

book club synopsis

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The Bully Pulpit

Doris Kearns Goodwin

Simon & Schuster, 2013

At the turn of the last century, the United States was in much the same situation as it is today: divisive political factions threatened to tear the country apart, and legislation was desperately needed on pressing social issues. It was in this context that a leader arose—Theodore Roosevelt—who brought about change by harnessing public opinion, most notably through the use of the investigative press. In *The Bully Pulpit*, Doris Kearns Goodwin explores the legacies of both Roosevelt and his successor (and friend) William Howard Taft and the role of the press in the making and breaking of these men.

About the author

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a gifted historian and unparalleled storyteller whose works bring history's most respected and successful leaders to life, allowing them to impart their enduring knowledge to modern audiences in a way that is as entertaining as it is enlightening. The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of several best-selling books, Goodwin also consulted on Lincoln, Steven Spielberg's award-winning film based on her work *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. Goodwin has taught at Harvard University and worked as an assistant to President Lyndon Johnson during his last year in the White House. She was also a contributor, both on and off the air, to the PBS documentaries LBJ, The Kennedys, FDR and Baseball.

contents:

3	characters
7	preface
9	the hunter returns
13	will and teedie
17	the judge and the politician
21	nellie herron taft
23	edith carow roosevelt
25	the insider and the outsider
27	invention of mcclure's
31	"like a boy on roller skates"
35	governor and governor general
37	"that damned cowboy is president"
41	"the most famous woman in america"
45	"a mission to perform"
47	toppling old bosses
49	"thank heaven you are to be with me!"
51	"a smile that won't come off"
53	"sitting on the lid"
57	the american people reach a verdict
61	"cast into outer darkness"
65	"to cut mr. taft in two!"
67	taft boom, wall street bust
69	kingmaker and king
71	"a great stricken animal"
75	a self-inflicted wound
79	st. george and the dragon
83	"the parting of the ways"
87	"like a war horse"
91	"my hat is in the ring"
95	"bosom friends, bitter enemies"
101	armageddon
105	epilogue

characters

The Presidents

Theodore Roosevelt	President of the United States 1901-1909; Republican
William Howard Taft	President of the United States 1909-1913; Republican
Benjamin Harrison	President of the United States 1889-1893; Republican
William McKinley	President of the United States 1897-1901; Republican
Woodrow Wilson	President of the United States 1913-1921; Democrat

The Wives

Nellie Herron Taft	Married William Howard Taft in 1885
Alice Lee Roosevelt	Married Theodore Roosevelt in 1880; died in 1884
Edith Carow Roosevelt	Married Theodore Roosevelt in 1886

The Journalists

S.S. (Sam) McClure	Founder of McClure's magazine
John Phillips	Lifelong friend of S.S. McClure, with whom Phillips co-edited The Wheelman magazine
Albert Brady	Lifelong friend of S.S. McClure; served as advertising manager for McClure's

McClure's "Big Four"

William Allen White	"The best known and most quoted country journalist"
Ida Tarbell	Known for her investigative articles on Standard Oil
Ray Stannard Baker	Often relied upon by Roosevelt to investigate issues of possible corruption
Lincoln Steffens	Known for his articles on machine politics

The Politicians

Mark Hanna	U.S. senator from Ohio and conservative party chairman who often opposed Roosevelt; died in 1904
Alton B. Parker	Chief judge of the New York Court of Appeals; ran against Roosevelt for president in 1904
William Jennings Bryan	Democratic presidential candidate in 1896, 1900 and 1908; served as Woodrow Wilson's secretary of state from 1913-1915
Richard Ballinger	U.S. secretary of the Interior from 1909-1911; played a key role in the dispute over protected lands and the advance of hydroelectric power
Gifford Pinchot	First chief of the U.S. Forestry Service from 1905-1910; clashed with Richard Ballinger over protected lands and hydroelectric power
Robert LaFollette	Wisconsin governor (1901-1906) and U.S. senator (1906-1925); competed with Taft and Roosevelt for the 1912 Republican presidential nomination

preface

“There are but a handful of times in the history of our country when there occurs a transformation so remarkable that a molt seems to take place, and an altered country begins to emerge. The turn of the twentieth century was such a time, and Theodore Roosevelt is counted among our greatest presidents, one of the few to attain that eminence without having surmounted some pronounced national crisis,” writes historian and biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin in the opening of *The Bully Pulpit*.

How did Roosevelt manage to get a Congress long wedded to the concept of laissez-faire to pass measures regulating railroads, strengthening labor rights, rooting out political corruption, protecting consumers from unsafe food and drugs, and conserving America’s natural resources?

His successful leadership derived from his use of the “bully pulpit,” a phrase that described “the national platform the presidency provides to shape public sentiment and mobilize action.” Using his ability to attract national attention, Roosevelt focused the progressive movement on the untrammelled growth of modern America.

From the outset, Roosevelt developed relationships with members of the national press, particularly at the national progressive magazine McClure’s, where writers researched without preconceived notions to carry their readers through the discovery process. These journalists, whom Roosevelt later scorned as “muckrakers” but who saw Roosevelt’s slur as a “badge of honor,” wrote a series of exposés on the invisible web of corruption linking business to politics. In this “golden age of journalism,” writes Goodwin, a “generation of gifted

writers ushered in a new mode of investigative reporting that provided the necessary conditions to make a genuine bully pulpit of the American presidency.”

Goodwin looks also at William Howard Taft, Roosevelt’s chosen successor to the presidency, but instead of focusing on the rift that developed between them when Roosevelt ran against him as a third-party candidate in 1912, she examines their friendship before the election. Taft served as Roosevelt’s surrogate in the electoral campaign of 1904 and as secretary of war; he, rather than the vice president, was the “acting president” when Roosevelt was away.

While Taft as president tried to codify and expand upon Roosevelt’s legacy, Goodwin sees him as a failed public leader, in part because of his inability to utilize the bully pulpit. “He was never able to seek the counsel [it] offered or harness the press corps to broadcast a coherent narrative concerning his legislative goals. As a former judge, he assumed that his decisions would speak for themselves.”

The story in the pages that follow teases out three interwoven strands:

- The tale of Roosevelt, whose crusade to expand the role of government in national life necessitated transforming the presidency
- The tale of Taft, who played a far more significant role in the Roosevelt presidency than is usually recognized
- The importance of the bully pulpit itself, in terms of Roosevelt’s success and Taft’s inability to exploit it

Goodwin concludes: “It is my greatest hope that the story that follows will guide readers through their own process of discovery toward a better understanding of what it takes to summon the public to demand the actions necessary to bring our country closer to its ancient ideals. ‘There is no one left,’ McClure exhorted his readers as he cast about for a remedy to America’s woes at the turn of the twentieth century, ‘none but all of us.’”

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chapter one:

the hunter returns

In 1909, Theodore Roosevelt disappeared from the political scene, citing the “wise custom which limits the President to two terms.” Roosevelt loved being president, writes Goodwin, calling it “the greatest office in the world.” After spending a year on safari in Africa, Roosevelt returned to New York City to a hero’s welcome on June 18, 1910. His exchanges with then-president William Howard Taft were just a part of the convoluted tale of their friendship and interactions with the press.

The Roosevelt presidency: Roosevelt’s physical vigor and mental curiosity made the White House a hive of activity and interest; his “love of the hurly-burly” fascinated journalists and their readers. When Roosevelt left for Africa, the noise and excitement vanished with him so the press was delighted to see him return. He debated points with them as fellow writers; argued with them as equals; read and commented on their stories; and accepted their criticism.

Roosevelt championed progressive goals during his presidency:

- Distribute the nation’s wealth more equitably.
- Regulate the giant corporations and railroads.
- Strengthen the rights of labor.
- Protect the country’s natural resources from private exploitation.

Under his Square Deal, the country recognized the need for government action to confront problems caused by industrialization. By his presidency's end:

- The moribund 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act had been revived.
- Vast acres of lands had been set aside for conservation.
- Railroads had been prevented from continuing long-standing abuses.
- Congress had passed workmen's compensation legislation, a pure food and drug act, and a meat inspection act.

Choosing Taft: Roosevelt handpicked his “beloved” friend William Howard Taft, who served as governor general of the Philippine Islands and then his secretary of war, to follow him into the White House. Roosevelt's legacy, says Goodwin, would depend upon the actions of his chosen successor. During the year that Roosevelt was away, he heard from his progressive friends questioning Taft's recent actions. As the day of Roosevelt's return approached, the country speculated: “Which side would Roosevelt take in the intensifying struggle that was dividing the old-line conservatives and a steadily growing progressive faction?”

The Taft presidency: When Taft took office, it was felt that the country was ready for a different kind of leader—a quieter, less controversial figure. The jovial Taft had a mind that worked “in straight lines and by long, logical habit.” He likened Roosevelt's administration to “a great crusade” that had aroused the people to the need for greater federal regulation of the economy and saw his presidency as working to make these expanded powers “permanent in the form of law.” Yet it was Taft's “misfortune to take office at a time marked by a bitter rift within the Republican Party, when progressives viewed compromise with conservatives as treachery.” To complicate matters, Taft questioned his skills as president. The natural politician in the family was his devoted, intelligent, and unconventional wife Nellie; however, 10 weeks into Taft's presidency, she suffered a devastating stroke that left her temporarily paralyzed and unable to speak, and left Taft deprived of her wise counsel.

By 1910, Taft's administration had its progressive accomplishments:

- A railroad bill to expand the federal government's power to prevent arbitrary increases in railroad rates had passed Congress and was awaiting his signature.
- In the previous Congressional session, a corporation tax bill had been hailed as "the first positive step toward the National supervision of great corporations," and Congress passed an amendment to the Interstate Commerce Act that gave the commission the power to prevent stock-watering.
- The first confirmed presidential authority to withdraw millions of acres of land for conservation would shortly be signed by Taft into law as well as a postal savings bill.

Roosevelt's return: Some 100,000 people came to Battery Park to hear Roosevelt proclaim: "I am ready and eager to do my part so far as I am able in helping to solve problems which must be solved." His brief speech, followed by a five-mile parade up Broadway, set the stage for Roosevelt's future actions. In the lengthy coverage of the historic day, the press corps reported numerous colorful anecdotes. "The story they failed to get, however, was the story they wanted above all—Roosevelt's response to the major political issue of the day: the growing disenchantment of progressive Republicans with the leadership of President Taft," notes Goodwin.

The Roosevelt-Taft friendship: "No other friendship in our modern politics has meant more to the American people," wrote the American journalist William Allen White, "for it has made two most important and devoted public servants wiser, kindlier, more useful men." Now, the fate of the friendship lay in Roosevelt's hands.

Concludes Goodwin: "To understand the complex contours of this consequential friendship, however, we must go backward in time to analyze the similarities in experience that initially drew Roosevelt and Taft together and the differences in temperament that now threatened to split them apart."

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chapter two:

will and teedie

This chapter focuses on the youth of Taft (born September 15, 1857, in Cincinnati, Ohio; known as Will) and Roosevelt (born October 27, 1858, in Manhattan; nicknamed Teedie). Both were favored children in close-knit illustrious families where affection and respect abounded. They inherited from their fathers' legacies of honorable and distinguished careers, as well as a commitment to public service and a dedication to the Republican Party. Will developed an accommodating disposition to please a father who pushed him to always do better; Teedie idolized a dead father who had paid for a substitute for himself during the Civil War to appease his wife (she was Southern-born), yet engaged his son's interest with military and historical tales of heroism.

Will was physically stronger as a youth but had weaker self-control and a tendency to procrastinate. Teedie had the weaker body, suffering from asthma, but a greater strength of will. Will was easygoing and even-tempered; he easily found common ground with others who responded to his smiling countenance and kindly demeanor. Teedie was perpetually in motion and less approachable on initial contact: As a youth he limited his associations to those who shared his class and station in life.

Teedie was an intellectual adventurer with a passion for reading, a wide-ranging curiosity, self-assured and guided by his own ferocious determination. Will worked methodically within the defined frameworks outlined by his instructors, subject to the entreaties of others. Will was modest and straightforward; Teedie, boastful and complex. Both had good sense and a willingness to work hard.

Portrait of Will as a young man:

- The desire to please his parents became central to Will's temperament and development. Each success, according to Goodwin, only fueled greater expectations, giving Will, who drove himself intensely to perform, little peace. Will developed a pattern of hard work, procrastination and an anxiety driven by his need to maintain the family standard of excellence.
- A class leader, known for his perpetual smile and rumbling, hearty laugh, he graduated as salutatorian of his class at Yale in 1878 and that fall entered Cincinnati Law School.
- Will credited his father's indomitable will and lofty aspiration in prompting his own achievements. From his father, writes Goodwin, "he had learned that the man who devoted himself to his community ... deserved greater praise than the man who pursued wealth for its own sake. Wealth was honorable only to the extent that it contributed to the well-being of the community."

Portrait of Theodore ("Teedie") as a young man:

- His father, "Thee," told 10-year-old Teedie, "You must make your body." Writes Goodwin: "The fierce determination that had propelled Teedie to become a serious student of nature, a voracious reader, and a sensitive observer was now directed toward expanding his physical capabilities by refashioning his body. Years would pass before the potential of these labors would be actualized in an adult capacity and physique that made him an exemplar of "the strenuous life."
- Teedie went to Harvard in 1875. Observed a classmate: "No man ever came to Harvard more serious in his purpose to secure first of all an education." At this point in his life, Teedie evaluated his classmates at Harvard based on their family's standing, boasting, "only one gentleman stands ahead of me."

- On February 9, 1878, his father died. The loss left Teedie, who was in Boston during his father's passing, in a clouded state of grief and remorse: "I never was able to do anything for him during his last illness," he lamented.
- During his junior year in college Teedie fell in love with Alice Hathaway Lee and they became engaged in his senior year. He thought about studying to become a naturalist upon graduation, but with marriage approaching, decided to enter Columbia Law School.

Goodwin concludes this chapter with the observation that: "If there are splendid traits in abundance in the characters of both young men, the one major distinction at this stage is that Teedie had shown he could come through agonizing misfortune. Will had not yet been tested by adversity."

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the judge and the politician

This chapter looks at the early careers of Taft and Roosevelt following their graduation from law school. Goodwin notes: “For William Howard Taft, law school fortified his life’s ambition to become a judge, fixing upon him a ‘judicial habit of thought and action’ that marked the rest of his life as he moved from the bench to the far less congenial world of politics. For Roosevelt, the study of law merely facilitated his diverse ventures ... each experience would eventually contribute vitally to a memorable presidency.”

Taft and the law:

- Taft decided he needed to learn more about the law than could be gotten from the daily lecture courses. He became a court reporter for The Cincinnati Commercial, making rounds to the police court, probate court, district court and superior court. The notes he took became short accounts of the most compelling cases in “The Courts” column.
- He graduated in good standing but remained on the newspaper staff to cover the sensational embezzlement trail against Cy Hoffman, a Democratic auditor for the city. His stories created widespread interest in the case, which took a sensational turn when it was learned that the chief prosecutor had conspired with Hoffman to fix the jury.
- The new prosecuting attorney offered 23-year-old Taft the post of assistant prosecuting attorney. Nellie Taft observed:

“the experience he had in the rough-and-ready practice ... was the most valuable experience he could possibly have in fitting him for trial work at the bar.” Taft was no showman; he valued the job as a contribution to his legal education.

- Taft began to take an active role in local Republican politics although he had no political ambitions for himself.
- In January 1882, Taft was offered the post of collector of internal revenue for the Cincinnati District, making him the youngest collector in the country. Goodwin says that he accepted the post because he didn't want to disappoint his backers—a local congressman and the president: “This unwillingness to disappoint others would continue to shape the course of his professional life.” He left this position in October 1882 after getting involved in political wrangling.
- In 1885, Taft filled in for an ill prosecuting senior attorney in a major political case. His performance led to his appointment to the Ohio Superior Court at age 29.

Observes Goodwin: “To Taft, who would become the youngest judge in the state of Ohio, this appointment represented ‘the welcome beginning of just the career he wanted.’ ... The golden chance to sit on the superior court represented the establishment of a judicial career that would eventually lead, after a painful detour as president, to his ultimate destination—chief justice of the United States.” Taft steadfastly shunned the spotlight that Roosevelt craved, preferring to fight his battles from the inside, trusting logic, reason, and the recitation of facts. He was a conciliator by nature, a mediator.

Roosevelt and the law: Roosevelt took up the study of law unsure whether he wanted to be a lawyer. At Columbia, he stood out as an energetic questioner; he also took up positions on several philanthropic boards previously occupied by his father. Despite his relative youth, he also demonstrated a confidence and understanding of his interests and capabilities.

Roosevelt, writer: Roosevelt published his first book in 1881: *The Naval War of 1812*. The naval history was favorably reviewed and taught him the importance of painstaking research and the meticulous deployment of facts.

- Over his lifetime, Roosevelt produced 40 books, in addition to hundreds of magazine articles and book reviews.
- The works ranged from narratives of hunting expeditions to natural histories on wolves, biographies of public figures, a four-volume history of the American frontier and more. The variety of these writings would later, in his presidency, help Roosevelt connect with many different kinds of people.

Roosevelt's political career begins: Roosevelt did not find the philanthropic administration rewarding but longed to honor his father and family through his own efforts to “better government in New York.”

- He began by attending local monthly meetings in the district, and in 1881 he “was elected as the youngest member of the New York Assembly.” This launched “an unprecedented political career that would culminate ... in his becoming the youngest president in the history of the U.S.”
- In Albany, Roosevelt began to develop an alliance with journalists that would boost his career at every stage. Though his first joust at entrenched corruption failed, he emerged as a champion of reform within the assembly and in the court of public opinion. In January 1883, he was elected as minority leader.
- Roosevelt began learning about labor issues: going to learn about the manufacture of cigars in tenements and eventually championing a bill outlawing it. When cigar makers fought against it in the courts—and eventually won—Roosevelt said, “It was this case which first waked me to ... the fact that the courts were not necessarily the best judges of what should be done to better social and industrial conditions.”

- In November 1883, Roosevelt tried to run for speaker but could not break the hold of the Republican machine; however, his attempt to run independent of the patronage of the bosses reinforced his leadership of the burgeoning reform element.

Goodwin says that his New York State Assembly career provided a great school for Roosevelt: “His three terms had offered Roosevelt with considerable reason for pride and satisfaction in his accomplishments ... His rigorous honesty and independence inspired adulation in young reformers, and old-timers began to treat him with grudging respect.” She also notes that “his singular success in the rough-and-tumble world of the state assembly revealed a temperament supremely suited for politics, strife and competition. He thrived in the cauldron, functioning best when dramatic moral issues were at stake.”

A personal note on Roosevelt: Alice Roosevelt died in February 1884 from Bright’s disease following the birth of her first child, Alice; Roosevelt’s mother Mittie died from acute typhoid on the same day.

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chapter four:

nellie herron taft

In 1879, Taft, 22, met Nellie Herron, 18. This complex woman, maintains Goodwin “would eventually lead him away from his beloved law into the often scathing vortex of political life.”

A defining moment in Nellie’s life was a visit to the White House as a teenager for the silver anniversary celebration of President Rutherford B. Hayes and his wife. After this visit she reportedly told “Uncle Rutherford” that she planned to “marry a man who will be president.” Reports Goodwin: “Thirty years later ... the allure of that first stay at the White House had not dimmed.”

Portrait of Nellie as a young woman:

- Raised with five sisters and two brothers in Cincinnati, Nellie’s father had a law practice with future President Rutherford B. Hayes. The bond between them would play a significant role in shaping Nellie’s ambitions.
- Nellie was highly educated. Independent for her day, she taught at two local private schools.
- She hosted Saturday night salons for her friends, including Taft, that combined entertainment and intellectual pursuits.
- Nellie and Taft, who had fallen in love with her with “overwhelming force,” became engaged in 1885. Observes Goodwin: “She sensed that marriage to a man of Will’s enlightened temperament would create enhanced opportunities for them both.”

- Nellie replaced his father as Will’s guide, counselor and friend. The drive in Nellie, along with Taft’s recognition of his own temperamental deficits, contributed “to his profound admiration for the woman he loved and to his deep-seated reliance upon her judgment and resolve.”

Developments in Taft’s career: Taft’s 1888 election to a five-year term on the Ohio Superior Court would be the only time that Taft ran for office until he became a candidate for president.

- Taft flourished as a judge: His most significant action as a Superior Court judge was a ruling in 1890 that addressed the balance of power between labor and industry. His decision on the law of secondary boycotts—they were illegal—set precedent for decades.
- In 1890 President Benjamin Harrison nominated Taft for the prestigious post of U.S. solicitor general, and the Tafts moved to Washington, D.C.

“The most fortuitous and enduring aspect of the new Taft residency, however,” writes Goodwin, was that it was just 1,000 feet away from the modest house which Theodore Roosevelt, newly appointed member of the Civil Service Commission, and his wife had just rented. “The proximity of these two addresses ... would give rise to the legendary friendship between Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.”

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edith carow roosevelt

Although Roosevelt was devastated by the death of his wife Alice, within two years he was secretly engaged to his childhood friend, the intensely private Edith Carow. They had had a close relationship as children; they even had been homeschooled at the Roosevelt home and Edith was close to Teddy's sister Corinne. Although she had not had a happy childhood, Edith emerged a poised, well-educated young lady.

After a chance meeting at Teddy's sister's house, long-hidden feelings between the two of them surfaced. On November 17, 1885, they pledged to marry. They also reconciled two very different temperaments: Edith acknowledged to Roosevelt that her temptation was to withdraw from society, but "Father wouldn't allow it." Edith wanted a staid home life and sought to make her home a refuge for herself and her children. She was accomplished and competent, pursuing her intellectual passions while astutely managing her household.

Developments in Roosevelt's career: After Alice's death, Roosevelt did not run for a fourth New York Assembly term but relocated to the North Dakota Badlands, investing in two cattle ranches with two local cowboys. The constant activity that had helped him recover from his grief over his father's death this time went into hunting and running the cattle ranches. He also wrote a book, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*.

- Roosevelt ultimately lost a sizable portion of his fortune when a blizzard decimated his cattle herd. He considered his experience to be "the most educational asset" of his entire

life, instrumental to his success in becoming president. Observes Goodwin: “His years in the Badlands taught him ‘to speak the same language’ as men who spent their days herding cattle, roping steer, and hunting game.” The experience also fostered a national perspective foreign to most Eastern politicians.

- With his wedding to Edith planned for December 2, 1886, Roosevelt returned to New York and made a sacrificial, three-week run as the Republican candidate for mayor (Democrats outnumbered Republicans by 50,000 votes). The press reported he ran a spirited campaign: “Fighting is fun for him, win or lose,” editorialized the New York Sun.
- In 1888, Roosevelt campaigned for presidential candidate Benjamin Harrison. Following Harrison’s successful election, Roosevelt was offered the post of civil service commissioner.

The importance of Nellie and Edith in their husbands’ lives:

Observes Goodwin: “In many ways, the two women complemented and balanced their respective partners. Nellie spurred Will Taft to greater confidence and action, her expectations and support driving him to greater engagement in the important work of the time. Edith, meanwhile, worked to restrain the impetuous will that drove her husband to ceaseless activity.” Yet while the men forged a historic friendship, the women did not.

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the insider and the outsider

After Roosevelt and Taft settled in Washington, D.C., in 1890, they forged a close friendship. “Common views and sympathies,” Taft recalled, made them immediate allies and they turned to each other for advice and camaraderie. Each man recognized the rare character and unique talent of the other. “Externally Taft is everything Roosevelt is not,” observed journalist William Allen White. “Roosevelt’s mental processes are quick, intuitive and sure, while Taft grapples a proposition, wrestles with it without resting and without fatigue until it is settled or solved.” Where Taft possessed a capacity for personal intimacy that a self-centered man like Roosevelt could never have, Roosevelt was aggressively self-confident, delighted in confrontation and had a talent for publicity and a rousing rhetorical manner.

Roosevelt and civil service reform: Believing that this reform presented a historic opening to ensure that “the fellow with no pull should have an even chance with his rival who came backed,” Roosevelt’s crusade attracted immediate journalistic attention. He became the Civil Service Commission’s public face and utilized public opinion to prod party leaders and battle the entrenched spoils system. He needed to instill some of his own public outrage to popularize the reformist cause and promote change from the bottom up. He developed new tactics:

- He launched an on-the-spot investigation in the New York Custom House that revealed that party leaders were demanding “so-called voluntary contributions” from low-level employees in order to maintain their positions.

- He cultivated a network of progressive journalists “to point out infractions of the law” as it became clear that corruption extended nationwide and made sure to confirm the accuracy of the reports he received.
- After two years, his war on the spoils system had produced singular successes, but he was unable to stop the practice of political assessments outright.

Explains Goodwin: “He had alerted Americans to the flagrant inequities of the spoils system. The process Roosevelt had set in motion by shining the light of publicity on these practices would prove crucial in any attempt to create a system of government based upon good work rather than political influence.”

Taft as solicitor general: In Taft’s first year as solicitor general, he made many successful appearances before the United States Supreme Court—of 17 cases he argued in his first year, he won 15. When the U.S. attorney general became ill, Taft filled in for him. Taft became comfortable wielding authority but was careful not to overstep or compromise his position with the attorney general, maintaining, “the first duty of a subordinate is courteous respect to his superior officer.” He also developed an intimacy with the president.

Taft’s nomination as judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit: In 1891 Taft sought one of nine new circuit court judgeships created by Congress to relieve congestion. At 34, he was young for the prestigious post, the second-highest in the nation’s judicial system, and the appointment would put him in line for promotion to the Supreme Court. Nellie opposed this career move, but she went along with it when Taft was nominated.

Roosevelt returns to New York: Although President Benjamin Harrison left office in 1892, Roosevelt stayed on with the Civil Service Commission. He returned to New York City when Mayor William Strong asked him to serve as police commissioner.

invention of mcclure's

When the first issue of McClure's magazine appeared on newsstands in June 1893, the genteel world of patrician reformers and civil service enthusiasts was undergoing a seismic shift. In this so-called Gilded Age—starting in the 1870s—the country experienced:

- The growth of colossal corporations leading to consolidated wealth for the business owners
- The lives of the working people becoming increasingly difficult
- Increased mechanization and mass production
- The nation's most serious economic depression to date in 1893
- The declaration by American historian Frederick Jackson Turner that the “frontier” was closed
- An unprecedented number of violent strikes in factories, mines and railroads
- Fear that in the wreckage of the Gilded Age, democracy itself would crumble

Writes Goodwin: “Amid such pangs of rampant anxiety and latent insurrection, McClure's magazine was born. This acclaimed muckraking journal would play a signal role in rousing the country to the need for political and economic reform, animating the Progressive movement with which Theodore Roosevelt's name would forever be linked.”

Portrait of S.S. McClure: Referred to as a “genius” with a “highly creative mind, and a great deal of excitable energy,” founder Sam McClure was capable of wild bursts of creative productivity when his mind tumbled from one idea to the next. This euphoria was often punctuated by periods of exhaustion and depression, and there were periods in his life when he was forced into sanitariums.

- Born in 1857 to a poor family in Northern Ireland, McClure immigrated with his widowed mother and his four brothers to Valparaiso, Indiana. He eventually worked his way through Knox Academy and College in Galesburg, Illinois, where he met his future wife Harriet and developed lifelong friendships with John S. Phillips and Albert Brady.
- In his senior year at Knox College, McClure was chosen as editor-in-chief of the student newspaper; Phillips provided daily editorial support and Brady was the advertising virtuoso.
- In 1883 he and Phillips edited *The Wheelman*, an illustrated monthly magazine devoted to bicycling. The following year he began at the prestigious *Century* magazine in New York.
- McClure came up with the idea of a syndicate that would purchase stories and articles from well-known authors and sell them at reduced rates to numerous newspapers for publication. By 1887, McClure’s was distributing 50,000 words a week to more than 100 newspapers.
- In 1892, McClure and Phillips discussed the creation of a low-priced, high-quality magazine “within reach of all who care about good literature.” Brady came on board as advertising manager.

Writes Goodwin: “McClure immediately understood that his magazine must have ‘a unity’ beyond a mere compilation of freelance articles suiting the individual tastes of miscellaneous authors. He dreamed of creating a full-time staff of writers who would be guaranteed salary and generous expense accounts.” McClure wanted “to deal with important social, economic and political questions, to present the new and general inventions and

discoveries, to give the best in literature,’ and above all, to become a ‘power in the land ... a power for good.’ Indeed the ultimate success of McClure’s—its literary worth, its major contributions to progressive-era reforms, and its significant role in the rise of Theodore Roosevelt—can be directly traced to the prodigiously gifted writing staff McClure assembled.”

McClure’s Big Four: Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, William Allen White and Lincoln Steffens formed the core writing staff of McClure’s magazine and later became the heart of the muckraking movement. Unlike Sam McClure, the “Big Four” were the children of promising and enterprising businessmen. Each, however, had encountered the corrosive effects of the industrial system. All were also extraordinary, independent thinkers.

- **Ida Tarbell:** Raised in western Pennsylvania, Tarbell graduated from Allegheny College, then taught school and later became managing editor of *The Chautauquan*. She eventually moved to Paris and began a freelance writing career selling pieces to Scribner’s. To fulfill her ambitions as a writer, Tarbell defied the conventions of her gender, refusing to marry, braving poverty and alienation.
- **Ray Stannard Baker:** Baker grew up in St. Croix, Wisconsin, and entered Michigan Agricultural College (later Michigan State) when he was 15 years old. While there he was influenced by a botany professor who taught him to look at life before he talked about it rather than to look at it secondhand, by way of books. Resisting parental pressure to pursue a business life, Baker wrote for the *Chicago Record* and then switched to McClure’s, first as a freelancer and then as a New York staffer.
- **William Allen White:** The editor of a small country newspaper in Emporia, Kansas, White came to S.S. McClure’s attention in 1896 after he wrote a fiery editorial that attacked William Jennings Bryan and the populist movement. White became the best known and most often quoted country journalist in the U.S., and McClure’s often published his writing, although he remained in Emporia.

- **Lincoln Steffens:** A police reporter for the New York Evening Post, Steffens covered Roosevelt's activities as police commissioner and McClure hoped to use that relationship to secure a conduit to him. Steffens was a first-rate reporter with an immense curiosity, self-assurance and great storytelling gifts.

McClure's created a new fusion of journalism, literature, exposé and human interest that focused closely on humanity and the avarice and corruption that "stunted the very possibility of social justice in America," says Goodwin. "This revolutionary cadre of writers would soon play a vital role in Theodore Roosevelt's political future as well, helping to generate the critical mass of public sentiment to implement progressive policies."

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“like a boy on roller skates”

This chapter delves into Roosevelt’s career as New York City police commissioner, his service as assistant secretary of the Navy, the U.S. participation in the Spanish-American war, his exploits in Cuba with the Rough Riders, and his election as governor of New York State in 1898. McClure’s Ida Tarbell, who saw Roosevelt in Washington, later recalled in her autobiography that he “tore up and down the wide marble halls of the War and Navy Building—like a boy on roller skates,” and “already he saw himself as an important unit in an invading army.” The frenetic pace and stress of these years in Roosevelt’s life is contrasted with those of William Howard Taft, who spent a “congenial” eight-year tenure on the circuit court.

Roosevelt, Lincoln Steffens, Jacob Riis and *How the Other Half Lives*:

As police commissioner, Roosevelt viewed his job as having two sides: one was to manage the daily work of the department while the other, which included membership on the health board, provided him the chance to make “the city a better place in which to live and work for those to whom the conditions of life and labor were hardest.”

- Roosevelt turned to police reporter Jacob Riis, who wrote about the overcrowded, unsanitary tenements and the realities of immigrant life in the slums. Riis’s landmark book *How the Other Half Lives* traced the daily struggles of Italians, Jews and Bohemians who lived in fetid quarters.
- Roosevelt also brought Lincoln Steffens into his inner circle to learn from him about New York’s vast entrenched system of police corruption.

- Employing the same techniques that he'd used in previous corruption battles, Roosevelt waged war. At his first press conference, Roosevelt announced that appointments and promotions would be made on merit alone. Within three weeks he'd forced out the police superintendent and his chief inspector, both of whom had amassed considerable fortunes.
- Roosevelt made midnight forays with Riis and others to see if the police were patrolling their beats or sleeping at their posts.
- He also enforced the Sunday closing (the so-called dry) laws; this action, however, caused resistance both from the public and his own police board.

Taft's life on the circuit (1892-1900): Traveling to Cleveland, Toledo, Memphis, Nashville, Detroit and Louisville, Taft quickly developed warm professional relationships with his fellow circuit justices and others with whom he worked. Several of Taft's rulings highlighted:

- The right of labor to strike
- The right of injured workers to receive damages when the hazards of their employment resulted from a corporation's failure to meet safety regulations
- The attempt to block monopolies: When President Roosevelt began his trust busting against railroads in 1902, he relied, in part, on Taft's opinion in this case.
- His desire for an evenhanded policy

Taft's experience as circuit judge, notes Goodwin, sensitized him to the harsh circumstances confronting the country's working poor and the avarice and power of industrial interests, leading as well to the questioning of the laissez-faire doctrine that had guided him.

Roosevelt as assistant secretary of the Navy: "Roosevelt, who had never seen combat, absurdly romanticized war," notes Goodwin. No sooner had he taken office in 1897, than he "became convinced" that war with Spain over Cuba was imminent and did everything in

his power to prepare. When the battleship USS Maine, stationed in Havana Harbor, exploded, writes Goodwin, “Roosevelt immediately labeled the sinking ‘an act of dirty treachery on the part of the Spaniards.’” Although the cause of the Maine’s sinking was never determined, President McKinley eventually declared war in April.

McClure’s, Ida Tarbell and the Spanish-American War: The war was a turning point for McClure’s magazine. While the magazine in the past had sought to provide readers newly discovered fiction writers, scientific discoveries and interesting historical portraits, McClure’s created a special war edition in June 1898, facing up to new conditions and new interests. Tarbell switched from historical research to reporting current affairs, providing an intimate perspective on the choices facing President McKinley. Ray Stannard Baker examined the newspaper industry itself and how it was covering the Cuban conflict, while William Allen White focused on the nationalism sweeping the country. After the war, McClure’s ran a profile of Roosevelt by Baker that provided “a magnificent example of the American citizen of social position, means, and culture devoting himself to public affairs.”

Explains Goodwin: “The advent of the Spanish-American war fueled the magazine’s evolution toward a new role, a crucial engagement in American society. ‘Having tasted blood,’ Tarbell recalled, ‘it could no longer be content with being merely ... readable. It was a citizen and wanted to do a citizen’s part.’”

The Rough Riders: Roosevelt signed up as a lieutenant colonel to go to war with a volunteer regiment in which cowboys, miners and hunters served alongside Ivy Leaguers, polo players and prominent yachtsmen. Legendary war correspondent Richard Harding Davis covered the exploits of these colorful warriors. Out of this reportage came the famous description of Roosevelt and the Rough Riders storming San Juan Hill, a story that made it seem like Roosevelt had single-handedly crushed the foe.

Roosevelt runs for New York governor: At the urging of Steffens and reformer friends, the hero of San Juan decided to run for governor. While they hoped he would run as an independent, Roosevelt succeeded in getting the backing of the head of the state Republican machine Thomas Collier Platt but assured independents that no deal had been made. In the end, Roosevelt won the election by less than 18,000 votes and was inaugurated as governor on January 2, 1899.

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governor and governor general

In his inaugural speech, Roosevelt made clear that he intended to be loyal to his party and work with it but that “the State is the first consideration.” Lincoln Steffens wrote in an analysis in McClure’s that Roosevelt’s governorship was “a test to determine whether a leader could serve both the party machine and the good of the state, whether he could simultaneously maintain his ideals and get things done.” To deny the popular governor a second term would be difficult but Steffens said that the “obvious solution” would be to promote Roosevelt to “the most dignified and harmless position in the gift of his country”—the vice presidency.

Roosevelt becomes vice president: Although Roosevelt didn’t want to become vice president, the stampede for his nomination grew. Only the conservative party Chairman Ohioan Mark Hanna balked: “Don’t you realize that there’s only one life between this madman and the White House?” In the end Hanna agreed that Roosevelt was the best man to strengthen the ticket and Roosevelt was nominated as President McKinley’s running mate. During the presidential campaign Roosevelt became “the central figure, the leading general, the field marshal” campaigning across the country.

After his election Roosevelt longed for some active enterprise but McKinley had no such plans. Roosevelt wrote a friend that the vice presidency “ought to be abolished” noting, “the man who occupies it may at any moment be everything; but meanwhile he is practically nothing.”

Taft goes to the Philippines: In 1901 Judge Taft embarked on the most gratifying period of his long period of public service, writes Goodwin, with his appointment to a new Philippine commission that would formulate a civilian code for governance. Despite some initial misgivings about his qualifications, Taft accepted the post, stipulating that he lead the commission. The five commission members were charged with designing a new colonial government for nearly 7 million people. Taft followed a “policy of conciliation” and held public hearings and solicited local opinion.

Nellie made it a rule that neither politics nor race would influence their hospitality. She held parties for hundreds in her spacious gardens and insisted “upon complete racial equality.” She worked on the reduction of infant mortality and advocated respect for the native culture.

In July 1901, Congress declared the Philippine insurrection over and transferred power from U.S. military authorities to civilian authorities. Taft was inaugurated as the first governor general of the Philippines, eliciting “the wildest of cheering, and the playing of national airs.”

The tables turn: As Taft began governing the Philippines, Roosevelt reflected on his predicament of entering public life back in Washington: “What I have seen of the careers of public men has given me the absolute horror of the condition of the politician whose day has passed; who by some turn of the kaleidoscope is thrown into the background; and who then haunts the fields of his former activity as a pale shadow of what he once was.”

But, Goodwin notes, “That kaleidoscope shifted in a way Roosevelt never anticipated.” On September 6, 1901, a young anarchist approached President McKinley to shake his hand at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, pulled out a revolver and shot the president. Eight days later the president died and Roosevelt became the youngest American president at 42.

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“that damned cowboy is president”

Throughout his career, Roosevelt worked to reconcile party allegiance with the drive to address social problems. He saw himself as conservative when compared with the Populists but believed that his party was in thrall to reactionaries who so “dreaded radicalism that they distrusted anything that was progressive.” As he took office as president on September 14, 1901, he would have to work with just such conservative Congressmen. Writes Goodwin, “he would work to ‘push’ them forward but recognized that genuine progress would require a direct appeal to the people ... To reach the general public he would enlist the new breed of independent journalists.” On his first day as president, he invited journalists to the White House and proposed to “keep them posted” on his evolving policies and plans as long as they promised “never to violate a confidence or publish news that the president thought ought not to be published.”

The first few months of the Roosevelt administration were about capturing the public imagination and taking on the issue of the trusts. As he prepared his State of the Union address, Roosevelt recognized that:

- Increasing corporate consolidation had produced more than 1,000 new mergers, including the creation of the world’s most colossal trust—J.P. Morgan’s United States Steel Corporation.
- The Republican Party’s future would be determined by its willingness to confront the trusts, but an open denunciation of the Republican alliance with big business would force the bosses against him.

- The most significant obstacle to progressive reform was the U.S. Senate. Senators were elected by their state legislatures and the majority owed their seats to state political machines.
- Five men, including Mark Hanna, dominated the Republican-controlled Senate's inner circle. Hanna had impeded antitrust suits and saw Roosevelt as a political hazard. Having opposed Roosevelt's vice-presidential nomination, he pointed out: "Now look, that damned cowboy is president of the United States!"
- Rather than try to wrest control from Hanna at this point, Roosevelt approached him, indicating that he hoped to share an intimacy with him as McKinley had. To the others he made expansive overtures as well, soliciting their suggestions and inviting them to the White House for confidential conversations.

Roosevelt's State of the Union address: Roosevelt's 1901 20,000-word address was carried to the House and Senate to be read out by a clerk. The two-hour-long speech, whose language couched its more radical ideas by touting the benefits of capitalism and condemning the populist call for the trusts' total destruction, set the stage for reform without immediately alienating corporate interests, proposing:

- The federal government's responsibility to regulate corporations in the public interest
- The creation of a Department of Commerce through which the government would "inspect and examine" corporate finances to determine if regulation or taxation was necessary
- Plans for the welfare of wageworkers
- Forest preserves
- The reorganization of the Army and expansion of the Navy

Says Goodwin: "The tenor of the State of the Union was viewed as 'characteristic of the man; self-assertive, determined, honest, patriotic, permeated with the spirit of progress.'" By the end of the

congressional session, it had passed a bill providing \$170 million to begin construction of the Panama Canal; the Newlands Reclamation Act, which set aside revenue from the sale of western public lands for the construction of dams and irrigation projects; and appropriated money for renovations to the White House. The creation of the new Department of Commerce had been debated at the committee level but faltered because of Republican opposition.

Up against the trusts: The trusts misread the State of the Union speech, seeing it as mere theater to satisfy reformers. Roosevelt's true intent became clear when he announced that the government would bring an antitrust suit against Northern Securities, a giant holding company that had recently merged the rail and shipping lines of several major tycoons. Roosevelt's attention had been caught by a series of profiles of the captains of industries by Ray Stannard Baker in McClure's.

- Baker had described Northern Securities as an “absolute dictator in its own territory.”
- Roosevelt went after the trust through an antitrust suit based on the Sherman Anti-Trust Law of 1890.
- A second suit followed against the beef trust, which parceled out territories and fixed prices.
- Although Roosevelt would have preferred to go after the trusts through legislation, with his way blocked in Congress, he pursued the judicial path.

The 1902 Coal Strike: An anthracite strike begun in the spring had caused great misery and a heat famine by the fall, as shortages of the coal that heated homes, schools, hospitals and government buildings was in short supply. Although Roosevelt had no legal means to intervene, he summoned union representative John Mitchell and members of the coal operators' board to a White House meeting in early October. After negotiations back and forth, Roosevelt ultimately found the way for the government to serve as peacemaker in an industrial dispute rather than as a strikebreaker. Writes Goodwin: “Acting as ‘the people's attorney,’ William Allen White

summarized, Roosevelt had defined the public interest in the previously private struggle between labor and capital. Understanding that the laissez-faire philosophy retained a powerful appeal, he had patiently waited through five months of the strike until the ‘steady pressure of public opinion’ accompanying the onset of cold weather created space for his unprecedented call to bring the two sides together.

The teddy bear: A cartoon of Roosevelt on a bear hunt—depicting him refusing to shoot a small bear that had been furnished for the occasion—gained wide popularity. As renditions of the cartoon proliferated, the bear kept dwindling in size until he appeared as a tiny cub, prompting toy store owners to market stuffed bears in honor of Teddy Roosevelt. “Soon the Teddy bear became one of the most cherished toys of all time,” says Goodwin.

Harnessing public opinion: Roosevelt’s popularity with the public kept growing—in the elections of 1902 the Republicans avoided the midterm curse and retained control of both houses of Congress.

Writes Goodwin, “More than any president since Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt was able to shrewdly calculate popular sentiment ... Over time he developed an uncanny ability to gauge the changeable pulse of the American public. His experience in bringing the suit against Northern Securities and mediating the Pennsylvania coal strike had evinced the signal role that the press could play in rallying the public support essential to achieve substantial reform.”

Looking ahead, Goodwin notes that “in order to aggressively pursue redress for the abuses and inequity of the industrial age, the president would need to ride a seismic shift in national consciousness. He would need an instrument ... that would not just explain but vividly illustrate the human and economic costs of unchecked industrial growth and combination. The complex and sometimes contentious partnerships that Roosevelt had forged with investigative journalists would soon illuminate corruption, as if hit by lightning, and clarify at last a progressive vision for the entire nation.”

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chapter eleven:

“the most famous woman in america”

The January 1903 issue of McClure’s contained extensive, hard-hitting investigative articles that Goodwin says “ushered in the distinctive new period of journalism that would later be christened ‘the muckraking era.’” Ida Tarbell aimed at Standard Oil, Lincoln Steffens exposed corruption in the mayoralty of Minnesotan Albert ‘Doc’ Ames and Ray Stannard Baker wrote about union workers who manipulated and deceived fellow workers. S.S. McClure attached an unusual editorial postscript to the magazine, which sold out within days, urging readers to take action against corruption in every phase of industrial life. Tarbell’s stories about Standard Oil continued for three years; McClure called her “the most famous woman in America.”

Ida Tarbell and Standard Oil: In 1901 S.S. McClure decided that trusts were the issue of the time; that Rockefeller’s Standard Oil was the “Mother of Trusts”; that John D. Rockefeller was suited to the biographical approach; and that Tarbell, who had grown up in the oil region, was the person to write this story. Her 12-part history of the Standard Oil Company spurred popular demand to dismantle the trusts and ensured her legacy as one of the most influential journalists of her day.

- In her first installment, she explored the birth of the oil industry in western Pennsylvania. “As Tarbell’s story unfolds,” writes Goodwin, “she describes how the enterprising individuals ... finally proved no match for the regimented power of Standard Oil. Her narrative plainly documents how the ascendancy of the company was aided at every stage by discriminatory railroad rates and illegal tactics.”

- Tarbell acknowledged Standard Oil's "legitimate greatness" and recognized Rockefeller's business acumen, but her assessment of his practices and unethical maneuverings is "unsparing," according to Goodwin. She maintained, "Every campaign against rival interests which the Standard Oil Company has carried on has been inaugurated, not to save its life, but to build up and sustain a monopoly in the oil industry."
- In her closing paragraph, writes Goodwin, Tarbell issued a challenge: "'And what are we going to do about it?'" Echoing McClure's celebrated editorial, she exhorts her readers, the American public, to take action."

Congressional action, 1903: Following Tarbell's sensational series, Roosevelt decided that Congress should not play "the ancient and honorable bunko game" where legislation fell "between the two stools" of the House and Senate with no time left at the end for a conference committee to reconcile the differences. His antitrust program, which ultimately passed, called for:

- A measure to strengthen existing laws against the discriminatory railroad rebates
- A bill to expedite legal proceedings against suspected trusts
- The creation of a cabinet-level Department of Commerce with regulatory powers over the large corporations. Writes Goodwin of Roosevelt's success: "Jubilant, Roosevelt boasted that 'from the standpoint of constructive statesmanship,' he considered the Department of Commerce and Labor, with a Bureau of Corporations, 'a much greater feat than any tariff law.'"

Why Roosevelt succeeded: Goodwin notes that a confluence of forces came together to make it possible for the legislation to pass because "a great many people had been thinking and talking about the problem of the trusts" and "a certain consensus of opinion had been

reached.” Tarbell also furnished a human face—John D. Rockefeller—for the bewildering and multifaceted trust issue and fomented public opinion in towns and villages, giving Roosevelt a target.

Concludes Goodwin: “With the passage of the rebate bill and the expedition bill and the establishment of the Department of Commerce, Roosevelt was convinced that he had ‘gotten the trust legislation all right,’ that Democrats could no longer wield the trust issue against his party.” Roosevelt’s three antitrust measures had moved government away from laissez-faire economic policy and in a progressive direction.

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chapter twelve:

“a mission to perform”

Following Roosevelt’s congressional success on April 1, 1903, he set out on a nine-week transcontinental train tour. The American political tradition maintained that active campaigning by a president—and a presidential candidate—was distasteful; this trip, therefore, was Roosevelt’s best chance to connect and gain “the people’s trust” before his bid for reelection. On this tour he also enunciated the idea of “a square deal for every man, great or small, rich or poor,” including Indians, Blacks, labor and capital. Roosevelt also focused on the importance of preserving the national—and natural—heritage from exploitation.

- At the Grand Canyon, he resolved to ensure its designation as a national park.
- He foresaw, contrary to the prevailing view, that natural resources were not inexhaustible.
- He lauded irrigation projects and the 1902 Reclamation Act, which made funds available to create dams, reservoirs and other irrigation projects in the West.

Ray Stannard Baker and Roosevelt: Upon his return to the White House, Roosevelt asked Baker, who had written for McClure’s a series of articles on labor, to look into issues of possible corruption in the Salt River. Baker did so and passed his meticulous research on to Roosevelt with the conclusion that government agents were doing everything possible there to carry out the president’s purposes in a complex situation. Baker also provided Roosevelt with information about labor racketeering.

Writes Goodwin: “With justifiable pride, [Baker] noted that between his own work and that of Tarbell and Steffens, his magazine was ‘probably doing more in stirring up the American people than any other publication ever did before.’”

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toppling old bosses

Lincoln Steffens examined politics—particularly machine politics. “The American people did not control the nomination process in these days before the direct primary,” writes Goodwin. “Machine politicians and party bosses—the very men Roosevelt had opposed throughout his career—determined the candidates, and their selections were then endorsed by the very same financial interests he had antagonized during his two years as president.” For Roosevelt to triumph over the bosses he needed to have “reform in the air.” The dramatic stories told in Lincoln Steffens’ series on municipal and state corruption inspired reformers at the local level to address government corruption at every level. Goodwin notes: “His series played a significant role in toppling old bosses, bringing a new generation of Roosevelt-type reformers to positions of power in cities and states across the nation.”

- Steffens focused on corruption in places such as St. Louis, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City and Cleveland.
- He believed that corruption began at the top and that it was “not merely political; it was financial, commercial, social.” The web of corruption radiated out from the captains of industry who would do almost anything to get lucrative franchises and privileges.

Roosevelt, S.S. McClure, Steffens and Mark Hanna: McClure’s was now a monthly “powerful exponent of the national revolt against corrupt and oppressive methods in business, in finance, and in government,” filled with “must-read” pieces that were spurring a

national conversation on contemporary issues. S.S. McClure decided to take on Mark Hanna, who was engaged in a battle with young reformers and whom Goodwin says “remained the sole person who could snatch the nomination from Roosevelt.”

According to Steffens, Hanna entered Cleveland politics to get special privileges for his street railway system. Through campaign contributions and bribery he “degraded the municipal legislature,” and his success led him to aim higher. Hanna became a U.S. senator by paying state legislators who chose the senator. Steffens concluded that the system Hanna created in Ohio was “government of the people by politicians hired to represent the privileged class ... the most dangerous form of our corruption.” The story did not appear in print when originally planned, however, because Hanna died of typhoid fever on February 15, 1904. With Hanna gone, the path to Roosevelt’s re-election was cleared.

The power of McClure’s: “The story is the thing,” said Sam McClure about the magazine’s success. “When Mr. Steffens, Mr. Baker, Miss Tarbell write they must never be conscious of anything else while writing other than telling an absorbing story.” The magazine as an instrument of reform was “due solely to its effective method of telling the truth, of giving stories vital interest.”

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“thank heaven you are to be with me!”

While reform moved ahead in the United States, Taft remained in the Philippines, hearing about events through correspondence with his family and the president. Openings on the Supreme Court, where he yearned to be, came up: Oliver Wendell Holmes was Roosevelt’s first appointment, and Taft declined Roosevelt when a second one came up because he still had important work in the Philippines. Finally, Roosevelt summoned Taft home in 1903 when his secretary of war announced he was leaving the government. “As Secretary of War you would still have the ultimate control of the Philippine situation,” wrote Roosevelt, “and whatever was done would be under your immediate supervision.” Nellie supported Roosevelt’s wish for Taft to come home, and although Taft wanted to stay out of politics, he accepted the post. Roosevelt’s response was “Thank Heaven you are to be with me!”

Taft as secretary of war: Taft was sworn in as secretary of war on February 1, 1904. Roosevelt loaded him down with work, and he became the “veritable pack horse for the Administration,” a “trouble-shooter” who was asked to be involved in more than military matters and the Philippines. Taft’s responsibilities included:

- Supervising the Isthmian Canal Commission that was building the Panama Canal
- Giving speeches for Roosevelt and providing advice during the presidential campaign
- Spending time at the House and Senate when he was extremely well-liked

- Successfully lobbying in Congress for a bill to subsidize the construction of a railroad system in the Philippines
- Working to secure congressional support for tariff reduction on Philippine products

The Supreme Court decision on Northern Securities: The court's opinion was critical for Roosevelt; a backing by the Supreme Court that Northern Securities was a monopoly that restricted trade would demonstrate a fundamental shift in the Republican Party's relationship with the trusts. Pronounced Justice John Harlan: "No scheme or device could more certainly come within the words of the [Sherman Anti-Trust Act] or more effectively and certainly suppress free competition between the constituent companies."

While savoring his victory, Roosevelt made clear that the government would not "run amuck" and that its "power should be exercised with extreme caution." Writes Goodwin: "As he worked to implement this vision for genuine but evenhanded reform into public policy, the president was relieved to have William Howard Taft at his side. The approaching campaign would require powerful advocates for Roosevelt's election and for his progressive agenda. With his affable nature and tempered approach, the new secretary of war would be Roosevelt's indispensable complement."

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chapter fifteen:

“a smile that won’t come off”

Taft served as Roosevelt’s campaign surrogate, clarifying and promoting his positions, since American political tradition saw it as unseemly for candidates for president to stump on their own behalf. When the Republican convention opened, Roosevelt was confident of being nominated but was not present at the convention—another tradition of the time—and received word of his unanimous nomination at the White House. He succeeded in getting his candidate chosen as the chairman of the Republican Party but was unable to dictate the Republican Party’s platform, particularly on the matter of the lowering of the tariff—an issue that the Democrats would seize upon to proclaim that a Republican victory would herald “four years more of trust domination, of high prices to the consumer, and of low prices to the producer.” Two weeks later, the Democrats nominated Judge Alton B. Parker.

Roosevelt’s acceptance of the party nomination again was, as per tradition, via a formal letter of acceptance. Parker’s spirited letter of acceptance railed against centralized government at home and imperialism abroad, and called for tariff reform and further trust regulation.

Taft campaigns: Although Taft disliked preparing and delivering public speeches, he was the sought-after speaker on the campaign trail. He became the spokesman for the administration and was dispatched around the country.

Baker, Roosevelt and labor: Tensions between labor and capital had been increasing and Ray Stannard Baker approached Parker and Roosevelt about their positions. Baker found he couldn’t decipher

Parker's positions, but Roosevelt sent him a 2000-word letter in reply to his inquiry, articulating his position on such matters as the eight-hour day, labor strife in Colorado, immigration law and convict labor. Roosevelt asserted: "When I say I wish to give a square deal to every man I mean just exactly that." Using the letter and Roosevelt's statement and decisions, Baker was able to present clearly where Roosevelt stood. Observes Goodwin: "The time and attention Roosevelt had devoted to the journalist's request proved most rewarding ... Baker's 'thorough' and 'painstaking' methods provided McClure's vast middle-class audience with a clear, illuminating portrait of the president's fair-minded and long-standing attitudes toward labor."

Roosevelt triumphs and promises not to run again: On November 8, 1904, Roosevelt cast his vote in Oyster Bay, New York, and then caught the train to Washington to await the results. At 9 p.m., Judge Parker conceded and an hour later Roosevelt met the press in the executive mansion office. He told them: "On the 4th of March next I shall have served three and one half years ... The wise custom which limits the President to two terms regards the substance and not the form, and under no circumstance will I be a candidate for or accept another nomination."

"When all the votes were finally tallied," writes Goodwin, "Roosevelt had achieved 'the greatest popular majority and the greatest electoral majority ever given to a candidate for President.' ... Everyone in the administration, Taft told his brother Charley, 'has had a smile that won't come off since the election.'"

There was also acclaim for Roosevelt's decision not to seek a third term with people thinking that he would now be independent of all party bosses and party machines. Notes Goodwin, however: "Theodore Roosevelt would come to bitterly regret his action, later reportedly telling a friend that if he could rescind the pledge, he would willingly cut off his hand at the wrist."

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chapter sixteen:

“sitting on the lid”

Following Roosevelt’s inauguration, there were high expectations that the conservative bloc in Congress would no longer hold him in check. Before getting down to business, Roosevelt went on a two-month vacation trip through the Southwest and Rocky Mountain region. When asked who would be in charge in his absence, Roosevelt remarked: “Oh, things will be all right. I have left Taft sitting on the lid.” Although Charles A. Fairbanks was the sitting vice-president, it was clear to everyone that Taft was the “acting President.” While Roosevelt was away, Taft dealt with issues concerning the construction of the Panama Canal and then, upon Roosevelt’s return, headed off for a visit to the Philippines, China and Japan. His meeting in Japan with the prime minister helped bring about Roosevelt’s brokering the end of the Russo-Japanese War in September 1905. (And Roosevelt was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role.)

The struggle against consolidation and corruption was a burgeoning movement across America. Roosevelt was aware that he needed to achieve a delicate balance to realign his party without compromising the nation’s prosperity.

Ida Tarbell and Standard Oil—again: An “Oil War” broke out in Kansas after Kansans elected a Republican who challenged the Republican machine—and Standard Oil—and promised to build a state refinery. Standard Oil retaliated by boycotting the state’s oil, and Tarbell jumped into the fray to cover the story. Commenting on her involvement she said: “The Kansans are not fighting now for the money they can make. They are not fighting because their oil doesn’t

market well. They're fighting because a nation, a trust, has sought to come into their state and dictate to them where their products shall go and what shall be paid for their products. It's the fight for justice and right."

Tarbell's reporting led to the commissioner of corporation's official investigation and a two-part report in which he found that:

- Standard Oil received the same "unjust and illegal" preferences from the railroads that Tarbell had written about, and these rebates, bribes and kickbacks facilitated the trust's development of an extensive pipeline system.
- Standard Oil had a monopolistic position in the petroleum industry.

Roosevelt sent the report to Congress saying: "All the power of the government will be directed toward prosecuting the Rockefeller trust." The Justice Department prepared cases and Judge Landis ruled in a case against Standard of Indiana that the company was guilty and imposed an enormous fine. John D. Rockefeller, however, was sanguine about the ruling and he commented, "Judge Landis will be dead a long time before this fine is paid." Rockefeller's prediction was telling, since 11 months later the appeals court threw out the decision on a technicality.

In a second case, the attorney general charged Standard Oil of New Jersey and its five-dozen subsidiaries with conspiracy to monopolize the oil industry in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. The federal court found in the government's favor and two years later the Supreme Court upheld the lower court's ruling. Notes Goodwin: "Even when the corporate 'octopus' was divided into 38 parts, Standard Oil of New Jersey preserved its identity, eventually morphing into Exxon; Standard Oil of New York incorporated as Mobil; and Standard Oil of Indiana evolved into Amoco."

Roosevelt's feelings about regulation: Although Roosevelt pursued antitrust suits, he believed the judicial system was ineffective for controlling giant corporations since it was not feasible for the Justice Department to carry on a large number of major suits. He felt that regulation was the way to proceed: "The design should be to prevent the abuses incident to the creation of unhealthy and improper combinations, instead of waiting until they are in existence and then attempting to destroy them."

Regulation would mean legislative action by the House and Senate, where conservative Republicans were a key bloc. Writes Goodwin: "Roosevelt's regulatory ideas would 'extend the power of the federal government' to an unlimited degree. 'Are we to have a national government as highly centralized as that of France or Germany?' opponents ominously queried, warning 'That is what we certainly shall have if we find no way of checking the tendencies in government of which Theodore Roosevelt is so conspicuous and enterprising an exponent.'"

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the american people reach a verdict

Roosevelt's presidency was marked by the passage of three monumental pieces of federal legislation: the Hepburn Act, which strengthened the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission and federal regulation of the railroads; the Federal Meat Inspection Act; and the Pure Food and Drug Act. These acts marked “the beginning of a new epoch in federal legislation ... to stay the hand of private greed” and protect the general welfare. Journalists played a key role in this process. “No sooner had journalists illuminated a problem than the fight to secure a remedy had begun,” writes Goodwin. “For pass them they must,” McClure's biographer noted. “That verdict had already been reached by the people.”

Railroad regulation: From his re-election, Roosevelt made clear that “we must strive to keep the highways of commerce open to all on equal terms.” To accomplish that, he believed the Interstate Commerce Commission needed the power to regulate railroad rates.

- S.S. McClure decided that the magazine's next series should concentrate on the railroads. He assigned it to Ray Stannard Baker, who believed that by giving readers “real facts” reporters could shape the discussion, as the journalist was “the true servant of democracy.”
- Roosevelt felt that he could get a bill through the House since its members would feel the direct public pressure of agitation against the railroads.
- Roosevelt invited Ray Stannard Baker to the White House to discuss his research. Writes Goodwin: “The president had

asked Baker 'to consult' with him often during the course of his research, promising to enable the magazine's effort to clarify the complex problem for the general public."

- Congress took up railroad regulation in its short winter session of 1905. The House passed a bill granting the ICC power to regulate rates, but the Senate scheduled its hearings after Congress had adjourned, ending the legislation's chances. Writes Goodwin, "Roosevelt concluded that his influence had been stunted: Once he relinquished the chance to run for a third term, the opposition concluded he 'need not be regarded as a factor hereafter.'"
- The railroads launched their own propaganda campaign against regulation.
- Baker's series "Railroads on Trial" showed how the railroads, despite the Elkins Act that barred cash rebates, managed to create special rates through rebate chicanery that the trusts participated in. The trusts' "evil power" lay not in their ability to force the railroads to give them lower rates, but in the lack of a specific rate.
- On January 4, 1906, Colonel William Hepburn, chairman of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, reported the administration-backed railroad bill to the House floor. The bill gave the ICC the authority to determine a "just and reasonable" maximum for disputed rates, challenging the free enterprise tenet that set prices according to supply and demand.
- The Hepburn Bill passed the House on February 8; however, Roosevelt was hampered in his influence in the Senate as the Republican conservatives contrived a deal whereby the floor leader was Democrat "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman, with whom Roosevelt had not spoken since a falling out.
- Public outrage reached its height with Baker's exposé of the techniques railroads used to malign and falsify the Hepburn Bill.
- Tillman eventually decided to help Roosevelt, who also succeeded in getting the cooperation of two Republican conservative stalwarts. The bill, with some amendments, passed by an overwhelming majority.

- Despite the bill's flaws, Roosevelt believed that the Hepburn Act represented "the longest step ever yet taken in the direction of solving the railroad rate problem." The railroads were brought under federal control, and the scope of the ICC's power was apparent when the Supreme Court later declined to review the facts in a case of rate revision—leaving Roosevelt and the progressives with a clear victory.

Of the battle for the Hepburn Act, Goodwin writes: "The president enjoyed widespread credit for the passage of the bill, exhibiting, one Democratic newspaper remarked, 'the politician's gift of knowing when to fight, and, as well, when to surrender.'" Roosevelt had sought a Republican majority for the original Hepburn bill; when the leader of his own party subverted his efforts, he had reached out to the Democrats. When that failed to produce a majority, he returned to his original provision, altered only by a single amendment. Even Tillman grudgingly acknowledged that "but for the work of Theodore Roosevelt, we would not have had any bill at all." Equally important was the galvanized public behind Roosevelt.

Upton Sinclair and *The Jungle*: The novelist Upton Sinclair, a friend of Baker and Lincoln Steffens, provided the meat for the next crusade against special privilege. *The Jungle* was a best-selling, fictional story of immigrants who came to pursue the American dream and suffered terribly. In the book Sinclair describes the horrifying physical conditions that the meatpacking workers and their families endured, their brutal hours of work with no compensation for injuries, the unsanitary conditions in which they labored in the meat district and ultimately the destruction of families. Roosevelt was among those who read the novel, and by the time he met with Sinclair, writes Goodwin, "a Department of Agriculture investigator was en route to the stockyards with an order from the White House to evaluate the novelist's charges."

The inspectors found the conditions comparable to those Sinclair had portrayed, and in May, a White House-backed bill was introduced in the Senate to institute a federal inspection program covering all phases of the meatpacking industry, from animal slaughter to

sausage and canned meat production. The bill passed the Senate but foundered in the House, and to push for passage, Roosevelt released a preliminary report to Congress—and the newspapers. In the end, a fairly comprehensive meat inspection bill emerged. “We cannot imagine any other President whom the country has ever had, paying any attention at all to what was written in a novel,” commented the New York Evening Post.

The Pure Food and Drug Act: Modeled on the McClure’s exposés, groundbreaking articles in Collier’s magazine on the patent medicine industry provided the impetus for a bill regulating food and drugs. The series revealed that of more than 200 patent medicines, most were either “harmless frauds or deleterious drugs.” Once again the public clamored for action; legislation passed in the Senate but languished in the House until the national uproar over diseased meat forced House Speaker Joe Cannon into action in June 1906. The landmark act gave the government the right to look at processed foods and patent medicines, forbade the sale of adulterated or misbranded food and drugs, and required proper labeling of packages and bottles.

Other progressive legislation: “During no session of Congress since the foundation of the Government,” the New York Times reported, “has there been so much done, first, to extend the Federal power of regulation and control over the business of the country, and second, to cure and prevent abuses of corporation privileges.” Other legislation included an employer’s liability law for the District of Columbia and the Antiquities Act, granting the president authority to declare national monuments on federal land.

At the same time, Roosevelt recognized his own future limitations: “I do not expect to accomplish very much in the way of legislation after this Congress, and perhaps this session. By next winter, people will begin to think more about the next man who is to be President; and then, too, by that time it is almost inevitable that the revulsion of feeling against me should have come. It is bound to come some time, and it is extraordinary that it has not come yet.”

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“cast into outer darkness”

McClure’s journalists viewed the legislative accomplishments of the 59th Congress as the opening salvo in the war on wealth and power. Investigative journalism had become its own movement, leading the satirist Finley Peter Dunne to observe: “The hand that rocks the fountain pen is the hand that rules the world.” But the times were changing. A schism was coming that would end McClure’s glorious era and turn Roosevelt against investigative journalists, whom he deemed muckrakers and “cast into outer darkness,” as Ray Stannard Baker described this change of heart.

The breakup of McClure’s: Sam McClure was both reckless and brilliant, suffering from constant mood swings. A series of troubling events, writes Goodwin, “became distressingly emblematic of the way his compulsions began to compromise the accomplishments and aspiration of his friends and colleagues in the magazine world.”

- In 1903, McClure entered into an affair that involved secret meetings, publishing of articles that were not up to par and letters between the lovers that could be damaging if published.
- He wrote ill-tempered critiques that upset the New York staffers.
- The exposure of McClure’s affairs led to a plan of financial compensation to an author who threatened to expose it.
- McClure began talking about plans for a second monthly McClure’s Universal Journal. This upset the staff writers, who saw it as competition to McClure’s and objected to his plan to publish both magazines from the same office. From Ida Tarbell’s point of view, writes Goodwin, “McClure’s scheme of consolidating different enterprises under the same roof

echoed the very trusts against which she and her colleagues had waged war.”

- John Phillips, who managed the publication while McClure was away for months at a time, saw that the company’s finances could not support an additional magazine and informed McClure he would resign if he did not abandon this plan. McClure refused to budge, and ultimately Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens and Baker joined Phillips in a new venture in 1906.

Roosevelt speaks out against muckrakers: Exasperated by a sensationalist attack on the U.S. Senate in a magazine owned by political rival William Randolph Hearst, Roosevelt denounced investigative journalists as muckrakers. The coincidence of Roosevelt’s remark with the first revelations about dissension at McClure’s led to rumors that the magazine was going to soften its exposés and that that was the reason for the journalists departure.

- Hearst’s criticism of the Senate appeared in a series called “The Treason of the Season” in *The Cosmopolitan*. The magazine’s circulation doubled and the piece attracted attention nationwide.
- In a counterattack, Roosevelt spoke out against the investigative journalists in 1906 at the annual dinner of the Gridiron Club. This informal meeting of reporters, editors, cabinet officials, the president and business and academic leaders featured skits and speeches. Writes Goodwin: “The president spoke without notes for 45 minutes, railing against ‘muckrakers,’ who saturated magazines and newspapers ‘with sensational articles,’ dredging all that was bleak and corrupt while ‘ignoring at the same time the good in the world.’”
- Roosevelt’s annoyance at the muckrakers went beyond the Hearst series. While McClure’s writers spent months researching their articles, a large number of “imitators” did not. Even when the articles were solidly researched, notes Goodwin, “Roosevelt feared that an incessant fixation on corruption had begun ‘to produce a very unhealthy condition of excitement and irritation in the public mind,’ leading to an ‘enormous increase in socialistic propaganda.’”

- Steffens had picked up on Roosevelt’s annoyance at the “new journalism” as the journalists and Roosevelt differed on how to deal with the corrupt system that invested special interests with undue power at the people’s expense. Steffens and his colleagues wanted to deal with the abuses of capitalism: “I’d rather make our government represent us than dig the canal; the President would rather dig the canal and regulate railways rates. So he makes his ‘deal’ with the speaker and I condemn it.”
- Roosevelt, observes Goodwin, focused on “practical leadership—a sense of when to move forward, when to hold back, when to mobilize the public, when to negotiate behind closed doors. Leadership that led to genuine progress depended upon an acute sense of timing, a feel for both the public and the congressional pulse.”
- In Roosevelt’s famous “Muckrake Man” address in April 1906, he cautioned that his words should not be distorted and that the battle against corruption and exploitation should continue. The journalists’ investigations were “indispensable,” but he also noted that when they wrote “sensational, lurid and untruthful articles,” they became “potent forces for evil.” His failure to discriminate between yellow journalism and responsible journalism led to the speech being viewed as an indiscriminate attack on all reform journalism.
- Morale among conservatives and corporate interests rallied in the wake of the “Muckrake Man” speech.

The American Magazine: Phillips and his colleagues, joined by William Allen White, bought The American Magazine when it was offered for sale. It never achieved the status of McClure’s, lacking from the start a sense of direction and a focused and clear passion.

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chapter nineteen:

“to cut mr. taft in two!”

In 1906, Roosevelt learned that there would soon be an opening on the Supreme Court, and he wanted to appoint Taft. Nellie and other Taft family members were opposed to the nomination, and Taft let Roosevelt know that he had conflicting feelings. The New York Sun commented that with so talented a public servant it was “impossible, under the Constitution and laws, to cut Mr. Taft in two!” Taft ultimately declined the Supreme Court opportunity.

Taft and the tariff: Taft’s struggle with conservative Republicans over the Philippine tariff led him to question the inequity of the entire domestic tariff system, which created immense advantages for eastern manufacturers and corporations over western farmers and small business. Roosevelt feared that a downward revision of the tariff would tear the Republican Party in two. In a major speech, Taft voiced his opposition to the conservative “stand-pat attitude” of the president and the speaker of the House.

Trouble in Cuba: In September 1906, rebellion against the regime of President Tomas Estrada Palma broke out and Roosevelt sent Taft and Assistant Secretary of State Robert Bacon to Havana to serve as arbitrators who could reconcile differences peacefully. They brokered an accord, and Taft served as the initial temporary governor general for a few weeks. Writes Goodwin, “Taft’s role in the crisis was generally praised.”

Midterm elections: Roosevelt dispatched Taft to the stump and, contrary to expectations of slippage, the Republicans retained a strong majority in the House and added four seats in the Senate.

Roosevelt travels to Panama—the first foreign trip by an American president: Two days after the midterm elections, Roosevelt and Edith set sail for Panama, marking the first time that an American president left the United States to visit a foreign country. Of this unprecedented step Goodwin writes: “Indeed, when his trip was first announced, ‘a large portion of the public gasped,’ anxious that ‘such a jaunt would be contrary to law.’ The public was assured, however, that ‘modern inventions’ would enable the president to keep abreast of the nation’s business ‘no matter where he may be.’”

The Brownsville, Texas, incident: A race-related incident occurred in August 1906 resulting in the death of one white citizen and the injury of another. Local townspeople blamed the African-American soldiers there, and Roosevelt directed that all 167 men in the unit be dishonorably discharged. Taft did not agree with this decision, and parts of it were eventually revoked. “Roosevelt’s handling of the Brownsville affair became a permanent scar on his legacy,” writes Goodwin.

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taft boom, wall street bust

Roosevelt's concern that his influence would wane proved prescient during the second session of the 59th Congress (December 3, 1906 – March 4, 1907). Two bills, held over from the previous session, passed: One banned corporate contributions in federal elections and the other stopped railroads from “knowingly” working employees for more than 16 consecutive hours. The conservative Republican leadership blocked:

- The Philippine tariff law
- A child labor law for Washington, D.C.
- A national inheritance tax
- A progressive income tax
- A federal licensing law for corporations

Roosevelt became increasingly concerned that he have a successor who would sustain and advance his agenda and in his eyes, that man was Taft.

Roosevelt pushes Taft's presidency; Taft vacillates: Roosevelt privately pushed colleagues, friends, journalists and visitors to consider Taft as his successor. Taft's candidacy, however, was so tepid that people thought that he had decided not to run. He also found internal wranglings distasteful. Taft lacked a bellicose spirit and, observes Goodwin, “the politics of personal destruction held no relish for a man ‘born with an instinct to be personally agreeable.’” Although Taft had robustly campaigned for Roosevelt, he did little as a candidate to get the public behind him. More problematic was Taft's failure to present himself as a political figure independent from Roosevelt.

The Panic of 1907: Stock prices kept slumping and by October 1907 the country was in a financial crisis: Brokerage firms went bankrupt and investors pulled their money from banks. J.P. Morgan eventually stepped in and, at the beginning of November, arranged a deal that saved a leading brokerage house from bankruptcy. Morgan acted only after Roosevelt agreed that the purchase would not trigger an antitrust suit against U.S. Steel, which had acquired a competitor. This decision did not sit well with Taft (who was in the Philippines at the time) and later caused tension between Taft and Roosevelt. Commented Roosevelt about the events: “Events moved with such speed that it was necessary to decide and to act on the instant ... I would have showed myself a timid and unworthy public servant, if in that extraordinary crisis, I had not acted precisely as I did.”

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kingmaker and king

By the time Taft returned, from the Philippines in the early winter of 1908, Roosevelt had reiterated that he would not run, leaving Taft as the Republican front-runner.

The nomination: While the Republicans met at their national convention in June 1908, Taft awaited word of his nomination in Washington, D.C. When a telegram arrived declaring that Taft had been nominated, Nellie's eyes "flashed with excitement" and Taft "laughed with the joy of a boy." The next day, the party nominated conservative New York Congressman James Sherman for vice president—a choice that neither Roosevelt nor Taft was very happy with—and approved an "equally unsatisfying" platform. A week later the Democrats met in Denver and nominated the progressive hero William Jennings Bryan.

The platform: Contrary to later political practices, a formal ceremony took place to deliver the official announcement of Taft's nomination. In his official hour-long Notification Day speech, Taft started with a tribute to Roosevelt's "movement for practical reform," and then delineated his own policies. "The chief function of the next Administration is distinct from, and a progressive development of, that which has been performed by President Roosevelt," he said. "The chief function of the next Administration is to complete and perfect the machinery by which these standards may be maintained, by which the lawbreakers may be promptly restrained and punished, but which shall operate with sufficient accuracy and dispatch to interfere with legitimate business as little as possible." He also broke with the Republican platform, calling for a progressive income tax and the direct election of senators.

The campaign: While Taft’s political strategists were reluctant to send him out on the road against the brilliant Democratic orator William Jennings Bryan, Taft made it clear that he would campaign. The “Taft Special,” which included a private railway car for him and his guests, a dining car, a sleeping car for the press and a baggage car, carried him to 21 states in 41 days, where he often met “monster” crowds brimming with enthusiasm.

The election: Taft carried 29 of the 46 states, beating Bryan by more than a million and a quarter votes. His popular margin, however, was half that of Roosevelt’s 1904 victory. In a short speech that night, he pledged “to use all the energy and ability in me to make the next Administration a worthy successor to that of Theodore Roosevelt.”

Goodwin writes: “Taft addressed his very first letter as president-elect to his friend and mentor Theodore Roosevelt: ‘My selection and election are chiefly your work,’ he told him. ‘You and my brother Charley made that possible which in all probability would not have occurred otherwise.’ In later years, Roosevelt would express resentment at being yoked with Taft’s brother as a joint benefactor, heedless that Charles’s financial support had enabled Will to sustain a career in public service. At that moment, however, Roosevelt responded with unalloyed joy.”

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chapter twenty-two:

“a great stricken animal”

Having served as U.S. solicitor general, governor general of the Philippines and U.S. secretary of war, Taft was, according to writer Henry Adams, “the best equipped man for the Presidency who had been suggested by either party during his lifetime.” He was reliable, hardworking, and loyal. Would the skills that Taft had acquired be those needed to lead a nation? In all his previous positions, he had relied on the guidance of a superior. How would he do on his own?

Choosing a Cabinet: Taft recognized the need to establish an identity independent from Roosevelt but procrastinated in taking action. He alienated members of the Roosevelt Cabinet when he didn’t notify them early on that they might be replaced; when he finally let them know that he might be making changes, he sent out a half-dozen letters simultaneously with the same stilted phrasing. This upset Taft’s former intimates in the Cabinet and gave outsiders the impression of “a clean sweep” of Roosevelt’s team.

Inauguration Day, March 4, 1909: For the first time since Andrew Jackson’s second inauguration, the inaugural ceremony took place in the Senate chamber—rather than on the steps of the Capitol—because Washington was experiencing the worst blizzard since 1888. Roosevelt broke with tradition by not riding back to the White House after the swearing in, instead heading straight for Union Station. “Since Roosevelt had abandoned tradition,” writes Goodwin, “Nellie followed suit, deciding to do what ‘no President’s wife had ever done’—accompany her husband from the Capitol to the White House.” Riding in a horse-drawn carriage the Tafts elicited “a continuous cheer” from the thousands who thronged the streets.

Taft takes charge: With Taft's genial nature, the press anticipated an "era of good feelings;" however, Taft was uneasy with the expectations that surrounded him. Writes Goodwin: "Asked a week after his inauguration how he liked being president, he confessed that he remained disoriented. During the first two months of the Taft administration:

- Taft decided that his White House would be open to all, and he would welcome opponents and members of Congress. He announced a series of a half-dozen formal dinner parties designed to unify "all the warring factions" in the House and Senate, and invited dozens of rank-and-file congressmen who had not previously attended a White House dinner. Undesirables, such as Democratic Senator Tillman of South Carolina, were also now welcome.
- He met with hundreds of audience-seekers, inviting them into his office and making them feel at home. But at the pace that he conducted business, one aide said, Taft would "be about three years behind" on the final day of his term.
- Taft ended business around five p.m. and then would go for a spin in one of the White House's three new automobiles. The White House stables were converted into an oversized garage.
- His attitude towards the press was markedly different than that of Roosevelt's. Under Roosevelt, the White House had been a "reporter's paradise," as he allowed them access to his comings and goings. But "in his first few weeks as president," writes Goodwin, "Taft discovered that 'casual remarks' made headlines, and quickly recognized 'the necessity of care' in everything he disclosed. Rather than hold informal daily discussions with members of the press, he would see individual journalists by appointment only."

Nellie as first lady: Nellie was finally in her element. She announced that she saw herself as "a public personage" and that she would "cheerfully meet any demands the position [made] upon her." This contrasted with Edith Roosevelt, who believed that "a woman's name

should appear in print but twice—when she is married and when she is buried.” Nellie planned on a far different role for herself:

- She agreed to become honorary chair of the Women’s Welfare Department of the National Civic Foundation, a progressive organization devoted to improving the lives of wage earners in government and industry positions.
- On the matter of women’s suffrage she declared: “The woman’s voice is the voice of wisdom and I can see nothing unwomanly in her casting the ballot.”
- She rejected the traditional restrictions on a woman’s role in society and believed in women’s education.
- She made it clear that the White House belonged to the people and declared that she would hold social affairs there “on a plane of the highest and broadest democracy.”
- Her first major public project, Potomac Park, was inspired by the Luneta in the Philippines, and aimed to transform the south side of Washington’s Tidal Basin into “one of the most famous esplanades of the world.” She purchased 100 Japanese cherry trees from around the country, and when the mayor of Tokyo learned about her plans, he sent an additional 2000 cherry trees to Washington.

Writes Goodwin: “It was evident to all that the vivacious and self-possessed first lady would continue to be instrumental in all the new president’s endeavors.”

Nellie is stricken: While sailing on the presidential yacht on May 17, 1909 Nellie suddenly grew faint and collapsed. When she got back to the White House, her right side was paralyzed, the right side of her face had fallen and she was unable to speak. Taft was described as looking “like a great stricken animal.” The public was unaware of the severity of her illness, and the White House doctor failed to recognize the seriousness of her stroke, diagnosing it as an attack of nervous hysteria when actually a blood vessel had burst in her brain, causing aphasia. For weeks Nellie was unable to put her thoughts into language although she was alert.

That summer, the family relocated to Beverly, Massachusetts, to a summer house where Nellie could recover. “The president himself was able to stay in Beverly for only twenty-two hours, just long enough to get Nellie settled. He was needed in Washington where the special session of Congress called to revise the tariff was culminating in a nasty battle ... The tariff struggle would indeed become a defining event in Taft’s young presidency, but the true crisis had already transpired. His eloquent and independent wife, the partner who had attended to every detail in the opening days of his administration, was permanently incapacitated. The fierce and loving voice that had counseled and prodded Taft to every achievement and consoled him through every insecurity and difficulty was silent.”

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a self-inflicted wound

The Republican establishment had insisted for more than a decade that the country's high tariff structure was the engine of American prosperity and critical to the nation's industrial development. Protectionism was a basic component of conservative ideology. Roosevelt, although sympathetic to progressive claims that high tariffs strengthened monopolies and artificially inflated prices, refused to deal with the issue, knowing that a tariff battle would splinter the Republican Party. By the time Taft took office, however, the tariff question had to be addressed, and he was clear on where he stood. Writes Goodwin, Taft was "tenaciously advocating for revision," arguing that duties "should be levied simply to 'equal the difference between the cost of production abroad and at home.'" He called for a special session of Congress to revise the tariff.

The need to enlist the public in the tariff battle: With the old guard, which opposed tariff revision and was entrenched in both houses of Congress, journalists predicted that change would have to be achieved by an "uprising and demonstration of popular opinion," similar to what had occurred with other recent legislation.

- In 1909, Ida Tarbell wrote a series in *The American Magazine* framing the tariff schedule as a moral issue. She showed that the duties on hide and thread benefitted the Beef Trust, the United Shoe Company and the Leather Trust at the consumer's expense, noting that the average working-class family spent more than one quarter of their clothing outlay on the buying and mending of shoes.
- Despite greater public awareness, Taft struggled to get the public stirred up.

- An effort by insurgents to oust Republican House Speaker Joseph Cannon, a staunch supporter of protectionism and special interests, damaged Taft even before he took office. He realized that he needed to work within the party machinery and stood by Cannon. The decision wasn't critical, but his public declaration of surrender eliminated any advantage he might have had. Taft's later meeting with Cannon and Republican members of the Ways and Means Committee also discouraged the insurgents.

Observes Goodwin: "Perhaps it was inevitable that Taft's temperament ... would ultimately lead him to work within the system rather than mobilize external pressure from his bully pulpit. But his conciliatory approach left his administration and the American people at the mercy of Joseph Cannon."

Taft's message to Congress on the tariff: Taft sent a message to Congress to open its special session on March 16, 1909. The presidential message, expected to be historic, contained only 340 words and had been written that morning in 15 minutes. "Without an inherent 'flair for the dramatic' and hoping he might 'avoid the bitter feuding with Congress that had marked Roosevelt's last days in office,' he had chosen to launch his administration with 'no loud noises, no disturbances of the atmosphere,'" writes Goodwin.

- Taft was uncomfortable using the bully pulpit to get his message across.
- Taft stopped the weekly press conferences.
- Although journalists like Ray Stannard Baker and Tarbell were eager to help push for tariff revision, Taft did not turn to them.

The legislative battle: The tariff fight had three parts: deliberation in the House, the Senate and then a conference committee. Cannon and Republican Senator Nelson Aldrich advised him to hold off intervening until the conference committee met—rather than in

the earlier discussions. By keeping his distance, Taft hampered his own efforts.

- The House passed the Payne bill along straight party lines and Taft was pleased with the result.
- In the Senate, dissent arose from Aldrich. “This was the time when Taft should have summoned the press,” writes Goodwin, but “public confrontation was not in the President’s disposition.”
- The Senate passed its bill restoring duties on hides and raw materials and left the controversial wool and cotton schedules intact.
- There was mixed reaction to the bill since it retained—and even increased duties—on commodities such as cotton and wool.

Taft’s 13,000-mile western tour and the tariff: Taft hoped that by traveling from the Alleghenies to the Rockies and addressing the tariff issue he could sway the public towards the tariff revision. He acknowledged that the bill was less than many people had wanted but believed that it represented the most that could be extracted from Congress. Writes Goodwin, however, “In his strategy to realize this ambitious agenda, Taft stumbled badly from the outset.”

- In his opening appearance in Boston, he announced that he would not discuss the tariff in order “to leave something” for future audiences.
- In another speech, he talked about the bill’s merits and faults but then launched into a discussion of Representative Tawney’s decision to support the bill and the importance of party solidarity over reducing certain schedules. His statement that the Payne tariff bill was the “best bill that the Republican Party ever passed” made headlines nationwide; the New York Times charged that Taft “has decided to abandon the cause of tariff reform.”
- The long tour was successful, however, in drawing out the public—80,000 showed up in Seattle—and made clear that Taft “really and sincerely likes people.”

Upon returning to Washington on November 10, concludes Goodwin, “behind the ebullience and the cheerful faces that greeted Taft when he stopped off the train, tensions were brewing that would prove calamitous for the new president’s administration. Taft’s optimism was soon punctured by the realization that his inner circle was ‘full of despair and predicting all sorts of evil’—harboring personal and political wounds that Taft’s honorable nature had small hope of suturing.”

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st. george and the dragon

The rift between the the Agriculture Department's Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot, Roosevelt's close ally in the conservation crusade, and Interior Secretary Richard Ballinger, Taft's appointee to replace Roosevelt's James Garfield, flared up while Taft was on his road trip and escalated upon his return. Writes Goodwin: "The controversy would pit the East of America versus the West, corporate interests against public rights, developers against conservationists—until all the divisive factions at play in the confrontation between Pinchot and Ballinger were framed as the opening volley in the battle for the 1912 presidential nomination."

Hydroelectric power: Roosevelt believed in the future of hydroelectric power but warned Congress that the industry was consolidating with General Electric and Westinghouse. He warned that a monopoly similar to that in the oil industry might develop unless the government leased potential power sites on terms favorable to the public interest to developers who were interested in the properties.

- Secretary Garfield, without congressional authorization but with Roosevelt's approval and Pinchot's help, used executive orders to withdraw some 1.5 million acres of land from private development. Some of these protected lands had little connection to potential waterpower sites.
- Within three weeks of taking office, Ballinger, a lawyer and former judge, restored the majority of Garfield's withdrawals to the public domain. He felt that Roosevelt's administration had acted illegally by not having congressional authorization nor the data to determine potential locations for hydroelectric development.

- Taft backed Ballinger's decision that the issues should be resolved "on the basis of law" and that the "sweeping declaration of executive authority" behind the withdrawals misconstrued "the entire theory of the Federal Constitution" which delegated specific powers to the three branches.
- Progressives reacted with outrage at Ballinger's decision, while more conservative critics praised the shift away from Roosevelt's "cowboy methods."
- Pinchot called on Taft, who asked Ballinger to halt any further restorations and re-withdraw lands that might be valuable for water power purposes.
- By early August, the arguments had come to a head and Pinchot attacked Ballinger head-on in a speech; at the same time, a press story appeared claiming that there had been a land grab in Montana by corporations. Ballinger ultimately proved that the land grab story was riddled with errors, and Pinchot acknowledged that he had been mistaken in his charge that "monopolists had grabbed off" valuable Montana waterpower sites.

But, writes Goodwin, "by then Ballinger had lost the public battle; the impression that he had betrayed Roosevelt's conservation policies was widespread. The controversy between Pinchot and Ballinger had 'assumed a certain symbolic importance' with the chief forester advocating for the public and the interior secretary representing the corporations."

The Cunningham Coal Scandal: In this complicated story, field investigator Louis Glavis approached Pinchot, charging that Ballinger's Interior Department was preparing to hand over 5,000 acres of rich coal land to a syndicate headed by Seattle developer Clarence Cunningham. Glavis had evidence that Cunningham was violating Alaska's land law and that Ballinger had been closely identified with members of the Cunningham group at various stages of the claims process. Pinchot urged that the president meet with Glavis and Taft asked Ballinger to respond to the charges. Writes Goodwin, "The scandal and ensuing congressional investigation

would eventually become the ‘driving wedge,’ which ‘slowly but surely’ created an unbridgeable ‘chasm’ between William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt.” By the time the hearings were over, public confidence in Taft had been lost and “reformers’ faith in the president, already weakened by the tariff struggle, had plummeted. The split in the Republican Party appeared irreparable.”

Taking “the measure of Taft”: The Republican insurgent cause gained support from Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and William Allen White who eventually came out against Taft over the tariff issue and his support of the Republican leadership. In an article, Baker provided a balanced assessment examining the president’s strengths and weaknesses, noting that the public liked his warmth and his humble and accessible manner. But his amiable nature also kept him away from the rough-and-tumble of politics and the need to fight for himself and his convictions. Taft also could not accept honest criticism and avoided dealing with the press and its concerns.

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“the parting of the ways”

During Roosevelt’s yearlong safari,

Taft had written to him but had not heard back; the lack of communication between the two became public knowledge when Taft had to deny a newspaper report that Roosevelt had written him endorsing his administration’s accomplishments.

Roosevelt was aware of the activities back home, as he had received letters from disgruntled progressives. Additionally, the Roosevelt children wrote him that they felt they had not been properly treated under Mrs. Taft. Roosevelt did get in touch upon his return but stopped short of a meeting.

Roosevelt re-enters the political arena: Roosevelt immediately became a contributing editor to the weekly public affairs magazine *The Outlook*, and within a week of his homecoming met with Governor Charles Evans Hughes and agreed to back the governor’s direct primary bill.

- The boss-controlled New York Senate defeated the direct primary bill, and the New York World immediately declared, “It is Mr. Roosevelt who is beaten.”
- Roosevelt decided to run for the post of temporary New York State convention chair, but the old guard Republican bosses opposed him. Taft said that he would not be dragged into the battle, so the Republican State Committee proposed its own candidate, James Sherman, and “insinuated that Sherman had the backing of the Administration.” Sherman was elected.

- Roosevelt was incensed when he heard reports that Taft had conspired to bring about his defeat. Taft finally issued a formal statement denying that he had “ever expressed a wish to defeat Mr. Roosevelt,” but the damage had been done.

The New Nationalism: Roosevelt went on a three-week speaking tour in August 1910. In a radical, dedicatory speech at the John Brown Memorial Park in Osawatomie, Kansas, he joined the “front rank” of insurgent Republicans, when he proclaimed that:

- “The New Nationalism puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage” and such an approach “regards the executive power as the steward of the public welfare. It demands of the judiciary that it shall be interested primarily in human welfare rather than in prosperity.”
- “Fair play under the present rules of the game” was not enough and the rules needed to be “changed so as to work for a more substantial equality of opportunity.”
- “The struggle for freedom” demanded a fight for popular rule against the special interests.
- There should be direct primaries and laws forbidding corporations from directly funding political objectives.
- An income tax and an inheritance tax on large fortunes was needed.
- New laws were needed regulating child labor and women’s work, enforcing better working conditions and providing vocational training.
- “No matter how honest and decent we are in our private lives, if we do not have the right kind of law and the right kind of administration of the law, we cannot go forward as a nation.”

Taft reacted to reports of Roosevelt’s speech, commenting, “He is going quite beyond anything that he advocated when he was in the White House and has proposed a program which it is absolutely impossible to carry out except by a revision of the Federal Constitution.” He perceived this and other speeches as Roosevelt’s

nonsupport of him as a candidate in 1912. To Archie Butt, an aid who served under both Roosevelt and Taft, Taft said: "I know how it distresses you, Archie, to see Theodore and myself come to the parting of the ways."

Roosevelt and the New York State Republican Convention: Roosevelt triumphed over Sherman at the state convention and got fellow progressive Henry Stimson nominated for governor and a fairly progressive platform adopted, including a plank calling for direct primaries. The platform, however, also endorsed Taft for president in 1912 and approved the tariff. Meeting with Ray Stannard Baker shortly afterwards, Roosevelt acknowledged that he and Taft "had wholly parted company," and reflecting on their conversations afterwards, Baker sensed that "Roosevelt would ultimately fail in his attempt to play 'the old game' of serving 'both party and principle.'"

The 1910 midterm election rout: In the weeks that followed, Roosevelt campaigned for the Republican Party in the midterm elections. After more than a decade of Republican rule, however, the party's prospect had dimmed since the public was frustrated by the cost of living, the high tariffs and machine politics. The Democrats gained control of the House by nearly 60 votes, reduced the Republican majority in the Senate to 10 seats and now held 26 of the 48 governorships.

New Jersey Democrat Woodrow Wilson beat the Republican candidate by one of the largest margins in state history, and the entire New York State ticket lost. Despite the clear national trend, observes Goodwin, "journalists interpreted the New York result as a 'crushing rebuke' to Theodore Roosevelt" and the loss hit him hard. "As president and head of the Republican Party, Taft was, of course, more responsible than anyone for the magnitude of the Republican loss." Goodwin also notes that the shared sense of loss created by the midterm elections brought about a temporary rapprochement between Roosevelt and Taft.

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“like a war horse”

As the split in the Republican Party widened, Senator Robert LaFollette continued to push the progressive agenda and public excitement for a Roosevelt candidacy grew. In December, Ray Stannard Baker wrote to LaFollette that despite Roosevelt’s insistence that he was not a candidate, he seemed “like a war horse beginning to sniff the air of distant battles.”

The National Progressive League: In January 1911, LaFollette brought together a group of progressive leaders to fight for the direct election of senators, direct primaries to replace party caucuses, the direct election of delegates to the party’s national convention and state constitutional amendments to provide for the initiative, referendum and recall. The charter membership of this organization included nine U.S. senators, six governors and 13 congressmen. The Washington press viewed the League as “an anti-Taft movement,” designed to boost the presidential prospects of LaFollette. At this point, the relationship between Roosevelt and LaFollette was cordial, although neither liked the other. LaFollette viewed Roosevelt as an opportunist; Roosevelt considered LaFollette “an extremist.”

Reciprocity with Canada: Behind the scenes in 1910, Taft initiated negotiations with Canada for a reciprocity agreement that would drastically reduce or eliminate tariffs between the countries. In January 1911, the negotiators announced an agreement to be implemented by “concurrent legislation” in Congress (by a two-thirds vote of the Senate) and the Canadian Parliament, rather than through a treaty agreement. This proposed agreement provided for free trade in agricultural products, reduced tariffs on manufactured

goods, and, if passed, would halt the rising cost of living that was a major source of public dissatisfaction.

- Taft called a special session of Congress to consider the reciprocity legislation. Taft believed his chances with the new Congress would be better because of a Democratic majority in the House and greater representation in the Senate.
- In contrast to his actions during the 1909 tariff fight, Taft summoned congressional leaders to meetings at the White House, took them for sails on the presidential yacht, and gave speeches.
- In a strange twist, the insurgents led the fight against reciprocity since farmers, who were their power base, feared the competition of cheaper Canadian food products.
- On April 21, 1911, the House, with strong Democratic support, passed a comprehensive agreement and two months later the Senate followed suit. Taft's success with reciprocity and subsequent rise in public approval significantly altered the political landscape.
- In Canada, however, the Parliamentary debate broke down. Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier dissolved Parliament and took the case for reciprocity to the people in a September election. His decision backfired when the Canadians threw his government out of office, leaving the possibility of free trade "dead as a ducat."

The Tafts' Silver Anniversary party: Nellie had never forgotten the "sense of wonder" she had felt as a 16-year-old when she visited Washington for Rutherford and Lucy Hayes' anniversary celebration and she resolved to coordinate "an equally grand party that 'would be remembered through life by all who were fortunate enough to be present.'" She invited all members of official Washington, sending out more than 5,000 invitations. Although Nellie suffered another stroke just weeks before the event, she recovered sufficiently to be able to appear at the party. The day was a great success for the Tafts; however, the Roosevelts did not attend the party and the tension between the two men continued to build.

Arbitration Treaty among the United States, England and France: In August, after months of negotiation, representatives of the three countries came to the White House to sign a comprehensive treaty agreeing that “every contentious issue that might arise, even those matters relating to national honor, would be ‘subject to arbitration,’” writes Goodwin. “Taft believed that if the treaty emerged relatively intact from the Senate, it would be ‘the greatest act’ of his tenure as president.”

- Roosevelt came out against the proposed treaty. In September, as the Senate prepared to debate the treaty, he declared, “it is one of our prime duties as a nation to seek peace. It is an even higher duty to seek righteousness.”
- Taft set out on a two-month train trip through the West to build support for his policies. At this point, he learned that the reciprocity treaty had been defeated in Canada and in Washington the Senate was crafting amendments. The press deemed the trip a failure.
- Roosevelt continued his attacks on Taft. Commenting on Taft’s possible run for a second term, he said, “As for my ever having any enthusiasm for Taft again, it is utterly impossible. I shall support him if nominated because I do not believe that there is any ground for permanent hope in the Democratic Party.”

Roosevelt, Taft and trust-busting: On October 27, Roosevelt’s 53rd birthday, the Taft administration filed a suit against the massive U.S. Steel Corporation and its subsidiaries, focusing on U.S. Steel’s acquisition of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company that Roosevelt had sanctioned in 1907. The press focused on comments within the Justice Department’s filing that criticized Roosevelt and suggested that he had not understood “that a desire to stop the panic was not the sole moving cause, but that there was also the desire and purpose to acquire control of a company that had recently assumed a position of potential competition of great significance.”

- Roosevelt was furious and used the incident to attack the administration’s entire antitrust policy.

- Goodwin notes, however, that the Taft administration had instituted more antitrust suits than Roosevelt's and the U.S. Steel case was just the latest. Though Roosevelt had won great popularity as the nation's trust-buster, Taft was criticized by the press for the same behavior.
- The times had changed: the public expectation was no longer for "old-fashioned" trust-busting but for government regulation to prevent the formation of monopolies from the outset.

Roosevelt prepares to run: By December, public excitement had built for a Roosevelt run. One Ohio newspaper poll of more than 16,000 Republican voters showed nearly three-fourths of them supporting Roosevelt. Baker and others sensed that Roosevelt was contemplating a run, despite his insistence that he was not a candidate.

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“my hat is in the ring”

Leading up to the 1912 elections, Roosevelt, Senator Robert LaFollette and Taft jockeyed for the Republican Party nomination. Yet during a long period of uncertainty, it was not clear what Roosevelt’s intentions were. “To be or not to be?” fretted Lincoln Steffens. The question was answered in February when Roosevelt declared, “My hat is in the ring.”

LaFollette: By January 1912, it was clear that Roosevelt was using LaFollette as a “stalking horse” to test Taft’s strength. When Gifford Pinchot and others pressured him to leave the race, LaFollette’s office issued a statement: “Senator La Follette never has been and is not now a quitter. He will be there until the gavel falls in the convention announcing the nominee.” At a banquet before newspapermen in February, he hurt his chances when, in a voice that was “acid and raucous,” he berated the press as instruments of the “predatory interests.” The damage to LaFollette’s campaign, writes Goodwin, “proved irreparable. As he later acknowledged, his supposedly ‘shattered health’ [there had been rumors] provided a pretext for hundreds of his supporters who wanted to ‘switch to Roosevelt’ but would have felt guilty doing so.”

Taft’s awkward position: By delaying entering the Republican race, Roosevelt also destabilized Taft’s position. Taft didn’t want to tangle with Roosevelt and may have toyed with the idea of withdrawing. But, writes Goodwin, “the dignity of the presidency—and his duty to the people who elected him—ultimately prevented such a move. ‘I hate to be at odds with Theodore Roosevelt, who made me President,’ he told [his brother] Horace, ... ‘but I do not recognize any

obligation growing out of my previous relations to step aside and let him become a candidate for a third term when he specifically declined a third term.”

Roosevelt comes out fighting: In an inflammatory speech in Columbus, Ohio, on February 21, 1912 Roosevelt set out his current thoughts: “We Progressives believe that human rights are supreme over all other rights; that wealth should be the servant, not the master of the people.” Reformers were engaged in an epic battle “on behalf of the common welfare” and that the people’s wishes, not that of the special interests, propelled the government. “Unless representative government does absolutely represent the people it is not representative government at all.”

- He endorsed efforts to put additional “weapons in the hands of the people,” including the direct primary, the initiative, and the referendum.
- He demanded federal laws to regulate child labor and women’s working conditions, to establish an income tax, and secure workmen’s compensation.
- He also introduced a radical proposal—the recall. Roosevelt maintained that “if there must be a decision by a close majority, then let the people step in and let it be their majority that decides.” The press railed against Roosevelt’s idea of a “Court of the Crowd” and his recall position estranged him from several of his closest allies.

The Republican presidential campaign gets underway: On February 25, Roosevelt officially announced that he had entered the presidential race. By coincidence, the Roosevelt and Taft national headquarters, which were located two blocks away from each other, opened on the same day.

- Roosevelt’s radical Columbus speech gave Taft the chance to articulate his own position on judicial recall warning. He lashed out against the dangers of subjecting judicial decisions to the “momentary passion of a people.”
- As the electioneering began, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Oregon, North Dakota and California had

adopted the direct primary. In the other states, delegates were chosen at district and state conventions where local machines and federal patronage gave the president an advantage. At many state conventions, brutal fights broke out between Roosevelt and Taft supporters.

The direct primaries begin: Roosevelt recognized that his best chance of capturing the Republican Party nomination rested in the expansion of the direct Primary system beyond the current six states. Writes Goodwin: “He transformed the ‘sluggishly moving cause’ into a ‘torrential crusade.’” Taft was cautious, however, because the political climate made opposition to direct primaries awkward. As spring began, the direct primary system had increased to 13 states.

- In North Dakota, LaFollette bested Roosevelt 58 percent to 39 percent with Taft getting just 3 percent of the vote.
- In New York, Taft crushed Roosevelt by a margin of eight to one, although there had been some problems with the election machinery leading to questions about the polling.
- In Illinois, Roosevelt stumped extensively, met enthusiastic crowds, and swept to victory carrying every district in the state but one, and electing 56 of the 58 delegates.
- In Pennsylvania, Roosevelt captured 68 of 76 delegates, leading the Pittsburgh Press to proclaim, “The stampede is on.”

Taft fights back in Boston: The press deemed the April 30 Massachusetts primary as “the Gettysburg of the Republican presidential test.” Taft, aware of the high stakes, broke with the long-standing tradition that kept sitting presidents away from campaigning on their own behalf and came in person to deliver his message to the people. After a train trip that took him to half a dozen small towns, Taft spoke to an immense crowd at the new Boston Arena. During the speech, Taft asked voters to consider whether Roosevelt was giving him “a square deal,” pointed out that major segments of the population were voiceless (as women were not allowed to vote), responded to each of Roosevelt’s 11 accusations against him and attacked the former president’s pursuit of a third term. On April 30, Taft won a narrow victory in Massachusetts.

Concluding the primary season: After Massachusetts, Roosevelt captured Maryland and later California. In the battle for Ohio, Taft's home state, campaigning reached a head, with Roosevelt calling Taft "a puzzlewit" and a "fathead," while Taft struck at Teddy's egotism. Ultimately Roosevelt carried Ohio and went on to take New Jersey and South Dakota.

Writes Goodwin: "In nine of the thirteen states where direct primaries had been held, Roosevelt had won overwhelming victories. Taft had carried only New York and Massachusetts. La Follette had secured North Dakota and Wisconsin. The total popular vote for Roosevelt stood at 1,214,969, with Taft garnering 865,835 votes and La Follette 327,357."

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“bosom friends, bitter enemies”

As Republicans prepared to meet in Chicago in June to select their presidential nominee, observers around the nation and the world commented on the future. The Republican National Convention of 1912 predicted the election would be “the most exciting ever held in the history of the country,” since the opponents “once bosom friends” were now “bitter enemies,” with a president pitted against an ex-president for the party’s nomination. While the vast majority of the primary voters were in Roosevelt’s camp, Taft counted on the support of the states where party organizations still held control of the selection process. Although Roosevelt claimed that the Republicans would “not dare to oppose the will of the majority” because it “would mean ruin to the Republican Party,” Goodwin notes, “in truth, neither campaign arrived in the Windy City with enough votes to take the nomination on the first ballot.” The stage was set for the epic battle.

Contested delegate seats and rival delegations: Before the convention could begin, a committee had to settle disputes over more than half the seats needed for victory. The National Committee ultimately awarded 235 to Taft and 19 to Roosevelt.

- The first contests were from the South, where Taft secured most of the votes before Roosevelt entered the race.
- The committee split along partisan lines—39 voting for Taft delegates and 14 for Roosevelt—in rulings on critical contests in Washington, Indiana, Texas and California. “The National Committee’s decision to award the majority of the Texas delegates to Taft represented what many considered the most glaring violation of ‘fair play,’” writes

Goodwin. “The committee acknowledged that the Roosevelt delegation had been legally chosen according to party rules but claimed that the rival Taft delegation, selected at a rump convention, had greater popular support. Seating the Taft delegation, the committee argued, was an important step toward eliminating ‘boss rule’ in the state of Texas.”

- In the case of Washington, where primary contests had favored Roosevelt by two-to-one and even 10-to-one margins, the committee did not abide by the votes because of evidence of “irregularities” in the city primaries and instead decided to stand by the proceedings of the state party organization, which had selected Taft.
- In Indiana, the committee refused to examine a series of questionable district primaries in which Taft had emerged as the winner.
- In California, with its primary law calling for delegates to be elected at large, Roosevelt triumphed by 77,000 votes so it was argued that he should get all 26 state delegates. Taft had carried a district in San Francisco, however, and the committee awarded him two delegates.

Roosevelt takes the unprecedented step of coming to Chicago:

Roosevelt headed for Chicago, charging that “a small knot of professional politicians” were attempting “to steal” the right of the people “to make their own nomination” and that the rank-and-file Republican voters had made their will known in primaries and were “not in the mood to see their victory stolen from them.” The Chicago populace went “plum crazy” with an immense crowd greeting his train at La Salle Station. The next day, before a crowd of thousands, Roosevelt delivered what critics deemed “the most moving speech of his career,” in which he stated that “Mr. Taft had definitely and completely abandoned the cause of the people and had surrendered himself wholly to the biddings of the professional political bosses.” He asked those backing La Follette to join him and declared: “A period of change is upon us ... Our opponents, the men of reaction, ask us to stand still. But ... we must either go forward or go backward.”

Roosevelt, the bull moose: In response to a newspaperman's question about whether he was prepared "to stand up to the rigors of what lay ahead," Roosevelt replied, "I'm feeling like a bull moose." Observes Goodwin: "The image of the antlered king of the northern wood whose supposed instinct was 'to gore his antagonist' reflected Roosevelt's combative mood," and "provided the enduring symbol of his campaign."

The Republican National Convention: As the convention opened on June 18, the Washington Post reported: "It is almost incredible to hear at a national convention the question seriously discussed if there will be firearms used and whether blood will be shed, but one can hear this at every step in the frightful jam and welter in the hotel lobbies."

- Taft and Roosevelt supporters tangled over who would be the temporary chair. Before the fight over the temporary chair could get underway, however, Roosevelt's floor leader demanded that 72 Taft delegates be replaced by "honestly elected" Roosevelt delegates. Three hours later Elihu Root, Taft's selection, won narrowly (558 to 501), helped in part by Robert La Follette's delegates who refused to support Roosevelt. Pandemonium erupted; fistfights broke out, and the police intervened to prevent wholesale rioting.
- The convention's second day focused on the delegate confirmation process for the contested seats. In a pivotal ruling, Root allowed all the contested delegates to participate in the makeup of the Credentials Committee, which essentially delivered control of the convention to Taft.
- Talk of a third party began at a 2 a.m. meeting of Roosevelt's inner circle in his hotel suite.
- Returning to the conference room where credential deliberations were going on, Roosevelt told his delegates and supporters that if the convention did not purge the tainted roll, he had resolved "to lead a fight for his principles in defiance of any action of the regular Republican convention," that he would release his supporters, but that those who chose to stay were invited to participate in the birth of a new party.

- The Credentials Committee ultimately seated the Taft delegates. With Taft's nomination on the first ballot virtually guaranteed, a Roosevelt delegate read a statement on his behalf: "This action makes the convention in no proper sense any longer a Republican convention, representing the real Republican Party, therefore I hope that the men elected as Roosevelt delegates will now decline to vote on any matter before the Convention ... Any man nominated by the Convention as now constituted would be merely the beneficiary of this successful fraud." These inflammatory words led to Taft delegates attacking Roosevelt delegates and brawls throughout the galleries.
- At 9:28 pm Taft was proclaimed the victor, garnering 561 votes, 344 Roosevelt delegates declared themselves "present but not voting" and an additional 107 delegates followed the command of their primaries, casting votes for Roosevelt.

Taft's reaction from the White House: During the brutal campaign, Taft, who had previously seen himself as a moderate progressive in step with the sentiments and policies of Roosevelt, withdrew from the more progressive ideas: "If I am nominated, I shall have to take my stand as the representative of the conservative, sober, second thought of the people of the United States. I may go down to defeat if a bolt is started by Roosevelt, but I will retain the regular organization of the party as a nucleus about which the conservative people who are in favor of maintaining constitutional government can gather." In the days following his nomination Taft repeatedly said "I am not afraid of defeat in November." Writes Goodwin: "He believed he had already achieved the victory he wanted by preventing Roosevelt from taking over the Republican Party and moving it in an incomprehensibly radical direction that threatened to upset the constitutional separation of powers and destroy 'the absolute independence of the judiciary.' His victory, he proudly noted, had 'preserved the party organization as a nucleus for conservative action.'"

The new National Progressive Party: With Edith and Roosevelt's children seated in a box near the platform, a mass meeting began at Chicago's Orchestra Hall. Various state delegations left the Republican

convention before the finalization of Taft's nomination. California governor Hiram Johnson proclaimed: "We came here to carry out the mandate of the people to nominate Theodore Roosevelt." After a unanimous nominating resolution, a notification committee made up of representatives from 22 states escorted Roosevelt into the hall.

Writes Goodwin: "That a split party had little prospect for victory in November seemed irrelevant to the exuberant crowd though not to former Republican senator Chauncey Depew, who offered a widely quoted comment as the 1912 Republican convention came to a close. 'The only question now,' he said, 'is which corpse gets the most flowers.'" On July 7, Roosevelt's campaign manager issued a call for the new National Progressive Party's convention to meet in Chicago on August 5. Many of his supporters, however, chose not to back him, preferring to reform the party from within.

The Democratic Party Convention: The Democrats gathered in Baltimore during the last week of June to pick their candidate. On the 46th ballot, eight days after the Convention opened, the Democrats picked progressive New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson. La Follette was delighted to support Wilson, as did some other Republicans.

Taft accepts the Republican Party's nomination: Taft opted for a simple ceremony at the White House on August 1. Hoisting the conservative banner, he also stressed the progressive legislation that had been passed in recent years. Writes Goodwin: "Even as the Republican Party protected the traditions of the past, he argued, it must remain sensitive to the shifting views of the role of government. 'Time was,' he explained, 'when the least government was thought the best, and the policy which left all to the individual, unmolested and unaided by the government was deemed the wisest.' As industry consolidation and wealth disparity grew apace, however, it was 'clearly recognized' that the government had a responsibility 'to further equality of opportunity in respect of the weaker classes in their dealings with the stronger and more powerful.' In sum, Taft did not intend to take the country backward, but rather to protect it against the demagogic proposals of his adversaries."

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armageddon

The Progressive Party convention, referred to as the “Bull Moose Convention,” opened on August 5, 1912. In contrast to the other conventions, journalists reported that the delegates were younger and more earnest, and that petticoats were everywhere with suffragettes and social workers attending and saloonkeepers noticeably absent. As for the campaign, Roosevelt told his followers: “We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord.”

The Bull Moose Convention: According to Goodwin “It was evident to all that Roosevelt himself was the ‘whole show,’ the rhyme and reason for the new party.” The one issue that threatened the overall accord was the seating of African-American delegates. The North sent such delegates, but the South, with Roosevelt’s OK, sent “high-minded white men.” At the convention:

- Roosevelt pledged in his speech that the new Progressive Party would be based “on the right of the people to rule.”
- Roosevelt called for popular sovereignty through presidential primaries, the direct election of senators, the publication of campaign contributions, securing women the right to vote, “a living wage,” the prohibition of child labor, federal regulation of interstate corporations, a graduated inheritance tax, eight-hour workday for women, new standards for workmen’s compensation, and a contributory system of social insurance to protect citizens against “the hazards of sickness ... involuntary unemployment, and old age.”
- The “purely Rooseveltian” platform was approved.

- Jane Addams seconded the presidential nomination for Roosevelt—“the first time a woman ever had made a seconding speech in a national convention of a big party.”

Ray Stannard Baker felt that Roosevelt’s outsized personality “obscures everything” and that the campaign would turn more into a referendum on him than on the issues. Roosevelt did get the support of William Allen White, however, who served on the Progressive Party’s platform committee.

Taft’s campaign: Taft decided to hold to the tradition that “a President who is a candidate for reelection should remain at home and leave it to the judgment of the people to decide” whether he was entitled to a second term. He believed that his administration had had multiple accomplishments, and it wasn’t until September 29 that Taft lashed out at the third party for its attack on “the preservation of the institutions of civil liberty as they were handed down to us by our forefathers.” He maintained that the Progressive Party had been created “merely to gratify personal ambition and vengeance.” Taft acknowledged to friends that he would “probably be defeated,” and, while a loss at the party convention would have been a personal rejection, he viewed a November defeat as a general reverse for the party. In an interview just before the election, Taft asserted that his party had “naturally divided itself” between eastern manufacturing interests and western farmers and acknowledged that he lacked the ability to engage with the press.

Roosevelt’s campaign: Although he was aware that the Republican Party’s split would probably hand the election to the Democrats, Roosevelt went on an unprecedented speaking tour via rail, visiting 40 states around the country. In addition to delivering three or four prepared speeches daily, writes Goodwin, Roosevelt “agreed to appear on the train’s rear platform wherever a crowd assembled.”

In September, Roosevelt started to attack Woodrow Wilson directly. On October 14, a gunman shot Roosevelt in the chest as he arrived to give a speech, which he still delivered, but he then stopped campaigning because of the injury. Writes Goodwin: “The dramatic

attack upon the stalwart and stoic former president had rekindled the nation's empathy, and speculation swirled about how it might reshape the election." Roosevelt delivered his farewell speech on October 30, and those who heard him speak reported that they heard "a new Roosevelt" as he did not speak against his opponents but focused instead on the Progressive Party's principles.

Wilson's campaign: Wilson had planned to confine his appearances to a handful of speeches, believing that "extended stumping tours are not the most effective method of conducting a campaign." He saw Roosevelt as his chief adversary. Despite his comment that "I haven't a Bull Moose's strength as Roosevelt seems to have," Wilson eventually made an extensive campaign swing through the Midwest in September and then "as far west as Colorado" in October.

Wilson's skill as an orator, according to Baker, convinced audiences that he had spoken directly to their hopes and needs: "Wilson was a new personality in American political life. He profited by antithesis. He had the unfamiliar glamour, to the public eye, of the scholar, the thinker, the historian. There had been enough heat in politics; what was needed now was light. Wilson was expository rather than denunciatory. He was asking the country to look at its problems: he was not offering panaceas."

As the campaign progressed, Wilson enunciated his views on government and progressive policies:

- Laws were needed to ensure that "fair play," but laws should emanate from state capitals, not Washington,
- The Democratic Party, despite Wilson's beliefs, adhered to the idea of a smaller, less expansive federal government.
- Contrary to Roosevelt's belief that trusts were inevitable and needed to be regulated, Wilson believed that the size of corporations was problematic.
- America's wealth lay in its small businesses, towns and villages.
- Free enterprise could be returned to America by reinforcing the antitrust law, "abolishing tariff favors" and "credit denials."

Wilson triumphs: When the nation went to the polls, Wilson swept the Electoral College and the popular vote. Writes Goodwin: “The split between Taft and Roosevelt had clearly hurt both men: their combined vote exceeded Wilson’s by nearly 1.3 million. And together, they had captured over 50% of the electorate.”

Taft reacts: Commenting on the results, Taft said: “The people of the United States did not owe me another election. I hope that I am properly grateful for the one term of the Presidency which they gave me.”

Roosevelt reacts: Roosevelt was deeply upset by the loss. The Progressives only captured one governorship and a dozen congressional seats, while the Democrats increased their majority in the House and took control of the Senate for the first time in nearly two decades. Observed Roosevelt: “We must face the fact that our cutting loose from the Republican Party was followed by disaster to the Progressive cause.”

Summing it up: Although the Progressive Party was defeated, their causes would influence American politics for years to come. Three key amendments to the U. S. Constitution were added within the next 14 years, including the 16th Amendment, giving the national government the power to levy a progressive income tax; the 17th Amendment, providing for the popular election of U.S. Senators; and the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote.

Concludes Goodwin: “Though the two men had strikingly different temperaments ... their opposing qualities actually proved complementary, allowing them to forge a powerful camaraderie and rare collaboration. There was a time, at the height of their careers, when Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft stood shoulder to shoulder as they charted a different role for the U.S. government that would fundamentally enlarge the bounds of economic opportunity and social justice.”

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epilogue

After the election of 1912:

- Theodore Roosevelt wrote articles and books, including his autobiography, and continued giving speeches. He explored the uncharted tributary River of Doubt in the Amazon on an expedition in 1913-14. Roosevelt took ill in the winter of 1918 and died on January 6, 1919.
- Edith Roosevelt, following an old “widow’s custom,” did not attend the funeral or the burial. Writes Goodwin: “Though she would live to the age of 87, she had lost the only man she would ever love, the man, she had told Theodore, she loved ‘with all the passion of a girl who had never loved before.’”
- Roosevelt and Taft reconciled in May 1918 when they met briefly at Chicago’s Blackstone Hotel. They resumed their intimate, friendly correspondence, sharing drafts of speech and articles and their thoughts on contemporary issues. Taft attended Roosevelt’s funeral and later told Roosevelt’s sister Bamie, “How glad I am that Theodore and I came together after that long painful interval. Had he died in a hostile state of mind toward me, I would have mourned the fact all my life. I loved him always and cherish his memory.”
- After leaving the White House, Taft became the Kent Professor of Constitutional Law at Yale. In 1921 President Warren Harding appointed him Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and at his swearing-in Taft said, “This is the greatest day of my life.”

- Under Taft's leadership of the Supreme Court, Goodwin observes, "antiquated' court procedure was streamlined, 'speeding up' and greatly improving the delivery of justice throughout 'the whole system of federal courts.' As Taft had always suspected, the position of chief justice was more suited to his mind and temperament than the presidency had ever been."
- Taft resigned from the Supreme Court in February 1930 because of heart trouble and died on March 8, 1930.
- Nellie Taft, "whose catastrophic illness had left her husband bereft of his most valuable ally and altered his presidency in ways the public never comprehended," observes Goodwin, lived another 13 years, dying in 1943.
- The American Magazine, begun by Ray Baker, Ida Tarbell, William Allen White and John Phillips, failed and was sold to a publishing house, and the writers ultimately resigned. They continued their journalistic careers elsewhere and in the 1920s and 1930s gathered for collective birthday celebrations. At each of these celebrations, Sam McClure was "the star of the evening."

Goodwin concludes *The Bully Pulpit*: "After John Phillips was unable to attend one of these gatherings, Tarbell wrote to tell him how much he had been missed, how they all realized that he was the one, during all those years, who had kept the McClure's 'flame steady and lasting.' Revisiting that 'wonderful adventure we all had together,' Phillips confessed to Ray Baker, was 'almost like a physical pain—not because of you and me and so on. But because of this country, and because those sincere attempts, to do something in reporting and interpretation of what was good and sound and progressive, seemed lost and forgotten.' Still, he hoped that other 'times of awakening' lay ahead, that a new generation of journalism would be drawn to the work that 'seemed once almost a mission and a call.'"

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Summary by Lois Gilman

Lois Gilman has written for a variety of magazines, including *Corporate Board Member*, *Money* and *TIME*. She has worked on the program development of numerous business conferences, including the Fortune Global Forum and the Wall Street Journal CEO Council. Gilman was a head researcher at Time Life Books; a senior reporter at *TIME Magazine*; a program research manager at Fortune conferences; and the Web files editor of *Business 2.0* magazine. She is also the author of *The Adoption Resource Book* and *The New York Parents' Book*.

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