



Great Lives Observed

Robert Marion LaFollette

The footnotes of American history are filled with the names of nearly forgotten political candidates who never made it to the big times. Some of these politicians undoubtedly deserve their obscurity — others, however, do not. Among those meriting recognition and remembrance are countless crusaders and reformers whose vision of a realization of the American dream prompted them to challenge the status quo and liberalize the system. Such a man was Robert Marion LaFollette, Wisconsin governor, United States Senator, and Progressive Party Presidential candidate during the first quarter of this century.

The Progressives were an important part of the reform movement which swept the nation during the early twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, outstanding Presidents of this era, have each received considerable credit for their successful support of badly needed reform. Bob LaFollette, although less well known, contributed just as much to progressive change.

Wisconsin was among the most corrupt, boss-ridden, and ill-governed of all of the states at

the turn of the century when Bob LaFollette became governor. The political boss of the state, a wealthy lumberman and United States Senator, reportedly bought votes as easily as he purchased timber. Such an atmosphere of corruption and crass materialism appalled LaFollette. After working his way through the university and law school, "Battling Bob" was ready to challenge the entrenched politicians of the state machine. Waging a tough campaign which stressed the need for openness and decency in government and pledging to make the political system responsive to the needs of people rather than the tool of corporate wealth, LaFollette won the gubernatorial race. Successful in his attempt to improve state government, he became the greatest of all Progressive governors. (Some historians consider him the greatest of all the Progressives.) Under LaFollette's leadership, Wisconsin became the most democratic state in the nation and a model for the rest of the states.

After a successful three terms as governor, LaFollette won election to the United States Senate, where he became a

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Leaving the night behind, I entered the dimly lit bar. Forced by habit, hoping to see an anticipated face emerge from behind the opening door, eyes turned momentarily towards me but quickly returned, watching thumbnails tear labels, to their tables. I spotted an empty stool while looking for a familiar face — saw none and took my place inside of the mirrors. It was as if I was surrounded by mirrors whose reflective surface portrayed the people around me to themselves and concealed the man within. Even the bartender could not see me — I must speak or I shall not be known.

"Say, how about a cold Pearl?" Ah yes, the nectar of the gods — a magic elixir pretending to transport man from within himself.

spokesman for a group of reform-minded legislators. Notable among the changes for which he and his colleagues successfully fought were direct election of United States Senators, an income tax, the primary system for nominating political candidates, lower tariff rates, national regulation of the railroads, and laws which improved the working conditions of laborers, especially women and children.

Because LaFollette's ideals were not popular with conservative Americans, he made many enemies. Opponents accused him of advocating socialism and various other radical ideals. Although defeated in his campaign for the Presidency in 1924 while running as a Progressive, LaFollette, nevertheless, garnered nearly five million votes — a huge total for a third party candidate. More importantly, the success of the programs for which he courageously fought helped to make liberal reform more respectable in the United States. Today, his name belongs with those of such friends of humanity as Eugene V. Debs and Martin Luther King Jr. — men whose high principles, dedication to democratic ideals, and willingness to support unpopular causes have added immeasurably to an improvement of the quality of life for millions of Americans.

Jerry MacLean

"Thanks." Tickling my throat, quenching an almost insatiable thirst, the pearls rolled into my gut.

Lots of people down here tonight. Seems like everyone is having a good time. The heavy beat of the jukebox provides an earthy tempo behind the din of conversation. People bumping, spinning tales of intrigue, casting out lines, some landing a bass — everyone is in action. From pretended indifference, subtle looks, and hardcore propositions to good old American free enterprise, the styles of the players are kaleidoscopic.

Tonight I am abstaining; I'll just watch these games people play. I guess we all play the game — making up our rules as we go. Tonight I'm playing the watching game; noncommittal observation through detachment. Sitting on this stool, surrounded by plotting and action, a reversed theatre in the

round with everyone being their own leading actor, I see symbols enforcing themes. It's a fascinating show, much better than television because it's for real. Isn't it?

"Hey Tod, how have you been?" Haven't seen him in ages. Always pops up where you'd least expect to see him.

"Fine. Same old things, and you?" I hope he doesn't ask me for a ride, I'm not ready for that yet.

"Take it easy, don't do anything I wouldn't do." Though I'm sure he will. We just don't seem to see things eye to eye.

Time marches on, the players are leaving in groups, couples, and alone; order creeps in where chaos has been the norm. I tend to feel the chaos has been the illusion, alluding to a higher order in the whole lives of the players here tonight. I guess its time that I move on.

Brian J. Hunt

University (Continued from page 2)

creative intelligence, stifled by too much theory and too many grades in college, would not become reawakened by the boredom of the shop. Thousands of hours of frustrating mechanical problems would have made him more interested in machine design. He would like to design machinery himself. He'd think he could do a better job. He would try modifying a few engines, meet with success, look for more success, but feel blocked because he didn't have the theoretical information. He would discover that when before he felt stupid because of his lack of interest in the theoretical information which he'd have a lot of respect for, namely, mechanical engineering.

So he would come back to our degreeless and gradless school, but with a difference. He'd no longer be a grade-motivated person. He'd be a knowledge-motivated person. He would need no external pushing to learn. His push would come from inside. He'd be a freeman. He wouldn't need a lot of discipline to shape him up. In fact, if the instructors assigned him were slacking on the job he would be

likely to shape them up by asking rude questions. He'd be there to learn something, would be paying to learn something and they'd better come up with it.

Motivation of this sort, once it catches hold, is a ferocious force, and in the gradeless, degreeless institution where our student would find himself, he wouldn't stop with rote engineering information. Physics and mathematics were going to come within his sphere of interest because he'd see he needed them. Metallurgy and electrical engineering would come up for attention. And, in the process of intellectual maturing that these abstract studies gave him, he would be likely to branch out into other theoretical areas that weren't directly related to machines but had become a part of a newer larger goal. This larger goal wouldn't be the imitation of education in Universities today, glossed over and concealed by grades and degrees that give the appearance of something happening when, in fact, almost nothing is going on. It would be the real thing.

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