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Natives, Newspapers, and "Fighting Bob"
Wisconsin Chippewa in the "Unprogressive" Era

The Progressive Era (1900-1915) was a painfully regressive period for Native Americans. Government officials and Christian reformers mistakenly assumed at the turn of the century that the "Indian problem" had been solved with the assimilation policy of allotment and detribalization. Indians, they believed, would learn to live like whites and eventually be absorbed into white society. For Wisconsin's Chippewa, absorption carried a terrible price. Allotment was in disarray, corruption was rampant, and abuse of governmental authority was commonplace.

Much of the responsibility for this appalling state of affairs rested with Samuel Campbell, who served as Indian Agent at La Pointe from 1898 to 1912. During the last half of his tenure, Campbell was the target of several newspaper exposés. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* accused him of kidnapping Indian school children. The *Chicago Record-Herald* charged him with misappropriating Indian timber funds. Complaints from the Indian Rights Association and the Chippewa themselves continued to build until 1909 when the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs announced it would investigate the charges.

The senate panel, including the progressive Republican Robert M. La Follette, held a series of hearings on four Chippewa reservations in northern Wisconsin during the fall of 1909.[1] Although the hearings did not attract national attention, they did inspire regional coverage by the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. The investigation was major news in two small Wisconsin communities located near the reservations visited by Senate investigators—Ashland, which supported the *Ashland News* and *Ashland Daily Press*, and Minocqua, home to the *Lakeland Times*.

The hearings offer an excellent opportunity to look at a topic about which journalism history is silent. Historians interested in the Progressive Era have focused their attention on national muckraking magazines, the muckrakers themselves, and urban reforms. Little has been written about Native Americans and progressivism and virtually nothing exists about news coverage and Indians during this critical period of their history. Crusading journalists attacked the looting of the American resources by the "Robber Barons." However, in Indian County, which provided much of the loot, the muck went largely unraked.

Coverage of the 1909 hearings reveals a good deal about Native American-white relations in Wisconsin, and perhaps nationally during the early twentieth century. It reflects the racial arrogance that whites exhibited toward Indians. Clearly, white newspapermen did not think much of Indians or they did not think about them at all.

The coverage provides fascinating insights into how partisanship and political factionalism affected news reports of Indian affairs. It also offers a rare opportunity to look at Indians within the broader context of progressivism and the crusading journalism the movement inspired—a movement that fell short when it came to Native Americans. As western historian Donald Parman noted, "The Indian was primarily a bystander, seldom a participant, often a victim, and rarely a beneficiary of the progressive reforms."[2]

During the Progressive Era, life for the Wisconsin Chippewa was a study in contrast and chaos. It was a period of intense cultural reconstruction. Some of the 4,500 tribal members spoke only their native language, lived in wickiups, and survived by hunting and fishing. Others learned English in Eastern boarding schools and returned to their reservations to open hotels, movie theaters, and even an opera house. The nightmare that had become allotment, however, touched nearly every tribal member.

The General Allotment Act of 1887 had effectively detribalized Indian nations across the country and privatized their land. In Wisconsin, each tribal member received eighty acres, which he or she was encouraged to farm. As this land quickly passed from Indian hands into white ownership, Congress recognized the need to protect Native Americans from unscrupulous white land speculators. It passed a measure that placed allotted land in trust for twenty-five years. Indians judged mentally competent—that is, they spoke English and understood the concept of property ownership, could petition the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to sell their land sooner. As was the case with other tribes, an extraordinary number of Chippewa suddenly became competent—and destitute.

The Bad River Reservation near Ashland was in particular disarray. As the final Chippewa reservation in Wisconsin to be allotted, Bad River attracted hundreds of Chippewa and would-be Chippewa who had been denied allotments elsewhere. Nearly all the La Pointe allotments were rich in white pine timber. Lumber rights on one eighty-acre parcel, for example, might be worth as much as $30,000. Battles over choice allotments promoted in-fighting among tribal members and outright skullduggery by non-Indians.

As La Pointe Agent, Samuel Campbell directed and brokered critical operations for the Chippewa, including lumber contracts, land sales, and lease arrangements—responsibilities for which he was ill-prepared. A contract Campbell negotiated in 1902 prompted howls of protest from the Indian Rights Association (IRA). The IRA complained that Campbell had set the price at four dollars per thousand feet of stumpage when the current market value of the lumber was actually twelve dollars per thousand feet. This, the organization argued, "stamps him as unsafe to represent the interests of the Indians."[3]

Still, Campbell probably brought more credentials to the patronage position than most Indian agents. He had served as one of several white officers in a regiment comprised of black troops during the Civil War. Onetime farmer, sometime shop owner, and minor political figure, Campbell had come to his post by virtue of his friendship with several prominent Conservatives. He became an ardent member of the "unprogressive" wing of the party just as "Fighting Bob" La Follette's star was rising. There is evidence of political acrimony between the two men, but it is unclear whether this affected La Follette's decision to champion the Chippewa's cause.[4] As a member of the investigating committee, "Fighting Bob" was instrumental in having Campbell dismissed for misappropriating funds.

The six newspapers included in this study were chosen on the basis of their proximity to the hearing sites and other factors. The *Ashland News* and *Ashland Daily Press* newspapers, for example, could be expected to cover the hearings in nearby Odanah. Likewise, it seemed logical that the *Minocqua Times* would report on the hearings in Lac du Flambeau; the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*—the only newspaper serving the isolated St. Croix and Lac Courte Oreilles Chippewa communities—would cover the hearings at Shell Lake and Reserve. The author was guided to the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and *Chicago Record-Herald* by Campbell's personal papers. Agent Campbell was a prolific letter writer, whose dated missives directed the author to specific news articles published in the Milwaukee and Chicago newspapers. Finally, the prominent nature of the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* made them attractive additions to this study. The result—somewhat unintended, but thoroughly appreciated—was a set of newspapers that represented the spectrum of political partisanship. One newspaper identified itself as Democratic, one was independent, two were conservative Republican and two were progressive Republican.[5]

Ashland was a two-paper town at the turn of the century and its newspapers were predictably partisan.[6] The *Ashland Daily Press* was owned and edited by John C. Chapple. This Iowa-born Republican had published the Saturday Evening Press of Phoenix, Arizona, and the La Porte City Press in Iowa before moving to Ashland. Chapple quickly became active in Republican party activities. He served on the city council and county board before his election to the state assembly in 1908. When the state GOP fractured into the Conservatives and the Progressives in 1904, the *Ashland Daily Press* endorsed La

Follette for governor and a slate of progressive candidates for other offices.[7]

Chapple's counterpart at the *Ashland News* was Burt Williams, who would run for governor on the Democratic ticket in 1916. The *Ashland News,* also a daily, backed a number of progressive reforms including worker's compensation and municipal ownership of utilities. Williams railed against "privilege seeking institutions"—insurance companies, railroads, and grain elevator operators who were undeserving of their generous tax breaks and who, he believed, wielded too much influence in government.[8]

"An editor who accepted public office broke faith with the people."

The *Minocqua Times* was a conservative Republican weekly in a one-newspaper town. Its editor, C.W. Hooper, was president of the local businessman's club, active in the volunteer fire department, and rabidly anti-La Follette. During the historic 1904 schism, Hooper informed his readers that the *Times* would support the stalwart National Republican Party of Wisconsin. "We do not believe in the visionary doctrines advocated by Gov. La Follette and have the nerve to stand by our convictions, though we may stand alone."[9]

The *Milwaukee Sentinel* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* at the turn of the century represented opposite ends of the Republican spectrum. The former was a conservative organ owned by Charles Pfister, a man who relished politics and saw his newspaper as a political tool. The latter was shaped by the legendary Joseph A. Wheelock who scrupulously avoided politics, believing: "An editor who accepted public office broke faith with the people."[10]

Once described as a "ham-handed corruptionist," Pfister subscribed to the theory that if you cannot beat them, buy them.[11] In 1899 the *Sentinel* and its progressive editor, Col. Horace Rublee, had accused Pfister publicly of bribing city officials in order to obtain a monopoly franchise. Pfister's libel case against the *Sentinel* was still pending when the paper came up for sale in 1901. When La Follette backers could not meet the price, Pfister bought it and turned it into a conservative mouthpiece.[12]

Wheelock, who edited the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* for nearly fifty years, was a restrained progressive. He advocated black and women's suffrage, but opposed public ownership of telegraphs; he embraced anti-trust action and at the same time eschewed unionism. His attitude toward Indians was equally ambiguous. "The 'savage's right to land' was 'good only so long as the civilized white man' did not want it."[13] Although he imagined his newspaper to be "the best exponent of the most enlightened and progressive opinion on all the current issues of the day," Wheelock and his son, Webster, who took over as editor in 1909, opposed populists, socialists, and progressives like La Follette.[14]

The *Chicago Record-Herald* was owned and edited by Frank B. Noyes, who, like Wheelock, also avoided insider politics. Whiz-kid son of a prominent Chicago family, Noyes had managed the Evening Star in Washington D.C. at the age of 28. He returned to Chicago in 1902 to take over operations of the newly merged *Chicago Record* and *Times-Herald* newspapers. Although the *Record-Herald* proclaimed itself an independent newspaper, it tended to lean Republican.[15]

The picture that emerges is consistent with descriptions of turn-of-the-century newspapers from Baldasty, Dyer, Griffith, and other journalism historians.[16] Partisanship was strongest in smaller towns where the owner-editor was actively involved in politics, often as an officeholder. It was beginning to weaken in larger cities, where editors were moving away from insider politics.

Little is known about the reporters in this study. Consistent with Ogan's analysis of *New York Times* stories at the turn of the century, only one news account of the four dozen reviewed contained a by-line.[17] This was a *Record-Herald* exposé in 1906—three years before the hearings. It was written by someone identified only as "Sumner" and carried a Washington dateline and a "Special to the *Record-Herald*" disclaimer. The report revealed that Campbell had provided more than half a million dollars of Indian timber money to the lumber companies for use at little or no interest. The muckraking style of journalism, popularized by Lincoln Steffens and others, was evident in the report. In fact, Sumner used the term himself: "The Senate committee on Indian affairs has been out with a *muck-rake* and has uncovered a fine mess in connection with timber operations on the Indian reservation lands in the Lake Superior country [emphasis added].[18]

It is perhaps not coincidental that the *Record-Herald's* exposé on the La Pointe agency came

shortly after La Follette was appointed to the Indian Affairs committee. Was La Follette responsible for the report? In a letter to a friend Campbell said he thought so.[19] As Harry Stein pointed out in his synthesis of American muckraking, "Muckrakers valuably afforded Progressive reformers a national voice—functioning especially as their publicity agents—instructed them in what reformers did and said elsewhere, kept them from political isolation and otherwise sustained their efforts and ideas."[20] Graft, political corruption, and big business—the unholy trinity, as far as La Follette and progressive reformers were concerned—bedeviled Chippewa country. It was time to exorcise the demons.

The need to deny La Follette a platform . . . was likely perceived as more important than covering a statewide news event.

Pressure to investigate abuse and corruption within the La Pointe Agency had been building for years from the Indian Rights Association (IRA). The organization's litany of complaints included Campbell's practice of withholding all but ten dollars a month to the allottees, whose average estate was worth about three thousand dollars. Bad River tribal members, the IRA charged, were reduced to buying goods on credit with "orders" from the Stearns Lumber Company store. "These orders were then "exchanged for coupons and the latter sold at from sixty to seventy-five cents on the dollars, face value thereof, which is just so much lost to the rightful Indian owner."[21] The IRA accused Campbell of putting Indians at the mercy of a black market economy and the "exorbitant prices" charged by Stearns at its company store. Furthermore, the IRA claimed that Campbell had helped Stearns create a monopoly by denying government licenses to Stearns's competitors.

The efforts of the IRA and various tribal delegations that traveled to Washington with complaints fell on deaf ears. Campbell's close friends held powerful positions in the nation's capital. Wisconsin Republican W.A. Jones directed U.S. Indian policy as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Another Wisconsin Conservative, Senator Joseph Quarles, sat on the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. "As you probably know, the kickers [the IRA] made a demonstration against you and filed enough charges to imprison you for life," Quarles wrote Campbell in a sardonic letter. "But I have been able to satisfy the Secretary of the Interior and the Indian Committee that you are an honest man and really not half bad."[22]

In 1905, the unthinkable happened. Quarles stepped down because of poor health and La Follette, then Governor of Wisconsin, won a special election to fill the unexpired term. Even worse, La Follette was appointed to the Committee on Indians Affairs. He was now in a position to make Campbell's life miserable. He did just that.

The Senate panel opened its hearings with a session at Shell Lake on September 20, 1909.[23] Committee members were particularly concerned about 150 Chippewa, living along the St. Croix River, who had been omitted from the allotment rolls and now found themselves landless. Efforts to remedy the oversight by providing allotments on the Bad River Reservation produced resentment among Bad River tribal members and created a major rift within the Chippewa Nation. This was especially true of the mixed-breed Indians, who did not want to share their reservation with Chippewa from St. Croix.

La Follette insinuated to the media that Campbell was responsible for the mess. He also told reporters that Campbell could face misconduct charges relating to an incident the committee intended to investigate on the Bad River Reservation. Campbell had ordered four men off the reservation, claiming that they had violated liquor laws. In a *St. Paul Pioneer Press* story sub-titled "La Follette Champions Reds and Wants to Know Why Four Were Removed," the evicted tribal members were treated sympathetically as well-educated business owners who had suffered at the hands of corrupt government officials. "The committee will investigate whether these Indians were ordered removed in conformity with the law," the *Pioneer Press* reported, "or because they had been

criticizing the conduct of affairs by the department."[24] Editor Wheelock's animosity toward LaFollette was not evident in the news story. In fact, the characterization of "Fighting Bob" as a "champion," was downright flattering. This incongruity may have reflected the increasing separation of news and editorial at larger papers like the *Press*.

Ashland's Democratic paper paid little attention to the content of the Shell Lake proceedings. Instead, its account focused on the prominence of the committee members who would soon arrive in Ashland. Given his interest in politics, editor Burt Williams probably wrote this story himself. By choosing to focus on the committee itself, Williams could ignore La Follette and yet fulfill his primary role as a "booster" for his community.[25] Certainly the arrival of a U.S. Senate panel lent prestige to the town.

The two most staunchly conservative newspapers—the *Sentinel* and the *Minocqua Times*—totally ignored the hearing. The *Times* treatment of the hearing was predictable given the depth of loathing editor Hooper had for La Follette. The *Sentinel's* disinterest, however, is not as easily explained. Larger newspapers were becoming less partisan and more business-oriented. Pfister, on the other hand, bought the *Sentinel* specifically to wage political warfare. The need to deny La Follette a platform to criticize Pfister's fellow Conservatives was likely perceived as more important than covering a statewide news event.

The progressive Republican *Ashland Daily Press* came closest to reporting what had been a major concern to the St. Croix Indians. The Chippewa at Shell Lake had testified about what mattered most to them—treaty rights, the increasing factionalization of the Chippewa over assimilation issues, and the loss of their land base:

> **Mr. Mead.** Practically all the blue berry fields are fenced in, the cranberry marshes are owned by other people, and a great many of the cranberry marshes are turned to use for hay meadows. The fishing that they had then has been taken charge of by the sporting element from the cities; and deer, duck, and game have all been driven farther west and north."[26]

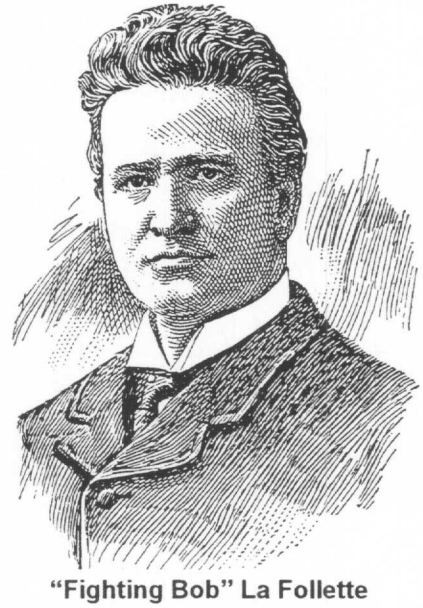
With settlement had come "encroachments upon what they thought was theirs," the *Ashland Daily Press* reported. With government education had come "disturbers" who caused "considerable ill feelings" on the reservation.[27]

None of the newspapers—not even the *Daily Press*, reported on what clearly had been the most dramatic moment of testimony—or non-testimony. When several traditional Chippewa attempted to testify about their treaty rights, committee members refused to listen. Chairman Moses Clapp demonstrated his impatience by telling the St. Croix Chippewa that he and his panel members had heard enough about treaty promises and subsistence living:

> **The Chairman (through the interpreter, Lone Star).** We do not care to hear anything more about your going up to Bad River for annuities nor about being deprived of the hunting and fishing. Now, have you anything else to say to the committee?[28]

The silencing of the Chippewa in the hearing room was reflected in newspaper accounts as well. No Indians were quoted. The issues that mattered most to them—sovereignty, treaty rights, and a dwindling land base—were largely ignored. No one seemed to have noticed the factionalism that had developed between the traditionals, who were interested in treaty and sovereignty issues, and mixed-bloods, who were perceived to be assimilating. Clearly, committee members were far more interested in the latter. However, if government officials had forgotten the hunting and fishing rights the Chippewa had reserved in treaties, it is equally clear that traditional Chippewa had not.

The committee opened its hearing involving the Lac Courte Oreilles Indians at Reserve, Wisconsin, the next day. The Lac Courte Oreilles detailed numerous trespass complaints against the lumber company with which Campbell had contracted on their behalf. They accused Signor, Crisler & Company of cutting timber without the permission of its owners and paying little, if any, restitution. Indians employed by Signor complained they were



"Fighting Bob" La Follette

paid in "time check coupons," redeemable only at the "company store." They told the committee that white laborers were paid in bank checks, not coupons.

Under cross examination, James Signor admitted that a black market had developed for these coupons and that white men sometimes charged the Indians a ten percent surcharge to trade their coupons for cash. He also admitted that there were just three places where Indians could cash their time checks—the company store, an Eau Claire bank (more than a hundred miles away), and a nearby saloon.

The Lac Courte Oreilles asked the committee to remove the lumber company from the reservation. One member told the panel that the tribe believed the land within the reservation boundary belonged to them. He did not use the word sovereignty, but the concept was evoked in his statement. "No one could come in and do any wrong to them," he said. "They had the rights to anything that belonged to them on the inside of the boundary line of their reservation."[29]

With that, the committee adjourned and left for Ashland. There was little newspaper coverage of the Lac Courte Oreilles hearings. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* ran a short three-paragraph article, which, like the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* "La Follette Champions Reds" account, discussed the eviction of the four tribal members and raised the question of possible misconduct charges against Campbell. It is likely the story was, in fact, a rewrite of the *Pioneer Press* article sent by telegraph. There was no mention of the time check coupons and nothing about the tribal sovereignty issue. Once again, reporters had ignored what mattered most to the Chippewa.

Bad River Hearing

The Committee hearing in Ashland began with hours of testimony over land claim issues. Allotment was in a state of chaos on the Bad River Reservation. As the final Chippewa reservation in Wisconsin to be allotted, Bad River attracted hundreds of Chippewa and would-be Chippewa who had been denied allotments elsewhere. It represented their last chance at securing land.[30] Tribal members testified that some Indians, who had received allotments on other reservations, obtained second parcels at Bad River while hundreds of legitimate members of the tribe received no allotments.

Much of the testimony, however, concerned the Assistant Government Farmer, Norbert Sero.[31] Sero was a mean-spirited, mixed-blood Indian who also had served as the tribal police officer. Under Campbell's direction, Sero had evicted five tribal members from the reservation for drinking, gambling, and womanizing. As the hearing progressed, it became clear that the five men had been evicted, not for their supposed infractions, but because they had agitated against government corruption on the reservation. Charges that the men had ignored the prohibition on alcohol proved hypocritical. Sero's own wife told the panel that her husband had been confiscating bootleg liquor on the reservation and supplying it—not only to other Indians—but to U.S. marshals as well. More damaging testimony came from the wife of one of the evicted men, who testified that she and Sero had had an affair.

The newspapers loved it. The *Ashland News* jumped into the fray with a front page story, editorializing: "The members of the committee are decidedly disgusted with the record and attitude of the Assistant Indian farmer at Odanah."[32] The conservative *Milwaukee Sentinel* ignored La Follette for the most part and instead concentrated on the developing soap opera. Its headline declared: "Indian Farmer Sero Will Have To Go."[33]

Sero had figured prominently in a well-publicized run-in with Roman Catholic Bishop A.F. Schinner in December 1905. Campbell had authorized Sero to forcibly remove four children from St. Mary's—a school run by Catholic nuns in Odanah. Both the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and the Democratic *Ashland News* carried the feud in a series of front- page stories. The *Sentinel* suggested that officials harvested Indian children in Odanah and delivered them to the government boarding school at Lac du Flambeau so that the school superintendent, who was paid on a per pupil basis, could enjoy a higher salary. The paper carried gothic descriptions of children being "seized" by the government farmer and both parents and children crying bitterly at the "enforced separation." The bishop's pronouncement that Campbell's actions were "as bad as the tyranny of the Czar of Russia" made it into both the *Sentinel* and the Ashland paper's accounts as well. Finally, the bishop warned that unless the children were returned, he would appeal to the President.[34]

The "Czar of La Pointe," meanwhile, discovered that his troubles with the Catholics of St. Mary's had not ended. Sisters Katherine and Margaret took the witness stand and told the committee that Campbell

and Sero were "really unfit to rule anybody, especially the Indians."[35] Sister Katherine described Sero as the "most immoral man" she had ever met.

The committee hearing at Bad River did not go well for Samuel Campbell. Allotment was in disarray, corruption was rampant, and lumber company abuse was commonplace. At least one subordinate had had an affair with the wife of a man he tossed off the reservation and his own people were supplying liquor to the Indians. It would take divine intervention for Campbell to survive the investigation, and given his acrimonious relationship with the bishop, that was not likely to happen.

Campbell found relief only in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and the *Minocqua Times*—conservative newspapers which ignored or downplayed his involvement in the investigation. Progressive papers—*St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *Ashland Daily News* remained in attack mode. Perhaps the hearings represented for progressive editors a convenient means of neutralizing or eliminating Campbell and his fellow Conservatives in northern Wisconsin. The emphasis had clearly shifted from Indian issues to the corruption and scandalous behavior of conservative Republicans within the La Pointe Agency.

Lac du Flambeau Hearing

The committee opened its hearing at Lac du Flambeau to familiar complaints—the unauthorized timber cutting, time check coupons, and inflated prices at the company store. The committee worked late into the evening in order to finish its business with the Chippewa before moving on to its hearings with other Wisconsin tribes. It was La Follette's final opportunity to humiliate Samuel Campbell and he made the most of it. Lumbering was the most important economic activity—in some cases, the *only* activity on the Chippewa reservations, La Follette maintained. He got the Indian agent to admit under oath that Campbell knew absolutely nothing about the timber industry.

The Chippewa hearings ended on that note. As committee members wandered off to Potawatomi Country, the newspapers turned their attention to other news of the day. The Democratic newspaper was the exception. The *Ashland News* continued to carry stories about the hearing for the rest of the week, speculating that Sero would be fired and that the five evicted tribal members would be allowed to return to the reservation.[36]

The progressive *Ashland Daily Press*, reverted to its comfortable role of booster. It reported that the Senators enjoyed the "magnificent" harbor, delicious white fish, and the "virility" of the Ashland area.[37] The conservative *Minocqua Times* was largely silent. During the months of September and October, it carried just one, three-paragraph article, which it buried on page three. Furthermore, the article focused on the hearings in Ashland, not the one in its own back yard. Partisanship and editor C.W. Hooper's averred distaste for La Follette, no doubt, influenced the decision to ignore what clearly must have been one of the major news events of the year in Minocqua.

The corruption exposed by the 1909 investigation was Campbell's undoing. Over the next two years, he faced increasing scrutiny by Commissioner of Indian Affairs R. G. Valentine, who had replaced his good friend, W.A. Jones. When Ashland businessmen undertook a petition drive to support Campbell, it was fitting perhaps that the effort was led by the local funeral director.[38] In the summer of 1912, Valentine ordered federal agents to seize Campbell's books. An audit revealed Campbell had deposited $54,771 of Indian timber money in his personal account. In December, the dreaded missive arrived: "You are, therefore, hereby dismissed."[39]

Partisanship is clearly evident in the treatment Campbell received from the Ashland papers and *Minocqua Times* in the months preceding his dismissal. Under the screaming headline, "Agent is Out," The Democratic *Ashland News* told of "sensational developments" brewing.[40] The progressive Republican *Ashland Daily News* was kinder in its headlines and more generous in its copy. It stated that once the charges were proved false, it would be Campbell's decision not to resume control of the agency.[41] The conservative Republican *Minocqua Times* was kindest of all, burying its four-paragraph story on Campbell's suspension on page three.[42]

The Chippewa at the turn of the century faced tremendous pressures—allotment, assimilation, and a dwindling land base. They met these challenges against a bewildering backdrop of graft, corruption, and major political upheaval. The complexities of these problems and the investigation they prompted invited thorough reporting and thoughtful analysis. Instead, the newspapers in this study took a dismissive approach to the core issues confronting the senate panel—the issues about which the Chippewa testified and which clearly mattered most to them—

their land, the allotment process, and their sovereignty.

The lack of understanding was not surprising considering the cultural divide that existed between the Chippewa and their neighbors. Indians were the great enigma—idealized as noble savages and cursed as bloodthirsty heathens. Following the Civil War until the turn of the century, Spencerian theory and scientific racism dominated discussions about Indians.[43] The race would vanish, social scientists predicted, either because of its inherently inferior genes or through assimilation into the larger population. Eastern reformers fervently believed that given exposure to the Christian work ethic, Indians could evolve into civilized beings. They viewed assimilation and allotment as the means to end the misery of reservation life documented by Helen Hunt Jackson.[44] Western expansionists ardently hoped the two policies would open up vast tracks of tribal land to settlement. Detribalization, grounded in guilt and greed, was an immensely popular proposition and one unquestioned by Wisconsin newspapermen.

Editors either politicized the investigation or used the hearings as a way to "boost" their community's image. In nearly every story, the main characters—Indians—were pushed to the periphery. The Chippewa were, as far as the senators and newspapermen were concerned, insignificant actors in a drama directed by outsiders. They were held not so much with disregard as with no regard. If Indians had a role, it was one-dimensional—that of victim.

Progressive reformers, including La Follette, believed they could "save" the victim through assimilation—a strategy viewed today as decidedly "unprogressive." Newspapers, whether they supported La Follette or not, also reflected an obvious assimilationist theme. Senate investigators and reporters were critical of figures who acted as obstructionists to assimilation. They were supportive of Indians who tried to assimilate. Chippewa who acquired an education and operated businesses—in other words, acted like whites—were treated favorably. Those who wanted to talk about hunting and fishing rights—who wanted to continue living like "real" Indians—were dismissed from hearing rooms and absent from news reports.

Newspaper coverage of the investigation was driven by partisanship and party factionalism. There is strong evidence that conservative Republican newspapers downplayed or ignored the hearings that targeted La Follette opponents within the La Pointe Indian Agency. Democratic and progressive Republican papers, on the other hand, were much more aggressive in their coverage.

That La Follette championed the Chippewa's cause, there can be no doubt. *Why* he defended their interests so vigorously is less clear. To reformers, the Chippewa fell into the ranks of the downtrodden—people La Follette felt duty bound to protect. Enough evidence exists, however, to speculate about whether his enthusiasm may have been politically motivated. The hearings, did, after all, neutralize a political rival.

The most revealing characteristic of newspaper coverage of the 1909 hearings is the absence of Chippewa voices. No tribal members were quoted. The statements they made or attempted to make during testimony were disregarded by the senate investigating panel and ignored by the media.

Those complaints still echo. A study of recent treaty rights coverage suggests Indian voices are still absent from mainstream newspapers. Of more than one hundred sources used by reporters for the *Lakeland Times* (formerly the *Minocqua Times)* between 1986 and 1990, for example, only sixteen percent of them were Indian.[45]

Was newspaper treatment of the 1909 hearings predictive of modern-day treaty rights coverage? Native Americans today claim they are largely ignored by the mainstream media except when Indian sovereignty collides with white interests. In 1909 the issue of Indian sovereignty surfaced and was suppressed. In the end, the "Condition of Indian Affairs in Wisconsin" investigation was a narrative about cultural arrogance. It was not really a story about Indians at all. It was a story about the condition of white men—Indian agents, lumber barons, U.S. senators, and newspapermen—whose lives and political careers intermeshed with the Chippewa during the fall of 1909.

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NOTES

1. The panel convened at Shell Lake to meet with the St. Croix Band of Chippewa, then traveled to Reserve to meet with the Lac Courte Oreilles Band. It then proceeded to Ashland to take testimony from Bad River and Red Cliff Band members. It

concluded its tour of Chippewa country with a stop in Lac du Flambeau, home to the band of the same name. Along with autonomous bands in Michigan and Minnesota, the Wisconsin Chippewa comprise the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa. Instead of *Chippewa,* the author would have preferred to use *Anishinabe* or *Ojibwe*—the appellations most Chippewa use when referring to themselves. However, most government documents refer to the tribe as *Chippewa*. The use of other terms might have confused the reader. In addition to the four Chippewa reservations in Wisconsin, the senate panel also held hearings in Menominee, Potawatomi, Oneida, and Ho Chunk (formerly Winnebago) communities in Wisconsin in September and October 1909.

2. Donald L. Parman, *Indians and the American West in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 11.

3. S.M.Brosius to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 15 Nov. 1902, Campbell Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, River Falls.

4. Campbell's papers reveal a fair amount of political activity during his tenure as La Pointe Agent, including efforts to thwart La Follette in northern Wisconsin. Although most Indians were not citizens and could not vote in federal elections until the 1920s, some had become U.S. citizens. Campbell's Conservative cronies at the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation, for example, routinely rounded up Indians on election day and delivered them to the polls, much to the dismay of Progressives. A shady land deal offers further evidence of a feud between Campbell and La Follette. In 1907 Campbell ordered a "competent" Chippewa woman to give up an eighty-acre allotment and then promptly filed a homestead claim on it. An Ashland attorney whose family members, according to the *Ashland News,* were "active and vigorous followers of Senator La Follette in this part of the state" sued Campbell, claiming that the agent had abused his public position for private gain. Campbell lost the suit and the land.

5. Circulation figures ranged from 450 for the Minocqua paper, and under 2,000 for the Ashland papers to just over 40,000 for the Milwaukee and St. Paul newspapers. The *Chicago Record-Herald* claimed a circulation of 141,000. There were no Native news publications in Wisconsin at the time. *The Odanah Star*, an English-language newspaper owned and edited by the author's great-great uncle began publishing in Odanah in June 1912, well after the hearings.

6. Gerald Baldasty found that in communities where there were two or more publications, "nine-tenths of all newspapers claimed political affiliation." Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 130.

7. The schism within the Republican party just before the 1904 elections was so great that members of the conservative and progressive wings of the party went to court for the right to use the name "Republican Party." After the State Supreme Court ruled in favor of La Follette's backers, the losing faction formed the new "National Republican Party of Wisconsin." In an effort to simplify terminology, the author refers to La Follette and like-minded members of the Republican party as Progressives (even though La Follette did not establish the National Progressive League until 1911) and stalwart Republicans as Conservatives. There was some concern that readers might confuse the "National Republicans" of this era with the anti-Jacksonian National Republicans of an earlier era, so the decision was made to use the simpler, albeit less-correct terms, "Progressives" and "Conservatives."

8. Burt Williams, "Address of Burt Williams, Democratic Candidate for Governor" at Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 25 Sept. 1916.

9. "Our Position," *Minocqua Times*, 20 Oct. 1904, 4.

10. Richard Eide, "The Influence of Editorship and Other Forces on the Growth of the St. Paul Pioneer Press, 1849 to 1909" (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri, 1939), 60.

11. William Thompson, *Wisconsin: A History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 413.

12. Ronald Anzia, *Wisconsin's Oldest Business Institution ...Milwaukee Sentinel*, reprinted from the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 12 Aug. 1965, 23.

13. Eide, 50.

14. Quintus Charles Wilson, "Joseph Albert Wheelock: A Study of his Life and of the Impact of his Editorial Direction in St. Paul, Minnesota and the Northwest" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1953), 269.

15. In the 1904 election, for example, the *Chicago Record-Herald* endorsed three times as many Republican candidates as Democrats. ("For the Guidance of Voters," *Chicago Record-Herald*, 7 Nov. 1904, 1.)

16. Baldasty, 3; Sally Foreman Griffith, *Hometown News* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 4; and Carolyn Dyer, "Economic Dependence and the Concentration of Ownership Among Antebellum Wisconsin Newspapers," *Journalism Monographs* 109 (February 1989): 32.

17. Christine Ogan, Ida Plymale, D. Lynn Smith, William H. Turpin, and Donald Lewis Shaw, "The Changing Front Page of the *New York Times*," *Journalism Quarterly* 52 (Summer 1975): 340-344, quoted in Michael Schudson's *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 63.

18. "Indians' Funds Prey For Lumber Barons," *Chicago Record Herald*, 17 April, 1906, 4.

19. Campbell wrote to his mentor, Senator John Spooner, and called the report, "another scurrilous, contemptble [sic], low, mean" attack on his character. "This is the second or third time that I have been attacked by these parties, as I have no doubt this originated from that source, LaFollette being on that committee." Campbell to Spooner, 18 April 1906, Campbell Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

20. Harry H. Stein, "American Muckrakers and Muckraking: The 50-year Scholarship," *Journalism Quarterly* 56 (Spring 1979), 10.

21. S.M. Brosius to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 15 Nov. 1902, Campbell Papers

22. Senator Joseph Quarles to Campbell, 19 May 1902, Campbell Papers

23. The U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs traveled to every reservation in Wisconsin between Sept. 20 and Oct. 6, 1909. The testimony collected is recorded in a document entitled "Condition of Indian Affairs in Wisconsin," Senate Hearings, 1910 (the year in which the hearings were published). There has been little, if anything, written about this important event in Wisconsin Indian history. It details an incredible number of complaints, ranging from government fraud and abuse by lumber companies operating within Indian Country to the liquor trade and environmental damage done by white settlers. It contains far more in its 1192 pages than the author has touched upon in this paper.

24. "Probe Badger Indian Affair," *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* 20 Sept. 1909, 10. There is some confusion over the number of Indians evicted from the reservation. Some press accounts name four men. Others name five.

25. Griffith and others have written about the role of newspaper editors and boosterism in small communities. The editor was expected to promote economic development, celebrations, and civic events. For more see Sally Foreman Griffith, *Hometown News*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 6.

26. J.H. Mead testimony at Shell Lake, 20 Sept. 1909, 28.

27. "Senators At Odanah," *Ashland Daily Press*, 23 Sept. 1909, 1

28. Senator Moses Clapp at Shell Lake, 20 Sept. 1909, 61. The Chippewa had explicitly reserved the right to hunt, fish, and gather on the lands they had ceded to the federal government in the Treaties of 1837, 1842, and 1854. The issue would resurface in a 1974 class action suit which evolved into the Chippewa Treaty Rights case—the most expensive and contentious lawsuit in Wisconsin history. The suit inspired mass demonstrations and violence on Wisconsin boat landings between 1986 and 1991.

29. Billy Boy testimony at Reserve, 22 Sept. 1909, 192

30. Bad River was allotted in 1901. The Dawes Act required tribal consent before the division process could begin; however, tribes who resisted, like the Cherokee, were allotted

anyway.

31. Each reservation had a "government farmer." It was a patronage position, often filled by men who knew nothing about farming. Government farmers were "gifts" to the Chippewa—paid for out of the Chippewa's own timber money.

32. La Follette Shows Up Sero As A Falsifier," *Ashland News*, 25 Sept., 1909, 1.

33. "Indian Farmer Sero Will Have To Go," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 29 Sept., 1909, 12.

34. "Bishop Schinner After Campbell," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 13 Dec., 1905, 1; "Is After Campbell," *Ashland News*, 13 Dec., 1905, 1; "Is Like The Czar," *Ashland News*, 14 Dec., 1905, 1.

35. Sister Katherine testimony at Ashland, 25 Sept. 1909, 531.

36. "To Take Some Time," *Ashland News*, 28 Sept. 1909, 1.

37. "Senators Liked Country," *Ashland Daily Press*, 28 Sept. 1909, 6.

38. B. Maytor Hoppenyan, Funeral Director and Embalmer, to Valentine, 18 Jan. 1912, Campbell Papers.

39. Secretary of the Interior W.L Fisher to Campbell, 21 Dec. 1912, Campbell Papers.

40. "Agent Is Out," *Ashland News*, 2 Aug. 1912, 1.

41. "Campbell Will Disprove Charges and Quit," *Ashland Daily News*, 5 Aug. 1912, 1.

42. "Indian Agent Suspended," *Minocqua Times*, 15 Aug. 1912, 3.

43. From the 1870s to 1900s, various evolutionary theories were presented in which anthropologists and ethnologists outlined how civilizations progress. Some of the more prominent theorists include the Englishman Herbert Spencer and Americans Hubert Howe Bancroft and Lewis Henry Morgan.

44. Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1885)

45. Patty Loew, "Voices From the Boat Landings" (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1992), 21. Between 1986 and 1989 the *Lakeland Times* used exactly three unduplicated Chippewa sources. Quite often the paper attempted to present the Indian perspective through interviews with whites sympathetic to the treaty rights struggle.