Chapter XI

CONCLUSION
One can only judge Wilson in terms of the political climate of his own era. Adjustment was its key word and people were thinking how they could adjust their social, political and economic institutions to the new and strikingly different problems that an industrial revolution left in its wake. The century saw a wide range of political philosophies; but its most unique feature was the development of that liberalism which alone could "meet the new conditions of human life." (1)

The men most clearly associated with nineteenth century liberalism in America were editors, authors, and college professors rather than practising politicians. Representative liberals of this camp were Edwin Lawrence Godkin, James Russell Lowell, George William Curtis, William Graham Sumner, Francis Lieber, and Wendall Phillips Garrison. The Nation founded in 1865 and edited from that date until the turn of the century by E. L. Godkin, was the representative organ of later nineteenth century liberalism in the United States, and its pronouncements on public issues had far-reaching influence. Wilson's father was a regular subscriber to The Nation and Wilson was profoundly influenced by Godkin's appraisal of the great English liberals and statesmen such as Gladstone.

(1) Charles E. Merriam, American Political Ideas (New York, 1929) 3.
Throughout England, France, and America of the eighteenth century the great struggle had been between the forces of democracy and of political absolutism which manifested itself in arbitrary personal power, political privilege and institutionalised political inequality. The forces of democracy had then been fighting for representation of the people and the responsible use of power. Democracy had been fighting for equality before law and against special privileges—and for constitutions, written or unwritten that would guarantee fundamental rights.

Industrialization centred the thoughts of the people on the economic aspect of their lives. The problem that engaged the attention of thinking persons was how to relate the political and legal forms to the new social and economic conditions which industrialization had brought upon them. The great debate centred on capitalism. Should the nation preserve the framework of political democracy and also bring about economic democracy by the regulation of the economic activities of man. Should the public allow the development of monopolies unhindered and uncontrolled; should it allow them to develop subject to government control, or should it prevent the development of monopoly and attempt to maintain competition. In the United States a laissez faire attitude on the part of the state had greatly increased the trend towards concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the rise of giant corporations, trusts and monopolies. Though this was accompanied by rapid economic development of the country, middle class businessmen saw in this...
trend a threat to this very existence. Social reformers became conscious of the need to counter the growing influence of big business over the governmental agencies and political parties.

Labour became more and more conscious of the importance of asserting its demands influenced by anarchism and socialism. As labour became more organized, the middle class saw a threat from both sides—big business and organized labour. "In order to curb the power of big business and to equalize opportunity and, at the same time, to stave off the threat of socialism and to drain discontent into more moderate channels, the middle class was prepared to enlist the aid of the state and to embark upon a programme of social and economic reform." (2)

The middle class saw in the ideas of Progressives hope. And, with this middle class awakening to the value of the ideas of the Progressives, began the Progressive movement which was largely in the tradition of the Grangers and the Populists.

The term is used to denote the broad movement in favour of social, economic and political reform in the first two decades of twentieth century and not the political party led by Theodore Roosevelt in 1912. The Progressive movement rejected extreme economic individualism and emphasized social action, social institutions and social responsibility. In place of economic competition and its resultant inequality they stressed economic co-operation which they believed would result in economic equality.

The present writer shares the view of Grimes that "In all, progressivism marked the arrival in America of an aroused social conscience which took as its subject the economic system, as in an earlier age the social conscience had turned upon slavery. Yet, though the instrument for action was collective, the impulse to action was a revived sense of the dignity of man and his assumed equality in rights." (3)

Wilson's "New Freedom" embodied many of the thoughts of the Progressive movement. This movement had assumed that political power had moved away from the people into the hands of those who held economic power. Popular freedom was thus endangered. Political and economic decisions of the government were being influenced by vested interests and were thus getting out of public control. Progressives in both parties had opposed that trend and President Theodore Roosevelt had used his high office not only to propagate the progressive point of view but to embody some of them in legislation. The significance of the "New Freedom" was that it carried this process a step further. "The 'New Freedom' . . . restated a faith in the dignity, individuality, and capacity for freedom of the average man—the democratic belief that social institutions possessing authority over men ought to be brought under social control." (4)

Central to Wilson's thought was the idea of social harmony—the balancing of individual welfare with the welfare of society.

(4) Ibid., 393.
As Governor and President it was only natural that he should introduce legislation to equalize opportunities for economic and social well-being and to restore to the people popular control of the government. He stridently denounced political corruption and the power of special interest and became thereby a tribune of the people. Perhaps his most outstanding successes as Governor and President lie in the realization of the domestic policies of the "New Freedom." Here he used his personal leadership and that of the Presidential office most effectively.

Perhaps he was most successful in his domestic program because he was in step with the times. The nation was asking for practical solutions to the problems—it could feel and see and know. The pragmatic Wilson with his beliefs in and qualities of leadership was a fitting executive of the "New Freedom." "The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson, from 1913 to 1921, marked an important shift in the attitude of a Democratic administration to economic policies. Wilson used the national regulatory power even more than Theodore Roosevelt. . . ." (5)

The concept of change through time, of adaptation to new situation, was basic to Progressive thought. Wilson's general ideas on society, state and government were based on this concept of change through time. Central to his ideas also was the concept of social harmony. In fact the two are intimately related because it is change that is continuously jeopardizing social harmony.

It was Wilson's opinion that government's role was to create the opportunity to ensure social harmony. Such a concept of the role of government is pragmatic.

In his study of Wilson's economic thought William Diamond expresses the view that Wilson never applied the ideas of Darwinian evolution to economics because he saw that it was risky to do so. (6) Did Wilson in fact reject the application of Darwinian evolution to the economic activity of man? To find the answer to this question Wilson's views must be studied in the proper context. To him society is an organism and the economic activity of man is only one part of the total organism. It was government's function, Wilson contended, to strive to ensure harmony among these different parts of society. Wilson did not consider the economic activity of man as separate from the social organism. According to Darwin, nature selected the fittest organism to survive. Hence the organism having a complement of organs which best fitted it to its environment would survive. Thus Wilson looking at society as an organism saw that its economic organ was endangering society's existence, and must undergo change if society was once more to be in harmony, that is adapted to its environment. In The State Wilson remarked that neither laissez-faire nor socialism would ensure harmony. Therefore, when he actually faced the problem as President, he advocated measures

that would bring the special interests of business into harmony with the interests of society as a whole.

Because Wilson saw society as an organism it was only natural that the ideas of Burke would appeal to him. Burke talked of stability, order, progress, growth, change, preservation and improvement. He considered that change must be slow and that there should be no violent breaks with the past. Burke's society was a product of the experiences of history and he stressed the power of custom and convention. He believed society was the master and government its servant. Obviously many of Wilson's ideas were taken from Burke. The important question is: how do they differ?

Burke discussed freedom only in the context of a class society. Wilson had more faith in the common man. Burke believed in the rule of the elite. Wilson felt that to be a leader one must first establish one's ideas in the common mind by the art of persuasion. Any other type of leadership he would have considered at best enlightened dictatorship.

Wilson admired Bagehot most for his writings on the functioning of the English Constitution, something that supposedly had for ever been a mystery to Americans. He wished to model his writings on Congressional government after Bagehot's writings. He saw in Bagehot's writings a literary acumen which could see into the functions of institutions and describe them with effectiveness—at the same time being objective. However, much as he tried to understand the working of Congress he failed and really only proved certain of his own preconceived assumptions. It was left
to others to do a study of the American government of the penetrating quality of Bagehot's. It was, however, a first attempt and had value as such. Wilson highly admired the literary quality of Bagehot's writings, and Bagehot represents Wilson's concept of the "literary politician." Until his entrance into active politics Wilson saw his place in the political field as that of a literary politician.

Wilson admired the fact that Burke and Bagehot viewed democracy as a product of experiences rather than theoretical assumptions. In his own writings Wilson stressed that the concept of democracy possibly had great unrealized potential. If so this would be evident if the concept of democracy were applied to more aspects of society than merely the political.

Though Wilson saw great potential in the further application of democratic principles, he considered political democracy basic to economic and social democracy's and only visualized a community of nations whose members believed in the rights of free people to govern themselves. Wilson warned, however, that political democracy alone was inadequate and would lead only to revolution. Social and economic justice were necessary to the success of any political democracy. Henry Steele Commager has aptly commented that "The New Freedom . . . gave explicit recognition of government as a social welfare agency." (7) In so doing it laid the foundation for the New Deal of the 1930's.

Wilson realized that, with the extension of governmental functions to bring about social and economic justice in society, the administrative duties of the government would greatly increase. He realized that efficiency in administration would be one of the big problems that government would face. Wilson is most admired and praised for his original thinking on administration. With foresight he saw that administration must be studied as a special branch of political science.

As Professor Commager has observed, one of Wilson's main contributions to the evolutionary view lies in his interpretation of the functions and powers of government. Wilson maintained that the Constitution must be interpreted liberally enough to enable the government to meet the complex needs of modern society. His support of anti-trust legislation, banking and currency reform, tariff reduction, election reform, labour legislation and pure food laws were all part of his attempt to protect the rights of individuals against growing corporate power. With the expansion of governmental functions, Wilson recognized, there was a growing necessity to organize the administration of the government on a businesslike basis. To give flexibility to the administrative system and thus enable it to handle day-to-day problems most effectively, he advocated the granting of "broad discretionary powers" to administrative officials.

Wilson himself made no claims to being a political theorist. However, his contributions to the political literature of the United States have not been insignificant. His dream of writing a "Novum organum"—"The Philosophy of Politics"—remained a dream. But in his published writings including *Congressional Government* (1885), *The State* (1889), *A History of the American People* (5 Vols., 1902) and *Constitutional Government in the United States* (1908), one can find, as Comanor aptly puts it "flashes of intuition." (9) From these "flashes of intuition" he developed a pragmatic and workable approach to the study of government.

In his capacity as a teacher at Bryn Mawr, Wesleyan University and Princeton University; as President of Princeton University, as Governor of New Jersey; and finally as President of the United States he had the unique opportunity of testing his ideas. In this process we find Wilson adjusting, modifying and compromising his political ideas occasionally to meet particular situations for the larger purpose of preserving his fundamental beliefs.

Wilson's approach to the study of political science; his concept of society and state; his ideas on the role of government and the place of the individual indicate his reaction from the mere formal and mechanical approach to a more human and social one. He wrote, "I do not find that I derive inspiration, but only information, from the learned historians and analysts of liberty;  

(9) Ibid., 322-3.
but from the sonneteers, the poets, who, speak its spirit and its exalted purpose,—who, reckoning nothing of the historical method, obey only the high method of their own hearts,—what may a man not gain of courage and confidence in the right way of politics?" (10)

The rise of industrialism and the complex problems that arose after the civil war caused American political scientists to pay more attention to the realities of the conditions around them. It was no longer possible to seek solutions to social problems in terms of historical synthesis or logical analysis of legal rights and obligations. The times demanded practical solutions to the practical problems. To understand these problems social knowledge had to be anchored in facts. This trend of pursuing facts in a scientific manner and searching for their immediate relations came to be known as the empirical movement.

Not all political scientists in the United States had accepted the empirical approach to social problems. Woodrow Wilson, though a part and product of the scientific revolution, was much opposed to studying social problems exclusively on an empirical basis for he believed that it limited the free play of insight into human relations. He strongly felt that "human relationships, whether in the family or in the state, in the counting house or in the factory, are not in any proper sense the subject matter of science. They are stuff of insight and sympathy and spiritual comprehension." (11) He clearly stated

(10) Woodrow Wilson, Here Literature and Other Essays (Boston, 1896) 35-6.

"I do not like the term political science," (12) Thus "the chief significance of his method lay in the importance attached to the study of politics as made up of living facts and forces, institutional as well as constitutional, organic rather than mechanical." (13) Wilson believed that the study of politics must combine facts and figures and ideas which inter-relate these observations and statistics into meaningful patterns. He considered that the study of politics from either purely theoretical or purely empirical approach would be fruitless. Wilson paid more attention to the actual functioning of political forces which he felt was the more important process of political life.

Political theory in the nineteenth century was dominated by religion, that is to say, national dogmas and personal convictions. Those studying "the theory of the state" as it was then called, asked such questions as--what are the ends of states and government--what are the proper means toward those ends--what is the best form of government. Scholars thought in terms of "first principles" derived from religion, philosophical speculation, positive law or, in particular, the constitution of their own countries. (14)

(12) Ibid., 11.
(13) Herriam, American Political Ideas, 382.
In contrast, the twentieth century political scientists began seeking actual facts and their inter-relationships. In so doing they found that the actualities differed from the old maxims postulated in the nineteenth century. This search for facts in actual social situations revealed many factors that had not heretofore been brought before the public. This process of search thus laid the foundation for practical reforms in many fields and especially in the field of social welfare. (15)

The trend was, therefore, to move away from "dogma" and on to "reality." The new scientific method left no scope for evaluations in absolute terms. Every tentative hypothesis or generalization, based on observed facts, laid itself open to the test of further observations. Terms such as good and evil, just and unjust, right and wrong, best forms and proper means, and ends of government, which had played such a dominant role in the writings of the nineteenth century, were no longer accepted without qualifications.

In his writings Wilson made a clear break from the traditional approach. He frequently denounced the older view of the static state and emphasized the organic relationship of the various parts of the government as well as the organic development of the constitution. Erlo Curti observes that "The conception of the state as an artificial and deliberate creation, of something which could be made and unmade at will, was now contrasted

(15) Ibid., 4-6.
with the idea that the state, being a slow accumulation, could be altered only slightly and very gradually." Thus, he adds "Political science also came within the evolutionary orbit. The older view of a static state and of eternal verities in politics gave way to organic and relativist ideas." (16) In this process Wilson's contribution was also significant. David Easton writes that, "Woodrow Wilson, in his Congressional Government, was the first political scientist in the United States to make a significant effort to break [with] the old legal pattern." (17) In his work, Congressional Government, Wilson did not content himself merely with descriptive analysis. He sought to provide answers, by way of suggesting institutional changes, to produce the result he desired.

The chief purpose of that work was to find out ways and means for the responsible use of political power. In effect he desired, in the last analysis, to have political power responsible to the electorate. His major thesis was that "... the more power is divided the more irresponsible it becomes." (18) Towards this hypothesis Wilson pointed out facts and directed his argument. He concluded that power was concentrated in the House of Representatives, and that it was no longer divided among the


three branches of government as the founding fathers had intended. Moreover, he said, the House of Representatives was itself dominated by various committees. This division of power among the committees of the House of Representatives prevented the electorate from locating responsibility for legislative enactment. He therefore suggested that power, whether in the hands of one or a group of persons, must be identified. It was his opinion that it was easier to locate responsibility in the British parliamentary system than in the American Congressional system. His whole argument was based on two assumptions. If power is divided the electorate will be unable to locate responsibility. A responsible ministry allows power to be concentrated and, thereby responsibility can be fixed in all circumstances.

Wilson's method of studying American government is worth pointing out here. He first made assumptions. He then sought facts to support his own assumptions. Though his technique would never yield necessarily an objective picture, it was an improvement, practically speaking, over the completely theoretical approach of his predecessors. His technique has become common among today's political scientists. It is a circular type of reasoning, and logical but not necessarily scientific. Wilson and the whole group of political scientists who work in this manner, approach their study from the point of view of reform. Wilson is not a theorist but a pragmatist and it is only natural that he would approach American governmental studies in this manner.
A weakness in this type of thinking is brought out in his writing on Presidential leadership. In *Congressional Government* he desires that the office of President be like the office of Prime Minister and suggests that the necessary changes be made to allow this to be so. In *Constitutional Government* he takes for granted that the office of the President has a larger base and greater scope in the exercise of power than that of the Prime Minister and includes the challenges and responsibilities of a Prime Ministership. Though his desire has not changed, his reformative approach has. He no longer suggests institutional changes but argues for strong Presidential personalities believing that the Constitution allows for powerful Presidents.

As his writings were not analytical neither was his understanding of the problems he faced as Governor or President. He did not analyze situations in detail. As Governor he brought before the public the evils of the boss system without analyzing how this system had come into existence. As President he brought to the eyes of the public the evils of trusts and monopolies and was primarily interested in reform rather than analyzing the problem enough to come out with a sound theoretical argument for his programme. Because this was his general approach he often did not have a detailed view of the problem and did not understand fully the implications of his reform ideas.

In foreign problems, because of an inadequate understanding of the setting and origins of problems, he was able only to judge situations according to the values which he had imbibed
from his own training and cultural background. How did he meet
problems of foreign policy? He agreed to fight Germany to make
the world safe for democracy. In Mexico he did not recognize
the government that had established itself by force because he
believed that the people should choose their own government. In
China he advocated an open door policy believing that it would
prevent exploitation of China. Although he had set values,
those common to the Anglo-American liberal tradition, he did not
have set methods of applying those values. That is to say,
although he did not have a pragmatic philosophy, he did have a
pragmatic approach to the application of that philosophy.

For example, in China his idea was to insure democracy.
In agreeing to the open door policy he was actually making that
idea impossible, yet he accepted the exploitation of China by
Europe and Japan as a fact and tried to save, by American inter-
vention, any one power from dominating. He thus maintains his
ideal but also recognizes the real situation and tries to adopt
some policy that will help, in some measure, to preserve his
ideal. An idealist would have refused to interfere at all.
Wilson, at first, did not agree to join the consortium feeling
it would exploit the Chinese which was against democratic
principles. When he realized that, by joining, the United States
could decrease the degree of exploitation, he then agreed to
join.

In the case of the League of Nations he could bargain
with the European governments but he could not accept the
reservations of the Senate which would destroy the League. How could a Senate of the United States oppose a League of Nations that would lead to peace and be a first step toward world democracy? Because he considered that the President represented better than any other branch of the government, the ideas and feelings of the people, he never took the Senatorial criticism seriously enough. He was under the illusion that the people would force the Senate to accept the treaty as presented. It is difficult to understand how a man who had studied American government, as he had, could ever forget that the participation of the United States in the League depended upon senatorial ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. It is also difficult to understand how he could not be aware that a substantial segment of the people of the United States was very reluctant to involve the country in European politics.

One asks, did he not recognize the Senatorial reservations because he did not want to? Or, did he realize that any further compromise would mean the complete loss of the League and thus that he best accept that the Senate would not ratify the treaty? At least a League of Nations of some sort would be established regardless of the United States decision. A small step in the right direction would be better than no step. A League without the United States would be better than no League at all. Wilson maintained his belief in a League of Nations but accepted the reality of the situation because he strongly felt that the ideal would eventually be accepted by the United States. An eminent
American who served Woodrow Wilson and subsequently rose to be President of the United States rightly described this critical period in Wilson's life as an "ordeal". Herbert Hoover wrote: "Through his leadership and his sacrifices, he (Wilson) established for the first time in history a systematic and powerful organization of nations to maintain peace." (19) It was a contribution that was in no way less significant than the "novum organon"—the great treatise on political philosophy—which Professor Wilson had dreamed of writing.