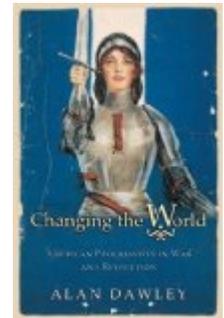


Alan Dawley. *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003. x + 409 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-11322-7.



Reviewed by William E. Doody

Published on H-USA (October, 2003)

Global Interests and the Progressive Movement

In recent years, scholarship on the Progressive era has begun to take a comparative approach to the period, focusing on trans-national influences on the movement. Alan Dawley's excellently written *Changing the World* continues in this vein, exploring the international inspiration and interests of the leading figures in the American Progressive movement. Writing with ease, Dawley effectively synthesizes social and political history to create an interesting, informative, and provoking book. *Changing the World* is a title that is sure to appear on required reading lists in the near future and for years to come.

The domestic interests and achievements of the Progressive movement have been well documented by historians ever since Richard Hofstadter's landmark text, *The Age of Reform*, was published in 1955. However, until recently, most authors have focused exclusively on the domestic aspects of Progressivism. Among others, Daniel Rodgers (*Atlantic Crossings*, 1998) and Leila Rupp (*Worlds of Women*, 1997) have expanded the view

of historians to consider international connections to the reform movement. Dawley may be the first, however, to focus on the international interests of the American reformers themselves. Rather than dwell on the external forces that influenced them, as did Rodgers for example, Dawley explores the involvement of Progressive-era reformers such as Jane Addams and Robert LaFollette in the major international issues of the period. In addition, Dawley has focused more intently on the later years of the Progressive era, especially those leading up to, during, and immediately after World War I.

Dawley begins his account with the pledge of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, organized in Zurich in May 1919, "We dedicate ourselves to peace" (p. 1). He notes that many of the leading figures in the women's anti-war efforts had previously been involved in social causes such as women's suffrage and the settlement house movement. While opposed to World War I, these women and their male counterparts had reached the conclusion that isolationism was not an option. Rather, they developed carefully

formed responses to the issues of war and revolution which had engulfed the world. Thus, while opposing war in the general sense, they tended to support the revolutions in progress in Russia and Mexico, among others. However, unlike the better-known Progressive leaders of the period, Roosevelt and Wilson in particular, "Progressive Internationalists" such as Addams and LaFollette scorned military involvement in favor of international cooperation. At the same time, the rapid rise of the United States to world prominence raised many questions for Progressives to consider on the domestic front, where the reform movement diminished considerably in the postwar era.

Chapter 1, "The New Internationalism," explores the development of an outward-looking attitude among leading Americans at the dawn of the twentieth century. Here, Dawley emphasizes the working-class roots of international solidarity, citing examples of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and Eugene Debs. Inspired by the diversity of her home city, Chicago, Jane Addams became a leading voice in the campaign for international awareness, involvement, and cooperation. At the same time, however, many leading Progressives, among them Theodore Roosevelt, saw this internationalism as an opportunity for U.S. imperialism. Dawley has sparse praise for Roosevelt, accusing him of "some deep anxiety over masculinity" and suggesting that his Progressive achievements were exaggerated (p. 21). Dawley argues that the competing visions of Addams and Roosevelt would later form the basis for the foreign-policy debates of the Cold War era. For the author, however, the interventionist argument collapsed with the dawning of the First World War.

In his discussion of U.S. involvement in World War I, the author accuses the Progressives of contributing to "the worst excesses of wartime propaganda" and blames the American "war fever" on the influence of "Protestant Moralists" among others (pp. 146-147). As the nation set out on a cru-

sade to "make the world safe for democracy," Dawley notes the rapid evaporation of the reform spirit at home. The Espionage and Sedition acts targeted outspoken radicals such as Eugene Debs and IWW leaders while race riots and racist violence reached unprecedented levels. Dawley makes several noteworthy observations about the class and racial conflict spreading through the country—for example, the support of American Jews for the African-American communities. He also attributes the growing trend towards suspicion and repression at home to a perceived link between domestic tensions and the revolutions in progress in Russia and Mexico. Persecution of American supporters for the Bolshevik revolution was one example of the government's increasing anti-radical tendencies in 1918-1919.

In the aftermath of the war, Dawley describes a "Millennial Moment" in which America controls the world stage, standing tall over the chaos dominating Europe, Russia, and Latin America. That moment quickly fades, however, as the Progressive dream of a League of Nations and a permanent end to war is defeated by partisan disagreements. Dawley attributes much of the opposition to nativist fears of immigrant revolt and nationalist worries over the perceived spread of Communism. At the same time, the first red scare, the tumult of the strikes of 1919, and the upheaval caused by the flu epidemics, all served to quiet the reform spirit. The eventual defeat of the Treaty of Versailles, and Woodrow Wilson's silencing as Progressive spokesman by the stroke he suffered in 1919, marked the effective end of the Progressive era. As Dawley notes, however, Progressivism itself continued, to be reborn in the social consciousness of the Depression-era New Deal.

Changing the World is an impressive synthesis of primary and secondary source material covering the key issues of the Progressive era from a variety of perspectives. The writings of feminist leaders of the period figure heavily in Dawley's account, as does the leading scholarship on labor

and political history of the period. While in general his writing is balanced, some points call for greater clarity or explanation. Most notably, the reader is left hanging at the book's conclusion. Dawley describes the New Deal as a restoration of Progressive ideals, but does not mention how those "new" Progressives reacted--or should have reacted--to the global issues of the 1930s, which paralleled those of the earlier generation. He also stated, as he began the book, that *Changing the World* would provide lessons for Americans contemplating the international crises of the contemporary world. The reader is left to find those lessons for himself, as Dawley makes no attempt to provide the solutions. Overall, however, Alan Dawley's *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* is a fine survey of the Progressive era from the perspective of the international debates of the period.

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Citation: William E. Doody. Review of Dawley, Alan. *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution*. H-USA, H-Net Reviews. October, 2003.

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