Progressivism and Higher Education at the Outbreak of WWI

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The Progressive Era, which began in the last decade of the 19th Century, brought about drastic changes to all aspects of American life. The rise in both literacy and life expectancy, along with the emergence of settlement house programs, acute industrial growth, and trade unions, rallied the nation around the progressive cause. The attack of monopolies, exposure of government corruption, new agrarian policy, and significant municipal reforms, brought Americans into an era which was anchored by a newfound sense of liberation and freedom. The areas of science and medicine experienced major breakthroughs with the theories of Sigmund Freud in 1909, while the paintings of Pablo Picasso jolted art into the public eye. In addition, the movement had a distinct impact on all levels of education, and especially institutions for higher learning. New progressive leaders were exercising their expansionist and evolutionary ideals on campuses all over the country as enrollment in higher education swelled. Despite these progressive reforms, all was not well on these college campuses.

The outbreak of WWI in 1914 brought about a bevy of opinions and arguments on campuses all over the country. Differing views on America's role in the war, ranging from pacifism to interventionalism, were further compounded by a large contingency of German sympathizers on campus, many of whom were administrative leaders or renowned professors. The role of universities in the war effort, and especially in military preparedness, exposed different ideals of progressivism on college campuses around the nation, and created deep divisions between faculty members and administrative leaders.

Although the most prominent and well documented investigation of the events on college campuses during the war took place at Columbia University under President Nicolas Murray Butler, its example is not universal. As intriguing as the events at Columbia were, which will be covered in the latter part of the paper, it is important to understand that the type of chaotic disturbance caused by the censorship of basic civil rights at Columbia was not widespread throughout the country. Many college campuses faced similar protests as Columbia, yet were able to avoid the type of crisis experienced under President Butler. One such university which displayed a different, yet equally important reaction to the war was Syracuse University, while under the leadership of Chancellor James R. Day. An interesting point however, is the examination of the different methods used by each of the two leaders in an effort to deal with internal conflict. These methods and actions by both Butler and Day can be viewed as reflections of each man's progressive ideals and opinions of the war.

Before we can analyze the turmoil caused by the Great War on these two campuses, we must first establish the details behind each conflict. First, we will examine the seemingly untold story regarding the reactions to WWI at Syracuse University. Sitting atop a hill, overlooking the industrial city of Syracuse in central New York, lay Syracuse University. As the 20th Century approached, students on campus showed little interest in foreign affairs. Instead, they turned their attention to the changes brought about by progressive reforms such as the expansion of enrollment and the women's rights movement.

The outbreak of the Spanish American war in 1898 grabbed their attention, as the campus rallied to support the U.S. cause. Signs of interest for the conflict were displayed all over campus. Students printed patriotic editorials in the student newspapers, discussed foreign affairs in history lectures, and

most notably, burned a doll that represented the Spanish General, while Edith Knight sang "Down in Havana".[1]

In addition, eight known alumni served their country at the front line, and the community took interest in their status and wellbeing. But the fighting was soon over and life on campus returned to normal, focusing on more trivial things such as prom dates and football games. Despite this, in the first few years of the 20th Century, guest lecturers on campus spoke on the topics of imperialism, the naval race, the wars in the Balkans, and the idea of human injustice. Thanks to these lectures, the campus remained somewhat focused on European affairs.

When the Great War did finally break out in late July 1914, Chancellor James R. Day addressed the students and voiced his opinion against the war, predicting massive death and destruction. Day expressed his contempt for all forms of war other then self- defense when he said, "No nation should ever be permitted to fight except against the invasion of an unchristian or semi-barbarous cause."[2] Initially, the students and faculty accepted Day's pacifism with open arms and following the speech, the campus exploded with opinions about the war.

On October 12, the Cosmopolitan Club held a meeting to discuss the war, which was centered on the presentation and discussion of the "Moral Equivalent of the War".[3] In other such instances, students went to great efforts to aid the people of Europe by raising money for war-torn nations. For example, students created a Belgium relief fund and the Chaplain offered an address titled, "Socialism, a cure for present war," which was endorsed by the Syracuse branch of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society. [4]

The faculty became directly involved as well, holding lectures like that of Professor Sperry, who preached that "Germany's desire to expand was the underlying cause of the war."[5] Because Day himself was a German sympathizer, this type of accusation could have easily divided the campus. However, instead of choosing a side in the conflict, Day remained strongly against the war, and peace on campus remained.

As the end of 1914 approached and the events taking place in Europe intensified, Day clearly reiterated his opposition to the war. To drive his point home, Day gave a stirring speech at commencement in May 1914, emphasizing the need for upright moral character, as well as the prospect of a new future. Day concluded by advising students to:

> Fear war. Avoid it if possible. Welcome it in defense of our land and our citizens in any land if we have no other defense. Be honest, be truthful, be brave. Be more careful about the right thing than the popular thing.[6]

As would be expected, the war remained the main subject on campus the following year. In 1915, differing opinions of the war emerged around campus in editorials and lectures. A faculty member named Dr. Mez was the leading peace advocate, giving a series of three speeches on the need for peace in Europe. Mez, like Day was strongly opposed to military preparedness, stating that, "War is

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[1] Freeman Galpin, *Syracuse University II; The Growing Years* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1960), p. 373.
[2] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 374.
[3] "European War Discussed by Cosmopolitans", *Daily Orange*, October 13, 1914.
[4] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 375.
[5] "Professor Sperry Gives Lecture on War Situation", *DO*, November 11, 1914.
[6] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 375.

the failing of human wisdom. Just so long as the nations of the world prepare for war, it will exist."[7] Mez's lectures prompted many students to join the peace movement, as nearly 800 students packed into the Liberal Arts Chapel to hear him speak. The supporters formed the International Polity Club to channel this sentiment.[8]

Many professors and students also debated the precise cause of the conflict. These theories varied greatly, and numerous opinions about the war, its causes and consequences, spread throughout campus. One theory, as explained by a prominent member of the faculty, Professor Alexander C. Flick, to his European History class, was one which preached that the war was inevitable due to the very essence of Europe:

> Over twenty independent governments exist in an equal area in Europe. Each has its own ideas, its own aspiration, its own conception of right and wrong. Their different programs result in a clash of interests which brings on war…The chief result of the war will be the spread of democracy in Europe.[9]

By contrast, Professor John A. Silver saw the war as anything but inevitable, and placed the blame for the war squarely on Germany, claiming that:

> The European war seemed to us like a bolt from the blue. Other storm clouds threatening the peace of Europe had blown away: it seemed to us that future storms would be averted.[10]

Though this type of accusation most likely angered Chancellor Day and other German sympathizers in the faculty, neither Day nor any authority figure quelled such opinions, illustrating for the first time the non-regulatory policy of Day's administration throughout the war.

While the campus was still very much unified in its stance against the war itself, the issue of military preparedness soon spread throughout the country and invaded many college campuses. The argument over whether preparedness was necessary, as well as which side of the conflict the U.S. should support, circulated throughout the nation and caused major rumblings in many academic environments. Syracuse University was certainly one of these environments, as strong protests and demands for a program for military preparedness on campus emerged. Being bitterly opposed to any type of U.S. intervention, Day chose to ignore the outcry. By ignoring these opinions rather than speaking out against them, Day encouraged free speech on campus, subtly voicing his own opinion and quietly pledging his support for those who sympathized with the Germans and those who were against any form of conflict.

The emergence of an increased number of German U-Boats off the east coast in 1916, prompted another outbreak of protest for preparedness on campus. Sparked by an editorial in *The Daily Orange*, which demanded the end of isolationism and the immediate initiation of military training at Syracuse, the protest was supported by the majority of the students and faculty at SU, including many of Day's own staff.

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[7] "Dr. Mez Gives First of Series of Peace Lectures", DO, February 2, 1915
[8] "Dr. Mez's Campaign Culminates in the Formation of International Polity Club". DO, February 6, 1915.
[9] "War Was Inevitable Declares Prof. Flick", DO, May 2, 1915.
[10] "Says Germany is Cause of Conflict", *DO*, May 5, 1915.

The ideals behind this interventional movement stemmed from the application of Progressive Era beliefs to the broader world stage. The students and faculty felt that it was their responsibility, as Woodrow Wilson would later say, to "make the world safe for democracy." This very idea was accepted by an increasingly large number of faculty members, led by Dr. Flick, who had earlier declared that the Germans were the enemy. Flick believed that the war was truly a world-wide affair and that it was the responsibility of the United States to intervene on the Allied side. He demonstrated these views when he lectured that, "We must forget isolationism and meet square on world responsibilities and duties."[11]

This type of faculty support encouraged the students to become involved in the preparedness movement, and student protests and rallies were held. The students further engaged in the war effort when they held a massive fund raiser to supply money for the preparedness program. Their fund raising attempt, however, was thwarted, as Chancellor Day stepped in and forbid the collection of money for the war. His reasons for shutting down the fund raiser are debatable. Though some may point to his adverse stance against the initiation of military preparedness or his German sympathizing tendencies, the main reason for the shutdown of the fund raiser was the economic ramifications that such an act would have had on the university. Prior to this event, Day had considerable economic concerns about the university, specifically in the amount of scholarship money available. Acting on this concern, Day felt that the school could literally not afford to lose any more money.

As would be expected, Day's termination of the fundraiser sparked even more students to protest for military preparedness on campus, as voices from all over the university demanded a change in policy. In an effort to quell these protests, Chancellor Day gave a speech on the topic, attempting to calm the protesting students and faculty by exhibiting his full confidence in the safety of the United States. Though he acknowledged the need for a means to defend the country through national defense, he strongly stated that this type of militarization was unjust at the present time:

> It is consummate nonsense, the thought of Germany attacking us. The idea is being spread by politicians. Military education in the colleges is one part of preparedness. A Christian country must prepare for any attack that is going to be made, but it must not go into hysteria over an imaginary attack by an emaciated country not a foe.[12]

Though his opinion was in the minority, Day was far from alone and was supported by a number of faculty members. For example, Professor Frederick W. Roman, the head of the Economics Department, was vehemently against not only preparedness, but against the war itself. Roman theorized that military propagandists were "Selfish Capitalists," whose principle goal was to make money. Instead of becoming a militarized nation, he believed that there were greater problems at home that needed to be addressed:

> We do not need increased armament and augmented army and navy half as much as we do an improvement of the internal conditions of the country…We have great national problems such as those of poverty, crime, insanity and disease, the solution of which is of more immediate importance than military preparation.[13]

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[11] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 376.
[12] "Chancellor Day Speaks on Preparedness Issue", *DO*, February 21, 1916.
[13] "'Increased Armament Not Needed', Says Professor Fredrick Roman Discussing Preparedness Situation", *DO*, February 15, 1916.

Professor Roman's stance, which was congruent with Days', is that of a progressive reformer whose focus is geared more toward changing American society at home than changing the world abroad. In addition, Day arranged a series of lectures by intellectual figures outside of the university who spoke out against preparedness. One of the most prominent was world famous internationalist Norman Angell, who spoke on campus on February 23, 1916.[14] In his lecture, Angell stated that though preparedness may be needed in the future, a rush to do so would cause the nation to neglect its other foreign policies. These included:

> The rights of trade; immigration residence which we intend to grant foreigners…the rights which we demand for our own citizens on land, as in Mexico, or the high seas as in the conflict with Germany and England.[15]

Thus, Angell, like Day, recognized that though military preparedness may be needed in the future, there were more important policies which called for attention at home. Though Angell and Day differed somewhat on the importance of America's foreign policy, Angell provided backing for Day's stance on the need of preparedness.

Though protests for preparedness continued, Day continued to strengthen the peace movement on campus. He did so by inviting Hamilton Holt, a well known writer on the subject of world peace, to speak on campus.[16] Holt's first lecture was so successful that Day brought him back to lecture in late April. In this lecture, Holt stated the value of peace and the price of militarism. He asked the students to look around the world at highly militarized nations and evaluate their current status, demonstrating his point by repeatedly asking, "Do warlike nations inhabit the earth?" He then proposed his theory that the nations currently at war were the most militaristic, while the United States and Canada were the least militaristic; pointing out that the U.S. was a nation of peace and prosperity due to the lack of a militant run society.[17] Once again, Chancellor Day, who was desperate for support, had his opinions of the war affirmed by experts and world renowned scholars.

Despite Day's best efforts, in early 1917, strong protest arose for the implementation of military training on campus after a student run newspaper had circulated a leaflet which asked students to initiate a money drive for military preparedness. These protests were even stronger than in the previous year, and were supported by Dean Howe and Dean Walker, who were both men of significant influence at the university. Later in the year, when President Wilson broke off all contacts with Germany, the rebellion reached a boiling point. Students on campus immediately organized programs for the support of U.S. intervention in the war, exemplified by events such as "Preparedness Balls" and other fund raisers. At this point, it became clear that the supreme need on campus was the immediate initiation of a military program to train and equip troops for the war effort.[18]

But Day stuck to his plan and further ignored the outcries from the students and faculty. Though he did not implement military preparedness on campus, he never reprimanded the protesters. This policy of non-action by Day is surprising due to the extremely radical nature of many of the protests. For example, the students created their own Rifle Club and spread flyers around campus which declared that Syracuse was the last large eastern university in the entire country that had not yet implemented military training on campus. The students further stated their defiance and exhibited their patriotism by

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[14] "Norman Angell to talk on America's Foreign Policy", *DO*, February 11, 1916.
[15] "Advocates Clearly Defined Foreign Policy to Prevent Fear of Aggressiveness", *DO*, February 24, 1916.
[16] "Advocate of World Peace to Speak at Eight Tonight", *DO*, March 1, 1916.
[17] "United States is Among Countries Least Militaristic", *DO*, April 16, 1916.
[18] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 376.

declaring that they were ready to start their own form of military training off campus if the school continued to refuse their request for immediate action.

Finally, the students made their views official at a meeting of the Senior Council where they drafted a declaration demanding the immediate initiation of military preparedness on campus. In addition, the document contained detailed plans of how the military training would be organized along with the signatures of thousands of students from the university. The agenda and goal of the document was summarized in detail by the *Daily Orange* the following day:

> Preliminary discussion brought out the fact that it is probable the plan will include a proposal to make military training an alternative to the present Gymnasium workout required of all students. The other problems of obtaining a leader, the appointment of officers, the uniforming and equipping of the corps, and the definite organization will be worked out by the committee after consultation with officers of the regular army stationed at Syracuse.[19]

It was now clear that the vast majority of Syracuse University was in favor of entering the war. The students showed no signs of ceasing their outcry until the campus was a working military training facility. Yet, even in the face of this direct defiance of his authority, Day remained silent and repeatedly demanded that the faculty and the university police allowed the protests to continue.

On April, 2 1917, when Woodrow Wilson and the United States declared war on Germany, Chancellor Day was finally forced to submit to the masses, and a program for military training was initiated on the campus of Syracuse University at an assembly which drew nearly 12,000 students. Chancellor Day defended his previous stance on the implementation of a preparedness movement on campus stating that he "had not deemed it advisable for the university to declare war before Congress."[20] Despite this attempt at humor, Day realized that the school was in danger due to the economic strain which would come with a reduction in enrollment because of the war.

However, beyond this concern, Day seemed to suddenly change from someone who was strongly against U.S. intervention in the war against Germany, to someone who was bursting with a sense of nationalism and patriotism. He preached about the support of Wilson's and America's values, and even wrote a large magazine article which was published in *The Syracusan* on May 1, 1918 in which he talked about the war. In the article, Chancellor Day expressed his very passionate and very progressive ideas on the war against Germany itself, but also touched on more abstract topics such as women's rights, prohibition, and God. He wrote, "The length of the war is not on our calendars. It is in the defeat of our foe, of the world's foe. When will the war close? When Germany is whipped out of all semblance of militarism into Christian democracy! Not until then!"[21] He then expressed his sheer hatred for the Germans and their society due to the murder of women and children and pledged his allegiance to President Wilson. He seemed to reach an enraged state in the final few paragraphs where he ridiculed all aspects of German life, stating that:

> The name of German Kultur, German Civilization, have become a byword and a stench in the earth, --- effete, decayed, rotted. They are an offense and a menace to the earth and should be removed absolutely and forever. There should be a century of disinfection

[19] "Senior Council to Suggest Plan for Military Training", *DO*, September 25, 1917.
[20] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 378.
[21] "The State of the Country", *Syracusan*, p. 12, May 1, 1918.

> before an American student enters a German university…The time of conquest of territory, of the absorption of weaker peoples by war has passed and must not be permitted to return…Germany has reaped her materialistic philosophy and is being destroyed by it…we are now in it to preserve human rights throughout the world and we must see this through to the last man and the last dollar. Militarism must be removed from the earth and the freedom of all men everywhere to pursue the peaceful pursuits of life must be given to all mankind…The name of Christ would rebuke the Kaiser's mode of warfare. [22]

In the last few paragraphs, Day expressed his progressive ideals for both home and abroad when he talked about the need to raise the status of citizenship for women in America, asking all the readers to join him and "Hail the coming of women to her inalienable estate". Strangely enough, Day seemed to want to express another one of his progressive stances when he somehow made the transition from war to prohibition and the selfish squander of grain that should be used for the war effort.

Thus, though the article touched on many different issues, it boldly demonstrated the extremity of Day's progressive values and his strict belief in the rights and the freedom of man. He furthered these views when he proclaimed that the First World War would be the last of all wars, and declared that all types of militarism would no longer be acceptable in the post-war era of reform and peace.

The article also demonstrates the extreme change of direction in Day's view of the war. Once a German sympathizer, he now viewed all aspects of German life as unacceptable and appalling. His complete turn-around after the declaration of war demonstrates that while Day had his own opinions on certain affairs, when it came to the defense of his country, he was purely patriotic. Though it may seem odd that a man of such strong progressive opinion repeatedly chose to reject the process of preparedness on campus, Day never wavered from his take on the war being wrong. Instead, he attempted to avoid the chaotic breakdown of his institution and thus the breakdown of the many progressive reforms on campus which had begun with his inception as chancellor in 1894. Despite this attempt, once the U.S. entered the war, Day was as patriotic as the next man.

Thus, it must be made clear that Day's refusal to allow military preparedness on campus was not due to a lack of love for his country. Rather, it was done because he loved his country so much that he wanted to see it continue to grow without the interruption of a World War to stand in its way. Perhaps the best example of Day's patriotism was his constant upholding of the rights of free speech by not regulating any of the protests during the war.

Although it took Day until 1917 to show the ideals of nationalism and progressivism, he made sure to emphasize that he held no place in his heart for any teacher or student who voiced their support of the Germans or refused to fight in the war. He even stated that, "If there is any man on faculty who goes around the campus chattering about Germany, let him go where he can fight for Germany."[23] Though some small anti-war sentiment existed on campus, no records of it exist, and the closest thing to documentation on the subject come from two cases where draft dodgers were found on campus and disciplined by police.

The first such instance occurred in early September 1918, and involved a 20 year old Russian student who was working in a cafeteria in Sims Hall when he was captured and accused of draft

[22] "The State of the Country", *Syracusan*, p. 29, May 1, 1918.
[23] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 379.

dodging. The report of the incident appeared in the *Syracuse Herald* on September 4, 1918. In the article, the suspect, identified as Felix Jegorski, said that he would refuse to fight after being told of the new military draft. The man who reported him, fellow cook Joseph Morrison, claimed that Jegorski said, "I will go West or to Mexico, I won't fight. To hell with the law. To hell with the government, they can't make me fight."[24] Jegorski was placed into custody by the U.S. government, and was tried as a draft dodger.

Though in previous years Chancellor Day may have supported this voice which sought peace rather than conflict in the world, now that his nation was at war and the campus was directly involved in the war effort, he was a changed man. In the case of Jegorski, the university only acted on a federal law which stated that draft dodging was illegal. In fact, it was the FBI who headed the investigation of the Syracuse draftee.

That being said, Day often encouraged all those who were part of the war effort, and even gave speeches about the just cause of the war. He refused to tolerate anyone who spoke out against U.S. involvement in the war, believing that this type of view devalued the millions of lives which were being interrupted by the war. In addition, Day seems to have realized that while the war may have caused progressivism at home to struggle, similar progressive ideals would be essential to reshape Europe.

In the following weeks and months, the campus on the Hill was quickly transformed into a military training facility. All buildings were handed over to the War Department, and a Special Committee was formed by the Trustees to oversee the progress of the transformation from education facility to American Army center. The support for this militarization of the campus was widely popular and both the students and faculty tried their best to help the war cause. Class discussions on campus turned sharply toward the examination of the war as demonstrated by a quote from an article which was featured in the *Syracuse Post Standard* on July 9, 1918:

> The aim of the war, the conditions of the war and plans for the period following the war will be the subject of daily lectures for members of Syracuse University training camp… Geography of countries engaged in the struggle and customs of their nation will be explained by faculty members of the university who have visited the countries.[25]

There were also volunteer organizations, such as the Y.M.C.A., which held events and functions for those stationed on campus. The unity created by these programs yielded a very communal feeling on campus, as everyone seemed to have a part in the betterment of the world. This cooperation was certainly appreciated by the military, as demonstrated by this quote from Capt. H. D. Push, who, after being asked to comment on the role of the Y.M.C.A, replied that, "Too much cannot be said in praise of what the Y.M.C.A is doing for our boys."[26]

All in all, the school received 1000 men by Armistice Day, and 2000 men who came through the training program at Syracuse University served in combat. The 81 students and alumni who died in the war were honored on campus, and letters and reports from students fighting in Europe covered both student and citywide newspapers and magazines.[27]

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[24] "Russian Defies Federal Draft Law", *Syracuse Herald*, September 4, 1918.
[25] "Lectures on War Topics for Training Camp Men", *Syracuse Post Standard*, July 9, 1918
[26] "Movie Staged on Hill for Benefit of Soldiers", *Syracuse Journal*, July 10, 1918.
[27] Galpin, *Syracuse University Volume II; The Growing Years*, p. 385.

Thus, the main point to take away from this is that the campus was not at all militarized until the spring of 1917 at the American intervention in the war. Once this military preparedness was finally advocated by Chancellor Day the campus erupted in a patriotic fever that had been brewing for nearly four years. Despite the anti-war talk of years past and the outcry from students and faculty alike at Day's refusal to allow military training on campus, the campus community remained unified and the administration remained stable. The same, however, can not be said of Columbia University under the watch of ultra-progressive president Nicolas Murray Butler.

When Nicolas Murray Butler took over as President of Columbia University in 1902, he immediately made known his strongly progressive views when he labeled his goals for the school expansion and evolution. In his inaugural address, he further emphasized these goals when he stated that, "Great personalities must be left free to grow and express themselves, each in his own way, if they are to reach a maximum efficiency."[28]

In order to achieve the goal of efficiency, Butler proposed major changes in the administration of the university; the most important being the termination of all administrative powers of the professorial class and the creation of the Board of Trustees whose only function was to oversee administrative matters in the university. He believed that this would allow professors to further focus on their educational duties rather than waste their time on what he saw as boring administrative paperwork. He even went as far to say that a professor "wishes to be let alone with his own students in order that he may best serve the purpose for which he has become a member of the University."[29]

Butler believed that the modern era of higher education, with larger enrollments than ever before, called for a more systematic method of administration. This change in the fundamental structure of the faculty's role in administration was the start of a series of centralist reforms which created individual realms of responsibility for administration and included the creation of Provost's and the reinstatement of Deans.

Despite other amiable, highly progressive reforms during the first years of his Presidency, such as the teaching of natural science and research, the development of a social life on campus by placing students in the same college students in their own dormitories, an expanded course catalog, and the exploration of an international exchange program, Nicolas Butler created substantial anger and resentment among the professors for his autocratic methods of administration.[30]

Labeling himself as a "new conservative", Butler embraced individuality in institutional development, yet rejected individualistic behavior seen to be detrimental to the university, and responded to such radicalism in a swift and firm matter. When dealing with professors, he decided rather than bargained, informed rather than consulted. He refuted any criticism that stood in the way of the development of the institution and rejected any nonconformist or radical thinking from the faculty. He deemed that while freedom of expression was valued, it would only be tolerated within certain limits, and instead preached the universal goal of making Columbia University, "A national and international powerhouse of scholarship and service."[31]

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[28] "Scholarship and Service", *Columbiana Collection*, Columbia University, April 19, 1902.
[29] Columbia University, *Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer to the Trustees* (New York: For the University, 1910), p. 48.
[30] William Summerscales, *Affirmation and Dissent: Columbia's Response to the Crisis of World War I* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1970), p. 30.
[31] Summerscales, *Affirmation and Dissent: Columbia's Response to the Crisis of WWI*, p. 31.

In such instances, where Butler saw the faculty as becoming too radical so as to compromise the integrity of the institution, the accused professors were simply dismissed. Some of the most notable victims of such discipline prior to the war were Harry Thurston Peck, George E. Woodberry, and Edward MacDowell, all of whom were nationally renowned scholars in their respective fields. All three men were dismissed as a direct result of their differences with Butler and for speaking out against his opinions. While Peck's downfall had been one "predominantly of personal temperament, Woodberry's had been the direct result of Butler's administrative interference, and MacDowell's was more a mixture of the two."[32] Though this type of dismissal hurt the school academically, Butler believed that the action paled in comparison to placing the integrity of the university in jeopardy. This precise type of centralist yet progressive form of rule created issues of morality and radicalism within the faculty while it propelled Columbia toward the label of the greatest institution in the world. Despite this rise in status, many members of the faculty saw Butler's goals for the university as unattainable and unreasonable. His behavior was often viewed as similar to that of the president of a corporation who was ruthless in his quest for supremacy.

The most glaring disturbance from his faculty began in 1910 and involved a Professor of Psychology named James Mckeen Cattell. Professor Cattell was a well known psychologist who took great interest in the affairs of the academic government. A progressive in his own right, Cattell believed that it was the institution's responsibility "to conserve the traditions of the past and guide the progress of the future."[33] Though he believed in keeping some of the age old traditions at the university, he was also an avid reformer who had little concern for his own well being. As he said, "A reformer should be concerned with accomplishing his ends rather than conserving his dignity."[34] As it happened, this statement was eventually accurate in his personal case, as he was dismissed by the university on October 1, 1917. The terms of this dismissal are important in understanding the dominant factor which led to the uprisings at Columbia University during the First World War.

After the aforementioned changes to the structure of the university's administration, in 1910 Professor Cattell began to act as the voice of the faculty, complaining about a variety of issues. Not surprisingly, these complaints included his disapproval of the changes in administration made by Butler. He even went as far as making the claim that the trustees were unfit to represent academia, and warned of the "autocratic usurpations" which would occur due to the changes.[35]

Cattell, instead, suggested a tripartite system of administration which combined the faculty, the alumni, and the surrounding community. In a bitter statement, Cattell warned of the demoralizing effect Butler's administrative reforms would have on the faculty:

> I object even more to the irresponsibility of the university president than to his excessive powers. The demoralization that the president works in the university is not limited to his own office; it has given us the department-store system, the existing exhibit of sub-bosses, deans, heads of departments, presidential committees…all subject to him and dependent upon his favor.[36]

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[32] Laurence R. Veysey, The *Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp 426-428.
[33] J. McKeen Cattell, *University Control* (New York: The Science Press, 1913), pp. v-vi.
[34] J. McKeen Cattell, *University Control* (New York: The Science Press, 1913), pp. v-vi.
[35] Summerscales, *Affirmation and Dissent: Columbia's Response to the Crisis of WWI*, p. 77.
[36] Summerscales, *Affirmation and Dissent: Columbia's Response to the Crisis of WWI*, p. 77.

Nicolas Murray Butler's response to this claim by Cattell was one of anger, as he called Cattell's statements "a curious perversion of the facts."[37] Later that year, Cattell circulated a memo to the faculty in which he expressed his opinion that the university was deteriorating due to low faculty salaries, increased administrative control, and the subversion of academic freedom through a "bureaucratic system by which nearly everything is done by the president with or without consultation with his subordinated deans and heads of departments."[38] In addition, Cattell voiced his opinion that the number of professors in the Academy of Science paled in comparison to those employed at the other prestigious institutions around the country.

This particular complaint exhibits once more Cattell's progressive agenda, but more importantly, his effort to make Columbia University the greatest institution in the country. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Butler and Cattell both yearned for a better Columbia, as they both saw the Progressive Era as a time where change and the renewal of traditional values were two very prominent themes in society. The fact that these men saw two different ways of orchestrating this expansion was the main reason for their contempt for each other.

After receiving Cattell's memo, an angered Butler gathered the support of the trustees, as well as several faculty members. He then asked one of the trustees, a man named Francis S. Bangs, what he should do about the radical preaching of Cattell. Bangs replied to Butler, advising him to dismiss him immediately, theorizing that the act would be of no great importance saying that, "We have lost so many men of eminence that I don't believe a total loss of him will hurt us now."[39]

The problem Butler faced was that though many members of the faculty saw Cattell as overly rebellious, his support was strong within the professorial class. One such supporter, a prominent member in both the faculty and the administration, was Dean Keppel. Keppel evaluated Cattell's popularity when he wrote that:

> Cattell's brilliant editorship of *Science* and the *Popular Science Monthly*, even when he uses them to tell us of our sins of omission and commission as a university, and possibly because of this use, endears him to us all. He himself is a living proof that we have some academic freedom at any rate".[40]

So, instead of taking the advice of Bangs and further alienating the faculty, Butler threatened Cattell by sending him a letter of warning in an attempt to let the situation disappear. Unfortunately for Butler, the confrontation did not vanish as he had hoped, and would soon come back to serve as the dominating issue at the university in the years to come.

As time went on, it became evident that Butler's autocratic centralist system and Cattell's rebellious communal ideology could no longer co-exist at the university. And, since Butler's agenda called for constant evolution and expansion, the Cattell problem needed to be dealt with once and for all. The simplest way for Butler to accomplish this was firing Cattell with the support of the trustees, which he did on May 9, 1913.

Yet Butler and the trustees underestimated the support Cattell had within the faculty. Numerous faculty members spoke out against the decision by the administration, including both professors and

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[37] Columbia University Archives through 1910 (J. McKeen Cattell folder), Butler to Cattell, January 5, 1910, pp. 1-4.
[38] Archives through 1910 (J. McKeen Cattell folder), Butler to Cattell, January 5, 1910, pp. 1-4.
[39] Columbia University Archives, 1910-1918 (F.S. Bangs folder) Bangs to Butler, December 3, 1910.
[40] Frederick P. Keppel, *Columbia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 159-160

Deans. For example, Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, Dean of the Graduate Facilities, wrote to Butler that if the resolution to dismiss Cattell was adopted, it would, "operate to the serious disadvantage of the scientific prestige of the University and would be regarded by the Graduate Facilities as very unfortunate."[41]

What was even more important was the outcry which was directed at the lack of free speech at the university due to the treatment of Cattell. For the first time in the recorded history of Columbia University, professors and other faculty members claimed that their right to freedom of speech, as dictated in The Bill of Rights, was being suppressed by the university. Professor Pupin, of the Physics department voiced his opinion on the matter bluntly and directly to Butler when he wrote that, "Cattell's involuntary retirement at this present time might be constructed as due to Columbia's narrowness of academic views and intolerance."[42]

The support of Cattell by the faculty was widespread and could not be ignored by Butler. Due to this protest, he was forced to withdraw the proposal to fire Cattell on May 21, 1913. This division between the faculty and the trustees, specifically between Cattell and Butler, would remain evident for the next four years. Though physical evidence of this feud for the years 1913-1916 are unknown, the issue certainly circulated back into the main stream in 1917, when the U.S. was seemingly on the brink of entering the war and free speech was at its most restrained state.

On January 10, 1917, Cattell submitted a memo at a faculty meeting which expressed his strong anti-war views and asked for the faculty's support for a bill being drafted in Congress which would prevent the army from sending unwilling draftees to fight in Europe. Though the faculty had supported Cattell's progressive views in the past, this radical proposal was too much for many members of the faculty. Due to this, they wrote a collective letter to Cattell which informed him that, "We do not share the sentiments of the memorandum and that we regard with entire disapproval the terms in which it is expressed."[43] A copy of the letter was sent to Butler who was instructed to ignore it by taking "no official notice of the incident."[44]

But instead of doing so, Butler displayed the letter to the trustees, and had Cattell. along with fellow anti-war activist Professor Dana, dismissed from the university. However, the type of anti-war propaganda displayed by Cattell's memo had been apparent on campus since the start of the war. One of the first public displays of what the trustees would later call "unpatriotic dissent", appeared as an editorial printed in *The New York Times* on February 9, 1917. The editorial, written by Columbia University Professor Charles Edward Russell, expressed that:

> The present situation, so far as the United States is concerned, is due only to the injustice of our one-sided enforcement of those International laws that have been violated by Germany. Since we have taken a radical stand against Germany, only one just course is conceivable; the insistence on the immediate lifting by Great Britain of the illegal blockade of neutral countries. If this demand had been insisted upon at an earlier time, there would be no crisis.[45]

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[41] Archives, 1910 through 1918 (J McKeen Cattell folder), Woodbridge to Butler, May 13, 1913.
[42] Archives, 1910 through 1918 (J McKeen Cattell folder), Pupin to Butler, May 13, 1913.
[43] Archives, 1910 through 1918 (J McKeen folder), Shotwell, Dewey, Keppel, Robinson, et al. to Cattell, March 3 1917.
[44] Archives, 1910 through 1918 (J McKeen folder), Seligman to Butler, March 3, 1917.
[45] "Professor Boas Dissent", *New York Times*, February 9, 1917.

Thus, Russell was not only speaking as a pacifist, but was also defending Germany while denouncing the decisions of President Wilson and the justification of the Allied cause. Less than a week later, there was more upheaval involving the war on campus when approximately 300 students held a mass meeting to support the highly protested scheduled appearance of Russian theologist, Count Tolstoy, who was to speak on campus the following night. The meeting sought to protect the right to freedom of speech and backed highly ridiculed Professor Prince, who had organized the appearance.[46] Though the protest was peaceful, it served to demonstrate that the campus was still distinctly divided on the issues surrounding the war, and that students and faculty alike had grown tired of the increased intervention by the university in curtailing free speech. In response to this explosion of anti-war protest, the trustees saw the need to establish a deafening blow to all anti-war sentiment, as well as all forms of rebellion from both the students and faculty.

Though Butler had been strongly against military preparedness on campus in prior years, after the German declaration of continued unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917, he seemed to have become increasingly patriotic. This newfound sense of patriotism in Butler was observed by the trustees, many of whom had wished for U.S. intervention on the allied side for many years. They took advantage of Butler's shift by publishing a statement which sought to curtail the teaching or speaking of ideals which were subversive to the U.S. government. The statement, which appeared in the *New York Herald* on March 6, 1917, was as follows:

> Resolved, that the Chairman and clerk of the Trustees, the Chairman of the Committees on Education, Finance, and Legal Affairs, the President of the University be appointed a Special Committee to inquire and ascertain whether doctrines which are subversive of, or tend to the violation or disregard of the Constitution or laws of the United States or of the State of New York or which tend to encourage a spirit of disloyalty to the Government of the United States, or the principles on which it is founded, are taught or disseminated by officers of the University; and, generally to inquire into the state of teaching in the University; such special committee to report its findings and recommendations to the Trustee as soon as convenient…Resolved, that unqualified loyalty to the Government of the United States be required of all students, officers of administration and officers of instruction in the university as a condition of retaining their connection with the University, and that the President have authority to exercise disciplinary powers of the University to carry this resolution into effect.[47]

In effect, the document gave Butler and the trustees sweeping authoritative disciplinary powers and provided them with a direct tool to avoid the type of dissent which was promoted by Cattell. The resolution took all rights of freedom of speech away from the students and faculty. What is more, the trustees had this act passed directly after the Zimmerman Telegraph was intercepted and as the United States was on the brink of war. By doing so, the trustees took advantage of the popular sentiment of patriotism and exercised their power in a way that prevented any further dissent on campus and established the university in the national light as a devotedly patriotic institution.

Yet, there remained a problem on campus which resulted from this form of patriotic censorship. It was the same problem which had divided the faculty from the trustees when the war broke out in 1914; the fact that a far greater percentage of the faculty was amiable toward Germany and German culture. Though one of the reasons for this was the fact that some professors were of German blood, the

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[46] "Students Protest Tolstoy Muzzling", *NYT*, February 15, 1917.
[47] Columbia University, University Council Minutes (October 1915 to April 1921), p. 896, meeting of March 14, 1917.

majority had become familiar with German culture while studying at German universities during the earlier parts of their careers. This was largely due to the fact that prior to the opening of Johns Hopkins University, the only university where a student could earn a Ph.D was in Germany.[48] Because of this, the majority of the faculty had ties to Germany rather than England or France. Some professors displayed this support in the prewar years more than others, as Professor Franz Boas participated in the Germanistic Society of Columbia University while John W. Burgess went as far as conducting his lectures in Berlin in German, unlike previous professors.

Thus, the Columbia faculty had sufficiently fewer "Anglophiles" than some of the other major universities in the nation, and more importantly, possessed much less pro-British sentiment than the trustees.[49] This being said, few faculty members at Columbia were inspired to sympathize with the Germans at the outbreak of war in 1914, yet they were also not enthusiastic of immediate American intervention on the side of the Allies.

So when the trustees past the patriotism resolution, the jobs of all those professors who had sided with the German cause or culture were in jeopardy of falling victim to the swift axe of Butler. It should not come as any great surprise then, that two days before the U.S. officially entered the war, Butler forced three German professors to take leaves of absence with half pay, with the understanding that, "any sign of political activity or opposition to the policy of the United States would bring about an immediate separation from the university."[50] This type of policy was used to regulate free speech, as well as to prohibit any protest of the massive preparedness program which was taking control of the campus.

Though the faculty was divided on the cause of the war, who was to blame, and what the United States' role should be, in the end Butler had the last say in what forms of opinion were allowed to be voiced. This unilateral policy was displayed when Butler dismissed both Professor Cattell and Professor Dana on October 1, 1917, for spreading documents which were "tending to encourage disloyalty."[51] Yet these dismissals yielded a new wave of protests on campus which focused on the denial of civil rights by the university administration. These protests occurred after Cattell issued a statement regarding his dismissal on October 4, 1917. Cattell professed the injustice of the actions taken by Butler and pleaded his innocence when he wrote:

> It is contrary to academic traditions maintained for six hundred years, to dismiss a university professor on account of his opinions expressed in a proper way to experts in the subject…I am opposed to war and to this war, but I have undertaken no agitation against the Government nor against its conduct of the war. I have written nothing against the draft law or against sending armies to Europe, although I regard both measures as subversive of the national welfare.[52]

Cattell's outcry against his dismissal by the university brought to light the issue of the freedom of speech which had been significantly curtailed since the March 6 resolution on patriotism. The protest for this cause was strengthened when popular Political Science Professor Charles Beard resigned in

[48] Robert A. McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 245.
[49] McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia*, p. 246.
[50] Archives, 1910 through 1918, (F.S Bangs Folder), Butler to Bangs, April 5, 1917.
[51] "Columbia Ousts Two Professors, Foes of War Plans", *NYT*, October 2, 1917.
[52] "Dismissal Illegal, Cattell Declares", *NYT*, October 4, 1917.

response to the unjustified dismissal of Cattell and Dana. Beard stated his resignation, along with his reasons for departure in an emotional letter to Butler, which declared that:

> Having observed closely the inner life at Columbia for many years, I have been driven to the conclusion that the university is really under the control of a small and active group of trustees who have no standing in the world of education…I was among the first to urge the declaration of war by the United States, and I believe that we should now press forward with all our might to a just conclusion. But thousands of my countrymen do not share this view. Their opinions cannot be changed by curses or bludgeons. Arguments addressed to their reason and understanding are our best hope.[53]

In this statement, Beard clearly stated that while he supported the war, it was essential for the opinions and voices of all members of society to be heard in order to understand where opposing arguments came from. He insisted that the foundation of the United States was based around the notion of freedom of speech and opinion. Due to both Beard's opposite stance on the war, as well as his notoriety and popularity as an extremely progressive figure on campus, his resignation caused major uproar from the students and faculty.

One source of this uproar stemmed from rumors which circulated around campus that hinted at a strike and rebellion by the students in response to the resignation of Beard. In the strike, the students supposedly would, "quit their classrooms in a body as a protest to the repressive methods of the Trustees".[54] These rumors circulated via fliers, which were pinned up all over campus and demanded the stoppage of the unlawful regulation of free speech on campus by the trustees. The students also expressed themselves through protest, as on October 10, 1917, nearly 500 students held a rally on the steps of Low Library in defiance of the dismissals of Cattell, Dana, and Beard.[55]

In response to this protest by the students and the published statements made by numerous faculty members, a meeting was scheduled in an effort to restore unity on campus. On October 11, 1917, the Committee of Nine, a panel of both trustees and faculty members which had been created only months before, met to discuss the reasons for the actions taken by the trustees. The facts and evidence against Cattell were laid out, and there was an open discussion centered on the cause of the pronounced division between faculty and trustees.[56] But the wounds inflicted by the dismissals were too deep, as neither Cattell nor Beard returned to the university, and the divisions between the faculty and administration grew larger as the war raged on.

In the following weeks, the implementation of military preparedness on campus increased and Columbia was soon engulfed by the war. But even though Columbia's contribution of both men and supplies to the war was significant, the controversy involving the suppression of free speech and the effects of the firing of professors Cattell, Dana, and Beard, lasted long after the war ended in 1918.

So, as we can see, the repercussions of the progressive reforms brought to the university by President Butler created major divisions between members of the faculty and administration. The newly appointed Board of Trustees served to implement Butler's agenda and created a newfound separation of the faculty and the administration. The tension instigated by these reforms created a distinct division between the faculty and the trustees in the years prior to the war.

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[53] "Quits Columbia; Assails Trustees", *NYT*, October 9, 1917.
[54] "To Sue Columbia, Cattell's Threat", *NYT*, October 10, 1917.
[55] Summerscales, *Affirmation and Dissent: Columbia's Response to the Crisis of WWI*, p. 62.
[56] "Committee of Nine for Columbia Peace", *NYT*, October 11, 1917.

These divisions intensified further when Butler used his newly created Board of Trustees to discipline Professor Cattell. This example of the suppression of any threat to his power would serve as a benchmark for Butler wartime administration. When U.S. intervention in the war was imminent, differing opinions on campus sparked Butler to issue the trustees enough power to control and suppress any unwanted opinion or protest. It was this suppression of free speech which caused the campus to erupt in 1917 over the dismissal of several faculty members due to their opinions on the war.

In conclusion, when both President Butler and Chancellor Day took leadership positions at their aforementioned institutions, they each had visions of grandeur. Strongly progressive, both men yearned for the development and elevation of their institutions through reform and evolution. Yet when WWI broke out in Europe in 1914, both Butler and Day were forced to address internal conflicts which stemmed from the events taking place overseas. The two conflicts, both of which pitted each man's own personal ideals against the opinions of their faculty and students, stood as a threat to divide each campus.

When comparing the leadership qualities of Butler and Day, it is clear that while both men struggled to cope with the massive reactions to the war in Europe, each attempted to avoid conflict in different ways. While Butler used his position of power to quell those voices which were unlike his own in an effort to create unity on campus, Day made certain that he never abused his position of power to discipline or reprimand opinions which differed from his own, and thus created a melting pot of opinions. A great testament to this was the fact that for the majority of the war, Day's view on the issue of military preparedness was completely opposite than that of the majority of students. Despite this, Day chose not to act with the type of disciplinary bias displayed by Butler and the trustees at Columbia. Though he acknowledged his disagreement with the arguments, he never once stopped a protest or ridiculed protesters because of their opinion.

Perhaps this was a tribute to Day's progressive attitudes toward personal freedoms and his deeply ground patriotism. Though he may have failed in his battle to prevent the initiation of military preparedness at Syracuse, Day succeeded in maintaining unity despite the differing of opinions. By never using his power to moderate the many differing voices on campus like Butler, Day allowed opinions of the war to be discussed freely and without regulation. Because of this, the inflammatory issue of free speech never once crept into the wartime spectrum at Syracuse University, whereas it virtually engulfed the campus of Columbia. By achieving peace and unity on campus despite chaotic circumstances, Day succeeded where Nicolas Murray Butler failed, and proved that the tumultuous events at Columbia did not engulf all major universities. Though Butler established utilitarian rule over Columbia, his contrite dealings with professors, as well as his lack of tolerance for conflicting views created tension and eventually crisis at Columbia. On the other hand, Day's direction over Syracuse University with a steady hand and an open mind, guided Syracuse peacefully through one of the most controversial periods in U.S. history.

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Biography:

Andrew Semuels is history major from Belmont, Massachusetts. He is a senior specializing in American history and wrote this paper in the fall semester of the 2004-2005 academic year. The topic of the paper was derived from the general theme of progressivism in his History 401 Senior Seminar class under Professor Andrew Cohen. Next year, Andrew will be working at Brookline High School in Brookline, MA as he hopes to become a history teacher at the high school level in the future.