

# *Gifford Pinchot's Years of Frustration*

*1917-1920*

GIFFORD PINCHOT's crushing defeat by Boies Penrose for United States senator in 1914<sup>1</sup> did not quench his thirst for participation in the political arena. Continuing to devote a considerable portion of his time to promoting his first love—the conservation of forests and other natural resources—his career was now marked by an ascendancy of politics.

Still embracing the Progressive Party (Washington Party in Pennsylvania), he was "heartbroken" when Theodore Roosevelt informed the delegates to the Progressive National Convention of 1916 that he could not accept the nomination for President which they had by acclamation offered him. Although Pinchot was not quite the last to leave the Progressive ship, he clung to it longer than most. Even after Roosevelt announced his decision to support Charles Evans Hughes against Woodrow Wilson, Pinchot was not yet ready to return to his former habitat in the Republican Party. He did send to the nation's newspaper editors several thousand copies of two letters endorsing Hughes,<sup>2</sup> but he wanted Wilson to lose more than he wanted Hughes to win.

Following the re-election of Wilson, Pinchot for the first time was fully convinced of the futility of his remaining outside a major party. To a leader of the Progressives in Pennsylvania he wrote that "to take possession of the Republican Party offers us our only practicable method of getting action on our principles." The "rank and file" of the Republicans, he maintained, were "progressive and overwhelmingly so." Moreover, he was confident that they were ready to buck

<sup>1</sup> See M. N. McGeary, "Gifford Pinchot's 1914 Campaign," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXI (1957), 303.

<sup>2</sup> Pinchot letters of Sept. 7 and Sept. 20, 1916. All manuscripts cited are in the Pinchot Papers in the Library of Congress.

"the bosses" out of the saddle; "I propose to put a burr under the said saddle to aid in the bucking process."<sup>3</sup>

Pinchot found it painfully difficult to accept the re-election of Wilson. Undoubtedly, his attitude was shaped partly by Roosevelt's low opinion of the President. Then, too, Wilson's policies of caution and neutrality in the European war seemed to Pinchot incredible. He could scarcely contain himself when the President sent a peace note to the belligerent powers. Privately, in strong language, he accused Wilson of taking the part of the "Lusitania murderers" when they were on the "verge of punishment." "As for me," he vowed, "I shall stand with the people who fight against this man, and shall keep on standing with them until he is driven from public life. . . . I can't stand for Wilson."<sup>4</sup> Publicly, he pleaded with the nation to support the Allied cause because it was "right," and because "our security will be promoted by their coming victory." And he charged that Wilson by his note had "slapped in the face the men who are fighting for the principles of human liberty."<sup>5</sup>

From the early days of the war, Pinchot had been convinced that the struggle was primarily the result of "German militarism," and had said that if he thought there was any danger of a German victory, he would favor "immediate participation" by the United States.<sup>6</sup> During a visit in England in 1915 he reported to Roosevelt that the British were showing "profound stupidity" by failing to capitalize on their opportunities to influence American public opinion to their side.<sup>7</sup> Returning to the United States he beat the drums in favor of the Allied cause. Speaking to an audience in a New York Methodist church he caused a scene by asserting that the Germans had killed priests and nuns in Belgium; an irate listener was moved to rise and shout "You lie!" Deeply vexed by the "incomprehensible obtuseness of our Western people" toward the war, Pinchot sent advice to England's Arthur Balfour concerning methods of reaching public opinion in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pinchot to H. D. W. English, Dec. 20, 1916.

<sup>4</sup> Pinchot to Matthew Hale, Dec. 22, 1916.

<sup>5</sup> Pinchot statement, Dec. 24, 1916.

<sup>6</sup> Pinchot to C. L. Pack, Dec. 19, 1914.

<sup>7</sup> Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, Mar. 6, 1915.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1915; Pinchot to Gilson Gardner, Oct. 22, 1915; Pinchot to Arthur Balfour, Feb. 16, 1916.

As the United States' entry into the war became more likely, Pinchot continued to lash at Wilson with wide abandon. "He may not be the father of lies," he told a friend, "but he certainly is high up in the family."<sup>9</sup> Four days before the declaration of war on Germany, he wrote a belligerent letter to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge: "War is not the worst of evils. Self respect is a jewel beyond price, and righteousness and justice are the only foundations of enduring peace." Asserting his approval of universal military training, he accused the Germans of practicing "murder as a habit" and urged that the United States fight them at once. "We should have done so long ago."<sup>10</sup>

When war came, Pinchot was already on record at the White House as a volunteer. Two months earlier he had addressed a note to the President: "In the event of war, I have the honor to place myself at the disposal of the Government, to serve in whatever capacity I may be of greatest use."<sup>11</sup> It is hardly surprising, in view of some of his comments on Wilson, that the White House did not scramble to enlist him in its war organization.

In the interest of national unity, Pinchot during the war kept his criticisms of Wilson private. Especially disturbed that the President would not permit Roosevelt to take a volunteer force to Europe, he told T. R., "I believe you would be worth a dozen army corps if you were in Russia right now."<sup>12</sup> Had Roosevelt received the necessary permission, he would have made Pinchot a lieutenant colonel on his staff.<sup>13</sup> When official notice of the refusal came through, Pinchot resorted to uncustomary profanity in expressing his feelings to the "Chief." "It is a damned shame," he wrote to Roosevelt, "but by no means a surprise," and went on to explain that he had hopes himself of raising and taking to France "a regiment of foresters."<sup>14</sup> When news of this project was rumored in the papers, however, Pinchot wrote to Harold Ickes, in an apparently embarrassed manner, that he had decided not to go.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Pinchot to G. C. Pardee, Jan. 25, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Pinchot to H. C. Lodge, Apr. 2, 1917.

<sup>11</sup> Pinchot to Woodrow Wilson, Feb. 9, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, May 11, 1917.

<sup>13</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to Gen. P. C. March, <sup>5</sup>Sept. 1, 1918.

<sup>14</sup> Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, May 19, 1917.

<sup>15</sup> Pinchot to H. L. Ickes, May 25, 1917.

Having no official position with the government, Pinchot took it on himself to try to aid the war effort by urging the growing of more food. Late in April he addressed a letter to more than 5,000 editors in which he suggested that the nation had a duty to guarantee fair prices to farmers,<sup>16</sup> and followed up this letter by a "talking campaign" in the South.<sup>17</sup> Hopeful of obtaining a position with Herbert Hoover's Food Administration, he had made his first approach to the future President in March. Pinchot's first impression was that Hoover was shying away from using him,<sup>18</sup> but he was delighted when, after a "thoroughly satisfactory" talk with Hoover, he was given the "real job" of trying to "increase the head of livestock in this country."<sup>19</sup>

In less than three months, however, Hoover had Pinchot's resignation. At the outset of his job, Pinchot had concluded that the way to persuade farmers to produce more pork was to have the meat packers guarantee sufficiently high prices for all hogs raised. When the packers objected, Hoover insisted that his organization did not have the authority to impose such a scheme. Pinchot, impatient with such hesitation, reminded Hoover that as the former head of the United States Forest Service he "had spent many years making the same kind of people do things they declared they would not do." If the Food Administration made a vigorous effort to compel the packers to agree, he argued, they would have no choice but to comply; in case of refusal, the government actually had the power "under the law, in addition to the moral weight of the War situation," to take over the packing houses.<sup>20</sup> But Hoover believed in neither the legality nor the wisdom of such drastic action.

As tension between the two men grew, Hoover suggested that Pinchot, with his ability to speak French, give up his livestock work and take charge of the distribution of farm tractors in France. Given but a day to consider the proposition, Pinchot surmised, with justification, that it was "merely a way to dispose of me." Returning to Hoover's office, therefore, he submitted his written resignation. "Because," it read, "of the continued failure of the Food Administration

<sup>16</sup> Apr. 26, 1917.

<sup>17</sup> Pinchot to A. W. Dimock, May 11, 1917.

<sup>18</sup> Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, June 21, 1917.

<sup>19</sup> Pinchot to J. A. McSparran, Aug. 19, 1917.

<sup>20</sup> Pinchot to H. C. Wallace, Oct. 26, 1917.

to take effective action for increasing the production of meats, which failure is certain to result in higher prices to our people and a shortage in the food supplies needed to win the war, I hereby resign."<sup>21</sup>

Pinchot's account of his ensuing discussion with Hoover showed how far apart the two men were in their philosophies concerning the proper role of the Food Administration. Hoover, in the course of their talk, revealed he had been warned "on all sides" that Pinchot would not be loyal to him. Whereupon Pinchot listed the occasions on which he felt Hoover had not been loyal to him, and complained that Hoover had offered nothing but objections to his proposals.<sup>22</sup>

Pinchot's resignation was announced only briefly in the press. To his credit, he refrained from continuing the debate in public. "I have neither the desire nor the intention of doing anything that would hamper the Food Administration."<sup>23</sup> From Henry C. Wallace, future Secretary of Agriculture under President Harding, he received both advice and hearty approval for his actions. Hoover, although profoundly pained by the resignation, and especially by the way it was worded, agreed that, in view of the national emergency, it warranted no controversy.<sup>24</sup>

Pinchot had a tendency, when engaged in a conflict, to ascribe to his opponent every possible shortcoming. He granted in his private correspondence that Hoover was an able mining engineer, and had capably handled Belgian relief. But relief work, he reasoned, consisted merely "in the purchase and delivery of supplies already produced. . . . The Belgian people took what was given them and were thankful." Managing a food administration agency in a democracy, maintained Pinchot, was "a wholly different matter." Hoover had "no knowledge of how to deal with masses of people" under such circumstances. "His knowledge of democratic institutions appears to be elementary. Indeed I understand that he has never voted." Complaining that the Food Administration was largely in the hands of men representing "the packers and other great special interests," he asserted that Hoover began his services as head of the agency "with a contempt for public opinion." Describing Hoover as

<sup>21</sup> Pinchot to Herbert Hoover, Oct. 25, 1917.

<sup>22</sup> Pinchot to H. C. Wallace, Oct. 26, 1917.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Herbert Hoover to Pinchot, Oct. 27, 1917.

"actively hostile" to the farmers, he reported to Colonel House that "So far as I can recall, in every interview I have had with him since early in September, Mr. Hoover has taken occasion to berate the farmers, and to accuse them of greed, lack of patriotism, and other shortcomings." On top of all this, charged Pinchot, Hoover was a man "nervously overwrought, seeking excuses to avoid action, and over-sensitive to criticism."<sup>25</sup>

Once more a free lance, Pinchot experienced a feeling of frustration at having no official role in the war effort.<sup>26</sup> Eager to be at the center of things, he pulled two different wires in an effort to get to Europe. First, as a member of the executive committee of the National Board of Farm Organizations, he got himself designated as their representative to study in Europe the proposed plans of Allied and neutral nations for postwar agricultural reconstruction. Appointed in September, 1918, he took no active part in the 1918 election campaigns because of his impending trip. In preparation for the assignment, he collected a large number of letters of introduction to key Europeans. But he struck a snag when the State Department refused his application for passports for himself and his secretary, Stephen Stahlnecker. The State Department, relying on a statement by Secretary of Agriculture Houston, held that Pinchot's trip was not of urgent necessity. Pinchot was incensed. "I have not tried to talk it out with Houston," he wrote Louis Brandeis, "and I will see him and the whole Government at Washington in Hades before I do."<sup>27</sup> Appealing directly to Secretary of State Lansing, he maintained that the denial of this right to the farmers "would be in line not with American democratic ideals, but rather with the policy and practice of autocratic governments."<sup>28</sup> The State Department, however, refused to budge.

The second job opportunity that Pinchot pursued was with the Army. At Pinchot's request, Roosevelt wrote General Peyton March describing Pinchot's eagerness to get to the front and suggesting that he might be used for intelligence work.<sup>29</sup> The letter brought action, for

<sup>25</sup> Pinchot to H. C. Wallace, Feb. 27, 1918; Pinchot to E. M. House, Oct. 20, 1917. In view of various statements of this nature, it is understandable that Pinchot faced some embarrassment in explaining his support of Hoover for President in 1928.

<sup>26</sup> Pinchot to J. R. Garfield, Sept. 11, 1918.

<sup>27</sup> Pinchot to Louis Brandeis, Nov. 12, 1918.

<sup>28</sup> Pinchot, confidential, to Robert Lansing, Oct. 15, 1918.

<sup>29</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to P. C. March, Sept. 1, 1918.

within two weeks the Director of Military Intelligence in the War Department wrote Pinchot of the possibilities of using him in a civilian status, ostensibly on a mission connected with forestry, in Switzerland or some Scandinavian country. Once more Pinchot's hopes rose, only to be dashed again, two weeks before the armistice, by a letter from the War Department explaining that efforts to obtain a passport for him "have been unsuccessful."<sup>30</sup>

Stopped twice in his tracks, Pinchot could not help believing that the Wilson administration was singling him out for punishment. His bitterness toward Wilson, although not publicly expressed, continued unabated. The results of the November elections, which gave the Republicans a majority in Congress, therefore brought deep satisfaction. "My warmest and heartiest congratulations," he wrote to Republican Chairman Will H. Hays, "on the magnificent victory under your leadership. . . . There can be no German peace now."<sup>31</sup> When the armistice was signed, he once more confided to Roosevelt: "What a pitiful spectacle at Washington. Unready for war, unready for peace, without a plan or a policy."<sup>32</sup>

His lack of respect for Wilson was contagious in at least part of his family. His sister Antoinette (Lady Johnstone), writing from Paris on January 18, 1919, described to Gifford her meeting with the President the night before. Wilson told her, she said, that there was nothing personal in the denial of a passport for her brother, but she refused to believe it. In a triumphant tone she wrote how she had informed Wilson of her opinion that there were no great men in the world at that time. In a battle of parlor wits, he had countered quickly with the observation that Colonel House was a great man, whereupon she acidly admitted that there were two—House, and her brother Gifford.<sup>33</sup>

With the war ended, Pinchot resumed his interest in domestic affairs. A wealthy man, he thought of his inherited money as advance wages which he hoped to work out over the years.<sup>34</sup> When the people of Pennsylvania, in the election of 1914, declined to accept his services in the United States Senate, he had continued to pour both

<sup>30</sup> M. Churchill to Pinchot, Oct. 29, 1918.

<sup>31</sup> Pinchot to W. H. Hays, Nov. 8, 1918.

<sup>32</sup> Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, Nov. 18, 1918.

<sup>33</sup> Lady Johnstone to Pinchot, Jan. 18, 1919.

<sup>34</sup> Pinchot to E. W. Scripps, Mar. 27, 1914.

time and money into conservation work. During the war he had tried desperately to do his patriotic bit. It became increasingly apparent, however, that he preferred to earn his wages as an elected public official.

His wife, too, had an active interest in politics, shown partly by her three campaigns for a seat in the United States House of Representatives. Perhaps even more than most good wives of politicians, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot was acutely ambitious for her husband's political success. Early in 1915, for example, she asked Roosevelt if he did not think Pinchot was making a mistake by staying out of the country too long. Roosevelt's reply was not encouraging, for he said frankly that he believed her husband had no future in politics since the people as a whole were not sympathetic with his views. The former President hastened to add that the same was true of his own future, and he hoped that Pinchot's situation was only temporary.<sup>35</sup>

Whether or not he knew of Roosevelt's letter, Pinchot was undaunted. With cold calculation he set out to build a following in Pennsylvania. Joining the Grange in his local area, he continued his vigorous championing of the farmer; before long he was chairman of the Committee on Conservation of the state Grange. His growing attachment to the prohibition movement, in which he believed sincerely, certainly did him no harm in numerous sections of Pennsylvania, including the so-called "Bible belt" which spread through a considerable portion of the rural areas. In 1915, he presided at a meeting of a national convention of the Anti-Saloon League of America, and during the war became an earnest advocate of preventing the brewers and distillers "from using the grain that is needed for food."<sup>36</sup>

Early in 1917 Pinchot's eye began concentrating on the 1920 election for a seat in the United States Senate. Although an election for governor of Pennsylvania was scheduled for 1918, he probably preferred the Senate. He had enjoyed national prominence in Washington, and still maintained his luxurious home on Rhode Island Avenue. Fond of his estate in Milford, he also loved to frequent his Washington mansion and to participate in the possibly more exciting politics of the nation's capital.

<sup>35</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to Cornelia Bryce Pinchot, May 13, 1915.

<sup>36</sup> Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, Apr. 18, 1917.



He needed reassurance, however, that he was wise in placing most of his eggs in the one political basket of Pennsylvania. It still was not too late to jump back to the field of conservation or forestry. Following a talk with Roosevelt on both national and Pennsylvania politics, he had an interview with Edwin A. Van Valkenburg, editor of the Philadelphia *North American*, which helped persuade him to continue his political fence building. Pinchot happily reported to Roosevelt that Van Valkenburg promised to "throw the whole power" of his paper "behind me" in the primary race for the Senate. "He believes," continued Pinchot, "that it was not only wisest but my duty to stay with the work in Pennsylvania." The more he thought about it, he explained to Roosevelt, the more he agreed that the "effort" was "worth making."<sup>37</sup>

Despite his apparent preference for a seat in the Senate, Pinchot quietly entertained some hope that the anti-Penrose Republicans in the state might call on him in 1918 to defeat the Senator's candidate for governor. When the choice fell on another, J. Denny O'Neil, however, he loyally offered to do everything possible to help the candidate, including the mailing of a personal letter to some 70,000 Progressives of 1914.<sup>38</sup> Optimistically, he confided to his sister that as a result of "the situation" there was "a better chance for me to go to the Senate in 1920 than would have otherwise been possible."<sup>39</sup>

The selection of another man for the governor's race served as a lesson to Pinchot. The controlling reason for passing him over, he reasoned, was that he had "been too much absent" from the state during the previous two or three years. "It seems a shame," he ruefully admitted, "that I should have allowed such a chance to get by from plain failure to take advantage of the situation. It is a lesson which I shall not forget."<sup>40</sup>

As soon as the war ended, Pinchot set out in earnest to overcome the mistakes he felt he had made, and to point for 1920. The 1918 defeat of the anti-Penrose forces in no way deterred him. He played his cards carefully. When the chairman of the Republican state committee asked him to attend a meeting of the group, he shied away, hoping, it would seem, to avoid being marked with the label of the

<sup>37</sup> Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, Jan. 29, 1917.

<sup>38</sup> Pinchot to William Flinn, May 1, 1918.

<sup>39</sup> Pinchot to Lady Johnstone, Feb. 14, 1918.

<sup>40</sup> Pinchot to Lady Johnstone, Jan. 24, 1918.

regular Republican organization.<sup>41</sup> He and his wife, moreover, took the unusual step of living in Philadelphia during the winter of 1918–1919. In the spring and much of the summer of 1919 he toured the state, talking in churches, before Rotary clubs, and at Grange picnics. Pounding home to farmers his now familiar tune that they should organize and get into politics, he was highly pleased when representatives of both the Grange and the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor approved a platform he drafted emphasizing the common interests of workers and farmers, and he offered to pay the expenses of sending copies of it to all Pennsylvania newspapers.<sup>42</sup> Similarly satisfying was a letter sent by the president of the Federation to all local unions, in which he referred to Pinchot as one “whose friendship for organized labor is well known.”<sup>43</sup>

Coached by a practical politician as to the proper people to see in the towns he visited, Pinchot grew enthusiastic over his progress. “Delighted with good results,” he jubilantly wired his mentor, “have followed your suggestion let the good work go on.”<sup>44</sup>

Aware of the breadth of the international problems with which a senator would have to deal, Pinchot began sounding out the opinions of the citizens of the state. Promising that their answers would be held in strict confidence, he asked them in a form letter how they and their neighbors felt, for example, about the League of Nations.<sup>45</sup>

Mrs. Pinchot, whom Gifford had married in 1914, ran a veritable beehive of entertaining both in Washington and at the summer residence in Milford. Rarely did the family have a chance to eat alone. The *Saturday Evening Post* described her home as a “sort of political boarding house.”<sup>46</sup> Drove of politicians, national, state, and local, delighted in Pinchot hospitality. Sometimes they were invited by a formal card, as on March 6, 1917, at 4:30, to Pinchot’s Washington home, where two United States senators spoke on “certain phases of education among the cowboys, ranchmen, and miners of the northern rocky mountains.” At the other extreme, the invitation

<sup>41</sup> Pinchot to W. E. Crow, June 8, 1918.

<sup>42</sup> Pinchot to J. H. Maurer, Feb. 26, 1918.

<sup>43</sup> J. H. Maurer, Mar. 6, 1919.

<sup>44</sup> Pinchot to A. N. Detrich, July 23, 1919.

<sup>45</sup> Pinchot form letter, Mar. 14, 1919.

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Frazer, “Mrs. Gifford Pinchot, Housewife and Politician,” *Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 26, 1922.

might be an advertisement in a newspaper announcing, for example, that on September 13, 1919, the Pinchots would entertain all soldiers from Pike County at Milford, from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M.; rain or shine, every resident of the county was invited for refreshments and speeches.<sup>47</sup> Much of the Pinchot entertaining, of course, had no political implications, but some of it obviously contributed to the welfare of an eager candidate.

To dramatize his contempt for Penrose, Pinchot, more than a year before the 1920 primaries, sent a bristling open letter to the Senator. Asserting that he wanted to see the Democrats beaten in 1920, he suggested that one of the main obstacles to a Republican victory was the knowledge that as a result of seniority it would place Penrose in the chairmanship of the Senate committee on finance. Choosing his words carefully, he stressed the importance to the Republicans of the vote in the Middle West, but stated frankly that "The middle West knows you mainly as the most perfect living representative of the worst type of politics in America." And Pinchot added that he thoroughly agreed with their opinion. "You are a liability," he charged. "If you are not a good enough Republican, are you a good enough American to withdraw your name" for consideration as chairman?<sup>48</sup>

Penrose's answer was brief and contemptuous. "Mr. Pinchot seems to me about as important as a cheap side show outside the fence of a county fair, like the tattooed man or the cigarette fiend."<sup>49</sup> In the ensuing slugfest of words, Penrose sometimes confused his vowels in pronouncing Pinchot's name. Pinchot, in turn, addressed devastating anti-Penrose letters to all Republican members of the House and Senate, in one of which he called his adversary "The Republican Old Man of the Sea."<sup>50</sup>

In view of his drive against Penrose, it came as a distinct shock to Pinchot that candidates supported by the Senator in the September, 1919, primaries for local offices showed "unexpected strength." He feared that the results in the state's two large cities, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, "greatly advanced" Penrose's prestige and made it improbable that Pinchot or anyone else could defeat him for the Senate

<sup>47</sup> *East Stroudsburg Press*, Aug. 20, 1919.

<sup>48</sup> Pinchot to Boies Penrose, Jan. 25, 1919.

<sup>49</sup> *North American* (Phila.), Jan. 28, 1919.

<sup>50</sup> Pinchot to Republican Senators, Feb. 7, 1919; Pinchot to Republican Representatives in Congress, Feb. 21, 1919.

in 1920.<sup>51</sup> "[It] may be," he wrote in despair, "that the chance to get effectively into Pennsylvania politics for some years to come will vanish away. . . . I feel like fighting, but there is no use butting your head against a stone wall."<sup>52</sup>

In the midst of his determined drive to sell himself to Pennsylvania, Pinchot lost the friend who, with the possible exception of his mother, did the most to influence his life. On January 6, 1919, Theodore Roosevelt died.

Despite Roosevelt's latter-day impatience (some of it not fully revealed to Pinchot) with his radicalism, Pinchot continued to hold the "Chief" on a high pedestal. Although some of T. R.'s former admirers saw him in his later years as pulling away from true liberalism, Pinchot's confidence in Roosevelt's fundamental humanitarianism was never seriously shaken. Senator La Follette once reported a remark by Amos Pinchot that Roosevelt was always able to pull the wool over his brother Gifford's eyes.<sup>53</sup> Be that as it may, there can be no question that Gifford's long and close association with Roosevelt convinced him of the genuineness of the former President's concern for the common man.

Roosevelt's death was a great personal loss to Pinchot. He was certain that it also represented a serious loss to the nation. It "may result in such control by the reactionaries," he wrote his brother, "as to put the policies you and I are interested in back many years."<sup>54</sup>

Pinchot's active concentration on Pennsylvania politics did not in any sense diminish his profound interest in the national political scene. Even before the war ended, he repeatedly informed Republican National Chairman Hays of his belief that the best way to ensure a Republican victory in 1920 was to demonstrate to the farmers that the party understood their problems and was prepared to act. Feeling that labor had become an "adjunct of the Wilson Administration" (although not in Pennsylvania, he said), he thought the farmers could be weaned away from the Democrats, but only if the Republicans avoided a reactionary viewpoint. "I feel very strongly," he wrote, "the pressing and immediate danger that the Democratic

<sup>51</sup> Pinchot to J. R. Garfield, Sept. 27, 1919.

<sup>52</sup> Pinchot to G. C. Pardee, Oct. 8, 1919.

<sup>53</sup> *La Follette's Autobiography* (Madison, Wis., 1913), 593.

<sup>54</sup> Pinchot to Amos Pinchot, Jan. 18, 1919.

Party may succeed in becoming the progressive party in the United States, and thereby may secure for itself some such lease of power as the Republican Party secured after the Civil War."<sup>55</sup> The danger, as it turned out, was more imminent a dozen years later than it was in 1918. To strengthen the party's appeal to the rural voters still further, Pinchot advocated that the vice-presidential candidate should be a farmer.<sup>56</sup>

At the end of 1918, in another of his circular letters addressed to thousands of Republican voters, Pinchot discussed the reasons for nominating a progressive Republican for President.<sup>57</sup> Encouraged by the favorable tone of many of the several hundred responses, he issued a ringing statement to the press. Asserting that Roosevelt, if still living, surely would have won both the nomination and election, he urged Republicans everywhere to join in preventing the enemies of T. R. and his policies from taking over the party. Announcing that he would submit his name as a delegate to the Republican National Convention the next year, he pledged his opposition to the nomination of "a reactionary" like Senator Warren Harding or Senator James Watson.<sup>58</sup>

On the list of possible candidates in Pinchot's mind he probably included his own name, but was realistic enough to know that his chances were tiny. Some careful notes he made of an interview with a man in Philadelphia indicate that he was ready to take himself seriously. Asked if he would consider running on a third ticket in 1920 and 1924, he cautiously answered, "I would consider any proposition made at the right time and in the right way."<sup>59</sup>

Pinchot had some difficulty in choosing the man he would support for the nomination. Finally, he had a talk with General Leonard Wood in which the candidate stated that "he knew of no policy in which he was not in entire agreement with Colonel Roosevelt."<sup>60</sup> That was enough for Pinchot. In speeches in the East and as far west as South Dakota, he began lauding Wood.

<sup>55</sup> Pinchot to W. H. Hays, Sept. 4, 1918.

<sup>56</sup> Pinchot and others to W. H. Hays, Oct. 8, 1918.

<sup>57</sup> Pinchot form letter, Dec. 19, 1918.

<sup>58</sup> Pinchot statement, Apr. 16, 1919.

<sup>59</sup> Pinchot notes on interview with Lynn Haines, Oct. 27, 1919.

<sup>60</sup> Pinchot to H. D. W. English, Feb. 17, 1919.

As the time for the Republican convention approached, Pinchot was pleased that chairman Will Hays placed him on an advisory board of one hundred fifty-nine persons to work on the policies and platform for the party. Working diligently on this assignment, he was "well pleased" with the "farmer plank" and the "conservation plank" that finally were adopted.<sup>61</sup> Watching the situation develop, however, he became increasingly fearful that the progressive Republicans would be left "absolutely out in the cold."<sup>62</sup> Although he sneered at Harry M. Daugherty's famous prediction that out of a smoke-filled room at the convention would come the nomination of Harding, he had confided to a friend that "the probability is that some Reactionary like Harding is likely to be the Republican candidate rather than Wood."<sup>63</sup> Harding, he told some University of Pennsylvania students, "would make a fine President to look at, but that is about all you can say of him."<sup>64</sup> And he wrote to the Philadelphia *North American* that "Harding is utterly unfit to be President."<sup>65</sup> Further discouraging to Pinchot was the report that he had no chance of being chosen as a delegate-at-large to the Republican convention; Senator Penrose, it was explained, was against it.<sup>66</sup> In the end, Pinchot went to the convention, but not as a delegate.

After the convention scattered the Progressives to the wind and nominated Harding, Pinchot privately expressed his misgivings that "Penrose and his crowd" had managed to put over their choice.<sup>67</sup> But he was in no mood to create a fuss. For some months, indeed, he had given indications, more so than in the past, that he was willing to be a good boy and go along with the decisions of a majority of the Republicans. For one thing, he was determined that Wilsonianism must be beaten. Although striving to infiltrate the Republican Party with as much Progressivism as possible, he promised that "We are not going to do anything that will cause or look toward causing a split" in the party.<sup>68</sup> It is likely, moreover, that his political ambitions were restraining him from appearing to be a maverick. In his

<sup>61</sup> Pinchot to H. D. W. English, June 24, 1920.

<sup>62</sup> Pinchot to H. L. Ickes, Feb. 18, 1920.

<sup>63</sup> Pinchot to Horace Plunkett, Mar. 19, 1919.

<sup>64</sup> Pinchot speech, Mar. 27, 1920.

<sup>65</sup> Pinchot to editor, Feb. 25, 1920.

<sup>66</sup> A. N. Detrich to Pinchot, Feb. 9, 1920.

<sup>67</sup> Pinchot to H. D. W. English, June 24, 1920.

<sup>68</sup> Pinchot to H. D. W. English, July 18, 1919.

1914 election campaign he had toyed with socialism and had been called a radical. Now he seemed to be trying to redeem himself in the eyes of the conservatives whom he had frightened away. Perhaps almost unconsciously he had come to realize that if he hoped to win an election in Pennsylvania he must tame some of the wild horse within him. He had, for example, wired to Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts his congratulations for "your services to the whole nation" in breaking the Boston police strike.<sup>69</sup>

No sooner had Harding been nominated, therefore, than Pinchot fell in line. "Much as Harding's nomination leaves to be desired, Cox is a great deal worse," he told a Pennsylvania Progressive. And he asked to be excused from signing with other former Progressives a letter asking Harding to disavow some of the strong criticism he had directed at Roosevelt in 1912.<sup>70</sup>

Late in August Pinchot made a trip to Marion, Ohio, to see the candidate and to judge for himself. In personal interviews of this kind, Pinchot sometimes tended to be swayed unduly by what was said in the course of the discussion. Harding, in this instance, did not completely captivate his interrogator, but did remove a number of Pinchot's doubts. "Harding has come through superbly on forestry," he told an associate. He was delighted, moreover, that the candidate "referred to our friends the grabbers as *hogs*, and said he would tell them so if it were not for its being campaign time." Pinchot did not believe Harding "would be another T.R.," but was happy to report that the candidate was "much better in every way than I supposed."<sup>71</sup> Part of this enthusiasm stemmed from Pinchot's belief that Harding "liked me and wanted me in the picture."<sup>72</sup> Immediately after the interview, the news wires reported to the nation that Pinchot endorsed Harding.

Pinchot's support of Harding was considerably more than passive acquiescence. He supplied material for the candidate's speeches. He offered his services to the national chairman as a stump speaker. And early in October he proclaimed, in a letter to Republican papers all over the country, that, as a follower of Roosevelt "alive or dead," he had found Harding "by no means the Reactionary I thought him." Admitting to frequent past differences with the candidate, he empha-

<sup>69</sup> Pinchot to Calvin Coolidge, Nov. 6, 1919.

<sup>70</sup> Pinchot to H. D. W. English, July 10, 1920.

<sup>71</sup> Pinchot to H. A. Slattery, Aug. 30, 1920.

<sup>72</sup> Pinchot to Lady Johnstone, Jan. 17, 1921.

sized that Harding's present pronouncements on agriculture, forestry, and conservation were "sound and right." Referring to his personal impressions from the interview at Marion, he said he liked the Senator because he "dodged nothing, looked me straight in the eye, and unmistakably meant what he said."<sup>73</sup>

In the midst of the country's drive "back to normalcy," which represented a retreat from the things that Progressives stood for, Pinchot still was able to speak hopefully. With an optimism that was characteristic, although scarcely warranted, he assured Harold Ickes that the former Progressives were getting their point of view "far more widely accepted in the platform and in the speeches of the candidates than I had any idea would be possible. . . . I still have the feeling that our day is not over."<sup>74</sup>

Pinchot's hopes were raised for some sort of job with the newly elected Harding administration when Henry C. Wallace wrote that he was urging his name for Secretary of Agriculture. Wallace himself, however, stepped into that post. Pinchot admired Wallace, but was sadly disappointed in most of the other members of the new Cabinet, including Herbert Hoover. It might have been possible, he wrote, to pick a worse man than Albert Fall for Secretary of the Interior, "but not altogether easy."<sup>75</sup> Ten days after Harding took office, Pinchot ruefully admitted to his sister that while Harding was "extremely cordial," there was no prospect of a position in the administration.<sup>76</sup> A quarter of a century later he conceded that he had made a mistake, "I voted for Harding and I've been sorry ever since."<sup>77</sup>

In the spring of 1921, after making only limited political progress, Pinchot chose to bide his time and train his sights on some more distant goal, perhaps the next election for governor in 1922. The political opportunity for which he had been waiting came on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1921, when the death of Boies Penrose brought about within the Republican Party of Pennsylvania a wild struggle for power and offices.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Pinchot to Republican newspapers, Oct. 2, 1920.

<sup>74</sup> Pinchot to H. L. Ickes, Sept. 25, 1920.

<sup>75</sup> Pinchot, confidential, to S. M. Lindsay, Mar. 6, 1921.

<sup>76</sup> Pinchot to Lady Johnstone, Mar. 14, 1921.

<sup>77</sup> Pinchot form letter, Oct. 16, 1944.

<sup>78</sup> Research on Gifford Pinchot was made possible by grants from the American Philosophical Society, and the Council on Research of the Pennsylvania State University.