THE PHILADELPHIA PROGRESSIVES:
A TEST OF THE
HOFSTADTER-HAYS THESESES

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THE period of American history from approximately 1900 to
1917 is marked by a national response to changing conditions
in American society. The "Gilded Age" had witnessed an acceleration of
the forces of industrialization and urbanization, accompanied
by a vast influx of European immigrants, which contributed to the
creation and aggravation of many political, economic, and social
problems. During this period, some private groups and some
municipal and state governments began to try to cope with the
new complexities; and with the coming of the twentieth century,
history records increased legislative action by the federal govern-
ment also. The wave of "progressivism" that swept the country
with varied intensities in different areas is characterized by three
major categories of reform efforts: politically, a desire to broaden
the base of democracy through electoral and administrative re-
forms; economically, a desire for governmental regulation or
ownership of certain monopolistic enterprises in the public interest;
and, socially, a quest for justice to increase the dignity and al-
leviate the conditions of the downtrodden masses. Reform move-
ments differed in various sections of the country, on various gov-
ernmental-administrative levels, in leadership, and in the problems
on which they focused. Because of marked differences among pro-
gressive movements and yet their coincidence of time and general
sentiment in the desire for some change, there have been numerous
scholarly investigations in the historiography of progressivism.¹

Historians generally seem to concentrate their interpretive de-
bates on three major issues. First, was there a progressive move-
ment? Was there a distinctive era in time characterized by certain

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¹Arthur Mann, "The Progressive Tradition" in John Higham, ed., The
Reconstruction of American History (London: Hutchinson, 1963), pp. 157-
179, discusses the interest of historians in progressivism.
tendencies that can be described as progressive? Second, having generally accepted the existence of a progressive era or various progressive movements on different levels of government, scholars then have asked, who were the progressives? John D. Hicks's thesis that the Populist movement provided the origin of twentieth-century progressivism has come to be challenged by the historical inquiries of Richard Hofstadter, Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., and George Mowry. Through the collective biography method, the latter historians have investigated the origins and social backgrounds of selected groups of reformers, concluding that the progressives were primarily upper-middle class, Protestant urban dwellers. This theory has been questioned in turn by J. Joseph Huthmacher, who charges that historians neglect the role of the urban masses in the movements supporting economic and social improvements. The third area of controversy concerns a psychological consideration—why did the reformers seek to realize the particular programs they espoused? The antiquated image of the idealistic reformer on a sacred quest for social justice has recently been challenged by two different interpretations. Richard Hofstadter ascribes progressive motivation to a "crisis in status," while Samuel P. Hays claims that the movement was merely a dispassionate effort to apply the newer administrative techniques of the scientific method and the efficiency of the economic industrial world to the political scene.

Such theories as to the nature of progressivism and of the progressives themselves have prompted numerous investigations of reform movements on state and local levels to test the various interpretations. This article is an attempt to consider the reform movement in Philadelphia in relationship to the recent theories, focusing upon the victorious election campaign of reform Mayor

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Rudolph Blankenburg in 1911. In order to place Philadelphia in the spectrum of progressive historiography, we must first examine the history of Philadelphia municipal reform in the post-Civil War period, to serve as a background and because of that period's importance as a reference for comparison with the progressive movement. Because of the importance of the personality of a leader in shaping the spirit of a movement, it is also necessary to examine briefly the character of Rudolph Blankenburg himself and the extent to which he exemplified the individuals and the movement he led. The Blankenburg Campaign Committee of Seventy will be examined through the collective biography method, and the results of this investigation will be related to the Hofstadter thesis regarding the origins of progressive leadership. Through a consideration of the Blankenburg campaign in relation to political, economic, and social conditions in Philadelphia, the motivation of the Blankenburg reformers and their specific program will be tested in light of Samuel P. Hays's modification of the Hofstadter thesis of the "status revolution." After considering all of these factors, conclusions will be drawn by answering the three general questions of progressive historiography in relation to the events, individuals, and conditions in Philadelphia. Did Philadelphia experience a progressive movement, resembling the spirit of political, economic, and social reform that swept different areas of the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century? If so, who were the Philadelphia progressives? And what motivated them to work to try to realize the program they espoused?

In his muckraking exposé that appeared in *McClure's Magazine* in July, 1903, Lincoln Steffens described Philadelphia as "corrupt and contented." This famous phrase must be regarded as an overgeneralized exaggeration of Philadelphia's reaction to conditions that existed in its municipal government. Throughout the post-Civil War period, groups of concerned individuals sought modifications in the city's administration.

Municipal reform efforts in Philadelphia may be said to have begun with the formation of the Committee of 100 in November, 1880. It was composed entirely of Republicans, whose objective

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was to nominate proper, but reformist, Republican candidates for the election in February, 1881. The Committee's platform included such proposals as a nonpartisan police force; limiting the compensation of the receiver of taxes; nonpartisan election of the school board and the appointment of teachers on merit; and prosecution and punishment of those guilty of election fraud, maladministration of office, or misappropriation of public funds. The mayor, however, refused to support the Committee. Angered by his action, the group decided that Republicanism was not broad enough to accomplish reform; machine control could only be broken by combining efforts and acting as citizens rather than partisans.

By adopting a declaration along nonpartisan lines and inviting Democrats to join them, the new Committee of 100 seemed an encouraging example of bipartisan reform. Among its members were some of the most prominent businessmen of Philadelphia, whose names reappeared continually in civic movements up to and including the campaign of 1911. Rudolph Blankenburg himself served as its chairman of the Committee on Election Frauds, and Francis B. Reeves, vice-chairman of the Committee of 100, later became an outstanding member of Blankenburg's Campaign Committee. Other notables who served this organization were Anthony J. Drexel, Edward Longstreth, Justus C. Strawbridge, and John Wanamaker.

The Committee of 100 supported Samuel G. King for mayor in 1881. He was a Democrat with a record of continuing loyalty to the public interests. For receiver of taxes, they chose John Hunter, a Republican and manufacturer. The Committee succeeded in electing their fusion ticket, and its efficient administration justified its championship by the Committee. They failed to reelect Mayor King in 1884; the political ring's nominee, William B. Smith, triumphed.

In addition to championing candidates, the Committee of 100 also sought an entire administrative reorganization of the city.

3 Ibid., p. 284.
John C. Bullitt, a prominent Philadelphia lawyer, led a group which studied the defects of the existing city charter. Through the Committee's efforts, the "Bullitt Charter," which centralized power and responsibility, was finally enacted in 1885. The Charter enhanced the importance of the mayor's office and extended his term. Twenty-five separate bureaus were consolidated into nine departments. The Committee was so encouraged by the passage of the Bullitt Bill that the group disbanded on January 19, 1886. They saw no further purpose to the organization. The expected millennium, however, did not follow, and "the new mayor was not exactly a shining light of reform."19

This Committee of 100 was Philadelphia's first major reform organization. It is noteworthy because of its membership—prominent business and professional men of Philadelphia (primarily national Republicans), who considered their movement a non-partisan effort—and its primary desire for a more efficient organization of the city's government. The Committee is considered the foundation of Philadelphia's reform spirit, and all future groups regarded it as an inspiring example.

Following the pattern of the Committee of 100, reformers re-organized in 1891 into the Municipal League, whose principal goals were the separation of municipal affairs from state and national politics, the extension of civil service, and the development of a more businesslike management of municipal services.20 The League endorsed candidates in municipal elections, investigated election frauds, and proposed legislation; but it rarely encountered success, for want of sufficiently wide backing.

During this same period, in 1895, a group of independents, The Anti-Combine Committee, endorsed Robert E. Pattison for mayor and called for a "business administration of business affairs."21 Their chairman was Walter Wood, an iron manufacturer, and the secretary was Herbert Welsh, a nationally-known reformer. Both men would later serve on Blankenburg's Campaign Committee.

The defeats of the 1890's discouraged the reformers, but events of the early 1900's gave them renewed encouragement. Theodore

19 Ibid.
21 Joyce, Story of Philadelphia, p. 293.
Roosevelt was elected President on a progressive platform in 1904, carrying Pennsylvania and Philadelphia; and, in addition, Lincoln Steffens's harsh descriptions seemed to provide impetus for a new movement. A group of citizens formed the Committee of Seventy to elect officials without regard to national party politics, to enforce election laws and enact new laws for personal voter registration, to encourage faithful public officials, and to publish reliable information on city affairs. The Committee attracted the interest and support of many influential persons, and its executive board was headed by the eminent publisher John C. Winston. Deeming the minority party as corrupt as the majority, the Committee was determined to organize a new party entirely independent of national partisan differences. Their new City party entered candidates in the campaign of 1905 for fifteen city magistrates, and also investigated and prosecuted ballot frauds and false lists of voters. Despite these efforts, old-line politicians still dominated the city councils. The state legislature then amended the city charter, removing the mayor's right to appoint two important department heads and conferring the power on the corrupt councils. These developments were climaxed by the proposal of a new lease to the United Gas Improvement Company on terms described as "infamous."

This continuing corruption climaxed by the exposure of the proposed "gas steal" provided the immediate cause for further action. Mayor John Weaver reacted to public pressure by removing two officials and appointing "high class gentlemen of reform tendencies." Further excitement forced the councilmen to withdraw the proposed lease to the United Gas Improvement Company. Mayor Weaver then formally supported the City party as the reformers resumed their investigation of election frauds and eliminated more fraudulent names from the voters' lists. Unfortunately, however, no election for important offices was approaching, and the wave of reform failed to reach a more substantive climax.

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40 Wilcox, *Great Cities in America*, p. 255.
41 Ibid., p. 256.
42 Ibid., p. 260.
For the next mayoralty election in 1907, the traditional politicians gathered forces to elect Republican John E. Reyburn. Philadelphia then "sank back to the control of the gang and public service corporations." Reformer George W. Norris commented: "The Organization elected its ticket, not without a fight, but with safe majorities." The councils paid little attention to the reform demands which had become vocal, and of which Rudolph Blankenburg, who had been concerned with questions of civic improvement since 1880, was now the leading spokesman. In national politics Blankenburg was a Republican, but he advocated nonpartisanship in local affairs. In 1911, he initiated a nonpartisan reform campaign for mayor. Behind him ranged an organization of influential citizens reminiscent of the days of the Committee of 100.

Just before the election of 1911, a breach occurred between the state Republican organization, headed by Senator Boies Penrose, and Mayor Reyburn, resulting in a state Senate committee's investigation into charges of corruption in connection with contracts in Philadelphia. By the time of the Republican primary, the schism had become so great that the voters were faced with two machine candidates. Mayor Reyburn supported William S. Vare, the brother of a millionaire contractor, and the other candidate, George H. Earle, Jr., was favored by Senator Penrose and his fellow state boss, James P. McNichol, who was also a contractor. This contest was reported in a contemporary magazine:

"two candidates, backed as they are by two factions of one machine. The Reyburn administration has made Philadelphia notorious as a flagrant example of misgovernment; the Penrose-McNichol machine has made the Republican Party in Pennsylvania notorious as a flagrant example of boss domination. Associated with both factions are big contractors, each of whom has profitted largely from contracts with the city."

The excitement aroused by the exposures of the state Senate committee, combined with the split in the dominating Republican

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18 Ibid., p. 263.
20 Joyce, Story of Philadelphia, p. 300.
21 "The Campaign in Philadelphia," Outlook, XC (September, 1911), 97.
machine, gave the reform element a real opportunity for victory. Anxiously for unity among their supporters, the advocates of decent government campaigned successfully for the victory of the City party's candidate, Rudolph Blankenburg.

This study is not concerned with the accomplishments of the Blankenburg administration from 1912 to 1916. The main purpose is to ascertain the nature of Philadelphia progressivism. The 1911 election was chosen as the primary focal point because the fusion victory occurred during a period when almost the entire nation was experiencing some reform activity. The Blankenburg victory represented Philadelphia's counterpart to the trends of the age; but did Philadelphia reformism really bear any resemblance to progressive movements elsewhere? To answer this question is the major purpose of this article. To accomplish this task, it is first necessary to examine Blankenburg himself, because he led the movement and personified its spirit. Then his supporters will be studied, noting their backgrounds and participation in previous movements. To study the nature of Blankenburg's supporters, his Campaign Committee of Seventy will be analyzed according to the collective biography method. Since this group was formed in September, 1911, there is no danger of confusing any local independent Republicans with those who may later have become national Progressives, breaking with the national Republicans in 1912.\textsuperscript{22} The Committee, in addition, was organized before Blankenburg won the primary election and fused with the Democrats, also eliminating confusion with people who supported Blankenburg's platform only after competing elements were eliminated. This group is, therefore, a valid sample to be examined in comparison with the Hofstadter thesis of the origins of the urban progressives.

Richard Hofstadter begins his analysis with a description of the Mugwump of the 1880's, whom he considers the spiritual father of the twentieth-century progressive. Although this study of Philadelphia is primarily concerned with the decade after 1900, it is essential to be aware of Hofstadter's Mugwump when analyzing the Philadelphia progressives, and it is, therefore, necessary

\textsuperscript{22}The Campaign Committee of Seventy was named and listed in the \textit{Philadelphia Public Ledger}, September 7, 1911.
to consider this aspect of his thesis also. Hofstadter concludes the general picture of the Mugwump as follows:

old gentry, merchants of long standing, established professional men, civic leaders of an earlier era . . . from old families, college educated . . . ancestral roots in local communities and often owned family businesses with traditions of political leadership, belonged to patriotic societies and the best clubs, staffed the governing boards of philanthropic and cultural institutions, and led movements for civic betterment.23

The Mugwump was a Republican but independent enough to bolt his party. Yet despite this spirit of revolt, the Mugwump retained a rather conservative perspective, exemplified by his support of sound money. Hofstadter claims that the twentieth-century progressive shared many characteristics with the 1880 Mugwump, but adds that the spiritual son was not so conservative. He emphasizes that while the Mugwump was committed to social aristocracy and laissez faire, the progressive was more liberal, desiring to broaden both the base of democracy and government regulation.24 With these descriptions of the Mugwump and progressive, we can now turn to Philadelphia and examine Rudolph Blankenburg and his Campaign Committee.

Blankenburg was born in Germany in 1841 and came to this country when he was twenty-two years old. He began his career with a prominent Philadelphia manufacturer at a salary of six dollars a week. His campaign literature described his first years in America as follows:

By dint of industry and close application to work, he made his services so valuable to his employers that his position was rapidly advanced, and it enabled him to marry and provide a good home for his wife, a member of an old Philadelphia Quaker family.25

His skill in business management soon became apparent, and from a humble beginning, the export-import firm of Rudolph Blanken-
burg and Company grew to enjoy a national reputation. Blankenburg's importance in the economic community was marked by his being director of the Mechanics National Bank and president of the Thirteenth Street Building Association. He was also a member of prominent social groups such as the Union League, the Manufacturers' Club, and the Contemporary Club. Blankenburg vigorously engaged in philanthropic activities and political reform organizations. In national politics, he was a staunch Republican, participating in several national campaigns. He strongly supported the protective tariff, and in the election of 1888, primarily concerned with this issue, he made speaking tours across the state of Iowa for Benjamin Harrison. In the campaign of 1896, Blankenburg actively campaigned for William McKinley. He was instrumental in forming the National Republican League of Businessmen and organized the first of 200 chapters, which was located in Philadelphia.

Blankenburg believed that nonpartisanship in local affairs was the only means of destroying the domination of the corrupt machine. As a member of the Committee of 100, Blankenburg had persuaded the group to join the Democrats in supporting the fusion ticket headed by Democrat Samuel King instead of supporting the Republicans only. He was active in the Municipal League of the 1890's and also organized a campaign critical of state boss Matthew Quay in 1897. Blankenburg joined the Committee of Seventy of 1904 and ran successfully for county commissioner on the City party ticket in 1905. He also wrote a series of muckraking articles for the *Arena*, exposing corruption in the city's administration.

By 1911, this man was heading a fusion ticket, seeking to improve conditions in Philadelphia's municipal government. While reform movements were led in Toledo by Samuel M. ("Golden Rule") Jones, in Cleveland by Tom Johnson, in Wisconsin by Robert M. LaFollette, and in California by Hiram Johnson, Philadelphia's counterpart was Rudolph Blankenburg. It seems

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27 Blankenburg, *The Blankenburgs of Philadelphia*, pp. 7-17; and Blankenburg Citizens Committee, *For Mayor Rudolph Blankenburg*, p. 3.

fair to conclude that Blankenburg resembled the Mugwump of 1880 described by Richard Hofstadter. Despite his having been born in Germany, Blankenburg married into an established Quaker family with ancestral roots in the community. To paraphrase Hofstadter, Blankenburg was a merchant of long standing, belonged to patriotic societies and the best clubs, staffed the governing boards of philanthropic and cultural institutions, and led movements for civic betterment. Besides these parallels, there is an additional factor, which demonstrates that Blankenburg was even more conservative than Hofstadter's Mugwump. Because the Mugwump became dissatisfied with his party, he broke with his traditional affiliation and refused to support the Republican candidate for the Presidency in 1884. During the Mugwump period, however, Blankenburg continuously remained loyal to his national party, working at his own expense to promote its candidates. Because of his age, social position, and political policies in relation to the context of the time, it is impossible to classify Blankenburg as the spiritual son of the Mugwump, when he was even more conservative than the theoretical father.

The organization that campaigned to elect Rudolph Blankenburg was his Committee of Seventy. An analysis of this group according to the collective biography method is also essential in determining the spirit of Philadelphia progressivism. The following observations and conclusions are based on a study of one-third of its membership about whom adequate information could be found.

The typical member of the committee was relatively old. Some 80 percent were born before or during the Civil War, placing them in their late fifties and sixties during the time of the 1911 campaign. The entire group, except for one, was born in the United States. Of the native-born Americans, 65 percent were born in Philadelphia, and many traced their ancestry to the colonial settlers.

Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, p. 137.

All of the factual material and statistical conclusions concerning the Campaign Committee of Seventy are based on data taken from various volumes of the following standard biographical references: *Distinguished Men of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania; Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography; Joyce, Story of Philadelphia; National Encyclopedia of American Biography; E. P. Oberhartz, History of Philadelphia; Who's Who in America; Who's Who in Pennsylvania (1908); and Who's Who in Philadelphia.*
The educational backgrounds were outstanding. All of the members studied, completed formal education beyond high school. In regard to primary and secondary education, 50 percent attended private schools, such as the Episcopal Academy, Mercersberg Academy, Haverford School, and Friends Central School. Their undergraduate colleges included the University of Pennsylvania, Lehigh University, and Wesleyan University. Beyond this level, 50 percent attended the Graduate School or the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania.

The occupational status of these members is equally impressive. They were all prominent businessmen and professionals during the time of the campaign. Fifty percent were lawyers, the majority of whom were associated with prominent firms, and in many instances they were either one of or related to the major partners. George Wentworth Carr, for example, was associated with the firm of Carr, Beggs, and Steinmetz. Henry F. Budd had his own practice, whose clientele included many important corporations. Those who engaged in finance and business either were the directors of their own enterprises or worked for long-established family corporations. Their positions can be illustrated as follows: James A. Develin was president of the Mortgage Trust Company of Philadelphia; Levi Garner Fouse was president of the Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Company of Philadelphia; Francis B. Reeves was president of the Girard National Bank; William Alex Brown was on the board of directors of the West End Trust Company; and Allan Sutherland was the founder and chairman of the board of directors of the Erie National Bank.

Religious affiliation is also important for a biographical profile. The entire group studied was Protestant, except for three who were Jewish; and almost 50 percent of the Protestants were Episcopalians. The predominance of this denomination is noteworthy because it is socially an upper-class church. The most interesting aspect of the religious phase, however, is that many were intensely interested and participated extensively in their churches' educational and philanthropic activities. Henry F. Budd, for example, was chancellor of the Ecclesiastical Court of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania and was also interested in religious education. One biographical essay described Budd as possessing "an inbred kindly consideration, and . . .
he was entitled to be called a Christian gentleman.” Cyrus D. Foss, Jr., served on the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of his Episcopal congregation. Francis Reeves was an elder of the Presbyterian Church, superintendent of the Wakefield Presbyterian Sunday School, and a member of many religious and private charities. Allan Sutherland served on the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church and was editor of the “Religious Page” of the Philadelphia North American.

These men also were active in prominent social organizations of Philadelphia’s upper-class society. Some of their affiliations with well-established professional and social clubs included the following: Leo Belmont was a member of the Philadelphia Lawyers’ Club and the Mercantile Club; James A. Develin belonged to the University Club, Merion Cricket Club, and Overbrook Golf Club; George Wentworth Carr gained membership in the Union League and Philadelphia Lawyers’ Club; and Andrew Stephen Murphy enrolled in the Overbrook Golf Club and the Cape May and Wildwood Yachting Clubs.

With this examination of the economic and occupational backgrounds, along with the educational, religious, and social aspects of the biographical profile, the political phases can now be considered. In regard to national party membership, 85 percent were registered Republicans. But the members of the Committee labored for municipal reform through participation in the nonpartisan movements previously mentioned. An examination of some of the policies and activities of the more prominent men will provide a most important contribution to drawing a collective profile.

Francis B. Reeves was the oldest member of the Committee, and his activities in Philadelphia’s reform movements can be traced as far back as the Committee of 100 of 1880. Although described as a staunch national Republican, he was independent in local politics. A biographical sketch described him as follows:

Efficiency rather than party is his incentive and inspiration . . . and reform has been his watchword and guide. . . . He is in one word, the dean of political reformers in Philadelphia.32

One of the most active municipal reformers, who also enjoyed

32 Joyce, Story of Philadelphia, p. 376.
a national reputation as president of the Indian Rights Association and editor of *City and State*, was Herbert Welsh. To remedy dishonest and inefficient management of the city government, Welsh proposed to organize a municipal league to destroy partisanship in city affairs and to discontinue voting in municipal matters as though they were national issues. In his desire to promote these principles, Welsh worked for the election of Blankenburg, not only through the Campaign Committee, but also through speeches and newspaper articles.33

Other men concerned in Blankenburg's campaign who were continually interested in previous movements included James A. Develin, treasurer of the Campaign Committee, who was also a member of the Committee of Seventy of 1904 and founder of the City Club, a nonpartisan reform organization. Dr. Howard S. Anders was a candidate for city coroner on the Municipal League ticket. Cyrus D. Foss, Jr., was secretary of the City Committee of the City party from 1905 to 1906 and director and secretary of the City Club. Allan Sutherland was one of the major leaders of the Committee of Seventy of 1904 and was an influential organizer of the City party.

This profile describes a group of men who sought to reform their municipal administration. They were so dissatisfied with existing conditions that they sacrificed time and effort from their business, professional, and social obligations to espouse the cause. From this examination of the Blankenburg Campaign Committee, conclusions can be drawn regarding the individuals who comprised Philadelphia's progressive leadership.

Just as Blankenburg closely resembled Hofstadter's Mugwump of the 1880's, it is appropriate to note a corresponding likeness of his supporters. Recalling the profile of the Campaign Committee and again paraphrasing Hofstadter, many similarities become evident.34 These Philadelphia reformers had ancestral roots in the community, were college-educated, and were established business and professional men, who owned family businesses. They were members of the best clubs and staffed the boards of philanthropic and cultural institutions. These factors emphasize their

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34 Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, p. 137.
patrician background. They exhibited characteristics of the Mugwump commitment to the concept of a social aristocracy rather than the progressive impulse to broaden the base of democracy. The prevailing membership in Episcopalian congregations and the performance of charitable work through church and private groups are also more descriptive aspects of Mugwump attitudes of the 1880’s than the twentieth-century movements espousing governmental aid in the quest for social justice.

The Philadelphia reformers of 1911, in fact, were the civic leaders of an earlier era. They had previously participated in movements for municipal improvement. The average age of the committee exceeded fifty-five years, meaning that a majority had been adults during the 1880’s. While history records a Mugwump revolt at that time in Boston and New York, what was happening in Philadelphia? The reform elements of the Republican party had organized the Committee of 100, originally composed entirely of loyal Republicans and eventually classified as nonpartisan only in local politics. While other urban reformers bolted the national party, the Philadelphia progressives remained loyal. This fact emphasizes an element of greater conservatism among the Philadelphia reformers than among the 1880 Mugwumps. Yet these Philadelphians were disturbed enough to protest certain conditions that existed in their city. The continual formation of nonpartisan groups provides evidence of a desire for some changes. But what kind of reforms did the committee seek to enact? And what motivated them to pursue their goals?

The question of motivation is the final aspect that must be considered before drawing conclusions as to the nature of Philadelphia’s progressive movement. But before dealing with specifics, it is necessary to note the conflicting interpretations of this aspect of progressive historiography. One of the most provocative theories is Richard Hofstadter’s concept of the “status revolution” as the cause of progressive motivation, which is based upon a study of selected categories of professional urban dwellers, whom he concluded to be alienated. Hofstadter believes that these professional men, once socially prominent in their communities, experienced anxiety due to the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, which was radically changing their position in so-

ciety. As a result of the consolidation of large enterprises, these independent businessmen and professionals lost their prominence in an economic world dominated by corporate wealth. At the same time, the huge influx of eastern European immigrants, unacquainted with American political institutions and in need of economic and social assistance, resulted in the increased power of municipal bosses, whose strength seemingly came from the downtrodden masses. The political machine posed another challenge to the urban middle-class professional, who was formerly regarded as a civic leader and social benefactor. Because such individuals now found their status threatened, they felt alienated; their reaction was to espouse reforms in an effort to recapture an era in which they had enjoyed a prominent position. By examining certain conditions in Philadelphia, we can see if this theory is valid in regard to the Campaign Committee.

The collective profile of the committee noted that most of the members headed their own corporations and enjoyed membership in some of the most prominent clubs in the city. It seems fair to conclude, therefore, that these individuals felt little or no threat to their positions from huge consolidated enterprises because they themselves were among the most influential business and professional men in Philadelphia. But their status could also have been threatened by the increased numbers of immigrant masses, enhancing the power of the corrupt machine. It is interesting to note that Philadelphia did not have an immigrant community comparable in numbers to other major cities during this era. Reformer George W. Norris commented on Philadelphia's being "a 'City of Homes,' which has a smaller percentage of foreign born citizens in its electorate than any other large American city."

A corrupt machine dominated the city's political life, but its power base could not be associated by the reformer with the immigrant community as easily as it was perhaps in other urban centers. In Philadelphia the machine was considered to be controlled by contractors. Because of these factors, it is also fair to conclude that the immigrants also failed to constitute a threat to the status of the Committee of Seventy members.

The Philadelphia reformers, therefore, are not likely to have felt alienated because of challenges to their place in society from

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corporate wealth or the immigrant masses. Their motivation cannot, consequently, be attributed to a crisis in status. To find a more appropriate cause, it is necessary to consider a recent modification of the Hofstadter thesis that has been offered by Samuel P. Hays. Hays criticizes the Hofstadter study because it fails to examine the opposition to progressivism and also because it does not distinguish the individuals who espoused reform within the professions. He argues the importance of contrasting the progressives with the opposition because of the necessity for the progressives to have been unique in order that they might have felt alienated. For the purposes of this study, the uniqueness of the Committee is inconsequential, because the group was not alienated in any case. The important phase of Hays’s modification involves the question of who within the professions championed reform. He believes that the individuals involved in reform came from the advanced segments of their professions,

from those who sought to apply their specialized knowledge to a wider range of public affairs. Their role in reform is not related to their attempt to defend earlier patterns of culture, but to the working out of the inner dynamics of professionalization in modern society.

Hays concludes that this upper-class origin is the crucial factor. The leading business groups in alliance with professional men initiated and dominated municipal movements, believing that their concept of city welfare “would be best achieved if the business community controlled the city government.” Although he does not refer to Benjamin Parke DeWitt’s analysis, Hays’s concept of progressive reform is suggestive of DeWitt’s observations of the municipal efficiency movement, which DeWitt describes as follows:

municipal problems depend for their solution upon the same scientific study and analysis that banking problems or railroad problems require; that any attempt to re-

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38 An example would be a differentiation between corporation lawyers and struggling independent ones.  
40 Ibid., p. 160.
move inefficiency and waste must be continuous and not intermittent; that honesty and good intentions cannot take the place of intelligence and ability; and finally that city business is like any other business and needs precisely the same kind of organization, management, and control.\textsuperscript{41}

Hays's analysis of motivation seems to coincide with this description of the desire for efficiency. The reformers opposed decentralized urban growth which limited their business objectives; they thus desired to have greater political power to advance their own concept of desirable public policy.\textsuperscript{42} The reformers sought innovations in the formal governmental machinery to concentrate power by sharply centralizing the process of decision-making rather than distributing it through more popular participation, so that they could apply the techniques of business management to municipal administration.

An analysis of the Blankenburg campaign reveals a striking similarity between Hays's theory and Philadelphia's actual experience. The profile of Blankenburg's supporters revealed these men to have been upper-class businessmen and professionals, which is in agreement with Hays's differentiation. And, in addition, an examination of the platform, the issues emphasized in pamphlets and speeches, and the types of voters who were attracted to these appeals, reveals that Philadelphia progressivism was essentially an efficiency movement.

The platform of the City party in 1911 proposed some of the following measures:

A clean, progressive, constructive business administration not for the profit of a few, but for the benefit of all. Philadelphia's development into the most prosperous and attractive manufacturing, business, and home center. A hundred cents return for every dollar expended. No illegal or wasteful use of city funds.\textsuperscript{43}

These proposals exemplify Blankenburg's approach to the existing

\textsuperscript{42}Hays, "The Politics of Reform," p. 162.
conditions—a primary concern with technical issues, thriftiness, and efficient management.

Campaign pamphlets emphasized those aspects of Blankenburg's business background that would enable him to be a capable administrator. The major issues raised attempted to attract professional men and merchants, and principles were expressed in a phraseology designed to appeal to this social and occupational segment. Leaflets published by the committee gave detailed descriptions of Blankenburg’s profitable enterprises, attributed to his “skill, management, and ability,” and pointed out that he was a self-made man.44

The campaign speeches also reveal a preoccupation with efficiency. After winning the nomination, Blankenburg opened his campaign at an enthusiastic gathering, where Herman Loeb, a committee member, asserted:

If Mr. Blankenburg is elected . . . Philadelphia will get 100 cents for every dollar spent on contracts. He will save the city between $30,000,000 and $40,000,000 in the next four years.45

Blankenburg himself emphasized the introduction of new methods in the conduct of city affairs.46 He promised to improve Philadelphia's harbor and thus increase business generally.47

A more complete picture of the actual campaign can be drawn by noting the reactions of certain individuals. A merchant wrote a letter, saying: "The people of Philadelphia can absolutely pin their hope and faith for an honest and economical government of our city affairs on Rudolph Blankenburg."48 Another letter, signed "A Blankenburg Republican," stated: "A vote for Blankenburg means a positive reform and business administration for the people."49 As election day drew closer, many politicians were anxious to see whom Edward T. Stotesbury, Republican financier and president of Drexel and Company, would support. Until 1911

44 Blankenburg Citizens Committee, For Mayor Rudolph Blankenburg, p. 2.
45 "Blankenburg Fires His Opening Gun," Philadelphia Public Ledger, September 13, 1911.
46 "Blankenburg Wins Plaudits by Pledge," ibid., September 23, 1911.
47 "Downtown Voters Cheer Blankenburg," ibid., September 24, 1911.
he had always been a loyal supporter of Republican nominees; but this time he decided to vote for Blankenburg because of his business ability.  

Although this study is not concerned with the accomplishments of the Blankenburg administration from 1912 to 1916, certain aspects should be noted briefly to illustrate further the substantiation of Hays's thesis in Philadelphia. The mayor's cabinet was an impressive group of men who were appointed because of their knowledge and talent, rather than party affiliation. All of the members had a business, professional, or political background.

Morris L. Cooke, director of public works, for example, was a disciple of Frederick Taylor, whose system of scientific management was an outstanding phase of the efficiency movement. Commenting on his cabinet, Blankenburg said: "I trust my directors . . . responsibility and discretionary power are concentrated in a few heads of departments and efficiency is secured." By relating Blankenburg's campaign to the various interpretations of progressive motivation, it is apparent that Philadelphia's reformers sought a more honest, efficient municipal administration, which would enhance the city's economic development and be beneficial to their own businesses and professions.

From this study of the collective profile of the Blankenburg Campaign Committee and a comparison of their campaign with theories of motivation, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the nature of Philadelphia progressivism. By analyzing the findings of the study in relation to the economic, social, and political conditions in the city, an attempt can be made to answer the three questions posed in the introduction.

One qualified contemporary observer described the economic condition of Philadelphia as "smug prosperity." Financial well-being was enjoyed by businessmen and manufacturers as a result of such benefits as tariff favors. Prosperity lulled the civic conscience and made many people look upon political corruption as

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51 The Blankenburg Cabinet is discussed in detail in Owen Wister, "The Case for the Quaker City," Outlook, CI (May, 1912), 170-172; and Donald Disbrow, "Reform in Philadelphia Under Mayor Blankenburg (1912-1916)," Pennsylvania History, XXVIII (October, 1960), 382-383.
52 Wister, "The Case for the Quaker City," p. 171.
"comparatively unimportant in the career of peaceful industry and
the accumulation of wealth." Many Philadelphians, therefore, were
content to tolerate municipal mismanagement unless inefficiency
affected their enterprises and endangered their professional success.

Looking at the corresponding social scene, observers noted
Philadelphia as a "City of Homes." One observer suggested that
this fortunate home life militated against good citizenship. Because home life was so pleasurable, the citizens gave little thought
and less time to the inconvenient duties of citizenship. This idea
can be further illustrated by contrasting Philadelphia's local pride
in her attractive houses with New York's glaring tenements. Many
Philadelphians took great pride in the claim that their city was
free of high-rise dwellings. They resided, so they believed, in a
"City of Homes," not in a "cesspool" of slum tenements.

From 1880 to 1911 numerous reform organizations were
formed in Philadelphia, but it is essential to note the membership
and the types of changes they favored. The historical background
showed certain trends dominating the groups preceding the
Blankenburg campaign. The Committee of 100 of 1880 is a
perfect example of an efficiency movement, in which upper-class
businessmen and professionals sought only administrative changes.
When the Bullitt Bill passed, the Committee considered its objec-
tives fulfilled and thus disintegrated. John C. Bullitt's own phi-
losophy was as follows:

If you would strike a real effective blow [at municipal
abuses] then begin at the ultimate cause. Reform the
framework of the government, and thus destroy that
which generates and maintains them.

A similar attitude was demonstrated by groups that were formed
afterward. The Municipal League of 1891 proposed to separate
local affairs from state control and develop a businesslike man-

\[51\] Ibid., p. 253.
\[53\] Wilcox, Great Cities in America, p. 253.
\[54\] Many social reformers, however, asserted that while Philadelphia lacked
the "vertical slum," it was plagued by the "horizontal slum." See, for ex-
ample, E. W. Dinwiddie, "Housing and Social Conditions in Philadelphia."
Charities, XII (1903), 490.
agement of municipal services, and the Anti-Combine Committee of 1895 also desired a business administration.

It is equally important to observe the nonpartisan character of these movements. The reformers opposed the machine’s domination because of its corrupt inefficiency and hence potential threat to their economic welfare, and nonpartisanship was their means of restoring competent management. The younger members of the Committee of 100 were to become the leaders of the groups that followed. These same socially prominent, upper-class businessmen and professionals were to carry ideas of the Gilded Age into the twentieth century as they joined the Campaign Committee in 1911. The political events in Philadelphia that year culminated with the victory of Rudolph Blankenburg in November, and his administration is considered to be Philadelphia’s counterpart to the reform sentiment that had swept the entire nation. His platform, however, was not a broad comprehensive progressive program. The campaign was not a grand, passionate quest for broader suffrage, government regulation, and social justice. It was rather a movement conducted by a certain segment of society to clean out corruption and institute a more efficient management of municipal affairs. To quote a muckraking article, Philadelphia was “striking a balance between boss and business rule.”

Blankenburg did not win because of an overwhelming support for his program. His plurality was reported to be under 5,000 votes. His campaign lacked the emotional appeal to rally the masses to his cause. Several fortunate circumstances were involved that facilitated Blankenburg’s victory to a greater extent than the candidate himself or his campaign. The division that occurred among his opposition greatly strengthened Blankenburg’s chances for victory. At the same time, a state Senate investigation by the Catlin Commission exposed many instances of corruption, and the Taxpayers Committee revealed that the city was frequently borrowing huge sums while granting extravagant contracts. These facts reported in the newspapers began to excite the voters to support Blankenburg’s cleanup campaign, and these circumstances were the main contributing factors to the reform victory.

60 Wister, “The Case for the Quaker City,” pp. 169-170, analyzes the reasons for victory in detail.
Did Philadelphia experience a progressive movement which corresponded to the reform administrations that existed in other cities and states and eventually reached the national level? The answer must be negative, unless we are to conclude that progressivism everywhere was mainly an efficiency movement. In Philadelphia, general economic prosperity fostered a desire to maintain the status quo. Social complacency due to an absence of glaring abuses and private religious and philanthropic work removed the stimulus for advocating public welfare programs. Political corruption, with its potential threat to the continued success of the upper-class businessmen and professionals, was the issue that induced reform agitation. Thus, the so-called "Philadelphia progressives" resembled Richard Hofstadter's Mugwumps of the 1880's, conducting Samuel P. Hays's dispassionate type of campaign for municipal efficiency.