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UNDER PRESSURE: THE NONPARTISAN LEAGUE IN SOUTH CENTRAL MINNESOTA

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On June 8, 1918, less than ten days before Minnesota's Republican primaries, the Nonpartisan League's (NPL) candidate for governor, Charles A. Lindbergh Sr., the father of the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh, was arrested on a small southern Minnesotan farm under charges of conspiracy. Albert Allen, the local county attorney, hatched the plot to arrest Lindbergh because of his fanatical beliefs that the League was both disloyal and radical. Lindbergh's arrest was just one of the many examples of Allen actively working against the NPL, going as far to tour southern Minnesota giving anti-League rallies and sending county police officers to arrest League officials around the entire state. In the midst of World War I (WWI), he accused the League of trying to "capture our country and lead her blindfolded by the route of Russian bolshevikism to a condition of Prussianized slavery."<sup>1</sup> This sad exaggeration of the League's platform was a common sentiment felt among many of the constituents that Allen represented. Across most of south central Minnesota, the League was met with staunch opposition, and in one instance, the citizens of a small village, Comfrey, built barricades to prevent the League from entering. This wave of patriotism in south central Minnesota that followed the United States' entry into WWI caused the reform-minded platform of the League to be unpopular and even appear to be radical. National security threats can create these strong patriotic feelings which causes a shift in the political culture of a region. In the case of the NPL, Minnesota's moralistic culture adopted several aspects of the traditionalistic political culture normally found in the American South. This blending of moralistic and traditionalistic political

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<sup>1</sup>"Arrangement of the Kaiser is Treason," *Nonpartisan Leader* (St. Paul, MN), March 25, 1918.

cultures caused by World War I explains the reactionary actions that many of the county officials and citizens in south central Minnesota undertook against the Nonpartisan League.<sup>2</sup>

The Nonpartisan League presents an interesting chapter in the history of social movements in American politics. The NPL represents one of the last farmer populist movements in the Midwest and, according to the noted political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, the League had many aspects of agrarian socialism. Minnesota is known for, and has a long history of, being progressive. For example, Minnesota had a Farmer-Labor Party in the mid twentieth century, which was the successor to the Nonpartisan League, similar to many of the red-green coalitions found in Scandinavian countries. Later the Farmer-Labor Party merged with the weaker state Democratic Party to form the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL). Minnesota's liberal politics affected national politics when Hubert H. Humphrey helped put the first civil rights plank in the Democratic Party platform in 1948, causing many of the Southern Democrats to walk out of the Democratic National Convention. Also, Minnesota is unique in that it has elected such unusual characters such as Paul Wellstone, Jesse "The Body" Ventura, and Al Franken. This has led Daniel Elazar, Virginia Gray, and Wyman Spano to call Minnesota "the epitome of a moralistic political culture."<sup>3</sup> Political culture, as defined by Almond and Powell, "is the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations toward politics among the members of a political system."<sup>4</sup> With a few exceptions, in geographically small countries the political culture that the people share is the same, but in countries with a larger land mass or diverse population, such as

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<sup>2</sup>Bruce L. Larson, *Lindbergh of Minnesota: A Political Biography* (New York: Hancourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), 237-240.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel J. Elazar, Virginia Gray, and Wyman Spano, *Minnesota Politics and Government* (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 19-30.

<sup>4</sup>Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), 50.

the United States, there can be the existence of several political subcultures within in the country. Elazar, who was from Minnesota, has observed in his groundbreaking study, *American Federalism: A View from the States*, that there are three political subcultures in the United States: moralistic, traditionalistic, and individualistic.<sup>5</sup>

Elazar uses the following traits to determine the political subculture in a state: citizen participation in civic affairs; the strength of existing political parties; opinion of the status quo; views of welfare and government regulation; and government involvement in promoting traditional religion. The moralistic political subculture tends to be the most progressive because it promotes high citizen participation, existing political parties are not as strong, welfare programs are favored, elected officials are not as attentive to elite interests, there is a value in corruption-free government, high government regulation on the economy, and usually low government support in preserving traditional religious values. Areas that are usually considered to have a moralistic political culture include the Pacific Coast states, the Northern Midwest, and New England.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, the traditionalistic political culture tends to favor elite interests and can at times result in mob rule and political tactics of terror and intimidation. Although the moralistic and traditionalistic political cultures appear to be opposites, they are not mutually exclusive. According to Elazar, “Like its moralistic counterpart, the traditionalistic political culture accepts government as an actor with a positive role in the community, but it tries to limit

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<sup>5</sup>Seymour Martin Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan: A Study in Political Sociology* (Garden City NY: Doubleday and Company Inc. 1963), 28-34; Ibid; Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism: A View From the States* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966), 79-116. This theory is also found many of Elazar’s other works and is one of the most cited sources in the study of political culture in the United States.

<sup>6</sup>Elazar, *American Federalism*, 79-116.

that role to securing the continued maintenance of the existing social order.”<sup>7</sup> Elazar’s typology of political culture is usually applied to classify a state’s political culture, but each state is not a monolithic block and different regions within a state can have a combination of several types of political culture. Contrary to Elazar’s assumptions about Minnesota’s political culture, in the years 1917-1919, the south central portion of Minnesota appears to adopt many traits of a traditionalistic political culture. This blending could possibly be attributed to the national security threat of World War I, which gave the opponents of the Nonpartisan League a chance to label the NPL as a disloyal and radical organization. In a time of war, maintaining social order is vital for the existence of a strong war effort, thus the moralistic political culture can adopt several traits of a traditionalist political culture in order to preserve that social order. In the case of south central Minnesota during World War I, the moralistic political culture of the region adopted several traits of a traditionalistic political culture, among these are heightened attention to elite interests, disdain of outside influences, strong party rule, and terror and intimidation tactics done by public officials and the general public.<sup>8</sup>

There has been plenty of secondary research done on the Nonpartisan League, including two prominent books: Robert Morlan’s *Political Prairie Fire* and Michael Lansing’s *Insurgent Democracy*. Morlan focuses on the uniqueness of the Nonpartisan League and the leadership of Arthur Townley, arguing that “Townley’s organizing tactics” and the economic and political conditions allowed for the League’s success.<sup>9</sup> Morlan’s narrative is restricted to only the states of North Dakota and Minnesota. Michael Lansing provides an updated report on the NPL that

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 93.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 79-116.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1955), 349.

emphasizes the techniques that the NPL used to reinvigorate democracy amongst farmers and provide alternative forms of capitalism, showing that the League's tactics could still hold relevancy to today's politics. Lansing's book differs sharply from Morlan's in that his narrative shows the Nonpartisan League at the national level and as a major regional movement in the Upper Midwest and Pacific Northwest. Other research done on the Nonpartisan League includes a study done by the noted historian Samuel Huntington on the techniques that it incorporated and identified the four tactics that the League used to gain political power: nonpartisan, sorehead, balance of power, and farmer-labor party tactics. Larry Remele researched the political ideology of the NPL, analyzing many of the political cartoons from the NPL's main newspaper, *The Nonpartisan Leader*, and comparing their ideology to the agrarian ideals of Thomas Jefferson to show how the League followed in the Jeffersonian tradition. Lastly, Karen Starr focuses on the role that women played in NPL and the role that the NPL played in the women's suffrage movement. Starr also emphasizes the effect the egalitarian rhetoric of the League had on farm women decades after the League disbanded.<sup>10</sup>

Many scholars have argued that the League faced the toughest opposition in Minnesota. A study conducted by Carol Jenson observes the opposition that the NPL faced in Minnesota during the campaign for the 1918 Republican primaries, and focuses on how the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety (MCPS) and others who held public office used World War I as an opportunity to consolidate their power. Other scholars who have focused solely on the MCPS,

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<sup>10</sup>Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire*; Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: The Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Samuel Huntington, "The Election Tactics of the Nonpartisan League," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 30, no. 4 (March 1950): 613-632; Larry Remele, "Things as the Should Be: Jeffersonian Ideals and Rural Rebellion in Minnesota and North Dakota 1910-1920," *Minnesota History* 51, no.1 (Spring 1988): 15-22; Karen Starr, "Fighting for a Future: Farm Women of the Nonpartisan League," *Minnesota History* 48, no. 6 (Summer 1983): 255-262.

have also touched upon the massive resistance that the League face from this organization. Carl H. Chrislock's *Watchdog of Loyalty* primarily focuses on the story of the MCPS and argues that the MCPS, although it appears to be contradictory to Minnesota's liberal tradition actually helped the progressive forces in Minnesota in the long run by alienating both farmers and laborers. Despite, the extensive research done on the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, many scholars tend to neglect the local county based commissions of public safety and loyalty organizations that formed and, in the case of south central Minnesota, primarily attacked the Nonpartisan League. Also important to this research are the biographies of Joseph Gilbert and Charles A. Lindbergh Sr., because both happened to be arrested in south central Minnesota and their biographies provide their perspective on their arrests. Gilbert's biography was written by Davis Douthit and Lindbergh's by Bruce L. Larson. Both biographies put the men into the context of protest politics. Larson's work shows Lindbergh's selfless conviction for helping the farmer and his willingness to stand up against moneyed interest. Douthit portrays Gilbert as man who stood up for what he believed and calls him a gadfly "of human progress."<sup>11</sup> A master's thesis by Robert Hoppe compares the opposition that the Nonpartisan League faced in the Second Congressional District in Minnesota (Southwestern Minnesota) to the opposition that the League faced in Blue Earth County. Hoppe's study focused on the role that local newspapers played, and how these local newspapers helped uphold the status quo. This study presents a survey of counties in south central Minnesota, among these are Blue Earth, Brown, Jackson, and Martin counties. A study that looks at the opposition that NPL faced in these counties during the campaign of 1918, and how their usual moralistic political culture adopted several traits of a

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<sup>11</sup>Davis Douthit, *Nobody Owns Us: The Story of Joe Gilbert, Midwestern Rebel* (Chicago: The Cooperative League of the U.S.A., 1948), 2.



traditional political culture is truly unusual in the context of existing historiography. Considering the success that the League had in primarily German populations in south central Minnesota, this changing of the political beliefs and values of the area can be attributed to the breakout of World War I.<sup>12</sup>

The Nonpartisan League began in 1915 when Albert Bowen, Arthur C. Townley, and Arthur LeSuer became disenchanted with the Socialist Party, in part because the Socialists attacked the ownership of land, something that farmers cherished. At the same time North Dakota grain farmers, due to the rough economic circumstances in the early twentieth century, could accept some aspects of socialism, such as state intervention into the economy, and this caused the NPL gain popularity in North Dakota. Lansing discusses several of the economic hardships that North Dakotan grain farmers faced such as banks owning a lien on seventy percent of the farms in 1920 and the grain elevators in the Twin Cities constantly took advantage of these farmers through unfair business practices. To help farmers overcome these adverse conditions the first Nonpartisan League platform called for many provisions that helped the farmer financially, such as state ownership of grain elevators and state oversight on grain, tax exemptions for farm improvements, and “state hail insurance.”<sup>13</sup> The League used its nonpartisan tactics to take over the North Dakota government, meaning that the League encouraged its members to go to the Republican primary and vote for the League’s candidates there. Two existing political conditions allowed for the success of the League tactics in North Dakota: First,

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<sup>12</sup>Carol Jenson, "Loyalty as a Political Weapon: The 1918 Campaign in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 43, no.2 (Summer 1972): 42-57; Carl H. Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991); Larson, *Lindbergh of Minnesota*; Douthit, *Nobody Owns Us*; Robert Andrew Hoppe, "A Comparative Study of the Program Effectiveness of the Nonpartisan League in Blue Earth County and Second Congressional District" (master's thesis, Mankato State University, 1966); This list and the one above are not intended to be exhaustive.

<sup>13</sup>Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 19.

North Dakota had an open primary, allowing for anybody, despite their political affiliation, to vote in a party's primary; and second, North Dakota was primarily a one-party state with the Republicans winning almost every general election. Due to these conditions and tactics, the Nonpartisan League gained control of the North Dakota government in 1916, just one year after its founding.<sup>14</sup>

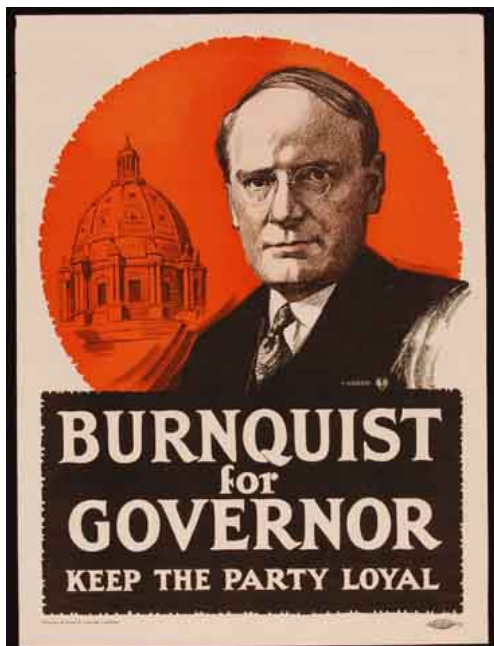
After its successes in North Dakota, the Nonpartisan League attempted to enter Minnesota politics. Unfortunately for the League, the United States' entrance into the First World War coincided with the beginning of the NPL's campaign into Minnesota. According to Lansing, the League made two serious mistakes in regards to their loyalty: First, the NPL made a deal with the Agricultural Workers Organization (AWO); and second, they invited Senator Bob La Follette Sr. (R- WI) to give an oration at a League convention. The AWO was a branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a well-known radical anarchist organization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two of the founders of the IWW, Eugene V. Debs and Bill Haywood, had their civil liberties violated during the loyalty crusades of the First World War and both served prison sentences as a result. "Fighting"



From: *Nonpartisan Leader* January 4, 1917. <http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/fullbrowser/collection/ndsunpl/id/5/rv/singleitem/rec/>.

<sup>14</sup>Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 6, 15-19; Huntington, "Election Tactics of the Nonpartisan League," 614.

Bob LaFollette also spoke out against the United States' entry into the war, and he became a controversial figure after the entry into the war. The League invited "Fighting" Bob to speak at a NPL convention in St. Paul on September 20, 1917. La Follette spent the night before his speech typing it up then when James Manahan and William Lemke, two influential figures of the League, gave La Follette a ride to the convention and told him that his topic, free speech, was too controversial and that he should instead talk about "financing the war."<sup>15</sup> According to Chrislock, "The free speech theme may have been provocative, but it was riskier to turn La Follette loose without the discipline of a script."<sup>16</sup> During the speech La Follette began to talk about the United States' entry into the war, and claimed that the reason for fighting was not a worthy cause. The



From: Minnesota Historical Society.  
Governors of Minnesota <http://collections.mnhs.org/governors/index.php/photo/view/10059955/narIrn/10004391>.

Associated Press misquoted this and printed that La Follette had said, "I wasn't in favor of beginning the war. We had no grievances." The local press, in particular, took full advantage of this opportunity and used it as much as they could against the League.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to April, 1917, the League's position against the United States' entry into the war gave the League's enemies a political weapon to use against them after Wilson's declaration of war on April 6, 1917. Across the nation, commissions of public safety were set up to ensure loyalty, but the Minnesota legislature actually created the

<sup>15</sup>Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty*, 170

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 101-105; Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty*, 170; Jensen, "Loyalty as a Political Weapon," 47.

Minnesota Commission of Public Safety with the passage of three bills in late March of 1917, before the war began. The MCPS was not set up only to attack the League, but the League was probably one of the factors in the creation of the MCPS. Other factors included the Industrial Workers of World (IWW) and the issue of hyphenated Americans. The power given to the Commission was immense, and according to Robert Morlan, “During the war its word was law in Minnesota, and its standards of ‘loyalty’ the norm.”<sup>18</sup> The head of the Commission was Governor Joseph A. A. Burnquist (R-MN), who had been considered a progressive politician up to the start of the war. Two other influential members of the commission included former governor John Lind and John F. McGee. Lind, a native of New Ulm, had been more sympathetic to progressive ideals, but McGee was an ardent foe of the League and other liberals. The MCPS’ ideology ran counter to the League’s and many commissioners viewed the League as disloyal, and La Follette’s speech allowed the MCPS to start an investigation into the activities of the NPL. Charles W. Ames headed the investigation effort and the MCPS granted him the power to subpoena materials and the power to investigate people with ties to the League. Ames already had a bias against the League prior to the La Follette speech and although Ames would not be able to produce any substantial evidence against the NPL the negative publicity that an investigation brought to the League hurt their standing.<sup>19</sup>

The League also faced opposition from other actors besides the Commission of Public Safety. Much of the opposition was brought on by local forces, such as newspapers, pamphlets

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<sup>18</sup>Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire*, 129.

<sup>19</sup>Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty*, 40-64. The first three chapters of *Watchdog of Loyalty* give an in-depth look at the conditions in Minnesota that led to the creation of the MCPS; Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, *Report of Minnesota Commission of Public Safety* (St. Paul: Louis F. Dow Company, 1920), 164; Jensen, “Loyalty as a Political Weapon”, 47; Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty*, 175.

and the sentiment felt among the general public. The Twin Cities press opposed the League for evident reasons, seeing that the League posed a threat to the livelihood of flour mills in that area. This affected the news in rural areas because many of the small local newspapers actually received articles from the Twin Cities press. Many local presses also published their own anti-League stories and other pro-war propaganda. In south central Minnesota nearly every newspaper took an anti-League stance or was neutral towards the League. Perhaps the most conservative newspaper in south central Minnesota was the *Mankato Daily Free Press*. The *Daily Free Press* ran many anti-communist and anti-League stories and consistently attacked La Follette in 1917 and 1918. After the socialists were defeated in the primaries in Wisconsin, in early April of 1918, the *Daily Free Press* said, “La Follette should take the hint and resign at once.”<sup>20</sup> Local newspapers distributed a number of pamphlets denouncing the League with titles such as *Spies, Traitors, and the Kept Press: A Barrage Flung Out by Fear* and *German State Monopoly for Minnesota: What Mr. Townley Fears*. Pamphlets made outlandish claims such as that Townley wanted to turn the whole country socialist and that his followers lacked the ability to think for themselves. The rhetoric of these pamphlets also attempted to strike a chord with people’s patriotic feelings by using military illusions. For example one pamphlet said, “The Townley heavy shells carry shrapnel to inflict heavy wounds.”<sup>21</sup> With American boys dying in Europe this would make the League appear to be public enemies.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>*Mankato Daily Free Press* (Mankato), April 3, 1918, microfilm.

<sup>21</sup>*Spies, Traitors, and the Kept Press: A Barrage Flung Out by Fear* (Place of Publisher Not Identified, 1918), roll 18, National Nonpartisan League Printed Materials, undated and 1910-1928, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, microfilm.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid*; *German State Monopoly for Minnesota: What Mr. Townley Fears* (St. Paul: Reliance Publicity Service, 1918), roll 18, National Nonpartisan League Printed Materials, undated and 1910-1928, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, microfilm.



From: *Nonpartisan Leader* May 6, 1918. <http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/ndsu-npl/id/9/rec/10>.

The publication of these newspapers and pamphlets had a large influence on the actions of the general public. The general public used forceful tactics such as setting up barricades to prevent Leaguers from entering the town, laying out fire hoses to intimidate Leaguers, or plain and simple mob attacks on Leaguers. The use of terror tactics is something that is characteristic of some traditionalistic political cultures, especially when outside influences attempt to gain power in the system. The best example is the South during the Civil Rights Movement and

the terror tactics that the Ku Klux Klan used. The atrocities committed against the League would be so horrendous that the League eventually sent a message to the United States Congress about the injustices that they faced in Minnesota alone. This *Memorial to Congress* listed all of the atrocities that had been committed against the League in several Minnesota counties. The *Memorial* best sums up the terror tactics used against it when it stated that “men have been coerced, assaulted, kidnapped; law has been denied; passion has supplanted reason; riot has been invented; the process of social order has been menaced by the approach of anarchy.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Hoppe, “A Comparative Study”; National and State Executive Committees of the Nonpartisan League, *Memorial to the Congress of the United States Concerning Conditions in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Allied Printing Trades Council, 1918), 1.

Although the League faced opposition throughout Minnesota, the League received the most opposition in the southern and south central regions of the state. For the purpose of this study, south central Minnesota has been restricted to the counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Jackson, and Martin, but many of the surrounding counties, including LeSuer, Fairbuilt, Watonwan, and Waseca, suppressed the League's voice in similar ways. The narrative of the Nonpartisan League and the battles it faced in these counties has proven to be an interesting one. The League began to campaign in this region in the middle of 1917, after the United States entered World War I and after the creation of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety. The political campaign that this study will primarily look at is Charles A. Lindbergh's run for governor in the Republican Primaries of 1918. Lindbergh was born in Sweden and moved to Minnesota as a child and his father worked as a farmer. He studied law and entered public service in his thirties. Prior to his Nonpartisan League days, Lindbergh served as the Congressman for Minnesota's Sixth District from 1907 -1917. The Nonpartisan League endorsed Lindbergh for governor, against sitting Governor Joseph A.A. Burnquist, for several reasons, including Lindbergh's stance on the war and that Burnquist headed the MCPS. The choice of Lindbergh to be the Nonpartisan candidate hurt the League because it allowed for their enemies to charge the NPL with being disloyal. Almost immediately after the United States' entry into the war, Lindbergh had published a book titled, *Why is Your Country at War, and What Happens to You After the War, and Related Subjects*, which criticized the decision to enter the war. Herbert E. Gaston, who worked for the League, claimed that the content and message of Lindbergh's book supported the war effort, but the press in Minnesota frequently misquoted the book to hurt his campaign.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Herbert E. Gaston, *The Nonpartisan League* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 257-260.

Out of the counties listed above, the League faced the greatest resistance in Martin and Jackson counties. Martin and Jackson counties are primarily rural counties with German descendants, quite similar to another county surveyed, Brown County. Unlike Brown County, both had also consistently prevented League meetings and had county officials that went out of their way to hurt the League effort in Minnesota. In Martin County the county attorney was Albert Allen, a man who the *Minnesota Leader* called “the most wild-eyed and vicious enemy of the farmers, except McGee, in the state of Minnesota.”<sup>25</sup> The county attorney in Jackson County was E. H. Nicholas, a close friend of Allen, who, in the long run, had been more successful in attacking the League than Allen, but not as fanatic in his beliefs about the NPL as Allen. Both worked together in preventing meetings in their counties and gave defamatory speeches across southern Minnesota. The Martin County newspaper, the *Fairmont Daily Sentinel* congratulated Allen and Nicholas on the work they had been doing to hinder the League effort. In an article titled, “Martin and Jackson Counties Gain Fame,” the Fairmont paper praised Allen and Nicholas for their work saying, “It is safe to say that Martin and Jackson counties got more favorable advertisement out of their trip than from any other campaign in the history of the state.”<sup>26</sup> Besides doing these tours around the state, Allen and Nicholas attacked the NPL by going out of their way to arrest important League actors on charges such as conspiracy and disturbance of the peace. The most notable of these League actors were Joseph Gilbert and Charles A. Lindbergh.

Joseph Gilbert, the general manager of the Nonpartisan League, had been a favorite target for both Allen and Nicholas. The early months of 1918 proved to be an especially absurd time in

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<sup>25</sup>*Minnesota Leader* (St. Paul), June 15, 1918

<sup>26</sup>“Martin and Jackson Counties Gain Fame,” *Fairmont Daily Sentinel* (Fairmont, MN), June 14, 1918.



the life of Gilbert, for Allen and Nicholas arrested Gilbert multiple times in several areas of state. The Nonpartisan League planned to hold a meeting in a small village in Jackson County, Lakefield, on January 23, 1918, and sent letters to League members in Jackson County. In response, an organization called The National Defense League of Jackson County, which consisted of many Jackson County officials, including Nicholas, sent a note to the Nonpartisan League headquarters in St. Paul that said the League could no longer hold meetings in Jackson County. The letter denounced the League for “sowing seeds of class hatred, dissension, and unrest.”<sup>27</sup> The National Defense League ended the letter with a threat to the NPL, saying, “We do not want you here at all” and that “we shall uses every measure at our disposal to prevent you from speaking here.”<sup>28</sup> The original speaker at the meeting was supposed to be George D. Brewer, but after the NPL received the letter, Gilbert felt compelled to speak.<sup>29</sup>

When Gilbert first arrived in Lakefield, he immediately went to Sheriff O.C. Lee, whom Gilbert’s lawyer James Manahan described as “a big lumbering, slow thinking Norsk,”<sup>30</sup> and demanded that he see the National Defense League of Jackson County. As it turned out, the officials who wrote the letter were in the upstairs of the building where Gilbert and Lee met, in one of the Commercial Club Rooms. Once Lee told Gilbert this, Gilbert went upstairs, and began to argue with the county officials, including R.C. Muir (head of the County Commission for Public Safety), Judge Thoreson, and E.H. Nicholas. Several farmers filed into the room, and the

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<sup>27</sup>Letter to A. E. Bowen from National Defense League of Jackson County, January 18, 1918, roll 4, National Nonpartisan League Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, microfilm.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Douthit, *Nobody Owns Us*, 117-118; Affidavit of Joseph Gilbert, Jackson County, January 28, 1918, roll 4, National Nonpartisan League Paper, Minnesota Historical Society, microfilm.

<sup>30</sup>James Manahan, *Trials of a Lawyer* (Minneapolis: Farnham Printing and Stationary Company, 1933), 233.

county officials still refused to allow the farmers to gather. The fact that the farmers had little to no say at Gilbert's arrest in front of these "higher-ups," shows that the "higher-ups" had almost all the say in this meeting. This is evidence of certain traits of a traditionalistic political culture existing, because the "higher-ups" are assumed to be elites in this case. Gilbert and the farmers left the room and proceeded to walk down a couple blocks to the courtyard of Kemp's livery. Gilbert climbed into a wagon box and gave a speech to several farmers. Sheriff Lee then arrested Gilbert, dispersed the meeting, and then brought Gilbert to an office. Judge Thoreson was in the office already typing the charge on a typewriter. Gilbert was taught in the law and was actually able and forced to write his own bail bond, which was set at five hundred dollars. Two farmers followed Gilbert and posted his bail; Gilbert then left to St. Paul.<sup>31</sup>

The court case for this charge against Gilbert and its aftermath proved to be more outrageous than his arrest. R. C. Muir officially filed the complaint against Gilbert as the "'intent' to make false statements against the government, oppose sale of liberty bonds and many other 'intentions.'"<sup>32</sup> Nicholas eventually change the charged to "unlawful assemblage,"<sup>33</sup> which turned the case into a jury trial. Prior to Gilbert's hearing, Gilbert's attorney for the impending case, former Congressman James Manahan, "said he was not prepared for a jury trial, thereby virtually placing him [Nicholas] in contempt of court."<sup>34</sup> Gilbert's trial was held on Monday, February 11, in Lakefield, where after the trial an angry mob broke out and chased Manahan out of the county. Manahan told about the incident in his autobiography, *Trials of a Lawyer*, where he

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<sup>31</sup>Douthit, *Nobody Owns Us*, 118-122; Affidavit of Joseph Gilbert, Jackson County, January 28, 1918, National Nonpartisan League Papers.

<sup>32</sup>*Daily Free Press*, February 6, 1918.

<sup>33</sup>*Daily Free Press*, February 12, 1918.

<sup>34</sup>*Daily Free Press*, February 6, 1918.



From: *Minnesota Leader*, February 16, 1918. Microfilm.

described the hostile atmosphere inside the court room. In the early session of the trial, the existence of farmers in the audience caused the hostility towards Manahan and Gilbert to be low. After the court adjourned and met later that night, the amount of farmers dropped close to zero. Also, the

witnesses that Manahan cross-

examined now appeared to be better prepared and had no discrepancies in their account of

Gilbert's arrest compared those in the earlier court hearing.<sup>35</sup>

The elites of the town had several other tricks up their sleeves to trip up Manahan. Near midnight, the judge allowed a man to try and auction off a German speaking parrot named Kaiser Bill and have the proceeds go to the Red Cross. Manahan realized the trap and noted to himself, "If we bought a German parrot named Kaiser Bill we were Pro-German. If we refused to bid for the Red Cross, we were Huns."<sup>36</sup> In an attempt to work his way out of this trap, Manahan bought the parrot for fifteen dollars then tried to sell it again to the judge, but his anger took over him causing him to taunt the state's attorney, threatened to boycott Lakefield, and called the crowd 'tightwads' and 'lip-patriots.' As a result, an angry mob formed outside the courthouse waiting to chase Manahan out of town. According to the *Minnesota Leader*, Sheriff O.C. Lee was in that

<sup>35</sup>Ibid; *Daily Free Press*, February 12, 1918. James Manahan, *Trials of a Lawyer*,

<sup>36</sup>James Manahan, *Trials of a Lawyer*, 236.

mob and also someone had shouted “Where’s a rope” threatening to hang Manahan.<sup>37</sup> A deputy then told Manahan to leave the county, then proceeded to drive Manahan twenty miles to Huron Lake, and told him never to come back. Afterwards Manahan said that he would no longer represent Gilbert, and H. A. Paddock of Montana took over the case. Jackson County then sent another warrant out for Gilbert’s arrest, this time for discouraging enlistment, and also sent another warrant out for A.C. Townley’s arrest.<sup>38</sup>

Another person affected in this court case was Leo Biahoski whom the angry mob also chased out of Lakefield. This happened because Biahoski applauded a comment that Manahan made about North Dakota exceeding its Liberty Loan quota. According to Biahoski, “A leading businessman was near me and when I started from the room a little later he hit me in the jaw, knocking me over a chair and the mob started after me as I ran from the hall.”<sup>39</sup> Sheriff Lee happened to be in the mob and did nothing to help Biahoski. Eventually three local farmers saved Biahoski, but he still had to leave town in fear for his life. Here there is evidence of the interests of business elites being protected by the actions of the majority; a trait of traditionalistic political culture. An editorial in the *Minnesota Leader* argued that not all of the blame for what happened in Lakefield should be put on the businessmen of the town, but a fair amount of the blame should be put on the press of Twin Cities and suggested that “if anyone at Lakefield is convicted of rioting, at least four daily newspapers in the Twin Cities ought to be convicted as instigators of the crime.”<sup>40</sup> The press can easily manipulate the public, and in south central

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<sup>37</sup>*Minnesota Leader*, February 16, 1918; Manahan, *Trails of a Lawyer*, 237; In Manahan’s account someone shouted “Get a rope.”

<sup>38</sup>*Daily Free Press*, February 6, 1918; *Nonpartisan Leader*, March 4, 1918; *Ibid*; *Daily Free Press*, February 6, 1918.

<sup>39</sup>*Minnesota Leader*, March 2, 1918

<sup>40</sup>*Minnesota Leader*, February 6, 1918.

Minnesota, they had both the Twin Cities press and the local press consistently publishing anti-League stories. Although the press helped shape public opinion, many local officials acted on their own accord, going out of their way to hinder the League's campaign.<sup>41</sup>

E.H. Nicholas' friend and hyper patriot, Albert Allen, who also happened to be in attendance at Gilbert's trial, initiated one of the biggest attacks against the League when he sent the Sheriff of Martin County, W.S. Carver, to go up to Twin Cities and arrest both Arthur Townley and Joseph Gilbert. The warrant issued on February 28, 1918 against Gilbert and Townley charges the two Leaguers of discouraging enlistment as evidenced by a thirty-three-page pamphlet titled *National Nonpartisan League: Origin, Purpose and Methods of Operation, War Program and Statement of Principles*. When Sheriff Carver arrested Gilbert and Townley, they refused to be brought to Fairmont and demanded Carver to take them to the nearest court. According to the *Daily Free Press*, Carver went to the state capitol building for legal advice, after which Townley and Gilbert posted bail at \$3,000 in the Twin Cities. The two were then set to appear in Martin County Court on March 11. Carver came back to Fairmont to a furious Allen, who sent him back up to St. Paul a few days later, with Deputy Sheriff Roepke, to retrieve Townley and Gilbert. Townley left the Twin Cities, but they trapped Gilbert. Roepke arrested Gilbert and took him to the train station in Mendota, then boarded the train to Fairmont. Meanwhile League attorneys secured a *writ of habeas corpus* which ordered Carver to have Gilbert brought back to St. Paul. According to Robert Morlan's narrative, "Carver wired Roepke to return Gilbert to St. Paul, but the deputy, who received the telegram at Lake Crystal, suspected

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<sup>41</sup>*Minnesota Leader*, March 2, 1918

that it was a fake and continued to Fairmont.”<sup>42</sup> After arriving in Fairmont, Allen then asked Gilbert to sign the bail bond, which Gilbert refused to do, so Allen proceeded to have Gilbert arrested and put in jail where he spent the night. In the morning Gilbert returned to the Twin Cities and he and the League proceeded to present both criminal and civil kidnapping charges against the three Martin County officials.<sup>43</sup>

Although this appears to be a strange series of events, there are traces of traditionalistic political culture throughout the story. The most apparent feature of traditionalistic political culture is Allen’s disrespect for the Twin Cities courts and the large amount of faith in the local court. More evidence of a traditionalistic political culture is Allen’s fanatical disdain for the Nonpartisan League, another outside force attempting to influence local politics. All three Martin County officials respected law and order and they tried to implement it; Allen to an extreme extent. Although there are some signs of a traditionalistic political culture, other evidence points to the normal moralistic political culture of the state, such as Sheriff Carver’s obedience to some of the officials at the state capital, but his indecisiveness suggests a blending of the two cultures. Sadly, two other counties in Minnesota, Jackson and Goodhue, followed Martin County’s lead and went on to kidnap Gilbert. Gilbert brought the state of Minnesota to court in a case that went all the way the Supreme Court. According to Michael Lansing, *Gilbert v. Minnesota*, 1920, “represented a low point in the history of American civil liberties.”<sup>44</sup> Gilbert lost the case with

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<sup>42</sup>Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire*, 169;

<sup>43</sup>Albert Allen to W.S. Carver, February 12, 1918, roll 4, National Nonpartisan League Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, microfilm; The District Court for the County of Martin and State of Minnesota, Indictment Against Arthur Townley and Joseph Gilbert, February 2, 1918, roll 4, National Nonpartisan League Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, microfilm; *Daily Free Press*, February 28, 1918; *Daily Free Press*, March 2, 1918; *Daily Free Press*, March 4, 1918; *Daily Free Press*, March 5, 1918; Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire*, 167-169.

<sup>44</sup>Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 130.

only the Chief Justice, Edward Douglass White, and Justice Louis Brandies dissenting. Brandies' dissent stated that the Minnesota law against discouraging enlistment prohibited the teaching of certain applications of pacifism and violated federal law. Concerning civil liberties, the Supreme Court adopted a view closer to that of Brandies' in 1925, but Gilbert ended up serving a prison sentence.<sup>45</sup>

Damaging the Nonpartisan League's reputation further, Martin County officials arrested the League endorsed candidate for Governor, Charles A. Lindbergh Sr., on June 8, 1918, less than ten days before the Republican Primaries on June 17. Originally, Lindbergh intended to give a speech outside the small village of Monterey, on William Urhammer's farm as part of a last-ditch effort to get people to turn out to the primaries in the League's favor. The League corresponded with Martin County officials prior to the incident and the county officials told the League officials that Lindbergh could speak in Martin County, as long as he went alone. The Martin County officials wanted Lindbergh to go alone so they could arrest him with less of a fight. Martin County arrested Lindbergh on the charge of conspiracy, and sent out warrants for the arrests of Townley, and G. H. Griffith, the Nonpartisan League's secretary. Lindbergh only spent a few minutes in jail before several farmers bailed him out. Although the farmers posted bail for Lindbergh, being arrested during a campaign proved to be bad publicity, especially that close to an election. The police also arrested Eric Olson, a local farmer from Martin County and former editor of the *Labor Echo*, a Minnesota newspaper for the Knights of Labor and Farmers' Alliance, when he advocated "that the rural guard 'be thrown over the fence' ... [he was

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 130-131; *Gilbert v. Minnesota*, 254 U.S. 325. 41 S.Ct. 125 (1920), Internet, [http://users.soc.umn.edu/~samaha/cases/gilbert\\_v\\_minnesota.html](http://users.soc.umn.edu/~samaha/cases/gilbert_v_minnesota.html), accessed December 7, 2016.

arrested] on a charge of attempting to provoke assault.”<sup>46</sup> According to Lindbergh’s biographer, Bruce Larson, only Olson spent any substantial time in jail and after Olson’s case went through the system, he “appealed to John Lind that he be given an acquittal and damages for false arrest.”<sup>47</sup> Although Olson and Lindbergh did not spend the same amount of time in jail, both men agreed that Martin County brought one hundred policemen to arrest them.<sup>48</sup>

These events that occurred in Martin and Jackson counties caused Lindbergh to lose in both counties. In Martin County, Lindbergh received 1,134 votes to Burnquist’s 2,410, still a large margin, but compared to the large amount of opposition that the League faced in the county from Albert Allen it is surprising that Lindbergh had even gained only thirty percent of the vote. Lindbergh lost the county seat, Fairmont, in a landslide, with Burnquist collecting 503 votes and Lindbergh garnering 166. Lindbergh won eight rural townships in Martin County, showing the popularity of Lindbergh in some of the rural areas of the county. In Jackson County, Lindbergh lost by a closer margin of 582 votes (1669 to 1087). Again, this is surprising considering the amount of resistance that the League faced in Jackson County. Lindbergh lost all of the main population centers of Jackson County, such as Jackson, Lakefield, and Heron Lake, but he won many of the smaller villages in the county. This could be evidence that the leaders of Jackson County were not acting on what the majority wanted in the county but and that they acted either on their own interests or in the interest of tradition. The League’s popularity in the sparsely

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<sup>46</sup>*Fairmont Sentinel*, June 8, 1918.

<sup>47</sup>Larson, *Lindbergh of Minnesota*, 240.

<sup>48</sup>*Minnesota Leader*, June 15, 1918; *Fairmont Sentinel*, June 8, 1918; Larson, *Lindbergh of Minnesota*, 237-241; George M. Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1935), 48.



populated areas of these counties show that the League's opposition primarily came from the larger cities within the county.<sup>49</sup>

Martin and Jackson counties presented the strongest opposition that the Nonpartisan League faced in south central Minnesota, but the League also confronted fierce opposition in Blue Earth County. Out of all the counties studied, the League did intensify their efforts to infiltrate Blue Earth County's politics the latest, which happened to be June of 1918, less than a month before the Republican primary. Despite this, a few notable events regarding the League's activity took place prior to June of 1918 in Blue Earth County, including one in the small town of Mapleton. In order to prevent a League meeting from happening in Mapleton, in late February of 1918, the sheriff of Blue Earth County, Anton Olsten, rounded up several members of the home guard to ensure that a meeting would not happen. Olsten originally wanted to take all thirty members of the local home guard from Mankato area, but eventually settled on a lower number. In Garden City, the local business owners effectively prevented a meeting on February 14, 1918, by refusing to rent a building to the League. This is evidence of a traditionalistic political culture seeing that the businesses directly preventing League meetings.<sup>50</sup>

Although the League did have increased activity in Blue Earth County in June 1918, these activities proved to be futile. On June 13, Leaguers from Blue Earth County went on an auto tour around the county. A Courtland band accompanied the Leaguers on their trip around the county. They started in Good Thunder where the local police force thoroughly searched the Leaguers for liquor, disloyal pamphlets, and other propoganda. From Good Thunder, the convoy

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<sup>49</sup>Martin County Primary Election Returns, 1918, Election Returns, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; Jackson County Primary Election Returns, 1918, Election Returns, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

<sup>50</sup>Hoppe, "A Comparative Study", 37-38; *Daily Free Press*, February 28, 1918; Hoppe, "A Comparative Study", 42-43.

of Leaguers went to Pemberton and then to St. Clair. In St. Clair, local authorities told the band that they could only play patriotic songs, thus, the band did not play. The League faced the most opposition in Madison Lake where the fire department attacked Leaguers using fire hoses. While this happened, many of the local citizens stripped the cars in the tour of their Lindbergh banners while police officers threw some Leaguers in jail. Sheriff Olsten then advised the Leaguers to not enter Mankato and the Leaguers took the advice. This proved to be a wise move on the part of the Leaguers because earlier that day a group of citizens got together to paint any League car that would enter the city yellow. The constant pestering of Leaguers by local authorities and the general public are examples of intimidation tactics, which is commonly found in traditionalistic political cultures.<sup>51</sup>

The press in Blue Earth County held a strong anti-League stance which caused the League to not invest many resources into that county. According to Robert Hoppe, four out of the five newspapers that he studied in Blue Earth County prior to 1918 had active anti-League positions, and the fifth did not take a position. Of all the papers in the county, the *Daily Free Press* had the strongest stance against the League. The *Daily Free Press* produced hyper patriotic materials to circulate in the newspaper, which included the classic *Man Without a Country* by Edward Everett Hale and anti-League pamphlets. News about the war's front line and about local boys that had overseas constituted most of the headlines on the front page. Mankato's paper also consistently published anti-League stories and wrote biased things about the League. On April 29, 1918, the *Daily Free Press* printed a story about how the Nonpartisan League tricked a farmer into not reading American papers and to instead join the NPL to fight against the war. On

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<sup>51</sup>Hoppe, "A Comparative Study," 39-41.

May 3, 1918, the Mankato newspaper praised the current congressmen from the area who the League campaigned against. The *Daily Free Press* would even go as far to say, “There is not a patriotic line in Lindbergh’s platform. It reads like the whine of a chronic pessimist.”<sup>52</sup> The *Daily Free Press* actually tried to hurt the Democratic Party’s candidate for state senator, Frank Simon, by accusing him of going to the only League meeting in Mapleton. Hoppe offers some explanations as to why the Mankato paper could be overtly biased against the League including the large staff size of the paper and the small proportion of farmers buying the paper.<sup>53</sup>

As expected, Lindbergh performed poorly in the Republican primaries in Blue Earth County. In the county as a whole he received only half of the votes that Burnquist collected, being 1,911 to 3,361. In the main population center of Blue Earth County, Mankato, Lindbergh would lose all six wards, with Burnquist receiving 1,224 votes, nearly a third of his votes from the county. Lindbergh only received a miserable 293, barely one-seventh of the total vote that he received in Blue Earth County. Lindbergh did appeal to some farmers in the area, the Mankato Township and the Mapleton Township both voted for Lindbergh, although Lindbergh lost by large margins in both Mankato and Mapleton proper. Lindbergh also won Rapidan (118 to 100), Pleasant Mound (123 to 25), and Good Thunder (48 to 35), all of which are small rural villages. This shows that might have been some discontent among the farmers in the area, but the large population center of Mankato muted their political voices.<sup>54</sup>

Out of the counties listed in south central Minnesota, the League was most successful in Brown County, due, in part, to Brown County’s largely ethnic German population. The

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<sup>52</sup>*Daily Free Press*, April 5, 1918.

<sup>53</sup>*Daily Free Press*, April 8, 1918; Hoppe, “A Comparative Study,” 44.

<sup>54</sup>Blue Earth County Primary Election Results, 1918, Election Results, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

Nonpartisan League appealed to ethnic Germans for several reasons, one being the position that the League took towards World War I. Hoppe best described the League's stance towards the war when he noted, "The League believed that it was wrong for corporations to benefit from the war while other businesses, such as farming, were suffering."<sup>55</sup> Townley made several appearances in Brown County where he denounced war profiteering. Many Germans in Brown County also felt compelled to join the League due to the actions of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety. According to Lansing, "In response to the Commission of Public Safety's intense anti-German orientation - including outlawing the use of the German language - German American corn farmers in south central Minnesota began joining the League in large numbers in mid-1917." New Ulm, the county seat, has historically been notable for its largely ethnic German population and culture. Today, the architecture and the names of landmarks in New Ulm are distinctly German and the town still holds a popular Oktoberfest every year. After the United States' entered WWI in 1917, New Ulm even held an anti-war parade.<sup>56</sup>

The actions of the Minnesota Commission Public Safety after the anti-war parade in New Ulm created several reasons why New Ulm Germans found the League appealing. On July 25, 1917, eight thousand people gathered in New Ulm to watch a parade of two thousand draft-age men led by the mayor of New Ulm, Louis Fritsche, the president of Luther College in New Ulm, Adolph Ackermann, and the city attorney, Albert Pfaender. Ackermann, happened to be a theological conservative, something that is prominent in traditional political cultures. He also fought against the draft saying that "We do not want to fight for Wall Street, England, or France",

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<sup>55</sup>Hoppe, "A Comparative Study," 24

<sup>56</sup>Hoppe, *Ibid*; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 125.

which argued against the influence of outside influences. The press outside of New Ulm, with the exception of Socialist publications, did not look favorably at the parade in New Ulm, and caused the MCPS to conduct an investigation into the loyalty of many of the officials of the town. After an investigation into the event, the MCPS had Fritsche, Ackermann, and Pfaender removed from their positions. There is a great chance that this action of the MCPS, an outside influence on the politics of New Ulm, alienated the citizens of that city to lean towards the Nonpartisan League. John Lind, of the MCPS, had some sympathy towards New Ulm and their anti-war feelings, largely due to Lind being a native of New Ulm. Lind left the MCPS after John McGee shouted several insults at Lind for opposing the removal of the Socialist Thomas Van Leer as Mayor of Minneapolis. This shows that even Lind, a member of the MCPS, had sympathy for the people prosecuted by the MCPS, including the Nonpartisan League.<sup>57</sup>

This is not to say that the League faced no opposition in Brown County, because the League did face resistance outside of New Ulm, in towns such as Sleepy Eye and Comfrey. One example would be when Townley attempted to hold a rally in Springfield on February 21, 1918. The city council of Springfield had placed a ban on NPL meetings, but the pro-League mayor of near-by Comfrey allowed them to meet in his city. The city council of Springfield then issued a statement saying that the League could not meet in Comfrey, and attempted to get the Home Guard, the Brown County sheriff, and the county attorney to help enforce their statement. Both the sheriff and county attorney ignored the statement and attended the meeting. The League still met resistance in Comfrey when they discovered that the door of the hall was locked because the

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<sup>57</sup>Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty*, 133-136; *New Ulm Review* (New Ulm, MN), August 1, 1917, Internet, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89081128/1917-08-01/ed-1/seq-2/>, accessed November 13, 2016; Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota*, 335.

owner held anti-League beliefs. The hall owner changed his mind after the village began to fill with farmers who wanted to enter the hall. The hall owner was not the only businessman to refuse business to the League; both the owners of the hotel and garage successfully denied business to the League. After Townley gave his address, he gave a rousing endorsement for the reelection of the sheriff and county attorney. The opposition of business owners shows evidence of traditionalistic leanings in the political culture.<sup>58</sup>

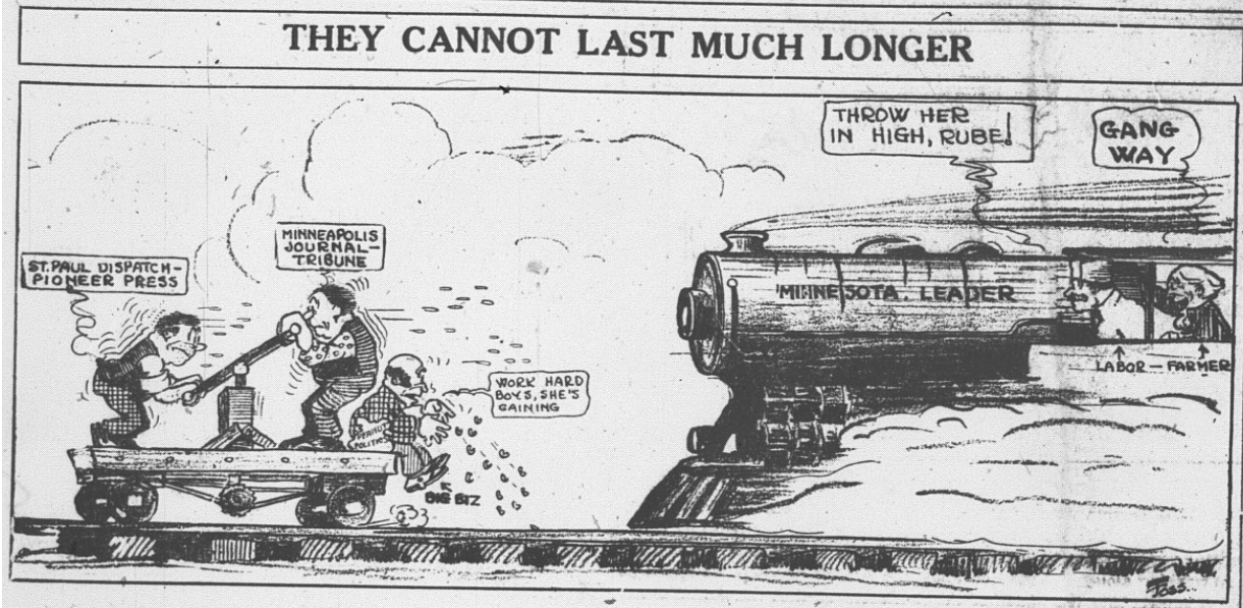
Despite the opposition that it faced, the Nonpartisan League candidate, Lindbergh, still prevailed over Governor Burnquist in Brown County in the Republican primaries on June 17, 1918, by a large margin. In the county as a whole Lindbergh received 2,685 votes, over double of Burnquist's 1,223. Most of Lindbergh's votes came from New Ulm, where he received 800 votes to Burnquist's feeble 234 votes. Although Lindbergh easily won both Brown County and New Ulm, he lost some of the smaller towns in the county. He lost Sleepy Eye 209 to 104, and Springfield 152 to 96, and the most embarrassing loss came in Comfrey where Burnquist received 111 votes and Lindbergh only five. Although the League dispersed shortly after this election, they still had a lasting impact in Brown County's voting patterns. In the general election that November, Brown County voted for the newly formed Farmer-Labor Party, the third-party attempt of the Nonpartisan League to win the governorship, and would continue to vote Farmer-Labor for the next decade. The fact that Brown County continued to vote for the Farmer-Labor Party shows that more than anti-Burnquist and MCPS sentiment caused New Ulm to vote for the

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<sup>58</sup>*Minnesota Leader*, March 2, 1918.

League. Deeper cultural indicators, rooted in German heritage, fostered the conditions that caused the popularity of the Nonpartisan League and the Farmer-Labor Party in Brown County.<sup>59</sup>

Even after the election, the League held an auto-tour around Brown County, and this tour is the best example of the opposition that the League face in the rural parts of the county. This tour was held on June 20, 1918, and included several bands. The tour began in Sleepy Eye, where the local authorities prevented the bands from playing any music, then went to Springfield and received an unwelcoming reception there. In Comfrey, where Lindbergh received only five votes, the Leaguers were met with hostility. According to Hoppe, “The townspeople had barricaded the roads leading into the village in an attempt to keep the Leaguers out.”<sup>60</sup> The Leaguers eventually broke through, after which violence broke out. One shot was fired from the crowd and struck a man, but no serious injury was inflicted, and a fight broke out in which



From: *Minnesota Leader*, March 16, 1918. Microfilm.

<sup>59</sup>Brown County Primary Election Returns, 1918, Secretary of State Election Returns, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, microfilm.

<sup>60</sup>Hoppe, “A Comparative Study”, 30.

another man was injured. After Comfrey it was smooth sailing for the League and they ended their tour with a picnic at Turner Park in New Ulm. Although this happened after the primary, this is a good example of the general public's tendencies to resort to intimidation and terror tactics in many of the small towns in south central Minnesota.<sup>61</sup>

The events surrounding the Nonpartisan League in south central Minnesota during the campaign in 1918 show ample evidence that a blending a political culture had taken place and left a lasting impact in the politics of the region. The ill-fated campaign of Charles Lindbergh and the atrocities that League officials faced, such as Joe Gilbert's multiple arrests and trial, James Manahan nearly getting lynched, and Lindbergh's arrest, show that the political character of the area had changed. Many of the terror and intimidation tactics that the League faced from county officials and the general public are characteristic of a traditionalistic political culture. The heightened attention for elite interests and disdain for the new political force is also characteristic of a traditionalistic political culture. Although there are signs of a traditionalistic political culture in this region during this time period, many of the counties retained many moralistic traits. Political participation did not seem to be frowned upon, in fact it was encouraged, as long as the participation was in line with the status quo. The fact that Brown County supported the Nonpartisan League suggests that the national security threat of World War I likely caused the blending of political cultures.

Two factors that hurt the League in this time period (1917-1918) fostered this blending between political cultures: The national security crisis of World War I; and the radical positions that the League took towards economic issues. Crises can cause a blending of political cultures

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<sup>61</sup>Hoppe, "A Comparative Study", 30-31.



with foreign crises causing political cultures to turn more traditionalistic. This is due to the high patriotic sentiments that people feel after a crisis of this sort. A modern-day example of this happening is how many people became content with their civil liberties being violated with the passage of the PATRIOT Act after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After the wave of post 9/11 patriotism wore off and the country also fell into an economic crisis, people became upset with the PATRIOT Act. When there is a national security crisis people's rights get ignored, such as the League's right to free speech and women's right to vote. In an economic crisis, political cultures can take on a more moralistic look, as evidenced with the South's acceptance of many of the New Deal programs in the 1930s. The League's progressive stances were better suited for this type of crisis, and might have even thrived in such a crisis. Unfortunately for the League, World War I would make their radical stance appear to be sinister, allowing for many of the businessmen to manipulate members of the general public into being against the League.

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