

contributed to the undertaking, Lester Frank Ward, an obscure sociologist, made one of the most direct assaults on the Spencerian position. (American thinkers could, and did, usually ignore the Marxian argument against ameliorative reform.)

Ward granted that in times past social change as well as biological changes had taken place without being consciously directed. But, he proclaimed, a new stage in evolution had now been reached as a result of thousands of years of movement in its direction. The new stage was the "advent with man of the thinking, knowing, foreseeing, calculating, designing, inventing and constructing faculty, which is wanting in lower creatures. . . ." This development repealed "the law of nature and enacted in its stead the psychologic law, or law of mind."³

By the Mind of Man

The vision that Ward held forth was one in which man could use the creative powers of his mind to take over the direction of social development. By so doing, he could bring nature and natural law to heel, or, as Ward put it:

. . . When nature comes to be regarded as passive and man as active . . . , when human action is recognised as the most important of all forms of action, and when the power of the human intellect over vital, psychic and social phenomena is practically conceded, then, and then only,

can man justly claim to have risen out of the animal and fully to have entered the human stage of development.⁴

In short, the path to progress now lay through man's taking over and directing the course of social development.

It should be pointed out, however, that neither Lester Frank Ward nor anyone else has proved that government intervention in general can produce progress, nor even that particular interventions will necessarily do so. Indeed, the intellectuals—Ward, Richard Ely, E. A. Ross, John Dewey, Walter Rauschenbusch, Thorstein Veblen, Herbert Croly, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Louis Brandeis, and others—were generally strong on assertion and weak on proof. By and large, they were enthusiasts, caught up in the vision of making all things new, eager to innovate, aware, perhaps, that most men do not so much require proof as vigor in assertion, and bent toward joining their word visions of the future to political power. In any case, they prepared the way for linking the idea of progress to government intervention, not because they had proved the connection by evidence and reason, but by laying their claim on the basis of assertions about what could be accomplished. The politicians did the rest.

Even though the linkage was made by little more than intellectual sleight of hand and political bom-

bast, it was nonetheless a political master stroke. Long after the Progressive movement had been relegated to the pages of history reformers continued to give impetus to their measures by claiming they were progressive and by denouncing those who opposed them as reactionaries desirous of returning to the unsavory past. Today, the linkage is a relic, a relic of intervention.

Actually, the linking of the idea of progress to government intervention was one of the ways that socialistic reform was adapted to the American framework. It was, however, such an important element of that effort, and so distinctive, that it has been accorded separate discussion. What needs discussing about the adaptation is how the Progressives smoothed the way and prepared Americans for the reforms and interventions.

Americanized Reform

Most of the basic reform ideas were promulgated by the Populists in the 1890s. However, they advanced them as immediate demands and made it appear that if they were adopted a virtual revolution would be accomplished. Their arguments were cast in class language; their denunciations of wealth, banking, and gold were clearly demagogic; their proposals were rough hewn and heavy handed. Their monetary panaceas were at considerable remove from

programs the generality of Americans were likely to find acceptable.

By contrast, Progressivism was much more attuned to the American political motif. Demagoguery there might be, but it was toned down to a level that made it little different from the approach of most politicians. The class struggle was muted; wealth and property were not attacked directly; the utopianism of populism was kept out of sight, and reform and gradual change were the only tickets presented.

However much Populist ideas might be drawn from intellectuals, they had about them the aura of Kansas farms and Chicago factories. Progressivism, on the other hand, brought to the fore the reformer dressed in his Sunday best, so to speak, ready to take up his place in the American mainstream. While Richard Hofstadter held that Populism merged into Progressivism in the early twentieth century, he described the differences between them this way: "Populism had been overwhelmingly rural and provincial. The ferment of the Progressive era was urban, middle-class, and nationwide. Above all, Progressivism differed from Populism in the fact that the middle classes of the cities not only joined the trend toward protest but took over its leadership."⁵

Both Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, the most prominent political leaders of a progres-