War or not, as can already be seen in the letters to Esch from Minon and Reichert. Minon argued entry into the war would save American honor, if it was done in a manly way. An author of another letter to Esch, completely disagreed, stating, “The honor of the United States is not involved...it is only Wilson’s honor [that is under attack] and a damn little he has.”¹⁶⁹ Preparedness advocates and those who supported America entering the war on the side of Britain and France closely tied their arguments to masculinity, integrity, and virtue, as did one Wisconsinite, who, in a letter to Senator Husting, not only complained that sending money, but not soldiers to France was “a vile slander on American manhood,” but also implied that the United States needed leaders who did not equate patience and love of peace with “fear and decadence,” as supposedly pacifists and La

¹⁶⁸ John J. Esch to John Haldeman (Norwalk), March 3, 1917; Esch to Rev. Panzlau (La Crosse), March 2, 1917; John J. Esch to A.A. Schroeder (La Crosse), March 31, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

¹⁶⁹ William Vollmer (Mauston) to John J. Esch, no date but received by Esch on March 29, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

Follette supporters did.¹⁷⁰ While Esch did suggest going to war to defend America's honor, he may have only been using the approved rhetoric of the time.

By late February 1917, a number of Milwaukee men, concerned about the perception of their city as disloyal, formed a volunteer citizen's committee to counteract this potential opinion. They originally came together on February 25, in part as a response to Kletzsch's worrisome statements in the *Journal* about Milwaukee's loyalty, but also to a mass meeting held the same day by the city's Socialist Party. Worried that the Socialist meeting's "pro-German" agenda would reflect badly on the city, the committee wrote a telegram to President Wilson pledging to support "any action he might take in protecting American rights and urging thorough preparedness."¹⁷¹ When news of the telegram led to "thousands of endorsements" from around the state, the committee's chairman, Wheeler Bloodgood, decided to call for another mass meeting, one of patriots, not Socialists, to be held at the city's auditorium on March 17.¹⁷² Its purpose, Bloodgood proposed, would be "to give voice to the sentiments in the message to the president [the telegram sent February 25]...and offset the impression that Milwaukee is a stronghold of disloyalty."¹⁷³

Ellis B. Usher, as correspondent for the *Milwaukee Journal*, attended the meeting and described it as "a great success" and "an intensely genius and serious gathering." Usher noted that the leaders, including Augustus Vogel, chair of the

¹⁷⁰ Thomas H. Ryan (Wausau) to Paul O. Husting, March 30, 1917, POH papers, Box 10, folder 6, WHS.

¹⁷¹ "Milwaukeeans Wish to Prove Loyalty," *Racine Journal News*, March 12, 1917, 1.

¹⁷² *The Wisconsin Defense League*, Milwaukee: Allied Printing, undated (but post May 29, 2017), 3.

¹⁷³ "Milwaukeeans Wish to Prove Loyalty," 1.

National Security League's Wisconsin branch, U.S. Senator Paul Husting, and Bloodgood, came from a variety of political affiliations and backgrounds (Scandinavian, French, "Long Island Dutch," even German) and suggested this broad range spoke to the depth of the patriotic spirit in Milwaukee.¹⁷⁴ According to Usher, over seven thousand attendees loudly proclaimed Milwaukee and Wisconsin's loyalty to the U.S. government and President Wilson. When a heckler questioned Vogel's patriotism, he responded that this was obviously a "pro-American" meeting of patriotic and loyal citizens and anyone "not in harmony with that platform...had better leave now." The audience demanded the heckler be removed from the gathering, so attendants escorted him out.¹⁷⁵ Husting followed this moment of drama with a rousing patriotic speech that explained President Wilson's foreign policies and called for unity "in thought, word, and deed," since "We are all Americans."¹⁷⁶ The crowd rewarded him with a long and loud standing ovation. The meeting concluded with resolutions stating the attendees' support of the President and the Federal Government in their efforts to defend the country's rights and uphold its national honor.¹⁷⁷ The citizen's committee, pleased with the results of the rally, formalized its existence one week later as the Wisconsin Defense League, with Bloodgood as chair.

¹⁷⁴ Ellis B. Usher, "Big Meeting a Success," *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, March 24, 1917, 2.

¹⁷⁵ "Loyalty Meeting in Cream City," *Racine Journal News*, March 19, 1917, 6.

¹⁷⁶ Pifer, 200.

¹⁷⁷ John J. Esch to Wheeler Bloodgood (Milwaukee), March 26, 1917, John J. Esch (JJE) papers, Box 41, WHS.

Wheeler Peckham Bloodgood had been a leader in the preparedness movement and would continue to be an outspoken proponent of defining America's involvement in the war in hyperbolic patriotic terms. Understanding his motivations, which changed during the course of the war, provides us with an insight into how a number of Wisconsin's hyperpatriots thought and reasoned, especially as many of them, including Bloodgood, moved from a pro-La Follette position to an anti-La Follette one. Bloodgood,



a Milwaukee native born into a family with American roots dating back to the seventeenth century, could often be found, according to a *Wisconsin State Journal* editor (several years after Bloodgood's death), "striding his tall and manly way among the beloved people of a country which he loved almost to the point of worship."¹⁷⁸ This extreme form of patriotism may have developed from growing up in a family known for their public service to the United States, including a maternal uncle who had served as a U.S. Supreme

Court justice. His son Francis, writing a decade after World War II, believed his father made a conscious decision to follow in his predecessors' footsteps. In preparation for this role, Bloodgood graduated from St. John's Military Academy in Delafield, Wisconsin in 1887, read law with his father, passed the bar in 1894, and became a successful business lawyer with a wide practice.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ A.W. Brayton, "The Rambler" column, *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 29, 1933, 4.

¹⁷⁹ Francis J. Bloodgood, "Wheeler Peckham Bloodgood of Milwaukee, 1871-1930," unpublished biography, c. 1957.

Although he was later described as “a spokesman of big business,” in the early years of the twentieth century Bloodgood supported the Progressive Movement by backing Robert La Follette and his progressive policies when the latter was Wisconsin’s governor. According to Francis, this meant he was interested in government reform and “humanitarian legislation,” which improved the welfare of Wisconsinites.¹⁸⁰ During the 1912 presidential election, Bloodgood actively promoted the Progressive Movement by breaking with the Republican Party and backing Theodore Roosevelt’s new Progressive or “Bull Moose” Party. On Roosevelt’s behalf, Bloodgood organized the political party in Wisconsin, attended the Bull Moose convention as a delegate, and even served on the committee that wrote the new party’s platform. Regarding these accomplishments, the *Wisconsin State Journal* editor also wrote that Bloodgood “built one of the finest working organizations ever possessed by a political faction.”¹⁸¹ Although he eventually abandoned Roosevelt’s party after major defeats in the 1914 mid-term election, Bloodgood stayed involved in politics—not by running for political office, but by funding and organizing support for issues he championed. By the time of the war, however, he had not only abandoned the Progressive Party, but La Follette as well, and instead associated with Stalwart Republicans, the most politically conservative faction in the state.

Besides Bloodgood, the newly formed Wisconsin Defense League’s executive committee included August Vogel and *Journal* correspondent Ellis Usher. In the early

¹⁸⁰ Bloodgood was described as “a spokesman of big business” in “Militarism in Public Schools,” editorial, *Capital Times*, February 23, 1924, 1; Francis described his father’s interest in “humanitarian legislation” in the unpublished bibliography; Bloodgood’s support for progressive polices can be found in a speech he made on behalf of Theodore Roosevelt’s presidential campaign and published in “States of Union in Competition,” *Eau Claire Leader*, September 12, 1912, 10.

¹⁸¹ Brayton, “The Rambler.”

days of the League's existence, these leaders directed their energies toward forming similar associations throughout the state, assisting the state and federal government as requested by "accredited representatives," and helping with any potential military recruitment.¹⁸² By the end of March the committee had sent out a letter to "patriotic citizens" around the state asking them to form organizations that would support the civil and military arms of the U.S. government.¹⁸³ They also identified as a goal the need to overcome "the pro-German propaganda and agitation which permeated the state" with the purpose of ultimately destroying "the idea prevalent throughout the country that Wisconsin was a hot-bed of sedition and disloyalty."¹⁸⁴ With these goals in mind,



Madison Loyalty Parade, March 31, 1917

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League supporters managed to organize Loyalty Parades in Janesville and Madison in the last days of the month. Speakers at these parades not only decried Germany, but the peace movement, which they thought would "turn this county into a German colony," and called upon Wisconsin "to gather up the jewels of her manhood" and defeat these threats to America.¹⁸⁵ With the organization of the League just getting underway, the

¹⁸² *Wisconsin Defense League*, 4.

¹⁸³ Ellis B. Usher, "These are Stirring Times in the Nation Whether in the City or Rural District," *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, March 31, 1917, 8 (Also appeared in the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, 14, on the same day under the title "Action of Patriots Takes Place of Talk.")

¹⁸⁴ *Wisconsin Defense League*, 5.

¹⁸⁵ "Loyal Meeting in Janesville," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 31, 1917, 10; "10,000 in Madison Pledge Loyalty," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 1, 1917, part 1, 2.

question whether the United States would enter the European War reached a crisis point, bringing yet even more attention to Wisconsin and its national representatives.

“*It is to be war with Germany.*” With this statement several Wisconsin newspapers informed their readers that on Friday, March 30, 1917, President Wilson with the unanimous support of his cabinet had decided to go to war with the German empire. In his announcement, Wilson made clear that he thought Germany had already gone to war with the United States by 1) taking more than 240 American lives on the high seas; 2) destroying American ships; 3) attempting plots that had caused millions of dollars’ worth of damage; and 4) attempting to conspire with Mexico and Japan to destroy the United States.¹⁸⁶ Over the weekend he prepared a speech asking Congress to support him in this decision, which he gave on Monday, April 2. The next few days would be climactic ones for the country and Wisconsin. Efforts by the state’s preparedness advocates who supported Wilson’s decision and those who opposed it came to a climax when both sides worked to win the hearts and minds of Wisconsin’s citizens.

In anticipation of the president’s announcement, a handful of Wisconsin cities held patriotic meetings the night of March 30. Grand Rapids’ *Daily Leader* reported that the “city thrilled with patriotism” when nearly two thousand people turned out to hear supporters of Wilson. They ended the mass meeting by resolving to “stand firmly with the president of the United States in any and all measures which he may see fit to

¹⁸⁶ See for example “War to Resist German Hostility is Decided Upon by Wilson and his Cabinet” in the *Manitowoc Daily Herald* and “President Will Declare ‘State of War’” in the *La Crosse Tribune*. Both appeared in their March 31, 1917 issues on page one.

adopt in this present crisis.”¹⁸⁷ On the same day, Eau Claire held a patriotic meeting that the *Eau Claire Leader* made clear “was not one of these rabid red-fire affairs” but a sober gathering of citizens concerned about the future. Mayor J.E. Barron asked his listeners to provide unqualified support to the president and reminded them “that patriotism is the spark of national honor and the shield of personal safety.” The main speaker of the evening, Arthur B. Doe of Milwaukee, made a strong plea for preparedness and shared concern that Japan, “the most treacherous and untrustworthy [nation] on the globe,” could combine with Mexico to “come up the Mississippi valley and cut the country in two.” The audience, after Doe’s speech, willingly adopted a pledge of loyalty to the president and an urgent plea for preparedness.¹⁸⁸

The following evening, eleven heads of large manufacturing firms in Milwaukee, eight of whom had German roots, gathered to adopt a pledge of loyalty and support to the federal government and to make their factories available as needed to the nation’s leaders. The *Milwaukee Journal*, which continued to be a leading voice in the preparedness movement, practically glowed with approval when it stated this act “will offset the false opinion held of Milwaukee by those who have heard disloyal words, have read of disloyal acts and disgraceful votes and have believed that these were true results of German-American spirit and attitude.” The *Journal* editors also noted that military

¹⁸⁷ “This City Thrills with Patriotism,” (Grand Rapids) *Daily Leader*, March 31, 1917, 1.

¹⁸⁸ “Standing Room at Premium at Patriotic Mass Meeting Held at Opera House Last Night,” *Eau Claire Leader*, March 31, 1917, 2. Despite Doe’s concerns, Japan fought on the side of the Allies during World War I. However, the United States and Japan had had long-standing acrimonious relations because of their competition for influence in the Pacific and disputes over China. To ease these tensions, the two countries signed the Lansing-Ishii Agreement on November 2, 1917, where they agreed to respect the independence and territorial integrity of China. China objected to the agreement and it was repealed in 1923. For more information, see Barbara Tuchman, *Stillwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 48 and William O. Walker, *National Security and Core Values in American History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 78. Concerns about Japan can be illustrated by the editorial “Making Ready,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 16, 1916, 12, which alleged that “Japan is preparing for an attack on the United States.”

enlistment in Milwaukee had exceeded expectations and that newspapers around the country had taken note. They beamed with pride that these businessmen, along with the boys of Milwaukee, were demonstrating their intent to “stand by America.”¹⁸⁹

Not all of Wisconsin’s cities and towns eagerly embraced a pending war with open arms. Monroe in Green County near the Illinois state line, for example, as well as Manitowoc and Sheboygan, both on the banks of Lake Michigan, decided to hold unofficial referendums asking voters “Shall the United States enter the European War?” During the month of March, Representative John J. Esch had received letters from a handful of Wisconsinites, including Socialist Victor Berger, urging him to support a nationwide referendum along these lines with the hope that Wilson and Congress would learn how the majority of voting Americans felt about entering the war.¹⁹⁰ With Wilson on the verge of sending Americans into the midst of European hostilities, residents of these three cities took matters into their own hands. Manitowoc held its referendum vote on Saturday, March 31, while Monroe and Sheboygan held theirs on Tuesday, April 3. The outcomes were all the same, between 90 and 98 percent of the voters replied, No, the United States should not enter the European War.

Preparedness advocates worried that the results of these referendums would feed the perception that Wisconsin was a state filled with unpatriotic pacifists and pro-

¹⁸⁹ “This is Milwaukee” editorial, *Milwaukee Journal*, April 1, 1917, part 2, 4. In this article the editors quoted the *Springfield Republican*, “‘Alien’ Milwaukee is heaping coals of fire on its critics by leading the cities of the country in military enlistments, in proportion to total population,” as well as the *New York Times*, “Milwaukee, the first city in the country to perfect its preparedness campaign back of the line, now has led the nation in the number of enlistments in the various branches of service, in proportion to population.”

¹⁹⁰ Rev. George Reichert (Prairie du Sac) to Esch, undated, but received in the Esch office on March 2, 1917; Victor Berger, John M. Work, and Adolph Germer (Socialist Party National Office, Chicago, IL) to Esch, March 30, 1917; Mary A. Archibald, Kate Kellogg and R.M. Curry (Baraboo) to Esch, undated, but received in the Esch office on March 31, 1917. The Kelloggs and Curry wrote, “As we appear to be denied a referendum, I implore you to work hard for mediation.”; all letters in JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

German sympathizers. They called on the loyal and patriotic citizens of these towns to protest the votes or realize that the rest of the world would assume they all spoke in one voice, the voice of “those who put Germany before their own country.”¹⁹¹ The *Milwaukee Journal* editors looked to expose those behind the referendums and demonstrate that the balloting was not supported by patriotic Americans. In Manitowoc they learned that the city’s *Daily News*, which they described as “a pro-German paper,” had conducted the vote and that the vote’s organizer Otto Geussenhainer defended it by stating, “The slaughter of 100,000 men in war will not avenge the lives of 200 people [Those lost on the high seas.]”¹⁹² In Monroe, the *Journal* editors discovered Green County judge and active Socialist John M. Becker had led the call for an “anti-war referendum” with support from pro-German and pacifist propagandists who distributed literature to voters.¹⁹³ While the *Milwaukee Journal* editors did not publish the names of those who held the Sheboygan vote, they did describe those seen at the polling places as “almost entirely German sympathizers and ‘peace-at-any-cost’ propagandists.” The *Journal* also noted that significant numbers of women voted in the Manitowoc and Sheboygan elections, supposedly skewing the results. On the other hand, a representative of the Sheboygan Association of Commerce noted that few businessmen voted, since they saw it as unnecessary and meaningless.¹⁹⁴

At 11:00 am on April 3rd, Sheboygan’s referendum committee called off the vote due to the realization that Congress was about to declare war on Germany. Their decision may have also been influenced by the eleven secret service men who had

¹⁹¹ “Sheboygan’s Misfortune” (editorial), *Milwaukee Journal*, April 2, 1917, 8.

¹⁹² “Call Off Peace Vote,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 3, 1917, 7.

¹⁹³ “954 for Peace in Monroe,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 4, 1917, 7.

¹⁹⁴ “Call Off Peace Vote.”

arrived in Sheboygan the week before to begin surveillance of the town's German-American citizens, especially those who had spoken out against Wilson and the United States government or as the *Sheboygan Press* described them, those "who it was alleged have let their love for the Fatherland smother their loyalty to the country of their adoption." According to the *Milwaukee Journal*, the secret service men remained in Sheboygan to monitor the outcome of the vote.¹⁹⁵ Since 98 percent of those who voted chose not to go to war with Germany, ending the referendum and removing voters from potential surveillance probably made sense to the referendum committee. News of these anti-war votes did make it into the North American press reinforcing Wisconsin's issue with loyalty. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, for example, noted that in Sheboygan, "one of the most Germanic cities in Wisconsin," the town's "hyphenates" had voted against the war.¹⁹⁶

The day after Monroe and Sheboygan's votes, Wisconsin's preparedness advocates had another reason to fear the state would be further stained with the stamp of disloyalty when Senator La Follette railed against Wilson's request to go to war against Germany in a four-hour speech on the senate floor. The senator began by reading excerpts from the fifteen thousand pieces of correspondence he had received regarding the war (noting that 90 percent supported his views), including telegrams from officials in Monroe and Sheboygan letting him know the outcome of their referendums. La Follette went on to describe a "new spirit of intolerance that has been bred in [and through] the press...within the last few months that challenges the right of any man to utter his independent judgment on a question vital...to the people of this

¹⁹⁵ "Call Off Peace Vote"; "Secret Service Men Here," *Sheboygan Press*, March 31, 1917, 1.

¹⁹⁶ "Wisconsin Hyphenates Against the War," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 6, 1917, 2.

nation.” The senator worried that this vocal and intimidating pro-war rhetoric kept the majority of Americans from speaking out against preparedness advocates and their hawkish demands.

La Follette spent most of his thirty-two-page speech chastising Wilson and Congress for not practicing a true neutrality—of, in effect, favoring Britain and her allies over Germany. In the concluding pages of his address, he called this inability to be neutral the “administration’s fatal mistake,” one that had led the United States to declare war unnecessarily. “We should not seek to hide our blunder behind the smoke of battle,” La Follette declared, or “to inflame the mind of our people by half truths into the frenzy of war.” He went on to appeal to a definition of patriotism not supported by most of Congress, when he added, “I do not believe that our national honor is served by such a course. The right way is the honorable way.”¹⁹⁷ As he finished, the Wisconsin senator stood in silence with tears running down his face. A sympathetic observer believed his grief and anger seemed “like that of a person who had failed to keep his child from doing itself irreparable harm.”¹⁹⁸ Others were not so kind. Mississippi senator John Sharp Williams, who immediately followed La Follette, assailed his speech as pro-German, “anti-resident, anti-congress and anti-American.”¹⁹⁹ Few loyalists would forget La Follette’s decision to defend Germany’s belligerent actions against America during the bitter senatorial debate.

¹⁹⁷ Robert M. La Follette, La Follette's historic U. S. Senate speech against the entry of the United States into the World War: delivered in the United States Senate on April 4, 1917; online facsimile at <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/u/?tp,26836>

¹⁹⁸ Unger, 249 as quoted from Amos Pinchot, *History of the Progressive Party* (NY: New York University Press, 1958).

¹⁹⁹ Unger, 249; “Senate for War with Germany,” *Clinton Saturday Argus* (Indiana), April 6, 1917, 1.

Later the same day, Senator Paul Husting helped vindicate Wisconsin in the eyes of preparedness movement advocates when he not only denounced La Follette and other “pacifists” in his speech, “War with Germany,” but reaffirmed the state’s loyalty and honor. Husting began by emphasizing the strong allegiance the Wisconsin people had to the United States, despite La Follette’s embarrassing actions and the anti-war votes held in Sheboygan and Monroe the day before. He dismissed these referendums as ones “not held under the auspices of civil authority,” but instead “personally conducted as a rule by German sympathizers,” adding “the citizens who support the Government refused to take part.”²⁰⁰ After this introduction, the bulk of his speech focused on the ways Germany had abused the good will of the United States and explained the logical reasons for America’s participation in the war, while also rejecting pro-German arguments and reminding listeners of American values. He ended his oration by declaring, “I am going to vote for the pending joint resolution [to go to war with Germany],” as a way to “impress Germany with the thought that this powerful country was ready, prepared, and determined to use all of its power and might to protect our honor and our rights.”²⁰¹

With this speech Husting cemented his position as Wisconsin’s loyalist senator and gained the unqualified support of Wisconsin’s preparedness advocates and future hyperpatriots. His star had been on the rise since the patriotic meeting in Milwaukee on

²⁰⁰ Paul O. Husting, *War with Germany: Speech of Hon. Paul O. Husting, of Wisconsin, in the Senate of the United States, Wednesday, April 4, 1917*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 1-2. The sentiment Husting expresses on referendum elections may come from a letter from a lawyer in Tigerton, Wisconsin (in Shawano County, about 150 miles north of Madison) who asked the senator to “not give undue weight to the numerous peace petitions that have been circulated here. They are not worthy of serious consideration, as they are circulated by or under the auspices of Germany’s representatives.” Fred Y. King (Tigerton) to Husting, April 2, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 6, WHS.

²⁰¹ Husting, 32.

March 17. Many of the letters he received after that meeting acknowledged his new role as the face of Wisconsin patriotism and loyalty. In one, a Madison resident wrote Husting, “May I not congratulate you on your good American speech at Milwaukee the other night. I am glad that Wisconsin has one Senator who is single minded and who refuses to truckle.”²⁰² Another supporter sent Husting a newspaper clipping written by William D. Hoard, editor and publisher of the *Jefferson County Union* (Fort Atkinson), who responded to Husting’s Milwaukee performance with the following, “Rising like a mountain over a molehill [referring to La Follette]...was the inspiring speech of Senator Husting. We wish to apologize to Senator Husting for our previous disbelief in his fitness to fill the place of a loyal representative of Wisconsin in the United States Senate...Hats off to Senator Husting for this bugle blast of straight truth.”²⁰³ On the day Wilson asked Congress to declare war, a Tigerton, Wisconsin, lawyer wanted to express his pleasure “that we have one Senator at least that we know will support the President in standing for the honor of these United States, regardless of petty politics, and without regard for the German vote.”²⁰⁴

On April 4, when the Senate voted on Wilson’s resolution that a state of war existed between Germany and the United States, Senator Husting sided with the president, as he had pledged he would, and Senator La Follette, as expected, did not. The final Senate tally came to 82 to 6 with the majority supporting an American role in the European war. The House of Representatives held its vote at 3 am on April 6 with a

²⁰² Ray E. Clarke (Madison) to Husting, March 19, 1917, POH papers, Box 10, folder 6, WHS. As a postscript to this letter, Samuel Bryan wrote, “I fully agree with the above and extend my congratulations.

²⁰³ Sent with letter by Mr. Geihm to Husting, March 26, 1917, POH papers, Box 10, folder 6, WHS.

²⁰⁴ King to Husting, April 2, 1917.

similar result (373 to 50). To the dismay of Wisconsin's loyalists, nine of the state's eleven U.S. representatives had not supported the resolution. With 75 percent (10 out of 13) of Wisconsin's national legislators opposing Wilson's request to go to war, a fear grew among these patriots that the perception of the state's disloyalty would increase exponentially. Members of the Wisconsin Defense League knew they had to take action and their number one goal became to oust as many of these ten disloyal representatives as they could and replace them with loyal ones. Despite their concerns, the nine Wisconsin members of the House of Representatives immediately accepted the new reality and made every effort to support the war effort. Senator La Follette, however, continued to question and speak out against the sagacity and morality of America's role in the European War, making him the League's number one target.

In the first week of April 1917, Wisconsin's patriots had to endure another moment of shame, which, in national eyes, helped brand Wisconsin as disloyal yet again. On April 7, 1917, the day after Congress voted to go to war, the Socialist party had planned a conclave in St. Louis, Missouri, to discuss the war issue, not anticipating that the matter would come to a congressional vote before its members met. Despite knowing the outcome, a conclave committee led in part by Victor Berger, former U.S. congressman from the state, and editor of the *Milwaukee Leader* (a Socialist newspaper), still decided to draft an anti-war report denouncing Wilson and Congress's move as "a crime of our capitalist class against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world." Convention attendees approved the committee's report, which also called for active opposition to the war. Later, a national referendum

saw it pass by a three-to-one margin.²⁰⁵ With this statement, the Socialist party in America went on record against the war and Victor Berger from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, became known as a leader in the decision-making process.

As the possibility of war became more likely, Wisconsin Governor Emanuel Philipp moved from strongly supporting neutrality to believing America had good reasons to consider Germany a belligerent. Once Congress declared war, Philipp stood firmly behind the decision and spoke out in defense of America's participation. In a typical speech, he declared that the American flag had never "left our shores for any selfish purpose. Whenever we have engaged in war it has been for the purpose of establishing some great human right in the interest of humanity." He emphasized the reasons Americans were going to war would not "bring either money or other material wealth to us." We only ask, he concluded, "that the smaller nations of Europe be permitted to exist" and that Germany not be destroyed.²⁰⁶ Largely wishful thinking, he consistently defended America's role for these reasons in both public and private statements throughout the war.

Despite Philipp's support of America's entrance into the European War, within a week of the congressional vote he provided yet another reason for the rest of the country to question Wisconsin's loyalty. The governor had been appalled by Wilson's decision, after war had been declared, to create an army by conscription, so on April 10 he sent a telegram to the president and Wisconsin's U.S. senators and representatives announcing

²⁰⁵ Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940, Vol. V* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 11.

²⁰⁶ Notes for Philipp speech given around March-April 1918, Emanuel L. Philipp (ELP) papers, Box 19, WHS.

his belief that such a conscription plan would “be unnecessary and unwise for the present.” Instead Philipp supported a volunteer army believing it would 1) have a better spirit, 2) leave a better feeling at home, 3) help raise troops more promptly, 4) create a patriotic class that would visibly show its love for country, and finally, 5) acknowledge that America’s best citizens preferred to volunteer than be forced into military service.²⁰⁷

Newspapers around the country published Philipp’s telegram in their next day’s edition and the governor became another example of a disloyal elected representative from Wisconsin. Wisconsin’s war supporters immediately let Philipp know of their displeasure. George Gray of Fond du Lac sent a letter to Philipp the next day offering the opinion that “The Kaiser certainly has a bunch of friends in poor old Wisconsin.” A Milwaukee correspondent agreed, “If I did not know you as I do, I would take it for granted that you want to aid the Kaiser by indefinitely postponing the job of raising an army.” Herbert Laflin, also of Milwaukee, agreed and described Philipp’s action “as another smirch...upon the banner of this state.”²⁰⁸

As so many of Wisconsin’s elected officials piled disgrace on top of discredit on top of smirch, leading to a perceived national belief that Wisconsin had a loyalty problem, the state senators’ reaction to the young, inexperienced Socialist Senator Frank Raguse on April 26 (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) makes more

²⁰⁷ Clipping from unknown paper; Philipp to J.L. Sturtevant, editor of the *Wausau Record-Herald*, April 18, 1917, ELP papers, April 1917 correspondence folder, WHS.

²⁰⁸ George B. Gray (Fond du Lac), special agent for the California Insurance Co., to Philipp, April 11, 1917; John H. Manschot (Milwaukee) to Philipp, April 11, 1917; Herbert N. Laflin, attorney, to Philipp, April 11, 1917, ELP papers, April 1917 correspondence folder, WHS.

sense. The young senator's seditious words and Socialist leanings combined with his lack of power and position set him up to be the perfect scapegoat. With his sacrifice on the altar of patriotism, Wisconsin's senators probably hoped they would be able to redeem both the state and its elected officials. Newspapers around the country did take notice. News of Raguse's ouster appeared in papers as far away as California and Connecticut, usually with a tone of approbation.²⁰⁹ Closer to home, the *Racine Journal News* spoke approvingly of the "renewed evidence" of the state legislators' excellence by showing that "Disloyalty is not to be countenanced in the state's legislative chambers." His ouster demonstrated, they believed, that, "When comes the hour for real devotion to country—for fealty to its institutions—for defense of its rights—no state in the Union will offer in defense of the United States a more genuine loyalty nor a better manhood than will Wisconsin."²¹⁰ For a short time, at least, Wisconsin would be vindicated.

Raguse's punishment did not end with his expulsion from the Wisconsin Senate chambers. His enemies, avowed patriots, actively suppressed any attempt by Raguse to redeem himself or return to politics over the next year. Shortly after returning to Milwaukee, Raguse volunteered to be a soldier in the U.S. Army. Although physically fit, the local enlistment office labelled him "conscience and morally unfit" and believed he would be a poor defender of the flag. As a result, they denied him a chance to prove his patriotism through military service.²¹¹ Several months later Raguse attempted to run in the reelection for his senate seat, as he promised he would. Possibly worried that the

²⁰⁹ "Wisconsin Senate Expels Socialist," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 27, 1917, 2; "Socialist Raguse May Enlist in U.S. Army," *Naugatuck Daily News* (Connecticut), April 27, 1917, 1. Raguse's ouster made newspapers in at least ten states: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Texas.

²¹⁰ "Senate Expels Raguse" (editorial), *Racine Journal News*, April 27, 1917, 8.

²¹¹ Untitled article, *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, June 8, 1917, 2.

ousted senator could win, Wisconsin's attorney general soon ruled that Raguse, because he had been dismissed on a charge related to disloyalty, would not be allowed to take his seat if reelected.²¹² The Socialist party ran another candidate in his place, but lost to the loyalist candidate, Louis Fons, a Republican, who ran on an "America First" platform.²¹³

Raguse experienced retribution for his words not only from officials, but also from Wisconsin's citizenry. In March 1918 he attempted to campaign for the Socialist candidate running for U.S. Senator in Dane County in south central Wisconsin. After being recognized in Stoughton, cadets from the local high school ran him down, seized and burned his pamphlets, and called the chief of police, who briefly held him in custody.²¹⁴ A few days later, "loyal citizens" in Sun Prairie drove him out of town when he was discovered going house to house with Socialist campaign material. Afraid of being physically attacked, Raguse asked for protection from the local marshal, who took him to Madison, where he was released with the threat that "his actions would be watched."²¹⁵

Raguse never returned to politics. After the war, he trained as a welder and worked in his brother's shop in Rockford, Illinois. In 1922 his life changed for the worse, when an explosion of carbide seared out both his eyes, blinding him. Raguse learned to deal with his new disability at Janesville's school for the blind and then found a job working at a small candy store in Milwaukee. He did not last long at this job and, overwhelmed by his disability, spent most of his remaining years unemployed. In 1939

²¹² "Disloyalist Can't Come Back," *Grand Rapids Daily Leader* (Wisconsin), December 1, 1917, 1.

²¹³ "First Wisconsin Vote Vindicates State's Loyalty," *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, January 3, 1918, 1.

²¹⁴ "Berger Booster Meets Surprise," *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 26, 1918, 1.

²¹⁵ "Raguse 'Escorted' from Sun Prairie," *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 29, 1918, 14.

he moved to East Troy in Walworth County and lived there quietly and forgotten until his death in 1966.²¹⁶

To Wisconsin loyalists, Frank Raguse was an “other,” everything they were not: German-born, Socialist, poorly educated, a manual laborer, and a threat to American patriotism. When he dared to challenge them, he had to be silenced, to be made an example so others would not follow him. His successful and complete destruction through the use of intimidation, suppression, and manipulation brought the state’s patriots national acclaim and sent a strong message to those who sympathized with Raguse to keep quiet or experience repercussions. Raguse’s expulsion and subsequent humiliations also created a precedent for how those who confronted the state’s self-defined patriots with “traitorous” words and actions, deemed a threat to the country at that time of crisis, would be treated.

Wisconsin’s loyalists had first solidified their identity as preparedness advocates, a small minority of the state’s population, who eventually supported going to war against Germany. Once war with the Kaiser’s army became a reality, they morphed into superpatriots, those who placed unquestioned love of the United States above all else. As long as the war raged in Europe, their numbers grew throughout Wisconsin. The primary goal of these newly-empowered patriots became salvaging the state’s patriotic reputation in the national eye. To do this successfully they needed to bring Victor Berger and Robert La Follette to task. Both men, however, continued to have supporters and

²¹⁶ “Frank Raguse, Dismissed from Senate and Blinded by Blast, Never Gave Up, *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 29, 1923, 6; Frank Raguse Obituary, *Janesville Daily Gazette*, January 31, 1966, 2. The obituary mentioned that he had been a state legislator, but not that he had been expelled.

were not as easily threatened as Frank Raguse, which made them hard to control, manipulate, and suppress. Over the next year, the enemies of Berger and La Follette spent a significant amount of effort discrediting them, ruining their reputations, destroying their careers—anything to prevent these unpatriotic representatives of Wisconsin from doing more damage. While this battle raged, Wisconsin's superpatriots still had a number of hurdles to overcome. During the summer and fall of 1917, events seemed to conspire against them, keeping the question of Wisconsin's loyalty open.

Chapter 3: Wisconsin Becomes the Traitor State, April-October 1917

*But for God's sake save the reputation of Wisconsin! Remember, too, in all your devotions, to thank the freeman's God that we have Paul Husting in the United States senate.*²¹⁷

Ellis B. Usher, *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh), April 7, 1917

As Wisconsin's loyalty came under attack, the state's patriots knew they had a strong national advocate in junior senator Paul O. Husting. He solidified this position and acquired a national following after he gave his "War on Germany" speech on April 4, 1917. Newspapers from Massachusetts to California shared excerpts of his speech with their readers, emphasizing the quotations that spoke of Husting's distrust of hyphenates (German-Americans) and pacifists.²¹⁸ His most widely published quotation, even appearing in the *New York Times*, lashed out against pro-German Americans and began with this statement, "Societies and leagues have been formed to exalt everything that is German and denounce everything American." The *Times* went on to share more of Husting's speech than other newspapers, such as his assertion that America was going to war for one reason—the murder in cold blood by the German government of "peaceable American citizens engaged in legitimate business." It also included his tendency, along with most hyperpatriots, to conflate pacifism with a lack of masculinity. Specifically, he wondered if he had mistaken "the temper of American manhood and the mettle of American citizenship if the prayers for peace are for peace at any price. The people want peace, but not at expense of national honor or national safety."²¹⁹ With

²¹⁷ Ellis Usher, "Hang Out the Flag. This is War Time," *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, April 7, 1917, 5.

²¹⁸ Excerpts of his speech appeared in dozens of newspapers including the *Boston Globe Herald*, April 5, 1917, *Joplin Globe* (Missouri), April 5, 1917, *Conway Horry Herald* (South Carolina), April 5, 1917.

²¹⁹ "Story of Debate on War Resolution: Husting Assails 'Hyphenates,'" *The New York Times*, April 5, 1917, 3.

these words hyperpatriots around the country heard their priorities, i.e. national security, American honor, and reputable masculinity, prized and perhaps glorified by this loyalist Wisconsin senator.

Husting's early life did not hint of the fame he would receive in his early fifties, but he did have deep roots in Wisconsin and a connection to one of its forefathers. His mother, Mary (Juneau) Hustling had been the twelfth born child (out of sixteen) of Solomon Juneau, co-founder of Milwaukee and the city's first mayor. Mary and her husband Jean "John" Pierre Hustling, an immigrant from Luxembourg, first raised their children in Fond du Lac, where Paul was born, before moving the family thirty miles south to Mayville in Dodge County, the place Hustling considered his hometown. Early signs of his ambition appeared in his late teens, when he decided not to be a craftsman like his father, a jeweler and watch maker, but to work as a clerk instead. Over the next ten years, he clerked for a variety of entities, including the Wisconsin State Prison in Waupun. In his mid-twenties he began working as the assistant bookkeeper for Thomas J. Cunningham, Wisconsin's Secretary of State, and this taste of law and politics may have influenced his decision to become a lawyer. Cunningham, a Democrat, may also have predisposed Hustling to join the same party. Hustling had been so well-prepared for the law, that he entered the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1895 and passed the bar a few months later. On completion of his studies, the twenty-nine-year old returned to Mayville and opened a law office first with an associate and later one of his brothers.

With the beginning of the new century, Hustling's star rose quickly when he was elected for a series of increasingly powerful offices. In 1902 he ran for and won the office of Dodge County district attorney, a position he held for four years, and in 1906 his

district elected him their state senator. In the eight years he held that position, he advocated for many bills, including the direct election of United States senators (instead of election by the state senate). When the senate passed that bill, Husting ran in the next election and became the first United States senator from Wisconsin to be elected by the people. His term began in March 1915 and, until he became the face of Wisconsin loyalists late in 1916, Husting had a fairly unremarkable career.

When Wisconsin found its most popular leader, Senator Robert La Follette, held up nationally as the iconic representation of unpatriotic disloyalty, Husting easily stepped into the breach. With the specter of La Follette hanging over the state, Husting's constituents lauded him for upholding Wisconsin's reputation. David Atwood from Janesville let him know that while he had differed with him politically, he approved of his war vote and speech. Atwood added, "Wisconsin likes a man not a long-tailed rat down there in Washington and there is not any need of saying who is the rat."²²⁰ They also shared their approval of his "War on Germany" speech, the event that brought him into the public eye. Dr. J.S. Hansberry of Wonewoc congratulated the senator for the speech's truth, character, and force.²²¹ While another of Husting's constituents, William A. Hayes of Milwaukee believed he could "compare it with the best efforts of Clay, Marcy, Benton, Seward, Sumner and others" and added, "I am not in the least flattering you."²²²

²²⁰ David Atwood (Janesville), editor of Gazette Printing Co., publishers of *Janesville Daily Gazette* to Paul O. Husting, May 15, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 2, WHS.

²²¹ Dr. J.S. Hansberry (Wonewoc), physician at Woodsmere Sanatorium, to POH, May 25, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 3, WHS.

²²² W.A. Hayes (Milwaukee), attorney, to POH, June 7, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 3, WHS.

Not everyone in Wisconsin, however, approved of Husting's approach to the war. Burlington (Racine Co.) lawyer E. John Wehmhoff, a son of German immigrants, wrote Husting two letters in May letting him know of his unhappiness with the recent turn of events. In the first letter, he pled with Husting to only send goods and money to the allies, adding that sending troops "will be a calamity!" Of the war, he believed, "We are making a mistake and the people have been negligent in not asserting themselves before."²²³ Thirteen days later, Wehmhoff did assert himself in a much longer second letter. In between the two letters, he had read Husting's "War with Germany" speech and found himself unconvinced "even now that it is right that we are at war with Germany." He wondered if his own German ancestry played a role in his thinking and if President Wilson had German blood would he have acted differently. He also argued that England's successful propaganda stood behind America's decision to back the Allies. In this letter, Wehmhoff provided the senator a peek into the minds of those not blindly following Wilson and his loyalist followers,

The war is not a popular idea with our people here. The volunteering [to be in the military] and the war bond subscribing is making this clear to all of us. The high moral purpose does not seem to carry through. People still have the notion that the war was originally a trade war and that only after the allied cause received a set-back were we called in to assist.²²⁴

As with Withrow three months earlier, Husting would not hear of such nonsense. He published his lengthy response to Wehmhoff with excerpts appearing in newspapers around the Midwest. In it, he wondered if German-American Wehmhoff loved Germany more than America and suggested that

²²³ E. John Wehmhoff (Burlington) to Paul O. Husting, May 3, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 2, WHS.

²²⁴ E. John Wehmhoff to POH, April 16, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 2, WHS.

for the sake of your peace of mind as well as in justice to yourself as an American citizen who does not desire his loyalty questioned or to have his honorable reputation permanently impaired, you should respect, obey and support the mandate of your country in the spirit of true and devoted American citizenship.²²⁵

After this public attack, Wehmhoff appears to have gone silent about his concerns and feelings regarding the war.

Wehmhoff's letter to Husting was an exception. Most Wisconsinites who wrote the senator over the next few months showered him with praise. David Lawson of Oshkosh spoke of his "admiration for the man who has the courage of his convictions, and whose love of truth and candor leads him to brave the sneers of disloyal ingrates."²²⁶ F.P Hopkins, a self-described Socialist from Milwaukee, wanted the senator to know that he was in his "integrity and ability, a credit to your country, your state, and to yourself," and as a fighter of autocracy, "a true friend to real socialism."²²⁷ Finally, G.E. VanderCook, also of Milwaukee, took pride in Husting's brave stand regarding the war, while so many of Wisconsin's national representatives "trucked to what they considered the voting sentiment of the state or acted as pacifists to a condition of perverted patriotism."²²⁸

To loyalist Wisconsinites, Husting with his strident pronouncements about American democracy destroying German autocracy represented the redemption and validation of Wisconsin. For members of the Wisconsin Defense League and other

²²⁵ "Documents: Some Letters of Paul O. Husting Concerning the Present Crisis," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 1, no. 4 (June 1918): 410.

²²⁶ David Lawson (Oshkosh) to POH, May 19, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 2, WHS.

²²⁷ F.P. Hopkins (Milwaukee), lawyer, to POH, June 21, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 4, WHS.

²²⁸ G.E. Vandercook (Milwaukee) to POH, July 9, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 4, WHS. Truckle means to be submissive or servile.

Wisconsin superpatriots, Husting became their national voice, one of reason, clarity, loyalty, and patriotism. He seemed to be watching out for their best interests in Washington, while they took care of loyalty issues back home. Over the next few months, Wisconsin hyperpatriots put their ideas into action, teaching other Wisconsinites what loyalty looked like and actively discouraging unpatriotic behavior. Despite their best efforts, however, prominent Wisconsinites continued to keep the question of Wisconsin's loyalty front and center, so that in the summer of 1917 its citizens heard the epithet "Traitor State" for the first time.

In the spring of 1917, Ray Stannard Baker, a muckraking journalist and supporter of President Wilson who had grown up in St. Croix Falls (Polk Co.), Wisconsin, visited his home state and discovered, to his dismay, a widespread lack of enthusiasm for the war effort. He wrote a friend that he found Wisconsin "really the most backward state I've struck in its sentiment toward the war."²²⁹ Baker did not say what he saw that led him to this conclusion, but he was not the only one to notice it. The week after America joined the war, professional and business men of Sturgeon Bay decided to organize a loyalty parade. The *Door County News* agreed that a parade could "stir up enthusiasm and the proper spirit which appears to be dormant in the city at present."²³⁰ The city's mayor Nathaniel C. Garland also hoped decorating the town with "National colors" and having a parade would "send out a message to the world that this part of Wisconsin is

²²⁹ Ray Stannard Baker to William Allen White, June 8, 1917, William Allen White (WAW) papers, Library of Congress as quoted in Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940* (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 26.

²³⁰ "A Loyalty Parade," *Door County News* (Sturgeon Bay), April 11, 1917, 1.

loyal to the core.” The day before the parade, *Door County Democrat*’s editors were concerned the city may send the exact opposite message. With American flags only flying from a handful of buildings and not “blazon[ed] from every home,” like other cities, they worried that visitors would easily question the city’s loyalty. “Old Glory should come from obscurity to light,” they demanded of the town’s citizens.²³¹ They need not have been concerned. On the day of the parade, “Old Glory greeted a gazer’s eye no matter which way he chanced to look.” In the end *Door County News*’s editors declared the event a success and thought citizens could feel proud of such a patriotic demonstration.²³² Baker may have seen this or one of the other loyalty parades and meetings held in Wisconsin during the weeks following America’s entrance into war, since he added to the same letter that he detected “strong patriotic fevers also at work” in the state.²³³

That patriotic fever Baker spoke of came from followers of Senator Husting, members of the Wisconsin Defense League, and others who had supported preparedness before the war, but were now changing their message from mobilization to patriotism and loyalty. Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots found that besides asking their fellow citizens, “Are you a patriotic American?” they also needed to define what that meant. Wisconsin historian Paul W. Glad has suggested that they defined loyalty simply as fidelity to the United States but added that the Wisconsin Defense League left terms imprecise so they could bring a wide range of people into their fold.²³⁴ If the League left

²³¹ “Sturgeon Bay Ready for Loyalty Parade,” *Door County Democrat* (Sturgeon Bay), April 13, 1917, 1.

²³² “Display Patriotism,” *Door County News*, April 18, 1917, 1.

²³³ Baker to White, June 8, 1917, WAW papers, Library of Congress.

²³⁴ Glad, 27.

definitions hazy, others then and since have grappled with what it meant to be a patriotic and loyal American during World War I.

Historian Merle Curti from the University of Wisconsin has argued that patriotism can be “defined as love of country, pride in it, and readiness to make sacrifices for what is considered its best interest.”²³⁵ What these best interests are has been a source of contention throughout American history. As beliefs and values have changed over time, American patriotism has been elastic; shaped and molded to fit needs and events as necessary. According to Curti, American patriotic thought and feeling during World War I centered around a “hatred of an external foe, the association of military power with loyalty and devotion to country, and that intensely emotional insistence on unity.”²³⁶ This form of patriotism, Curti believed, came from a growing sense of nationalism that arose during the nineteenth century. Nationalism, he suggested, had developed from the belief that “the unified nation is the highest value in civilization.”²³⁷

A nation unified in purpose and thought—President Wilson demanded nothing less from the American people. When Congress declared war on April 6, 1917, he insisted the range of opinions that had previously existed regarding America’s role in the European War (neutrality, pacifism, and preparedness) be replaced with cohesive support for America’s participation. According to World War I historian David M. Kennedy, Wilson had a number of hurdles to overcome to reach this goal of unification

²³⁵ Merle Curti, *The Roots of American Loyalty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), viii.

²³⁶ Curti, 222.

²³⁷ Curti, viii.

“given the conflicting loyalties of America’s diverse accumulation of ethnic groups, and given the wrenching departure from usual American diplomacy that entrance into a European war constituted.”²³⁸ With these realities, Wilson soon concluded that he would have to sell the war to Americans at an emotional level by promoting it as a crusade for liberal democracy in formerly autocratic countries. To this end, he hired George Creel, an advertising executive, to create the Committee of Public Information (CPI). Creel’s new agency focused on uniting Americans behind the war effort by educating them on the reasons the United States sided with the Allies in the war, while simultaneously suppressing anti-war propaganda.

Creel, Kennedy has suggested, also longed “for a unanimous spirit, for a single consensual set of values that would guarantee a social harmony.”²³⁹ He planned to reach this goal by rallying Americans around Wilson’s passionate plea to make the world safe for democracy. Creel had his work cut out for him, especially since he and his staff chose to encourage cohesive thought by promoting the United States as the saviors of England and France, while demonizing Germany and the other Central Powers. America, however, had been created from a polyglot of peoples, including those from the Central Powers, and historically had had a weak central government that had done little to control American thought or behavior in the past. This sudden shift in policy did not sit well with many Americans, so hyperpatriots around the country made it their mission to convince those reluctant to embrace Creel’s philosophy to conform to his values or be portrayed as allies of the enemy. The Wisconsin Defense League fully supported the

²³⁸ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 46.

²³⁹ Kennedy, 63.

CPI's goals and methods and spread its message of unified patriotism throughout the state, using materials provided by the federal agency.

To meet the objectives set by the CPI, League members knew they had to convince a wide swath of Wisconsinites to drop their notions of pacifism and neutrality and become active supporters of America's role in the new world war. Ellis Usher discouraged pacifism by describing pacifists as disloyal, ineffective, cowardly, and contemptible and equating them with German sympathizers. More provocatively, he saw them as dangerous, "as are all men who skulk in the bushes and shoot braver men in the back," with the potential to "hamstring the government" and "endanger...the lives of their loyal neighbors by inviting violence [apparently against themselves]."²⁴⁰ Despite Usher's concerns, most Wisconsinites who had been active pacifists before the war, solidly supported the war effort once the United States became a belligerent. Even Julia Grace Wales, the most prominent Wisconsin pacifist, embraced patriotism in the early months of the war and for the next year and a half urged other pacifists not to become "obstructionists" and "to guard themselves absolutely against any anti-war attitude."²⁴¹

Convincing Wisconsinites to drop their support of pacifism proved fairly easy, but dislodging the concept of American neutrality turned out to be a more daunting task. A majority of Wisconsin citizens had hoped the nation would remain neutral, treating the Allies and Central Power countries equally, without entangling itself in the

²⁴⁰ Ellis Usher, "Usher Scores Small Minority in Injuring State," *Eau Claire Leader*, June 17, 1917, 5.

²⁴¹ As quoted in Jack Frooman, "The Wisconsin Peace Movement, 1915-1919," 269. According to Frooman, those who continued to support the peace movement during the war derogatively described Wales and those like her as "administration pacifists." This term came up during a March 3, 1949 interview Frooman had with Miss Ann Pitman, a member of the University of Wisconsin English department, who along with her co-worker, Lelia Bascom, remained true to the concept of pacifism.

messy European War. When the country did enter the war, neutrality, according to the state's loyalists, had to be thrown aside. Guy D. Goff, an attorney who had been appointed special assistant to the U.S. Attorney General, served on the executive committee of the Wisconsin Defense League, and was known as an adept orator with "a voice of great carrying power," spent the month of April travelling throughout the state giving speeches that dismissed neutrality as a viable option during this time of crisis. At an April 27 lecture he gave at a Loyalty Mass Meeting in Sheboygan, Goff declared, "There can be no neutrals, only patriots and traitors."²⁴² A few months later, Julia Grace Wales wrote that "neutrality in this war is essentially unsound and that impartial judgment must recognize that the international right is more with one side than the other." Being a Canadian and therefore a British subject may have influenced her belief that England held the position of moral superiority.²⁴³ On May 3, 1917, the *Iowa County Democrat* published a letter written to the editor by Mineral Point surgeon and physician Dr. Allen D. Brown. In it he unequivocally stated that neutrality was an absolute impossibility when the country was at war. Loyal citizens, he continued, had to be willing to do and say things voluntarily and spontaneously that would advance the nation's cause and bring victory nearer. Only this, he believed, could be called "American loyalty."²⁴⁴

Although Glad postulated that the Wisconsin Defense League did not define patriotism, a number of the state's hyperpatriots, such as Dr. Brown, did make an effort

²⁴² *Wisconsin Defense League* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin Defense League, probably June 1917), 14.

²⁴³ Julia Grace Wales to Louis P. Lochner, October 31, 1917, Julia Grace Wales papers, WHS, as quoted in Froeman, 268.

²⁴⁴ Allen D. Brown, "Loyalty or Disloyalty?" *Iowa County Democrat* (Mineral Point), May 3, 1917, 4.

to define loyalty and disloyalty. Of all the voices in Wisconsin, the *Milwaukee Journal* with the support of its owner/editor Lucius Nieman worked hardest at encouraging loyalty and unified thought, while concurrently vilifying disloyalty. Nieman had become alarmed by the pro-German sentiment of some of his newspaper's competitors as early as February 1916, the month the *Milwaukee Journal* began its "Campaign for Americanism" in an attempt to inspire patriotic feelings within all the city's citizens and to counteract any negative publicity that challenged Milwaukee's patriotism. An example appeared in an April 16, 1917 editorial, in which the paper reminded its readers that "This war is a war of the whole nation...It is a war to which we are all committed, waged for the safety of us all. Every man who would be a true citizen and not a parasite will find his place and his service."²⁴⁵ The *Journal* continued in this vein throughout the war; actively supporting patriotism and loyalty and denouncing actions the editors deemed disloyal.

The question soon became how could one tell a true citizen from the disloyal, traitorous parasite? Definitions of the latter abounded. Dr. Brown defined disloyalty as actions that "hamper your country in any manner" or statements "calculated to discourage enlistments or that might inflame intemperate ones to act." Goff defined him as "the man who does not regard the land of his birth or adoption with reverence and [who does not] inwardly feel that it is the holiest and the dearest spot on earth, when its honor is assailed and its soil threatened with invasion."²⁴⁶ To be a traitor meant being disloyal to a country that, according to Goff in a later speech, "has secured a higher

²⁴⁵ "To Every Man & Woman," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 16, 1917, 8.

²⁴⁶ Brown, *Iowa County Democrat*, 4.

degree of happiness to a greater number of people for a longer period of time” than any other form of government ever created.²⁴⁷ To be disloyal, according to the superpatriots, meant being a danger to the nation and its citizens. The *Racine Journal*, for example, described disloyal words as acts of personal hostility that exposed their neighbors to “rapine and slaughter,” supposedly by the German army!²⁴⁸

Wisconsin’s governor Emanuel Philipp did not get caught up in the patriotic hyperbole that flourished in the weeks around the time war was declared. He had been a supporter of neutrality, but with the war a reality, he turned his actions toward systematically setting up a state infrastructure to handle the extra war demands. Within a week of April 6, Philipp and the legislature passed legislation establishing the Wisconsin Council of Defense, which was modeled on and expected to coordinate with the National Council of Defense. The state Council’s many responsibilities focused on meeting draft quotas, allocating labor appropriately, and avoiding food and fuel crises. Philipp appointed eleven men to serve on the council with Magnus Swenson as its leader. To the dismay of the Wisconsin Defense League leaders, not only did the name of the new council sound confusingly like their own organization, but none of the council members came from their own ranks.

Throughout the war, Philipp was wary of the hyperpatriotic rhetoric and, consequently, refused to let those who spouted it dominate or even coordinate with the Council and its members. His view of patriotism did not align with their good or evil approach. In a speech much later in the war, Philipp defined his concept of patriotism as

²⁴⁷ *Wisconsin Defense League*, 14.

²⁴⁸ “It is Your Battle,” *Racine Journal*, April 10, 1917, 4.

a personal responsibility and added “that one patriot is as good as another.” He went on to declare, “I will not use my office to break down the people’s constitutional rights, nor give way to the demands of those who would wish to abuse citizens of foreign birth or extraction, even though they be loyal Americans.”²⁴⁹

Senator Robert La Follette and prominent Socialist Victor Berger, the primary targets of hyperpatriotic rhetoric in Wisconsin, did not show much interest in defining patriotism or loyalty. When speaking of what it meant to be American, they focused instead on civil rights, especially freedom of speech. To them the allowance and performance of the latter was what made an American an American. Just as the United States declared war on Germany, this right, among others, came under attack, as the overwhelming need for a unified American voice meant that freedom of speech had to be repressed. While Wilson and Congress worked on a bill that intended to control Americans’ ability to speak out against the war, La Follette and Berger responded by denouncing it as a violation of civil rights. The bill, which passed on June 15, 1917 as the Espionage Act punished those who interfered with the military, especially the draft, or sent treasonous materials through the mail with sentences up to twenty years or fines of \$10,000. The original version of the act also included a measure censoring the press, but after newspaper editors from around the country vehemently protested the measure’s inclusion, Congress dropped it from the bill.

Both La Follette and Berger saw the passage of the Espionage Act as unconstitutional and un-American. Shortly after its enactment, La Follette noted the

²⁴⁹ Excerpted from speech by Governor Emanuel L. Philipp, Marshall, Wisconsin, June 27, 1918, ELP papers, WHS.

irony that “Under a pretext of carrying democracy to the rest of the world, we have done more to undermine and destroy democracy in the United States than it will be possible for us as a nation to repair in a generation of time.”²⁵⁰ Berger made a similar statement in a letter to the *Chicago Examiner* where he wrote, “The man who would suppress free speech and who advocates press censorship is the most dangerous foe of this country because under the pretext of extending democracy in Europe, he is willing to abolish democracy at home.”²⁵¹ To them, those who would suppress free speech and possibly muzzle the press were the true unpatriotic traitors.

Berger would experience that muzzling soon enough, but his first taste of repression came on May 23, 1917. On that date, US Secretary of State Robert Lansing refused to issue him and two other Socialists passports so they could attend a peace conference in Stockholm. An international group of Social Democrats had chosen this city, located in a neutral country, to hold a peace conference, where Socialists from all the belligerent nations could form a plan that would help end the war. Government officials from the Allied countries frowned on this informal diplomacy and saw it as a form of meddling. As a result, almost all of them, including those in the United States, denied passports to the delegates from their countries. Lansing cited the Logan Act of 1799, which prohibited unauthorized persons from working with foreign agents on controversies that involved the United States, to keep Berger and his compatriots away from Stockholm. A few days after receiving the news, Berger went to Washington to

²⁵⁰ Robert M. La Follette, Congressional Record 55, pt. 2: 1355 as quoted in Nancy C. Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2008), 252-253.

²⁵¹ Telegram from Victor Berger to *Chicago Examiner*, May 6, 1917, Socialist Party Collection, Milwaukee County Historical Society as quoted in Kevin J. Abing, *A Crowded Hour: Milwaukee during the Great War, 1917-1918*, (Arcadia Publishing, 2017), 75.

plead his case to Lansing, without success. Afterward, he stated to the press, “I am a good American and a good socialist also,” and would, therefore, not attempt to find another way to go to Stockholm. The three-year imprisonment and \$5,000 fine imposed by the Logan Act may have deterred him as well. In the end, the Stockholm peace conference was never held.²⁵²

Berger had already experienced some negative publicity about his role at the Socialist convention in St. Louis, but this experience brought him even more attention. The news of Lansing’s rejection of Berger’s request for a passport made its way into the national press, which generally chided and derided the *Milwaukee Leader* editor for his purportedly unreasonable request. The *Olympia Daily Recorder (Washington)*, for example, spoke of Lansing’s decision with approval remarking that the three delegates denied passports, including Berger, who they described as being “accidentally elected to congress by Milwaukee Germans a few years ago,” were “known to be so pro-German that they are nearly anti-American.” The *Daily Recorder* editor went on to question the loyalty of American Socialists and asked its readers to distinguish between the “ravings” of the pro-German Berger and “the true socialist.”²⁵³ Closer to home, the *Eau Claire Leader* referenced those “true socialists” in an article on the conference (an attempt at

²⁵² In a May 27, 1917, letter to his wife Meta Berger, Victor Berger described Lansing as “an ignorant and conceited country lawyer” and as “a cheap little fourth rate corporation lawyer who happened to marry the daughter of a former secretary of state.” He also expressed little hope of being able to overturn Lansing’s decision. Quoted in Michael E. Stevens, ed., *The Family Letters of Victor and Meta Berger* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 210.

²⁵³ “Keeping the Troublemakers Home, *Olympia Daily Recorder* (Washington), May 25, 1917, 2.

peace propaganda by European socialists), when it noted that other, anti-German socialists saw the conference as the “Kaiser’s Creation.”²⁵⁴

This type of rhetoric became more common as efforts to silence those who questioned America’s interference in the Great War increased. Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots, like others around the country, used President Wilson’s words from his April 2 war message that any disloyalty would “be dealt with a firm hand or stern repression” to justify their actions.²⁵⁵ In the early weeks of the war, most of this stern repression came from government officials. On April 19, the United States Secret Service bureau in Milwaukee announced it had a complete list of Waukesha citizens who had been heard to give expression to seditious and disloyal statements and warned that their words could lead to arrest and imprisonment. The bureau also mentioned that it had appointed an unnamed local citizen to report any cases that required attention.²⁵⁶ A few days earlier, the Kenosha School District forced Clarence Dodson, a high school junior, to apologize for making statements disloyal to the United States government before a school assembly. District officials took this action when a significant number of his five hundred schoolmates refused to attend class with him. Besides making an abject apology, according to the local paper, Dodson also waved an American flag and led the school body in singing the “Star Spangled Banner.”²⁵⁷

Almost from the beginning, government officials encouraged Wisconsinites to share information about their potentially traitorous neighbors. By April 10, Dr. Herman

²⁵⁴ “Berger Group is Warned by Sec’y Lansing; No Passports; Conference Viewed Kaiser’s Creation,” *Eau Claire Leader*, May 24, 1917, 1.

²⁵⁵ As quoted in “Threatening America from Within,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 13, 1917, 1.

²⁵⁶ “Warning Issued Against Disloyal Expressions,” *Waukesha Freeman*, April 19, 1917, 4.

²⁵⁷ “Boy Apologizes for Disloyal Statement,” *Racine Journal-News*, April 13, 1917, 10.

F. Prill of Augusta (Eau Claire Co.), Wisconsin, had received a letter from the U.S. Attorney General asking him in his role as a pension examiner “to be on the lookout and report any disloyal and treasonable acts and utterances.” Uncomfortable with this request, Prill wrote his congressman, John J. Esch, with his concerns. Although Esch had voted against America’s entrance into the war, a week after Congress’s decision to become a belligerent he had already embraced Wilson’s message that every American must be completely loyal. In response to Prill, Esch wrote, “Our people should refrain from criticism of the government and of Congress, or individual Members thereof” and asked Prill to remember “that we are all American citizens who are loyal to our government.” In the end, he suggested Prill write directly to the Attorney General about his unease with the request.²⁵⁸ Bella Fox of Kaukauna (Outagamie Co.) did not have the same reservations as Prill. On April 23, she wrote Senator Husting to let him know that she heard from a stage coach driver, who was a young woman and former school teacher, that Charles H. Koonz, clerk of the school board in Red Springs, “was a traitor of the deepest dye and did not hesitate to make traitorous remarks about this country.” Miss Fox, exasperated by the driver’s fear of reporting him because of his position in the community, asked Husting to send out a secret service man and catch Koonz in the act.²⁵⁹

Although government agencies, such as the secret service and the U.S. Attorney General’s office, began by asking Wisconsinites to assist them in identifying treasonous

²⁵⁸ John J. Esch to Dr. H.F. Prill, a physician, April 13, 1917, JJE papers, Box 41, WHS.

²⁵⁹ Bella Fox (Kaukauna) to POH, April 23, 1917, POH papers, Box 11, folder 2, WHS. Charles H. Koonz (1867-1957) was a co-founder of Red Springs Township in Shawano County in 1911. He worked as a school teacher on the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation and created the first one-room school in Red Springs, also in 1911. By 1920 he had become a farmer.

behavior in others, they soon discovered the consequences of this request. In its May 3, 1917 edition, the *Sturgeon Bay Advocate* reported that a local “busybody” had been reporting names of “disloyal” Germans in the city to the district attorney. The harassed gentlemen resented this “humiliating, irritating, and commiserating annoyance” and threatened to sue for libel. The *Advocate* felt it necessary to remind its readers that the Espionage Act, under consideration by Congress, did not support unjust prosecution and instead focused on plots, intrigues or acts of violence against the government or language that could incite violence.²⁶⁰

Despite warnings like this one from the *Advocate*, Wisconsin was rife with busybodies eager to search out and persecute traitorous and treasonous behavior. The *Milwaukee Journal* easily surpassed all others in this effort. From the beginning of the war, its mission focused on identifying and reporting traitorous and treasonous behavior and language. The National German-American Alliance became one of its first targets. Although the newspaper frequently spoke with pride of the obvious loyalty Milwaukee’s German-American citizens displayed, it believed the Alliance had a long record “of flagrant and continuous disloyalty to the nation.”²⁶¹ The German-American Alliance had been founded as a national federation for all German-American organizations in 1901 and received a national charter from Congress in 1907. Its purpose, according to its constitution, included bringing together American citizens of German descent “for the protection of the German element against ‘nativistic’ attacks and for the promotion of sound, amicable relations between America and the old

²⁶⁰ “Unjust Charges,” *Sturgeon Bay Advocate*, May 3, 1917, 1.

²⁶¹ “Revoke Its Charter,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 10, 1917, 12.

German fatherland.”²⁶² The founders considered prohibition, women’s suffrage, and immigration restrictions among the most concerning of these “attacks.”

As the war in Europe got underway, members of the Alliance spoke out against British imperialism, while also stressing the importance of maintaining German culture in the United States. On November 22, 1915, Charles J. Hexamer of Milwaukee, president of the German-American Alliance, declared, “We will not permit our *kultur* of two thousand years to be trodden down in this land...No one will find us prepared to step down to a lesser *Kultur*; no, we have made it our aim to draw the other up to us.”²⁶³ With statements like this, by 1917, according to German-American historian Frederick C. Luebke, the German-American Alliance “had come to symbolize for the American people all that was arrogant and distasteful about German ethnocentrism.”²⁶⁴ The *Milwaukee Journal* completely concurred, describing the organization as “the foe of America” and its leaders, like Hexamer, as “a menace to the United States.” It urged Congress to revoke the Alliance’s charter and eliminate this scourge from American society.²⁶⁵ The Alliance eventually succumbed to the pressure and disbanded in April 1918. Three months later, Congress, after holding hearings on the matter, repealed the charter of the now non-existent organization.

²⁶² From Max Heinrici, ed. *Das Buch der Deutschen in Amerika* (Philadelphia: National German-American Alliance, 1909), 781-782 as quoted in *The German-Americans in Politics 1914-1917* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1939), 3.

²⁶³ From Senate Sub-committee of the Committee on Judiciary, *Hearings on the National German-American Alliance*, 65 Congress, 2 Session (1918), 25-27 as quoted in Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I*, (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 100. In the same hearings, Alliance leaders maintained that their support of German-Americanism meant no more than upholding the virtues of German civilization, including “knowledge, science, invention, philosophy, and art.” During the war years, these types of statements did not sit well with Americans who did not have a German heritage.

²⁶⁴ Luebke, 43.

²⁶⁵ “Revoke Its Charter,” 12.

The German-American Alliance may have been an early and easy target, but the *Milwaukee Journal* spent much of 1917 going after what it perceived to be widespread disloyalty and un-American behavior throughout the Milwaukee school system. Early inklings of a problem appeared in an article on the front page of the May 15, 1917 issue. The *Journal* reported, first, that Assistant Superintendent of Schools A.E. Kagel had accused teachers of the Forest Home Avenue School of gossiping when they learned a German teacher in the school had made a derogatory remark about the flag, and second, that talk regarding the unpatriotic statement incident reached the ears of staff at the department of justice. Soon after, federal agents descended on the school asking questions. The leading agent reported that the accused teacher denied making any comments regarding her willingness to salute the flag. In the end, the agents decided to drop the matter. The *Journal* still questioned school officials handling of the case and quoted one of the “gossiping” teachers, who said, “Fathers and mothers of this city have a right to know whether their children are having American or alien ideas instilled in their minds.”²⁶⁶ The *Journal* staff took her concern seriously, especially when only nine days later another teacher allegedly said something even more incendiary.

In a May 24 editorial, *Journal* staff warned its readers of “Danger in the Schools.” According to the editors, this danger resulted from Milwaukee schoolteachers failing “to inculcate in their pupils respect for law and love of country”. To them, one Milwaukee teacher, later identified as Mrs. Sonia Sasuly, represented the worst of these offenders. Allegedly, she had declared that if anybody decided to blow up Allis-Chalmers, Milwaukee’s largest manufacturing plant and a maker of munitions and war materiel,

²⁶⁶ “Enjoins Silence on Teachers,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 15, 1917, 1.

“she would not censure them.” The *Journal* could not see how a person so unfit to teach patriotism or respect for the law could remain in her position. “This teacher,” they concluded, “should be summarily dismissed from service.”²⁶⁷ The next day the newspaper reported that despite her traitorous remark, the principal at her school had recommended Mrs. Sasuly for reappointment.²⁶⁸ The Milwaukee School Superintendent, however, disagreed and did not recommend her. The matter eventually came before the Milwaukee School Board, which would have the final say in the matter, on June 30. The day before, *Journal* editors worried about the school board’s ability to do the right thing, since five of its fifteen members were Socialists and included Meta Berger, wife of Victor Berger. “How will the Socialists on the Milwaukee school board vote on this question that touches the loyalty and patriotism of Milwaukee?”²⁶⁹ They were right to be concerned, since the Socialists on the board did elect to reinstate her; however, the majority, who agreed retaining her would be “detrimental to the best interests of the schools and the school children,” outvoted them.²⁷⁰ For Milwaukee’s hyperpatriots, Mrs. Sasuly’s transgression turned out to be a minor incident in the battle for the minds of the city’s schoolchildren.

²⁶⁷ “Danger in the Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 24, 1917, 10.

²⁶⁸ “Names Teacher to Stay On,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 25, 1917, 1.

²⁶⁹ “Loyal Milwaukeean, Here is Something that Will Make You Stop, Look and Listen,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 29, 1917, 1.

²⁷⁰ “Teacher is not Reappointed,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 1, 1917, part 2, 1.

Sonia (Kassmer) Sasuly Lattman (b.c. 1889) was born in Kiev, Russia and came to the United States as a 3-year-old child. In 1913 she married Max Sasuly (1888-1971), a statistician and mathematician, in Chicago. Shortly after being dismissed as a teacher, the Sasulys and their two sons moved from Milwaukee to Washington, DC, where Max worked at the Bureau of Standards. Sonia graduated from National University Law School in 1928 and became a lawyer with her own practice and later a social worker. Max and Sonia divorced and in 1937 she married radiologist Isidore Lattman (1894-1971).

The primary concern of the *Milwaukee Journal* and the Wisconsin Defense League regarding the Milwaukee school system centered on the teaching of German, especially to elementary school students. On one hand was Milwaukee's assistant superintendent in charge of foreign languages, Leo Stern, who was also president of the German-American Alliance's Wisconsin branch. The *Journal* protested his position by stating, "his racial [ethnic] political activities alone disqualify him from rendering the right kinds of service in the schools." Milwaukee's schools, they added, needed to be safeguarded from his "un-American interference."²⁷¹ On the other hand, was the recommendation of the Milwaukee School Principals' Association, who suggested dropping the teaching of German in grades 1-4 and replacing it with "more intensive work in the language of America." Their concern centered around the confusion learning a foreign language would cause children, while others argued that eliminating foreign languages from the school system would help with Americanization of Milwaukee's immigrant population.²⁷²

To the *Journal's* great dismay, the Milwaukee School Board had no interest in dismissing Stern. In late June the newspapers editors attempted to bring Stern's transgressions to light. They railed against the Board's inability to root out un-Americanism and anti-Americanism in the public schools. Stern's dismissal would be a start, since his ideas about teaching German seemed anathema to the war effort. In 1914, Stern had sought to strengthen the teaching of German and to support institutions where German teachers trained in an attempt to "foster German idealism and inculcate

²⁷¹ "Danger in the Schools."

²⁷² Abing, 66.

it in the minds and hearts of their students.” Instead of dismissing Stern for such pronouncements, the *Journal* reported, the School Board actually raised his salary in 1916.²⁷³

Leo Stern did partially acquiesce to demands about removing German from the school system and suggested that the Board eliminate the teaching of German from the two lower grades, which it agreed to do. The *Journal* editors were apoplectic. With American blood being poured out on the soil of France so that German ideas would not “dominate all mankind,” with American manhood arrayed on the battlefields of Europe against the “German idea,” the Milwaukee School Board only eliminated German in first and second grade. Do they not know there will be a day of reckoning for this laxity? Do they not know “that this is America”? The problem, they later clarified, was not with the German language per se, since they recognized the “intellectual and spiritual wealth” in German literature; it was with the teachers.²⁷⁴ Quoting an unnamed Milwaukee citizen, they alerted their readers to the reality that “teachers of German are generally propagandists who are eternally pushing the interests of a foreign country and deriding the principles of America.” By continuing to teach German, the Milwaukee School Board aided and abetted those who supported the existence of a “German Kultur-politik” in the United States.²⁷⁵ Another anonymous writer of a letter to the *Journal* editor summed up the issue at hand:

One thing is certain, we do not want kaiserism to reign in this country, and the sooner we eliminate the study of all the foreign languages from all the grades, the better. Teach the English language only, and teach it

²⁷³ “While Loyal Men Sleep!” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 27, 1917, 10.

²⁷⁴ “What Shall It Be?” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 28, 1917, 14.

²⁷⁵ “Aim is to Keep Germans Alien,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 30, 1917, 2.

thoroughly. Let the teachers give all the time allowed for teaching foreign languages to improve the children's handwriting, figures, reading and speaking.²⁷⁶

This attack on the teaching of German meant that seven thousand fewer elementary students studied the language in the fall of 1917 than had in the spring. In October the School Board adopted a proposal that put the final nail in the coffin of German language studies in Milwaukee, when it agreed that only one foreign language would be taught at each school and if less than half the students in the school enrolled in those classes, the courses would be discontinued. Milwaukee's school superintendent also asked that teachers stop speaking in German on playgrounds and that all German "war" songs be removed from songbooks. By the spring of 1919 only four hundred Milwaukee schoolchildren chose to enroll in German language classes.²⁷⁷

Throughout the spring and summer of 1917, Wisconsin hyperpatriots made every effort to combat the idea that Wisconsin was filled with disloyal citizens. First, they attempted, primarily through the offices of the Wisconsin Defense League, to educate Wisconsinites about the meaning of patriotism and loyalty during wartime and to promote a patriotic attitude toward the war effort. At the same time League members and others began suppressing perceived disloyalty, primarily with words and threats, not actual violence. Despite these efforts, Wisconsin continued to stumble in the eyes of other Americans and reports of the state's deep problems with patriotism still haunted the state's superpatriots.

²⁷⁶ "Thoughts of Our Readers," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 1, 1917, part 2, 4.

²⁷⁷ Abing, 67-68.

The next embarrassment came in the middle of June 1917, when the state learned it fell \$10 million short of its quota for the First Liberty Bond drive. The *Milwaukee Journal* acknowledged the issue within days of the drive's conclusion in an editorial that scolded those bankers who had been reluctant to sell bonds or were "distinctly hostile" to the idea. Bankers who had not met their quota argued that they did not feel comfortable asking patrons of German descent to purchase bonds. The *Journal* responded by questioning their patriotism and intelligence, "The man...who has been made to believe that he must go cautiously in standing by America's cause in this war has been fooled."²⁷⁸ Ten days later, J.R. Wheeler, president of the Wisconsin Bankers' Association, used much harsher language in a speech at a bankers' convention, suggesting those who been afraid to sell bonds "were guilty of cowardice bordering on treason." He continued, "The excuse offered that those institutions were in communities where a majority of the people were not in sympathy with the war is no excuse at all." Wheeler concluded that "many banks did not understand their duty" despite receiving materials educating them about the bond drive and suggested, "too much printed matter goes into the waste basket" before the valuable had been sorted from the worthless.²⁷⁹

Most Wisconsinites, not just the state's bankers, did not grasp the value, meaning, and purpose of the Liberty Bonds during this first drive. Before World War I very few Americans had ever purchased bonds of any kind and most had no idea how they worked. Several government agencies, but especially the Committee on Public

²⁷⁸ "The Banks and the Loan," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 17, 1917, 4.

²⁷⁹ "Banks Border on Treason," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 27, 1917, 1.

Information, sought to educate the public about bonds through a variety of mass media. From this effort, Americans learned that they were lending the United States money and would receive interest on the bonds between 3.5 and 4.5 percent every six months. Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo deliberately set the interest rate below going rates at the time, since he believed the purchasing of them should be more a patriotic duty than a money-making proposition for the buyer. Unlike World War II when bonds were always available, during World War I there would be five bond drives held at specific times and usually lasting three to four weeks. Four of the drives occurred during the war, two in 1917 and two in 1918, and a fifth, the Victory Liberty Loan, was held approximately six months after the war ended in 1919. Each of the five bond drives was oversubscribed (i.e. more bonds were purchased than were offered), but not every state met its subscription quota for each drive.

Liberty Bonds had been the brainchild of McAdoo, who devised a plan to use them in the first weeks of April 1917. McAdoo chose selling stamps and bonds to raise funds for the war effort over taxation after reviewing how the United States had raised money in previous wars. He had been particularly struck by Civil War-era Treasury Secretary Samuel Chase's failure to make a direct appeal to the public. Learning from this gaffe, McAdoo created his own philosophy: "Any great war must necessarily be a popular movement. It is a kind of a crusade, and, like all crusades, it sweeps along on a

powerful stream of romanticism. Chase did not attempt to capitalize the emotion of the people.”²⁸⁰

McAdoo would not make the same mistake and, from the beginning, decided to use patriotic emotion to fill the Treasury’s coffers. As he wrote years later, “We capitalized the profound impulse called patriotism. It is the quality of coherence that holds a nation together; it is one of the deepest and most powerful of human motives.”²⁸¹ In the end, the Liberty Bond drives proved to be enormously successful. This achievement could not have occurred without the efforts of hyperpatriots around the country, including those who were members of the Wisconsin Defense League and county Councils of Defense.

At first McAdoo had planned to enthusiastically market the Liberty Bonds to the general public, hoping to cut inflation by asking Americans to use their savings and non-subsistence money to buy them, thereby cutting back on demand for consumer products. But at the last minute he changed his mind. He feared the public would not purchase enough bonds and decided to focus on bank borrowing instead. During the first drive, banks did not appear interested in bonds offered at 3.5 percent. This surprised McAdoo because he had tried to make them attractive in other ways, including having them be tax exempt, allowing them to be purchased on an installment plan with only 2 percent required at purchase, and making them convertible into future issues with higher interest rates. With a week left in the first bond drive, McAdoo feared that

²⁸⁰ From William G. McAdoo, *Crowded Years: The Reminiscences of William G. McAdoo* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931) as quoted in Charles Gilbert, *American Financing of World War I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corp., 1970), 82.

²⁸¹ From McAdoo as quoted in *Walton H. Rawls, Wake Up, America! World War I and the American Poster* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), 196.

the basic need of \$2 billion would not be raised, but then banks and businesses around the country made an extra effort to make money available to their stockholders, so they could buy bonds. By June 15, when the bond drive ended, over \$3 billion had been raised with the Treasury accepting its original offering of \$2 billion (Subscribers who had purchased over \$10,000 worth of bonds were asked to cut back their subscriptions.).

In Wisconsin the state Council of Defense, headed by Magnus Swenson, assumed responsibility for the Liberty Loan drives, although patriotic organizations like the Wisconsin Defense League also encouraged the purchasing of Liberty Bonds. Shortly after the First Liberty Bond drive began on May 14, Swenson experienced push-back from bankers not eager to invest in a low-interest product or, as mentioned above, unwilling to promote them in communities with large German populations. News of this hesitation made the front page of *Forward*, a state government publication. In response, F.R. Hughes, secretary to a Chippewa Falls businessmen's association, wrote to the Council, "I was almost ashamed to read it; and then to think that these banks were from Wisconsin, the greatest state in the Union." He added, "For Heaven's Sake, send some of these slackers up here till we show them what real bankers do for their country."²⁸² Swenson was not pleased with these alleged "slackers" either and his office sent out a flurry of threatening letters to bankers around the state. On May 23, 1917, for example, Swenson wrote Louis Schriber, cashier for the Old National Bank in Oshkosh, that he had heard banks in Schriber's city had "taken concerted actions discouraging the

²⁸² F.R. Hughes (Chippewa Falls) to Magnus Swenson, undated, but received on June 12, 1917, Council of Defense (COD) papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

buying of the Government Liberty Bonds. We should like to know what the facts are before we call the attention of the Federal authorities to this matter.” Mr. Schriber responded that he was shocked to read the contents of Swenson’s letter and the Council could be assured that the Oshkosh banks were “doing all they can to further the sale of these bonds.”²⁸³

When the Council of Defense spoke of “Federal authorities,” they were referring to the Federal Reserve Bank. The Treasury had divided the country into twelve districts, and Wisconsin was split between two of them. Forty-five southern counties fell into the Seventh District with headquarters in Chicago; the remaining twenty-six northern counties belonged to the Ninth District with headquarters in Minneapolis. Oshkosh fell into the Seventh District, so its banks would have been reported to the Federal Reserve in Chicago.

Not all bankers sent letters by Swenson responded as reassuringly as Mr. Schriber. Shortly before the second loan began, Swenson sent the Chili State Bank of Chili (Clark Co.) a letter telling them the Council’s records did not show the bank subscribing to any bonds during the first loan and wondered if they made a mistake. Mr. Sawyer, the Chili Bank cashier, returned the letter with a harsh annotated note, “Is this all B.S.? or doesn’t [the] Fed. Reserve Bank of [Chicago] keep any records?” Henry Burd, assistant secretary of Wisconsin’s Council, responded, “The annotation you made on our

²⁸³ State Council of Defense Chairman [Magnus Swenson] to Louis Scheiber [sic] (Oshkosh), May 23, 1917; Louis Schriber to Magnus Swenson, May 24, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

letter...is interesting but not very illuminating.” Eventually the Council learned that the Chili State Bank had purchased \$1500 in bonds.²⁸⁴

While the Council of Defense went after bankers to buy Liberty Bonds, volunteer organizations put pressure on their members to do so as well. Mary Mariner, chairman of the National League for Woman’s Service in Wisconsin (NLWS) and the League of Patriotic Women of Milwaukee, for example, wrote a letter announcing that the NLWS Board had decided “it was our patriotic duty to do all in our power to assist in the sale of Liberty Bonds” and asked each member to pledge selling two \$50 bonds by the first loan’s closing date on June 15, 1917. Mariner reminded her readers, “Without the Liberty Loan, the Government cannot prosecute this war for freedom, democracy and liberty. Without it there can be no overwhelming victory, no speedy termination of carnage and destruction.” She concluded by stating, “We cannot talk patriotism and do nothing more.”²⁸⁵

Around the same time, Wheeler Bloodgood, as chairman of the Wisconsin Defense League, sent out a letter to League members urging them to form “Liberty Loan Clubs” in the schools, factories, churches, fraternal societies and other “natural social units” in their communities. These clubs would encourage those enrolled to save pre-specified sums, which would eventually be invested in the Liberty Loan. Local bankers would work with these clubs to help finance the purchase of the bonds. Bloodgood began his request by noting that “lending to liberty is planting freedom our children will

²⁸⁴ Andrew H. Melville, Executive Secretary, State Council of Defense to Chili State Bank, September 10, 1917; received back on September 14, 1917; Henry A. Burd, Assistant Secretary, State COD, to Chili State Bank, September 14, 1917; received back on September 18, 1917; COD papers, Box 20, folder 2, WHS.

²⁸⁵ Mary A. Mariner (Milwaukee) to “Madam,” June 7, 1917, John W. And Mary Mariner papers, Box 9, folder 1, WHS.

reap,” but to not do so will “give aid and comfort to the enemy.”²⁸⁶ Although not a club, Wisconsin State Capitol employees did have a Liberty Loan committee, which intended to secure a hundred per cent subscription rate among those working at the State Capitol. Its chairman sent a letter two days before the loan closed reminding Capitol employees that buying bonds was their patriotic duty. He also, as added pressure to those he believed slacking in this duty, attached a list of employees who had subscribed with the amounts they had pledged.²⁸⁷

Despite all these efforts, combined with the Federal Reserve Bank sending forty agents to Wisconsin where they encouraged state banks to participate and generally promoted the sale of Liberty Bonds,²⁸⁸ Wisconsin found itself \$10 million short of its quota. The Treasury Department had expected Wisconsin to raise \$44.1 million, but the state only cleared \$34.3 million. Of the forty-five Wisconsin counties in the Seventh District, three made or surpassed their quotas (Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine), while two (Adams and Waushara) raised less than 10 percent of their allotment. Taken together Wisconsin’s Seventh District raised 77.8 percent of its quota.²⁸⁹ The twenty-six counties in the Ninth District did much worse. Although three counties went over 100 percent (Ashland, Lincoln, and Oneida), overall the district raised a pitiful 42 percent of

²⁸⁶ Wheeler P. Bloodgood (Milwaukee) to Wisconsin Defense League members, undated, but predates June 15, 1917, letter titled: “Lending to Liberty,” Wisconsin Defense League (WDL) papers, Box 2, folder 4.

²⁸⁷ Committee on Liberty Loan, M.J. Tappins, Chairman to Wisconsin Capitol employees, June 13, 1917, Merlin Hull (MH) papers, Box 8, WHS.

²⁸⁸ Form letter from State Council of Defense signed by J.R. Wheeler (also president of Wisconsin Bankers’ Association) to local Council of Defense organizations, undated, but refers to the first drive; COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

²⁸⁹ Attachment to letter, Martin Gillen, Mitchell Wagon Co. (Racine) to Morris F. Fox, Fox Investment Co. (Milwaukee), November 15, 1917; COD papers, Box 20, folder 2, WHS.

its quota.²⁹⁰ The state's Liberty Loan performance worried Wisconsin's hyperpatriots, but at the time, this deficiency was not an acute concern because the general public was only mildly aware of the loan and other states had also not met their quota. Still it was another stain on Wisconsin's reputation.

While Wisconsin may have come up short in the first Liberty Loan drive, the state, to the surprise of many, did go "over the top" with draft registration. In the first weeks of April, Governor Philipp had asked President Wilson to support a volunteer army in order to avoid a draft, bringing more derision to the state, as mentioned in chapter two. Wilson, who did not believe enough men could be raised through volunteering, dismissed Philipp's request and turned the matter of drafting an army over to his Secretary of War Newton Baker. Baker avoided his Civil War predecessor's mistakes, some of which had led to draft riots around the United States, including a handful in Wisconsin, by using local civilian boards to run the draft, instead of autocratic army personnel, and instituted a Selective Service system that allowed deferments for those needed to grow food and manufacture war materiel. The whole process was to begin with a national draft registration drive on June 5, 1917. As with the Liberty Loan drive, each state had a quota of eligible men to register. With its reputation for disloyalty already established, Wisconsin was not expected to succeed in this endeavor. Senator Husting suggested that Philipp's "pro-German," anti-draft rhetoric, possibly along with Wisconsin's outspoken German and Socialist populations and La Follette's opposition to the draft, would lead to protests. General Enoch Crowder,

²⁹⁰ Ninth District returns for the 1st and 2nd loan drives, dated November 7, [1917], COD papers, Box 20, folder 2, WHS.

provost marshal of the army and administer of the Selective Service, another doubter, offered Philipp use of federal troops to prevent these expected riots. Philipp politely declined. In the end, the day passed successfully with the state registering 218,700 men or 106 percent of the estimated men thought to be eligible!²⁹¹

Yet the national press reported just the opposite and Wisconsin's reputation continued to be assailed. The *Louisville Courier-Journal* may have been the instigator of this misinformation when it announced, "Wisconsin is sending fewer recruits to the American army than any other Middle West State." The newspaper's editor Colonel Henry Watterson, mis-reported that Wisconsin had registered 29 percent to Illinois's 110 percent and Michigan's 107 percent. He went on to note that the *Chicago Journal*, "disgusted with the conditions in Wisconsin," believed the state's low recruiting numbers were the result "of the seditious propaganda that has prevailed within her boundaries, not merely unchecked but countenanced and led by her most conspicuous politicians," specifically Senator La Follette. However, Watterson did not want to suggest that Wisconsin's attitude could be blamed on one individual. Instead, he argued, "a considerable part of its population [had] proved treasonable under the acid test of war with Germany." Those who did not fall into this traitorous rubric, Watterson believed, would soon lead "an exodus of decent Americans" from Wisconsin. With so many of the state's citizens supposedly failing the nation in so many ways, Watterson

²⁹¹ Pifer, 80-83, 202-203.

felt obliged to ask if Wisconsin will from now on and forever be known as the “Traitor State.”²⁹²

Wisconsin’s loyalists did not take Watterson’s attack lightly or complacently. His embarrassing question tightened their resolve to control the words and actions of those they perceived to be disloyal to the United States, the President, and the war effort in general. The *Milwaukee Journal* spoke for many of Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots in their response to Watterson’s challenge when they wrote, “The loyalty of Wisconsin is a patent fact” and referred its readers to a letter Governor Philipp had sent to Watterson correcting his misrepresentation of Wisconsin’s enlistment efforts, an error Watterson quickly acknowledged and corrected, and listing all the ways the state had shown its loyalty to the nation. To the *Journal*’s editors, the governor’s message did not go far enough in its defense of the state, nor did it address how the state would purge this traitorous stigma from its reputation. The newspaper’s editors suggested “the way to attack...criticism is not to defend loyal citizens who need no defense, but to condemn the course of those who have brought this criticism on them and to oppose them.” Philipp knew, they argued, that disloyalty in Wisconsin existed and all of his efforts should be directed toward fighting it and ending it. “For the sake of the state’s fair name,” they cried, “it should be crushed.”²⁹³

²⁹² “The Traitor State,” *Louisville Courier-Journal* as published in the *Princeton Daily Democrat* (Indiana), July 17, 1917, 2.

²⁹³ “The Kind of Defense,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 26, 1917, 10. Watterson’s acknowledgement that he misrepresented Wisconsin’s enlistment numbers appeared in “What Gov. Philipp Could Do,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 2, 1917, 8.

Over the next week, the *Milwaukee Journal* continued to harp on this message. In a July 30 editorial, the newspaper rhetorically asked is “Wisconsin loyal?” and answered, “Of course Wisconsin is loyal—staunchly, unswervingly loyal,” but added, “It would be criminally stupid...to overlook the fact that disloyalty of no trivial magnitude exists in Wisconsin.”²⁹⁴ On August 2, another *Journal* editorial reported that Watterson had written of a similar concern in response to Philipp’s letter, which the newspaper editors thought had unfortunately “stirred up the whole question of Wisconsin’s loyalty” and advertised Watterson’s criticism “from one end of the country to another.” Specifically, the Louisville editor wondered why the governor had not addressed “Wisconsin’s responsibility for La Follette,” which Watterson stated had been his chief argument for declaring Wisconsin a “Traitor State.” The *Milwaukee Journal* also questioned Philipp’s silence. They, along with the rest of Wisconsin, “would like to know whether the governor thinks Senator La Follette is representing the state.” Philipp chose not to respond, at least not at that time.²⁹⁵

With Philipp not doing enough to stop the boldly disloyal and traitorous from “plotting day and night,” the *Milwaukee Journal* suggested, “only effective organization and wise, able leadership can save Wisconsin’s name from being undeservedly sullied even more than it has been already.”²⁹⁶ The pastor of the First Congregational Church in Grand Rapids, Wisconsin, Robert J. Locke, completely agreed. In a letter to the *Milwaukee Journal*, he chastised Wisconsin citizens, primarily German-American pastors and men of influence, who Locke thought championed Germany, and state

²⁹⁴ “Disloyal Work Goes On,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 30, 1917, 4.

²⁹⁵ “What Gov. Philipp Could Do,” 8.

²⁹⁶ “Disloyal Work Goes On,” 4.

representatives in Madison and Washington, who he felt had made unseemly statements. Despite the “copperhead conduct” of a portion of Wisconsin’s population, Locke declared, “the majority of the [state’s] citizens are with the United States as thoroughly and completely as are those of any other state in the Union.” To prove this, Locke suggested the creation of an organization, which he named the Wisconsin League of Patriotism, whose main purpose would be to pledge every adult in Wisconsin to an unequivocal allegiance to the federal government during the prosecution of the war. The creation of this league and the signed loyalty pledges of its members would allay fears that Wisconsin was a center of German sympathy. Locke concluded by suggesting that such a league would be best directed by the State Council of Defense.²⁹⁷ Wheeler Bloodgood agreed with Locke that an organization was needed, but wanted the one he chaired, the Wisconsin Defense League, to take the lead in eradicating Wisconsin’s perceived disloyalty problem. To do so effectively, the League first needed to make some changes.

By August, the League’s executive committee was ready to acknowledge that confusion between the Wisconsin Defense League, a volunteer organization, and the Wisconsin Council of Defense, a state agency, had impeded their ability to raise money, build membership, and be successful at their patriotic mission. Bloodgood, realizing the committee needed to reconsider the group’s mission and contemplate a reorganization, called for a meeting, which occurred on August 28. In reaction to the confusion and the continuing worries concerning the state’s loyalty, the committee decided to rename the League the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion. While the Legion’s new leaders waited for the

²⁹⁷ “To Organize Loyal Wisconsin,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 10, 1917, 1.

state to recognize the Legion as an incorporated organization, which it did on September 21, they used the time to write the Legion's constitution. The resulting document spelled out the reasons the United States had to declare war on Germany; the requirement "for every American to stand back of our Government, loyally and enthusiastically"; and the Legion's list of purposes, which among others, included its pledge "to unite the people of Wisconsin in loyal, active and efficient support of the Government" and "to bring traitors to punishment, hold up slackers to public contempt, and oppose disloyalty and dissension wherever it may appear, and however disguised."²⁹⁸

By the time the Legion's executive board had written the latter statement, loyal Wisconsinites from local citizens to federal agents, possibly in attempts to clear Wisconsin's name, had already been busy punishing those accused of disloyal deeds and words. The June 5th draft registration appears to have caused the first wave of vigilante action. Dr. H. Miller, a resident of Laona (Forest Co.) was working as a government physician on a Native American reservation when he experienced swift retribution by his neighbors for offending draft registerees by suggesting, "You are fools to make manure and cannon powder of yourselves." Later that evening, local citizens threw Dr. Miller into a river (probably the appropriately named Rat River), then forced him to march at the front of a parade holding an American flag, and finally made him kneel and kiss the flag.²⁹⁹ Austria-native John Bobush suffered similar treatment a few days later when three hundred of his fellow J.I. Case employees took exception to his refusal to register for the draft and his declaration that "I'll be damned if I'll fight for the United States." Infuriated Case employees forced Bobush to crawl to an American flag they had

²⁹⁸ Wisconsin Loyalty Legion constitution preamble, WLL papers, Box 1, WHS.

²⁹⁹ "Forced to Publicly Kiss the Flag," *Grand Rapids Daily Leader* (Wisconsin), June 1, 1917, 1.

spread on the floor and kiss it. The Austrian lost his job and soon learned that the Racine police had announced he would be arrested and prosecuted if he did not register for the draft by the end of the day.³⁰⁰ Both of these men had been outsiders in their communities, but disloyal locals were not spared either.³⁰¹

While draft registration day appears to have set off the first wave of retribution against Wisconsin's disloyal citizens, other incidents occurred throughout the summer. On July 13, the *Racine Journal-News* reported that two federal Department of Justice agents had taken four Kenosha residents into custody, including at least one woman, and charged them with disloyalty. The four were given a chance to repent by marching to an American flag and kissing it. Afterward, the agents gave each penitent traitor a small silk flag to be displayed in their windows until peace between the United States and Germany was declared. Since this was their first offense, the four accused residents did not go to court, but the agents reminded them that if this had been Germany, traitors, like themselves, would have been taken behind the building and shot.³⁰² About two weeks later, the *Rhineland New North* newspaper let its readers know that a local resident, while in Antigo (Langlade Co.), "had the pleasure of seeing a man who had created a disturbance at a patriotic meeting tossed up in a blanket by members of the Antigo militia company" and then forced to kiss an American flag. The offender, apparently a local baker who had been drunk at the time, thought he was going to be

³⁰⁰ "Made to Kiss Flag on Knees for Word Against the Draft," *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, June 5, 1917, 1 and "Factory Men Compel John Bobush to Kiss Old Glory," *Racine Journal News*, June 5, 1917, 1. The J.I. Case Company was located in Racine.

³⁰¹ Another example of an outsider being targeted can be found in "Loves Kaiser; Is Locked Up," *Stevens Point Daily Journal*, June 16, 1917, 1. John Henrich "who says he has no home, is a wanderer" allegedly expressed "too forcefully his pro-German sentiments and...used profane language in reference to the president of the United States." Members of the local cavalry troop complained and the sheriff placed him jail for two to three days.

³⁰² "Kenosha woman Kisses Old Glory," *Racine Journal-News*, July 13, 1917, 5.

hung and “whined for mercy.” The witness told the *New North* reporter, “It did [his] heart good to see the offender get his medicine.”³⁰³ This handful of incidents illustrated an increasing willingness by authority figures, as well as emboldened neighbors and co-workers, to control and silence Wisconsinites they perceived as disloyal. Loyalist newspapers throughout the state eagerly published these confrontations in an attempt to discourage any further unpatriotic speech and clean up Wisconsin’s reputation.

None of the editors of loyalist newspapers seemed to question whether the act of placing the American flag on a floor to be kissed was patriotic, instead they focused on how the accused could have been more effectively punished. The *Wisconsin State Journal*, which had supported La Follette before the war, but no longer did, wrote of an enemy in our midst, “the fellow who is forced to kiss the flag to prove his loyalty.” These fellows, obviously not real Americans according to *Journal* editor Richard Lloyd Jones, needed “drastic punishment” and suggested “robbing them of their right to vote for a term of five or ten years or for life,” based on the offense.³⁰⁴ The *Marinette Eagle-Star* proposed deportation for the “scurvy traitor” who had to kiss the flag to prove his loyalty. The *Eagle-Star*’s editors added they felt sorry for the flag and believed traitors did not deserve to live under its shadow, “let alone to kiss its sacred folds.”³⁰⁵

Many years after the war ended, Wisconsin Socialist Oscar Ameringer wondered “how Old Glory enjoyed those shotgun weddings.” He had almost been subjected to one

³⁰³ “Kissed the Flag,” *Rhineland New North*, August 2, 1917, 6.

³⁰⁴ “Punish and Penalize,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 17, 1917, 8. The *Journal* had been a staunch supporter of La Follette before the war but abandoned him around the time of his March filibuster, when he attempted to prevent the arming of the merchant marine. Merlin Hull, Wisconsin Secretary of State, later suggested Jones would be an excellent president of the new Wisconsin Loyalty Legion.

³⁰⁵ *Marinette Eagle-Star* as published in “Among the Newspapers,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, September 17, 1917, 2.

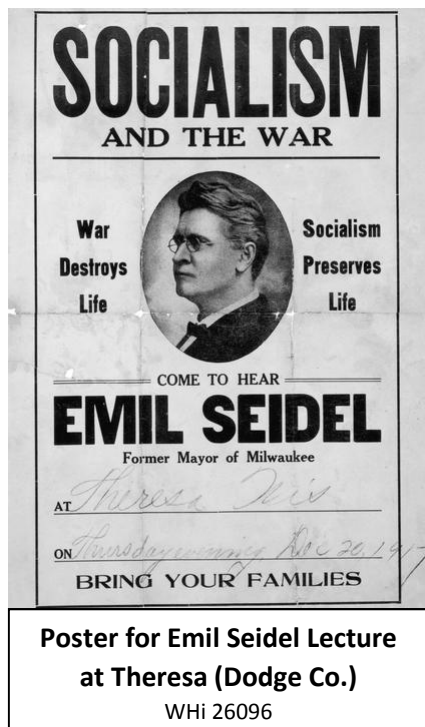
of these “weddings” himself, after giving a campaign speech during an unsuccessful run for Congress in 1918. As Ameringer finished his presentation to a sympathetic crowd in a Sauk County dance hall, the door flew open and a group of men, who had thrown an unpatriotic doctor in a river the night before, marched in with “drums, bugle, flag and guns.” In the moment, Ameringer made a mental note that he would rather die “fighting than kiss and insult Old Glory under duress,” so he kept calm and encouraged the men to come in and hear his speech from the beginning. While speaking to the hyperpatriotic mob, he checked out the legs of the table he was using as his “pulpit” for a potential weapon, just in case. After Ameringer finished, the mob’s leader, a manufacturer from a neighboring town, lectured him for his unpatriotic stance and may have planned further punishment, but the original audience, primarily made up of farmers, had, according to Ameringer, armed itself with “really mean” pitchforks. Confronted with this scene as they stepped outside, the leader and his mob let the Socialist depart without any further ramifications.³⁰⁶

Ameringer was not the only Wisconsin Socialist to experience intimidation and suppression. As the summer of 1917 wore on, hyperpatriot attacks on Socialists appear to have increased as Wisconsin’s loyalty continued to be questioned. Wheeler Bloodgood probably aided in the escalation by announcing in August, “Records of meetings held under the auspices of the socialist party [and the peace party] show a decided similarity of program, of agitation...In short, socialism has given way to pro-Germanism in organization speeches.”³⁰⁷ As Wisconsin loyalists intensified their fight against treason

³⁰⁶ Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1940), 338-340. Ameringer ran for Congress in November 1918. The doctor he mentioned being thrown in the river was not Dr. Miller from Laona. The latter incident occurred over a year earlier and around 200 miles away.

³⁰⁷ “Launch Move to Hit Disloyalty,” *Racine Journal News*, August 16, 1917, 10.

and disloyalty, Socialist Party members began sharing complaints and reports of threatening encounters with the state party's Executive Committee as early as June.



Poster for Emil Seidel Lecture
at Theresa (Dodge Co.)
WHI 26096

Socialists had discovered that sharing their views on the war had repercussions from both local citizens and government officials. Kenosha law enforcement, for example, placed the chairman of the city's Socialist Party in jail, shortly before he was to speak at a Socialist rally. In December 1917 former Milwaukee mayor Emil Seidel had planned to give a lecture on "Socialism and the War" with the subtitle, "War Destroys Life; Socialism Preserves Life" at a small Dodge County town. On the day of his speech, six hundred members of the Loyalty

Legion successfully prevented this allegedly "pro-German" meeting from occurring.³⁰⁸ Yet all of this was small potatoes when compared to the attacks on Victor Berger by the federal government.

In September 1917, Postmaster General Albert Burleson summoned Berger to Washington, DC to answer charges of sedition under the Espionage Act. Burleson, who with President Wilson's support had parlayed his position into a powerful regulator of the press, cited over fifty *Milwaukee Leader* editorials that had been published in the three months since the passage of the Espionage Act that he thought proved Berger was part of an organized propaganda effort to "discredit and impede in every way the Government in the prosecution of this war." The recently passed act, which prohibited

³⁰⁸ Pifer, 224-225.

mailing any material that advocated “treason, insurrection or forcible resistance to any law,” gave Burleson the power to deny journals and newspapers’ second-class mailing privileges, along with a \$10,000 fine and up to twenty years in prison.³⁰⁹

On September 22, Berger argued his case before the third assistant postmaster to no avail. The low-level functionary would not provide specific examples, listen to Berger’s arguments that the editorials were not pro-German or intended to hurt the war effort, or accept Berger’s offer to keep within editorial limits if the postmaster’s office provided him with a definition of legitimate criticism. Berger attempted to make appointments with Burleson and President Wilson to argue his case, without success, although he did manage to speak with Colonel Edward M. House, a close friend and advisor to Wilson, who shared Berger’s concerns with the president. In regards to Berger, Wilson wrote to Burleson, “I do not think that most of what is quoted ought to be regarded as unmailable.” Burleson disregarded Wilson’s message and on October 3, 1917 revoked the *Milwaukee Leader*’s second-class mailing privileges. With this decision the newspaper lost 40 percent of its subscribers, specifically those who lived outside of Milwaukee, and \$70,000 in revenue. Other ramifications soon followed. Local loyalty advocates, like the *Milwaukee Journal*, pressured *Leader* advertisers and subscribers to abandon the paper or be labelled as disloyal, and the National Press Club expelled

³⁰⁹ Philip M. Glende, “Victor Berger’s Dangerous Ideas: Censoring the Mail to Preserve National Security during World War I,” *Essays in Economic & Business History* 26 (2008): 9.

Burleson (1863-1937), a Texas Democrat whose father had been a Confederate officer, served as Postmaster General under Wilson from 1913 to 1921. Besides his vigorous enforcement of the Espionage Act and its effect on the national press, he may be best known for segregating post offices and removing or demoting African Americans in the postal service. Wilson later used this model to segregate the federal government, a significant change from policies that had been in place since the Reconstruction era.

Berger from its organization for outraging its members “sense of loyalty.”³¹⁰ For Berger, this was just the beginning of the harassment he faced over the next few years. Despite this, he chose not to bow to the pressure and in the spring of 1918 he made a decision that brought Wisconsin’s crisis of loyalty to national attention yet again.

While Berger faced prosecution from the Postmaster General, Senator La Follette had his own problems in September 1917. His trouble escalated when Governor Philipp finally responded to Wisconsin’s “Traitor State” reputation, something he had declined to do earlier in the summer, by issuing a statement on September 14 attributing this unfortunate status, which, he added, was completely undeserved, to Wisconsin’s senior senator, Robert La Follette. Philipp believed he had to make this assertion because, “People in Washington have even come to the point of questioning my loyalty and that of everyone in Wisconsin on account of the stand taken by some of our representatives in congress [sic].”³¹¹ Finally, Philipp had acquiesced to Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots and shared thoughts, which closely resembled their own, about La Follette’s words and actions from the past nine months. Although La Follette may have been dismayed by Philip’s statement, it foreshadowed an even stronger outburst of anti-La Follette rhetoric that began a week later and would doggedly pursue him for the rest of the war.

On September 20, La Follette gave a speech to the Non-Partisan League, a group that wanted wealthy Americans to pay their fair share of war costs, in St. Paul, Minnesota. The enthusiastic, standing-room only crowd showed their support with

³¹⁰ Glende, 9, 12; Pifer, 225-226; Abing, 87.

³¹¹ “Philipp Raps Senior Senator,” *Duluth News-Tribune*, September 14, 1917, 1.; “La Follette Scored by Gov. Philips [sic],” *Middlesboro Pinnacle News* (Kentucky), September 14, 1917, 1.

applause, cheers, and standing ovations as he spoke about corporate profiteering, the loss of civil rights during the past year, and his views on the Great War. In the course of extemporaneous remarks, La Follette stated, “For my own part I was not in favor of *beginning* the war. I don’t mean to say we hadn’t suffered grievances. We had—at the hands of Germany. *Serious* grievances!” but added that they were “too small to involve this government in *the loss of millions and millions of lives!!*” The Associated Press seemed to have misheard and inaccurately reported that he had made the seditious statement, “I wasn’t in favor of beginning this war. We had no grievance [against Germany],” which appeared in thousands of newspapers throughout the United States the next day.³¹²

Newspaper editors around the country responded to this added proof of the senator’s disloyalty by ratcheting up their anti-La Follette rhetoric to new levels, especially in their editorials. The *Gulfport Daily Herald* (Mississippi), for example, took him to task on September 24 with this colorful language:

We might grant the truth of every contention urged by this pompadoured extremist of the North and still prove that he is yellow. Senator La Follette is “yellow” because he is a traitor. He is “white livered” because he loves pelf and self more than his country...We neither hate him nor are moved by his traitorous utterances. Rather would we invite our readers to cremate the memory of “Bob” La Follette.³¹³

The same day the *Chicago Daily Tribune* contended, “If the state of Wisconsin wishes to clear its honorable record of the stain of disloyalty it will at the earliest possible moment remove from La Follette the ability to misrepresent that intelligent community...

³¹² Pifer, 233-235; Unger, 254-255.

³¹³ “La Follette of the Yellow Streak,” *Gulfport Daily Herald* (Mississippi), September 24, 1917, 2.

[Wisconsin] does not deserve La Follette.”³¹⁴ On September 29, former president Theodore Roosevelt, an ardent hyperpatriot, also weighed in on the La Follette controversy by describing the senator as among the “Huns within our gates” and labelling him “the most sinister enemy of democracy in the United States.”³¹⁵ Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, also condemned La Follette’s remarks, believing, “You might just as well put poison in the food of every American boy that goes to his transport as to permit La Follette to talk as he does.”³¹⁶

On September 30, the U.S. Senate reacted to this massive anti-La Follette outcry



**Life Magazine cover,
December 13, 1917, from its
“Traitors” issue
WHI 3272**

by calling for his expulsion; Republicans in Wisconsin’s State Capitol reiterated the demand three days later. La Follette responded to the charges on October 6 with an impassioned three-hour speech calling for civil rights protections during times of war without making any specific references to his St. Paul presentation. He may have avoided doing so out of recognition that in front of the receptive Minnesota audience he had been carried away. The result included controversial, ill-advised statements, which included some significant inaccuracies or misrepresentations. La Follette’s fellow

senator Frank Kellogg did not let these omissions pass quietly. To refute the Wisconsin senator, he read several of the “slanderous” St. Paul assertions into the record. Kellogg

³¹⁴ “Wisconsin and La Follette,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 24, 1917, 8.

³¹⁵ *Trenton Evening Times* (New Jersey), September 29, 1917, 1.

³¹⁶ Unger, 255.

also disagreed that this case was an issue of free speech, but instead an “erroneous statement of facts” that “aid and encourage the enemy and cast dishonor and discredit upon the nation.” After both sides had been presented, the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections decided to move forward with an investigation into La Follette. In the end, the Senate adjourned for the year before deciding whether to banish the Wisconsin Senator from their midst or not. The Associated Press’s mistake, easily believed by those who questioned his loyalty, meant attacks on La Follette continued



unabated, even after the mistake became common knowledge.³¹⁷

As the Berger and La Follette issues came to a climax, the second Liberty Loan drive got underway. With much of the money raised by the first Liberty Loan spent by August 1917, Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo proposed a second bond drive

to begin on October 1 and close on the 28th. With more time to prepare, the federal Liberty Loan committee did a much better job organizing this drive. Though still planning to encourage banks to buy Liberty Bonds, the committee decided to go after middle-class Americans and non-urban dwellers more than they had in the first drive. To accomplish this, committee members realized they needed to do a better job educating Americans about what bonds were, how they could be purchased, and why

³¹⁷ Unger, 256-257. Unger believes some of the backlash against La Follette following his St. Paul speech was deserved, because “he expressed points of view likely to raise criticism even during peace time” (255).

buying them was each American's patriotic duty.³¹⁸ Despite push-back from some German-Americans, who did not feel comfortable lending money to see their homeland crushed; Irish-Americans, who were not eager to support Britain; and Socialists, along with some labor organizations, who believed the war was a result of greedy capitalists' machinations, Americans oversubscribed the second Liberty Loan by \$1.2 billion dollars.³¹⁹

In Wisconsin, the county Councils of Defense followed the national model by using the months of August and September to effectively plan and organize campaigns that would fulfill the state's quota of \$91.3 million. The Milwaukee County Council of Defense, after researching how they could have done better in the first Liberty Loan drive, wrote a plan that mirrored much of what had been said at the federal level by identifying three areas for improvement: 1) publicity, 2) the need to popularize small subscriptions (i.e. \$50 and \$100 bonds), and 3) increasing bond purchasing by farmers and rural residents. The creators of the Milwaukee plan specifically acknowledged "that more bonds should have been sold to the residents of rural districts" during the first drive and suggested forming a figurative "flying squadron," a group which would go into small towns and rural areas "to clean up loose odds and ends which were missed by the district team."³²⁰ Milwaukee's Junior League took up the call for such a squadron and later reported that it had "canvassed the rural districts in Milwaukee County and visited

³¹⁸ See "Are the U.S. Government Securities a Good Investment?" Wisconsin Council of Defense, COD papers, Box 20, folder 6, WHS; "Potatoes, Rye, Wheat: Farmers: This is Your Turn," Wood County Liberty Loan Committee, undated.

³¹⁹ The Treasury accepted \$3.8 billion of the \$4.6 billion raised.

³²⁰ "Plan for Handling the Second Liberty Loan of 1917 in Milwaukee County," COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

farmers' wives."³²¹ At the end of the drive, the League reported selling \$44,550 worth of bonds, but how much of this came from their flying squadron is unknown.

Even with an increased interest in rural residents, the Wisconsin Council of Defense still concentrated its efforts on bankers, who were expected to sell bonds to all their customers this time, not just the wealthy. Bankers in German communities and northern counties soon experienced resistance from some of their customers. Theodore Boehm, for example, allegedly started withdrawing his money from the Bank of DeForest (Dane Co.) when it began selling Liberty Bonds, and his brothers Fred and Anton may have done the same.³²² The State Bank of Sauk City also reported a customer who pulled \$6000 from their bank based on the belief that "the Government" would confiscate the accounts of those who did not buy Liberty Bonds.³²³

Fearing similar reprisals and anger from their customers, bankers may have considered not selling the bonds or purchasing their quotas. Whether this happened or not, several bankers found themselves accused of doing so. Matthew Weiss, the cashier of the Farmers' State Bank of Schleisingerville, suffered repercussions from the Washington County Liberty Loan Committee when he supposedly tried "making capital of the fact that the other bank in the same village is selling bonds, and is trying to win the friendship of the people of German descent in his community." However, when the

³²¹ Mariner, Mrs. John W., "Report of Woman's Liberty Loan Committee of Wisconsin, Second Liberty Loan Drive, 1917." The Woman's Committee role was to solicit women, especially those who lived alone or headed households. The bonds purchased by women were usually listed separately in final loan drive reports. The state committee raised \$6,334,930 during the Second Liberty Loan; Milwaukee County represented \$2.6 million of the total. Mariner reported, "On the whole, we feel that Wisconsin women were awake to their responsibilities and did excellent service for the cause of the Liberty Loan."

³²² George W. Boissard, Chairman, Second Liberty Loan Committee, Dane County to Magnus Swenson, October 11, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

³²³ Secretary, State Council of Defense to The State Bank, Sauk City, October 2, 1917; J.E. Buerki (Sauk City) to State Council of Defense (Madison), October 4, 1917.

State Council of Defense followed up by accusing him of an unpatriotic attitude, Weiss replied that while “it was not so easy to sell the bonds in this community,” his bank had still managed to purchase or sell \$5200 worth.³²⁴ Around the same time banker Thomas S. Saby, wrote to Magnus Swenson, director of the Wisconsin Council of Defense, that six of the nine banks in Buffalo County had not “raise[d] a finger toward selling bonds during the sale of the last issue” and thought their unwillingness to participate came from a fear of antagonizing their “Pro-German clients.” He suggested that these six bankers could be “aroused” to do their patriotic duty if they knew the government was paying attention. Swenson and the Council took his suggestion seriously and wrote to the six banks that they had heard “on good authority that you refuse to have little or nothing to do with the sale of Liberty Bonds.”³²⁵ Most wrote back correcting that misconception by listing the amounts they and their customers had purchased or pledged to purchase. One of the bankers, however, had his lawyer respond for him. The lawyer wrote of his client’s awareness that “he had been reported as a slacker in the sale of Liberty Bonds,” apparently a true statement, he had been warned that “the Government had its eyes on our banks and believed by reason of German influences that we had not done our duty,” and he had been advised to produce results as soon as possible.³²⁶ Dane County Liberty Loan chairman George Boissard also reported to

³²⁴ B.C. Ziegler, Chairman, Washington County Liberty Loan Committee (West Bend) to William Ross, Chairman of Wisconsin Liberty Loan Committee (Chicago), October 20, 1917; Ross to A.H. Melville, Secretary, State Council of Defense (Madison), October 22, 1917; Melville to Mathew [sic] Weiss (Schleisingerville), October 24, 1917; Weiss to State Council of Defense, October 25, 1917; Melville to Weiss, October 29, 1917; Weiss to Melville, October 30, 1917; Melville to Weiss, October 31, 1917, WCOD, Box 20, folder 1, WHS

³²⁵ Thomas S. Saby (Alma) to Magnus Swenson, October 11, 1917, WCOD, Box 20, folder 1, WHS; A.H. Melville, Executive Secretary, State Council of Defense to F.J. Bohri (Fountain City), G.W. Smith (Gilmanton), A.W. Hofer (Cochrane), G. Nold (Nelson), Will Jensen (Modena), and P.E. Ibach (Alma), October 24, 1917, WCOD, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

³²⁶ S.G. Gilman (Mondovi) to A.H. Melville, October 25, 1917, WCOD, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

Swenson that twelve banks in his county had not taken their full allotment, including Black Earth State Bank, which he thought were afraid pro-Germans would resent the bank purchasing bonds, Bank of Verona, which had pro-German directors and cashier, and the International Bank of Cambridge, which Boissard described as “just plain hogs.”³²⁷ As with other such reports, Swenson sent out letters to Boissard’s list of banks. Several seem to have been chastened by his awareness that they were slacking and agreed to purchase their quota. The International Bank officers replied that they thought Swenson was “overstepping the requirements of [his] office” by implying there would be trouble for banks that do not take their allotment and added they would only purchase \$2000 of their \$3500 quota and if that did not satisfy Swenson he could “report us just as soon as you please.”³²⁸ Swenson does not appear to have responded to this snide remark.

In cases more extreme than the International Bank, the Secret Service could be called in to handle the recalcitrant banker. Agents may have visited the Forest Junction State Bank in Calumet County after the cashier of the Commercial Bank in Chilton, also in Calumet Co., reported to William Ross, chairman of the Wisconsin Liberty Loan Committee, that its bank directors refused to join with other county banks to support and advertise the second Liberty Loan drive. Ross informed the Secret Service of this particularly egregious example of banker disloyalty and asked them to follow up. He also wrote to the State Council of Defense, which he knew was already aware of this problematic bank, and suggested that it “make an example[,] so far as it is in the power

³²⁷ George Boissard (Madison) to Magnus Swenson, October 24, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 6, WHS.

³²⁸ Swenson to Citizens Bank (Belleville), October 25, 1917 (includes reply dated October 26, 1917) and Bank of Verona, October 25, 1917 (includes undated reply, but it was received by the COD on October 27, 1917); C.C. May, president, International Bank (Cambridge) to Swenson, October 27, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

of your organization to do it[,] of the institution at Forest Junction.” In case that did not happen, he also wrote to the Chilton banker suggesting the Secret Service punish the bank by allowing it “to stand out in a disloyal class of its own[,] subject to the scorn of every decent banker in Calumet County.” What action, if any, was taken against the Forest Junction bank is unknown.³²⁹

In the midst of the second Liberty Loan drive, Wisconsin hyperpatriots eagerly reported those who spoke out against bond sales to the Wisconsin Council of Defense with the hope that their seditious neighbors would be appropriately punished. In October 1917, the Council had no qualms acquiescing to their request and turned dozens of reported names over to the Secret Service or other government officials. The Council Secretary alerted “Barry of [the] Secret Service” to Arlington (Columbia Co.) resident William Staudenmayer after being informed that this apparently “wealthy German farmer” cursed “the president and the United States and positively refused to buy a bond,” when a Morrisonville banker tried to sell him one. A colleague of the banker wrote the Council that behavior such as Staudenmayer’s “should not be permitted [sic] to go unpunished.”³³⁰

The Council had subpoenas served by the Dane County sheriff to two DeForest residents who, they learned from George Boissard (mentioned above reporting

³²⁹ W. Kingston (Chilton) to William Ross (Chicago), October 4, 1917; Ross to A.H. Melville, Executive Secretary, State Council of Defense, October 6, 1917; Ross to A.C. Kingston (Chilton), October 5, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

³³⁰ A.A. Linde (DeForest) to Magnus Swenson, Chairman, State Council of Defense, October 31, 1917. Linde referred to “Mr. Studemeyer” from Arlington, whose brother served in the last state legislature. William Staudenmayer (1865-1937) fits that description.; Henry Burd, Assistant Secretary, State Council of Defense to Linde, November 1, 1917; Burd to T.A. Caldwell (Morrisonville banker), November 1, 1917, includes handwritten note about Barry of the Secret Service; Burd to Linde, November 3, 1917; Linde to Burd, November 5, 1917; COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

bankers), had spurious reasons for not buying bonds. Boissard telephoned the Council to let them know that Henry A. Miller had told a member of the Dane County Second Liberty Loan committee that “the government must say ‘please’” before he would buy a bond, and William Paulman had allegedly refused to buy bonds unless the government paid 10 percent interest. Both men received letters from the Council asking them to explain their statements. Paulman does not seem to have replied, but Miller wrote that he had purchased bonds and “as to ‘Please’ that must be a mistake.” Despite this, he and Paulman received subpoenas requiring them to appear the next day before the Council to prove they had not made disloyal statements discrediting the President or the Government. No records exist to show the outcome of the subpoenas, but they appear to have been more a scare tactic than a serious attempt to punish these alleged slackers.³³¹

Real punishment could be instigated by the U.S. district attorney in Madison, Albert C. Wolf, who used Secret Service agents to follow up on reports of potentially traitorous or seditious Wisconsin residents. When the chairman of the Oconto County Liberty Loan Committee, John B. Chase, asked the Council of Defense how to get the services of Secret Service agents to Oconto, where pro-German activities by “certain people” had become “particularly noticeable” during the second Liberty Loan drive, he learned that the U.S. District Attorney would be glad to send a Secret Service man to

³³¹ Memorandum (undated) listing four names of “disloyal parties” reported by George Boissard. The other two men on the list were William Helmka, who supposedly stated that “any man is a damn fool who borrows to buy a Liberty Bond,” and Thomas Helgeson for continually “knocking Bonds.” Both men received letters from the Council asking them to explain their behavior. Helmke replied that “it was a false statement brought to you”; Helgeson showed up in person and protested the accusation. A Council staff member wrote, “He seems to be a loyal citizen” next to Helgeson’s name on the memorandum after his visit.; Magnus Swenson to Henry Miller (DeForest), October 19, 1917; Magnus Swenson to William Paulman (DeForest), October 19, 1917; Miller to the State Council of Defense, October 24, 1917; A.H. Melville to Henry Ireland, Dane County Sheriff, October 26, 1917; subpoenas for Henry A Miller and William Paulson, October 26, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

Oconto upon request. Earlier in October, the Council of Defense had sent a list of likely traitorous Waushara County residents, provided by the Federal Reserve Chairman William Ross, to Wolf for potential prosecution. The list included W.J. Smith of Plainfield, who told his friends not to buy Liberty Bonds because it was “all a fake business,” and Reverend William Rul of Coloma, who claimed the banks were unsafe, causing Bank of Coloma depositors to withdraw \$30,000 during the first Liberty Loan drive.³³² In the long run, this intimidation seems to have been all talk, but no action; none of these men brought to the notice of the Council were indicted or had any further legal action brought against them. While their neighbors may have hoped for more serious consequences, at this point the Council of Defense seemed more inclined to frighten Liberty Bond slackers and naysayers into participating in the loan drive than seeing them jailed.

By the time the second Liberty Loan drive came to an end, Wisconsin had raised \$87 million from the sale of bonds. Unfortunately, that was \$4.3 million short of its quota. Hyperpatriots quickly blamed the pro-German atmosphere in many counties for the state’s failure, but even a cursory look at the numbers proved that was not true. Counties with large German-American populations, mostly in the 7th Federal Reserve District, consistently met or exceeded their quotas. Milwaukee, for example, subscribed to 131 percent of its quota, while Kenosha outdid every other county by subscribing 228 percent of its allocation. Still thirty-nine of the forty-five counties in the 7th District

³³² William Ross (Chicago) to Andrew Melville (Madison), October 10, 1917; Melville to Ross, October 11, 1917; Melville to F.S. Durham (Wautoma), secretary, Waushara County Council of Defense, October 11, 1917; Melville to Albert C. Wolf, October 11, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 1, WHS.

failed to meet their quotas, and not one of the twenty-six counties in the 9th District came close.³³³

Further research showed rural counties, but not necessarily heavily German ones, had done the worst. Days after the drive ended, the *Milwaukee Journal* reported that farmers had only purchased 20 percent of their allotment. Andrew Melville, executive secretary to the Council, acknowledged “the farmers fell down in this test,” but blamed politicians for pampering them in an attempt to earn their vote. Farmers, he thought, believed they were in a class by themselves and could do as they pleased. Melville did note that farmers had done better in the second loan than they had in the first and that after a more comprehensive “campaign of education” they would do even better in the third drive.³³⁴ Juneau County State Bank president George S. Grubb confirmed some of what Melville said in a mid-November note to a Council member who had asked why Juneau County only raised 26.1 percent of its quota, one of the lowest numbers in the state. Grubb, like Melville, noted that they had done much better this time than on the first loan drive, but added that “Ours is a farming community and a large part of the crop is potatoes,” the price of which had dropped dramatically that fall due to frost, meaning less cash in the hands of farmers and therefore less money to buy bonds.³³⁵

Not everyone was as kind or understanding. H.R. Boerner tried to sell bonds to his fellow Ozaukee County farmers and only managed to convince twelve of the sixty he

³³³ Wisconsin Manufacturers' Association, *Industrial Wisconsin* 18 (July 1918): 63; COD papers, Box 20, folder 2; WLL papers, Box 1, November 1917 correspondence, WHS.

³³⁴ “State Council of Defense Says Farmers Bought Few War Bonds, *Milwaukee Journal*, October 30, 1917, clipping in COD papers, Box 2, folder 1, WHS.

³³⁵ J.R. Wheeler (Columbus) to George S. Grubb (Mauston), November 19, 1917; Grubb typed an undated response on the bottom of the letter, which was received by the Council on November 21, 1917, COD papers, Box 20, folder 6, WHS.

visited to do so, a result he called “mighty poor sledding.” Boerner believed that the farmers either did not care, evidenced by their unwillingness to attend patriotic meetings or rallies, or they were “pro-German, pacifist, or resentful because their boy was called,” a consequence of “pretty well swallow[ing] the pacifist ‘dope’ and the anti-war propaganda.” Boerner thought steps needed to be taken to curb the “selfishness and lack of real loyalty” by the farmers, and suggested sending some ‘bang up’ good men on the Farmers Institutes’ circuit. When these patriotic men talked ‘brass tacks’ (i.e. gave loyalty speeches)...from the right angle,” farmers would be convinced to be loyal and patriotic and show it by buying Liberty Bonds in the third drive.³³⁶ However, before Boerner’s ideas could be put in practice, even before the second Liberty Loan drive ended, Wisconsin learned it would soon be facing its most challenging crisis of loyalty to date. The crisis began innocuously enough on Sunday, October 21, 1917, when Senator Paul O. Husting and his brothers decided to go duck hunting on Rush Lake in Winnebago County.

Senator Husting had stayed in Washington, DC, through the summer of 1917, along with the rest of Congress to pass war legislation and address a myriad of war issues. His votes and rhetoric continued to earn him praise from his hyperpatriotic supporters back home. By this time, Husting had defined his role as one who chastised anyone not supporting the war effort, no matter what his or her position in society. On July 18, for example, he scolded manufacturers for complaining that the war interfered with their business by reminding them that they had no “other business in the world at

³³⁶ H.R. Boerner (Cedarburg) to Magnus Swenson, January 22, 1918, COD papers, Box 20, folder 2, WHS.

the present time more important than the defeat of Germany.” Husting urged them to put their selfish interests aside and “unify all manhood, all the force, all the power that we possess...to save the world from the curse of autocracy and the curse of slavery...the worst that the world has ever known.” Instead of complaining about profits, he argued, businessmen should be working with the rest of the country to make the world safe for democracy, “safe for the people of the world.”³³⁷ By early August, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* was ready to ask, “Can anybody see at the present time any man who would stand a ghost of a chance of beating Husting for re-election?” The *Sentinel* editors could not. Although Husting was a Democrat, they “regret[ted] to say, his patriotic attitude in the international crisis and his firm support of his country’s government,” along with his ability to “run as an American-American all through the war,” made him virtually unbeatable.³³⁸

Around the same time, however, the *Wisconsin State Journal* spoke of its concern about Husting’s definition of democracy. While the newspaper’s editors applauded Husting for being “heroically true” during the battle to arrest “arrogant autocracy in its program of terrorizing the whole world with its forces of frightfulness” and appreciated his battles “against individual and corporate robbery,” they wondered if he only supported a “limited and curtailed democracy.” The *Journal* illustrated Husting’s tendency to see America as “a half democracy” by his unwillingness to support women’s suffrage, prohibition, or referendums unless “he believes in the proposition submitted.” However, the *Journal* added, they would “never lack gratitude for the fine fight [he] put up for the overthrow of militarism in the world.” It only hoped that when

³³⁷ Untitled article, *Door County News* (Sturgeon Bay), August 30, 1917, 3.

³³⁸ From the *Milwaukee Sentinel* as quoted in *Grand Rapids Tribune* (Wisconsin), August 2, 1917, 15.

the war was won, he would not “slap democracy itself full in the face.” The *Journal’s* rebuke, bracketed by support for his war effort, seems to be the only negative comment regarding Husting in the summer of 1917.³³⁹

Like many hyperpatriots, Husting remained suspicious of German-Americans and their connection to the German government. In late September 1917, Secretary of State Robert Lansing announced that a congressional investigation into a German agent’s attempt to influence Congress with bribes would be unnecessary, since the German had been unable to persuade any congressmen to commit treason for money. Husting remained unconvinced that the agent’s removal from the United States had eliminated the danger and believed instead that “A master propagandist still lurks, directing the lines of his intrigue through myriad agents preparing copy for foreign language newspapers and laying the lines for telegraphic and letter lobbying.” He planned to introduce a resolution to ferret out this influence, but not until he was sure it would not embarrass the government. In the meantime, he focused on the foreign language press, especially German newspapers in his own state that he was sure were promoting pro-German attitudes.³⁴⁰

Husting actively stayed abreast of the foreign language press situation in Wisconsin, occasionally with the help of informants. When convinced that certain journals were publishing disloyal editorials, he brought them to the attention of the Post Office Department’s solicitor, who had the power to curtail the newspapers’ second-class mailing privileges, as they had done with Victor Berger’s *Milwaukee Leader*. In late

³³⁹ “Husting,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 3, 1917, 12.

³⁴⁰ “Lansing Does Not Favor Plot Probe,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, September 22, 1917, 13. The German agent was Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff, German ambassador to the United States from 1908 to 1917.

September, Husting made sure the Post Office knew about the un-American writing that emanated from Eau Claire's *Der Herold*, the *Watertown Weltbuerger*, the *Dodge County Pioneer*, and the *Sheboygan Zeitung*, and asked them to follow up. The Post Office's solicitor responded that the latter two were already receiving their attention and the other two soon would.³⁴¹ The Catholic Printing Company in Dubuque, Iowa, heard about Husting's fight to suppress the foreign press, specifically his desire to deny second-class mailing privileges to all newspapers financed and edited by foreigners, including British or German ones and wrote to congratulate him on this decision, especially since his father was a Luxembourger. This particular fact caught their interest, because they published the *Luxemburger Gazette*, which had been "Americanizing foreigners of Luxemburg birth or extraction" for forty-six years.³⁴²

Letters to Husting show Milwaukee's *Germania-Herold* to have been one of his primary targets. The newspaper, which was in publication from 1913 through 1918, came into existence when four Milwaukee German-language newspapers, which could trace their lineage back to at least 1857, merged over time. Its editors had supported neutrality and spoken positively of the German war effort before America's entrance into the war, but afterward began, as one detractor called it, "to play as safe as possible." As with other German-language newspapers, the Postmaster General required the *Germania-Herold* to translate their editorials into English and send them to the Postmaster's office for approval, which kept the editors' writing appropriately patriotic. George Creel, director of the Committee on Public Information, impressed by what he

³⁴¹ William H. Lamar, Solicitor, Post Office Department to Husting, September 26, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 2, WHS.

³⁴² Nicholas Gonner (Dubuque) to Husting, September 26, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 2, WHS.

had seen, sent the *Germania-Herold* a letter stating his belief that it was a very loyal, patriotic American newspaper. The *Milwaukee Journal* staff, however, was not impressed and wrote Husting that, in their opinion, Creel's letter was not only unwarranted, but also dangerous. They let Husting know,

There need not be the slightest doubt that at every opportunity The Germania-Herold will strongly oppose the re-election of all men like yourself, who have been loyal to the government, and fearless and outspoken against sedition and treason.³⁴³

Husting must have questioned Creel about the wisdom of writing such a letter to the *Germania-Herold*, because Creel quickly wrote back to the newspaper that the earlier letter was not be construed as “a certificate of loyalty” and he appears to have lectured the editor Gustav Haas on how a German-language newspaper should behave during the current crisis. Haas wrote back that he only showed the letter to one person, a Wisconsin Loyalty Legion member, who misconstrued its meaning and caused the current commotion. Husting managed to stay informed about Creel's interactions with the *Germania-Herold* and probably approved of the scolding letter received by Haas.³⁴⁴

As the 1917 congressional session wound down in mid-October, a number of Senator Husting's constituents wrote to congratulate him for staying “on the good old loyal track immovable,” especially in contrast to Senator La Follette, who, at the time, was suffering from the consequences of his misreported Saint Paul speech of September 20. Several of Husting's hyperpatriotic supporters wanted him to publically condemn the treasonous La Follette and help facilitate his expulsion from the Senate. Pepin

³⁴³ Henry C. Campbell, assistant editor, *Milwaukee Journal* to Husting, September 24, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 1, WHS.

³⁴⁴ Gustav Haas, *Gemania-Herold*, to George Creel, October 1, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 2, WHS. Haas wrote that the Loyalty Legion member was Willet M. Spooner and Campbell confirmed this in his letter to Husting.

County district attorney Caleb M. Hilliard hoped to see La Follette, who “should be making speeches in the Bundesrath [sic] or Reichstag where he belongs,” suffer appropriate penalties for his “disloyal and brazen misconduct.”³⁴⁵ More pointedly, John Splan Jr. of Green Bay told Husting that he was “mighty glad to have you use your vote and influence to oust that pin-headed La Folette [sic] out of office...Down with La Follette.”³⁴⁶ At least five organizations around Wisconsin sent letters informing Husting they had passed resolutions condemning La Follette and encouraging his ouster from the Senate as soon as possible.³⁴⁷ In the end, Husting, probably wisely, declined to discuss La Follette or his speech.³⁴⁸

Others wrote to Husting of their great pleasure in having him represent the state of Wisconsin during the war crisis. Merrill mayor Fred J. Smith, for example, informed the Senator, “The rank and file of patriotic citizens of this entire locality (that I believe includes a considerable majority) are very much pleased with your position and efforts on the great war measures and generally your work in the United States senate.” Smith also thought that Husting’s patriotic stand regarding America’s role in the war had kept the state of Wisconsin in the patriotic column.³⁴⁹ Even Republicans praised the Democrat senator for his brave war stance. DeWitt C. Reynolds of Ripon told Husting that at his next election, he would have the support of many Republicans in his district,

³⁴⁵ Caleb M. Hilliard (Durand) to Husting, September 22, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 1, WHS.

³⁴⁶ John Splan Jr., 1871-1928(Green Bay) to Husting, October 12, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 4, WHS.

³⁴⁷ These included the Burnett County Conference of Town and Village Councils of Defense (letter to Husting, September 26, 1917, Box 12, folder 2); Plymouth Council National Defense (letter to Husting, October 5, 1917, Box 12, folder 3); loyal citizens of Rhinelander (telegram to Husting, October 6, 1917, Box 12, folder 3); Marshfield Chapter of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion (letter to Husting, October 4, 1917, Box 12, folder 3); and State Council of Defense conference (letter to Husting, October 12, 1917, Box 12, folder 4), POH papers, WHS.

³⁴⁸ *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, October 11, 1917, 3.

³⁴⁹ Fred J. Smith (Merrill) to Husting, October 10, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 4, WHS.

including the writer, who had not voted for him in 1916, but would support the junior senator from now on, as long as he “stay[ed] by the Government.”³⁵⁰ Corporal Francis C. Marshall from Green Bay, but stationed at Fort Russell, Wyoming, may have been the most effusive in his praise, “You have won my admiration by your simplicity, your honesty, your courage and your sound statesmanship.” Like Smith, Marshall thought Husting could attract Republicans, both Progressives and Stalwarts, as well as Democrats, with his approach to the war. Husting’s only failing, according to Marshall, was that he was not promoting himself enough. Marshall wanted the senator “to proclaim that you discovered the war, were for it all along, knew it must come, and prove it by your record.”³⁵¹ However, Husting had already made plans to give war-related speeches throughout the state after a two-week vacation in late October, before Congress reconvened. John F. Morrow of Spring Green had heard about Husting’s plans and asked him to consider stopping at his small town, where many pro-Germans resided, a consequence, Morrow thought, of the misleading German press. Morrow wanted Husting to bring “a big battle” to his small town, because, as he stated, Spring Green needed it. He concluded his letter by asking Husting for timely notice, so he and others could round up the “leading Germans” and get them to his speech. Unfortunately, the senator never had a chance to reply.³⁵²

Husting planned to spend two weeks during the congressional recess duck hunting with four of his six brothers at a variety of places, including Rush Lake, a 4.7-square-mile body of water mainly made of marsh and bog eighteen miles southwest of

³⁵⁰ DeWitt C. Reynolds (Ripon) to Husting, October 14, 1917, Box 12, folder 5, WHS.

³⁵¹ Frances C. Marshall (Fort Russell, Wyoming) to Husting, October 6, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 3, WHS.

³⁵² John F. Morrow (Spring Green) to Husting, October 12, 1917, POH papers, Box 12, folder 4, WHS.

Oshkosh. Since his brothers could not take two weeks off, they arranged to take turns hunting with Paul. Gustave “Gus” agreed to join Paul for the last weekend of his vacation, October 20-21. The two brothers left for their hunting shack on a cold, chilly Sunday morning amidst a light snow. Before each brother got into their separate rowboats, Paul and Gus agreed to stay kneeling in their boats to prevent any potential accident. Around 4:15 pm, as they crouched behind a blind, eight mallard ducks arose from the marsh. Paul yelled at his brother to shoot, but in his excitement stood up to fire at the ducks as well. From about two feet behind, Gus’s shot went through Paul just below his left shoulder. Paul fell back in his boat, “You shot me.” He remained conscious as Gus frantically rowed both boats to shore through “a sea of mud” and under a barbed wire fence, which the local hunting club had stretched across the bog. Seeing he could not move Paul, Gus ran to a farmhouse around a quarter mile away for help, where he managed to telephone doctors in nearby Ripon. After they arrived, Gus, the farmer, and the doctors put Paul’s boat with Paul in it on a wagon and brought him to the farmhouse. Their original plan had been to take him by train, one called specifically for the purpose, to Oshkosh, but when the doctors examined Paul, they found his body riddled with buckshot along with a wrist-sized hole in his back that had deflated his left lung. There was no point taking him to a hospital; he would not live. Paul had acknowledged this reality while still in the boat, when he told Gus, “No use sending for doctors, I’m done for.” The doctors could not save him, but they did alleviate his pain with large doses of morphine. Husting remained conscious for several hours and kept up a conversation with three of his brothers, letting them know he considered only himself to blame. As a parting message, Husting said, “Tell them [his constituents] I did the best

I knew how.” Around 7:15 pm, Husting slipped into unconsciousness and at 10:45 passed away.³⁵³

Husting’s funeral on Wednesday, October 24, drew a huge crowd. Congressional representatives from Washington, including Robert La Follette, and legislators from Madison, along with Governor Philipp, made their way to the small Dodge County town of Mayville. After a brief trip to a funeral home in Fond du Lac, Husting’s body had laid in state at his sister Bella Lamoreux’s Mayville home. By 10 am on Wednesday, hundreds of people had gathered on the Lamoreux lawn and into the street to witness the service held on Bella’s front porch. Despite La Follette’s policy disagreements with Husting, the senior senator served as an honorary pallbearer during the funeral and spent much of the service trying to console Mrs. Lamoreux, who one newspaper described as “near prostration from grief.” After the service, the funeral cortege made its way to the gravesite followed by a mile-long parade of mourners. Throughout the service, Gus remained inconsolable.³⁵⁴

Even before the funeral was over, questions about who would take Husting’s place and who had authority to replace the recently deceased senator began to emerge. The day after Husting’s death, Wisconsin’s attorney general announced that Husting could only be replaced by election, but Governor Philipp thought having two elections for the same position within a year was a waste of money and instead planned to ask the legislature for permission to appoint a replacement until the Fall 1918 election. To

³⁵³ “Senator Husting Shot and Killed by His Brother in an Accident,” *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh), October 22, 1917, 12; “U.S. Senator Paul Husting Killed by Own Brother in Hunting Accident at Pickette,” *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, October 22, 1917, 1; “Sen. Husting Killed,” *Sturgeon Bay Advocate*, October 25, 1917, 1; “Gustave Husting Tells Tragic Story of Fatal Hunt Accident,” *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, October 25, 1917, 4.

³⁵⁴ “Great Throng in Tribute to Husting,” *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, October 25, 1917, 4.

Wisconsin's hyperpatriots, Husting had been the embodiment of a loyal, patriotic American. Their pride in the way he castigated disloyalty and his unwavering support of President Wilson could barely be contained. As the governor made plans to find Husting's replacement, a concern arose among Wisconsin's loyalists about Philipp's ability and/or willingness to appoint someone equal in patriotism to the deceased senator, Paul O. Husting. This apprehension would eventually lead Wisconsin to its most significant crisis of loyalty during the Great War.

Chapter 4: Wisconsin's Crisis of Loyalty, October 1917-April 1918

To Milwaukee the city election Tuesday is no less crucial than the huge battle in France is to the world...By her decision she will regain the confidence of the American people or hopelessly lose it.³⁵⁵
Milwaukee Journal, April 1, 1918

From the time of Senator Paul Husting's death in late October 1917 until the election to name his replacement on April 2, 1918, Wisconsin's loyalists worried how the state's citizens would vote. Would they elect a "loyalty" candidate and regain the confidence of the rest of the nation or would they fall into a deeper pit of disloyalty by electing a candidate with views similar to those of Senator Robert La Follette or, even worse, a Socialist? President Wilson spoke of this concern when he wrote Vice President Thomas R. Marshall, who was campaigning in Wisconsin for the Democratic candidate,

The attention of the country will be centered upon it [the election in Wisconsin] because of the universal feeling against Senator La Follette and the question which will be in every patriotic man's mind whether Wisconsin is really loyal to the country in this time of crisis or not.³⁵⁶

Aware of this looming "crisis of loyalty," the state's hyperpatriots tried to persuade, cajole, and, sometimes, even threaten potential voters to choose wisely. They knew that the nation's eyes were firmly fixed on Wisconsin. The tension and fear that underlined many of the self-described patriots' statements, especially as the election moved closer, illustrated their lack of confidence in Wisconsin voters and their awareness that those who appeared patriotic in action, possibly due to the effects of the Espionage Act, may not have been in thought. In their anxious rhetoric, loyalists

³⁵⁵ "Tomorrow Milwaukee Will Decide—What?" *Milwaukee Journal*, April 1, 1918, 1.

³⁵⁶ Nancy C. Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2008), 259.

wondered if these phantom patriots would show their true colors in the anonymity of the ballot box. While the final outcome did not represent their worst fears, it was more ambiguous than the black and white answer the state's hyperpatriots had hoped for and in its aftermath, they struggled to interpret the result.

Not only did Wisconsin elect a new U.S. Senator on April 2, but Milwaukee also held its biennial election for mayor the same day. Concerns that swirled around the senatorial race were also apparent in the mayoral race. In both cases, a Socialist ran for the seat, a cause of apprehension among the state and the city's loyal patriots. The difference being that the Milwaukee Socialist, Daniel Webster Hoan, Jr., had been the incumbent since his election to mayor in 1916. Hoan, along with the first Socialist mayor Emil Seidel (elected in 1910), had shown Milwaukee residents how their city could be run free of corruption and graft, the existing state of affairs when Milwaukee elected Seidel. By the spring of 1918, however, the city's loyalist patriots could not stomach the idea of a Socialist leading Milwaukee, a city already under a cloud of alleged disloyalty. American Socialists generally believed that the Great War in Europe was created by capitalists to make a profit and not one to make the world safe for democracy; ideas the city's patriots saw as dangerous to the war effort. Hoan's detractors agreed that the mayor had improved the city substantially and had done everything possible to further the war effort, but his Socialist beliefs disqualified him from being a "loyal" American, and they actively fought against his re-election. In many ways, anxiety over the outcome of the Milwaukee mayoral election mirrored, although on a smaller scale, the concerns about the senatorial campaign.

Hoan's journey to Milwaukee mayor had not been inevitable. He had been born during 1881 in Waukesha, a summer resort town known for its spring water, to parents who ran a boarding house, while his father also worked as a blacksmith. When Daniel was eight, his mother left the family and shortly afterward his parents divorced, leaving Daniel Sr. to raise the four Hoan children. Daniel idolized his father, who was a strong advocate of labor rights and an early member of the Populist Party. Daniel Sr. even hid Socialist Alfred Parsons on his property for six weeks, after Parsons was accused of participating in Chicago's 1886 Haymarket bombing that killed seven policemen. Parsons eventually turned himself in and, after a lengthy trial, was convicted and hung. Until Daniel Sr.'s death in 1895, the father and son frequently discussed the legitimacy of the Parsons case and both strongly believed the Socialist had not deserved his fate. Following his father's death, Hoan worked for several years as a cook in Milwaukee restaurants, but at the turn of the century decided to pursue a college degree, despite having only an eighth-grade education. In 1901, he entered the University of Wisconsin, where he distinguished himself as a student, especially as an orator. After graduating in 1905, Hoan moved to Chicago and opened a restaurant. When that failed, he found work at a law firm that handled labor cases. While there, he became inspired to pursue a law degree at the Chicago Kent College of Law. In 1908 he passed the bar exam in Illinois and Wisconsin.³⁵⁷

Hoan admitted that he had been afflicted at an early age with a "political virus."³⁵⁸ Although inclined to join the Socialist Party, he decided, while he still lived in

³⁵⁷ Information about Daniel Hoan's early life comes from Edward S. Kerstein, *Milwaukee's All-American Mayor: Portrait of Daniel Webster Hoan* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966).

³⁵⁸ Kerstein, 29.

Chicago, to research the two main political parties first by visiting their party headquarters, listening to speeches, and attending debates. He concluded they reeked with corruption and were “damnably crooked.”³⁵⁹ By the time he left for college, Hoan had become an active member of the Socialist party. Milwaukee Socialists, including Victor Berger, had had their eye on the up-and-coming party member and in June 1908 encouraged him to move to Milwaukee and open a law practice there. For years, Hoan had admired Clarence Darrow and his support of the labor movement. Once in Milwaukee, Hoan emulated the eminent attorney by focusing on labor cases. He worked closely with the Wisconsin State and American Federations of Labor and helped draft Wisconsin’s workmen’s compensation act. In 1910, Milwaukee’s Socialist Party decided Hoan was ready to run for city attorney in the spring municipal elections.

Milwaukee had suffered under a corrupt government, led by Democrats, for decades and by 1910 its citizens seemed ready for a new approach. Once the election results had been counted, not only had Milwaukee elected the Socialist Daniel Hoan city attorney, but Socialists filled all of Milwaukee’s municipal seats, including mayor, city comptroller, and city treasurer, as well as 21 of the 25 open aldermen positions. This was the first time in American history that Socialists had control of a city government. Milwaukee’s support of Socialists repeated itself in the fall of 1910, when one of the city’s two congressional districts elected Victor Berger to represent it in the U.S. House of Representatives and sent twelve Socialists to the state assembly and two to the state senate. Socialists had won by emphasizing their support of the working man and their

³⁵⁹ Kerstein, 14.

desire to run a clean government. For the next four years, Hoan earned the respect of Milwaukee residents, often by challenging powerful public utilities and winning.

When the United States entered the European War, Hoan had been Milwaukee's mayor for a year. During that time, he had had to fight his opponents on the city council, who at first refused to confirm any of his appointments to head city offices, as well as powerful businessmen, who did not agree with his Socialist approach to government. Decades later, Hoan told his biographer that he always believed in the philosophy of Socialism, but felt it "had to be tempered to fit into the American idealism of the Constitution," which meant not adhering too closely to the writings of Karl Marx. To that end, his proposals usually focused on measures that improved life for everybody, such as better public schools, new playgrounds, clean water supplies, and efficient sewage removal. His "real enemies—the real opponents to good, clean government," he quickly learned, "were the people with lots of money," who usually lived outside Milwaukee, but had businesses in it. These enemies began describing him derogatorily as a "sewer Socialist," when he emphasized practical and pragmatic issues over backroom politicking. Hoan did not like this epithet, but historians have since used it to describe the type of American Socialism practiced by Daniel Hoan.³⁶⁰

Hoan did not attend the Socialist convention in St. Louis the week President Wilson and Congress declared war, as did his fellow Milwaukee Socialist Victor Berger. He was not interested in supporting a platform that "damn[ed] everything about the war," although he did believe Wilson should have kept America out of the "capitalist war." Instead, he looked for efficient ways to co-ordinate Milwaukee's war efforts,

³⁶⁰ Kerstein, 89.

beginning with draft registration in June 1917. Shortly after war was declared, Wheeler Bloodgood, in his role as chairman of the Wisconsin Defense League, asked Hoan to share his war effort ideas with the organization's executive committee. Impressed with Hoan's idea to create a county Council of Defense, one that would represent all the county's residents regardless of party, religion, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, the committee charged Hoan and Bloodgood to inform the state Council of Defense of their decision to put Hoan's plan into action. On April 30, 1917, the newly formed Milwaukee County Council of Defense elected Hoan to be chairman and Bloodgood to be vice-chairman.

Over most of the next year, Hoan and Bloodgood, not natural allies, worked well together and Bloodgood frequently praised Hoan's war work, but when Hoan decided to run for mayor as the incumbent in 1918 on a Socialist platform, Bloodgood had a change of heart. The break between the two men occurred in late February, when Milwaukee Socialists met to endorse Hoan as the party's mayoral candidate and write a platform that had echoes of the St. Louis Socialist manifesto from the year before, including this statement:

The American people did not want and do not want this war. They were plunged into the abyss by the treachery of the ruling class of the country—its demagogic agitators, its bought press, its sensational photoplays [movies], its lying advertisements, and other purchasable instruments of public expression.³⁶¹

When Hoan embraced this platform, Bloodgood called a meeting of the Milwaukee County Council of Defense administrative committee for the purpose of insisting Hoan

³⁶¹ Wheeler P. Bloodgood, *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, WI: [unidentified publisher], March 1918), 5.

step down as chairman of the Council and discontinue his race for mayor. In a statement to the committee, Bloodgood implied Hoan's continued governance of the city and the Council would lead Milwaukee to a fate similar to Russia's.³⁶²

On March 11, 1918, Bloodgood and other members of the administrative committee let the mayor know there would be a meeting of the Council three days later where Hoan could either resign or be removed as the chairman of the Council. Hoan demanded the committee provide "a single instance in which I had failed to aid the government in the persecution of this war," knowing that they could not.³⁶³ He accused the committee of having a political anti-Socialist motive, since they were unable to attack his work. Hoan also reminded committee members that he had organized the Council to represent all residents of the city, not just one political party or voice.

Bloodgood replied:

We were all ready to drop politics and did so until the Socialist city platform was adopted and the mayor announced that he stood on it. We all stood with him on every economic demand and in everything he thought wise...I went to Washington to say goodbye [sic] to my sons who were leaving for the front. When I came back I found you [Hoan], whom I had defended, standing on a platform saying that my sons were criminals...I cannot believe that you realize the meaning and consequences of that platform. You are too kind-hearted, too big a man to believe it. You can not stand on that plank in the Socialist city platform and stay on this council.³⁶⁴

On March 14, the committee voted sixteen to five to remove Hoan from the chairmanship. Only the Socialists on the committee had supported the mayor. Hoan responded he would step down as chairman, but continue to be an active supporter of

³⁶² Bloodgood was referring to the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 that put Vladimir Lenin in power and created the U.S.S.R.

³⁶³ *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood*, 7.

³⁶⁴ "Mayor Off War Work Board," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 14, 1918, 1; *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood*, 3.

the war effort in his role as mayor. He added that Milwaukee voters would not be pleased with the committee's action and evidence of this displeasure "will be presented to you on the second day of April [the day of the mayoral election]."³⁶⁵ For the next two weeks, Milwaukee's hyperpatriots did everything in their power to convince Milwaukee's electorate that Hoan's acceptance of the Socialist platform made him incapable of being an effective and competent mayor during wartime. As the election drew closer, they became confident that Milwaukee would vote their way. They were in for a surprise.

Meanwhile, the Senatorial race to replace Paul Husting had also heated up. A few days after Husting's death, Governor Philipp announced his intention to appoint a temporary replacement to the late Senator's seat until the next election in November 1918, rather than hold an earlier election. Philipp had learned that, although the U.S. Constitution required vacancies be filled by election, a governor could fill an empty congressional seat if the state legislature gave him permission. On October 31, 1917, the governor stated that he would call a special session of the state legislature and ask its members to give him the ability to do just that. In his statement, Philipp suggested that an earlier election would provide pacifists and anti-war propagandists an excuse to advocate their position. He also spoke of the cost, estimating the state would spend around \$200,000 to hold a state election; a cost the state would have to repeat for the November 1918 elections.³⁶⁶ When the Secretary of the Loyalty Legion George Kull travelled to counties in east central Wisconsin, a portion of which he described as "pro-

³⁶⁵ *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood*, 7.

³⁶⁶ "Philipp to Seek Power to Appoint," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, October 31, 1917, 1.

German as hell,” to organize county chapters of the Loyalty Legion, he found the predominant “sentiment in favor of the Philipp plan to appoint a U.S. senator” rather than holding a special election.³⁶⁷

Not everyone agreed with the governor’s choice, however. Secretary of the Wisconsin Patriotic Press Walter S. Goodland summed up the views of the hyperpatriots in a letter to the state’s newspaper editors, “The people of Wisconsin will be damned as cowardly and afraid to put their loyalty to the test if they do not demand a special election for United States senator.”³⁶⁸ A few days later, a *Milwaukee Journal* editorial reinforced Goodland by stating, “The only way that there can be a showdown on Americanism in Wisconsin is by a political fight.” Those not willing to fight, the editorial suggested, were “like poor, weak women who...choose what they think is the easiest way.”³⁶⁹ Around the same time, newspaper commentator and ardent hyperpatriot Ellis Usher argued Philipp’s reasons for avoiding an election did not hold up. Usher noted that Philipp had frequently spoken of the depth of Wisconsin’s loyalty. With such a loyal population, Usher argued, any agitation by pacifists or anti-war propagandists should have a negligible effect. As to the cost, Usher thought a vigorously contested election would do quite a lot to improve “state unity and patriotic uplift,” making it worth any expense involved.³⁷⁰ On the other side of the political divide, Progressives, who generally did not trust the governor, also opposed a senatorial appointment by

³⁶⁷ George Kull (Shawano) to Walter Goodland (Milwaukee), November 13, 1917, WLL papers, Box 1 correspondence, WHS. The counties Kull visited included Manitowoc, Brown, Outagamie, Winnebago, Fond du Lac, and Shawano. He described the latter county as “pro-German as hell.” Despite this obvious difficulty, he had created chapters in Fond du Lac, Winnebago, and Shawano Counties and expected “to have thorough organizations doing aggressive work” in all the named counties “by next Saturday.”

³⁶⁸ “Test Loyalty of Wisconsin,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 6, 1917, 7.

³⁶⁹ “When Shall We Begin to Fight?” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 14, 1917, 1.

³⁷⁰ Ellis B. Usher, “Patriots Demand a Special Election,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, November 17, 1917, 3.

Philipp.³⁷¹ The *Racine Journal*, on the other hand, warned hyperpatriots to consider the consequences of an election, which it warned could lead to a supporter of Senator Robert La Follette or Victor Berger winning the Senate seat.³⁷²

While most national newspapers in late 1917 did not show much interest in Husting's replacement, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* made sure its readers knew that it considered the issue a matter of nationwide concern. The stakes were high, it argued, since only by electing a senator similar to Paul Husting could Wisconsin save its good name, as well as demonstrate its "[intent] to adhere to this union" and not secede. Wisconsin already seemed weakened by La Follette, its German population, and large rural population, the newspaper editorialized, making it the best place for the enemy "to drive the entering wedge" into the United States and an ideal base for enemy operations. Only by electing a loyal senator, the *Tribune* concluded, could Wisconsin demonstrate its loyalty, renounce separatism, and "purge itself of the La Follette stain."³⁷³

After a delay of two months, Philipp finally agreed to call a special session of the state legislature to vote on war-related issues, including finding a replacement for Husting, and set the date for reconvening on February 19.³⁷⁴ At the same time, he made it clear that he intended to stand firm on his request to appoint a temporary senator. State legislators, probably influenced by the rhetoric of Wisconsin's loyalists, did not take long, only two days after assembling, to deny the governor his wish. Philipp

³⁷¹ Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940, volume V* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1990), 46.

³⁷² "Gov. Philipp and His Critic," *Racine Journal*, November 27, 1917, 6.

³⁷³ "The Case of Wisconsin," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1917, 8.

³⁷⁴ Philipp called for a special session on January 4, 1918. See "State Legislature Called for Special Session Feb. 19th," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, January 4, 1918, 1.

immediately declared that elections would be held, “against his will,” with a primary on March 19 and the general election on April 2. He also announced that he would have appointed U.S. Representative Irvine Lenroot in Husting’s place.³⁷⁵

While Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots pushed for an election to replace Senator Husting, they were also taking other steps to promote the cause of loyalty in the state. At the time of its formation, the Loyalty Legion had made “patriotic education” one of its priorities. As one member wrote, the Legion needed “to attack this ulcer [of disloyalty] that has broken out amongst us in the only sensible manner, that is by a counter campaign of education.” While the Legion used speaking tours and mass meetings as a way to get its message out, they also relied heavily on the dissemination of literature. At first, they used materials provided by the National Security League, the YMCA, and the Red Cross, but eventually became the official Wisconsin distributor of pamphlets and flyers produced by the Committee of Public Information.³⁷⁶

Since the Loyalty Legion feared that Socialist and “pro-German” propaganda could easily sway the working classes, their education became a top priority. As the Legion’s Speakers Bureau Director Thomas J. Mahon stated in a letter to the Legion’s executive committee chairman, William A. Hayes, “Let us convert our people to our cause. Let us make our cause touch the heart and soul of those whose minds cannot comprehend...the difference between autocracy and democracy.” He went on to urge the

³⁷⁵ “Special Election is Called for April 2,” *Grand Rapids Daily Leader* (Wisconsin), February 23, 1918, 1.

³⁷⁶ Lorin Lee Cary, “The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, 1917-1918,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 53, no. 1 (Autumn 1969): 40.

Legion to open its arms to those from all walks of life; to not just be a top down organization, but one also formed “from seed sown in common clay.”³⁷⁷ Even before Mahon wrote his letter, Andrew R. McDonald, a locomotive engineer living in South Kaukauna (Winnebago Co.), had written to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen in Cleveland, Ohio, at the behest of the Legion’s executive committee, asking if leading members of his union would come to Wisconsin and give patriotic speeches. McDonald mentioned in his letter to the Brotherhood’s assistant president that Wisconsin’s working class would “place a great deal more confidence in you [another member of the working class] and will be much more apt to be guided by your advice than they would by a speaker of another class.”³⁷⁸

Besides fearing for Wisconsin’s working class, the Loyalty Legion also showed a great concern for the patriotic education of the state’s schoolchildren. Loyalty and patriotism, Legion members insisted, had to be part of the school curriculum. They first focused on improving loyalty education in the schools of Milwaukee, the Legion’s hometown. Except for five Socialists, including Meta Berger, Victor Berger’s wife, on the Milwaukee school board, the remaining ten members were open to the Legion’s suggestions. As one school board member contended, “The schools are the bulwark of the nation. They should make American citizens. They should teach loyalty.”³⁷⁹ Since the Legion believed the board should have all high school teachers and students sign a loyalty pledge, they submitted their version of one to the school board at its October 23

³⁷⁷ Thomas J. Mahon (Milwaukee) to William A. Hayes and Walter S. Goodland (Milwaukee), November 7, 1917, WLL papers, Box 1 correspondence, WHS.

³⁷⁸ Andrew R. McDonald (S. Kaukauna) to Timothy Shea (Cleveland, OH), November 3, 1917, WLL papers, Box 1 correspondence, WHS.

³⁷⁹ “Schools to Help Teach Loyalty,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 24, 1917, 8.

meeting. The board agreed that a loyalty pledge would be appropriate, but its members did not think an outside body should write it and turned the assignment of producing one over to the city's school superintendent, Milton C. Potter. At the same meeting, the board approved the daily singing of an American patriotic song at each Milwaukee school and encouraged the dispersal of patriotic documents provided by the United States government among Milwaukee students. The *Milwaukee Journal* felt sorry for Potter when they learned his pledge not only had to express the signer's loyalty, but also had to be careful "not to breed hate among school children." The newspaper could not imagine he would come up with a pledge much different from the one created by the Legion.³⁸⁰

The Loyalty Legion also made clear it would not condone enemy aliens as teachers in the Milwaukee school system. John S. Stover, the Legion's director of public relations, led this charge in late October 1917, when he insisted Miss Gertrude L. Reinke, a Milwaukee grade school teacher for eighteen years, be dismissed from service for being born in Germany and remaining "a citizen of the imperial German empire." Stover announced, "Only an American citizen should have the care of the morals and patriotism of our little children." When the *Milwaukee Journal* interviewed Miss Reinke about the call for her expulsion, she explained that her family arrived in the United States when she was only thirteen months old and she had always considered herself a loyal American citizen.³⁸¹ Superintendent Potter supported her position by describing Reinke as an "accidental alien," as were most of the "aliens" teaching in Milwaukee

³⁸⁰ "School Loyalty Petitions," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 25, 1917, 16.

³⁸¹ "School Teacher is an Alien," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 28, 1917, section 2, 1.

schools, eleven, of which, had been born in Germany. He added he would not have allowed these men and women to remain in the school system if they showed any indication of being pro-German.³⁸² When Stover and the Loyalty Legion continued to push for Reinke's removal, Potter suggested she sign a loyalty pledge prepared by the Legion.³⁸³ This must have worked, since Reinke remained a Milwaukee school teacher into the 1940s. She became a naturalized citizen in 1921.

The Loyalty Legion also looked for ways to insert itself into the teaching of loyalty and patriotism in schools throughout the state, not just in Milwaukee. On January 9, 1918, the Legion sent a letter to school superintendents of twenty-one Wisconsin cities asking their opinion about organizing a Junior Loyalty Legion, one that would charge dues.³⁸⁴ The response was not favorable. The superintendents who replied made clear they believed in incorporating patriotic instruction into their school day, but either felt they had already implemented appropriate programs (Fond du Lac schools had the Junior Patriotic League and Beloit the Junior Red Cross) or would prefer to pick programs that could be adapted to the local situation rather than ones provided by a "state central authority." In the end, the superintendents did not think Wisconsin schools needed a Junior Loyalty Legion, especially since they were already swamped

³⁸² "18 Aliens Teaching Here," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 30, 1917, 9.

³⁸³ "Loyalty Pledge by Teachers," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 7, 1917, 4.

³⁸⁴ George Kull (Milwaukee), Loyalty Legion Secretary, to twenty-one Wisconsin school superintendents, January 9, 1918. The Loyalty Legion sent the letter to superintendents in Appleton, Ashland, Beaver Dam, Beloit, Eau Claire, Edgerton, Fond du Lac, Fort Atkinson, Green Bay, Janesville, Madison, Manitowoc, Marinette, Merrill, Neenah, Racine, Sheboygan, Stevens Point, Sturgeon Bay, Superior, and Wausau.

with ideas for patriotic activities and demands on student's money to pay for them. The Legion quietly dropped the idea.³⁸⁵

By late November 1917, the *Milwaukee Journal* wanted the Loyalty Legion to do more than promote loyalty through education; the Legion's duty, the newspaper's editors insisted, must include the suppression of disloyalty. Loyal citizens had to expose and punish traitors, slackers, and other "unworthy individuals."³⁸⁶ This rhetoric of "punishment" and "suppression" began in the fall of 1917 and ratcheted up significantly at the beginning of 1918. One of the earliest examples of this language in print appeared on the back of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion membership cards. Shortly after the Legion's formation in September 1917, the organization printed these cards, which listed their goals, including number five, "To seek out and bring traitors to punishment." The *Milwaukee Journal* also began to focus on the need to punish the disloyal with one of the earliest examples occurring in a September 5 editorial that concluded, "Time will...result in the punishment of those who have been false both to the nation and to men of their own blood."³⁸⁷ The *Journal* repeated this idea about two weeks later in one of its editorials stating America's "Benedict Arnolds...should be hunted out and punished remorselessly for their treachery."³⁸⁸

When the *Milwaukee Journal*, the Loyalty Legion, and other hyperpatriots spoke of punishing traitors in the winter of 1917 and spring of 1918, they were referring to

³⁸⁵ J.G. Moore (Superior) to George Kull, Loyalty Legion Secretary, January 11 1918; J.E. Roberts (Fond du Lac) to George Kull, January 14, 1918; F.J. Shannon (Ashland) to George Kull, January 14, 1918; F.E. Converse (Beloit) to George Kull, January 14, 1918, WLL papers, Box 2, WHS.

³⁸⁶ "A Duty of the Loyalty Legion," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 22, 1917, 14.

³⁸⁷ "How Governor Philipp's Demagoguery Hurts," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 5, 1917, 1.

³⁸⁸ "Changing Front," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 20, 1917, 12.

shaming or the handing out of legal penalties by local, state, or federal governments. By the end of 1917, the *Milwaukee Journal* editors were encouraging patriotic citizens to aid the federal government in the discovery, exposure, and punishment of traitors. Milwaukee resident Dennis Scholl reinforced this emphasis when he wrote to the newspaper, “Every disloyal remark heard should be noted and reported to the proper authorities...The constitution of this country must act fair to all and give each individual what is coming to him.”³⁸⁹ While hyperpatriots wanted all patriotic citizens in Wisconsin reporting traitors to government authorities, the *Journal* believed that the Loyalty Legion was the best organization to work with federal government agencies towards the goal of destroying the state’s disloyal element, “root, branch and body.”³⁹⁰

Around the same time discussion of punishing traitors appeared in the *Journal*, its editors realized that “Measures to prevent treasonable acts and to throttle treasonable utterances will of course be denounced as a manifestation of Prussianism” (i.e. seen as undemocratic and/or unconstitutional).³⁹¹ When complaints did arise about governmental agencies suppressing freedom of speech, the *Journal* explained there was a difference between speech liberty and speech license. According to the newspaper, the former was protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution, but the latter, described as a “license to criticize, condemn, and do inestimable harm” to the United States, was not. The editors insisted that “the government” must make the suppression of those “yellow-streaked curs,” who hid behind a freedom-of-speech “smoke screen,” its

³⁸⁹ “Thoughts of Our Readers: Loyal Men Be on Alert,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 29, 1917, 10. Dennis Scholl (1862-1945) was a German Jew who had been born in “French Germany,” probably the Alsace Lorraine area. He immigrated to the United States in 1893 and became a naturalized citizen in 1900. He was the proprietor of a frame shop in Milwaukee during the war.

³⁹⁰ “Suppress Disloyalty,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 6, 1917, 14.

³⁹¹ “Traitors Will Disturb Peace,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 4, 1917, 8.

absolute priority.³⁹² Despite contending that the suppression of disloyalty had to be left to government agencies, the *Journal's* editors did hint that there would be “a reckoning” one day, when disloyal cowards would be “shamed for all time to come,” while others might experience even more disastrous consequences.³⁹³

In the spring of 1918, a number of local organizations, along with Governor Philipp, attempted to strengthen local and state sedition laws by enhancing their punishments. Milwaukee Alderman John Kroener, a member of the city's common council judiciary committee, wanted, for example, to increase the maximum fine for disorderly conduct, including any “derogatory and insulting remarks about the American flag, the government and the president,” from \$25 to \$250. Socialist alderman John Doerfler, Jr. denounced the proposed ordinance, calling it “camouflage patriotism.” Fines, Doerfler insisted, would not stop the rare unpatriotic remarks made by Milwaukee residents and could possibly have unintended results. In spite of Doerfler's statements and an attempt to postpone the vote, the committee passed the resolution on to the city common council, which voted the ordinance into law a few weeks later. Mayor Hoan vetoed it immediately. The ordinance, he argued, did not punish those who were the most disloyal—the millionaire who sold rotten beef to soldiers, or the capitalist who supplied shoddy clothes to the military, or the man who was making 500 percent more profit during the war than before it. He also resented “the imputation which this ordinance casts upon our city.” The Socialists on the council

³⁹² “Speech Liberty & License,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 8, 1917, 4.

³⁹³ “Aggressive Loyalty Needed,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 13, 1917, 16.

voted as a block, along with one nonpartisan alderman, to sustain Hoan's veto, and the matter was dismissed.³⁹⁴

By early February, an interest in passing state sedition laws emerged. The Oneida County Council of Defense adopted a resolution calling for the passage of state laws to punish the utterance of seditious or disloyal remarks. They asked that the legislature's special session called by Governor Philipp consider this resolution.³⁹⁵ Although Philipp had reservations about sedition laws, he saw their need and had state Senator Timothy Burke prepare two bills, one to prohibit inciting insurrection or sedition and to prohibit the advocating of disloyalty towards the national or state governments and, a second to prohibit the interference or discouragement of enlistments in the army or navy. Philipp was adamant, however, that the laws should "not mean that there may not be criticism of the government," nor should they interfere with any reasonable exercise of the freedoms of speech, of the press, or of the right to assemble.³⁹⁶

The *Milwaukee Journal*, despite being "in favor of any righteous move that will promote loyalty," could not support Philipp's state sedition law. The newspaper argued, "The state government has done precious little to discourage unpatriotic activity...It has been so unwise that one naturally balks at giving it additional powers." Disingenuously, the paper referred to the "state government," but one could read between the lines to see the Democrat-inclined paper's concern focused on the Republican governor, who they

³⁹⁴ "Opposes Act to Curb Disloyal," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 5, 1918, 2; "Vote is Delayed; Socialists Block Action to Punish Disloyal," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 12, 1918, 2; "Hoan Tells Why," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 7, 1918, 4; "Halts Loyalty Ordinance," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 12, 1918, 2.

³⁹⁵ "Ask Strict Laws for Disloyal," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 1, 1918, 4.

³⁹⁶ Emanuel L. Philipp, *Messages to the Legislature and Proclamations* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin Printing Co.), 242-243.

feared would use the powers of the sedition law for personal or political ends.³⁹⁷ On February 23, the state legislature killed the sedition bill prohibiting the advocating of disloyalty, but did pass, in a close vote, the bill prohibiting enlistment interference. The legislature also voted against two other Philipp-backed bills related to the war effort. Many saw the dismissal of three of these four bills as a repudiation of Philipp and predicted an early end to his political career. Philipp, still concerned about the wisdom of any sedition law, added a memorandum to the passed bill that stated the new law could not be used as a way to justify abuses of loyal citizens or limit their constitutional rights.³⁹⁸

Wisconsin's hyperpatriots consistently placed Philipp in a gray area of loyalty. He was not as disloyal as La Follette, but he clearly did not meet their requirements as a missionary or crusader for American loyalty or patriotism. Loyalty Legion chairman, William Hayes, in a speech at the Auditorium in Milwaukee, declared Americans had come to expect a new, higher, and single standard in public service, "The golden standard of an intelligent, courageous, self-sacrificing and militant loyalty to our national government...a loyalty with no alien squint."³⁹⁹ To the state's hyperpatriots, Philipp did not meet this standard. As the *Journal* explained, the governor had not "set a shining example of militant and uncompromising patriotism," but neither had the Republican party of Wisconsin, which for decades had dominated the state.⁴⁰⁰ The party had not only produced the disloyal La Follette (a Progressive Republican) and the

³⁹⁷ "State Punishment of Disloyalty," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 2, 1918, 4.

³⁹⁸ Robert S. Maxwell, *Emanuel L. Philipp, Wisconsin Stalwart* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1959), 158-159. No one was successfully prosecuted under this law.

³⁹⁹ "Loyalty Indivisible," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 5, 1917, 8.

⁴⁰⁰ "Setting Up an Inquisition in Wisconsin," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 28, 1918, 12.

disappointing Philipp (a Stalwart Republican), the *Journal* argued, but also a state legislature incapable of “affirming the state’s loyalty to the nation’s cause.” The party, it suggested, was “bankrupt in militantly patriotic leadership,” and its central committee needed to find ways to attract “militant patriots.”⁴⁰¹

“Militant patriotism,” which hints of order, authority, and punishment, became the catchword for the state’s loyalists at the beginning of 1918. At a mass meeting held in Milwaukee on March 22, the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion declared that “the militant loyalists of Wisconsin” had been assembled to give them “an opportunity to sustain [their country] in its great struggle.” To this end, they approved fourteen resolutions that included asking Congress to pass laws that would punish disloyal and seditious citizens by the loss of citizenship and their property, as well as assisting the American Protective League and other government agencies to seek out and punish all persons guilty of sedition.⁴⁰² Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots had given themselves a name, “militant loyalists,” and a clearer mission.

Possibly the best representation of militant patriotism in Wisconsin could be found in the Wisconsin members of the American Protective League (APL), especially Milwaukee resident and Loyalty Legion board member, John S. Stover.⁴⁰³ The APL was

⁴⁰¹ “What Will It Do? And When?” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 18, 1918, 8.

⁴⁰² “Loyalty Legion Resolutions That Aim to Remove Blot from Wisconsin’s Name,” *Sunday State Journal* (Madison), March 24, 1918, 2; “Plea for Militant Patriotism,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 23, 1918, 3; “Wisconsin Loyalty Legion State Secretary’s Report, Mass Meeting Minutes, Annual Meeting Minutes, and President’s Address,” March 23, 1918, 13, WLL papers, Box 4, WHS.

⁴⁰³ John S. Stover was born May 20, 1883 in Burlington (Racine Co.), Wisconsin, the son of attorney James Harney Stover (1849-1935) and Isabella Spoor (1850-1930). Both parents had ancestors who had fought in the Revolutionary War. John received his law degree in 1907 from Marquette University, Milwaukee. Around September 1918, he was commissioned a major in the Judge Advocate General’s department and sent to Washington, DC, until after the armistice. Stover then worked in New York City as admiralty counsel for the War Department. Shortly before being discharged he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Stover married in 1920 and

the brainchild of Chicago advertising executive Albert Briggs, who, in March 1917, offered to create an organization of volunteer detectives to assist the Department of Justice, Bureau of Investigation's search for agents of foreign governments or persons unfriendly to the Government. At the end of the month, when war seemed imminent, the Bureau accepted Briggs's offer and clarified that the volunteer organization would supply information and assist in securing information, but would remain as confidential as possible and make no arrests without consulting Federal authorities first. Recruiting began immediately and by the time Congress declared war on Germany almost a hundred branches were in the early stages of being formed. Wilson and his cabinet supported the APL and historian Joan Jensen has suggested that by doing so America's leaders "tacitly endorsed an organization which could field a legion of spies larger than any autocrat had ever dreamed of."⁴⁰⁴

The Bureau, which only had a limited number of agents in Wisconsin, a state it thought needed watching, used the APL to be their eyes and ears by encouraging neighbors to spy on neighbors. At least 170 APL operatives served in Wisconsin during the war, eighty-one in Milwaukee alone, although records for several western Wisconsin cities do not survive. Briggs recruited the earliest Wisconsin APL volunteers just as America looked ready to enter the European War. He travelled to Milwaukee around that time to meet with members of the Wisconsin Defense League (precursor to the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion) with the intention of discussing the formation of an APL

brought his Milwaukee bride to New York City, where he served as a Judge Advocate for the Maritime Affairs office for many years. He died in New York City on June 2, 1959. Most of this information is from Ancestry.com and from "Out-of-Town Wedding News," *Washington Herald* (District of Columbia), December 31, 1919, 5.

⁴⁰⁴ Joan Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1968), 17-31. The DOJ's Bureau of Investigation was the predecessor of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

branch for the city. WDL officers quickly saw the wisdom in Briggs's plan and agreed to appoint one of their members, attorney John S. Stover, as the head of its Milwaukee branch. Stover, like most APL agents, received little training and even less direction from the Bureau of Investigation about his new role. With limited oversight, Stover, along with many of his compatriots, frequently ignored privacy laws and brushed aside concerns about civil rights once he had a potential traitor in his crosshairs.⁴⁰⁵

Stover became known for frequently overstepping his duties in his attempts to



John S. Stover, c. 1918

ferret out traitors and other disloyal citizens. After unsuccessfully trying to remove “accidental alien” Gertrude Reinke from the Milwaukee Public School system in late October 1917, Stover quickly turned his attention to another recalcitrant school employee. In a November 20 article, the *Milwaukee Journal* reported that Stover and other members of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion had visited the Twenty-fifth Avenue School and

found the principal, Theodore J. Oesau, had been remiss in his patriotic duties. Not only had his school neglected to fly the American flag that day, as required by order of the Milwaukee school board, but had not done so since the beginning of the school year. Stover insisted staff retrieve the flag from the basement, where it had become covered in

⁴⁰⁵ Kevin J. Abing, *A Crowded Hour: Milwaukee during the Great War, 1917-1918* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2017), 77; Richard L. Pifer, *The Great War in Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017), 193; Jensen, 25.

dust and dirt, and raise it in the presence of the schoolchildren. The Loyalty Legion contingent had to remind Oesau to remove his hat.

Offended by Oesau's apparent disrespect for the flag, Stover wrote letters to school Superintendent Potter and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, alerting them to the situation. After learning that the school had not flown the flag because the school's elderly janitor had difficulties hoisting it on its pole, the school board decided to reprimand Oesau, but take no other action. *Sentinel* reporter Charles Kennedy, who had received the letter about Oesau's misdeed, accused Stover of stirring up this matter because the Loyalty Legion needed publicity to show they were doing something. He reminded Stover, "It isn't the stars and stripes on a flagstaff but the flag in the heart that counts." He asked Stover to admit his mistake, but the APL agent replied that he "had only called the attention of the school authorities to the facts" and did not tell them how to respond.⁴⁰⁶

Stover's actions even caused friction among those who supported the war effort. Milwaukee school board chairman William Pieplow, for example, accused him of using feverish haste, ignoring common courtesy, and subverting the aims and goals of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion to "gratify his morbid desire" for publicity. Early in the war, Milwaukee lawyer Erich C. Stern described Stover as a "bigoted little petty-fogging bureaucrat," who routinely "bully-ragged" innocent enemy aliens. Shortly after the Reinke affair, the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion executive board believed they needed to rein in Stover. To this end, they asked the Legion's Secretary to remind Stover that the

⁴⁰⁶ "Vote to Censure Principal," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 20, 1917, 5; Abing, 91.

Legion was “not a punitive institution” and that he not take similar actions as an official representative of the Loyalty Legion. The Department of Justice agent in Milwaukee, Ralph Izard, also made it clear that he was not pleased with Stover’s work. By the fall of 1917, even APL founder Briggs wanted Stover removed from the organization. This never happened. National APL Director Charles Frey acknowledged at the time that Stover’s brother being the U.S. District Attorney in Milwaukee was the only reason he was not removed, although the fact that by late 1917 Stover was being less aggressive may have also played a role in preventing his ouster.⁴⁰⁷ With his new attitude, the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion again felt comfortable sending him information about potential traitors until he left for Washington, DC in September 1918 to work for the Judge Advocate General’s office.⁴⁰⁸

While APL agents, like John Stover, generally reported minor indiscretions that rarely resulted in any official action, Department of Justice officials did identify a handful of Wisconsin citizens they felt needed to be punished to the full extent of the law. William Gessert, a farmer from Rhine Township in Sheboygan County, was one of those citizens. Gessert had been born in Rhine to German parents. He married in 1893 and with his wife had seven children, including two boys, Benjamin and John Henry, who were 23 and 22 respectively in 1917—perfect ages for the army. Both boys had registered for the draft in June 1917, even though their father had adamantly stated

⁴⁰⁷ Abing, 89-91. Victor Berger’s paper, the *Milwaukee Leader*, described Stover as someone who “froths at the mouth wherever he gets a whiff of sauerkraut and whose sensitive American imagination runs riot when he sees a stuffed dachshund.” Abing, 107.

⁴⁰⁸ George Kull, WLL Secretary to Stover, May 2, 1918 regarding two men who avoided the draft, one through a brief marriage; June 6, 1918 regarding five men who allegedly spoke pro-German/un-American comments; and August 16, 1918 regarding suspicious wiring at a Milwaukee company and inappropriate display of an American flag, WLL papers, Box 1, WHS.

neither would go to war. When the Second District Draft Board ordered John to report for a physical exam in November 1917, Gessert refused to let him go, a clear violation of the 1917 Espionage Act. When secret service agents and a Department of Justice agent followed up on John's failure to report, Gessert told them, "Not his sons, nor any members of his family could enter the army service against Germany." Wilson was wrong to send this country to war against Germany, he continued, because Germany was "right in this war and the Germans are good people." Gessert also could not see "why his son should fight against Germany for \$30 per month when he could just as well be earning \$50 working on a neighbor's farm." He later told his Lutheran minister that



William Gessert, 1893

if the Germans invaded the United States, "he and his boys and all his family would be out to fight," but he would not send them overseas. Once Department of Justice officials showed up, however, Gessert let John take the physical exam, which he passed easily. John then learned he would be leaving for camp a few days later. When he did not show up

on the appointed day, Wednesday, November 28, the Board decided to give him a twenty-four-hour grace period. After that expired, the local chief of police visited the Gessert farm on Sunday, December 2, hoping to persuade William to let John join the army. Gessert made it very clear that this would never happen. His son, he declared, would enter the army "over his dead body." Not wanting to invite trouble or bloodshed, the police chief turned the Gessert affair over to federal authorities.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁹ "Gessert Resists the Draft," *Sheboygan Press*, December 3, 1917, 1; "Germany Right in This War," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 13, 1918, 1; "Gessert Case in Jury's Hands," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 14, 1918.

Late in the morning of Thursday, December 6, a Deputy U.S. Marshal, a Department of Justice agent, and the police chief arrived at the Gessert home to arrest William and John, but soon found themselves in an intense and bloody fight. Gessert attacked the visitors, when they forced themselves into his home, by striking the marshal in the eye with his fist and a moment later grabbing the DOJ agent by the throat. The agent responded by pounding Gessert's head with his billy club, which broke into pieces. Gessert then called for his two older boys to help. After one of them hit the marshal with a wooden stick, the DOJ agent got Gessert's sons under control by drawing his revolver. In the midst of the melee, Gessert grasped an iron clock weight and slammed it down on the marshal's head. When the agent turned his revolver on the farmer, Gessert surrendered, along with Benjamin and John. Once the federal agents had the three men locked up in the local prison, they immediately sent John to Fort Sheridan in Illinois, told Benjamin to go home and do his chores, and made plans to take Gessert to Milwaukee to be imprisoned and tried in a court of law. However, Gessert, who the marshal described as "a large, powerful man, square of shoulder and swarthy of complexion," still had some fight in him. When the marshal tried to place handcuffs on Gessert, he attacked again. In the end, the marshal needed seven more men to subdue him. Gessert remained in jail for two weeks before being released on a \$5000 bail. The army decided not to court martial John, believing his father had forced him to disobey orders, and mustered him into Co. F, 28th Infantry. Within a few months, John arrived in France and eventually saw action.⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ "Gessert Case in Jury's Hands"; "Father and Sons Fight the Officers," *Sheboygan Press*, December 6, 1917, 1; "William Gessert and His Son John Are Both Indicted," *Sheboygan Press*, December 8, 1917, 1; "Bail for Gessert Assured," *Sheboygan Press*, December 21, 1917, 1; "John Gessert Goes into the Regular Army," *Sheboygan Press*,

Gessert's trial lasted two days, February 13-14, 1918, and during his time on the stand, he denied telling his son not to report to the Draft Board or fighting with the federal agents. Even though Gessert admitted he had not purchased Liberty Bonds or supported the Red Cross, he still spoke of his loyalty for America, "the land of his birth." This last statement caught many in the courtroom by surprise, since Gessert needed a German translator to help him understand much of the proceedings. In fact, the judge, before sending the jury out to deliberate, seemed to describe him as one of the "foreign born whose hearts are not with this nation in the time of war." After deliberating for several hours, the jury found Gessert guilty of only three of the seven counts and recommended leniency in sentencing. For his crime of obstructing the enlistment service, Gessert could have received up to twenty years in prison or a \$10,000 fine or both. While the judge noted, "this crime was treasonable in its nature and treason is the greatest crime of which a man may be guilty," he felt sorry for the farmer and his family. He refused to issue a fine, believing it would hurt Gessert's family more than him, but added the "jury had no right to squirm in its judgment" and sentenced Gessert to five years at Fort Leavenworth. The next day Gessert, accompanied by the marshal he had attacked, left for the Kansas prison.⁴¹¹

The *Milwaukee Journal* described the Gessert incident as one of "grave import" that "every patriotic man and woman should ponder earnestly." The *Journal* did not

December 22, 1917, 1. The 28th Infantry arrived in France during May 1918. They fought in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive where John Gessert received a minor wound on October 4, 1918. He later received a Purple Heart. The army discharged John on September 25, 1919 and he returned to Rhine Township by September 28. He never married and spent the rest of his life on the Gessert farm. He died on March 20, 1946 at age 50.

⁴¹¹ "Gessert Case in Jury's Hands"; "Gets Five Years as Obstructor," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 15, 1918, 1. On May 24, 1919, the US Attorney General commuted Gessert's sentence to two years. However, he was back on his farm by January 22-23, 1920, the time of the census count in Sheboygan County. The local press did not mention his return. Gessert lived on his farm until his death on November 11, 1932 at age 62.

blame the Gesserts for their behavior, but instead saw them as the tools and weapons of the pacifists and German Socialists who had been active in Sheboygan County, “a center of German agitation since the outbreak of the war.” These agitators, the *Journal* asserted, had the press and the pulpit flood the county with pro-German propaganda that called the war a capitalistic conspiracy and denounced the government. Worried that violent behavior like the Gesserts could lead to even more deplorable occurrences, the *Journal* urged its readers to keep the peace and respect the law. As the paper noted, “Better orderly action now than violence later.” Still, its editors were aware that situations like the one in Sheboygan County tried men’s patience and “the breaking point could come at any time.”⁴¹² This emphasis on a peaceful approach to disloyalty would last until the spring of 1918.

In spite of the statewide press coverage of the Gessert incident, the Sheboygan County farmer was insignificant when compared to the leading disloyal Wisconsinite, Senator Robert M. La Follette, who militant patriots around the state and country still believed should be severely punished for his long list of anti-war statements. As W.J. Kershaw, a member of the Loyalty Legion, declared in early November 1917, “There is no need to waste time with small fry. La Follette would be the leader of the state’s disloyal element whether he wants to or not.”⁴¹³ After the Senator’s misreported assertion in September 1917 that America had no grievances against Germany, Wisconsin loyalists, while impatiently waiting for the U.S. Senate to expel him for

⁴¹² “Time to Think and Do—Better Wise Action Now than Violence Later,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 8, 1917, 1.

⁴¹³ “La Follette is Blamed for Disloyal Sentiment,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 14, 1917, 3.

sedition statements, intensified their reprimands and castigations of La Follette in both words and actions.

Beginning in the fall of 1917, the outpouring of disgust for La Follette among Wisconsin's self-identified patriots rose to new levels. As mentioned in the last chapter, at least five organizations wrote Senator Paul Husting, before his premature death, to say they had passed resolutions condemning La Follette and demanding his ouster from the Senate. Most of these organizations were chapters of the Council of Defense or the Loyalty Legion. On October 10, 1917, the state Council of Defense issued its own statement condemning La Follette's opposition to the war and demanding he resign as U.S. Senator.⁴¹⁴ Two months later in a more vivid testimonial of La Follette's unpopularity, fifteen members of the Phi Psi fraternity at the University of Wisconsin burned the senator in effigy after attending a mass meeting in the university gym where faculty and students agreed to launch a local chapter of the Loyalty Legion. The fraternity brothers marched in lock step in the midst of a snowstorm to the "hanging bee," which consisted of performing an Indian war dance, while another member hoisted a dummy of La Follette over a football goal post and touched a match to it.⁴¹⁵ In another blow to the senator, at the very end of 1917, the Madison Club, after a seven to two vote, expelled La Follette from its membership, a result of his "unpatriotic conduct and having given aid and comfort to the enemy."⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Charles August Nelson, "Progressivism and Loyalty in Wisconsin Politics, 1912-1918" (University of Wisconsin master's thesis, 1961), 105-106.

⁴¹⁵ "La Follette and New Paper are Burned in Effigy," *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 13, 1917, 1.

⁴¹⁶ "La Follette Expelled from Madison Club," *Eau Claire Leader*, December 29, 1917, 1; "Ousted from a Club," *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, December 29, 1917, 2.

In an attempt to remain non-partisan, the Loyalty Legion decided not to participate in the attacks on La Follette. According to the secretary of the Madison chapter, the Legion should not be seen as an organization “designed to further the political ambitions” of partisan politicians or one that took sides between the Stalwarts and Progressives in the split Republican Party.⁴¹⁷ For a few months of its existence, the Legion did accept petitions from around the state that denounced La Follette and passed them along to Wisconsin’s U.S. Representatives. In October 1917, the Legion decided to stop this particular practice, much to the disgust of board member Benjamin Carter of Menomonie (Dunn County). On October 31, Carter wrote a fellow member of his amazement that the Legion would be afraid to renounce Senator La Follette, “a Benedict Arnold to our country,” especially when “our state is the Benedict Arnold state...in the eyes of the Country.” Carter offered his resignation with the comment, “I love my country too well to affiliate with any organization where the people question their sincerity.”⁴¹⁸ This did not mean that the Loyalty Legion avoided discussion of punishing the disloyal. In February 1918, a special committee of the Legion issued a report on how to check “Kaiserism” and disloyalty in Wisconsin. Among its suggestions, the committee believed the state should create more onerous penalties for disloyalty, including imprisonment.⁴¹⁹

While the Loyalty Legion passed on censoring La Follette, the state legislature did not. When Wisconsin’s Senate and Assembly reconvened on February 19, 1918, per

⁴¹⁷ Don E. Mowry, Secretary, Madison Chapter of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion to George Kull, Secretary, Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, February 3, 1918, marked “Strictly Confidential,” WLL papers, Box 2, WHS.

⁴¹⁸ Benjamin Carter to Thomas Higgins (Milwaukee, Carter’s proxy at the November 1, 1918 WLL meeting), October 31, 1917, WLL, Box 1, WHS.

⁴¹⁹ “Report of the Special Committee Appointed Feb. 1st, 1918,” WLL papers, Box 2, WHS.

Governor Philipp's request, Republican Party assemblymen set to work drafting a Loyalty Resolution that made clear Wisconsin stood "second to no state in the union" in meeting the demands in the current struggle and that the Republican Party would not "shirk its duties as loyal citizens to its country."⁴²⁰ While the legislators easily agreed with this statement, some wanted the resolution to disavow La Follette. To this end, Assemblyman John F. Donnelly from Milwaukee offered an amendment that condemned La Follette and the nine U.S. Representatives from Wisconsin who had voted against America's entrance in the war. According to the *Wisconsin State Journal*, Donnelly "delivered a scathing speech" declaring, "A man is either loyal to this country or he is a traitor to the country." Charles Rosa, a Beloit Republican who supported La Follette, reminded the Assembly that they had passed a resolution the year before petitioning the president to keep the United States out of war. Were they also traitors? Rosa wondered. The Assembly voted later the same day and passed the Loyalty Resolution 79 to 11, but not the Donnelly amendment, which was defeated 76 to 15.⁴²¹ This, however, was not the last attempt by the Wisconsin legislature to "score," as many papers described it, or censure La Follette. The Senate now had its turn.

On Saturday, February 23, 1918, the Wisconsin Senate began debating the Loyalty Resolution as passed by the Assembly. Again, a number of the senators worried that without an amendment denouncing La Follette, the resolution would be meaningless. Infuriated by this thought, La Follette supporter Senator Henry Huber,

⁴²⁰ "Loyalty Pledge Given to G.O.P.," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 20, 1918, 6; also appeared in "Loyalty Resolution by Senator Burke Stirs the Wisconsin Legislature," *Sheboygan Press*, February 20, 1918, 1 and "La Follette Made an Issue by Burke," *Racine Journal-News*, February 20, 1918, 2.

⁴²¹ "Assembly Passes G.O.P. Loyalty Bill; Omits Name of La Follette," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 21, 1918, 1.

Republican from Stoughton (Dane Co.), provided hour-long testimony on La Follette's behalf just as the chair was ready to call for adjournment. Boisterous young men in the galleries, possibly planted there, urged him on by hissing at his opponents and wildly applauding when he concluded. The *Journal* believed Huber's strategy backfired and instead of creating support for La Follette, undermined it.⁴²² Unintentionally, the timing of Huber's speech and the obnoxious reaction from the galleries appeared to have destroyed any positive opinions remaining among the more moderate state senators regarding La Follette and set the stage for the senate's next meeting.

On Monday evening crowds poured into the Senate chamber, filling the galleries, lobbies, even the president's rostrum, expecting to see a dramatic battle—in essence, a court trial over Wisconsin's and La Follette's loyalty. Senator Roy Wilcox from Eau Claire, who considered himself one of Wisconsin's militant patriots, did not disappoint. La Follette's words and behavior over the past year, Wilcox declared, had appalled him. After the Senate passed the assembly's Loyalty Resolution by a vote of 22 to 7, Wilcox suggested an amendment to it that read in part,

We condemn Senator Robert M. La Follette and all others who have failed to see the righteousness of our nation's cause...and we denounce any attitude or utterance of theirs which has tended...to injure Wisconsin's fair name before the free peoples of the world."

After giving his opposition a chance to respond, Wilcox launched into a speech that the *Journal* described as teeming with patriotism and "a masterful address to an intelligent and representative body." At its conclusion, the spectators burst into applause for several minutes. Once it died down, Wilcox called for a vote and his amendment passed

⁴²² "Senate Rows Over Loyalty," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 24, 1918, 1.

23 to 6.⁴²³ The Wilcox Amendment then went to the assembly, where it passed on March 6 in a vote of 53 to 32.

News of the Wilcox Amendment spread throughout the national press, who tended to applaud the actions of the Wisconsin legislators. Days after the senate passed the amendment, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, wrote that this action affirmed “the complete loyalty of the state,” while also regulating La Follette “to that obscurity he so richly deserves.” The *Inquirer* went on to mention La Follette’s state senate supporters, who talked so much and threatened so loudly that anyone who heard them would believe that “disloyalty was enthroned in Madison,” but concluded, “You cannot always judge by the noise that is made.”⁴²⁴ Days after the assembly passed the amendment the *The State* newspaper in Columbia, South Carolina, wrote that Wisconsin’s vindication was at hand and “the prospect of that event is now excellent.”⁴²⁵

Despite all the vitriol aimed at him, La Follette seemed to take most of his vilification in stride. As his wife, Belle Case La Follette, noted at the time, “Nothing fazes Bob or destroys his faith in the ultimate outcome of all this malign feeling.” La Follette even wrote, “In the midst of this raging storm, I am withal very happy in so far as my own future is concerned. I would not change places with any living man on the record as it stands today.”⁴²⁶ This did not mean La Follette sat passively by while these events occurred. On November 9, 1917, he sued the *Madison Democrat* newspaper for libel and

⁴²³ “La Follette is Repudiated; Senate Passes Amendment to Loyalty Pledge,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 26, 1918, 1.

⁴²⁴ “Wisconsin Disowns La Follette,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 27, 1918, 10.

⁴²⁵ “Looks Better for Wisconsin,” *The State* (Columbia, SC), March 9, 1918, 4.

⁴²⁶ Unger, 257. William Evjue later claimed that State Council of Defense director Magnus Swenson and two top executives of the Gisholt Machine Company, Carl and Hobart Johnson, instigated the move to expel La Follette from the Madison Club (William Evjue, *A Fighting Editor* (Madison, WI: Wells Publishing Co., 1968), 302.

repeated this action on January 12, 1918, against the *Wisconsin State Journal* and its editor Richard Lloyd Jones. A month later, he brought a libel suit against the Madison Club for its publically-stated comments expelling him.

According to his biographer Nancy Unger, however, one attack in particular deeply affected La Follette. On January 15, 1918, following a University of Wisconsin faculty meeting, a petition circulated among the participants protesting against his utterances and actions in regards to the war, deploring his alleged failure to support the government in the prosecution of the war, and declaring that in these respects he had misrepresented his constituents. The petition circulated among the faculty for the next two weeks before they sent it to La Follette with a list of over four hundred faculty members attached.⁴²⁷ Unlike other attacks on him, La Follette had trouble brushing this one aside, especially when the university removed his picture from all university buildings and replaced it with an advertisement for Liberty Bonds.

While these attacks on La Follette were reaching a crescendo, the move to expel him from the U.S. Senate had quickly come to a standstill. Just days before the senate sub-committee was to begin proceedings, its chairman met with President Wilson, who made it clear he would not support the removal of the Wisconsin senator from Congress. Wilson gave three reasons for this: 1) to do so would make La Follette a martyr for the cause of free speech; 2) La Follette's opinion of the war did not represent that of the

⁴²⁷ "Badger 'U' Faculty Attacks La Follette," *Racine Journal-News*, January 15, 1918, 10; "Faculty Protest Sent to La Follette," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 3, 1918, 6. A copy of the petition, often called "Round Robin" in some literature, can be found in the Robert M. La Follette Sr. papers (Wis Mss LB), WHS. Henry Huber had wanted to burn it in a ceremony on the state capitol lawn after the war, but La Follette asked that it be preserved at the Wisconsin Historical Society, so that future generations could learn from it. Former pacifist Julia Grace Wales was one of the faculty who signed the petition.

majority of Wisconsinites; and, 3) his speeches aroused those to active support of the war when they would have normally remained passive.⁴²⁸ Another obvious reason for not going forward with the probe into La Follette's St. Paul speech was the fact he had been misquoted. By the time the committee first met in late November 1917, most senators knew this, but because they had disliked the tenor of his speech still wanted to try expelling him. From the first day until its conclusion, the committee delayed and postponed meetings and procedures. By early February 1918, Governor Philipp, like many others, had become exasperated with the slow pace of the proceedings. In a February 4 speech, Philipp urged the Senate to give La Follette:

A prompt and fair trial, and if it finds him guilty, should expel him from that body. If, on the other hand, he has committed no offense against the government, and in an unbiased investigation it is found that he has done nothing that disqualifies him as a senator or a patriotic citizen, the United States senate should say so and the public trial of Senator La Follette should end.⁴²⁹

In spite of calls like Philipp's, the investigation dragged on for fifteen months.

Two weeks before the committee met for the first time, Belle La Follette had written her family, "No one seems to think they will really try to put him out of the Senate."⁴³⁰ Belle's prescience proved correct when the committee voted nine to two to end the investigation on December 2, 1918. On January 16, 1919, the Senate concurred, when it voted to dismiss the resolution calling for La Follette's ouster. La Follette had left the fray over the war early in 1918, long before these votes, to care for his son Robert Jr., who suffered from a series of dangerous streptococcal infections throughout the

⁴²⁸ "Badger May Not Be Ousted," *Racine Journal-News*, November 25, 1917, 1.

⁴²⁹ "Try La Follette, Philipp Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, February, 5, 1918, 7.

⁴³⁰ Unger, 257.

year.⁴³¹ Although La Follette would not emerge again as a major figure in opposition to the war, Wisconsin's hyperpatriots would continue to view him as the anti-war movement's figurehead. Late in March, the *Milwaukee Journal* editorialized that the Republican Party, including Governor Philipp and Senator La Follette, was showing its ugly, party-prejudiced underbelly as the senatorial election loomed. Its editors prophesized a "swift and thorough" punishment for all of them, since "the Lord moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."⁴³²

While anti-La Follette rhetoric swirled around Wisconsin, especially in late 1917, a handful of Madison newspapermen concluded that the state's hyperpatriots had based their La Follette hysteria on misrepresentations and lies. When America entered the war, these five Madison journalists and editors worked for Richard Lloyd Jones (Frank Lloyd Wright's cousin), owner of the capital city's *Wisconsin State Journal*, who in 1911 had moved to Madison from New York, where he had been the editor of *Collier's Weekly*. Since taking ownership of the *Journal* in an attempt to rejuvenate the moribund newspaper, Jones had been a strong La Follette supporter and, when war broke out in Europe, believed the United States should remain neutral. By late 1917, however, he had left his support of neutrality and La Follette behind and become an ardent militant patriot. As his views about the war changed, his editorials took on a virulent anti-La Follette tone that became so strident that these five employees, led by managing editor William Evjue, left to form a new newspaper aimed at Progressives, a

⁴³¹ Unger, 260-261; Pifer, 235-236.

⁴³² "Philipp, La Follette & Co.," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 28, 1918, 1.

newspaper that would portray, according to them, La Follette's words and actions accurately. Years later Evjue stated, "It was La Follette's fight against the folly of World War I that resulted in the birth of *The Capital Times*."⁴³³ Even before the *Times* printed its first issue on December 13, 1917, Madison's hyperpatriots attempted to silence the paper and prevent its success. As with many of their efforts to control the war narrative in Wisconsin, they did not succeed.

When war broke out in Europe, Jones took an isolationist stance regarding America's role. Even after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, he wrote that America declaring war on Germany represented a "consummate folly." Later in 1915, Jones spoke out against Wilson's request to Congress for \$400 million for defense.⁴³⁴ In early 1917, however, he began to modify his attitude toward America's role in the war, as can be seen in his views of the American flag. During the 1916 Mexican Punitive Expedition, Jones had scoffed at the idea that America should go to war over insults made to the American flag by Mexicans in Tampico, Mexico, but by mid-February 1917, Jones felt compelled to write, "It's about time that we began to fly the American flag, talk about the United States flag of our national honor, our national welfare, and not like a lot of cowed creatures who plead so piteously for peace that we lose all sense of justice".⁴³⁵

Jones's support for La Follette did not dissipate so quickly. In an August 2, 1917 editorial, he still admitted that La Follette had made many useful contributions to both

⁴³³ Dave Zweifel and John Nichols, *The Capital Times* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017), 69.

⁴³⁴ William Evjue, *A Fighting Editor* (Madison, WI: Wells Printing Co., 1968), 241-242.

⁴³⁵ Evjue, 243; Time to Stand for America, *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 13, 1917, 10.

state and country, but added the senator's "belief that in the main the United States is wrong and that to no small degree Germany is right" was not tenable. Jones continued, "In every utterance he makes in defense of Germany Senator La Follette...defends autocracy and not democracy." Yet Jones finished with the thought that despite all the serious mistakes La Follette had recently made, his cumulative life's work still kept him on the credit side in the balance of history.⁴³⁶ Two weeks later, after La Follette introduced a peace resolution that prohibited indemnities, territorial acquisitions and other advantages "by which one nation shall strengthen its power abroad at the expense of another nation," Jones could no longer support the senator.⁴³⁷ By not punishing Germany for its atrocities, Jones argued, the United States might as well declare "murder, pillage, arson, outrage of women, and divers other crimes to be legal." Jones now spoke of La Follette's actions as ones that defended, comforted, and helped "the greatest criminal the world has ever known."⁴³⁸ According to William Evjue, after Jones made several of these statements, he and four other *Journal* employees "could no longer work at the side of a man who had become so outrageously unfair to La Follette," as well as "unreasonable in his criticism of people of German background."⁴³⁹ Evjue believed Wisconsin's big businesses controlled the hyperpatriots' message through the Council of Defense and the Loyalty Legion and that Jones had come under their influence, especially after the Loyalty Legion's Wisconsin Patriotic Press Association elected him president on September 4.⁴⁴⁰ A reward, Evjue alleged, "for his leadership in patriotic

⁴³⁶ Evjue, 247-248; "La Follette," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 2, 1917, 8.

⁴³⁷ "Peace Terms Demanded by La Follette," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 11, 1917, 1.

⁴³⁸ "Shall We Pay Germany's Bills?" *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 17, 1917, 12.

⁴³⁹ Evjue, 248. The other four men included Tom C. Bowden, Harry D. Sage, E.C. Homberger, and W.C. Allman. Evjue believed the *Journal* had been unfair to La Follette, because "Jones failed to point out that La Follette had backed every major bill in the Senate to support the conduct of the war." (Evjue, 248).

⁴⁴⁰ Evjue, 248.

news reporting and editorial declarations.” Evjue and his four compatriots resigned from the *Journal* and immediately started planning for a new Madison newspaper that “would be representative of the interest of the people as a whole.”⁴⁴¹

By mid-November, when *The Capital Times* looked like it might actually go to press, Madison’s militant patriots, but especially Jones, did everything in their power to suppress the new newspaper. Jones began by trying to convince his readers that the *Times* would not succeed, since the newspaper business was currently in decline and third newspapers in Madison had never succeeded (In 1917, Madison had two newspapers, the *Journal* and the *Madison Democrat*.) He went on to characterize the *Times* as politically biased by stating, “Today practically no newspapers except purely propaganda sheets are being born in America.”⁴⁴² Other Madison hyperpatriots attempted to threaten the *Capital Times* the day before its first issue went to print by hanging a sign referring to the newspaper on the La Follette effigy (mentioned earlier) before the whole thing was burnt and by telling newsboys they would go to jail for selling a disloyal newspaper.⁴⁴³ Even the University of Wisconsin’s journalism department played a role in the attacks on the newspaper by preventing students from working as interns due to “rumors which are afloat concerning the policy of [*The Capital Times*] in regard to the war.”⁴⁴⁴

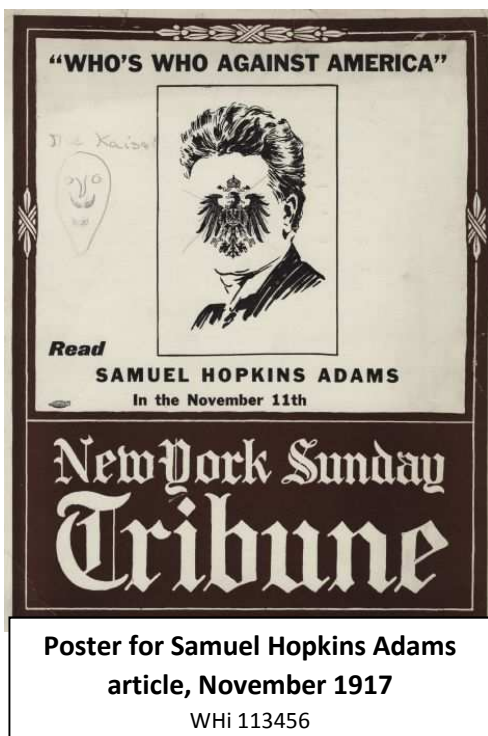
⁴⁴¹ Evjue, 255.

⁴⁴² Evjue, 251-252; “1,200 Papers Fail in Ten Months,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 16, 1917, 14.

⁴⁴³ Evjue, 255, 276; “La Follette and New Paper Are Burned in Effigy,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 13, 1917, 1. The La Follette effigy had a large sign on it that read, “Senator La Follette and The Capital Times.” Evjue noted that it was a group of women, possibly wives of Madison’s big business officials, who threatened the newsboys.

⁴⁴⁴ Evjue, 285.

A more significant attack came in late November when Samuel Hopkins Adams, a strident hyperpatriot who worked for the *New York Tribune*, declared the *Capital Times*



a La Follette “organ” that had been created in the office of La Follette’s law partner and financed by pro-Germans throughout the state. Adams even suggested that Victor Berger had been making appeals in his speeches to support the *Capital Times*. On December 6, 1917, Jones published Adams’s editorial in the *Wisconsin State Journal*.⁴⁴⁵ Since none of these assertions were true, Evjue believed Jones and Adams had colluded together to create these allegations. He made that

clear in “A Statement to the People of Madison and Dane County,” characterizing the La Follette connection and the pro-German funding accusations as lies.⁴⁴⁶ A Department of Justice investigator looked into the latter allegation early in 1918 at the request of the state Council of Defense, the Madison Association of Commerce, and Madison’s two other newspapers and found no sign of pro-German support. Evjue published the investigator’s statement in the May 10, 1918, issue of the *Capital Times*.⁴⁴⁷ While the Adams and Jones attack had an aura of desperation about it, a serious threat to the *Times’* finances arose in the early weeks of its existence.

⁴⁴⁵ Evjue, 289; Samuel Hopkins Adams, “The State of Wisconsin,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 6, 1917, 14. Originally published in the *New York Tribune* on November 25, 1917. According to Evjue, Jones later admitted to working with Adams to plant the story (Evjue, 289).

⁴⁴⁶ “A Statement to the People of Madison and Dane County,” *Capital Times*, December 18, 1917, 1.

⁴⁴⁷ Evjue, 293-295.

Madison's hyperpatriots tried a number of roadblocks to prevent the *Capital Times* from being successful, but their advertising boycott showed the most promise. During the first week of the newspaper's existence, women wearing Red Cross uniforms visited Madison merchants who had purchased advertisements and suggested to them that advertising in a disloyal, pro-German newspaper, one supported by Senator La Follette, a traitor to his country, would ruin their business. Evjue and his colleagues responded by publishing an editorial condemning the threats made to their advertisers and spoke of their belief that Madison's merchants would not "submit to blackmail and boycott." Despite these attempts to mitigate the boycott, most of the merchants appear to have taken the threats seriously and withdrawn their advertisements. By the end of the *Capital Times*' first week, the number of display ads had dwindled down to ten, a shockingly low number with Christmas only days away.⁴⁴⁸

When the situation looked dire, State Representative Charles Rosa, who remained a La Follette supporter throughout the war, sent out a questionnaire to business and political leaders around the state asking them if they would support the new Progressive paper by buying stock in it or selling it to others. From the replies that survive, Rosa appears to have received positive responses, such as this one from Milwaukee attorney William Schroeder, who wrote that he admired Evjue's nerve to start the *Capital Times* and would send him a check "to help him along."⁴⁴⁹ State Representative John E. Johnson from Brandon (Fond du Lac Co.) replied he was

⁴⁴⁸ Evjue, 277; "A Statement to the People of Madison and Dane County"; The December 21, 1917 issue had ten display ads in its 8 pages. Contrast this to the December 15 issue, which had 26 ads in its ten pages. Unlike many retail businesses, Madison's movie theaters continued to purchase ads throughout the boycott.

⁴⁴⁹ William A. Schroeder (Milwaukee) to Charles D. Rosa (Beloit), January 19, 1918, Charles D. Rosa (CDR) papers, Box 1, WHS.

heartily in favor of the new paper and would “take stock in it,” while State Representative Christian N. Saugen of Eleva (Trempealeau Co.) thought he could get a lot of subscribers to the newspaper, since “the general feeling is that the papers are not telling the truth” and the *Capital Times* “would be what the people want.”⁴⁵⁰ With this support, the newspaper struggled along for the next several months.

Evjue later wrote that he thought the first break in the boycott occurred on February 22, 1918, when O.K. Schubert, owner of a men’s clothing store on Wilson Street in Madison, took out a full-page advertisement for a “workingmen’s sale.” Schubert let Evjue know that the ad had led to the biggest business day he had experienced in twenty-two years and forced him to hire five extra clerks to handle the crowds. He added that many people mentioned they had seen his advertisement in the *Capital Times*. The newspaper featured Schubert’s success story on the front page of its next issue, above the fold. Evjue believed Schubert’s success led other, “formerly timid,” merchants to place ads in the struggling newspaper.⁴⁵¹ Despite this bumpy start, the *Capital Times* remained a daily paper until 2008, when the success of the internet forced it to change its format to a free weekly with a daily internet presence. The failure of Madison’s hyperpatriots to prevent the *Capital Times* from flourishing would be one of many disappointments they experienced in 1918. A sense that they were not successfully converting Wisconsin’s disloyal citizens into loyal Americans would force local Loyalty Legions and Councils of Defense to reconsider their methods, especially in the way they handled and sometimes punished La Follette supporters, alleged pro-

⁴⁵⁰ John E. Johnson (Brandon) to Charles D. Rosa (Beloit), January 26, 1918, CDR papers, Box 1, WHS; Christian N. Saugen (Eleva) to Charles D. Rosa (Beloit), January 28, 1918, CDR papers, Box 1, WHS.

⁴⁵¹ Evjue, 298.; “Capital Times Ad Brings Crowds,” *Capital Times*, February 25, 1918, 1.

Germans, and Liberty Bond slackers. In the meantime, there was a Senate race they needed to win.

Wisconsin's crisis of loyalty reached its watershed moment in early spring 1918 when the election to replace the late Senator Paul O. Husting occurred. By choosing his successor, many at the time thought Wisconsin would show whether it remained loyal to the nation or stood alone as a harbinger of the disloyal and unpatriotic. Some had great faith in Wisconsin. The *Chicago Daily Tribune*, for example, noted days before the primary, that the election will give "Wisconsin a chance to blow this fog of doubt away like smoke before a gala." The election outcome could not be in doubt, its editors declared, since "The heart of Wisconsin is sound to the core, and so is Wisconsin's brain." The *Tribune* also pointed out, "More than the collective good name of Wisconsin is involved."⁴⁵² The election was a national issue that newspaper editors from across the nation believed would determine, on one hand, where the German-American sentiment about the war really stood. The *Milwaukee Journal* made this clear in a March 16 editorial reminding German-Americans,

How they vote in the senatorial primaries next Tuesday and at the final election April 2 will reveal clearly and conclusively their attitude toward America. They will either confirm the confidence that fair-minded men have felt in the good faith and loyalty of nearly all of them or they will plead guilty to the charge sometimes made that they put Germany above America.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² "The True Americanism of Wisconsin," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 13, 1918, 8.

⁴⁵³ "Two Roads-Which?" *Milwaukee Journal*, March 16, 1918, 4.

On the other hand, the election, according to these editors, would decide whether the United States would remain a nation of forty-eight states or lose one to Germany. As the *Colorado Springs Gazette* stated on the day of the primary, “The unity of the nation in the cause of humanity is on trial in Wisconsin. The verdict,” they added, “is awaited with impressive patience.”⁴⁵⁴

If only “loyalty” candidates had run for the Senate, a crisis would not have existed, but that was not to be the case. Both the Socialist Party and the pro-La Follette wing of the Republican Party fielded candidates, who the state’s hyperpatriots quickly labelled as disloyal and pro-German. The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion warned its members about the consequences of Wisconsin electing either candidate in a mass letter that averred, “The election of a pro-German [senator] would be worth many divisions to the Kaiser and would cost the lives of thousands of American boys.” The Legion, which considered itself a non-partisan organization, favoring neither Republicans nor Democrats, intended to focus its energies on defeating these disloyal candidates, primarily through “intense educational work.” The mass letter concluded by rallying its members to battle, declaring, “Now is the time to show whether the Loyalty Legion is a fighting working organization...in what will be the biggest electoral battle this state has ever known.”⁴⁵⁵ As much as the Legion tried to eliminate parties and politics from the election and create a non-partisan candidate to run against the Socialist, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans were willing to sacrifice their candidate to the cause.

⁴⁵⁴ “What Will Wisconsin Do?” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, March 19, 1918, 4.

⁴⁵⁵ Algie M. Simons, Director, Bureau of Literature (Milwaukee) to “Dear Sir,” no date, but the text mentions the April 2 election, WLL papers, Box 4, WHS. Simons (1870-1950) had been a member of the Socialist Party and a reporter for Victor Berger’s *Milwaukee Leader* until the Party expelled him for publically disagreeing with its St. Louis war resolution.

Republicans dominated Wisconsin politics in 1918 and the general assumption at the time was that the Republican candidate would become the state's new senator. In January and February, newspaper editor Francis A.R. Van Meter, a Republican living in New Richmond, Wisconsin, maintained a lively correspondence with Wisconsin Secretary of State Merlin Hull about the pending election, especially the search for an acceptable Republican candidate. From the beginning, Van Meter made it clear that the Party needed "a candidate for senator who is and always has been 100 per cent loyal--- or none at all." One person immediately came to Van Meter's mind, Irvine Lenroot, U.S. Representative (also Governor Phillip's choice), who the editor described as "the man for the senatorship," even though he later admitted, "I have never been a Lenroot man until very lately, but he has lately grown on me tremendously."⁴⁵⁶ Hull agreed that Lenroot was "fine Senatorial timber," but pointed out that the Congressman, who eventually expected to be Speaker of the House, would probably not want to jeopardize his position to run for senator, a race he could potentially lose. According to Hull, Lenroot took some convincing, but finally on February 24 he allowed the Republican Party to circulate his nomination papers.⁴⁵⁷ Lenroot appealed to most Stalwart Republicans and to the Loyalty Legion, primarily because he had been one of the two (out of eleven) U.S. Representatives from Wisconsin who voted with President Wilson to enter the European War, which to the state's hyperpatriots placed him on the side of loyalty and pro-America patriotism.

⁴⁵⁶ Francis A.R. Van Meter (New Richmond) to Merlin Hull (Madison), February 11, 17, & 23, 1918, Merlin Hull (MH) papers, Box 8, WHS.

⁴⁵⁷ Hull to Van Meter, January 31, February 22 & 24, 1918, all letters marked "Personal and Confidential," MH papers, Box 8, WHS.

Even though Republican Party leaders supported Lenroot, two other Republican candidates decided to vie for the open Senate seat. Francis McGovern, a former Wisconsin governor, also chose to run, along with James Thompson, a lawyer and a La Follette supporter, who had the endorsement of the Progressive wing of the Party, including Evjue's *Capital Times*. Republicans immediately became concerned that Lenroot and McGovern would split the Stalwart Republican vote, leaving the potentially disloyal, pro-German candidate, Thompson, to represent the party and possibly lose to the Democrat. At a meeting on March 12, state party leaders successfully pressured McGovern to withdraw. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* applauded McGovern's decision stating, he, "has done a conspicuous act of patriotism...[He] refused to be responsible for dividing the loyalist vote, and therefore unselfishly drew out and proposes to help Mr. Lenroot win for the honor of Wisconsin."⁴⁵⁸ Now only Thompson remained to challenge Lenroot. Thompson's platform called for "a united country to prosecute the war vigorously and effectively until peace shall be declared," but his La Follette stain, according to the nation's hyperpatriots, still made him dangerous.⁴⁵⁹ The *Colorado Springs Gazette*, for example, described Thompson as a "Bolshevist" and warned that with his candidacy "the forces of disloyalty are attempting to force down the throats of American people another senator of traitorous stripe to take a seat in the Upper House of Congress."⁴⁶⁰

Despite the Republican's Party confidence that they would win the election with Lenroot, the Democrats still thought with a popular Democrat administration leading a

⁴⁵⁸ "The True Americanism of Wisconsin."

⁴⁵⁹ Glad, 46.

⁴⁶⁰ "What Will Wisconsin Do?"

successful war effort, they had the best chance in a long time of claiming the senatorial seat. Vying for the candidacy were two Democrats, Charles McCarthy, founder of Wisconsin's Legislative Reference Library and chief aide at Herbert Hoover's Food Administration, and Joseph E. Davies, the first director of the Federal Trade Commission. Wisconsin historian Paul Glad notes that McCarthy never made it clear why he became a candidate but suggests McCarthy may have thought that since he was a favorite among farmers and organized labor, he had a chance.⁴⁶¹ Democratic leaders paid little attention to his campaign and put their support firmly behind Davies, who President Wilson had handpicked to run in the Wisconsin election. Van Meter commented in a letter to Merlin Hull on the strength of Davies as the Democrat candidate and the attempt by his party (possibly with the help of the Loyalty Legion) to push him as a non-partisan candidate:

The democrats are putting up an exceedingly strong fight under the surface for Joe Davies. They are working the non-partisan gag among republicans and putting it on a straight party basis among democrats. It is a perfectly grand little game and they are making some head with it, and they are putting it over in some localities.

Although Van Meter did not support Democrats, he still realized Davies was a viable candidate, even stating that if the Republicans could not find a "100 per cent loyalty man" for the senatorship, he would vote for Davies. He then suggested Hull run for senator, saving him "the embarrassment of supporting a democrat."⁴⁶² Hull declined.⁴⁶³

The non-partisan Loyalty Legion approved of Davies's loyalty credentials, along with

⁴⁶¹ Glad, 47.

⁴⁶² Van Meter to Hull, February 11 & 23, 1918, MH papers, Box 8, WHS.

⁴⁶³ Hull to Van Meter, February 24, 1918, MH papers, Box 8, WHS. Hull responded to Van Meter, "[Van Meter's letter] almost made me ambitious to become a candidate," but goes on to say that Lenroot has accepted the nomination, so the matter was moot.

Lenroot's, and believed either candidate would make a loyal and patriotic senator. The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* had summed up the hyperpatriots general approval of Lenroot and Davies running for the Senate earlier in the month, when it suggested that the election of either man would allow Wisconsin to "hold up its head in self-respect and face the future without misgivings."⁴⁶⁴

Although the Thompson candidacy worried Wisconsin's loyalists, their primary concern regarding this election emerged when Victor Berger decided to run for U.S. Senator as the Socialist candidate. Not only had Berger refused to support the United States entrance into the war and written editorials in his newspaper, the *Milwaukee Leader*, that led the Postmaster General to ban his publication from using second-class mail, but on February 2, 1918, the Department of Justice indicted him for treason under the Espionage Act. The DOJ did not make the indictment public, even to Berger, until March 9, a few weeks before the primary election—a move Berger thought his enemies might have done purposefully to hurt his chances in the Senate race.⁴⁶⁵ Even before the federal government released information about the indictment, news of Berger's candidacy caused ripples of anxiety throughout the national hyperpatriot community. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, voiced their concerns on February 27 by suggesting, "Mr. Berger belongs to the Bolsheviki.... He is the right sort of candidate for the disloyalists," and predicting, "There is apparently no prospect that he will get more

⁴⁶⁴ From the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* as published in "Among the Newspapers," *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, March 1, 1918, 6.

⁴⁶⁵ Glad, 49.

than a small percentage of the votes.”⁴⁶⁶ This editorialist, however, underestimated Berger’s support.

On the day of the primary election, March 19, 1918, “balmy, spring weather throughout the state” caused the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* to comment, “The weather man has done his bit to make the primary election a success.”⁴⁶⁷ The meteorologist appeared to be right, since by the end of the day, 258,552 voters had turned out to vote—58 percent of them Republicans, 27 percent Democrats, and 15 percent Socialists. Less than 24 hours later, the result was clear, although the final tally would not be available for another five days; Lenroot had defeated Thompson with 53 percent of the Republican vote, while Davies had handily trounced McCarthy with 81 percent of the Democrat vote.⁴⁶⁸

The 7,414 votes that stood between Lenroot and Thompson, originally announced as only two thousand, caused consternation for Wisconsin’s Republicans and the nation’s hyperpatriots. The latter concluded that, due to the close Republican vote, Wisconsin’s loyalty continued to remain under suspicion. As the *Jackson Citizen Patriot* (Michigan) declared, “While the triumph of the loyalist candidate is pleasing, still his small majority over the candidate put forth and supported by La Follette and his kind, shows to what surprising extent disloyalty has permeated the body politic of the Badger state.”⁴⁶⁹ The *Oregonian* (Portland) agreed in its editorial, “Wisconsin’s Good Name at Stake,” that Wisconsin had “at best just drawn back from an open declaration of

⁴⁶⁶ “Wisconsin Disowns La Follette,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 27, 1918, 10.

⁴⁶⁷ “Big Vote is Being Polled” and untitled comment, *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, March 19, 1918, 1 & 6.

⁴⁶⁸ The final vote was Lenroot (R): 78,186, Thompson (R): 70,772; Davies (D): 57,282, McCarthy (D): 13,784; Berger (S): 38,564.

⁴⁶⁹ “Lenroot’s Small Majority Proof of Wisconsin’s Disloyalty,” *Jackson Citizen Patriot*, Michigan, March 21, 1918, 6.

disloyalty to the country” and urged the state’s citizens to vote for a loyalist candidate in the final election, thereby wiping “out the blot on its good name.” The final election, the *Oregonian* suggested, was “not solely Wisconsin’s affair,” but one that “concerns the whole Nation, for a La Follette victory would stamp Wisconsin as pro-German—as a German outpost in this country.”⁴⁷⁰

The fact that Berger, without a challenger, still managed to attract a little over 15 percent of the vote, which the *Kalamazoo Gazette* (Michigan) described as “the largest vote ever given one of his party in a Wisconsin primary,” caused a mild panic among the nation’s editors. The *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans) believed that Berger’s results indicated, “The La Follette or disloyalist sentiment is very strong in the state.”⁴⁷¹ The *Kalamazoo Gazette* wondered if this sentiment was so strong that Lenroot and Davies would split the loyalist vote and leave Berger the winner. Its editor urged Wisconsin loyalists to do what they needed to do to avoid “the shame of endorsing La Follettism” by electing Berger.⁴⁷²

Almost immediately, Wisconsin’s loyalists began analyzing the results in an effort to know where blame for the near election of Thompson and all the votes for Berger should be placed. The day after the election, the *Milwaukee Journal* announced, “returns from the German communities make a saddening revelation.” Electors in primarily German counties, their analysis showed, backed Berger in large numbers, but in the end gave the majority of their votes to Thompson. The *Journal* concluded, after

⁴⁷⁰ “Wisconsin’s Good Name at Stake,” *The Oregonian* (Portland), March 21, 1918, 8.

⁴⁷¹ “The Disloyalists,” *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), March 26, 1918, 9.

⁴⁷² “Wisconsin’s Loyalty Fight,” *Kalamazoo Gazette* (Michigan), March 22, 1918, 4.

noting that these voters had “refused to give whole-hearted support to the nation and to the war which it is compelled to wage,” that it no longer believed “the great body of



For the first time, probably, in the history of the country it has been necessary to map the sedition of a State of the American Union. The Loyalist Legion of Wisconsin, after an investigation lasting about six months, located in certain counties of the State certain centres of pro-Germanism and active or silent disloyalty. It purports to be only a rough and general indication of the way in which Wisconsin is rotten spotted. There are counties not indicated by the shading where strong sympathy for Germany, and very active backing for La Follette is manifest, but on the whole the counties marked represent the most violent hostility to the President's policy and to the war aims of the nation. These are the counties in which Thompson, La Follette's candidate for the Senate, received his heaviest vote and where Victor Berger rolled up a large vote.

Sedition Map from the *New York Sun* showing the areas of Wisconsin that are “rotten spotted.”

March 21, 1918

WHi 40882

Wisconsin citizens of German extraction are Americans at heart.”⁴⁷³ The election, they felt, had made this truth clear. The Loyalty Legion agreed and on March 21 allowed the *New York Sun* to publish its “Sedition Map,” which showed “where disloyalty in Wisconsin chiefly centres [sic]” based on the results of the primary election. The *Sun* identified the map’s shaded counties, including all those from Milwaukee to Manitowoc and west to Green Lake, along with Marathon, La Crosse, Richland, Sauk, and Columbia Counties, as “rotten spotted” areas that

harbored voters with “the most violent hostility to the President’s policy and to the war aims of the nation.”⁴⁷⁴ Whether the Loyalty Legion intended to or not, their map

⁴⁷³ “The German Counties’ Vote,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 20, 1918, 10. The *Journal* specifically indicated that Marshfield (Marathon Co.) had been the Wisconsin city most “undermined with such an intangible feeling of pacifism and anti-Americanism.” Thompson carried the city, the newspaper noted, and “Berger received 158 votes in a town where Socialism was unknown before.” The city’s political leaders believed Berger would win the general election there, although few residents would admit voting for Thompson or Berger. “Pacifist Undermining Shows Danger in Silent Vote,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 25, 1918, 14.

⁴⁷⁴ “Where Disloyalty in Wisconsin Chiefly Centres [sic],” *New York Sun*, March 21, 1918 [WHS image 40882].

indicated that Wisconsin did have a loyalty problem; one the Legion had not yet been able to eradicate.

The Friday (March 22) following the primary election, the Loyalty Legion held a mass meeting in Milwaukee to present a rousing loyalty message, but also to remind its members that the upcoming election would be a fight against Berger, the disloyalty candidate. Like the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, leaders of the Legion worried that Davies and Lenroot would split the loyalty vote, leaving Berger the winner. Near the end of the meeting, Legion president Judson Rosebush made this clear. First, he reminded the audience of the upcoming election, which would “measure the strength of our love for democracy, and our constancy in helping to perpetuate it,” and then asked the “loyal candidates” to subordinate “personal ambitions to the reestablishment of the good name of Wisconsin among her sister states.”⁴⁷⁵ Richard Lloyd Jones of the *Wisconsin State Journal* completely agreed with Rosebush’s statement and in a March 23 editorial noted that since Lenroot had carried fifty-six counties and Davies only fourteen, the Democrat should be the one to withdraw. If Davies insisted on being the one candidate in the “FACE OF FACTS AND FIGURES ,” he was not practicing big-minded, generous patriotism and displayed instead “plain unworthy stubbornness.”⁴⁷⁶ The *Milwaukee Journal* also agreed that there should be “only one all-American candidate for the United States senate,” but argued that Lenroot was “not the kind of candidate desired by fighting Americans who can think and see” and suggested he withdraw.⁴⁷⁷ On March 26,

⁴⁷⁵ “Wisconsin Loyalty Legion State Secretary’s Report, Mass Meeting Minutes, Annual Meeting Minutes, and President’s Address,” 37.

⁴⁷⁶ “Plain Duty,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 23, 1918, 8.

⁴⁷⁷ “Easy to Arrange for a Single Candidate,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 25, 1918, 4. In this editorial, the *Journal* suggested Lenroot withdraw and be replaced by Francis McGovern “or some other Republican who appeals to the fighting spirit of American men.” The Republican Party declined to do so.

one week before the election, the Loyalty Legion, which had met with both candidates the day before, announced that neither Lenroot nor Davies would drop out of the race.

At the time of the Loyalty Legion announcement, either candidate could have won, but decisions made by the national and state Democratic Party to attack Lenroot as disloyal would change the balance. The *Milwaukee Journal* led the charge against Lenroot when it published a letter by former governor McGovern, who compared Lenroot to the late Senator Husting and concluded the Republican candidate suffered from “timidity, political opportunism, or lack of vision” and therefore had nothing in common with the fearless Americanism exemplified by Husting.⁴⁷⁸ The *Journal* also tied Lenroot to other infamous Wisconsin Republicans, specifically La Follette and Governor Philipp, a disappointing leader to most hyperpatriots because he did not back their agenda.⁴⁷⁹ Finally, the day before the election, the *Journal* published an editorial informing readers that the paper’s stand on the election was “not a matter of partyism at all, but one purely of patriotism.” Their stance supported the President, in part because President Wilson had made it plain Lenroot was “not the kind of man the nation’s needs demand,” and because Lenroot had opposed the president “on a number of vital questions.”⁴⁸⁰ The *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press* took note of the *Journal*’s assault on Lenroot and suggested the Milwaukee newspaper’s “unfair and impolitic campaign” was “reckless of consequences.”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁸ “Are We Ready to Forget Paul Husting’s Example?” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 27, 1918, 1.

⁴⁷⁹ See the following editorials in the *Milwaukee Journal*: “Lenroot Means Philippism,” March 27, 1918, 8; “Philipp, La Follette & Co.,” March 28, 1918, 1; “Lenroot Seeking La Follette Vote,” March 30, 1918, 1.

⁴⁸⁰ “Not a Matter of Partyism,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 1, 1918, 4.

⁴⁸¹ “Summing Up the Campaign,” *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, April 1, 1918, 1. The editorial’s writer believed the *Journal* was making a mistake by arguing the election was about Lenroot’s loyalty, something not questioned before the campaign. The author thought men who “like fair play” would balk at this new accusation.

The *Tribune and Leader Press* also mentioned that the Democratic leadership and the president's administration had been saturating the state's newspapers with misrepresentations of Lenroot's record, one of a handful of missteps made by the president, his administration, and his party. Wilson led off by firing "the first gun...in the campaign" the day after the primary, when he wrote Davies a letter, published in newspapers throughout the state. In the letter, the president accepted Davies's resignation from the Federal Trade Commission and thanked him for his "steadfast loyalty and patriotism" when "the first opportunities to apply the acid test in our country to disclose true loyalty and genuine Americanism" appeared early in 1917.⁴⁸² By mentioning Davies's support in the initial days of the war, state Republicans thought Wilson was implying that Lenroot had lagged behind Davies in his show of loyalty. Many in the Wisconsin press had a field day with this letter and its implications. The *Tribune and Leader Press* reacted by reminding the president that not only had Lenroot demonstrated his loyalty many times, but had also, "marshaled Republican support for administration measures that otherwise would have failed because of Democratic defections."⁴⁸³ The *Racine Journal* responded by letting its readers know that Lenroot voted for the president's declaration of war "and made one of the strongest speeches thereon," while Davies, who was not a Congressman at the time and had so far confined his national service to the Federal Trade Commission, had not made a similar public statement of support.⁴⁸⁴ The *Wisconsin State Journal* probably summed up the general

The *Journal's* approach, the editorialist added, also meant that the election's outcome would be more about Lenroot's loyalty than Wisconsin's, the whole point of the election in the first place.

⁴⁸² "President Urges Davies Election," *Racine Journal*, March 21, 1918, 3.

⁴⁸³ "Loyalist Victory at Wisconsin Polls Generally Conceded Today," *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, March 21, 1918, 1.

⁴⁸⁴ "President Urges Davies Election."

feeling about Wilson's letter, when it wrote, "This is not patriotism. It is just plain partisanship of the worst kind."⁴⁸⁵

Wilson exacerbated the situation a few days later by sending Vice President Thomas R. Marshall to campaign on Davies's behalf. In a speech on March 27, Marshall attacked Wisconsin's Republican Party,

Your state is under suspicion. You Republicans have made the issue here in Wisconsin. If the vote at the primary is based upon the charges and countercharges, which you have made each against the other, you are about half for America, half for the Kaiser, and all against Wilson. Your self-appointed leaders are now trying to convince the loyal half that the really important thing is not loyalty or disloyalty, but party success.⁴⁸⁶

A few days after the speech, the *State Journal* observed it had caused "a notable reaction" throughout Wisconsin, mainly one of resentment.⁴⁸⁷ The *Tribune and Leader Press* editor, for example, did not appreciate having the vice president tell him, as a Republican, "to elect Davies or brave [the vice president's] verdict that [the Republican Party] was a party of disloyalty." The editor believed Marshall had turned thousands of votes away from Davies and "placed the stamp of intemperance and insincerity upon the whole anti-Lenroot campaign."⁴⁸⁸ Again, the *State Journal* probably summed up what many Wisconsinites thought about the speech, when it demanded Wilson "live true to your own high declarations—RISE ABOVE PARTY INTO PATRIOTISM" and added, "You should [also] ask your colleague, the Vice President of the United States, to do it as he did not do it here."⁴⁸⁹ It later reminded the president that Wisconsin was a

⁴⁸⁵ "The Man Back of the President," *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 27, 1918, 14.

⁴⁸⁶ "Marshall Hits Wisconsin G.O.P. in Madison Speech," *Eau Claire Leader*, March 27, 1918, 1.

⁴⁸⁷ "Full Vote Tuesday Means Easy Win for Lenroot," *Sunday [Wisconsin] State Journal*, March 31, 1918, 4.

⁴⁸⁸ "Summing Up the Campaign," *La Crosse Tribune and Press Leader*, April 1, 1918, 3.

⁴⁸⁹ "The Man Back of the President."

Republican state and that attacks on the Republican candidate by him and the vice president destroyed the chances of Democratic Davies from succeeding. Two days before the election, the *Journal* predicted that Davies was no longer a factor and the senatorial race would be a fight between Lenroot and Berger.⁴⁹⁰

With this recognition that Berger was a viable candidate, a palpable fear that he could actually win spread among the state and nation's hyperpatriots days before the election. With this growing concern, their verbal assaults on the Socialist candidate dramatically increased. The anti-Berger, anti-Socialist hand wringing can best be seen in a series of *Chicago Daily Tribune* editorials that began on March 30. In the first one, the *Tribune* argued that the Socialist party, which it renamed the "Sedition party," was "the agent of imperial Germany." It went on to suggest that Berger, "an anti-American candidate," would be pulling "votes from disloyalists, from quitters, yellow bellies, Germans, anti-nationalists, pacifists, [and] hollow-headed altruists."⁴⁹¹ Two days later, the *Tribune* ranted against "Berger and his like," who, it declared, "are in no sense American, [since] no true American will vote for any one of them."⁴⁹² Finally, on April 2, the day of the election, the *Tribune's* editors condemned the Socialist party and Berger one more time, "The Socialist party is a loadstone [sic] to draw together privileged opposition to American nationality all seditious, disloyal, dissentient, ignorant, timid, or selfish elements which can be found in a community." They blamed the plight of

⁴⁹⁰ "Full Vote Tuesday Means Easy Win for Lenroot."

⁴⁹¹ "The So-Called Socialists," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 30, 1918, 8.

⁴⁹² "Loyalty at the Polls," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 1, 1918, 1.

Wisconsin and its embarrassing election on “enfranchised aliens, who have given the United States the shadow of loyalty and have left the substance of it in Germany.”⁴⁹³

On the day of the general election chilly weather predominated around the state, but the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* still believed, “The weather man has done all he could to make the election an unqualified success.”⁴⁹⁴ The *Racine Journal News* concurred and believed there would be “a heavy early vote.”⁴⁹⁵ When the final count came in both newspapers could claim accuracy on the turnout: 423,902 voters had participated in the election, 40 percent more than the primary. Milwaukee alone counted for 20 percent of the vote. In the end, the result had been close: 39 percent for Lenroot (48 counties), 35 percent for Davies (12 counties), and 26 percent (11 counties) for Berger. Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots could breathe a sigh of relief; a loyalty candidate had won. Yet, to their dismay, they could not help but notice that Berger had pulled over 25 percent of the electorate.

Again, the state’s German Americans took the bulk of the blame for the “disloyal” Berger vote. “Germanism pure and simple,” the *Milwaukee Journal* declared, and not religion or political partisanship, had been the reason for Berger’s success. The *Journal* editors spoke of their frustration that a group of immigrants, who had come to the United States penniless and now lived lives full of prosperity, happiness, and freedom, would turn against the country that had provided them these benefits.⁴⁹⁶ Charles Dering, a former Wisconsin resident, who, at the time, lived in Chicago, also blamed

⁴⁹³ “Rallying Disloyalty,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 2, 1918, 2.

⁴⁹⁴ Untitled statement in the editorial column, *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, April 2, 1918, 6.

⁴⁹⁵ “Heavy Vote Polled Early in the Day,” *Racine Journal News*, April 2, 1918, 1.

⁴⁹⁶ “Germans Voted as Germans,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 7, 1918, 1.

“German sympathisers [sic]” and their “traitorous sentiments” for Berger’s votes. Yet, Dering also tried to explain their choice by suggesting months of criticism and abuse probably led them to this act of “sullen defiance.” Despite this, Dering still believed that patriotic Wisconsinites would need to subject recalcitrant German-Americans in Wisconsin to a vigorous education campaign, preferably one in a “more intimate vein” that would be directed at them specifically.⁴⁹⁷

Berger’s shockingly high returns, according to many national newspapers, still left Wisconsin’s loyalty in question. In the primary, Berger had captured 38,564 votes, but in the general election, his total skyrocketed to 110,487. The *Charleston Daily Mail (South Carolina)* asserted, “Wisconsin appears (at this hour) to have decided to support the national honor,” but added, “Wisconsin Americans must feel a deep sense of personal-shame that...the margin between integrity and re-negation was so shockingly narrow. Poor Wisconsin!”⁴⁹⁸ The *Lexington Herald (Kentucky)* also noted that the election confirmed, “A majority of the people [in Wisconsin] are loyal to the Government of the United States. But it shows also that there exists in Wisconsin an alarming element of disloyalty.” This disloyalty the *Herald’s* editor argued seemed to be centered in Milwaukee, which he thought had “really seceded from the United States,” making it a great “folly in the future to consider Milwaukee other than German territory; or rather, American territory temporarily in the hands of the enemy.”⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Allen B. Pond (Chicago) to George F. Kull, Secretary of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, May 14, 1918, WLL papers, Box 2, WHS. In the letter, Pond passed on quotes from a message written to him by Charles Dering.

⁴⁹⁸ “At This Hour,” *Charleston Daily Mail* (South Carolina), April 3, 1918, 1

⁴⁹⁹ “Milwaukee Unfurls the Kaiser’s Banner,” *Lexington Herald* (Kentucky), April 4, 1918, 4. Milwaukee voted 41.7% Berger; 38.7% Davies, 19.6% Lenroot.

Even with “rotten spotted” areas throughout the state, some newspaper editors believed Wisconsin had proven it would only elect loyal legislators. The *Washington Post* proudly announced, “Even in a hotbed of disloyalty like Wisconsin, a stalwart American was elected to the Senate.” The *Post* continued that while “there may be few spots as intensely pro-German as there are in Wisconsin,” the state was not disloyal, “nor was any other state in the union for that matter.”⁵⁰⁰ The *Springfield Republican (Massachusetts)* reported on Wisconsin’s election with: “Wisconsin can now be said to be 75 per cent loyal,” but added,

Berger could be approved by no one in the present crisis who is not, morally speaking, a traitor to the United States. The Wisconsin voters of German origin and unshakable sympathy have stood up to be counted. Despite its disloyal minority, ***Wisconsin is not a traitor state.*** [my bold & italics]⁵⁰¹

With vindication more or less in hand, the Loyalty Legion’s secretary George Kull sent a letter to over two hundred newspapers around the country asking the editors “to help erase an unjust aspersion cast upon the state.” Kull went on to declare that while Wisconsin’s national representatives may have misrepresented the state as disloyal, thousands of patriotic Wisconsin citizens felt deeply injured by this false impression. At least 104 newspapers agreed with Kull and printed his letter, including the statement that “Wisconsin is loyal, first, last and always,” in their editorial sections. A few, such as the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Indianapolis Star*, let the Legion know that they had written original editorials along the same vein. The *Christian Science Monitor* editorial department, however, would have nothing to do with the Legion’s request. If Wisconsin

⁵⁰⁰ “The Heroic Hour,” *Washington Post*, May 18, 1918, 6.

⁵⁰¹ *Springfield Republican (Massachusetts)* as reported in “Live Political Gossip,” *Bridgeport Telegram (Connecticut)*, April 5, 1918, 12.

were truly loyal, they admonished, Kull's letter would have been unnecessary. The state should prove her loyalty, they added, "not by newspaper publicity only, but by the loyal acts of her citizens." Only then could Wisconsin "stand forth as...one of the loyal states that make up the great United States."⁵⁰²

Despite the *Monitor's* letter, the final consensus seemed to be that Wisconsin could call itself loyal, but with reservations. With this decision, the national press soon lost interest in the quality of Wisconsin's loyalty. To them, the state had passed the test and there was no need to discuss it further.⁵⁰³ Internally, Wisconsin's hyperpatriots felt a deep sense of shame over the election. So far, their attempts to educate Wisconsin's disloyal population had not taken hold. The state's militant patriots realized they would need to apply stronger measures to force all Wisconsinites to be loyal. They would begin with the third Liberty Loan drive and make sure, by any means possible, that Wisconsin would meet its quota this time.

While most Milwaukee Loyalty Legion members concerned themselves with the senatorial race, Wheeler Bloodgood turned his focus to the mayoral election and his fight to defeat the incumbent, Socialist Daniel Webster Hoan. Bloodgood had been infuriated when Hoan, who had been his ally and co-leader of the Milwaukee County

⁵⁰² "Wisconsin's Loyalty," *Philadelphia Record*, April 14, 1918, clipping; List of Newspapers who published Kull's letter; Chief Reid, *Detroit Free Press*, to George F. Kull, April 15, 1918 with clipping, "The Wisconsin Elections"; Ernest Brass, *Indianapolis Star*, to George F. Kull, April 14, 1918 with five clippings; O.L. Stevens, *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA) to George F. Kull, April 16, 1918; WLL papers, Box 2, WHS. Snippets from other newspapers declaring Wisconsin loyal appeared in the *Milwaukee Journal*, April 28, 1918, 3.

⁵⁰³ I could find no more articles about Wisconsin's loyalty in the national press after the one published by the *Washington Post* on May 18, 1918.

Council of Defense, had announced he accepted the Milwaukee Socialists' platform, which included the line, "The American people did not want and do not want this war." To Bloodgood, who had said goodbye to his sons as they left for the front in February, Hoan's agreement with the Socialist agenda was the same as "standing on a platform saying that my sons were criminals."⁵⁰⁴ In retaliation, Bloodgood helped oust Hoan as chairman of the Council, days before the primary, and made statements to discredit the incumbent mayor. Once Hoan sailed through the primary, however, Bloodgood's rhetoric turned even more desperate.

The primary election saw three men, besides Hoan, run as mayoral candidates: William Park, owner of the *Milwaukee Daily News*, who supported the loyalty movement and wanted to run the city with a "businesslike" approach; Theodore Dammann, City Treasurer, who thought he could capture "the German vote within the framework of loyalty"; and Hoan's fiercest competitor, Percy Braman, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, who the *Milwaukee Journal* believed would "help place Milwaukee in the position of the most patriotic city in America."⁵⁰⁵ The two candidates with the most votes in the primary would continue on to the April 2 general election.

The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion quickly needed to identify which of these men it could comfortably label "loyal," so on March 9 it sent out a four-question survey. One question asked if the candidate supported the Socialists' St. Louis anti-war platform, another if America was justified in going to war with Germany, and the last two whether

⁵⁰⁴ Wheeler P. Bloodgood, *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, WI: [unidentified publisher], March 1918), 1-2.

⁵⁰⁵ *Milwaukee Journal* article dated to March 7, 1918 quoted in Floyd J. Stachowski, *The Political Career of Daniel Webster Hoan* (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1966), 77-78.

the candidate supported the government's war effort. Park, Dammann, and Braman all gave the same answers, "no" to the first question and "yes" to the others. Hoan concurred with his competitors on the question about the Socialist platform, but broke with his fellow candidates by answering "no" to the rest. With these responses, the Legion felt comfortable supporting any candidate but Hoan.⁵⁰⁶

The *Milwaukee Journal*, however, did not need to send out a survey. It began denouncing Hoan shortly after he announced his intention to run for re-election. In a March 8 editorial, the paper declared,

Mr. Hoan, by the very limitations of his nature and vision, is found lacking in those qualities of courageous, patriotic leadership that Milwaukee should require of its mayor...Mr. Hoan's leadership has become woefully deficient. He is utterly disqualified for the position of mayor of Milwaukee.⁵⁰⁷

Less than a week later, the *Journal* insisted that the elected mayor had to be "a 100 per cent American" and strongly recommended the Democrat, Percy Braman, as the one who best fulfilled this requirement. To vote for Mayor Hoan, the paper suggested, "would simply confirm the suspicion of Milwaukee [as disloyal], which has long been held in all parts of the country."⁵⁰⁸ Days before the election, the *Journal* felt confident stating that Braman was "loyal to the core" and "fearless and outspoken in his Americanism." If he did not win one of the two spots in the primary, its editors believed, the loyalists should admit defeat.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁶ Herman Wagner & H.N. Laflin to Percy Braman, March 9, 1918 and copy of questionnaire with replies indicated, WLL papers, Box 2.

⁵⁰⁷ "Utterly Disqualified," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 8, 1918, 16.

⁵⁰⁸ "The Mayoralty Campaign," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 13, 1918, 8.

⁵⁰⁹ "All-Americans Must Win Tuesday or Lose All Chance," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 16, 1918, 2.

The *Journal* staff and Loyalty Legion members possibly felt some hope when they heard the results of the mayoral primary. Of the 58,645 people who voted for mayor, 48.5 percent chose Hoan, while 38 percent wanted Braman. Together Dammann and Park polled less than 14 percent. This meant Hoan and Braman would vie for the mayoral position in the general election. If the hyperpatriots could combine all the loyalty votes (Braman plus Dammann and Park's votes), there appeared to be a strong possibility Braman would win.

With the candidates set, Bloodgood began his campaign against Hoan in earnest. The day after the election, the loyalist made it clear there would be consequences for what he perceived to be Hoan's inappropriate, un-American, and thoroughly unpatriotic behavior and remarks, and that he was the man to set the wheels against Hoan into motion. First, Bloodgood chastised Milwaukee voters in a letter published by the *Milwaukee Free Press*, a Socialist newspaper, the day after the primary to let their readers know that by voting for Hoan (and Berger), Milwaukee County, would now, "in the eyes of the world, be considered a province of the German Imperial Government, and should be treated as such."⁵¹⁰ To see that they were, he wrote the U.S. District Attorney insisting the federal government needed to act against the potential election of Hoan or "we will have a condition in this community which will make it necessary to declare martial law."⁵¹¹ Bloodgood also had papers drawn to indict Hoan under the Espionage Act.⁵¹² Finally, on March 21, he announced the formation of the Next of Kin

⁵¹⁰ Stachowski, 81.

⁵¹¹ Abing, 115.

⁵¹² "Can't Defeat Hoan So They'll Indict Him/Bloodgood Liable to Make Serious Blunder in Milwaukee," *Grand Rapids Daily Leader* (Wisconsin), March 21, 1918, 1.

organization. Bloodgood declared that this group made up of men “of a determined character,” who had sons and brothers fighting in France, would not stand for a socialist government in Milwaukee or the state of Wisconsin. At the organization’s first meeting, Bloodgood equated Hoan with the already vilified Berger and La Follette in a speech he later had published as a small booklet,

While my sons and yours are facing bullets, high explosives, the bayonet and poisoned gas...the noble Berger with a Satanic smile on his Bolsheviki countenance listens to patriotic addresses in the City Club and Hoan directs the mobilization of our might and reconciles the “hostile groups,” and La Follette sulks in the senate, forgetting country...in his blind demand for unlimited speech and abuse.⁵¹³

If Milwaukee did happen to re-elect Hoan, Bloodgood continued, the Next of Kin organization would seek to have Milwaukee placed under martial law.⁵¹⁴

While an Alabama newspaper described Bloodgood’s suggestion as “a radical proposal designed to deal with a plague,” not everyone appreciated his suggestion that the federal government institute martial law in Milwaukee if Hoan managed to be re-elected.⁵¹⁵ The *Grand Rapids Daily Leader* described Bloodgood’s actions as a “serious blunder.”⁵¹⁶ While former Milwaukee mayor and Democrat David Rose stated, in the midst of assailing socialism, that he still “deplored the suggestion of martial law.”⁵¹⁷ Lawyer Erich Stern, who had not approved of John Stover (the enthusiastic American Protective League agent from Milwaukee), wrote in his journal that he did not

⁵¹³ *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood*, 12.

⁵¹⁴ “Can’t Defeat Hoan So They’ll Indict Him,” 1.

⁵¹⁵ “The Situation in Wisconsin.” *Montgomery Advertiser* (Alabama), April 19, 1918, 4.

⁵¹⁶ “Can’t Defeat Hoan So They’ll Indict Him,” 1.

⁵¹⁷ “Dave Rose Hits at Socialists,” *Capital Times*, March 27, 1918, 1; Hoan was amazed that the loyalists used Rose to campaign for Braman, stating in a letter to a friend that the former mayor was the “world champion enemy of democracy and decency,” Abing, 116.

appreciate Bloodgood's appeal to subvert the will of the voters and wondered if he should change his name to "Bad Blood."⁵¹⁸ The *Racine Journal News* was a bit kinder suggesting, "Mr. Wheeler Bloodgood may be prompted by a good purpose," but in the end, his actions would lead to the election of a Socialist.⁵¹⁹ The *Milwaukee Free Press* put it more bluntly,

The more our loyalty leagues, defense councils, voter's leagues and what not else speak and labor in a way to impugn the loyalty of any citizen or group of citizens, the more they try to impose any hard and fast standards of loyalty of their own upon Americans of this community during this campaign, the more may they expect rebuke in the result of the election—the more they may expect a socialist victory by the way of protest.⁵²⁰

The *Free Press* appears to have caught the general mood of many Milwaukee citizens. As one unidentified reader told the *Wisconsin News*,

The truth of the matter is that the overwhelming majority of Milwaukeeans do not care to be told that their patriotism needs vindicating, least of all by a silk-stocking few. And in the second place they do not care to have their patriotism made the cat's paw in anybody's war game.⁵²¹

According to Bloodgood, others took a more threatening and antagonizing stance. He reported that dissenters had sent him letters and made calls with menacing threats, such as "We will kill you, you English spy." He also recounted receiving inquiries from the editors of the *Milwaukee Free Press* wondering, "How the Ku Klux Klan is progressing." Bloodgood added, he did not appreciate the *Milwaukee Leader* in "heavy, black type" asserting that he and the Loyalty Legion were "loonies" or having U.S. Representative William J. Cary describe him as a "shyster" who "seeks publicity...by

⁵¹⁸ Abing, 115.

⁵¹⁹ "By the Way," *Racine Journal News*, March 23, 1918, 6.

⁵²⁰ Stachowski, 81.

⁵²¹ Stachowski, 80.

rousing bad blood in the community.”⁵²² Of all these humiliations, possibly the worst one came on March 22 when Governor Philipp, who had had enough of Bloodgood and his declarations, made a public statement that “Whoever is elected mayor of Milwaukee will be inaugurated. Peace will rule in Wisconsin. No Ku Klux Klan will rule in Wisconsin, at least not very long.”⁵²³ Bloodgood does not appear to have responded to Philipp’s statement comparing his actions to those of the KKK. Although he did retort, somewhat disingenuously, that he never called for the federal government to place Milwaukee under federal law.⁵²⁴

Not impressed with Bloodgood and his ilk, Hoan made it his goal to “give this crowd of camouflage patriots the worst licking they ever got” and, while he may not have succeeded at that goal, still gave them a “licking.”⁵²⁵ On April 2, 73,078 voters went to the polls and 51 percent of them chose Hoan to be Milwaukee’s mayor. Hoan had also asked the electorate, if they chose to vote for him, to elect Socialists to the Common Council as well. “Do not elevate me to a place of honor and then put shackles on my hands, hobbles on my feet, and a millstone around my neck.”⁵²⁶ Milwaukee voters came through and elected twelve Socialists. They, along with one who already served on the Council, meant enough votes existed to sustain any vetoes Hoan chose to make in the future.

Over the next few days, both loyalists and Socialists tried to explain Hoan’s victory. Bloodgood, who called the election’s outcome, “a most unfortunate thing for

⁵²² *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood*, 12-13.

⁵²³ “No Action Taken to Indict Mayor for his Utterances,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, March 22, 1918, 1.

⁵²⁴ “Did Not Call for Martial Law,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 22, 1918, 17.

⁵²⁵ Written in a letter by Hoan to Mrs. Nellie Ormond Slater, March 25, 1918 as quoted in Abing, 116.

⁵²⁶ Statement published in the *Milwaukee Leader*, March 28, 1918 as quoted in Stachowski, 82.

Milwaukee,” concluded, to his dismay, that the Milwaukee electorate did not care about Hoan’s “pacifist policies” and instead approved “the undoubted excellence of his administration.”⁵²⁷ Weeks after the election, Bloodgood again attempted to explain the result by suggesting misguided voters had accepted Socialist, pro-German propaganda as truth.⁵²⁸ The *Milwaukee Free Press* instead laid the blame for Hoan’s election at the feet of loyalists, such as Bloodgood, who should recognize the result “as a conscious and determined protest on the part of Milwaukee voters against the policy of suppression, persecution, or coercion practiced by certain elements of this community.”⁵²⁹

Despite having some understanding of why Milwaukeeans voted for Hoan, reactions by newspapers like the *Kansas City Times*, probably left Bloodgood humiliated. Days after the election, the Missouri newspaper dismissed Milwaukee, disgusted that the city, which lived “in a world of its own,” had just re-elected “its stop-the-war mayor.” “The country,” it suggested, “can get along without Milwaukee.”⁵³⁰ Columnist Ellis Usher also pointed out that Bloodgood had made promises about what he would do if Hoan won, which “he must now make good or ‘crawl.’”⁵³¹ Probably with such admonishments in mind, Bloodgood asserted, Milwaukee loyalists would “not stay idle and allow the enemy to take over the administration of this city.”⁵³² To prevent such a catastrophe, on April 4 Bloodgood left for Washington, where he met with members of the Department of Justice to discuss “steps for removing the stigma of an anti-war administration from Milwaukee” or as Usher wrote, Bloodgood “has gone east to consult

⁵²⁷ “Lenroot Elected by Large Margin,” *Oregonian* (Portland), April 4, 1918, 1, 3.

⁵²⁸ “Propaganda is Cause of Delay,” *Perth Amboy Evening News* (New Jersey), April 17, 1918, 1.

⁵²⁹ Statement published in the *Milwaukee Free Press*, April 4, 1918 as quoted in Stachowski, 83.

⁵³⁰ “What Kansas City Thinks of Milwaukee,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 6, 1918, 1.

⁵³¹ Ellis Usher, “Vote for Senator Was Most Decisive Patriotic Victory,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, April 6, 1918, 3.

⁵³² “Lenroot Elected by Large Margin,” 1, 3.

the oracles [about having] Dan Hoan thrown out of the mayor's office."⁵³³ Bloodgood hoped to have Hoan indicted under the Espionage Act, but added that if that failed, he had "a half a dozen other weapons ready."⁵³⁴

Once in Washington, Bloodgood backtracked, characterizing "as absurd reports he was here to try to oust the Socialist mayor of Milwaukee," and told reporters his visit only related to establishing a special bureau in Washington "to look after Milwaukee's industrial and military interests."⁵³⁵ Neither statement was quite true. While in DC, Bloodgood spent most of his time working with Assistant Attorney General Charles Warren to pass the Chamberlain Court-Martial bill, "by which the entire nation may be declared a military zone, making spies and disloyal persons subject to trial by court martial."⁵³⁶ The two had met in August 1917, along with Senator Paul Husting, who all agreed at the time that civilian courts were inadequate to deal with anti-war activists. Once in Washington, Bloodgood urged Warren to take up the cause again. Warren agreed and immediately wrote a memorandum proposing the Army "deal with enemy activities" and that the death penalty—the only way, he argued, to suppress dissent—be used on those found guilty.⁵³⁷

Oregon Senator George Chamberlain, chair of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, thought there was merit in Warren's idea and asked him to redraft his

⁵³³ "Berger's Strength Alarms Wisconsin," *Oregonian* (Portland), April 5, 1918, 15.; Usher, "Vote for Senator," 3.

⁵³⁴ "Berger's Strength Alarms Wisconsin," 15.

⁵³⁵ "Will Make Effort to Halt Pro-German Activities in U.S.," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, April 6, 1918, 1.

⁵³⁶ "The Situation in Wisconsin," 4.

⁵³⁷ Most information about the Chamberlain Court-Martial Bill comes from Eric Chester, "Traitors, Spies and Military Tribunals: The Assault on Civil Liberties during World War I," *New Politics* XIV, no. 2 (Winter 2013) https://newpol.org/issue_post/traitors-spies-and-military-tribunals-assault-civil-liberties-during-world-war-i/, unless otherwise identified.

memorandum as a bill. On April 17, Bloodgood testified before Chamberlain's committee and laid out the situation in Milwaukee. He told them of the futility of trying to suppress sedition in the city, where the possibility of finding a jury to convict someone for a seditious statement was slim. He spoke of the blatant German propaganda and tricky German agents that encouraged slowdowns at munition factories and shipyards. He wanted those responsible to experience retribution and justice.⁵³⁸

Attorney General Thomas Gregory had not approved of Warren's actions and did not learn about them until the hearing was underway. He saw the bill more as an attempt to take power away from the Department of Justice and hand it to the military rather than an appropriate way to deal with disloyal or treasonous Americans. Gregory responded by dismissing Warren from his position three days after the hearing began. Around the same time, President Wilson sent a letter to the Senate calling Chamberlain's bill "not only 'unnecessary and uncalled for,' but also unconstitutional." He told the Senators that passing the bill "would put us upon the level of the very people we are fighting and affecting to despise."⁵³⁹ The Chamberlain bill never made it out of committee.

During the course of his testimony, Bloodgood warned the committee that the people of Wisconsin "were apt to go back to primitive methods" and that "something unfortunate would happen," unless the government dealt with pro-Germanism more effectively.⁵⁴⁰ Humiliation over the election, as well as frustration about allegedly

⁵³⁸ "The Situation in Wisconsin," 4.

⁵³⁹ "Wilson Opposes New Spy Bill," *New York Times*, April 23, 1918, 6.; Abing, 119.; Chester, "Traitors, Spies and Military Tribunals."

⁵⁴⁰ "The Situation in Wisconsin," 4.

disloyal Wisconsinites' inability to respond "properly" to Loyalty Legion educational methods or to new local or state anti-treason laws, may have led Bloodgood to warn of potential violence. He may have also concluded that dissenters had become more dangerous, as illustrated by anonymous threats to himself and by violent episodes like the one with Gessert in Rhine Township, and thought the state's hyperpatriots needed to respond in kind. William R. Walker, a historian researching hyperpatriotism in World War I, has argued that Bloodgood "never urged that private individuals solve the problem of dissidents through intimidation or violence," but the Milwaukee lawyer allegedly threatened to answer the "ballots of the voters with bullets."⁵⁴¹ Bloodgood, however, was not the only loyalist frustrated by his compatriots' failure to scrub the disloyal stain from Wisconsin. Many of them were now ready, according to one historian of World War Wisconsin, "to tighten the screws against dissent."⁵⁴² The first incident of violence occurred days before the general election. From that time until the end of the war, but especially during the next two Liberty Loan drives, Wisconsin's self-identified patriots felt no compunction using more coercive and more violent means to convince the "disloyal" that they needed to change their ways.

⁵⁴¹ William R. Walker, "Only the Heretics are Burning: Democracy and Repression in World War I America" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 2008), 258; "Hunnish Patriots Rebuked" from the *Reading Labor Advocate*, Reading, Pennsylvania, as reported in *Truth*, Erie, Pennsylvania, August 10, 1918, 3.

⁵⁴² Abing, 119.

Chapter 5: An Era of Violence and Vigilantism, April-November 1918

*“I turned around to return to the house when they all at one time closed in on me like a vise; some grabbing my fingers or wrists, others my legs, and several of them were shouting before me, ‘Sign up.’ I said, ‘I will not sign up at this time of night.’ Then a man shouted, ‘Get the rope!’”*⁵⁴³

Statement of John Deml, Outagamie County, after a visit by a Liberty Loan mob, October 22, 1918

With the election over, Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots declared Wisconsin loyal. But was it really? The results proved that a significant number of Wisconsinites had not bought into the loyalist agenda despite the intense effort to educate them about the meanings of patriotism and loyalty during the time of the Great War. Voting statistics showed that areas of the state with large German-American populations had been particularly impervious to their efforts, reinforcing thoughts that those with German blood were less than loyal. The election’s outcome proved to the state’s loyalists that education and new laws had not been enough; more persuasive methods were needed.

From the time of the April election through Armistice Day on November 11, Wisconsin’s frustrated hyperpatriots utilized mob coercion and violence to make those they viewed as less than one hundred percent American prove their loyalty. The third Liberty Loan drive, held shortly after the election, would be the first time loyalists put group intimidation to the test, focusing on recalcitrant individuals who balked at buying bonds. In the end, with the added pressure exerted, Wisconsin loan committees managed to elicit a “fair share” from almost everyone and helped the state meet its quota for the first time. Some Wisconsinites complained about the coercive and possibly unconstitutional nature of the hyperpatriots’ actions, while others applauded their

⁵⁴³ Charles D. Stewart, “Prussianizing Wisconsin,” *Atlantic Monthly* 123 (January 1919), 102.

methods. By the fourth Liberty Loan drive in September and October 1918, the use of intimidation and occasional violence, often with mobs or “flying squadrons,” as they were called, had escalated, but the state met its quota again and the loyalists declared success again. Wisconsin’s self-styled patriotic mobs did not limit their wrath to Loyalty Loan slackers, but also felt free to attack alleged pro-Germans, especially those who seemed to have avoided punishment by the authorities. After the war ended, a Hartford (Washington Co.) resident, who had recorded a number of these incidents, asserted that instead of winning the war for democracy, the hyperpatriots had “Prussianized” Wisconsin, making them no better than the autocratic enemy the country had been fighting against. He wondered if their actions would be the war’s legacy to the state.⁵⁴⁴

Although most cases of mob intimidation in Wisconsin occurred during the third and fourth Liberty Loan drives, the first outbreak of vigilante violence began on March 31, 1918, just days before the special senatorial election. The anonymous militant patriots, self-styled as the “Knights of Liberty,” planned to rid Ashland and Bayfield Counties in northern Wisconsin of all German sympathizers. Of course, they defined for themselves who was disloyal and needed punishment, usually basing their decisions purely on alleged statements. The Knights used tarring and feathering to encourage their victims to change their ways or leave town. Obviously, they believed as true American patriots, they were free to mete out justice to those who deserved it. Even after Governor Philipp and the mayor of Ashland condemned the Knights, reminding them they were breaking the law and demanding that they cease and desist their

⁵⁴⁴ Stewart, “Prussianizing Wisconsin,” 99-105, esp. 105.

behavior, the Knights chose to ignore them and continued to mete out justice vigilante style.

Their first attack occurred on a Sunday night in the city of Ashland. Professor E.A. Schimler, a teacher of languages at the city's Northland College, was lounging in his boarding house room, his shoes thrown to one side, enjoying a book, when a group of ten to twelve masked men burst in and forcefully removed him from the house. These men had found a lonely spot about a half mile from the city where they could strip Schimler of his clothes and liberally cover him with tar and feathers. After they completed their task, the startled professor managed to find his underwear, return to his boarding house, and call the police. Schimler, a naturalized citizen who had come to the United States with his parents when he was fourteen, told the officers he had no idea why he was attacked and, having only arrived in Ashland in February, could not recognize the voices of his assailants. He also mentioned that he had been robbed of his coat, trousers, watch, and other valuables.⁵⁴⁵ To add to his humiliation, two days later Northland College authorities dismissed Schimler from his teaching position, stating the college "could not have as a member of their faculty any man whose loyalty was even suspicioned." This appears to have happened under some pressure, since just the day before, the college administrators had described the professor as "an efficient teacher and that there was no evidence that he was disloyal in words or actions."⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ "Professor of Northland Tarred and Feathered," *Ashland Daily Press*, April 1, 1918, 1. The watch was sent to the police with a note to "Kindly return this to the Pro-German Prof. of Northland College." See "Watch of Schimmler [sic] is Returned," *Ashland Daily Press*, April 2, 1918, 1.

⁵⁴⁶ "Professor of Northland Tarred and Feathered"; "Schimmler [sic] is Released by Northland," *Ashland Daily Press*, April 2, 1918, 1. Northland president J.D. Brownell issued a statement to the press on April 2 acknowledging that while there had been rumors about pro-German statements by Schimler, an investigation found no evidence of such, especially in the classroom. He added that no complaints were made directly to him and those who passed

Within days, the Knights of Liberty identified themselves as the perpetrators of the attack on Schimler through the local newspaper. In two letters sent to the *Ashland Daily Press*, the Knights informed local residents of their new society, described as “one hundred and fifty strong,” and its purpose. The authors of the letters, one signed “Loyalist” and the other, “Knights of Liberty,” rejected the implied idea that they were a bunch of hoodlums and claimed, instead, that their party was made up of “good, loyal, red-blooded American citizens.” They had formed their group to do away with pro-Germanism and sedition in Ashland County and make “it too damn hot a climate” for Kaiser agents to live there. The Knights would continue their attacks, the authors added, until northern Wisconsin was one hundred percent loyal. In an early display of dismissing the authority of actual law officials, incensed members of the Knights responded to the announcement by city authorities that a \$100 reward would be offered for any information leading to the arrest of anyone who participated in the Schimler attack, by offering a reward of their own: a \$100 for “any information of Pro-Germanism that we cannot handle and guarantee satisfaction.”⁵⁴⁷

Although these statements made their purpose clear, city residents were still confused as to why Schimler had been targeted, so on April 18, the Knights of Liberty sent another letter to the *Press* clarifying their reasons. Allegedly, the professor had said to Ashland stationery merchant John J. Hauptert a number of disloyal statements, including his belief that Germany had to use unrestricted submarine warfare to prevent

on the rumors refused to disclose their source or did not know its origin. During the investigation, Schimler told Brownell that he was a loyal American who abhorred “German Autocracy and militarism.” “Statement from President Brownell,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 2, 1918, 1.

⁵⁴⁷ Summary and partial transcription of articles and editorials in the *Ashland Daily Press* related to the city’s tarring and feathering incidents, ELP papers, Box 19. These quotes appeared in the article “Knights of Liberty Talk Thru Press,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 6, 1918.

Germans from starving, that German prestige and military prowess would soon make Russia German, and that the United States government was so corrupt, it would not accomplish anything in the war. Hauptert reported this conversation to the district attorney and only after the authorities refused to act did the Knights of Liberty step in and deliver appropriate and “very lenient” punishment.⁵⁴⁸

Ashland mayor Clarence Dennis tried to prevent the Knights from attacking another citizen by declaring that no American law allowed them to be prosecutor, judge, and executioner, adding, “When you assume any of these powers you become lawbreakers and invite for yourselves the punishment you inflict on others,” but to no avail.⁵⁴⁹ On April 10, the Knights of Liberty struck again. This time local bartender Adolph Anton was pulled from his home by a group of five to six mainly masked men, who claimed to be from the dynamite plant and looking for rooms. When Mrs. Anna Anton refused to let them enter, the Liberty posse broke down the door and searched the house for Adolph, finally finding him hidden in a closet. While holding her four-year old daughter, Mrs. Anton grabbed a rifle and aimed it at the intruders, but one Knight tore it out of her hands, while another tore their phone from the wall. The men then forced Anton into a car and drove him about a mile out of town, where, like Schimler, he was stripped, tarred and feathered, and left to find his own way home. In the meanwhile, Mrs. Anton contacted the police. Anton had lived in Ashland since his 1887 arrival from Germany and recognized the one unmasked man as Ephriam Gay, a house

⁵⁴⁸ “More Light on Schimler Matter,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 20, 1918, 1.

⁵⁴⁹ “Mayor Dennis Addresses the K. of L.,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 11, 1918, 1. The Knights of Liberty wrote Ashland mayor Clarence Dennis on April 3 with much the same language as appears in the “Loyalist” letter, but added “We are law abiding citizens and not lawbreakers, did not intend to rob or injure anyone.”

mover, and the voice of another as George Buchanan, a life insurance agent. The police arrested both men, but released them on their own recognizance after they each paid a \$500 bond.⁵⁵⁰

With this second event, Governor Philipp had had enough and on April 23 directed the attorney general to send a staff member to Ashland to investigate. In the announcement of his decision, Philipp added,

No man or class of men can take unto themselves the duties of the courts of Wisconsin and mete out punishment. If there are disloyal citizens in Ashland, the courts are open and they will be prosecuted. But the men who think they can conduct tar and feather bees in the state will find that the courts are open to proceed against them...Peace and order [are] going to reign in Wisconsin.⁵⁵¹

Assistant Attorney General Winfield W. Gilman arrived in Ashland the next day and met with the editors of the *Ashland Daily Press* to let them know that not only was he there to make inquiries about the “recent ‘tar and feather’ outbreaks,” but also learn about disloyal acts and utterances made in the city, so perpetrators could be prosecuted appropriately. He asked those with information about either matter speak to him while he was in town.⁵⁵² City residents, including the editor of the *Press*, did not appreciate the governor’s actions and generally refused to cooperate with Gilman, often telling him they were proud of the Knights of Liberty and their activities. The *Press* ran an editorial disparaging the governor and Gilman for causing pain and surprise to Ashland citizens by insinuating “that Ashland is over-run by lawlessness” and that its local officers were ineffective. Instead, the *Press* argued, Governor Philipp and Mr. Gilman should spend

⁵⁵⁰ “Another Tar and Feather Party is Staged,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 11, 1918, 1.

⁵⁵¹ “Tar and Feather Bees to be Investigated,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 23, 1918, 1.

⁵⁵² “Governor’s Investigator in the City,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 24, 1918, 1.; “Gilman is After All Disloyalists,” *Ashland Daily Press*, April 25, 1918, 1.

their time and effort on curbing the city's "pro-German citizens who arrogantly parade up and down our streets."⁵⁵³ In a continued show of their disrespect for government authorities, shortly after the governor's statement, the Knights sent letters to about thirty Ashland County residents warning them that their "Americanism is questioned and it has been called to our attention that you could make a good subject for a demonstrating party."⁵⁵⁴

Not every Ashland citizen approved of the Knights actions or thought they represented real law and order. After the Schimler incident, the *Press* received two letters, which they did not publish until late April, from a "Subscriber" condemning the tarring and feathering bees. The writer had some harsh words for the Knights, who he called "a drove of grossly irresponsible asses," as well as for city authorities, whose inability to bring them to justice proved that "the police force needs to be fumigated and that our law courts are farces." Subscriber also castigated the *Press* for not supporting city authorities and suggested that some of their statements could lead to accusations of disturbing the public peace and land them in court.⁵⁵⁵ A similar letter, which suggested the actions of the Knights would lead to more Socialist votes in retaliation for their heavy-handed behavior, found its way to Governor Philipp. Somehow the *Milwaukee Free Press* got a hold of the letter and published it in its April 24 edition. The editor of the *Ashland Press* felt a careful reading of the *Free Press* letter showed it was written by the "coward who wrote the sneaking anonymous letter" to the *Daily Press*.⁵⁵⁶ On April

⁵⁵³ Untitled editorial, *Ashland Daily Press*, April 27, 1918.

⁵⁵⁴ "Milwaukee Free Press Runs Letter Slaming [sic] Ashland," *Ashland Free Press*, April 25, 1918, 1.

⁵⁵⁵ Untitled open letter to the editor of the *Ashland Press*, *Ashland Free Press*, April 24, 1918.

⁵⁵⁶ "Milwaukee Free Press Runs Letter," 1.

25, the *Ashland Press* announced in bold letters on the first page that the author of the correspondence was none other than Ashland's former income tax assessor William Landraint, a 61-year old farmer who had been born in Germany, served in its army, and immigrated to Wisconsin at the age of 36, and who already had a reputation for disloyalty.⁵⁵⁷

In early February 1918, the Ashland County Council of Defense accused Landraint of disloyal sentiments that made him unfit for his office as tax assessor. The state tax commission responded to the accusations by holding a two-day hearing and allowing Landraint to respond. Several men came forward to share statements Landraint had made to them, including this one to O.W. Smith, Washburn's Congregational minister: "This is the rottenest government on the face of the earth; it is either rule by gold or rule by mob; for justice and equity give me the German government every time." Landraint did not help his position by admitting he had not wanted to buy Liberty Bonds because both his farm and home were mortgaged, but later did so on the advice of his attorney.⁵⁵⁸ Two days after the hearing ended, the commission announced that Landraint, whose term had recently expired, would not be reappointed.⁵⁵⁹

The fact that this apparently disloyal man had had the nerve to write letters damning the Knights of Liberty did not sit well with its members, and on May 8 at 5:45 pm they retaliated. At that time Landraint, who was walking along a downtown street in

⁵⁵⁷ "Landraint Wrote Letter to the Free Press," *Ashland Daily Press*, April 26, 1918, 1.; "Thought Kaiser Was in Right," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1918, 1.

⁵⁵⁸ "Thought Kaiser Was in Right," 1.

⁵⁵⁹ "Assessor Charged with Disloyalty to Lose Job," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 14, 1918, 2.

Ashland on his way home, was attacked in broad daylight. In a brief moment, one man threw a bag over the victim's head, while another pinned down his arms, both throwing him into an automobile that drove up for the purpose. This happened so fast that no one noticed what happened. The Knights took the deposed tax assessor to Bayfield County, and, as before, removed his clothes and applied a "liberal coat of tar and feathers," although this time they also placed him in handcuffs. Landraint walked home and notified the police, who were able to find a locksmith to remove the handcuffs. When questioned, Landraint admitted he did not recognize any of the voices of the masked men.⁵⁶⁰

All of this happened despite the fact that just days before Governor Philipp had written to the county sheriff reminding him that it was his duty to keep the peace in Ashland County and protect its citizens "against any lawless mob, or against any individual who may wish to commit acts of violence." He added if the sheriff needed help to prevent these acts from happening, he would provide the law officer the means of doing so.⁵⁶¹ Possibly to protect the sheriff from experiencing any further wrath from the governor, the Knights of Liberty did not perform any more tarring and featherings in Ashland County. This may also explain why they drove Landraint to Bayfield County before attacking him.

⁵⁶⁰ "Landraint is Tarr'd and Feathered," *Ashland Daily Press*, May 9, 1918, 1. In a later interview with the *Milwaukee Free Press*, Landraint reported that he had two ribs broken during the assault and that he had been beaten and kicked about the face. He added that his nervous system had been "shattered by the experience." Landraint also went to his bank and requested the bank cancel his third Liberty Loan down payment check. The bank put the cancelled check on display. "Landraint [sic] Lifts Up His Voice," *Ashland Daily Press*, July 2, 1918, 1.

⁵⁶¹ "Gov. Philipp Writes to Kleinstreiber," *Ashland Daily Press*, May 4, 1918, 1.

The fourth tarring and feathering also occurred in Bayfield County. On June 30, farmer Martin Johnson experienced the Knights of Liberty treatment. Johnson allegedly had made disloyal remarks about the United States government, along with statements disparaging the Red Cross. As with Anton, the Knights approached him at his home on false pretenses, asking him to direct them to a fishing stream. Once he stepped outside, the Knights threw Johnson into a car and took him to an isolated spot, where they covered him with tar and feathers. As with most of the other victims, Johnson did not recognize any of the perpetrators.⁵⁶² This was the last time the Knights of Liberty attacked a Wisconsin citizen. However, on September 18, they did cross state lines and tarred and feathered Olli Kinkkonen, a Duluth, Minnesota, resident from Finland, shortly after he signed papers stating he would never try to become an American citizen as a way to avoid the draft. Later that day, Kinkkonen apparently committed suicide by hanging himself from a pine tree near the scene of the event. In remembrance of the harassment he experienced, his gravestone includes the phrase “Victim of Warmongers.”⁵⁶³

Days after the Johnson incident, the Ashland court held a preliminary hearing for Ephraim Gay and George Buchanan, arrested in the tarring and feathering of Adolph Anton. Governor Philipp had appointed William Shea special council to prosecute the two men. Anton, who returned from his new home in Gary, Indiana, for this court

⁵⁶² “Sweden Man Tarrred and Feathered,” *Ashland Daily Press*, July 1, 1918, 1.

⁵⁶³ “Duluth Expects Arrests,” *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*, October 8, 1918, 1; “Death Follows Mobs,” *Bottineau Courant* (North Dakota), November 21, 1918, 7. The latter reported that the Knights of Liberty admitted to the tarring and feathering to the *Duluth News Tribune* shortly after the event, but not to the hanging. “Prominent residents” reported he had committed suicide. According to an untitled article in the October 3 issue of the Finnish-language newspaper *Auttaja*, Ironwood, Michigan (p.1), before committing suicide, Kinkkonen removed the tar with a handkerchief he left in his hat and placed \$890 in paper money in his clothing, mainly in his socks, along with \$10.50 in change and \$10 in war saving stamps. Kinkkonen, born in 1880, had immigrated to the United States from Finland in 1907.

appearance, testified that he had recognized both men, but the judge believed the defendants' alibis over Anton's statement and dismissed Shea's request for a trial. Learning that Gay and Buchanan would be discharged, the courtroom broke into applause.⁵⁶⁴ Shea, dumbfounded by the result, later admitted that during a recess Buchanan had implied Shea might be the next victim of a tar and feather party, since "he had no time for men employed as detectives or lawyers for parties of pro-German proclivities."⁵⁶⁵ Shea had the authority to arrest Gay and Buchanan again, but after some deliberation, declined to do so.

The actions of the Knights of Liberty fit into a long history of American vigilantism, but represented a new form that appeared in the late nineteenth century. For most of that century, vigilantes brought law and order to frontier communities, usually before courts of law and other legal forms of justice had been established, and were best known for apprehending horse thieves and other criminals. With an increasing number of professional and government-backed police forces around the country, crime-control vigilantism was waning by the time of World War I, but had not disappeared. In its place a new form of vigilantism had emerged—one focused on social control by policing fellow citizens. Americans had a long history of equating good citizenship with obligation, especially an obligation to police and be the moral guardians of their neighbors. Conservative elites in America, who strongly believed in maintaining

⁵⁶⁴ "Ashland Court Ousts Mob Case," *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 17, 1918, 1.; "Happenings of the Week in Wisconsin," *Grand Rapids Tribune* (Wisconsin), July 25, 1918, 7.

⁵⁶⁵ "Promises More Tar Bees at Ashland," *Capital Times*, July 18, 1918, 2.

the status quo, social hierarchy, and morality of their communities, saw this policing as one of their primary roles. When dissenters, deviants, or other “dangerous” people challenged their sense of order, and the legal community seemed incapable of controlling them, these men often took the law into their own hands. They saw themselves not as the perpetrators of the type of uncontrolled mob violence committed by the lower classes, but as a rational group who acted in a systematic, organized, and passionless manner against those who threatened the social fabric of their community. They considered themselves vigilant not vigilantes.⁵⁶⁶

World War I brought a new context for vigilantism, specifically a demand for one hundred percent Americanism. This was not just a Wisconsin phenomenon, but one that appeared throughout the United States. The men who made up these wartime vigilante posses tended to come from similar backgrounds and hold similar fears. For the most part, they were conservative elites with Anglo-American backgrounds, Protestant religious beliefs, and comfortable bank accounts. They also had faith in the sanctity of family, community, and nation, which they saw as the bedrock for social cohesion, an essential concept to them. Their nativist views meant they treated the onslaught of eastern Europeans, often Jews and Catholics, who flooded into the United States beginning in the 1880s, as a threat to their sense of and need for national purity. These immigrants brought new ideas about how a government should be run, specifically

⁵⁶⁶ This discussion of vigilantism is based on the following: Christopher Capozzola, “The Only Badge Needed is Your Patriotic Fervor: Vigilance, Coercion, and the Law in World War I America,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (March 2002): 1354-1382; William C. Culbertson, *Vigilantism: Political History of Private Power in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990); H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter C. Sederbert, editors, *Vigilante Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976); “America’s Vigilantes in the Great War, 1916-1918” *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* 106, no. 3 (July 1976): 277-286; Michael Cohen, “‘The Ku Klux Government’: Vigilantism, Lynching and the Repression of the IWW,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1, No. 1 (Spring 2007): 31-56; as well as other articles cited in this section.

Socialism, and radical ideas about how to reform America from the bottom up. Those who responded with vigilante actions felt obligated to attack, remove, or bring into line those who threatened their worldview. Their enemies became, among others, pro-labor advocates, such as members of the Industrial Workers of the World, who were a major target of vigilante behavior during the war, moral deviants (especially those who relied on alcohol), and people of color, who tried to use the war to improve their social position. Besides these long-standing outsiders, vigilante groups used the war to attack slackers, shirkers, pro-Germans, and anyone with anti-war views.

While these men may not have been aroused to vigilante action outside of the war context, America's entry into the war created an intensely emotional experience that allowed those in polite society to use violence as a means toward their ends.

Government officials often supported vigilante action during the war. Attorney General Thomas Gregory, for example, saw it as a sign of vitality and of the country's martial spirit. Shortly after the war began, he announced, "May God have mercy on [war dissenters] for they need expect none from an outraged people and an avenging government."⁵⁶⁷ With this type of language, he and other officials gave the respectable classes permission to use violence and group intimidation against the "dangerous classes." One historian has called this bourgeois vigilantism.⁵⁶⁸

To understand wartime vigilantism in Wisconsin, we need to be put it into the context of its unique political position, especially as a leader of the Progressive

⁵⁶⁷ As quoted in Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime from the Sedition Acts of 1798 to the War on Terrorism*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 153.

⁵⁶⁸ Cohen, 35.

movement and the residence of a large Socialist (or Social-Democratic) population. Vigilantism historian William Cumberson has argued that the vigilante action in this era can be closely tied to progressivism, which privileged and struggled for the structural organization of society, especially through the use of bureaucracy and by focusing on intellect over emotion. He sees this in stark contrast to the preceding populist era with its reliance on emotion and violence.⁵⁶⁹ While the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin probably played a role in who participated in vigilante violence and how they conducted themselves during their attacks, Wisconsin's conservative elite did not describe themselves as progressive. At that time, Wisconsin progressives were an amalgamation of political moderates, Socialists, and La Follette followers who wanted to expand and reform the role of government using innovative approaches, usually in support of the common people rather than financial elites or corporations. The state's business and professional leaders, resistant to the idea of bringing more government into their lives, usually did not align themselves with progressive politics, yet their approach to vigilantism was definitely influenced by a progressive desire to be rational and organized.

Vigilantism as practiced by Wisconsin's community leaders was embedded with an inherent paradox. These men demanded their fellow citizens stand unified behind the flag, the president, the military, and the federal government. They wanted law and order to flourish and regulate society. Yet they placed more emphasis on "order" than the "law," which they frequently ignored. As a vigilantism historian has stated, "What is paradoxical about the vigilante position [of the early twentieth century] is, of course,

⁵⁶⁹ Cumberson, 91-92

that it seeks to perpetuate the existing order, but without law and without accepting the actions of the society's political institutions."⁵⁷⁰ The Knights of Liberty, for example, continued to tar and feather those they deemed pro-German even after the mayor, the governor, and later the president identified their behavior as illegal and un-American. Often, these war-time vigilantes had the complicit consent of some or all of the local public officials and police officers, who treated the organized, rational form of vigilantism as a politically legitimate way to police a community.

Most if not all the forty-eight states experienced some kind of vigilantism during the war, although each had its own ebb and flow.⁵⁷¹ Vigilante action in Idaho, for example, peaked in 1917 and began declining in the spring of 1918.⁵⁷² Kansas, on the other hand, saw little war-related violence until the third Liberty Loan drive (April-May 1918), but once introduced, vigilante behavior continued at a steady pace through Armistice Day. Pacifist Mennonites appeared to be the main targets there.⁵⁷³ Washingtonians experienced their worst case of vigilante violence in June 1918, when local businessmen and prosperous farmers in Walla Walla turned with a vengeance on members of the Washington Grangers, a powerful reform organization of around

⁵⁷⁰ Edward Stettner, "Vigilantism and Political Theory" in *Vigilante Politics*, Rosenbaum and Sederberg, editors (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 70.

⁵⁷¹ See the following books for examples of vigilante violence against German-Americans throughout the United States during 1918: Carl Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1936), 187-196 [Wittke's book emphasizes Ohio, but is not limited to just that state.]; Horace Peterson and Gilbert Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917-1918* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), 199-207; Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 279-282; and Erik Kirschbaum, *Burning Beethoven: The Eradication of German Culture in the United States during World War I* (New York: Berlinica Publishing LLC, 2015), 139-147.

⁵⁷² Hugh T. Lovin, "World War I Vigilantes in Idaho, 1917-1918," *Idaho Yesterdays* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1974): 2-11.

⁵⁷³ James C. Juhnke, "Mob Violence and Kansas Mennonites in 1918," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 43, no. 3 (Autumn 1977): 334-350.

15,000, for allegedly disloyal and unpatriotic statements.⁵⁷⁴ As with many examples of World War I-era vigilantism, those who participated in vigilante groups often equated reform with disloyalty, since it disrupted and challenged the status quo and the elites who maintained it.

While deaths from vigilante violence during the war were rare, one that received a considerable amount of national attention occurred in Collinsville, Illinois, on April 4, 1918, when local citizens lynched Robert Praeger, a German immigrant and a Socialist. Praeger considered himself a loyal American. He had registered for the military but was rejected because of a glass eye and his enemy alien status. He had even reported the disloyal remarks of a man from nearby St. Louis, who received thirty-two days in jail for his transgression. However, the president of the local miner's union, which he had unsuccessfully tried to join shortly before his death, called him a spy who had made derogatory remarks about President Wilson. Miners led the assault on Praeger, although later in the evening, they were joined by inebriated young men of draft age. Around 10 pm, the mob allowed Praeger to write a letter to his parents and say a prayer before hanging him from an oak tree outside of town. Unlike the Ashland tarring and feathering Knights, around eleven of the Collinsville mob went to trial, but to the judge's dismay were found not guilty by the jury.⁵⁷⁵ In contrast to vigilante behavior in Wisconsin and much of the rest of the country, the Praeger lynching was more in the nature of populist vigilinatism, since it was led by working-class men and not the

⁵⁷⁴ Carlos A. Schwantes, "Making the World Unsafe for Democracy: Vigilantes, Grangers and the Walla Walla 'Outrage' of June 1918," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 31, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 18-29.

⁵⁷⁵ Donald R. Hickey, "The Praeger Affair: A Study in Wartime Hysteria," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 62, no. 2 (Summer 1969): 117-134.

community's elites. The mayor, in fact, tried to calm the mob when it was harassing Praeger, while the police chief attempted to rescue him by hiding him in City Hall, both without success.

In Wisconsin, the Knights of Liberty events in Ashland and Bayfield Counties represented the beginning of the rational and organized era of vigilante behavior. During the previous year there had been spontaneous outbursts of populist-style vigilantism, generally consisting of working-class men throwing allegedly unpatriotic residents into a nearby river or forcing a fellow employee to kiss the flag. In contrast, hyperpatriotic community leaders had tried to encourage patriotism and loyalty in more benign ways. The April 2 election made them realize they had not succeeded; it brought their mission to a crisis point. Although they had won the senatorial election, the significant turnout for Victor Berger increased their frustration and added to their humiliation. During this time of war, the federal government was demanding unity in thought and deed, a concept that very much appealed to Wisconsin's conservative elite. The election proved they had not convinced every state resident of this necessity.

The Knights of Liberty tarring and featherings began just days before the election, when emotions about loyalty and disloyalty were at their peak in the state. Many loyalists rejected this approach, seeing it as brutal and uncivilized.⁵⁷⁶ The *Milwaukee Journal*, for example, called lynching and tarring and feathering "unworthy of those who enjoy American citizenship." These violence-averse loyalists, shortly after

⁵⁷⁶ In its July 21, 1918, Sunday edition (part 2, p. 1), the *Milwaukee Journal*, which generally supported punishment of dissenters, stated, "Tar and feather parties are supposed to be going out of style as the march of civilization brings laws which provide other punishment for the offenses, which in new communities, sometimes were punished in this crude way." The article, titled "Horrid Exhibit Here in Tar and Feather Case," includes photos of where the Anton incident occurred, as well as images of the tar cans, feather pillows, and sack used in that attack.

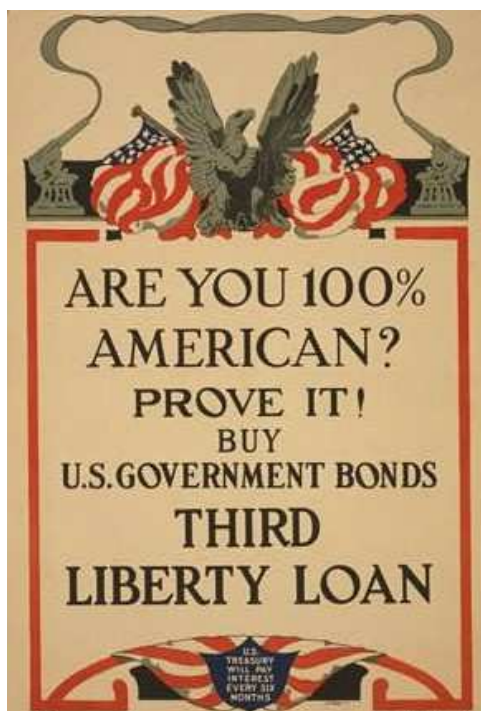
the April incidents in Ashland and Collinsville, began dividing “super-patriots,” a word first used that month, into two camps: “those more dangerous than the madman” and those, like them, who had thrown “everything they have into America’s cause” without harming people or their possessions.⁵⁷⁷ This latter group did not shy away from group intimidation, but they preferred a more rational and organized form that relied on shame and disgrace rather than violence. Spontaneous outbursts that attacked the body or property of an allegedly disloyal victim still occurred, but as before were perpetuated by members of the working class. In Wisconsin, both types of vigilantism became more frequent with the launch of the third Liberty Loan drive, which began on April 5, 1918.

About halfway through the third Liberty Loan drive, Waupun’s chief of police Harry Cross spoke with pride about being the leader of Dodge County Council of Defense’s Strong Arm Squad. Cross and a local farmer had come up with the idea of a squad as a way to make sure everyone in the county contributed their fair share of the loan. During this loan drive, many localities around the state established individual quotas based on the perceived amount a person could afford to spend on bonds, otherwise known as their “fair share.” Cross provided an example of a local man whose quota had been set at \$250, but only purchased \$100 and could not be convinced, even after three visits by bond sellers, to buy more. At this point, the Strong Arm Squad decided to step in and brought the recalcitrant man to Cross’s office, where a pail of tar

⁵⁷⁷ “Dr. Steiner on Super-Patriots,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 18, 1918, 12. In this editorial, the *Journal* quotes Dr. Edward A. Steiner, a Grinnell College, Iowa, professor, and asks him to be more specific in his definition of superpatriots.

was cooking on the stove with a feather pillow nearby. The threat was enough and the man purchased his full allotment plus gave \$25 to the Red Cross at the insistence of the Squad. Cross expected, correctly, that other communities would soon begin to use this method against negligent citizens. Cross added that the Squad was also looking for the twenty-nine men in Waupun who voted for Berger by offering a reward of \$25 for each name provided. When that did not prove successful, the Squad increased the reward to \$125, but again, no one came forward.⁵⁷⁸

Around the same time, another “strong arm” squad went into action in Janesville. Although described with the same term as the Waupun squad, the Janesville version



Posters for the Third Liberty Loan moved from having an educational quality to an intimidating one.
Library of Congress LC-USZC4-8075

was more ad hoc and more interested in raising money for the Rock County war chest, which funded the county’s war activities, than in selling bonds. On May 14, 1918, the squad, made up of county war fund workers from surrounding towns, drove up to the home of William G. Heller, a sixty-six-year-old retired banker who was believed to have “a substantial amount of money” but absolutely refused to donate to the war chest. Disgusted by this attitude, the squad pulled Heller from his house and drove him to a nearby quarry, where they stripped him to the waist and painted his chest with yellow German crosses, his back yellow, and then dumped the rest of the paint over his head.

⁵⁷⁸ “Gets After the Slackers,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 5, 1918, part 4, 1.

Heller was left to find his way home on foot. Word of the attack on Heller—or an “outbreak of patriotism,” as it was called—reached Janesville before the squad returned, and when they did, a number of Janesville residents had lined the streets, welcoming them with cheers and waving flags.⁵⁷⁹ Pleased with making Heller an example of what happens to slackers, the squad planned “a strenuous campaign” to gather war chest funds over the next week from those who had yet failed to donate.⁵⁸⁰

These examples from Waupun and Janesville represent the increasing use in Wisconsin of violence or the threat of violence in the last eight months of the war, as well as some common themes of vigilante behavior during that time, specifically organized rather than spontaneous visits to those who shirked their patriotic duty, the increased use of yellow paint, and the allotting of individual quotas. After Wisconsin’s failure to raise its quota during the first and second Liberty Loan drives, the 7th Federal Reserve District, which included the southern and eastern counties of Wisconsin, decided to initiate individual quotas. The problem, they believed, had been the inability, even by zealous patriots, to determine their “fair share,” leading many to seriously underestimate the amount of money they should invest in Liberty Loan bonds. To ameliorate this issue, local loan committees, beginning with the third Liberty Loan drive, determined how many bonds each head of household could afford by reviewing property values, salaries, other income, and indebtedness; information provided by

⁵⁷⁹ “William G. Heller is Painted Yellow,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, May 15, 1918, 5. Heller was not refusing to buy Liberty Bonds. He had in fact bought \$2950 worth of Liberty Bonds in the three drives. Instead he was refusing to donate to the “Your Share is Fair” fund, which supported the Rock County war chest. Having both drives happen concurrently must have confused many people. See “Retired Banker is Painted,” *Sheboygan Press*, May 15, 1918, 5.; “Rumored Governor May Take Action in Painting Case,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, May 16, 1918, 5. The county’s war chest is discussed in “State Council is Pleased with Rock County’s War Chest,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, May 30, 1918, 5.

⁵⁸⁰ “Payments to County War Chest are Due,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, May 20, 1918, 2.

county treasurers, township clerks, and income tax assessors. Flyers about the new procedures reminded local committees that anyone should be allowed to purchase more than their allotment, but no one would be allowed to take less.⁵⁸¹

The Monticello (Green County) Liberty Loan Committee put the new individual quota system into practice by dividing their town's third drive quota of \$26,100 among city residents by assigning them a rating. An A rating meant the person had the ability to purchase no less than \$1000 worth of bonds, B meant \$300 to \$1000, C meant \$100 to \$300, D meant \$50 to \$100, and E meant that the resident had no known purchasing power. This approach forced men such as Monticello resident Fred S. Blum, Jr., who from census records appears to have been independently wealthy but who had only purchased \$50 in bonds so far, to buy at least \$1000 worth of bonds. Instructions to sellers from the committee chairman mentioned that if they thought the allotment was too low, they were free to increase it, but could not decrease it without "positive proof." Everyone, the instructions added, had to purchase at least the minimum of their allotment, reiterating the rules supplied by the 7th Federal Reserve District.⁵⁸²

As can be seen from the Monticello example, Liberty Loan committee members, instead of banks, sold bonds beginning with the third Liberty Loan drive. For confidentiality reasons, only committee members could know an individual's quota. Loan committees feared that citizens would try to get around paying their fair share by purchasing from bankers who would not have quota information. Also, committee

⁵⁸¹ *Report of Committee on Individual Allotments*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, February 22, 1918.; *Explanation of the Plan for Individual Allotment in the Third Liberty Loan*, undated but from spring 1918.

⁵⁸² "Information Sheet" on Green County's rating system and Monticello's individual allotment list, COD papers, Box 20, folder 8, WHS.

members, usually the wealthy and powerful of each community, had less fear than bankers of financial repercussions or reprisals. This freedom allowed loan sellers to use pressure tactics without fear of any backlash. Sellers still reported sales to their local banks, who then reported them to their Federal Reserve district.

Not everyone was pleased with these new procedures and some let Governor Philipp know of their displeasure. Waushara County farmer Byron Morse, for example, wrote about his dislike of filling out a form asking for his net worth; his real estate valuation; annual income; debts; and contributions to previous loans, the Red Cross, and the Y.M.C.A. Morse did not want to share this private information with the “local newsmongers” and wondered if he could send the information to state or federal authorities instead. Although Philipp responded that there was no law compelling Morse to share the information, Morse in a succeeding letter replied that “large authority men” in his area were telling people they had to fill out these forms, as well as buy additional bonds as decided by “some self-constituted” committee. Morse concluded that while he was willing to pay his fair share, he was glad to hear that Wisconsin had not passed any undemocratic laws requiring him to share private financial information.⁵⁸³ J. Russell Weaver, president of the Farmers & Merchants Union Bank in Columbus (Columbia Co.), informed Philipp that he planned to challenge local and federal Liberty Bond officials after he received a similar card. Three weeks after the end of the third drive, Weaver travelled to Chicago, where he met with the head of the 7th Federal District, and demanded that this practice of sending out cards asking for private financial

⁵⁸³ Byron Morse (Wautoma) to Emanuel Philipp, April 8, 1918; Philipp to Morse, April 10, 1918; Morse to Philipp, April 12, 1918; ELP papers, WHS.

information be stopped. Weaver learned, to his satisfaction, that the cards were to be used by loan committees as an index and that the Columbus County chair would be informed that they were not meant to be circulated.⁵⁸⁴

As with previous loans, farmers continued to pose problems for Liberty Bond committees, who often found selling bonds to them challenging. Harvey Menn, who farmed in Sheldon Township (Monroe Co.), may have represented the type of mindset these committees were up against when he wrote his congressman John J. Esch to find out if Congress had passed a law compelling citizens to buy Liberty bonds.⁵⁸⁵ In response to this less than cooperative attitude among farmers, the 7th Federal Reserve District published a pamphlet, “Play Fair, Mr. Farmer!” which reported that during the first and second drives, farmers in a “patriotic state” had only purchased one tenth as many bonds as city people and argued that this needed to change. Farmers who, it suggested, seemed to think, erroneously, that their only role during the war was to raise crops “and sell them at enormous profits,” had to realize that winning a war took “hard cash.” Only by purchasing bonds could farmers prevent America from coming under

⁵⁸⁴ J. Russell Wheeler (Columbus) to Emanuel Philipp, May 14, 1918; Philipp to Wheeler, May 15, 1918; Wheeler to Philipp, May 18, 1918; ELP papers, WHS. In a letter to Congressman Esch, Mrs. Charles Wendling of Dorchester (Clark Co.) mentioned that the town clerk fixed the assessments for her village, but that the local school directors (school board) had also played an active role. She went on to complain that she thought the assessments high and that they negatively impacted poorer residents. She also mentioned a meeting to sell War Savings Stamps where the local banker informed the crowd that no one would be allowed to leave, enforced by having the constable lock and guard the door, until everyone had participated and the village’s quota had been raised. Wendling to Esch, July 6, 1918, JJE papers, Box 46.

⁵⁸⁵ John J. Esch to Harvey Menn (Norwalk, the post office for Sheldon Township), June 26, 1918, JJE papers, Box 46. Esch and Menn were first cousins, but apparently due to their 32-year age difference, Menn referred to Esch as uncle.

Germany's control—an event, the pamphlet concluded, which would lead farmers to not only lose their money, farms, and liberty, but also their lives.⁵⁸⁶

Farmers responded to these types of pleas by describing their unique difficulties. In a typical statement, Frank Reuter of Cochrane (Buffalo Co.) wrote to the state Council of Defense that he had experienced hardships because of the war, especially the loss of labor, and had decided to give his farm and household priority over spending time and money on the war effort. The leader of the Council responded with a biting statement telling Reuter to “gladly and uncomplainingly” lend every penny of his money to support the government.⁵⁸⁷ When the Wood County Liberty Loan Committee became exasperated with local farmers, its members published a flyer reminding recalcitrant farmers that the cost of produce prices had risen 200 to 300 percent during the war and admonishing them to spend some of that profit on buying bonds. If the farmer did not buy bonds, the county committee concluded, the farmer “had No Right as an American citizen to these MARKETS.”⁵⁸⁸

To combat farmers' reluctance to buy bonds, the Winnebago County Loan Committee devised a plan that encouraged their participation. Its benign measures included sending letters to farmers telling them of the approaching loan drive and when sales calls would be made, making sure solicitors were other farmers from the same township, and dispensing with the immediate two percent down payment, since many of the farmers would be in the field and away from their homes. The Winnebago

⁵⁸⁶ Louis Albert Lamb, “Play Fair, Mr. Farmer!” unknown publisher, 1918. In less patriotic states, according to “Play Fair,” farmers only purchased one hundredth as many bonds.

⁵⁸⁷ Frank Reuter to Andrew H. Melville, October 30, 1917; Andrew Melville to Frank Reuter, October 31, 1917; COD papers, Box 20, folder 1.

⁵⁸⁸ “Potatoes, Rye, Wheat/Farmers: This is Your Turn,” Wood County Liberty Loan Committee, undated.

committee had learned that without exception farmers who were “made to feel the direct call of the Government” paid their two percent promptly. On the other hand, stubborn cases called for more strident measures. If resistance to buying bonds occurred, the committee suggested using “Flying Squadrons” or “Wrecking Crews,” small or large groups of men, depending on the type of the trouble, who had the tact and capacity to deal with “delicate situations.” If a farmer continued to show an attitude of disloyalty, a “Federal Advisory Council” of loyal citizens could be created to investigate difficult cases and apply “moral suasion” to correct the farmer’s thinking. Farmers able to withstand these tactics would be turned over to the federal authorities. The Winnebago committee published their plan and several counties throughout the state used their model.⁵⁸⁹

With the instigation of individual quotas combined with more pressure placed on farmers, Wisconsin finally oversubscribed its allotment for a loan drive and did so with spectacular results. The state had been expected to purchase \$53 million worth of Liberty Bonds, but managed to subscribe slightly over \$73 million. Even the northern and western counties in the 9th Federal Reserve District managed to oversubscribe by forty-five percent.⁵⁹⁰ To many hyperpatriots this experience proved that coercion, whether intimidation or actual violence, was a useful tool in proving the state’s loyalty. They now needed to justify why it was needed in such a loyal state.

⁵⁸⁹ “Report of Committee on Individual Allotments [for Wisconsin counties in 7th Federal Reserve District],” Milwaukee, Wisconsin, February 22, 1918.

⁵⁹⁰ “Liberty Loan Record: Wisconsin Counties in Ninth Federal Reserve District,” ELP papers, WHS. I could not find third Liberty Loan county statistics for the 7th Federal Reserve District.

After the election that put loyal Republican Irvine Lenroot into office and the loan drive that finally put Wisconsin over the top in bond sales, many around the country were ready to declare Wisconsin loyal. The *Fort Worth Record* probably summed up most newspaper editors' reaction to the election when it wrote, "Wisconsin has spoken. Wisconsin is loyal."⁵⁹¹ A number of Wisconsin hyperpatriots who travelled to or lived in Washington, DC, found this belief in the state's loyalty widespread. Loyalty Legion secretary, George Kull, announced upon his return from the nation's capital that the election results had convinced those back east that Wisconsin was loyal.⁵⁹² Around the same time, Lenroot, now ensconced in Washington, told a group of University of Wisconsin alumni living in Philadelphia that the third Liberty Loan results refuted any impression those in the east had of the state's disloyalty.⁵⁹³ According to the *Milwaukee Journal*, these examples, among others, proved the election and the loan drive had shown the charge of disloyalty to be unjust. The people of Wisconsin, it added, did not need to get down on their knees and ask the nation for forgiveness.⁵⁹⁴

Even while happily enjoying the improved perception of Wisconsin's patriotism, most of the state's hyperpatriots were willing to admit that the state had not achieved one hundred percent loyalty among its citizens. There were, the *Journal* declared, "black spots" that needed to be wiped out. To do so, loyalists first needed to understand the

⁵⁹¹ "State is Loyal, Says Papers," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 28, 1918, 3. Article includes statements made by 44 newspapers that Wisconsin is loyal.

⁵⁹² "Kinder to State: East No Longer Thinks Wisconsin Disloyal," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 16, 1918, 3. Wheeler Bloodgood also visited Washington and came back with the same message. See "Wisconsin O.K.," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 20, 1918, 13. U.S. Congressman John J. Esch mentioned the same sentiment in a letter to a constituent, "It may be gratifying to you to know that since the Senatorial election we hear little or no criticism of Wisconsin's loyalty." John J. Esch to Rev. Leonard E. Blackmer (La Crosse), June 3, 1918, JJE papers, Box 46.

⁵⁹³ "State Leads in Loyalty," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 19, 1918, part 1, 3.

⁵⁹⁴ "Wisconsin Can Take Care of Itself," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 21, 1918, 10.

disloyal.⁵⁹⁵ Lenroot, in his alumni address, believed there were two kinds of Wisconsin citizens who did not support the war effort: one who was disloyal in his heart and another who was merely apathetic or, more insidiously, had been misled by the pro-German press. Educational propaganda, he argued, would only open the eyes of the latter to “the justice of our cause,” but would have no effect on the truly disloyal.⁵⁹⁶

How to handle the latter became the question in the summer of 1918. Wheeler Bloodgood suggested that those who could see through the lies and innuendo of German propaganda, which he frequently described as Germany’s “third line” in its attack on America, had to be braver, more courageous, and more militant than ever before. The discussion became whether to use violence or not against those who did not accept the concept of one hundred percent Americanism and whether civil liberties would guide their behavior or not. Bloodgood believed true Americans should be willing to “sacrifice some of the sweetness of our liberties” and accept civil rights violations, such as being bodily searched for suspicious papers, to annihilate German propaganda and save soldiers’ lives.⁵⁹⁷ The *Journal* concurred when it admitted that the “over-enthusiastic” may attack an innocent man, but “a wise man will accept it—and do his duty.”⁵⁹⁸

Despite these types of statements, which seemed to promote a breakdown of civil rights, a number of hyperpatriots, including Bloodgood, were not willing to go as far as endorsing mob violence. As attacks occurred in Wisconsin and elsewhere, a number of

⁵⁹⁵ “Wisconsin Can Take Care of Itself,” 10.

⁵⁹⁶ “State Leads in Loyalty,” part 1, 3.

⁵⁹⁷ Wheeler P. Bloodgood, *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, WI: [unidentified publisher], March 1918), 5; “The Next of Kin Must Defeat Huns with Own Weapons,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, August 6, 1918, 6.

⁵⁹⁸ “Coercion,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 30, 1918, 10.

them spoke out against it. The Loyalty Legion executive committee passed a resolution on April 29, 1918, stating the Legion would stand for strict observance of the law and deprecate any acts of mob violence, as well as utterances which might instigate it. Instead, the Legion's executive committee believed that officers of the law and court were sufficient to punish any disloyal citizens. They made this renunciation of mob violence public and stood by it for the rest of the war.⁵⁹⁹ Yet mobs, violent and otherwise, continued to break the law. So much so that two months after the Legion's resolution, the state Council of Defense (COD) sent a letter to all county COD chairmen reminding them that the suppression of sedition was not part of their mandate. The leaders of the state COD called on these men not to make any effort to detect or suppress sedition unless they were asked to do so by a member of the U.S. Department of Justice.⁶⁰⁰

Finally, and somewhat belatedly, President Wilson addressed the nation about "outbreaks of mob spirit," asking Americans to show the world that, while the country's soldiers fight for democracy in France, they are "not destroying democracy at home." He went on to state that any American who takes part in or supports mob action "is no true son of this great democracy, but its betrayer"—someone who discredits his country by being disloyal to its laws and constitution.⁶⁰¹ The *Reading Labor Advocate* (Pennsylvania), a Socialist newspaper, wondered if Wilson's announcement came as a shock to "certain men who have been falsely posing as loyal, patriotic Americans,"

⁵⁹⁹ Wisconsin Loyalty Legion Minutes, April 29, 1918, WLL papers, Box 1, WHS.; see also "To Favor Loyal Candidates," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 30, 1918, 2.

⁶⁰⁰ Magnus Swenson to chairmen of county Councils of Defense, June 25, 1918, WLL papers, WHS.

⁶⁰¹ "A Betrayal of Democracy," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 26, 1918, 12.

especially Wheeler Bloodgood of Milwaukee with his threat to answer the “ballots of the voters with bullets.” He must be appalled, the *Advocate*’s editor surmised, to be put in “the same category as the Hun who [he affects] to despise” by the president of the United States.⁶⁰² Bloodgood may have been just as appalled to have the *Advocate* put him in the same category as irrational, unorganized mob participants.

A few months earlier, Wilson had asked Congress to pass stronger sedition and disloyalty laws, in part, as a way to suppress mob violence. Loyalists believed that these violent actions were the result of “inefficient” laws. The *Marinette Eagle-Star*, for example, agreed that the United States had been too lax in punishing treason and that mob violence was the result of “reaping what we have sown.” While promoting what became known as the Sedition Act, congressional proponents clearly stated that its primary purpose would be to prevent vigilante mobs from taking the law into their own hands. Senator William Borah from Idaho, not completely comfortable with the newly-passed act, rationalized his vote by admitting in a letter, “I know this is a drastic law, and I would not support it except in times like these and unless I believed it necessary to prevent things far worse.”⁶⁰³ As a result of the new sedition law, disloyal behavior now had serious consequences--up to a \$10,000 fine, twenty years in jail, or both.

⁶⁰² “Hunnish Patriots Rebuked,” *Reading Labor Advocate* (Pennsylvania) as reported in *Truth*, Erie Pennsylvania, August 10, 1918, 3. According to this article, in its April 13, 1918, issue, the *Advocate* decried the tendency many were showing to resort to mob action, adding that “Outlaws, such as Bloodgood, must be eliminated from our midst. They but disgrace the president whom they claim to support, and the government whose laws they abuse.” I could not find any evidence that Bloodgood specifically said that he would answer ballots with bullets. The *Advocate* may be referring to Bloodgood’s wish to have Milwaukee placed under martial law if Daniel Hoan was elected mayor and his statement that the loyal people of Wisconsin may have “to go back to primitive methods” and cause “something unfortunate [to] happen.”

⁶⁰³ *Marinette Eagle-Star* as quoted in “With Editors of Wisconsin,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 13, 1918, 8. William G. Ross, *World War I and the American Constitution* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 291. Ross was quoting from a letter written by Borah to A.W. Ricker on April 8, 1918.

Despite the passing of the Sedition Act, mob violence continued in Wisconsin, as seen in the continuing tarring and feathering incidents in the Ashland/Bayfield area, creating a widening divide between hyperpatriots. A number of Wisconsin newspapers spoke out against the continuing violence, seeing it as the “most deadly terror that can exist in any community” and “a most unhealthy condition of public morals.”⁶⁰⁴ Loyalists began questioning the patriotism of mob participants and even called them cowards, who, in one description, wrapped the flag around their “carcasses” and committed crimes “in the holy name of country.”⁶⁰⁵ The *Racine Journal-News* reminded these anonymous men that patriotism and loyalty were based on “intelligent reasoning” and stood for “truth, reason and good government”; qualities belied by mob activity. The paper’s editors also suggested that the Sedition Act and other anti-mob laws were not working because either local officials supported the mob’s actions or juries feared retaliation. They urged that these unpatriotic officials be driven from office and mob members deprived a trial by jury.⁶⁰⁶ Despite questioning the efficacy of the Sedition law to suppress mob activity, loyalists generally acknowledged it as a potent way to reign in alleged disloyal activity. In the end, a significant portion of Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots did not support mob violence, but they appear to have had no issue with the use of mob intimidation, especially when they could situate it in the rhetoric of rationality and organization.

⁶⁰⁴ “Mob Law Should Be Put Down,” *Racine Journal News*, June 10, 1918, 4.

⁶⁰⁵ “Judge Lynch is No Patriot,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 23, 1918, 16.

⁶⁰⁶ “Patriotism and Loyalty,” *Racine Journal News*, May 3, 1918, 6.

Green Bay residents awoke on April 12, 1918, to see the remains of a statue that had rested in a semi-circular niche near the roof of a two-story building shattered in the street with her head missing. The life-size statue of a woman holding a sword and shield had been purchased by the building's owner, former U.S. Representative Gustav Kustermann, about thirty years earlier when he had wanted a Goddess of Music statue to grace his music business. When he could not find that specific statue, he installed the Goddess of Liberty instead. Despite the fact that her shield was adorned with thirteen stars, indicating her American association, the "Loyal Knights" who destroyed her believed she was an emblem of Germanic fighting and culture. As the crowd viewed her remains, a trumpeter appeared at the second-floor window and played a funeral dirge in honor of its demise. The police, who had been called to a non-existent burglary and locked inside during the incident, were never able to identify the perpetrators.⁶⁰⁷

While the destruction of a supposedly German statue was relatively innocuous, Wisconsin German-Americans experienced considerably more serious incidents of persecution beginning in the spring of 1918. The day before the Loyalty Knights pulled down the Green Bay statue, Department of Justice agents swarmed Milwaukee looking for enemy aliens who had violated their permits. Shortly after the United States entered the war, President Wilson issued an executive order requiring all German-American men over age fourteen to report before a United States marshal to be examined, photographed, and fingerprinted. Those deemed loyal to the United States received a permit requiring them to not live near or work at munition or other government-related factories and to only travel between home and work. If they moved or changed jobs, they

⁶⁰⁷ "Statue Tumbled: Was it German?" *Milwaukee Journal*, April 11, 1918, 1.

had to inform the marshal's office. Those seen as unfit to receive a permit had to move or post a \$2000 bond for good behavior.⁶⁰⁸

Close to a year after Wilson issued his order, three hundred and fifty Milwaukee men had been identified as violating their permits and needed to be brought in for questioning. Some of these men had failed to register for a permit, others had moved without informing authorities, while others had participated in pro-German activities. To take them into custody, approximately seventy government agents in thirty-five cars fanned out over Milwaukee in the early hours of April 10. The agents pulled the violators from their beds or places of employment and whisked them off to the third floor of the city's federal building to be investigated. By 8 am eighty-two men had been brought in. Agents released twenty-five immediately, but detained another twenty-two, who did not have permits, for investigation. Two of these latter men, unable to give a satisfactory account of their activities and movements, ended up in the county jail. Government officials had not decided what to do with the rest of them by the time most Milwaukee newspapers went to press.⁶⁰⁹ The fear for some enemy aliens was that they would be identified as dangerous and sent to an internment camp for the duration of the war. During World War I, the federal government interned 6,300 people, thirty-eight of those came from Milwaukee, although we do not know if any of the 350 men rounded up on April 10 ended up in one of the camps.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Kevin Abing, *A Crowded Hour: Milwaukee during the Great War, 1917-1918* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing Co., 2017), 65; Lee Grady, "America's 'Alien Enemies': Registering as German in Wisconsin during World War I," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 102, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 4-17. The US government began requiring permits for enemy alien women in June 1918.

⁶⁰⁹ "Many Aliens Are Rounded Up," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 10, 1918, 1.

⁶¹⁰ Abing, 64-65.

Until the elections of April 2, Wisconsin's German Americans had not been victims of personal attacks. There had been some threatening activity against them in the first few weeks of the war, but after local newspapers and government officials began describing the bulk of the state's German population as loyal, patriotic, and pro-American this behavior quickly subsided. This did not mean that attacks on German culture did not occur. By the spring of 1918, the German-American Alliance had been eliminated, for example, and the teaching of the German language in most of the state's elementary schools had been curtailed, but the state's German Americans had not been vilified. Instead hyperpatriots inside and outside Wisconsin had focused their vitriol on the state's national representatives who had voted against entering the war, allegedly because they were pandering to the German voter. After April 2, the German-American voter came under attack. We can see this in the two events just described, both of which happened about a week after the election.

After touting the loyalty of the state's German Americans for the past year, Wisconsin hyperpatriots felt betrayed by the high number of them who voted for Victor Berger. Election results showed that German Americans overwhelmingly voted for Berger regardless of normal political affiliation or religious membership. As an example, voters in New Holstein (Calumet Co.), a community predominately consisting of descendants of immigrants who left Germany in 1848 to escape political persecution, had given Berger 76 percent of their votes (Lenroot received 16.5 percent; Davies 8.5 percent). The *Milwaukee Journal* bristled at this news, pointing out that these descendants, who owned some of the richest farm land in the state, owed their prosperity to the opportunities provided by America and implied they should have

shown their gratitude by voting for the “loyal” candidates.⁶¹¹ The *Journal* had also been displeased to learn that Berger had handily won Milwaukee and blamed this result on the Germanization of the Socialist party.⁶¹² The *Christian Science Monitor* responded to the news that German Americans had primarily voted for Berger by suggesting Wisconsin should do everything in its power to show its loyalty now that the senatorial campaign had exposed how “objectional things” were in that state, a fact, that the *Monitor* realized had not been known before by the great majority of the state’s citizens.⁶¹³

So, even though Berger had lost—actually coming in third out of three—his significant share of the vote still rankled. The state’s hyperpatriots had pushed for the election to prove Wisconsin’s loyalty. When Lenroot won, they touted the news all over the country, and many Americans accepted the election results as proof of Wisconsin’s loyalty. Yet, despite this result and effort, somehow the election had backfired on Wisconsin’s loyalists. Besides decisively illustrating the state’s general loyalty, it had also exposed that a sizeable—26 percent—disloyalty problem remained and shown that the bulk of the disloyal had German blood in their veins.⁶¹⁴

This did not mean Wisconsin German-Americans did not push back against this sweeping accusation that most of them were disloyal. Milwaukee’s German Americans announced their loyalty at a patriotic rally held on May 19, 1918. Reverend Karnopp of the German Methodist Church, where the rally was held, told the crowd “let no man

⁶¹¹ “Germans Voted as Germans,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 7, 1918, 1.

⁶¹² “German Wards’ Vote Gave Berger the County,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 5, 1918, 4.

⁶¹³ “Wisconsin’s Duty,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 5, 1918, part 3, 8.

⁶¹⁴ Luebke, 296.

accuse us Germans of disloyalty.” He went on to enumerate all the ways Milwaukee Germans had shown their loyalty, but also pointing how this task had been “doubly difficult” for them since they were being asked to battle their own kin, their own blood. He ended by declaring that the current American army had more soldiers of German ancestry than any other nationality and these boys were better than any others in following orders. Finally, he asked that German Americans not turn on themselves by accusing each other of disloyalty. Instead, he offered, they needed to unite behind the war effort and pray for a “speedy peace.”⁶¹⁵

While Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots may have heard comments like those made by the German Methodist reverend, they were more aware of the supposedly inappropriate remarks and actions made by “disloyal” German Americans. Statements such as “President Wilson will have to crawl on his knees at the Kaiser’s feet” or “I hope the Kaiser would win the war,” both made by Wood County German Americans, had a much deeper impact on the minds and sensibilities of the state’s militant loyalists than more benign and positive statements made by German Americans.⁶¹⁶ The state’s hyperpatriots definitely bristled over reports like that of a Milwaukee saloon keeper who was known for ridiculing American soldiers, holding celebrations at his saloon after the Germans won a battle, not letting an American flag fly outside his business, and refusing to buy Liberty Bonds or support the Red Cross. At a hearing where he tried to renew his liquor license, one witness called his saloon “a hotbed of pro-Germanism.”⁶¹⁷ Whether these

⁶¹⁵ “Lauds Germans in America,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 20, 1918, 2.

⁶¹⁶ “Federal Court Starts Work on Group of Espionage Act Cases,” *Eau Claire Leader*, July 17, 1918, 2. Joseph Deachman, a German/Polish immigrant living in Port Edwards, made the first comment; Emil Schiller (1875-1922), a German immigrant living in Grand Rapids (later Wisconsin Rapids) made the second.

⁶¹⁷ “Saloon Hotbed of Germanism,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 21, 1918, 1; “Denies That He Is Disloyal,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 1, 1918, 3.

anti-American statements had actually been made or the reports of the saloonkeeper's behavior were false made no difference to the state's hyperpatriots. If these specific people had not made them, they rationalized, others had. By April 1918, after hearing or witnessing this kind of behavior and seeing the election results, they had had enough. The time had come to retaliate, to punish Wisconsin's disloyal German Americans, sometimes in a lawful way and sometimes not.

Over the course of the summer and early fall of 1918, Wisconsin's German Americans felt the wrath of the state's hyperpatriots through vandalism, intimidation, violence, and prosecution in the courts of law. Attacks on teaching German in public schools had already occurred, but now the use of German language in any context came under suspicion, in the press, in theaters, and especially in churches. The pastor of the Lutheran Church in the small town of Kendall (Monroe Co.) delivered his sermons in German and its members taught Sunday school from German-language New Testaments. Sometime in July or August, around four to six unknown men broke into the church and burned all of the testaments, many of the Bibles, and any other religious books they could find, causing upward of \$700 in damage.⁶¹⁸ The German Lutheran Church in Washburn also came under attack for similar reasons when the Bayfield County Council of Defense sent the pastor a letter demanding that its German school be disbanded immediately and that he cease and desist conducting his worship services in

⁶¹⁸ Unsigned (Norwalk) to John J. Esch, August 19, 1918, JJE papers, Box 46, WHS.

German.⁶¹⁹ Kendall and Washburn provide just two examples of the many German churches that came under attack.

German language theaters, especially those in Milwaukee, also found themselves the target of hyperpatriotic ire. Years after the war, Socialist politician Oscar Ameringer told a story of an anti-German mob that aimed machine guns at Milwaukee's Pabst Theater when it announced that Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* would be performed there in German. According to Ameringer, the mob obviously did not understand the irony of their actions, since Schiller's play had been inspired by the American and French Revolutions. When the Pabst offered to perform a comedy at a different venue, another mob formed with the intent of breaking "up this Hun show." While this story is probably apocryphal, it does give a sense of how hyperpatriots viewed the performance of German-language plays and musicals.⁶²⁰

The Pabst Theater, which had helped define Milwaukee as a "German Athens" since it was built in 1895, did experience a real, but non-violent attack in June 1918. On April 23, 1918, the board of the German Theater Company, housed at the Pabst, had decided, because of the war and anti-German sentiment, not to perform any more German language plays or musicals for the war's duration. When internal conflict led

⁶¹⁹ Reverend R. Krenke (Washburn) to Emanuel Philipp, October 21, 1918; Philipp to Krenke, October 24, 1918; Philipp to W.S. Heddles, chairman, State Council of Defense, October 24, 1918, ELP papers, WHS. In the letter to Heddles, Philipp reminds the COD chairman that "strong-arm methods...are in violation of the law" and, in this case, disregard "the constitutional right of freedom of religion."

⁶²⁰ Steven Hoelscher, Jeffrey Zimmerman, and Timothy Bawden, "Milwaukee's German Renaissance Twice-Told: Inventing and Recycling Landscape in America's German Athens" in *Wisconsin Land and Life*, Robert C. Ostergren and Thomas R. Vale, eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 393. I could find no mention of either of these incidents in Wisconsin newspapers. Gerhard Becker in his article "German Theater in Milwaukee, 1914 to 1918" *Milwaukee History* 13 (Spring 1990): 8-9, also noted that he could not find any indication that these events occurred. The only place they are described is in Oscar Ameringer's *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983, original edition, 1940), 336.

that decision to be overturned in early June, the city's hyperpatriots took action. The *Milwaukee Journal* immediately chided the board for showing little regard for the city's "American community" by producing plays in the "enemy's tongue" and suggested government authorities should take a look at the organization. The newspaper also lashed out at potential audience members, especially ones who considered German dramas the finest form of theatrical arts, while all others were a type of "buffoonery," by arguing, "The man who cannot get artistic enjoyment from American sources is a poor American indeed." The *Journal* added that those who sought out German theatrical perfection were really looking for relief from the pervasive patriotism found in American theaters.⁶²¹

The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion also responded shortly after the theater company's announcement by writing a series of resolutions expressing "their emphatic disapproval of the continuance of public theatrical performances in the German language during the war" and called on the board to revoke their recent decision. Their statement, sent to the German Theater Co. and published in the *Milwaukee Journal*, reminded the board that these performances would be offensive to non-Germans, put the city at a disadvantage in its attempts to prove its loyalty, and were in opposition to the Legion's goal "toward the Americanization of our citizens of foreign blood."⁶²² The board seemed to understand the ramifications of maintaining their position and, in the end, decided to suspend all productions until the war was over.

⁶²¹ "Noch Einmal! [Once Again!], *Milwaukee Journal*, June 7, 1918, 14 and "The German Theater Project," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 8, 1918, 4.

⁶²² Loyalty Legion to the German Theater Company (Milwaukee), June 8, 1918, WLL papers, Box 3, WHS; "Protest Giving German Plays," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 12, 1918, 2.

The Loyalty Legion's concept of Americanization, an allegedly benign form of coercion to make immigrants, especially eastern European ones, American, had been around since the late 19th century—but it took on new urgency during the war. The nation's hyperpatriots saw the war as an opportunity to push their form of Americanism onto immigrants who did not appear to embrace American ways or held onto Old World languages and customs. Wheeler Bloodgood promoted Americanization as a way to change the hearts of the state's "mal-assimilated immigrants" and others whose minds had been muddled by German propaganda.⁶²³ Historian Gerd Korman argues that the "militant nationalists" of the World War I era believed that the goals of Americanization fit perfectly with their ideas of national interest and national defense, specifically, as one Americanization pamphlet put it, to create a "universal desire of all peoples in America to unite in common citizenship under one flag." To this end, Americanization advocates promoted the use of the English language, adherence to the American standard of living, the creation of a love for America, a reverence toward the Constitution, founding fathers, and other American institutions and traditions, and the elimination of disorder, unrest, and disloyalty. Korman describes the latter as the hyperpatriots' attempt to create among immigrants a "reverence toward their version of law and order."⁶²⁴ To meet these goals, proponents looked for help from the two places where there were large groups of immigrants under the authority of Americanizing influences: the schools and factories. To their chagrin, one of these venues failed to meet their expectations.

⁶²³ *Statement of W.P. Bloodgood*, 5.

⁶²⁴ Gerd Korman, *Industrialization, Immigration, and Americanizers: The View from Milwaukee, 1866-1921* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967), 138-148; National Americanization Committee, "What You Can Do for Americanization," March 1918, 20, as quoted in Howard Hill, "The Americanization Movement," *American Journal of Sociology* 24 (May 1919): 630.

During World War I, Milwaukee, with its large population of German-Americans and significant number of powerful militant patriots, was the scene of a major Americanization campaign. In October 1917, the Milwaukee County Council of Defense launched a crusade to Americanize the city when it appointed May Wood Simons to lead an Americanization committee backed by an advisory board made up of Loyalty Legion members. Simons and her husband Algie M. Simons had been active Socialists before the war, and Algie had even worked at the *Milwaukee Leader* under Victor Berger. But once the United States entered the war, they became ardent nationalists. Simons found the Milwaukee public schools willing to work with her on cultivating militant patriotism among school children and, as we have seen, the school board moved toward eliminating German and other foreign languages from the curriculum and to emphasize English instead. All those involved believed they did this in the national interest.

Milwaukee manufacturers needed to be persuaded to participate in the Americanization campaign. Simons and her supporters wanted factory managers to encourage their foreign employees to become American citizens and learn English. They tried to appeal to the managers' self-interest by suggesting they offer English classes after work as a way to improve their efficiency on the job, increase safety, and prevent them from being influenced by labor agitators. A few tried, first by paying for after-work classes in public schools, but when workers were obviously too tired to make the effort to attend, Simons suggested the classes be offered inside the factories. Most managers could not be persuaded to do so, since they knew they could convey information efficiently and cheaply by posting it in multiple languages rather than forcing everyone to learn English. The workers, primarily Germans and Poles, often stayed in class only

long enough to get a basic understanding of English and then dropped out.⁶²⁵

Americanization campaigns had another, often self-created, barrier to convincing immigrants to Americanize. The National Defense Council addressed this issue when it called on all state and local Councils of Defense to discourage lawless violence and treatment, since the “deplorable” result was to undo any work done by Americanization campaigns to unite the country.⁶²⁶ Despite this plea, the continued failure by immigrant groups to Americanize appropriately seemed to escalate rather than dampen the fervor of the state’s hyperpatriots and created another reason they turned to stronger, more violent methods of coercion.

The majority of Wisconsin’s German Americans had been able to avoid the persistent yet ineffectual Americanization campaigns, but during the summer of 1918 more of them, along with their businesses, became victims of assault and harassment at the hands of the state’s militant patriots. Yellow paint continued to be a popular tool loyalists used to show their displeasure with enemy aliens. In mid-July a group of draftees on the eve of a trip from Wausau to their army barracks decided to use yellow paint to write the phrases, “Trade Here and Help the Kaiser” and “This is Berlin” on Christ Solberg’s store because he allegedly avoided the draft by marrying. Earlier in the evening they had also “decorated” the German American State Bank in Merrill by using yellow paint to obliterate the word “German.”⁶²⁷ About a month later, Rhinelander resident and meat shop owner Leonard Emmerling, accused of showing only lukewarm

⁶²⁵ Korman, 171-190; “Classes in Citizenship,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 9, 1918, 12; “Task in Making Americans,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 25, 1918, 2.

⁶²⁶ “Warns Against Mob Rule in Curbing Disloyalty,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 25, 1918, 5.

⁶²⁷ “Merrill Bank Gets New Coat of Paint,” *Grand Rapids Daily Leader* (Wisconsin), July 19, 1918, 1.

interest in the war effort, woke up on August 22 to find his business had been “daubed” in yellow paint.⁶²⁸ While yellow paint might be used by the rowdier elements of a community, local and state leaders resorted to less physical forms of intimidation. Owner of Green Lake’s Oakwood Hotel, Irvin F. Strauss had an unsettling experience in early August when he received a letter from Magnus Swenson, the chair of the state Council of Defense, to appear in Madison three days hence for using sugar packets printed with “Do not blame us, blame the United States” at his establishment. When he arrived to dispute this claim, Swenson accused him of being unpatriotic and suggested he go back to Germany “where you belong.” Strauss retorted that he had been born in America and was a good American citizen, to which Swenson responded, “Yes, your name shows it,” adding “Get out of my office or I’ll throw you out.”⁶²⁹ Although most were not recorded, verbal attacks against German Americans happened throughout the state during the last six months of the war.

The summer of 1918 also witnessed a wave of court cases against those, mainly German Americans, who had been indicted with breaking laws enumerated in the 1917 Espionage Act. The most significant grouping, which occurred in late July into mid-August at the courthouse in Eau Claire, included twenty-two Wisconsinites. With the exception of nine members of the Baronette Holy Roller colony who had been indicted for draft evasion, the rest had made seditious statements against President Wilson, the military, or the war effort serious enough that the district attorney of western Wisconsin decided to have them tried before a jury. The Wood County German Americans

⁶²⁸ “Yellow Paint on Meat Shop,” *Rhineland New North*, August 22, 1918, 16.

⁶²⁹ Irwin F. Strauss (Green Lake) to Emanuel Philipp, September 20, 1918, ELP papers, WHS.

mentioned above were among the twenty-two indicted, all of whom the Eau Claire juries found guilty. Of those, fifteen were sentenced to incarceration at the federal prison in Fort Leavenworth, six to be jailed at the house of corrections in Milwaukee, and the one woman to a \$500 fine.⁶³⁰

Due to the prestigious positions of two of the defendants, their cases received extensive newspaper coverage within the state and some mention nationally. This dubious honor belonged to Judge John M. Becker of Monroe (Green Co.) and Louis B. Nagler, Wisconsin's former Assistant Secretary of State, who had been indicted for making disloyal statements. Early in June 1917, Becker had made a speech to the Green County Board of Supervisors and the County Council of Defense allegedly telling them that the war in Europe was "a rich man's war" and that supposed food shortages were a tactic being used by corporations for their own gain. He also told a local woman that her two sons in the army would be shooting their own relatives when they went to France. A year later, the federal court in Superior, Wisconsin, indicted Becker on charges of making "false statements with intent to interfere with the operations and success of the military and naval forces."⁶³¹ In November 1917, Nagler had told a group of Red Cross canvassers that the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. were "nothing but a bunch of grafters," who only used 10 to 15 percent of the money they collected for soldiers or other war work. On December 10, a grand jury agreed that he should be tried for making false reports about the two charitable organizations "unlawfully, knowingly, willfully and

⁶³⁰ "Three Will Be Sentenced Here," *Capital Times*, August 10, 1918, 8. Joseph Deachman served six months in Milwaukee and seems to have disappeared from the written record afterwards. Emil Schiller spent a month and a day of his two-year sentence at Fort Leavenworth and then on May 8, 1919, along with forty-nine other men, was granted clemency and his sentence was commuted to a year and a day. "Clemency in 50 Espionage Cases," *Decatur Review* (Illinois), May 8, 1919, 1.

⁶³¹ "Becker Held under Bail by U.S. Court," *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 3, 1918, 1.

feloniously” with the intent of hindering the success of the United States in its war effort.⁶³² In July 1918, Nagler’s case came before the federal judge in Eau Claire; Becker’s trial began in early August. After hearing the evidence, juries found both men guilty. Later that year, a federal judge sentenced Becker to three years and Nagler thirty months at the federal prison in Leavenworth.⁶³³

Becker and Nagler had a lot in common, all of which made them perfect targets for Wisconsin’s loyalists. Both men had grown up in rural, small-town Wisconsin, Becker in Blue Mounds (Dane Co.) and Nagler in East Farmington (Polk Co.), the sons of German immigrants. Both had managed to forge successful political careers by the time of World War I; Becker had been an elected Green County circuit court judge since 1898 and Nagler had made his way up through the ranks of the secretary of state’s office in appointed positions since at least 1909. Becker had a long history as a Democrat, but in January 1918 decided to run for governor as a Progressive Republican and La Follette supporter. Nagler was also an ardent supporter of La Follette and, unlike many other supporters, had not abandoned the senator during the war. To Wisconsin’s loyalists, these two men represented a potent combination of holding prestigious positions while being German-American and La Follette supporters. Add to that having made offensive comments and they became perfect and significant foils to the state’s hyperpatriots. However, both Becker and Nagler had the wherewithal to appeal their convictions, which were overturned in 1920, and they never spent a day in jail.

⁶³² John F. Hutchinson, “The Nagler Case: A Revealing Moment in Red Cross History,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History/Bulletin canadien d’histoire de la médecine* 9 (1992): 178.

⁶³³ “Nagler Sentenced to Prison for 30 Months/Becker Given 3 Years,” *Eau Claire Leader*, August 17, 1918, 5.

During the spring and summer of 1918, Wisconsin's German Americans used a number of ways to respond to both the verbal and physical persecution they experienced. Some chose to proclaim the loyalty of those with German blood, while others railed against the harassment, most, however, chose to remain silent. In May, Reverend Karnopp of Milwaukee's German Methodist Church had spoken out against labeling Milwaukee Germans disloyal. Around the same time, one hundred city residents of German extraction gathered to form the Society of American Unity, in essence, a Loyalty Legion for German Americans, to combat the disloyal label in a more systematic way. The idea was that those who joined the Society would pledge to support the American government, the war effort, and the fostering of an American spirit in a way that eliminated ethnic tensions. Yet the Society had been created because many of its founders believed the Loyalty Legion had been trying "to persecute all Americans of German blood." Actually, leaders of the Loyalty Legion understood the need for such a society and assisted with its creation.⁶³⁴ However, the Society of American Unity never became a viable organization.

Since America entered the war, the number of German Americans in Wisconsin who spoke against the persecution meted out by militant patriots had dwindled. Despite this, the *Milwaukee Journal* recorded in July 1918 that a few German Americans were still protesting their treatment, but dismissed them as "men—and women—who have spoken out against America"; any harassment these complainers experienced, it argued, was their "just due." True Americans, the newspaper added, knew enough to discriminate between "faithful and unfaithful" German Americans, the latter they

⁶³⁴ "Organize a New Society," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18, 1918, 2.

viewed and treated with indignation, while the former they took “to their bosoms.”⁶³⁵ Most of Wisconsin’s German Americans, even those who were truly patriotic, probably never experienced this or any act of affection by “true Americans.” The best course they found was to keep a low profile and their mouths shut. Underneath a placid exterior, many resented and derided the hyperpatriotic rhetoric. As Manitowoc resident Ernst Baensch wrote to U.S. Representative John Esch, “I often have to laugh at the fear experienced by Anglo-Americans. All this talk of lukewarmness [sic] or worse, disloyalty, among those of Teutonic blood is a bogymen. [The German Americans] hurrah for the flag just as lustily as the others, even more musically.”⁶³⁶ Wisconsin’s German Americans may not have felt comfortable sharing their anger in public statements, but they had learned from the April 2 election that they still had some power at the ballot box. The next time they would have a chance to wield that silent muscle was on September 3, when the primary elections for governor and all eleven U.S. Representatives would be held.⁶³⁷

With the fall elections, the primary in September and the general in November, Wisconsin’s militant patriots, especially members of the Loyalty Legion, believed they would finally attain one of their major goals: to remove from office the nine Wisconsin

⁶³⁵ “They Do Justice to All,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 19, 1918, 14.

⁶³⁶ Ernst Baensch, President, East Wisconsin Trustee Co. (Manitowoc) to John J. Esch, August 16, 1918, JJE papers, WHS.

⁶³⁷ “Sacrifice Test of Loyalty,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 18, 1918, part 4, 1. This article/editorial was written by Vernon P. Kaub, editor of the *Watertown Daily Times*. In it he speaks of “a secret test,” specifically “the test at the polls.” He acknowledges that voters could use their ballots in the fall to “protest against the war and America’s purposes therein without fear of discovery.” He expected Watertown and Jefferson County, however, to pass this test with a significant “measure of success.”

U.S. Representatives who had voted against entering the war, as well as a patriotically lackluster governor, and replace them with loyalists. Success in this endeavor, they thought, would not only free Wisconsin from those who had originally stained the state's reputation, but decisively eradicate the "traitor state" epithet. Since Wisconsinites usually supported Republican candidates in general elections, the Republican primaries were of paramount importance to the state's hyperpatriots. The *Milwaukee Journal* even declared, days before the election, that the "primary will determine whether Wisconsin is militantly American...or a lukewarm spectator of the march of events." The nation and the world, it added, will be watching Wisconsin on September 3 and judging it.⁶³⁸ All nine targeted representatives were Republicans, as was the governor, so the Loyalty Legion made sure that most of them would run in the primary against someone who its members had defined as appropriately loyal and patriotic.

The Loyalty Legion actually began planning its election strategy, one that identified suitable contenders, on April 29, when its general council drew up a list of five statements candidates must subscribe to in order to have the Legion's backing. These resolutions required potential candidates to support the prosecution of the war to its "final victory" and also oppose any peace negotiations with Germany unless the Allies had thoroughly defeated the enemy in battle. To do otherwise, the resolutions suggested, would leave Germany "unbeaten and unrepentant" and make "peace with justice" unattainable.⁶³⁹ About six weeks later, the Legion resolved to support an amendment to the state's election laws that would allow loyalist "fusion" candidates,

⁶³⁸ "A Summing Up," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 1, 1918, part 1, 4.

⁶³⁹ Loyalty Legion Minutes, April 29, 1918, WLL papers, WHS; "To Favor Loyal Candidates," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 30, 1918, 2.

ones who represented both the Democrats and Stalwart Republicans. As he had when the Legion pushed this idea for the April senatorial election, Governor Philipp, a target of the Legion, refused to act on their request.⁶⁴⁰

Of the eleven U.S. Representatives, two of them, David Classon (9th District in Northeast Wisconsin) and Irvine Lenroot (11th District in Northwest Wisconsin) had voted to enter the war in April 1917.⁶⁴¹ Since, according to Stalwart Republicans, they had cast their ballot appropriately, neither district held an election to oppose them during the Republican primary. Classon, running against a Democrat, went on to easily win the general election with 60 percent of the vote. Since Lenroot had been elected U.S. Senator in April, another Republican, Adolphus P. Nelson, ran in his stead. With no Democrat and only a Socialist running against him in the general election, Nelson won the 11th District with over 84 percent of the vote.

Two of the nine remaining Wisconsin congressmen, all who had voted against entering the war, also did not go through the Republican primary, James H. Davidson (6th District in east central Wisconsin) because he died on August 6, 1918, just as he was gearing up for the fall campaign, and John J. Esch (7th District in west central Wisconsin) for reasons that can only be surmised.⁶⁴² Wisconsin's Republican Party chose Florian Lampert to replace Davidson in the 6th District. In the general election, Lampert ran against Democrat Bonduel Husting, the late Senator Paul Husting's

⁶⁴⁰ "Ask for Fusion," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 13, 1918, 2.

⁶⁴¹ In 1918 the 9th District included the following counties: Brown, Door, Florence, Forest, Kewaunee, Langlade, Marinette, Oconto, and Outagamie Counties. The 11th District included Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas, and Washburn Counties.

⁶⁴² The 6th District included the following counties: Calumet, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Manitowoc, Marquette, and Winnebago. The 7th District included Adams, Clark, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon Counties.

brother, who could have possibly won this race, but he split the non-Republican vote with Socialist Gilbert Thompson, leaving Lampert the winner.⁶⁴³ In the 7th District, Esch had clearly voted against America's entrance into the war, but somehow managed to avoid the disloyal or traitor label. The editors of Madison's *Capital Times* suggested that 7th District's big business leaders had found this "adroit" politician satisfactory to their interests and had, more importantly, not offended them. The newspaper also thought that, unlike the congressmen who did experience primaries, he had not been an ardent progressive or La Follette supporter.⁶⁴⁴ In the general election, his district gave him a 70 percent majority over the Democrat and Prohibition Party candidates. The seven remaining incumbents up for re-election would have to fight fiercely to remain in Congress.

Between late May and late August, the Loyalty Legion, the newly-formed Patriotic Congressional League, and loyalist newspapers like the *Milwaukee Journal*, went after those seven with blistering, but similar rhetoric. They usually began their attacks by pointing out that the belief Wisconsin was disloyal began with these national representatives, who "did not have the courage to declare war against Germany" and did not support the president's "win-the-war program."⁶⁴⁵ Loyalist media often mentioned

⁶⁴³ In other elections during the war, Socialists often voted for the Democrat candidate if no Socialist or Progressive Republican was running.

⁶⁴⁴ "When Big Business Grants an Exemption," *Capital Times*, August 6, 1918, 4. In June 1918, the *Sauk County Democrat* also called Esch "adroit" and believed by steering the "middle course of the professional congressman who seeks to hold his job," he had managed to keep hyperpatriots on his side. "State Press and Politics," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 10, 1918, 4. The *Rusk County Journal* thought there was no primary because Esch "always stood by the monied interests," adding "The dollar boys are strong on 'loyalty' when there is money in it." Clipping attached to letter sent to Congressman Esch. Unsigned (Madison), but Esch responded to William P. Welch, to Esch, July 16, 1918, JJE papers, Box 46, WHS.

⁶⁴⁵ "Kenosha Strong to Beat Cooper," *Racine Journal News*, July 11, 1918, 2; Patriotic Congressional League, "The Day of Reckoning for Cary and Stafford," (Milwaukee: Meisenheimer Printing Co., probably August 1918.), WLL papers, Box 3, WHS.

what they considered a list of failures, some before the April 6, 1917 congressional vote, such as supporting a resolution to prevent Americans from ocean travel or voting against allowing American ships to carry arms and ammunition in their cargo. Other alleged failures occurred after the United States' entrance into the war, such as not supporting conscription, voting against the Espionage Act, and not agreeing to censor newspapers during wartime.⁶⁴⁶ If an incumbent replied that he had been elected by a constituency that knew he would vote against the war or that his vote was based on the number of petitions sent to him by his constituents, the militant patriots usually accused the congressman of pandering to the German vote.⁶⁴⁷

Since Wisconsin congressmen generally supported the war effort once the United States joined the Allies, loyalists had to limit their grievances to those from before the war or in the few months following the congressional vote. If an incumbent pointed out that he had been an active champion of the war effort, loyalists accused him of not taking "a sufficiently pronounced position early in the crisis," not understanding that he had voted "to surrender America's sacred rights to German Autocracy," and ignoring German atrocities.⁶⁴⁸ The *Milwaukee Journal* completely dismissed this incumbent

⁶⁴⁶ Loyalty Legion, "To the Members of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion in the Eighth Congressional District," probably October 1918; Loyalty Legion memorandum, "War Records of Congressional Candidates Fourth and Fifth Districts," Loyalty Legion, date; Patriotic Congressional League, "The Deadly Parallel, Representative E.E. Browne's Record," 1918, WLL papers, Box 3, WHS; "Are They Too 'Pay-triots,'" *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 9, 1918, 14; "Kenosha Strong to Beat Cooper"; "An Illustration," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 12, 1918, 1

⁶⁴⁷ "Want Loyal Men in Congress," *Fort Atkinson Union* printed in *Edgerton Tobacco Report*, June 14, 1918, 4.; "Kenosha Strong to Beat Cooper"; "Around the American Tree," *Sheboygan Press*, July 29, 1918, 1.; "Explanation Does Not Explain," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 23, 1918, 12.

⁶⁴⁸ Untitled blurb, *Waukesha Freeman*, August 15, 1918, 4.; "For Home and Country: Patriotic Congressional League Pledges Its Support for the Election of Thoroughly Loyal, Representative and Able Men from the Fourth and Fifth Districts," Patriotic Congressional League, 1918; "State Press and Politics," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 21, 1918, 10, originally published in the *Racine Times-Call*. See also: "Frear's Record in Congress: Read His Record and You Will Vote for Schuyler G. Gilman" (Mondovi, WI: C.W. Gilman, campaign secretary, 1918) and Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, "To the Members of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion in the Second Congressional District" (Milwaukee, WI: Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, 1918), which refers to Edward Voigt's record in Congress, WLL papers, Box 4, WHS.

argument by informing the congressmen who used it that they could not be loyal only after war was declared.⁶⁴⁹ A few anti-incumbent arguments focused on the congressmen's current statements or potential future behavior. When Congressman John Nelson (3rd District in southwest Wisconsin) described loyalists as "pay-triots," essentially using the war and patriotism to make a profit, the *Wisconsin State Journal* rebuked him by informing its readers that the Lafayette County G.A.R. post had resolved not to support Nelson and asked would Nelson describe these Civil War heroes as "pay-triots."⁶⁵⁰ The Patriotic Congressional League asked those in the state's 8th District if they were willing to place the world's future in the hands of someone who could ignore Germany's atrocities, as well as be easily swayed by constituent petitions from the disloyal minority. Despite these attempts, the state's militant patriots had trouble proving that the incumbent congressmen had a consistent history of disloyalty during the sixteen months of America's involvement in the war.

As had so often happened when the state's hyperpatriots actively involved themselves in a state election, the primary results were mixed. Three incumbents lost in

⁶⁴⁹ "What the Nation Needs," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 26, 1918, 12. The *Capital Times* responded to this argument, by calling the *Milwaukee Journal* editor a hypocrite because, before the war, he had sold advertisements, which urged Wisconsin congressmen to vote against the war, to peace advocates. The *Times* pointed out the *Journal* had made money by supporting this position. The *Times* also noted that the *Journal*, a Democratic newspaper, only railed against Republicans who voted against the war. While there were no Democratic congressmen from Wisconsin at the time of the vote, the *Journal* supported Democrats in other states no matter what their war stance had been on April 6, 1917. "The Newspapers, the Milwaukee Journal and Members in Congress," *Capital Times*, June 17, 1918, 4.

⁶⁵⁰ "Are They Too 'Pay-triots,'" 14. Counties in the 3rd District included Crawford, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, and Richland. Nelson later published a rebuttal letter in the *Capital Times*, where he charged Richard Lloyd Jones, editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal*, with using loyalty and patriotism to his own ends. He added, "I am seeking to show that there is a plan on to cast the stigma of disloyalty on those men who are true to the people and to put into the halls of legislation through the disguise of loyalty those men who will vote with the [special] interests as against the people." Grace L. Nelson, "A Daughter's Recollections," John M. Nelson papers, WHS and "An Open Letter to Richard Lloyd Jones, Editor of the State Journal from Congressman John M. Nelson," *Capital Times*, August 20, 1918, 4.

the Republican primary, while the other four had no problems beating their contenders.⁶⁵¹ Henry Cooper, who lost in the 1st District (southeast Wisconsin) decided to run as an Independent against the Republican nominee in the general election. As a result, the loyalists focused their general election efforts on these five (the four Republicans who won their primaries and the one Independent), usually by promoting the Democratic candidate. As the Loyalty Legion and Congressional Patriotic League repeatedly announced, they endorsed loyal candidates, regardless of party. Exceptions were made in the 1st District, where the loyalists supported the Republican candidate over the defeated Cooper, and in the 10th District, where only a weak Independent candidate could be roused to oppose incumbent James Frear after he won the Republican primary.

At the same time these congressional races occurred, the state's militant patriots also waged a fierce battle in the Republican Party's gubernatorial race. There would be three candidates on the September 3rd ballot, the incumbent Emanuel L. Philipp, the farmer-labor coalition candidate preferred by La Follette supporters James N. Tittmore, and the loyalist candidate state senator Roy P. Wilcox. When Philipp became governor in 1916, he had planned to only run for two terms, not three. With the war in Europe still raging, he decided in early 1918 to see Wisconsin through to the end of the crisis by running for a third term. Tittmore, at the time president of the Wisconsin Society of Equity, a farmers' political organization, became a candidate on May 1 at a

⁶⁵¹ The three incumbents who lost included Henry Cooper, 1st district (1st District counties included Kenosha, Racine, Rock, Walworth, and Waukesha), John Nelson, 3rd District, and William Cary, 4th District (Milwaukee). The four who won included Edward Voigt, 2nd District (counties: included Columbia, Dodge, Jefferson, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington), William Stafford, 5th District (Milwaukee), Edward Browne, 8th District (counties: Marathon, Portage, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara, and Wood), and James Frear, 10th District (counties: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pierce, Pepin, St. Croix, and Trempealeau).

farmers' convention held in Madison. His goal was to bring together farmers and blue-collar workers to end the hold of entrenched business and political leaders on the welfare of the state's citizens. Wilcox, who earlier in the year had successfully introduced in the state senate the Wilcox amendment labeling La Follette as disloyal, was to be the salvation of the hyperpatriots. To them, Wilcox was "a 100 per cent American, liberal candidate, intelligent, fearless and independent, who, if elected governor, [would] not weaken in loyalty to his country when the test comes."⁶⁵² Replacing Philipp with Wilcox became their primary goal. Tittmore, on the other hand, was just a distraction.

Loyalists dismissed Tittmore for several reasons. First, his platform placed too much emphasis on domestic issues and not enough on using these issues to win the war. At the same time, he did not place enough emphasis on loyalty and patriotism. Secondly, his candidacy came about under a cloud of suspicion. The farmers attending the May convention had no prior knowledge that they would be electing candidates for state races and creating a party plank and, in fact, had been told there was no formal agenda for the meeting. A few months later, the *Wisconsin State Journal* described the convention as "the most un-American, the most undemocratic political conference we have ever heard of in the entire history of Wisconsin." Their real concern, however, primarily focused on another reason to ignore Tittmore, specifically his focus on appealing to class consciousness. The *Journal* accused him and his supporters of allowing farmers, union labor, and non-union labor to participate in the proceedings in an effort to create "a class government" that privileged "toilers," something, the *Journal*

⁶⁵²"An Open Book to the Voters of Wisconsin: All-American Candidate for Governor, Senator Roy P. Wilcox of Eau Claire, Wis.," (Milwaukee: Wilcox Campaign Committee, probably August 1918), 3.

suggested, only the Bolsheviki in Russia had tried to do, albeit unsuccessfully.⁶⁵³

Although Tittlemore actively campaigned and was well-received in parts of the state he was never really a contender for the Republican nomination.

With the race clearly between Philipp and Wilcox, the latter set out to label himself the loyalty candidate. In his platform, issued the first week of August, Wilcox declared, “The great and overwhelming issue of the times is loyalty.” There could be no doubt, indifference, or compromise on this matter, he stated, adding the government of Wisconsin’s only goal should be as an aid in winning the war. Everything else in contrast was insignificant.⁶⁵⁴ To accomplish this goal, his supporters asserted the state needed a man with the vision to understand “the real meaning of the war,” one who knew that “a victorious peace” is the supreme issue of the moment; a man who would not compromise with disloyalty.⁶⁵⁵ Wilcox met all of their requirements for a loyal and patriotic candidate. To the state’s hyperpatriots he represented the ideal and best qualified candidate, similar in these respects to the late Senator Husting.

Besides promoting his virtues, Wilcox and his campaign seemed eager to finally lay out all of the reasons Philipp needed to be ousted. As with the targeted congressmen, most of the reasons laid out for Philipp’s removal by Wilcox and his supporters focused on the governor’s opinions and behavior from before the nation’s entrance into the war or the months immediately after. Wilcox specifically attacked the governor’s support of a pre-war embargo of arms and ammunition, as well as humanitarian aid, to the Allies

⁶⁵³ “No Room for the Bolsheviki,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 8, 1918, 10.

⁶⁵⁴ “Loyalty Leading Plank in Wilcox Platform,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 9, 1918, 4.

⁶⁵⁵ “An Open Book to the Voters of Wisconsin,” 4.

and Central Powers, all allegedly in the support of neutrality. Wilcox also reminded the electorate of Philipp's anti-conscription position from early in the war and suggested that by fighting this policy, the governor had brought into question the morale of Wisconsin's draft age men. In a less rigid stance, the *Wisconsin State Journal* was willing to admit that Philipp had gotten better as the war continued, but would always be faulted for lacking the vision to see that Germany was the real enemy in the months before Congress's April 1917 war vote.⁶⁵⁶

Wilcox and his supporters went beyond the governor's policy to more deeply ingrained issues. He suggested Philipp said Wisconsinites should be "proud of our German-Americans" simply to pander to the German voter. Wilcox, on the other hand, stated he would not use the hyphenated term, since he was looking for support from all Americans, anyone loyal to the American flag, without reference to their national background, adding, "All of our ancestors at some time came from somewhere."⁶⁵⁷ Finally, the *Milwaukee Journal* took issue with Philipp calling himself a "war governor." A real war governor, it argued, would have stood with the loyalists and denounced treachery and disloyalty, especially when churches were being used to spread German propaganda. Had Wilcox been governor, it continued, he would have condemned the crimes of Germany in a frank and stern manner; he would have understood the "holiness" of the cause; and, he would have supported the loyalist causes.⁶⁵⁸ If Philipp

⁶⁵⁶ "No Room for Bolsheviki," 10.

⁶⁵⁷ "Philipp's Pride," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 6, 1918, 10.

⁶⁵⁸ "Gov. Philipp's Keynote," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 7, 1918, 6.

wanted to label himself a “war governor,” he should have championed patriotism, loyalty, and those who stood behind those terms.

Philipp anticipated Wilcox and his supporters’ condemnations of his loyalty and began his campaign by going after the loyalist weak spot: the violent vigilante attacks that had occurred around the state. On July 3, in a speech at Prairie du Chien, Philipp declared, “If my opponent, Roy Wilcox, wishes to stand before the people as a ‘tar and feather’ candidate, he may do so.”⁶⁵⁹ He obviously hit a nerve, since the response was immediate. The *Milwaukee Journal* was shocked the governor would stoop so low and make a statement beneath his dignity.⁶⁶⁰ The *Chippewa Falls Independent* described the comment as a “mighty mean thing” to say in order to win the governorship.⁶⁶¹ Wilcox called it a vicious and unwarranted attack, since there was nothing in his record to base such an accusation. He had, in fact, stood for law and order all his life. He saw Philipp’s move as a way to label him dangerous and “insinuate” that he might deny some people their constitutional rights. Wilcox called this innuendo, which did not deserve attention.⁶⁶² Yet as eager as he was to call out Philipp for not condemning Germany, the *Capital Times* could not find any instance when Wilcox had condemned the tarring and feathering in Ashland. In retrospect, perhaps Wilcox had been as cowardly in not defying militant patriots as he believed Philipp had been in not defying Wisconsin’s German Americans.

⁶⁵⁹ Several newspapers reported this comment, including the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Chippewa Falls Independent*. “Beneath the Dignity,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 5, 1918, 14 and *Chippewa Falls Independent* as published in “With Editors of Wisconsin,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 10, 1918, 10.

⁶⁶⁰ “Beneath the Dignity,” 14.

⁶⁶¹ “With Editors of Wisconsin,” 10.

⁶⁶² “Wilcox is Cheered by Ashland Crowd,” *Racine Journal News*, July 18, 1918, 2; “Attempt to Deceive People is Charged,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 16, 1918, 16.

In the week before the primary election, concern about the outcome of the congressional and gubernatorial races seeped into editorials written by militant patriotic editors. The *Milwaukee Journal* reminded its readers that the nation was watching Wisconsin again to see if it would vote for “men who were blind on and before April 6, 1917” or “men who saw clearly.”⁶⁶³ A few days later, the *Journal* reiterated that the nation and the world are watching Wisconsin and “will form their opinion from the decision which she makes.”⁶⁶⁴ The *Eau Claire Telegram* more bluntly stated the reason for this concern—its belief that the state was “still cursed with wrong-heads or worse.”⁶⁶⁵ It knew that these poisonous men were still out there, but had no idea what their effect on the election would be. They found out on September 3, 1918.

As with the senatorial race in April, the results of the congressional races were mixed, but there was some good news for the militant patriots. Of the seven men they hoped to defeat in the primary, they were able to oust three: Henry Cooper in the 1st District, John M. Nelson in the 3rd District, and William Cary in the 4th District. The Republicans who defeated these three went on to win the general election in November. This meant there were still four congressional incumbents who the loyalists needed to remove. They knew the fight to dislodge these four would be an uphill battle, since the remaining incumbents were all Republicans and Democrats rarely won in Wisconsin, the late Paul Husting being an exception. For the next two months, the state’s hyperpatriots would try to convince the electorate in the 2nd, 5th, 8th, and 10th Districts to

⁶⁶³ “Our Plain Duty Next Tuesday,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 30, 1918, 1.

⁶⁶⁴ “A Summing Up,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 1, 1918, part 1, 4.

⁶⁶⁵ *Eau Claire Telegram* as published in “State Press and Politics,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 28, 1918, 4.

replace their apparently disloyal Republican congressmen with Democratic or Independent candidates.

The gubernatorial Republican primary, on the other hand, was very tight and would not be called until nine days after the election. Around 186,000 men had voted in the election, with Tittmore receiving over 45,000 votes (23 per cent). That left Wilcox and Philipp neck and neck, each having at least 71,000 votes. As counts from around the state came in, the leader of the race slowly changed. The day after the election, Wilcox had a slight lead. On September 5, the *Wisconsin State Journal* described Wilcox's margin as 1,500 votes. By the 6th, the race results were still uncertain, but the margin for Wilcox had fallen to 67 votes. On the 7th, Philipp became the leader with 154 votes. By the 9th the margin on Philipp had increased to around 300 votes. Finally, on September 13, the state's citizens learned that Philipp had won the Republican primary by 418 votes.⁶⁶⁶ There is a strong possibility that if Tittmore had not run in this election, Philipp would have beaten Wilcox decisively, since election results showed that Tittmore and Philipp split the German counties Berger had won in April.⁶⁶⁷ The third candidate's presence actually gave the loyalists more of a chance to win than they probably realized at the time.

⁶⁶⁶ "Wilcox Has 1,500 Margin Over Philipp," *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 5, 1918, 1; "Result of Race for Governor is Still Uncertain," *Racine Journal News*, September 6, 1918, 1; "Philipp Leading in Race for Governor by Over 100 Votes," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, September 7, 1918, 1; "Philipp in Lead by Over 300 Votes," *Capital Times*, September 9, 1918, 1; "Tittmore Ran Poor Third in Late Primary," *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, September 13, 1918, 1. The final count was Tittmore: 45,459 (carried 16 counties), Wilcox: 71,177 (carried 32 counties), Philipp: 71,595 (carried 23 counties).

⁶⁶⁷ "Aided in Naming Philipp," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 3, 1918, 12-13.

By the time the general election occurred on November 5, many Wisconsinites had seen or experienced the use of intimidating and violent tactics by the state's hyperpatriots, especially during the fourth Liberty Loan drive. Shortly before the election, Will Esch wrote his brother U.S. Representative John Esch that "willing horses," like himself were being "driven to death" by the high bond assessments of the fourth drive. He added that loan committees around the state "are just raising H--- with this Liberty Loan and believe me the transactions will come home to roost."⁶⁶⁸ The obvious place for them to roost would be the general election, which did not go exactly as Wisconsin's hyperpatriots had hoped.

In the gubernatorial election, the loyalists supported the Democrat, Henry Moelenpah, a banker from Clinton (Rock Co.), who ran against Governor Philipp and Socialist Emil Seidel. After the election board sorted through the over 331,000 votes cast on November 5, Wisconsinites learned that Philipp had handily beat both of his contenders with 47 percent of the vote. Three of the remaining Republican incumbents in the U.S. House of Representatives also won re-election. In the 2nd District, Edward Voigt ran against a Democrat and Socialist and ended up winning with 44 percent of the vote. In the 8th, Edward Browne also ran against a Democrat and Socialist and won with 52 percent. In the 10th, voters elected James Frear with an overwhelming 90 percent, a result occasioned by the lack of a Democratic candidate and the presence of a very weak

⁶⁶⁸ Will Esch to John J. Esch, October 14, 1918, JJE papers, WHS. Will added that when he found out his assessment was \$500, he told the bank "to go jump in the lake." John Esch replied that he agreed that Will had been taxed "rather hard on the Fourth Liberty Loan." He had also been assessed \$500, an amount he had subscribed for each loan, but by the fourth drive was finding them difficult to buy, consequently he could "only pay this last by installments." John J. Esch to Will Esch, October 18, 1918, JJE papers, WHS.

Independent. Unlike other Republican candidates William Stafford, the 5th District's Republican incumbent, lost, but the outcome was disturbingly unexpected to the city's militant patriots, since he lost to a Socialist, and not just any Socialist.

The state's 5th District, which included a significant portion of Milwaukee and had been represented by William H. Stafford since 1902 (with a two-year break from 1910 to 1912), saw a three-way race for the U.S. House representative. Stafford, the incumbent, had voted against entrance into the war, but had won the district's Republican primary. In November, he ran against the Loyalty Legion's, Patriotic Congressional League's, and *Milwaukee Journal's* favorite, Democrat Joseph P. Carney, a newspaper man who was currently serving as a Milwaukee alderman, and the Socialist candidate, the hyperpatriots' nemesis, Victor Berger, who was just weeks away from his trial for sedition. The League would not back Stafford because he voted "to surrender America's sacred rights to German Autocracy," while the *Milwaukee Journal* believed his record made it impossible for "thorough-going Americans" to support him. The *Journal* also believed he would lose the anti-war vote, who the newspaper identified as Stafford's constituency, to Berger. The race the editors thought would come down to the loyalist candidate, Carney, and Berger. They went on to urge their readers to support Carney and "redeem Milwaukee."⁶⁶⁹

While Stafford, the *Journal* suggested, had failed in his duty as an official representative, Berger, the city's loyalists believed, had failed his duty as a citizen. Not

⁶⁶⁹ "For Home and Country: Patriotic Congressional League Pledges Its Support for the Election of thoroughly Loyal, Representative and Able Men from the Fourth and Fifth Districts (Milwaukee, WI: Patriotic Congressional League, 1918); "Carney or Berger?" *Milwaukee Journal*, October 25, 1918, 14; "Claim Carney's Election Safe," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 29, 1918, 2; "Carney or Berger Will Win," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 2, 1918, 4.

only had he had been indicted for sedition under the Espionage Act by a Milwaukee-based federal grand jury in February, on October 28, days before the election, a grand jury in Chicago indicted him on similar charges. By the time of the election, he had thirty indictments made against him. To Milwaukee's loyalists, he was an embarrassment to the city. To the *Brooklyn Eagle* (New York) he was a "menace" to the country. Loyal Milwaukee citizens had to keep Berger out of congress, the *Eagle* demanded, even if that meant voting for Stafford.⁶⁷⁰ By the time of the election, 5th District voters, who the *Eagle* described as mostly of "foreign stock," had had enough of the loyalists and their demands and elected Berger with 44 percent of the vote. Carney came in second with 30 percent and Stafford last with 26 percent.

Explanations for his win, which the *Milwaukee Journal* called "deplorable," poured in over the next few days. The *Racine Journal News* suggested that Wilson's appeal for a Democratic congress had turned Republicans away from Carney.⁶⁷¹ While the Milwaukee paper thought Stafford and Carney had split the Socialist opposition vote, it also blamed the governor for not allowing fusion candidates to run against Socialists and others branded as disloyal. "Some untoward results" would have been avoided if Philipp had done his duty, the *Journal* argued.⁶⁷² Berger, on the hand, felt vindicated. He believed 5th District voters had, by electing him, spoken out against militarism and imperialism and for an early and lasting peace. They could not show

⁶⁷⁰ *Brooklyn Eagle* (New York) as published in *Baraboo Weekly News*, October 10, 1918, 2.

⁶⁷¹ "Victor L. Berger is Winner at Milwaukee," *Racine Journal News*, November 6, 1918, 1; The election was held on Tuesday, November 5, 1918. On October 19, Wilson made a public appeal for a Democratic majority in congress to help him put his peace plans in action. Since just months earlier he had championed a no-politics approach during the war, his statement badly backfired and Republican majorities were elected in both the House and Senate. Garrett Peck, *The Great War in America: World War I and Its Aftermath* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2018), 194-195.

⁶⁷² "Results in Wisconsin," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 6, 1918, 8.

their dissatisfaction by voting for a Democrat or Republican candidate, Berger suggested, so they had to vote the Socialist ticket. Berger added that the indictments and persecution he had experienced probably helped his cause.⁶⁷³ After the election, the question became would congress allow him to take his seat. The answer rested on the results of his trial for sedition.

Berger's ordeal would be arduous, stressful, and last several years, but eventually he would be legally vindicated. A month after his election, another grand jury, this one in La Crosse, also indicted him for having violated the Espionage Act.⁶⁷⁴ This, however, was a side story to the trial that was about to occur in Chicago with Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis presiding. The long, drawn-out trial began on December 9 with final arguments exactly a month later (The court did take off a week for the Christmas and New Year holidays.). In the evening of January 9, 1919, the jury declared Berger guilty of sedition. After preventing an attempt by Berger's lawyers to request a new trial, Judge Landis sentenced Berger to the maximum, twenty years in a federal prison. Berger, still out on bond, responded that he would take his case to the Supreme Court. In the meantime, he planned to serve as a duly elected congressman. When he arrived in Washington, DC, his fellow congressmen were flummoxed by his presence and began searching for ways to prevent a convicted traitor from taking his seat amongst them. Finally, on November 10, 1919, congress officially denied Berger a seat in the House using as their reasoning section three of the 14th amendment, which prohibits those who have engaged in rebellion or given aid to the enemy from serving in the government.

⁶⁷³ *Milwaukee Sentinel* as published in "Berger Says He Has Been Vindicated," *Sheboygan Press*, November 6, 1918, 3.

⁶⁷⁴ "Berger Again Indicted," *Racine Journal News*, December 4, 1918, 4.

The House then required the 5th District to hold a new congressional election. It did, on December 19, and to the amazement of many, elected Victor Berger again. Congress quickly reaffirmed that Berger would not be allowed to take his seat, so the 5th District chair sat empty until the November 1920 election. This time the Republican loser from the 1918 election, William H. Stafford, won and served for two years. During this time, Berger's case finally made it to the Supreme Court, which overturned his conviction on January 31, 1921. At the next congressional election in November 1922, the 5th District elected Berger again. This time he was allowed to serve and did so until shortly before his untimely death in 1929.⁶⁷⁵

Before the general election occurred, other events, rife with vigilante action, dominated the news of the state. About two weeks prior to the worst incident of vigilante violence, the *Racine Times-Call* took Governor Philipp to task for suggesting that the state had seen much violence, disorder, and mob law over the past few months. Instead, it argued, "In no state in the Union has there been less overt acts and more obedience to the law." After September 14, 1918, the *Times-Call* would no longer be able to make that statement.⁶⁷⁶ On that Saturday afternoon, a posse (or mob) stormed the home of the Krueger family in Longwood Township (Clark Co.), an event that led to two deaths and several significant injuries. Caroline Krueger, who practiced a Pentecostal Holy Roller religion that closely adhered to the commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill," lived a mile

⁶⁷⁵ Pifer, 231, 238-239; Glad, 53. Berger died on August 7, 1929 from injuries, including a cracked skull, which occurred when he was hit by a Milwaukee streetcar on July 16. Berger was 69 at the time of his death.

⁶⁷⁶ *Racine Times-Call* as published in "State Press and Politics," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 31, 1918, 4.

south from the town of Withee on a farm with her four draft-age sons, two who had registered for the draft a year earlier, but refused to report to military service, and two who had not registered. Mrs. Krueger, a strong believer that governments should not force men into military service due to her religion, may have been the instigator of these decisions.

To force compliance, four federal and local authorities went to the Krueger home that Saturday with warrants to arrest the brothers. The deputy U.S. marshal in charge had been hired with no apparent qualifications and definitely no experience, and afterward most commentators laid the bungled incident at his feet. Shortly after this group arrived at the Krueger farm, Ennis Krueger, the youngest of the brothers at age nineteen, pulled out his pistol and shot at the lawmen, who returned fire. As the marshal and his compatriots escaped, Frank, the eldest, fired his shotgun in their general direction. The marshal sent a passing motorist to nearby Owen (two miles to the east of Withee) to get help, specifically men with guns. The rallying cry, "We're gonna to shoot up the Kruegers!" spread through the small town as men who wanted to join the posse ran for their guns. Over the next few hours, that was exactly what happened.

The gun battle began as the first posse members arrived at a neighboring farmhouse. By the late afternoon, the posse, a number of which had been shot and wounded, had grown to an angry mob no longer controlled by the marshal. They blamed Caroline for this mess and several yelled that she should be lynched or shot. Home guard companies eventually arrived and brought some order to the scene. The battle raged until dark with gun barrages devastating the Krueger house. The next day, Caroline and Frank, who had been badly wounded, reluctantly surrendered. By this

time, the house had been riddled with hundreds of bullet holes and five members of the posse had been badly wounded. A few hours after being shot, Harry Jensen, depot agent for the town of Owen, died from his wounds. The other four mob members survived, as did Frank Krueger, who, along with his mother, was arrested for first degree murder. Two other brothers, Leslie and Ennis, managed to slip through the guardsmen who had surrounded the property during the night. The fourth brother, Louis, had moved out west in April to escape conscription and missed the battle. Two weeks later, the U.S. marshal who had bungled the brothers' arrest, shot and killed Ennis, while he was hiding in a barn loft in Polley (Taylor Co.), about twenty-three miles northwest of Withee. The marshal said Ennis had pulled a gun, but many came to believe the agent had shot the Krueger brother in his sleep. Around the same time law enforcement officials tracked the third brother, Leslie, to Minnesota, where they arrested him. Louis managed to disappear until 1920, when he was recognized and arrested in Chippewa Falls. He spent about seven months in jail before being released. The courts released Caroline, but convicted Frank and Leslie in 1919 and sentenced them to life in prison.

Armed posse at the Krueger Farm, September 17, 1918

From: <https://www.wiclarkcountyhistory.org/5data/119/119816.htm>



They both spent most of their sentence in mental institutions and received a gubernatorial pardon from Robert La Follette, Jr. in 1934.⁶⁷⁷

Those who knew the Kruegers realized that religious fanaticism had caused the brothers to dodge the draft, while others, like the *Milwaukee Journal*, used the incident to fan the flames of ethnic hatred by blaming “false propaganda.” The *Journal* believed the brothers’ minds “had been poisoned and inflamed...[by] attacks upon America printed in alien-hearted newspapers” or spoken by “alien propagandists,” sometimes from the pulpit. While the Kruegers should be hunted down and captured for their bloody crimes, “the men higher up,” the paper argued, should also be punished.⁶⁷⁸ The *Journal* was correct in its assumption that the Kruegers had a German heritage; both Caroline and her late husband Ludwig, although born in Wisconsin, were the children of German immigrants. However, the Kruegers had made clear that their reasons for draft dodging came from their religious and moral beliefs and not from ethnic affinities with Germany. After capturing Frank and his mother, the posse members were surprised to find that the Kruegers actually had an American flag hanging over their fireplace.

⁶⁷⁷ Pifer, 194-196. For detailed accounts of the Krueger incident see Jerry Buss, *The Krueger Affair: A War of their Own* (Oregon, WI: Badger Books, 1998) and Kay Scholtz, *The Wisconsin Krueger Family Tragedy: 16 Years of Letters from Prison* (Boulder, CO: Trails Books, 2013). The *Madison Democrat* used hyper-patriotic language to describe the outcome, writing that Jensen “fell dead from a pro-Prussian bullet fired by a traitorous, un-American slacker” and suggested that Frank and Leslie “be shot forthwith by a platoon of soldiers” after a court martial that would help vitalize the “truth eternal that—**Treason is death!**” as published in the *Baraboo Weekly News*, October 10, 1918, 2. Caroline, who had been in jail at the time of Ennis’s death, had his body exhumed and declared that the corpse was not her son, a belief she held until her death in 1941. The Kruegers had been a fairly wealthy family at the time of the shootout and the house, which was brand new at the time and had many up-to-date features, had not yet received its final coat of paint. The Kruegers never recovered financially, the house was not finished during their ownership, and the brothers never married. Louis was the last to die in 1963. The house still stands and has been refurbished. Each succeeding owner has decided, however, to leave the bullet holes in the outside of the house and in the built-in china cabinet unrepaired.

⁶⁷⁸ “The Ultimate Responsibility,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 17, 1918, 8.

While this incident might seem different from typical incidents of mob violence, especially those that happened the following month during the the fourth Liberty Loan drive, it had many similar qualities. Its main difference was that it was instigated by federal agents instead of the town's elites. However, once they lost control, they relied on those elites, such as the depot agent, to gather and lead a posse that served as their back-up. The crisis devolved from a controlled and organized, albeit poorly, situation into one with spontaneous violence, ending in death. If the federal agents had not arrogantly assumed they could accomplish the task of rounding up the Krueger brothers alone and instead have asked for the cooperation of the nearby towns' leaders, this event may not have ended so tragically. In the end, this incident of botched mob violence would be the worst case of vigilantism in Wisconsin during World War I, but the use of mob violence became more prominent as the fourth Liberty Loan drive got underway.

By the fourth Liberty Loan drive, a combination of deep disappointments, especially at the ballot box, combined with the knowledge and experience of successfully persuading, albeit in intimidating and coercive ways, their recalcitrant neighbors to purchase war bonds had led loyalists throughout the state to embrace a moral suasion form of vigilantism. Loyalist leaders rarely called themselves vigilantes. They were instead leading "committees" that had a respectable and rational purpose, selling war bonds. Their activities, they believed, were carefully organized and allegedly violence adverse. Some of these committees, however, felt no compunction using violence or the threat of it against those who they thought were shirking their patriotic duty by not buying Liberty bonds, especially if the obstinate neighbor was a farmer or German or,

even worse, both. Those committees that avoided violence used intimidation by numbers or public shaming to meet their community's loan quotas. In either case, Wisconsin, hyperpatriots thought, had to succeed in selling bonds as never before to finally remove that stain of disloyalty from Wisconsin's reputation. The means would justify the ends.

Wisconsin's loan committees had learned from the third Liberty Loan drive and, consequently, were able to make improvements to their methods for the fourth drive, which began September 28 and lasted through October 19. The committees continued the third loan practices of assigning individual allotments and of sending "flying squadrons" to those who needed extra encouragement to buy bonds. This time, however, the squadrons were considerably more formidable. One Wisconsinite noted a pattern in the way these squadrons, which mostly fixated on farmers who had not bought any bonds or only a small portion of their allotment, carried out their "raids." Large groups made up of loan committee members would arrive at the farmer's door accompanied by deputy sheriffs, a color guard, photographer, stenographer, and a banker (to make loans), along with factory workers provided by the local manufacturer to be the muscle. Squadron members usually presented themselves as agents of the government and employed a ceremonial format to reinforce that concept.⁶⁷⁹ This increased emphasis on intimidation by numbers, formality, and occasionally violence may have been the result of an apparent feeling among farmers that they had done all

⁶⁷⁹ Stewart, "Prussianizing Wisconsin," 102. Manufacturing employees would be docked their pay to buy bonds, so were rarely a focus of loan committee squadrons. Superior Industries required their employees to purchase bonds equaling one month's pay, although the company's general chairman expected those with "tidy bank accounts" to buy more. "New Loan Plan: Month's Pay from Every Man," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 1, 1918, part 3, 1.

they could in the third loan drive, which could explain its spectacular results, and had nothing left to give financially when the fourth drive came around.⁶⁸⁰

From stenographers' reports printed in newspapers, as well as letters and affidavits written by those who had visits from these intimidating squadrons, there is a fairly decent record of what being approached by one of these mobs was like and the consequences of refusing to purchase one's bond allotment. The Outagamie County



Posters for the Fourth Liberty Loan often portrayed Germans as violent and sub-human.

Library of Congress LC-USZC4-2950

Council of Defense, sometimes described by those affected as the "Vigilante Committee," took a more forceful approach to loan collecting than most, especially when it approached county dairy farmers of German descent who had been lax in their bond purchases. Apple Creek (Outagamie Co.) dairy farmer John Deml experienced one of their visits when he was woken up shortly after midnight on a Sunday morning by a group of about forty men, who declared they were the Council of Defense. They were at his home, one of them announced, to make sure he purchased his allotted \$500 worth of Liberty bonds. When he told the posse through a closed door that he had

bought \$450 in bonds during the third bond drive and could not afford any more, the

⁶⁸⁰ "Failure to Buy Bonds Probed," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 23, 1918, 4. This article focused on Fond du Lac County, which had subscribed 157 percent of its allotment in the third loan, but came under its quota in the fourth.

men got angry and began to break into his home by tearing off the screen door and threatening to force the front door open. When Deml let them in, he decided to step outside to see if any yellow paint had used on his house or mailbox. At this point, several members of the group grabbed at his arms and legs and demanded he “sign up.” When Deml refused, citing the time of night, a member of the mob shouted, “Get a rope!” In the next instant, he had a rope around his neck and under his arms. A sharp jerk on the rope forced the farmer to the ground, where some of the mob jumped on his back and struck his face. The attack ended abruptly when another member told his fellow Council members that they had gone too far. When Deml told the leaders that he would definitely not buy bonds “after being abused like this,” a leader, possibly the Appleton police chief, told him he had to come with them or meet with “Mr. Keller” later that Sunday at 10 a.m. When Deml agreed to the latter, the raid ended. Deml did not visit Mr. Keller, but did try to get a warrant for assault with intent to do great bodily harm against those he recognized. Appleton judge A.M. Spencer refused to issue one for that charge, but later stated that he had been willing to issue a warrant for assault and battery, but that Deml and his representatives declined the offer. Shortly after the fourth drive ended, Clinton Ballard, who was on Appleton’s city board and a member of the Society of Equity, Tittimore’s farmer organization, took affidavits from the farmers accosted by the Vigilante Committee and presented them to Governor Philipp, who referred Ballard to District Attorney Mark Catlin. Catlin declined to act on the farmers’ behalf, stating that the affidavits “grossly exaggerated” the events.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸¹ John Deml (Apple Creek) to Charles D. Stewart (Hartford), October 22, 1918 as published in “Prussianizing Wisconsin,” 101; Clinton Ballard (Grand Chute) to editor (unknown newspaper), n.d., Charles D. Stewart (CDS) papers, WHS; “Bond Boosters Face Probe,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 27, 1918, 10.; “Affidavits in Mob Violence

Another violent incident occurred in nearby Winnebago County as the fourth Liberty Loan campaign was winding down, when the county's loan committee decided to confront those who had not bought their full allotment. Oshkosh lumber dealer William Wagstaff, who led this committee, must have felt a certain zealousness about this task, since he also served as the chairman of the Individual Allotment Committee for the loan drive at the state level. Adamant that all county residents would buy their allotted amounts, he set out on October 15, a clear day with mild weather, to confront the loan slackers. He brought forty-one other men with him, including former state attorney general Emmet Hicks. They drove around the county visiting several men, including farmer John Mole. Later, Mole remembered he was in the process of getting his horses out from the barn around 2 p.m. when "Wagstaff's mob of 42 men in automobiles called at [his] home." They aggressively insisted Mole purchase \$100 in bonds, his allotted amount, and sign for his mother's bond application for \$200. When he told them those amounts were beyond his means, but he would buy a \$50 bond, the mob got feisty, calling him "cocky," a "yellow dog," and accusing him of disloyalty for earlier saying the bonds had no value. A call went out amongst the mob to arrest Mole. When he turned to the former attorney general, Hicks told Mole to buy or else he could not save him. Mole still refused. The mob then decided to "make the yellow dog kiss the flag." Someone threw one on the floor and when Mole did not immediately kneel down, he was struck behind his left ear knocking him out and kicked again while he was down. When he came to, he did kiss the flag, but then the mob forced him into one of the

Cases are Placed before Justice Department Officials," *Capital Times*, December 21, 1918, 1, 4. The latter article includes seven affidavits from Outagamie County dairy farmers. The farmers mention those they recognized in the mob, who were all from Appleton, including a coal merchant, insurance agent, horse dealer, and dentist, as well as the chief of police.

automobiles and took him to his neighbor's farm. On the way, a mob member cried out, "let's go back and burn his buildings, the yellow dog." Once they arrived at nearby farm, Mole agreed to buy the allotted amount and the mob let him go. As he recalled, "I was abducted, and I paid the ransom...They then let me go home and they drove on to abuse other people." The event was witnessed by Mole's wife and mother, who lived with the couple, as well as their two Milwaukee guests. In early January 1919, Wagstaff declared, "No coercion of any kind was used" during the fourth loan drive and Emmet Hicks concurred.⁶⁸²

Not all visits by Liberty loan committee delegations were as violent as those experienced by Mole and Deml, but they could still be disturbing and uncomfortable experiences. The Milwaukee County loan committee, who called themselves the Liberty Loan Flying Squadron, used ceremony to overwhelm the farmers it visited. On a typical visit, a large group of men would arrive at a farmer's home in twenty-five cars. After parking, a squad of military men out of uniform and without rifles, supposedly to prevent a sense of intimidation, proceeded into the farmyard, where they stood in a semi-circle around the farmer. The leader, frequently James H. Stover (John Stover's brother, mentioned in chapter three), would read a "message from our government" that accused the farmer of failing or refusing to do his share and asked if he was now ready to do his duty. Most of the farmers subscribed at this point, but those who remained obdurate were told of the shame they would experience for not doing their part. A handful more farmers folded after this speech and made down payments towards their

⁶⁸² John Mole (Fisk) to Charles Stewart, January 7, 1918, CDS papers, WHS.; "Farmer Was Not Struck," *Capital Times*, January 13, 1918, 1, 6. Wagstaff's mob approached John Mole on October 15, four days before the fourth drive ended.

loan. The *Milwaukee Journal* described the ceremony as “solemn, silent, and orderly,” but also a “baptism of patriotism,” and added that deputy sheriffs were present to make sure order was maintained and no violence ensued.⁶⁸³

At least four farmers still refused to purchase loans, one because he was a Russellite, as had been Caroline Krueger, and would “not contribute anything for the purpose of killing my brother.” Stover suggested he could end up at Fort Leavenworth for statements like that and called him “no better than a worm of the earth.” The farmer stood his ground and the Flying Squadron had no choice but to nail a yellow placard on his property that read, “PUBLIC NOTICE The occupant of these premises has refused to buy his share of fourth Liberty loan bonds. Do not remove this sign.” The other three Milwaukee County farmers also had similar signs placed on their buildings and their names, along with transcripts of the proceedings, turned over to federal authorities.⁶⁸⁴

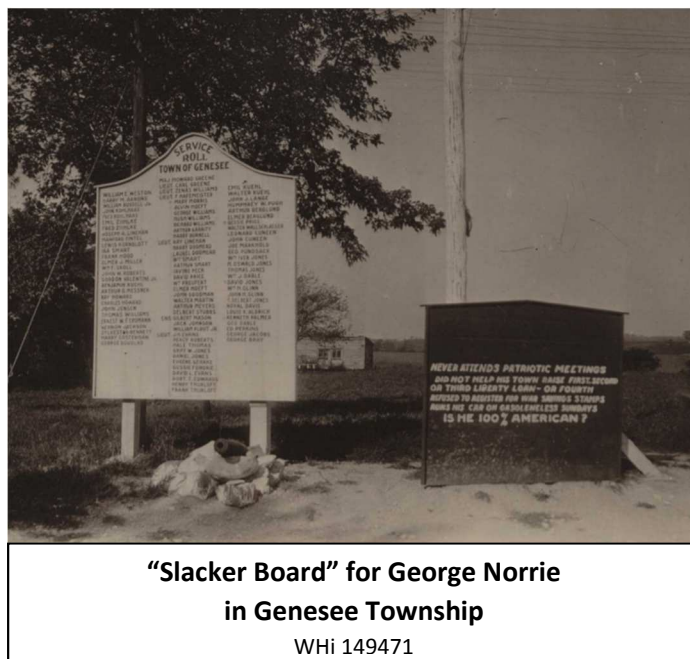
Shaming or the threat of shaming became a primary tactic of these squadrons during the fourth bond drive, even though it met with mixed success. The Milwaukee County placards, for example, did not prevent four of the farmers the committee visited from refusing to buy bonds. Henry Stoltzman, another farmer who experienced the Outagamie County Vigilante Committee, decided to sign a “black list” rather than buying bonds he could not afford, even after the committee told him that he was marking himself as “a slacker and pro-German” and could be sent to Germany after the war (Stoltzman was born in Wisconsin, the son of German immigrants.). Shaming did not

⁶⁸³ “Bond ‘Slacker’ Round-up On,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 29, 1918, 1.

⁶⁸⁴ “Bond ‘Slacker’ Round-up On”; “‘Wouldn’t Protect Own Wife,’” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 31, 1918, 4.; “More Slackers on Loan Found,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 1, 1918, 8.

work on Stolzman, neither did the threat of being tarred and feathered. Only when the squadron began pushing his wife around and intimating that if he did not sign up “there would be something doing,” did Stoltzman finally break and buy his allotment.⁶⁸⁵

Another sign, much larger than the Milwaukee County placards and labeled “Slacker Board,” appeared at a prominent corner in Genesee Township (Waukesha County) on September 23 or 24 next to the Town of Genesee’s Service Roll plaque. The board, decorated with a yellow flag, named local farmer George Norrie as a slacker for not attending any patriotic meetings or buying any Liberty bonds and for driving his car on a gasless Sunday. When Norrie

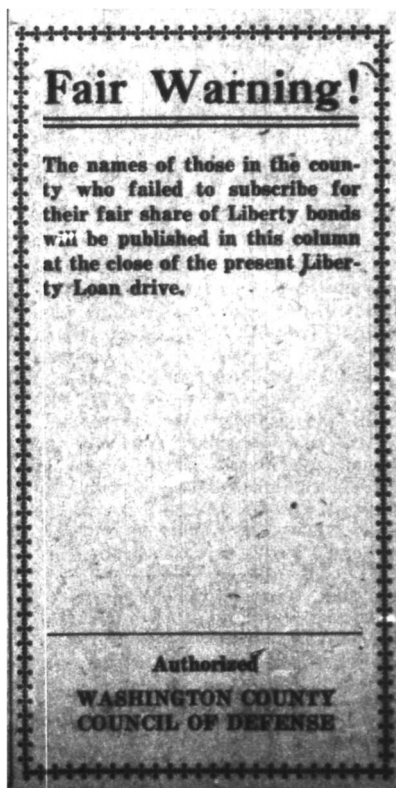


complained of the sign’s presence to the Genesee Township Council of Defense, its members denied creating the sign, but produced a long list of transgressions on Norrie’s part and elaborated on them in detail in the local newspaper. Norrie did buy bonds in the fourth drive, but added, he “would not give them the satisfaction of saying they

⁶⁸⁵ “Affidavits in Mob Violence Cases,” 4. The article lists his name as H.A. Holzman, but it was really Henry Albert Stoltzman. This idea of deporting slackers also showed up in a letter dated September 16 to the *Milwaukee Journal* editor. “Milwaukeean” suggested that those who did not show “affection for this country” by not buying their fair share of Liberty bonds should be interned until after the war and then deported “to the land they think they love so well, but allowed themselves to forsake,” an underhanded reference to German-American “slackers.” “Letters to the Editor,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 19, 1918, 7.

forced me to do so.”⁶⁸⁶ In a similar tactic, the Washington County Council of Defense placed a notice in a West Bend newspaper that citizens who did not “subscribe for their fair share” would find their names published in a later issue.⁶⁸⁷

When the bond drive finished, Wisconsin’s militant patriots probably felt they had succeeded, since the state had comfortably made its quota by \$12 million, even though fifteen counties had not made their allotments. This success occurred despite news of peace talks in Europe and the Spanish influenza pandemic, both of which could and may have hampered bond sales. On October 14, Governor Philipp issued a statement that he had heard “some people are losing their interest in bonds because of the prospect of an early peace,” but reminded the state’s citizens that the war was still in progress and the funds requested by the federal government were still needed.⁶⁸⁸ Around the same time, President Wilson and Secretary of Treasury McAdoo, hearing that “the weak-kneed and the pro-German propagandists” were inhibiting bond sales by announcing the war was over, vigorously rebutted this claim and reminded Americans of their financial duty during the war crisis.⁶⁸⁹



Announcement in the *West Bend News*, October 16,

⁶⁸⁶ Norrie (Genesee Station [sic]) to Stewart (Hartford), January 5, 1919, CDS papers, WHS. “To the Public,” *Waukesha Freeman*, November 14, 1918, 2. This was a letter from Norrie to the editor.; “Genesee Township Council of Defense Replies,” *Waukesha Freeman*, November 28, 1918, 3.

⁶⁸⁷ *West Bend News*, October 16, 1918, 1. Located in the bottom right corner of the front page. Despite the threat, no names were published in subsequent newspapers.

⁶⁸⁸ “Philipp Urges Speed,” *Capital Times*, October 14, 1918, 6.

⁶⁸⁹ Labert St. Clair, *The Story of the Liberty Loans* (Washington, DC: James William Bryan Press, 1919), 79.

The loan drive was still weeks away when the Spanish flu hit Wisconsin. On September 17, the state's first death occurred in Racine. By mid-October, Will Esch, the brother of U.S. Representative John J. Esch, wrote from Lodi (Columbia Co.) that "The flu is getting bad about here."⁶⁹⁰ His experience reflected that of most Wisconsinites. During the last week of September, new flu cases rose from 6 to 97, with new cases peaking on October 22 with 588. By the time the disease passed through Wisconsin, an estimated 103,000 of the state's citizens had had symptoms and 8,459 had died. The loan drive occurred in the midst of this pandemic. Unlike most states at the time, Wisconsin had a robust public health system, due to the work of the Progressives, and managed to have one of the lowest death rates in the United States. On October 10, when the state health officer declared a public health emergency and closed all schools, theaters, and places of public gathering for the duration of the flu, all planned patriotic rallies had to be cancelled as were many other publicity events meant to support the fourth loan drive.⁶⁹¹ Loan committees in their flying squadron mode seemed to have exempted themselves from these restrictions.

While dealing with the mid-term elections and the fourth Liberty Bond drive, Wisconsin's hyperpatriots also had to consider their response to a potential peace settlement between the Central Powers and the Allies. Earlier in the year, President Wilson had laid out America's war aims in what became known as his Fourteen Points

⁶⁹⁰ Will Esch to John J. Esch, October 14, 1918, JJE papers, WHS.

⁶⁹¹ Pifer, 179-181; Glad, 57-58; Steven Burg, "Wisconsin and the Great Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 84, no. 1 (autumn 2000): 38, 40-41, 44-45, 52. Wisconsin's death rate was 2.91 per thousand, much lower than the national death rate of 4.39 per thousand. Berg, 41. Wisconsin's population in 1920 was 2.679 million, so about four percent of the population experienced the disease.

Address, including the creation of a League of Nations. His intent was to limit the Allied powers more extreme demands when peace was finally declared. He later added eleven more points that included the right of self-determination for the defeated countries. Militant patriots in Wisconsin, as well as around the country, worried that Wilson would go soft on Germany, so they reiterated their demands that the belligerent nations be militarily defeated and made to suffer for their actions. In reality, Americans only had a limited ability to control events and, once started, the move to a peaceful and diplomatic resolution to the war happened quickly. Battle guns blared and boomed until 11:11 am on November 11, 1918, when they stopped suddenly as a negotiated armistice went into effect. Cities and towns around Wisconsin celebrated the news with parades and parties. In a handful of locations, some of these celebrations would devolve into what would be the final incidents of war vigilantism.

Although talk about peace negotiations had been happening on and off throughout 1918, the first real action occurred on September 29, when Bulgaria agreed to peace terms and to dismantle its war apparatus. Turkey and Austria-Hungary followed soon afterward. On October 6, Prince Maximilian, the new imperial chancellor of Germany, sent a note to Wilson asking to begin peace negotiations. The president believed armistice was a military matter best negotiated by generals and turned the request over to General Foch of France. Wilson was eager, however, to participate in the final peace negotiations.

Well-known lawyer Clarence Darrow wrote in the *New York Times* that peace will only “come when the German military machine is destroyed” and not before. He wanted a military victory, as did Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican U.S. senator, who made a

speech late in August stating any peace that occurred would have to be dictated to Germany by the Allies, including the United States, and not negotiated.⁶⁹² Around the same time, the *Milwaukee Journal*, in an unusual show of moderation, editorialized that although discussion of peace was “looked upon by some extremists as traitorous” and those who discussed it “thrust into the category of pacifists,” peace would come eventually and its readers should not condemn those who looked forward to it. Using this epithet, i.e. pacifist, indiscriminately, the newspaper added, would ultimately reflect more on the accuser than on the one accused.⁶⁹³ Yet concern about how the peace would be negotiated did escalate, so that on October 14, Arizona Senator Henry Amhurst met with Wilson to let him know, “If your reply should fail to come up to the American spirit, you are destroyed.”⁶⁹⁴ The American spirit, however, seemed to welcome the armistice.

With the knowledge that an armistice was only days away, towns and cities around Wisconsin began to prepare for a celebration. A false announcement occurred on November 7, setting off a handful of spontaneous parties, but the information was soon corrected.⁶⁹⁵ Before a real armistice was declared, the *Janesville Gazette* reminded its readers what the term meant. Armistice was not the signing of peace terms, the paper stated, but a preliminary step in that direction, which in this case included a temporary cessation of hostilities along with the requirement that German forces would withdraw to German soil. The *Gazette* added there would be a big celebration in town once official word had been received that an armistice had gone into effect. In anticipation of this

⁶⁹² Peck, 192-195.

⁶⁹³ “Discrimination,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 26, 1918, 12.

⁶⁹⁴ Peck, 193.

⁶⁹⁵ Peck, 198.

celebration, the Janesville Chamber of Commerce had arranged for a band to play, all the bells in the city to ring, chimes to play patriotic airs, and a grand parade with the Boy Scouts, Sammies' Sisters (a young girls' group that supported the Red Cross), High School Cadets, and local members of the Wisconsin State Guard. The Chamber asked factories to dismiss their employees early to witness the parade and participate in the celebration.⁶⁹⁶ This event resembled many around the state, but a few got out of hand.

The Evansville (Rock Co.) celebration quickly became the most notorious of these because the belligerent crowd degraded and humiliated a 73-year-old woman. Mary Jane (Montgomery) Shaw had been born in Ohio, but moved with her parents to Evansville when she was an infant and lived there the rest of her life. She married George Shaw, a shoe store owner who later became a real estate dealer, and together they had several children, although only one son lived to adulthood. George was around in 1918, but Mary seemed to be the focus of the loyalists' fury beginning with the third Liberty Loan drive. She had been active in the war effort and even purchased \$1,400 in Liberty bonds (with cash not bank loans), but refused to participate in the "Your Share is Fair" campaign, the Rock County effort to sell war bonds using individual allotments in the third bond drive. Mrs. Shaw considered the allotments unfair, since they were not issued in neighboring Dane County. When her obstinacy became known, "a bunch of zealous patriots" painted the walk and front of her house yellow on June 29.⁶⁹⁷

Memory of this refusal resurfaced on Armistice Day. In anticipation of the festivities, Mrs. Shaw had decorated her car in patriotic colors, but before she could

⁶⁹⁶ "Preparing for the Receipt of Genuine Armistice Signing," *Janesville Gazette*, November 9, 1918, 5.

⁶⁹⁷ "House Painted Yellow," *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 3, 1918, 9.

leave, a group of “loyalist citizens,” essentially a mob, burst into her home and demanded that she come with them. When she refused, they left, but soon returned with a large animal cage, later described as a cage for a circus lion, and tried to force her into it. She responded by pointing a rifle at them. A fifteen-year old boy managed to pull it from her hands, while the others pushed her into the cage and placed it on a wagon. Mrs. Shaw was paraded downtown until the cortege stopped at a bonfire in front of a local hotel. Here, mob members insisted she exit the cage, kneel, and kiss an American flag. When she did not cooperate, they pulled her from the enclosure and tried to force her to kneel and kiss the flag, without success. The police chief finally stepped in and broke up the mob and released Mrs. Shaw from the cage. The mob went on to find other “slackers” in Evansville and in the town of Union, who were humiliated by being forced to do a “snake dance” around the bonfire, as well as kiss the flag. Two days later, in a letter to the *Janesville Daily Gazette*, Mrs. Shaw described the mob as being primarily made up of intoxicated, draft-age men, who if they were truly patriotic, she thought, should have been “across the water fighting Germans.” She would not kiss or salute the flag for those hooligans, because, in her words, the flag “does not and never has stood for mob riot.”⁶⁹⁸

This is how the war ended in Wisconsin—with an elderly woman paraded around town in an animal cage. The Evansville mob was not the only case of armistice

⁶⁹⁸ Information about the Mary Shaw incident comes from these sources: “Evansville Woman Placed in Cage,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, November 12, 1918, 5; “Evansville Woman Claims She is Loyal,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, November 13, 1918, 4; “Evansville Woman Nabbed by Crowd,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 14, 1918, 4; Henry Huber, “War Hysteria,” unpublished manuscript, Henry Huber papers, WHS, 40-42.

celebrants turning on those they deemed disloyal or pro-German. A throng of loyalists also harassed a number of German-Americans in Black River Falls and there may have been others.⁶⁹⁹ This behavior is what the loyalists had wrought with their extreme and escalating forms of patriotism: a type of vigilantism based on moral issues, specifically an American morality, as defined by them, which had to be upheld at all costs. To do less, in their minds, was to be un-American. Yet they dismissed or ignored many of the values that made the United States unique, especially individual rights as provided in the Constitution.

Today, these hyperpatriots are barely remembered. If they are, it is for their more extreme behavior, such as the Krueger incident, where a mob of local men rained bullets on their pacifist neighbor's house, or the parading of Mary Shaw on Armistice Day in a lion cage. While the names of the victims are often known, those of the perpetrators have been generally forgotten. This is probably because within months of the war's end, a number of Wisconsinites began accusing the militant patriots of being more like the Prussian enemy than the "true American" they constantly upheld as the ideal.

⁶⁹⁹ Emma Gebhardt (Black River Falls) to Charles Stewart, January 23, 1919, CDS papers, WHS. Emma listed the names of Black River Falls's "victims of mob rule" at the end of her letter.

Chapter 6: The Aftermath to a “Government by Busybodies”

“Government by busybodies has neither head nor tail; working outside the law, it becomes lawless; and having no law to support it, it finally depends for enforcement upon hoodlums and mob-rule. When the respectable and wealthy elements are resorting to this sort of government...we finally have a new thing in the world and a most obnoxious one—mob-rule by the rich; with the able assistance of the hoodlums—always looking for a chance.”⁷⁰⁰

Charles D. Stewart, “Prussianizing Wisconsin,” January 1919

In the weeks after the election and Armistice, Hartford (Washington Co.) resident Charles D. Stewart⁷⁰¹ put pen to paper and wrote a letter to *The Atlantic Monthly* attempting to explain why Wisconsin—Milwaukee, especially—had so overwhelmingly supported Socialists in the November 1918 election, arguing that the blame for the results could be put squarely on the shoulders of the state’s hyperpatriots. Stewart believed their “entirely Prussian manner” during the 4th Liberty Loan backfired, leading those who experienced intimidation to refute the perpetrators the only way they knew how: at the ballot box. As Stewart recognized, “Vote for the party in power? I trow not. You would vote Socialist till the cows came home.” Stewart’s conclusion that “the Socialists’ sudden accretion was a Pro-America vote, not a Pro-German [one]”⁷⁰² framed the election results as patriotic and loyal. The editors of the *Atlantic*, so taken with this letter and its thesis, published it as “Prussianizing Wisconsin” in their January 1919 issue.⁷⁰³ The *Atlantic* article appears to have been the first in a series of attempts to

⁷⁰⁰ Charles D. Stewart, “Prussianizing Wisconsin,” *Atlantic Monthly* 123 (January 1919), 100.

⁷⁰¹ Charles David Stewart (1868-1960) was born in Ohio, but grew up in Milwaukee. After working briefly in the newspaper business, he made a living writing essays and articles for magazines, especially the *Atlantic Monthly*. He was also known as Shakespeare scholar. Stewart also worked briefly for Governor Emanuel Philipp during the first few years of his administration. He lived in Hartford most of his adult life, about 25 miles southwest of West Bend, the county seat.

⁷⁰² Stewart, “Prussianizing Wisconsin,” 105.

⁷⁰³ The article received further attention when, on March 1, 1919, Senator Robert La Follette read Stewart’s letter/article aloud as part of a speech to the U.S. Senate regarding the injustices that had occurred during the

expose, vilify, and possibly punish Wisconsin's militant patriots for their excessive and sometimes violent behavior in the last months of the war. To a certain extent, these attempts were successful, since after about 1930 very little, if anything, can be found that condones their actions. On the other hand, those who used violence to create an oppressive atmosphere in the state during wartime never experienced any reckoning for their behavior and most likely went to their graves feeling justified in their actions.



Charles D. Stewart, c. 1915

To be clear, Charles Stewart was not against the Liberty Loan drives. In July 1918, he even wrote an article supporting the fourth one at the request of the national Liberty Loan Committee, located in New York. In it, he stated, “This time, when the citizen puts his hand in his pocket and brings it out with his fist double, that fist is going to hit Despotism right in the face,” and added, “As a free people, we must temporarily oppress ourselves so that we may

not be permanently oppressed by another.”⁷⁰⁴ Clearly, Stewart, a Stalwart Republican who briefly served as Governor Philipp’s executive secretary early in his administration, bought into the patriotic rhetoric of the time.

fourth Liberty Loan drive, which meant it was then published in the Congressional Record. The *Capital Times* also reprinted the article in its January 21, 1919 issue.

⁷⁰⁴ John Price Jones, Assistant Director of Publicity, Liberty Loan Committee, New York, New York to Stewart, July 8, 1919; “When You Are Ready, Grady, Fire,” manuscript article, 1918, Charles D. Stewart (CDS) papers, WHS.

What changed Stewart's mind were the tactics used to elicit those funds, especially in his own backyard. The strong-arm methods used by the Washington County Liberty Loan committee were not the type of oppression he seems to have envisioned in his Liberty Loan article. His form of oppression was self-imposed and not coerced by pseudo-legitimate committees. After hearing what neighboring farmers had experienced, Stewart decided to make himself a target by refusing to pay his fair share of the fourth Liberty Loan. He was soon visited by a "collecting committee," which presented him an official-looking document requiring that he appear at the County Court House in West Bend at a specific day and time to subscribe to his full allotment. Stewart refused and found, despite the warnings, there would be no consequences. Disgusted with these deceptive threats, he worried that they represented "false laws," which would soon lead to contempt and disrespect for real laws.⁷⁰⁵

Stewart believed the reason intimidation and violence became popular in Wisconsin, especially during loan drives, was the fear by the state's manufacturers that the "Traitor State" label would hurt their bottom line. He suggested that to prevent this outcome and redeem the state's honor and reputation, manufacturers insisted Wisconsin had to go over the top in the last two loan drives. With a potentially recalcitrant portion of the population, primarily made of Germans and farmers, the best way to ensure a positive result was to create individual quotas, assessed by semi-official committees, whose "law must, somehow, be made as the laws of the Medes and the

⁷⁰⁵ Stewart, "Prussianizing Wisconsin," 104. Stewart did eventually pay his allotment, but did so directly to the federal government without going through his county's Liberty Loan committee. See Stewart to Ferris Greenslet, associate editor, *Atlantic Monthly*, October 18, 1918, CDS papers, WHS. In this letter, Stewart wrote, "And when I do buy more bonds I shall buy them in Chicago and let their local 'quota' go hang." The original document from the Washington Co. Liberty Loan Committee can be found in the Charles D. Stewart papers.

Persians.” The result, Stewart argued, was a “government by busybodies,” one that depended “for its enforcement upon hoodlums and mob-rule,” specifically “mob-rule by the rich.” Ultimately, he argued, this “government by public sentiment” instead of law was worse than Prussianism, which at least, in Stewart’s mind, was a form of government.⁷⁰⁶

While the overwhelming response to the article was from those who had experienced similar tactics by loan committees, a few quibbled or quarreled with Stewart’s thesis. One of the few was Frank Bentley of Baraboo, who had served on the Sauk County Liberty Loan committee and was keen that Stewart understand the pro-German forces he had had to contend with in his part of Wisconsin. He specifically mentioned Honey Creek, Governor Philipp’s home town, whose residents had apparently pushed back on Liberty Loan quotas with the governor’s support, proving to Bentley that Philipp was “at heart...nothing but a yellow streaked Hun.” Overall, he contested Stewart’s thesis that the election had been a “pro-American” movement and argued that it had been “nothing more or less than “pro-German” and future activities would prove him right.⁷⁰⁷ Along the same lines, the editors of the *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans, while willing to concede that Stewart’s points were well taken, went on to remind him “that Americans had been exasperated almost to madness by German plottings and propaganda,” thereby justifying the harassing behavior.⁷⁰⁸ In a different take, Peter G. Van Blarcom of Fond du Lac rationalized that the state’s militant patriots’ inexperience and need for a quick response may have led to mistakes, “but their hearts

⁷⁰⁶ Stewart, “Prussianizing Wisconsin,” 100-101.

⁷⁰⁷ Franklin R. Bentley (Baraboo) to Stewart, January 6, 1919, KY papers, University of Wisconsin Archives.

⁷⁰⁸ “Current Magazines Critically Reviewed,” *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), January 26, 1919, 49.

were in their work.”⁷⁰⁹ Finally, the *Milwaukee Journal* responded to the article by noting that it had “gotten on Wisconsin’s nerves, probably as much because of the title as the contents.”⁷¹⁰ This comment probably more accurately reflected the editors’ negative response to the article than that of many Wisconsinites who read it, since Stewart received a number of letters from people in Wisconsin, as well as from around the country, who wrote him about their experiences with mob violence, often with a sense of relief that they were being heard and that someone cared.

Among those who sent letters to Stewart after the *Atlantic* published the article was state Assemblyman Clinton Ballard from Outagamie County, who let the author know that the demand for the magazine was so high in Wisconsin, “it is now almost impossible to get one.” Unlike the *Milwaukee Journal*, which had been unhappy with Stewart’s article, Ballard saw it as representing a rapid change in public sentiment and added that if the militant patriots’ behavior “is allowed to continue then this talk of democracy and making the world a safe place to live in is a joke.” Unlike the others who wrote to Stewart, Ballard believed he had the ability to see that the “silk stocking, self-

⁷⁰⁹ “Americanize Americans,” undated clipping probably from the *Milwaukee Journal*, letter to the editor, CDS papers, WHS.

⁷¹⁰ “Is This All?” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 10, 1919, clipping from the CDS papers, WHS. Most of this editorial is a reaction to the *Milwaukee Herald*’s response to Stewart’s article. Apparently, the *Herald* wrote that “Prussians would never have done what it is alleged Americans did in Wisconsin.” When the *Herald* admitted that Prussia did commit “grievous sins,” the worst being an attempt “to uproot languages by force,” the *Journal* editors responded by reminding the *Herald* that the worst sins of the Germans during the war were actually the “savage acts of beasts in the uniforms of men,” including the attack on Belgium and the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Note that the *Milwaukee Herald* had been the *Germania Herald*, but changed its name in 1918.

constituted authority” who believed “in a government of busybodies and mob rule” would be brought to justice.⁷¹¹

Ballard attempted to use two avenues to achieve his goal, one as a state legislator and the other as a leader in the Society of Equity. At the time of the fourth Liberty Loan drive, Ballard was serving on the Outagamie County Board, a position he had held for decades, and had just won the Republican primary for local state Assembly representative. He had also been a leading member of the Society of Equity, a farmers’ political organization, for some time. When Outagamie County’s Council of Defense let loose their “Vigilante Committee” on the evening of October 19, 1918 to intimidate, threaten, and attack farmers who had not paid their “fair share,” Ballard immediately decided to act against those who had participated, including Appleton’s police chief and postmaster. First, he worked unsuccessfully to get a warrant for their arrest. When that fell through, he decided to support John Deml, a Society of Equity member whose experience was described in the last chapter, by helping him bring a law suit against the members of the Vigilante Committee. In the meantime, on November 2, Outagamie County residents elected Ballard, a Progressive Republican, to be their representative in the state Assembly, after he ran on a platform



Clinton B. Ballard, 1909

⁷¹¹ Clinton Ballard (Madison) to Charles Stewart, January 22, 1919, CDS papers, WHS. Clinton Broadwell Ballard (1860-1946) was born in Appleton, but spent most of his adult life working as a farmer in Grand Chute (Outagamie Co.). He served on the Outagamie County Board from 1895 to at least 1918 and was elected to the state assembly four times with 1918 being the last. In the 1920s he served as the Wisconsin Treasury Agent and then the Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Property. Afterwards he ran a grocery store in Glen Oak Hills (Dane Co.), Wisconsin [now a part of Madison]. He died on January 2, 1946 in Appleton.

that championed the interests of citizens against those of corporations and promised to prosecute members of the Vigilante Committee.⁷¹² On the day of the election, Ballard wrote Stewart, who he knew by now was not happy with the loan committee in his own county, that he would “make it my business to follow this to the end,” beginning by immediately holding meetings to look into the statewide activities of these committees and their actions against farmers.⁷¹³

Ballard would spend the next three years trying to punish the “silk-stocking” authorities for their behavior during the fourth Liberty Loan drive. The meetings he held shortly after the election led to a collection of affidavits illustrating the abuses and assaults that occurred during the fourth Liberty Loan drive, especially on the evening of October 19, 1918.⁷¹⁴ By mid-December, Ballard had turned them over to Governor Philipp with the hope that the Attorney General would prosecute the perpetrators, but the state authorities chose not to follow through. He then turned the affidavits over to federal authorities, who also declined to prosecute. On January 30, 1919, Ballard tried another tact by introducing a resolution in the Wisconsin Assembly that would allow a committee to be formed to “investigate methods employed in the sale of Liberty Loan bonds.” Although Vernon County assemblyman Clarence Carter attempted to kill the resolution immediately, the assembly decided to send it to committee.⁷¹⁵ When it finally came to the floor three and half months later, a heated debate occurred with three assemblymen, including Anthony C. McClone, the other Outagamie County

⁷¹² “Ballard is Elected in Outagamie,” *Capital Times*, November 6, 1918, 2.

⁷¹³ Ballard (Appleton) to Stewart, November 2, 1918, Kimball Young papers, UW Archives.

⁷¹⁴ See the following for a transcription of some of the affidavits: “Affidavits in Mob Violence Cases are Placed Before Justice Department Officials,” *Capital Times*, December 21, 1918, 1, 4.

⁷¹⁵ “Wants Loan Drive Methods Probed,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 30, 1919, 8; “Ballard in Demand for Bond Facts,” *Capital Times*, 1. See the latter for a transcription of the resolution.

representative, trying to kill the resolution, along with another resolution introduced by Ballard to look into the assault on Mary Shaw in Evansville. In the end, the assembly voted against the resolution 42 to 28 and sent the Mary Shaw resolution to the committee on state affairs.⁷¹⁶ Ballard, however, was not finished in his attempt to find justice for victims of Liberty Loan committees; he turned to his last hope, the courts.

By the summer of 1919, two of those attacked by the Outagamie County Counsel of Defense Vigilante Committee had decided to sue, John Deml and Mrs. Lillian Black, whose husband John Merritt Black was committed to the Northern Hospital for the Insane shortly after being visited by the committee. Deml asked for \$25,000 in reparations from three of the vigilantes, while Black asked for \$50,000 from ten of them.⁷¹⁷ These two suits, which together became known as the “Night Rider Cases,” would take over two years to be resolved and would, by their different outcomes, illustrate a change in attitude towards the “night riders” during that time.

The Vigilante Committee members, feeling totally justified in their actions, began to push back immediately by declaring in print that “no force” had been used to sell bonds. They kept to this message throughout their ordeal, which after the first few months was placed in the hands of a powerful Green Bay attorney, Patrick H. Martin, along with a collection of others, who they had hired to represent them in both cases. In July 1919, when the discovery portion of the Deml case got underway, Martin advised

⁷¹⁶ “Assembly Sits Down on Ballard,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 14, 1919, 5.

⁷¹⁷ “Voice of the People: The Outagamie Case,” *Capital Times*, July 29, 1919, 4. This is a letter to the editor by Ballard and is the first indication in the press I could find that Lillian Black plans to sue. “Asks \$25,000 for Defamation of Character,” *Sheboygan Press*, October 14, 1919, 4.

his three clients to decline answering any questions by invoking the fifth amendment (refusing to answer on the grounds they might incriminate themselves).⁷¹⁸

As the trial got closer, one of the defendants, Dr. Donald J. O’Conner, countersued Deml and Ballard for defamation of character based on a biting letter Ballard had written to the *Appleton Crescent* in the days after the raid. In it, Ballard described the raid as one led by scoundrels who had treated their neighbors “in a shameful and disgraceful manner,” and then apparently threatened the committee members, whom he listed by name, by suggesting they might find farmers prepared with rifles and shotguns the next time the night riders tried their form of “moral persuasion” and, as a result, be “obliged to take some strong medicine.” Based on this letter, O’Connor sued the plaintiff and his supporter for \$25,000.⁷¹⁹

When the trial began on March 16, 1920, John Deml had the backing of the Society of Equity, which had raised at least \$400.50 toward his defense and helped him hire prominent Milwaukee attorney Henry Cochems.⁷²⁰ In the end, the Society’s financial support would be Deml’s downfall. Jury selection took two days and at least one of the potential jurors implied that he found the actions allegedly taken against Deml, specifically the rope placed around his neck, “very close to his idea of the fitness of things.” Like this juror, a number had to be dismissed for already having formed opinions about the case, but the two sides managed to put a jury together so that the

⁷¹⁸ “Voice of the People: The Outagamie Case,” 4.

⁷¹⁹ “Court Still Sits on Night Ride Case,” *Capital Times*, October 11, 1919, 3; “Asks \$25,000 for Defamation of Character,” *Sheboygan Press*, October 14, 1919, 4. This article includes quotes from Ballard’s letter. The full letter by Ballard to the Editor of the *Appleton Crescent* can be found in the Charles D. Stewart papers, WHS. After the *Crescent* published this letter, the Vigilante Committee members encouraged the editor to desist from publishing any more of Ballard’s letters, an arrangement to which he agreed. See “Correspondence in Mob Cases,” *Capital Times*, January 30, 1919, 4.

⁷²⁰ “Otto Rohm is Renamed Head of Equity,” *Appleton Daily Post*, January 29, 1920, 1.

trial could begin on March 18.⁷²¹ After testimony by Ballard, Deml, and James Tittlemore, president of the Society of Equity (and former candidate for governor), Attorney Martin asked that the case be dismissed on the grounds of champerty or maintenance. In other words, Martin suggested that Ballard and the Society, who seemed to him to have no obvious interest in the lawsuit, would benefit, especially financially, if the lawsuit succeeded. After listening to several hours of testimony on this matter, the judge agreed that “Deml did not institute the action” against the defendants and had not taken responsibility for the costs of the case, and so dismissed it. The judge added that if Mr. Deml believed he had been wronged, he could bring action the next day “if he sees fit.” John Deml did just that; this time, without the help of Ballard or the Society of Equity. On the same day, the court also served summons on the ten defendants in the Black case.⁷²²

The two cases finally made it to court slightly less than a year later and the outcomes of both would disappoint Ballard and his supporters. On February 18, 1921, the Deml case was tried first. Throughout the proceedings, but especially in his closing arguments, Martin filled the courtroom with the patriotic rhetoric used throughout the war years. He did so by contrasting the actions of Ballard, Deml, and “men of their type,” who he frequently pointed at during his “flood of condemnation,” with “vivid pictures of our boys marching on and on to smash [the supposedly impregnable] Hindenberg line,” as well as comparing the actions of these supposedly contemptible men with the dutiful deeds of loyal citizens at home. In his closing statement, Cochems

⁷²¹ “Complete Jury for Trial of Deml ‘Night Rider’ Case This Afternoon,” *Appleton Post-Crescent*, March 17, 1920, 1.

⁷²² “Defense Seeks to Have Night Ride Case Thrown Out of Court,” *Appleton Post-Crescent*, March 18, 1920, 1; “EXTRA: Night Rider Case Dismissed,” *Appleton Post-Crescent*, March 18, 1920, 1; “Ten Defendants are Named in Two News Civil Actions: Deml Suit Dismissed,” *Appleton Post-Crescent*, March 19, 1920, 1.

attacked Martin for his behavior in court and said he had never seen anything similar during his twenty years of practice. Shortly afterwards, the jury received the case and began deliberating. The vote on the first ballot was 9 to 3 for acquittal, but over the next five hours, the majority worked away on the three remaining jurors, with succeeding ballots showing votes of 10 to 2, then 11 to 1, and finally a unanimous vote for acquittal. With this verdict, the judge dismissed the plaintiff's complaint with costs. The Black case followed immediately afterward and Cochems, also Mrs. Black's lawyer, asked that her case be dismissed, possibly in reaction to seeing the result of the Deml case.

Members of the Outagamie County Council of Defense considered the results of both cases an exoneration of their efforts during the war and the "last chapter" of the "night rider" cases. Dr. O'Connor was so pleased with the result that he dropped his libel suit against Ballard and Deml stating the verdict in the Deml case gave him "sufficient vindication" and he no longer needed to pursue it.⁷²³ Mrs. Black, however, was not ready to give up. She decided to make another attempt to get justice and, after Henry Cochems passed away in September, pursued her case with a different lawyer.

After several delays throughout 1921, the Black trial began on November 28 and lasted over two weeks. Again Patrick Martin, representing the defendants, would try to get the case dismissed; this time without success.⁷²⁴ During the Black trial in contrast to Deml's, he refrained from using patriotic rhetoric, possibly because it would not work well against a respectable woman, and instead rested his case on the belief that because John M. Black was already insane before the raid occurred, his placement in a mental

⁷²³ "Loan Campaigners Acquitted by Jury," *Appleton Post-Crescent*, February 18, 1921, 1.

⁷²⁴ "Judge Declines Act on Motion to Dismiss Case," *Appleton Post-Crescent*, December 8, 1921, 3.

hospital was not the result of actions by the Vigilante Committee. After the lawyers' closing arguments, Judge Byron B. Park, unlike the judge in the Deml case, offered some thoughts about what happened on the night of October 19, 1918. Park allowed that securing subscriptions for the Liberty Loan was "laudable and praiseworthy," but added that using intimidation and causing fear in the attempt to secure subscriptions was unlawful. He summed up for the jury that to use fear and intimidation "was to have a common design and purpose to do a lawful thing by unlawful means."⁷²⁵ This statement represented a significant shift in attitude toward Liberty Loan committees from just a year earlier.

With that the jury began what was to be "46 hours of vitriolic argument." They generally agreed with Martin that John Black's insanity was not caused by the raid, but they deadlocked, 8 to 4, on the question as to whether the defendants used intimidation and fear when they visited his home to secure a Liberty Bond subscription. Strident arguments from both sides could be heard throughout the court house over the next two days. The jury seems to have divided itself primarily by occupation, and secondarily by age, with the four supporting the night riders generally being older, their average age at the time was 51.5, and working in professional (i.e. white collar) positions, while the remaining eight skewed younger, their average age being 31.75, and supported themselves as manual laborers, mainly in factories and paper mills, although two were farmers.⁷²⁶ Both sides held their ground, so after nearly two days of deliberation, Judge

⁷²⁵ "Noted Liberty Loan Raid Case in Jury's Hands," *Appleton Post-Crescent*, December 9, 1921, 9.

⁷²⁶ Information about the eight jurors was gleaned from ancestry.com. Their job description is based on what they listed in the 1920 census. Four jurors for the defense: Jury foreman Walter E. Daniels, Seymour, age fifty-four, electrical engineer in a light plant; George A. Haas, Kaukauna, age sixty-three, merchant; Carl A. Hipp, Appleton, age fifty-five, insurance agent; and, John Forest Johnston, Appleton, age thirty-four, assistant manager, wire works. Eight jurors for the prosecution: John E. Appleton, Kaukauna, age thirty-eight, farmer; Thomas Bricco/Bricko, Bear

Park declared the jury deadlocked and dismissed the case.⁷²⁷ Lillian Black could have had the case tried again, but there is no indication that she chose to do so.

While the outcome was not exactly what Clinton Ballard hoped for, he did feel vindicated by the actions of the eight jurors who stood their ground. In a letter to the *Capital Times* shortly after the trial ended, he described them as having “the courage to stand for law and order and common decency, as against mob violence and lawlessness.” He believed that those who participated in night rides in Outagamie County’s farming district, “must surely know that they committed an unlawful act”; they must know they are guilty and should be in jail.⁷²⁸ In contrast to the glee expressed by members of the Vigilante Committee after the decision in the Deml case, this time the defendants made no public comment.

During the three years after Armistice, Clinton Ballard tried to bring to justice those who participated in vigilante committees and night raids in support of the fourth Liberty Loan, without success. Around the time of the Black trial, newly-elected Governor John Blaine appointed Ballard Wisconsin Treasury Agent and with this new position he went on to fight other injustices, leaving this one to the past. Despite Ballard’s unsuccessful battle, his public condemnation of vigilante “superpatriots,” as he called them, put their actions out in plain view and showed them to be vicious and deplorable. While they may have gone to their graves feeling vindicated in their actions,

Creek, age twenty-four, mill laborer; Bert W. Burmeister, Appleton, age twenty-five, tractor factory assembler; Fred Densch, Kaukauna, age thirty-three, pulp and paper company fireman; Fred Hurst, Kaukauna, age twenty-five, paper mill truck driver; William A. Kranzusch, Appleton, age forty-one, commercial painter; James Nelson, Kaukauna, age forty-four, farmer; and, Alvin Ploetz, Seymour, age twenty-four, paper mill fireman.

⁷²⁷ “Jury in Black Case Fails to Get Together,” *Appleton Post-Crescent*, December 12, 1921, 1.

⁷²⁸ “Voice of the People [Letters to the Editor],” *Capital Times*, December 16, 1921, 16.

since they were not successfully prosecuted, the Black trial was an early indication that public opinion was turning against them.

In the immediate aftermath of the Armistice, Wisconsin's hyperpatriots did not worry much about Stewart's article or Ballard's attacks, and instead looked forward to continuing the process of indoctrinating apparently recalcitrant and backward Wisconsinites with an understanding of true American patriotism and loyalty. To that end, the Loyalty Legion, in the months after the fighting ended, discussed at length what its role would be in the post-war era. Their original idea was to maintain the momentum toward a more loyal populace, which the Legion had worked hard to instigate and encourage. Yet fairly quickly, their plans began to fall apart as they found enthusiasm for the Legion's goals waning. Without a war to be won, the Legion's members seemed to lose the zeal they had previously held to promote loyalty enthusiastically. By the spring of 1919, the Legion's executives realized the organization had become obsolete and no longer needed to exist. While the Legion disappeared rather suddenly, the state's hyperpatriots did not. For the next few years they remained interested in controlling the narrative of Wisconsin's wartime legacy. Through publications, monuments, and memorials, they made every effort to ensure that the memory of their actions would not be forgotten.

The executive committee of the Loyalty Legion met three days after the November 11th Armistice to discuss the future of the organization. By the end of the meeting, the Legion's leaders had decided their work was too important to be discontinued and should, instead, be enlarged and expanded. Their focus would be first

on celebrating the end of the war and then on the Americanization of foreigners.⁷²⁹ To most of them, the latter project, meant concentrating on finishing their plan to remove foreign languages from all elementary schools, as well as teaching English to illiterate foreign-born adults, primarily at their work places. The Legion felt they had been fairly successful removing foreign languages from public elementary schools but needed to put more pressure on parochial and private ones. To meet their goals, the Legion's leaders considered pushing for state or federal legislation to remove foreign languages from all schools and to force employers to comply with teaching English in their factories.⁷³⁰ In January 1919, members of the Tomah Loyalty Legion did send a petition to their state assemblyman asking him to support a bill forbidding all foreign languages, except dead ones such as Latin or Greek, in all Wisconsin schools "lower in rank than high school."⁷³¹ However, no such bill was ever introduced to the state legislature and, in general, Legion members showed little interest in pursuing these goals after the war ended.

Behind the scenes, the Legion was also interested in continuing to ferret out cases of sedition. With the fighting over, the Department of Justice was considering disbanding the American Protective League (APL), a move the Legion stood vehemently against. Less than a week after Armistice, the Legion secretary sent out a form letter to chapters in areas that did not have an active APL presence and asked them to identify "your best patriots," those who were "sufficiently aggressive in their Americanism," to

⁷²⁹ Minutes of the General Council, Executive Committee and Advisory Board, Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, November 14, 1918, WLL papers, constitution and minutes, WHS.

⁷³⁰ Undated speech that discusses the future activities of the Loyalty Legion in the post-war era, WLL papers, speeches, WHS.

⁷³¹ "Tomah Loyalists Ask Law to Stop Foreign Language," *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, January 10, 1919, 5.

support the APL and continue its quest to expose and prosecute sedition.⁷³² With the German threat contained, supporters of the APL wanted to use the organization to control the menace to America posed by the “Bolsheviki, IWW’s and other fiends.”⁷³³ They would not be successful, however. Attorney General Thomas Gregory’s successor, A. Mitchell Palmer, had never been a proponent of the organization, and shortly after assuming office in March 1919, closed it down. The discontinuation of the APL turned out to be one of a number of frustrations Wisconsin’s Loyalty Legion experienced in the months after Armistice.

Although the Legion’s executive committee had decided to continue the organization in mid-November, what its actual post-war work would be still needed to be determined. Throughout December 1918 and January 1919, this was the primary topic of discussion and research among its executive committee. Legion president Judson Rosebush suggested that promoting the concept of loyalty to America, which he defined in part as “a love and devotion to [American] principles rightly conceived” and a “devotion in seeking to perpetuate them,” should be the Legion’s chief focus. While he supported the organization’s role in promoting Americanization, Rosebush also wanted the Legion to help create “a deeper understanding of democracy and human freedom” with “less emphasis on rights and more on duties and obligations.” He thought these messages could be handled by the Patriotic Press Association and through educational programs and conventions.⁷³⁴

⁷³² George F. Kull, State Secretary, (Milwaukee) to B.C. Berg (Hazel Green), November 16, 1918, WLL papers, correspondence, WHS.

⁷³³ Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 186-187.

⁷³⁴ Judson G. Rosebush (Appleton) to Willet Spooner, A.N. Simons, Fred H. French, Harold Seaman, Richard Lloyd Jones, and George E. Morton, December 9, 1918, WLL papers, correspondence, WHS.

Another of the Loyalty Legion's executives, George Morton, saw the group focusing most of its efforts on Americanization, but also wanted to educate the working classes about their role in American society. As for the former, Morton defined Americanization as the removal of foreign languages from all schools, while spreading to foreigners and "others not properly informed" information about American government, traditions, and ideals, specifically the "proper conceptions of the scope and proper limitations of true liberty." He also wanted to help the working classes understand the need for law and order, as well as realize the viciousness of class consciousness, an idea he saw being promoted by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), leaders of what he described as "industrial Kaiserism." Morton wanted the working classes to realize that terrorizing their employer was no different from the "piratical submarine warfare of Germany." He suggested that the Legion help "inculcate honesty, mutual confidence and amicable relations" between working class employee and employer and saw this form of education and propaganda as no different from "any church teaching morality, honesty, and decency."⁷³⁵ These would be difficult goals to achieve, but, at least at first, the Legion's executive committee felt up to the task.

By mid-January 1919, the Loyalty Legion had decided to pursue two major assignments, welcoming home soldiers from France and the Americanization of the state's former "enemy aliens." For the latter project, the Legion's secretary wrote the U.S. Department of Labor to ask them how its members could assist local communities in promoting Americanization. The department's Chief Naturalization Advisor responded by suggesting three activities: assist the clerk of naturalization with the filing

⁷³⁵ George E. Morton (Milwaukee) to Judson G. Rosebush (Milwaukee), December 6, 1918, WLL papers, correspondence, WHS.

of declarations of intention, also known as “first papers”; publish a pamphlet on the history of Wisconsin for the department’s history classes; and, involve the Department of Labor in any Americanization conferences the Legion might sponsor.⁷³⁶ By the time the Legion received this reply, its executive committee was already actively planning its first conference, which it called an Americanization, Reconstruction and Educational Conference for Eastern Wisconsin, to be held in Appleton on February 14 and 15, 1919. Throughout January, the Legion secretary sent out a flurry of letters asking prominent people throughout the country to speak at this conference.⁷³⁷ By early February, the Legion conceded defeat; few of the speakers were able to attend, so the conference was postponed and eventually cancelled.⁷³⁸

This cancellation may have been the last straw for the Legion. While it had been able to whip up enthusiasm for Americanization, patriotism, and loyalty during the war years, interest in these concepts faded after the war. The tasks suggested by the Department of Labor did not seem to stimulate the interest of Legion members, and the Legion’s inability to pull off the conference showed a general lack of enthusiasm to pursue the Americanization of foreigners during peace time. Much of what the Legion had promoted during the war years had had a strong emotional underpinning, which seemed to disappear with the Armistice. Ultimately, pursuing more mundane tasks just did not appeal to the executive board, so in March 1919 it began discussing dissolving the organization. Most of the Legion’s members learned this might happen when

⁷³⁶ W.H. Wagner (Chicago) to George F. Kull, Secretary, Wisconsin Loyalty Legion (Milwaukee), January 17, 1919, WLL papers, correspondence, WHS.

⁷³⁷ See George F. Kull (Milwaukee) to Charles P. Frey, Moulder’s Union (Cleveland, OH), January 20, 1919, which was one of many similar letters, WLL papers, correspondence, WHS.

⁷³⁸ George F. Kull (Milwaukee) to Richard T. Ely (Madison), February 3, 1919, WLL papers, correspondence, WHS.

chapter leaders received a form letter telling them the Legion would probably be disbanded soon and asking their permission to donate remaining funds to the Red Cross.⁷³⁹

On March 24, the General Council met and resolved to disband, agreeing this was the appropriate move because the organization had “fully accomplished the purpose for which it was organized.”⁷⁴⁰ At the same time, the Council dissolved the Wisconsin Patriotic Press Association, since it was no longer needed to insure “uncompromising support to the government in this war.”⁷⁴¹ The Council also decided to send its records to the Wisconsin Historical Society, as a way to make sure their efforts would be remembered by posterity, and to split any monies left in its treasury between the Red Cross and the Wisconsin Branch of the League to Enforce Peace. The purpose of the latter, formed in 1915 by a group of international leaders, was to promote the creation of an international body that would maintain world peace and prevent any nation from repeating Germany’s warmongering behavior. In the press release the Legion sent to newspapers letting the public know that as of April 3 the Legion and the Press Association had been dissolved, the Legion’s leaders made clear that they were neither for nor against the League of Nations, but promoted a discussion of its potential existence.⁷⁴² With this comment, the Legion disappeared.

⁷³⁹ See George F. Kull (Milwaukee) to Thomas Furnace Co. (Milwaukee), March 18, 1919, which was one of many similar letters, WLL papers, correspondence, WHS.

⁷⁴⁰ Minutes of the General Council, Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, March 24, 1919, WLL papers, constitution and minutes, WHS.

⁷⁴¹ “Loyalty Body Quits: Head in Commerce Job,” *Capital Times*, April 3, 1919, 1.

⁷⁴² “Local Chapter of Loyalty Legion is Formally Dissolved,” *Janesville Daily Gazette*, April 4, 1919, 11.

Shortly after the war ended, Governor Philipp authorized the creation of the Wisconsin War History Commission, “to provide for a memorial history of the part taken by the State of Wisconsin and its citizens” in the Great War. In 1919 the Commission published two books, both written by journalists, which glorified Wisconsin’s role during the war. The author of one them, *Wisconsin’s War Record*, thought that “the deeds of Wisconsin will be written high on the enduring tablets for the future generations”; the author of the other, *Wisconsin in the World War*, described his work as the “record of a loyal state,” one that acknowledges “its devotion and untiring service to the Nation and its ideals for a lasting and benevolent democracy.” In both publications, the disagreements and divisiveness that had pervaded Wisconsin were downplayed by the authors, who instead focused solely on the state’s successes by portraying Wisconsinites as having had a unified mission, which was accomplished with hard work and a good attitude.⁷⁴³

Former leaders of the Loyalty Legion must have been dismayed by the Commission’s approach to Wisconsin’s war time legacy, since the same year, they also published a series of essays under the title *Wisconsin in the Great War*. Throughout this work, the authors left no doubt about the disloyalty, treason, and lack of patriotism they had had to overcome, along with their untiring efforts to defeat these obstacles. In his essay on the Wisconsin Defense League, Wheeler Bloodgood described Milwaukee as “a

⁷⁴³ Fred L. Holmes, *Wisconsin’s War Record* (Madison: Capital Historical Publishing Co. 1919) and Rutherford Birchard Pixley, *Wisconsin in the World war: An Account of the Activities of Wisconsin Citizens during the Great World War, Giving in Part the Record of a Loyal State and Acknowledging in Part its Devotion and Untiring Service to the Nation and its Ideals for a Lasting and Benevolent Democracy* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin War History Commission, 1919).

hotbed of German propaganda...and an active field for Socialists agitators.”⁷⁴⁴ Judson Rosebush, the former president of the Legion, wrote of the notable strides taken by the Legion to eradicate the German problem, along with any “strong deep-seated racial ties,” through the removal of German names from businesses and the elimination of German as a foreign language in grade schools.⁷⁴⁵ Unlike the official state publications, *Wisconsin in the Great War* acknowledged that a portion of the population lacked the appropriate attitude to fight the Germans, but were managed and ultimately tamed by the truly patriotic. Prudently, however, they left out descriptions of the many strong-arm methods used to achieve their goals.⁷⁴⁶

With the Allied victory still ringing in their ears, Wisconsin’s hyperpatriots did more than write books, they also built monuments and memorials and organized celebrations, especially on Armistice Day. In the fifteen or so years after the war, the leaders of many of Wisconsin’s towns and villages discussed ways to commemorate the war and the sacrifices made on its behalf. Most decided to create small memorials, such as large stones or trees embellished with plaques, but a few decided to build something more substantial. Sturgeon Bay and Appleton, for example, constructed memorial bridges, while Manitowoc unveiled a large monument of eight Doric columns supporting an entablature topped by a large American eagle. In Madison, the University of Wisconsin dedicated its new Memorial Union to its war heroes, while Menasha built a

⁷⁴⁴ “Wheeler P. Bloodgood, “The Wisconsin Defense League,” *Wisconsin in the Great War* (Milwaukee: Press Publicity Bureau, 1919), 5.

⁷⁴⁵ Judson G. Rosebush, “Eradication of Racial Lines in Wisconsin,” *Wisconsin in the Great War*, 16 28.

⁷⁴⁶ Information about publications produced after World War I to commemorate Wisconsin’s role can be found in Leslie Bellais, “Lest We Forget’: Remembering World War I in Wisconsin, 1919-1945” in *Homefront in the Heartland: Local Experiences and Legacies of World War I*, Patty Sotirin, Steven A. Walton, and Sue Collins, eds. (Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2020), 37-39.

Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Building to support services for the city's veterans.

Altogether, around sixty memorials and monuments appeared in Wisconsin during the interwar years.⁷⁴⁷

At the same time, many Wisconsinites supported the celebration of Armistice Day, at first an unofficial celebration commemorating the last moment of the war, which later became a federal holiday in 1938, a day to honor the war's veterans (After World War II, its name was changed to Veterans Day.). The day was usually marked by the blowing of whistles and the ringing of bells just before 11 AM on November 11, followed by a moment of silence. Afterward there could be patriotic singing, a parade, and brief statements by local officials. Some localities had more formal programs followed by a football game with a dinner, ball, and/or lecture in the evening.⁷⁴⁸

Interest in celebrating Armistice Day, as well as building war memorials, seemed to peak in the early 1920s and then waned throughout the late 1920s and into the 1930s. This may have been due to a sense of disenchantment that settled in as disarmament, permanent peace, and a world court, such as the League of Nations, became unlikely scenarios. By 1945 a depressing cynicism about Armistice Day had become apparent, at least in Wisconsin, with the realization that the Great War had not made the world safe for democracy, but instead had led to the Second World War and all of its atrocities. That year the *Milwaukee Journal*, for example, noted, "This is not a day of rejoicing. This day marks the anniversary of broken promises and shattered dreams."⁷⁴⁹ By this

⁷⁴⁷ See Bellais, 60-67, for a list of monuments and memorials built between 1919 and 1946 to commemorate the Great War.

⁷⁴⁸ See Bellais, 49-59, for a discussion of Armistice Day in Wisconsin during the interwar years.

⁷⁴⁹ "Armistice Day Volleys Fired," *Milwaukee Journal*, Nov. 12, 1945, 15.

time, Wisconsin's World War I militant patriots were no longer attempting to have their self-declared heroic feats from that era remembered. In retrospect, the results had not been satisfactory and in the meantime new enemies, especially Bolsheviks and Communists, had arisen and needed to be vanquished.

In the post-war era, Wisconsin's political and business leaders, often the former militant patriots of their communities, built these memorials or monuments or acknowledged Armistice Day not so much to commemorate their activities but to reinforce their concepts of an ideal America. The story the state's militant patriots presented with their monuments put America at the center of the war—a conflict they described as fought by Americans for Americans. Wisconsin's Senator Irvine Lenroot, even spoke at the opening of Wausau's Memorial Monument by stating, "Our boys did not fight for any Nation but America, but we are glad in fighting for America they also fought for freedom and government by the people everywhere even in Germany."⁷⁵⁰ Lenroot, like many others who supported the building of Great War monuments and memorials, took a hagiographic approach to "our boys." These young men, both living and dead, the saviors and liberators of a victimized Europe, had to be honored and memorialized, so that future generations would know of their sacrifices for America and the greater good.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵⁰ "Wausau Unveils Beautiful Statue to Ex-Service Men," *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 31, 1923 located in Wisconsin War History Commission clipping files, 1921-1931, Box 5, folder 1/4, WHS.

⁷⁵¹ Further discussion of American war memorials, including those from World War I, can be found in James M. Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988), Kurt G. Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), and Christopher Tilley and Michael Rowlands, "Monuments and Memorials" in *The Handbook of Material Culture*, Christopher Tilley, ed. (London: SAGE, 2006).

Wisconsin's superpatriots used the war memorials and holiday to illustrate that the war had been fought for idealistically American concepts, such as liberty and democracy, and had, through the suppression of ethnic differences, supposedly forged a national identity that broke down divisions created by class, ethnicity, and sectional loyalties. These ideas of liberty, democracy, freedom, unity, and sacrifice, which appeared in Wisconsin's World War I monuments and were referred to in Armistice Day speeches, all fed into a mythological approach to American heritage that saw the United States as an ideal country worthy of being defended, and seemed disconnected from what Europeans and Russians might describe as the causes or purpose of this particular war. Ultimately, the state's superpatriots made sure the memory preserved by Wisconsin's war monuments centered on a mythologized patriotic story of soldier bravery and citizen unity during the war and on the American democratic narrative.

CONCLUSION

So, had the Loyalty Legion “accomplished the purpose for which it was organized”? This statement could be debated. Shortly before the April 2, 1918, senatorial election, the Legion published a booklet that included its goals. By November 1918, many of them had been met. The Legion had supported the actions of President Wilson and Congress in their handling of the war effort, both at home and abroad; helped make sure the 3rd and 4th Liberty Loan drives had been successful in Wisconsin; spoken out against the German-American Alliance; provided assistance to the American Protective League to seek out and punish those guilty of sedition; fought to discontinue foreign languages in all grade schools with some success; urged Wisconsinites to only vote for “men of courageous and outstanding Americanism”; and, promoted the disappearance of “distinctly foreign and non-American racial traits which our immigrants have brought from abroad,” while encouraging “those moral and spiritual forces” which “keep a people truly great.”⁷⁵² At its peak, the Legion had over 70,000 members. Its leaders could take pride in their accomplishments on paper, but had they been truly successful? Loyalty Legion historian Lorin Lee Cary suggests not when he argues its members may have been blinded by their own rhetoric and enthusiasm and their belief that support for the war effort equaled support for the Legion. He also points out that the Legion appears to have overestimated the willingness of voters to back their criteria for appropriate candidates. This combined by their eagerness to view those who disagreed with them as misinformed, at best, and traitorous, at worst, explains, according to Cary, why

⁷⁵² Wisconsin Loyalty Legion: state secretary’s report, mass meeting minutes, annual meeting minutes, president’s address (Milwaukee: The Legion, 1918), 15-17; online facsimile at <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=1744>.

superpatriots “of the Loyalty Legion brand remained a minority” during the war years.

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This lack of awareness by Loyalty Legion members led not only to a disconnect with the majority of Wisconsinites but also a number of embarrassments. Probably more than they were aware, members of the Loyalty Legion antagonized their fellow Wisconsinites. Their willingness to brand someone as traitorous, seditious, or disloyal for the slightest cause and to demand extreme forms of punishment for minor infractions turned many Wisconsinites against them. Their demands for law and order, loyalty and patriotism, all to support “a world made safe for democracy,” while overriding many basic American ideals, essentially making the means justify the ends, did not sit well with many of their fellow citizens. While only a few were courageous enough to challenge them in public, many more were willing to do so within the secrecy of the ballot box. Election results proved that the Legion was not as influential as its members hoped it would be. The success of Socialist candidate Berger, first his significant showing in the April 1918 senatorial election and later his winning run for U.S. congressman in November; Socialist Daniel Hoan’s re-election as Milwaukee mayor; and the loss of Roy Wilcox to Governor Philipp, who the Legion members frequently described as the personification of a weak form of loyalty, could all be read as a response to the anger and distaste Wisconsin’s superpatriots aroused among the voting public. Wheeler Bloodgood experienced a more visceral humiliation after his attempt to have the federal government declare martial law in Milwaukee after Hoan’s election. His actions, which he may have viewed as laudable, came across to many as

⁷⁵³ Lorin Lee Cary, “The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, 1917-1918,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 53, no. 1, (Autumn 1969): 50.

unnecessary and possibly silly. Overall, Wisconsin's superpatriots, including members of the Loyalty Legion, seemed to have had little positive impact on the state. They even seemed incapable of ending the perception of Wisconsin as a "Traitor State," and may have, by frequently calling out the state's allegedly disloyal citizens, kept the epithet alive in the public imagination longer than they intended.

The majority of those who sided with the hyperpatriots would never see themselves and their behavior during the war as anything but heroic and admirable and they wanted to be remembered that way. The Loyalty Legion ensured that its legacy would be memorialized by sending its papers to the Wisconsin Historical Society. Members of its executive committee may be surprised to find that over a hundred years after their donation, the papers have often been used in ways that do not place their legacy in a positive light with Lorin Cary's work on their history being a prime example.

History, in the form of contemporaries and historians, has not treated the activities of Wisconsin's World War I-era superpatriots with the same respect given to the state's veterans. As can be seen with Charles Stewart's article and Clinton Ballard's attempts to bring them to justice, a negative reaction against Wisconsin's loyalists began with the end of the war in sight. This flare of anger against Wisconsin loyalists in the months around Armistice can also be seen in a December 2nd letter written by Milwaukee resident Robert Bodenbach to Wisconsin's U.S. Congressman John J. Esch demanding the "muzzle" of the Espionage Act be removed immediately so that American citizens could have a chance to express their views again without retaliation "Or must they submit to the blackguarding of Hypocrites and Bum Ward Heels, for six

months.” Although, as Esch replied, the Espionage would stay enforced until mid-1919, the fact that Bodenbach felt comfortable enough to express his views of the state’s hyperpatriots without fear of reprisal showed that the muzzle was already off.⁷⁵⁴

Throughout the 1920s, as monuments and memorials to World War I were being built, not many Wisconsinites were interested in commenting on the behavior of the state’s superpatriots during the Great War. That would change with the dawning of the 1930s and the Great Depression. From that moment on, little has been written that treats them with respect or acknowledges that their activities were in the best interests of the country. This does not mean their personal power waned or that superpatriotism disappeared. Neither happened. In fact, those who participated in intimidation tactics and mob violence were not brought to justice nor did they feel any need to apologize. Yet since around 1930, what they wrought throughout the state has been viewed as disgraceful and unacceptable behavior.

Even the Department of Justice understood that vigilante behavior had gotten out of hand during World War I and used it as an excuse to centralize counter-subversive efforts under the newly-minted Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935. Attorney General Frank Murphy made this clear in the late 1930s when he stated, “Twenty years ago inhuman and cruel things were done in the name of justice; sometimes vigilantes and others took over the [counter-subversive] work, we do not want such things done today, for the work has now been localized in the FBI.” In 1941, an FBI agent told an Iowa audience that “many innocent persons had suffered at the

⁷⁵⁴ R. Bodenbach (Milwaukee) to John J. Esch, December 2, 1918 and John J. Esch to R. Bodenbach, December 5, 1918, JJE papers, Box 48, WHS. Robert Bodenbach (1855-1933), a travelling dry goods salesman, was the son of Prussian parents. The word I am reading as “Heels” is partially illegible and may be something else.

hands of vigilante groups during the world war” and, in the midst of World War II, J. Edgar Hoover announced that because of the FBI’s planning and coordination, the organization had managed to avoid the hysteria of World War I caused by “ill-advised vigilante activities.”⁷⁵⁵ How former vigilantes felt about these statements has not been recorded.

The earliest record of contemporaries sitting down to document Wisconsin’s experiences during the war and shining a harsh light on the behavior of the state’s superpatriots can be found in two unpublished manuscripts, both meant to be printed as books, housed in the archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society. The first from 1929 was a biography of war governor Emanuel Philipp written by John G. Gregory, a former newspaper man, who later became the unofficial historian of Milwaukee. The second entitled “War Hysteria” was a compilation of World War I atrocities collected by state senator Henry Huber, who had fought against the Wilcox amendment denouncing La Follette early in 1918. Huber died in 1933 and left money in his will to have his manuscript published, but for some reason, it never was. In both manuscripts, the authors used strong language to describe what had occurred during the war years. Gregory wrote of the “reign of terror in Ashland,” as well as Philipp’s attempts to protect the defenseless residents of Wisconsin “from mob malevolence.” He also seemed incredulous that such behavior actually occurred as recently as the second decade of the Twentieth century.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁵ All of these statements are quoted from William H. Thomas, Jr., *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the Justice Department’s Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 170-171.

⁷⁵⁶ John G. Gregory, unpublished manuscript, “Emanuel Philipp,” 325, John G. Gregory papers, Boxes 3-4, WHS.

Huber was much angrier than Gregory. In his chapter “The Mob Rules,” Huber described “unjust and vicious attacks” by “unthinking men who seemed utterly devoid of reason” and loyalist mobs “seized with a war madness that approached actual hysteria,” who were filled with “a bitter hatred that in times of peace would have been described as a form of insanity.”⁷⁵⁷ In the introduction to Huber’s manuscript, journalist Fred Holmes, wrote that from the “electric challenge” of fighting the Wilcox amendment “the soul of this book was born” with the purpose of making sure that “this plague may not canker the hearts of Wisconsin people again.”⁷⁵⁸ While “War Hysteria” was never published, graduate students have repeatedly turned to it when writing about World War I Wisconsin.

Altogether, fourteen graduate students wrote theses or dissertations to complete Master’s and Ph.D. degrees between 1941 and 2012 that cover some aspect of Wisconsin during the World War I era, however, only the first one, written by University of Wisconsin student Karen Falk, equivocates about superpatriot behavior.⁷⁵⁹ In a published version of her research she mentions that “sometimes high-handed methods were used” and that “difficult situations arose where local solicitors had not carefully investigated the facts,” but “despite some infringements of American rights by vicious individuals” Wisconsin proved its loyalty and ability to marshal numerous entities “into cooperative unity.”⁷⁶⁰ Curiously, she ends her article with a quote from Frederic L. Paxson’s book *America at War* (1939), which essentially states that when emotion

⁷⁵⁷ Henry A. Huber, unpublished manuscript, “War Hysteria,” 40, 42, Henry Huber papers, Box 6, WHS.

⁷⁵⁸ Huber, ii, iv.

⁷⁵⁹ For a complete list, see the bibliography.

⁷⁶⁰ Karen Falk, “Public Opinion in Wisconsin during World War I,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 25, no. 4 (June 1942), 402-403. This is an article based on her Master’s thesis, “War Propaganda in Wisconsin” (University of Wisconsin, 1941).

removes minority dissent, “even a democracy may act with speed, directness, efficiency, and weight.”⁷⁶¹ Succeeding generations of graduate students would not be so generous in their view of World War I Wisconsin.

With the fiftieth anniversary of the war on the horizon, at least six graduate students from the 1960s turned their interests to the events that played out in World War I Wisconsin. The titles, which included “Progressivism and Loyalty in Wisconsin,” “Wisconsin Patriots Combat Disloyalty,” “Dissent and Discord in Milwaukee,” and “Suppression of Expression in Wisconsin during World War I,” give a clue as to the authors’ interest in the battle between loyalty and disloyalty and the methods used to suppress the allegedly disloyal. As a group, the students did not treat the superpatriots kindly. Mary Henke in her work on Milwaukee described the treatment of the city’s German Americans, including the “radical and unreasonable questioning of [their] loyalty” and the destruction of their culture, as “more than disruptive; it was heart-rending.”⁷⁶² John D. Stevens in his dissertation on the suppression of expression described the era as a “reign of witches” when “phantom enemies were hounded” by a variety of official entities, as well as “innumerable voluntary ‘patriotic’ groups and individuals.” He concludes his work by noting that if scholars had spoken the “truth,” perhaps such as that presented in his monograph, in the years 1917 and 1918, “they might have found themselves in federal prison.”⁷⁶³ These comments are typical of those located in the theses and dissertations of 1960s graduate students writing on the topic.

⁷⁶¹ Falk, 406.

⁷⁶² Mary Henke, “World War I: Dissent and Discord in Milwaukee” (master’s thesis, Loyola University, 1966), 135.

⁷⁶³ John D. Stevens, “Suppression of Expression in Wisconsin during World War I” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967), 9, 269.

While the bulk of the student monographs on World War I Wisconsin appeared in the 1960s, a handful have appeared since then; all intent on depicting and analyzing the excessive behavior of World War I superpatriots. Stephen Gurgel in his work, “The War to End All Germans,” for example, described the era as “a time when civil liberties were rarely put into practice.”⁷⁶⁴ While Patricia Gardner in her thesis, “Fringe on the Flag” saw World War I Wisconsin rife with “extreme chauvinism” and “patriotic excess”; a place where “fanatical ultra-patriots...distorted the meaning of the flag.”⁷⁶⁵ She goes on to describe the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion and its affiliates as “vigilantes, nativists, secret police, and liberty bond boosters all rolled into one.”⁷⁶⁶ Obviously, time has not been kind to Wisconsin’s loyalists and hyperpatriots.

While a significant amount of work on World War I Wisconsin’s loyalty issues can be found in unpublished manuscripts and theses, there have also been a handful of articles on the topic; all of which continue to paint the state’s superpatriots as the villains of the era. Several of these articles were based on theses and dissertations mentioned above. Of those that were not the work of graduate students, University of Wisconsin history professor David Shannon’s stands out as one of the oldest and most vehement. He tries to understand certain wild and bizarre actions of those he describes as “illiberal extremists,” especially those associated with the Wisconsin Council of Defense and the Loyalty Legion, and suggests that an ambivalence about the war’s values and lack of surety of the justness of the war might explain the extreme behavior

⁷⁶⁴ Stephen S. Gurgel, “The War to End all Germans: Wisconsin Synod Lutherans and the First World War (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2012), 18.

⁷⁶⁵ Patricia Gardner, “Fringe on the Flag: Patriotism, 100% Americanism, and Extremism in Milwaukee, 1914-1944 (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2001), 3-4.

⁷⁶⁶ Gardner, 29.

of the state's superpatriots.⁷⁶⁷ More recently, Philip M. Glende in his 2008 article about Victor Berger's "dangerous ideas" wrote about how "a highly mobilized and worried public rushed to silence the most vulnerable skeptics," while also noting that the state's newspapers actively "restricted the participation of Berger and Wisconsin citizens in free elections."⁷⁶⁸ As has often been the case since at least the 1930s and as can be seen in Glende's article, Berger, as well as Robert La Follette Sr., have been portrayed by academics as victims and martyrs of Wisconsin's superpatriots, who have since been vindicated and are now identified as the heroes of Wisconsin's World War I story.

Despite the inability of Wisconsin's superpatriots to completely control the narrative of their actions in the post-war period, one that did not paint them in a positive light, superpatriotism has continued to thrive in Wisconsin and the United States. We can see it in the Red Scares of 1919 and the Joe McCarthy era, in the fear-mongering of the Cold War, during the attacks on Middle Eastern countries since the early 1990s, and today as many of those on the right of the political spectrum decry liberals, socialists, and the ANTIFA (anti-fascists). Superpatriotism has been a constant, although not always dominant, element of American life.

With the lynching of Robert Praeger in Collinsville, Illinois in mind, Wisconsin superpatriots can almost be considered restrained in comparison. With the exception of

⁷⁶⁷ David A. Shannon, "The World, the War, and Wisconsin: 1914-1918," *Historical Messenger of the Milwaukee County Historical Society* 22, no. 1 (March 1966), 45, 49.

⁷⁶⁸ Philip M. Glende, "Victor Berger's Dangerous Ideas: Censoring the Mail to Preserve National Security during World War I," *Essays in Economic & Business History* xxvi (2008), 14. Glende was a newspaper editor for many years, including at the *Wisconsin State Journal*, and at the time he wrote this article was finishing up his Ph.D. in mass communication at the University of Wisconsin.

the Krueger Brothers incident, which was instigated by federal agents, the state's superpatriots did not kill or maim those under attack. They relied on societal coercion more than violence, and when they did turn to physical attacks their intent was more to scare and create discomfort than actually permanently hurt anyone physically, although their victims may have experienced some emotional damage. The relative restraint by Wisconsin's superpatriots could have been the consequence of a peculiar mixture of characteristics not found at Collinsville, Illinois in 1918. Those in Wisconsin who took on the mantle of "militant patriot" during World War I represented a person immersed in Yankee Puritanical values that emphasized self-restraint, in progressivism that promoted rationalism, control, and organization, and in a middle-class mindset that stressed self-discipline. Even the Knights of Liberty, who tarred and feathered a handful of their neighbors, made clear that they were not hoodlums, but 100 percent Americans, who believed their actions fit into an American narrative that went back to the Revolutionary War, when tarring and feathering was fairly common. The men who made up the Flying Squadrons during the fourth Liberty Loan drive believed their approach to the allegedly disloyal was not that of lower-class mobs, but represented instead the rational, educated, and organized tactics of the business and professional classes. Even if the squadrons occasionally devolved into violence that was not their intent and could be the result of their "muscle" getting out of hand. Despite their restraint, they were still comfortable undermining democracy in an attempt to support their narrow version of what makes America exceptional.

Understanding American superpatriots, including their fears that the dominant culture's values, beliefs, and lifestyle are under attack often by an ethnic other, whether

German, Mexican, or Muslim, certainty that the government is not supporting them, and inevitable appearance during wartime can help historians recognize how their overwhelming desire for a national homogenization has contributed to ways many Americans self-identify. As the country becomes more diverse, America's current superpatriots may feel more under threat and become more aggressive. Historians of American history can help remind Americans of how superpatriotism's destructive tendencies have wreaked havoc in the past with the hope of slowing down its reappearance in the future.

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