

# A Progressive from Oklahoma

## Senator Robert Latham Owen, Jr.

*By Kenny L. Brown\**

Few senators knew what was coming. On February 25, 1908, Robert Latham Owen, Jr., their new Democratic colleague from the state of Oklahoma, rose to speak on the Aldrich currency bill. Owen was an unknown entity from a new state with a rough frontier image. As he began speaking, senators and even spectators listened with surprise. In a style sometimes eloquent and sometimes sarcastic, Owen attacked the Aldrich proposal, saying it favored large, monopolistic banks. One by one, the conservative supporters of the measure interrupted to debate, only to meet Owen's unexpectedly masterful rebuttals. Finally, Nelson W. Aldrich, Republican author of the bill, rose, debated, and attempted to answer one of Owen's questions. In reply Owen snapped back: "That is no answer. You are giving an explanation that doesn't explain."<sup>1</sup> The new senator was not only surprisingly capable, but also uncommonly rude.

This first dynamic performance revealed much about Owen. He was forceful, brash, and self-confident to the point of conceit. His fierce opposition to the Aldrich bill also served notice that he would ally with the progressives in their popular struggle against special interests. This was rather surprising because of his previous conservatism on the local level as a businessman and attorney. Yet subsequent actions confirmed his commitment to national progressivism, for he became a leading advocate of direct election of

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*Robert L. Owen, photographed in Muskogee in 1894, would become one of Oklahoma's first U.S. Senators and a leading Progressive in national politics (Courtesy Oklahoma Historical Society).*

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senators, the initiative and referendum, woman suffrage, and other popular reforms. Later during the Wilson administration he figured prominently in struggles for the Federal Reserve Act, child labor legislation, reform of the stock exchange, and ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. With all this he gained national prominence. At the same time, he represented the interests of his constituents in a more pragmatic and less progressive manner. He was particularly competent and effective. Oklahomans could not have chosen a more able man for their first senator.

Born in Lynchburg, Virginia, on February 2, 1856, Owen grew up in privileged surroundings. His father, Robert Latham Owen, Sr., was president of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, owner of Lynchburg's most impressive mansion, and a member of a prominent family known for producing physicians. His mother, Narcissa Chisolm, came from Indian Territory. She was the daughter of mixed-blood Cherokee leader Thomas Chisolm. Being somewhat aristocratic, his parents naturally provided a first-class education for their son. He attended private schools in Lynchburg and then Merillat

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*Young Owen, seen here on the far left, soon after arriving in Indian Territory. In 1885 he became agent to the Five Civilized Tribes, with offices in Muskogee's Union Agency (upper right) (Courtesy OHS).*

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Institute, a classical school near Baltimore. After graduation Owen could not afford college due to his father's death. He therefore studied medicine with an uncle, but dropped that pursuit after two years when he received a scholarship to attend Washington and Lee University at Lexington, Virginia. Owen became an excellent debater and was valedictorian of his graduating class, receiving a Master's degree in 1877.<sup>2</sup>

Upon the suggestion of Cherokee leader William Penn Adair, Owen moved to Indian Territory in 1879. Accepted as a Cherokee citizen, he first taught at the Cherokee Orphan Asylum at Salina. Between 1880 and 1885 he became a leader in the Cherokee Nation as an attorney, educator, editor, and businessman. When Grover Cleveland became president in 1885, the assertive Owen gained the endorsement of several senators and that year was appointed head of the Union Agency for the Five Civilized Tribes at Muskogee. As agent he favored the economic development of the territory, and he believed the invasion of white civilization was inevitable.<sup>3</sup>

When Cleveland left office in 1889, Owen lost his position. He remained in Muskogee and soon married Daisy Hester of Boggy Depot. Owen quickly became a very active attorney. His business operations also mushroomed. As a lawyer-lobbyist, he represented various Indian tribes, spending virtually every winter in Washington, D.C., over the next several years. He earned extremely lucrative

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fees: \$45,000 in 1889 as fiscal agent in the dispersal of the "Choctaw Net Proceeds Claim," \$110,000 in 1893 for his part in the "Choctaw Leased District Case," and \$160,000 in 1906 as attorney in the "Eastern Cherokee Case." Critics charged that he cheated the Indians with exorbitant fees. Indeed, Owen knew thoroughly the bureaucratic system and the legal conditions of Indian Territory. In 1893 he controlled the entire process of allotment for sixty Cherokees when the Cherokee Outlet opened.<sup>4</sup>

His varied business dealings were also impressive. He developed a large ranch north of Bartlesville, helped organize the first national bank in the territory, founded a mercantile business in McAlester, and speculated in mining and oil production. Owen moved in elite circles; he belonged to an emerging territorial aristocracy. There was little in his actions as entrepreneur, however, that foreshadowed his future apparent radicalism as senator. As late as 1905 he helped establish the Muskogee Citizens' Alliance, an organization opposed to labor unions.<sup>5</sup>

Owen's early activities in politics likewise revealed little of his later progressivism. Because no territorial government existed, Indian Territory offered little for political parties beyond federal patronage and conventions in presidential election years. In the 1890s Owen gained some control over patronage, thus augmenting his power as entrepreneur and attorney. In 1892 he organized the first Democratic convention in the territory. He was elected national committeeman that year and again four years later. At the presidential convention of 1896 he served on the platform committee, but showed little enthusiasm for the issue of free silver during the election year.<sup>6</sup>

The future senator first exhibited emerging progressive tendencies with his support of statehood for Indian Territory separate from Oklahoma Territory. He attended various meetings promoting the idea, including the important Sequoyah Convention held at Muskogee in the summer of 1905. As a leading delegate, Owen helped write the Sequoyah Constitution, which included such provisions as the control of corporations, protection of labor, and other progressive reforms characteristic of the era. Of the progressive proposals introduced at the convention, Owen particularly advocated prohibition and woman suffrage.<sup>7</sup>

Federal officials, bent on single statehood for the two territories, refused to approve the Sequoyah Constitution, yet Congress soon passed an Enabling Act for the single state of Oklahoma in 1906.

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*Owen in 1907, the year he left Oklahoma for Washington, D.C. (Courtesy OHS).*

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Owen was not a candidate for the constitutional convention at Guthrie, but he served as vice-president of the campaign committee to elect Democratic delegates. His party was unbelievably successful, winning 99 out of 112 positions. The Democratic majority wrote a constitution that leading progressives considered ideal. Although not a delegate, Owen traveled to Guthrie when he lobbied successfully for prohibition and unsuccessfully for woman suffrage. The delegates later selected Owen to go to Congress to request funds to pay for the convention.<sup>8</sup>

Well-known, respected, and active in recent events, Owen was automatically a leading prospect for the United States Senate. He announced his candidacy on February 10, 1907, and soon released a list of his views. On local matters, his ideas were already well-established, predictably pro-business, and solidly pro-development. He demanded removal of restrictions on the sale and lease of Indian allotments. This was an old issue for Owen because he had early

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opposed the restrictions that Congress placed on Indian land. Allotments could be sold or leased only with the permission of the Secretary of the Interior, but Owen argued that these restrictions failed to protect Indians from grafters and merely retarded economic development of the territory. He further suggested that the federal government should compensate Oklahoma for revenue lost on Indian land, which was non-taxable. Also on local matters, he proposed several benefits for his future constituents: federal buildings, federal jobs, free rural postal routes in Oklahoma, and improvements to make several of Oklahoma's rivers navigable.<sup>9</sup>

Owen was less experienced in national issues with little record to predict how he would posture himself. He recognized the popular sentiments of the time and expressed these in his campaign literature, accusing John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Philip D. Armour, and railroad executives of destroying competition and robbing the people of the just proceeds of their labor. Owen favored "reasonable" profits and advocated control (not destruction) of the monopolies, but he wanted strict laws against conspirators who stifled competition. He especially denounced Republicans for favoring monopolists, yet he also condemned blind partisanship of both Democrats and Republicans who succumbed to the organized greed of the robber barons. His opinions evidently pleased the voters. He led a large field of Democrats in the primary of June 8, 1907. This vote was only preferential because United States Senators were still elected by state legislatures. Shortly after statehood the Democrat-dominated Oklahoma Legislature promptly selected Owen and fellow Democrat Thomas P. Gore as the first two senators.<sup>10</sup>

The nation was in the midst of the progressive movement led by President Theodore Roosevelt when Owen took office. Approaching the end of his second term, Roosevelt struggled to hold his party together. Conservative Republicans were feuding with progressive Republicans over control of the government. Because he was a member of the minority party, Owen stood outside the mainstream of political events; yet he opposed special interests and conservatives with so much hostility that many people identified him with the most radical progressives, those whom Roosevelt referred to as the "lunatic fringe." Other Democrats likewise promoted popular progressive proposals. Over the next several years Owen's party successfully adopted a progressive agenda that led ultimately to their victories in the congressional elections of 1910 and the presidential election of 1912.<sup>11</sup>

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On February 25, 1908, Owen served notice that he was joining this progressive trend when he opposed the Aldrich currency bill, one of the most important measures of the latter part of the Roosevelt administration. The bill was a conservative response to the panic of 1907. Early in that year economic problems began and worsened as months passed. When a large New York bank closed in October, the public panicked. Depositors withdrew money from banks throughout the country, thus decreasing the amount of credit available and causing a mild depression. Reacting to this recurrent problem, Senator Aldrich designed a bill to meet such emergencies. It called for increasing temporarily the amount of currency available during a panic, thereby providing an ample supply for banks when people withdrew their money and hoarded it. This emergency currency was to consist of national bank notes backed by railroad bonds and commercial paper. When a panic began, national banks with sufficient assets to back the money were to form associations to issue the emergency currency.<sup>12</sup>

Owen criticized the plan for several reasons. The bill limited the amount to be issued to only \$500 million. Only banks with substantial assets could form associations; thus large banks in New York and other major cities were favored. Also, the guidelines were cumbersome. By the time a panic began, Owen argued, an association would form too late to stop it. He most strongly objected to supporting national bank notes with commercial paper and railroad bonds. He saw this as an attempt to strengthen railroad investments of the large New York banks. Owen preferred a much simpler system using treasury notes backed by United States bonds.<sup>13</sup>

Other progressive senators objected to the measure for the same reasons. Despite this opposition, Congress passed an amended version known as the Aldrich-Vreeland Act, omitting the use of railroad bonds to back the currency. Although Owen voted against the bill as a whole, he later admitted that he would have voted for the measure if it would have otherwise been defeated. It was an undesirable plan, but it was better than no safeguards at all. This stance revealed an important characteristic of Owen's progressivism. In much legislation he sought to inject governmental control and provisions favorable and responsive to the people. But he would sacrifice these progressive ideals if legislation enhanced efficiency or improved economic stability. In this regard he resembled many other progressives.<sup>14</sup>

The debate on the Aldrich proposal made Owen a well-known politician because the press gave wide coverage to this first perform-



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*Soon after the debate on the Aldrich Bill, Owen was pictured in a 1908 edition of Current Literature. The caption read, "The Cherokee Senator from Oklahoma" (Courtesy Western History Collections).*

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ance. Later several major newspapers and magazines published stories of Owen and his family. They particularly emphasized his Indian ancestry. More important to the people of Oklahoma, however, were the favorable descriptions of his ability and his aristocratic refinement. This helped the image of the new state, which was so often perceived as a crude frontier filled with colorful but somewhat backward people. Owen's subsequent actions also did much to counteract that general impression.<sup>15</sup>

Following his initial success, Owen soon became a leader among Democrats in promoting liberal doctrines. He quickly developed his own full-blown philosophical framework for these ideas. Labeling his program the "people's rule," he called for a return of governmental

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control to the people through the initiative, referendum, direct primary, and other such devices. During the Democratic Convention of 1908 he met with presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan to discuss the party platform. In the Senate for only a few months, Owen had gained sudden recognition as a leader of the progressive wing of his party.<sup>16</sup>

Bryan lost the election to William Howard Taft, Roosevelt's former Secretary of War and hand-picked successor. Owen's party, nonetheless, increased its minority in Congress, while progressive and conservative Republicans continued their war. The Democrats exploited this split. They portrayed themselves as being more genuinely progressive and at the same time sided with the "insurgents" (the progressive Republicans who opposed Taft's policies).<sup>17</sup>

Owen joined his fellow Democrats in allying with the insurgents. He fought side by side with them on the Senate floor to keep tariff rates low in the spring and summer of 1909. Like most Democrats, he worked even more vigorously than the insurgents for true tariff reform. There was one exception to his steadfastness in favor of low rates—the oil industry. Rationalizing that Standard Oil would import cheap Mexican oil without restraint, Owen favored protective rates for petroleum. This stewardship of independent oil producers became a habit for Owen. He was the first of a long line of Oklahoma politicians who represented petroleum interests. In regard to other products, however, he generally stood firmly for lower tariff fees. This was to no avail as the Payne-Aldrich Tariff left duties at about the same level as earlier similar measures.<sup>18</sup>

When the insurgents in the House of Representatives attempted to overthrow dictatorial Speaker Joseph G. Cannon, Owen encouraged them. Commenting in general about the insurgents in 1910, Owen said: "They represent the protest of righteousness and fair dealing against the craft and sordid meanness of special privilege."<sup>19</sup> He praised their efforts to cleanse their party, but wondered if the evil could ever be purged from the Republicans.

Among the progressive proposals gaining recognition for Owen was the creation of a department of health. Early in the century the federal government provided several health services, an inefficient crazy quilt of boards, bureaus, and agencies. In 1906 the American Association for the Advancement of Science established the Committee of One Hundred to promote centralization and coordination of governmental programs. Owen's brother, Major William O. Owen, a retired military physician, soon joined the movement and introduced

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members of the committee to the senator. In support of the effort, in February, 1910, Owen introduced a bill to create a cabinet-level department to oversee all existing civilian health and medical agencies. Almost immediately critics formed the rival National League for Medical Freedom in opposition to the proposal. Composed of chiropractors, osteopaths, and others outside the mainstream of regular medicine, the organization argued that Owen's bill would restrict freedom of choice and would lead to monopolization of medicine by the American Medical Association. Owen and his supporters replied that the patent medicine trust, food adulterators, and quacks financed and controlled the National League for Medical Freedom. The debate attracted widespread attention, but the bill failed, and advocates abandoned serious efforts by 1912. Owen continued to introduce similar legislation periodically throughout his senatorial career without success. Yet the efforts gained him additional national publicity, strengthened his political base, and demonstrated his interest in a more efficient society.<sup>20</sup>

Owen's promotion of efficiency was exceeded by his crusade for popular governmental reform, such as the direct election of senators. In his first days in office, he introduced a resolution for a constitutional amendment to allow voters, rather than the state legislatures, to choose their United States senators. Like other similar measures, it failed to pass the Senate. A situation soon arose, however, that became a catalyst for the movement. In 1911 the Illinois Legislature, after being deadlocked, suddenly chose machine politician William Lorimer, a Republican, for United States senator. Subsequent investigations revealed that large Chicago corporations provided a slush fund of \$100,000, to bribe several legislators to select Lorimer. The Senate committee that considered the matter ruled that Lorimer should be seated because he had a majority even without the votes of the bribed legislators. Owen and several Democrats joined insurgent Republicans in their angry opposition to the committee's decision. Early in January on the Senate floor, Owen strongly attacked Lorimer, saying that he led a corrupt political machine in Illinois. His criticism was so harsh that Lorimer's friends later tried to stop Owen's appearance before the Illinois Legislature when he made a speech favoring the initiative and referendum. Despite the bitter opposition of Owen and other progressives, the Senate voted to seat Lorimer, but public outrage over the incident soon led to ratification of the constitutional amendment for direct election of senators.<sup>21</sup>

The Oklahoma senator exceeded most progressives in his support

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for the initiative, referendum, and recall—proposals also designed to give the people more control over government. Owen spoke frequently inside and outside the Senate on the topic and wrote several articles for major magazines advocating the adoption of the reforms. He even introduced a bill to establish the initiative and referendum at the national level (a move supported by only a few reformers). In March of 1911, his strong advocacy led to conduct a dramatic filibuster during consideration of statehood for New Mexico and Arizona. A majority of the Senate opposed the Arizona constitution because of its provisions for recall of public officials, including judges. Owen disagreed. With the Senate meeting late to avoid a special session and with several major proposals yet to be considered, Owen began an eleven-hour filibuster just after midnight on March 4. He argued that Arizona, with a constitution supporting people's rule, should not be sacrificed; and New Mexico, with a constitution favorable to corporations, should not be admitted alone. During the night-long filibuster, several senators and even the vice-president approached him and pleaded with him to stop so other measures could be considered before the noon deadline. Finally, President Taft, wanting the Senate to consider his Canadian reciprocity agreement, sent a message suggesting that a solution for Arizona could be found later. The stubborn Owen refused and surrendered the floor only after the Senate agreed to vote on a resolution to admit New Mexico and Arizona jointly. Although the Senate then immediately rejected statehood for both territories, Owen had upheld the honor of Arizona. Several newspapers in New Mexico bitterly criticized Owen for blocking the will of thousands of people, but many Oklahomans and Arizonians praised him. William Jennings Bryan, still leader of the Democrats, sent Owen a telegram commending his filibuster and inviting him to Bryan's upcoming birthday banquet at Lincoln, Nebraska. Muckraker John Temple Graves also publicized his actions in the national press.<sup>22</sup>

The seemingly radical progressivism of Owen at the national level contradicted his more pragmatic politics in state affairs. Like all successful politicians, he took care of his constituents' needs. He kept in close contact with Oklahoma governmental officials, continuously making recommendations for jobs. In the Senate he submitted numerous bills giving pensions and relief to many Oklahomans. He also introduced legislation for improving roads and constructing federal buildings in the state. Of utmost importance to Owen and the rest of the state's congressional delegation was removal of restrictions

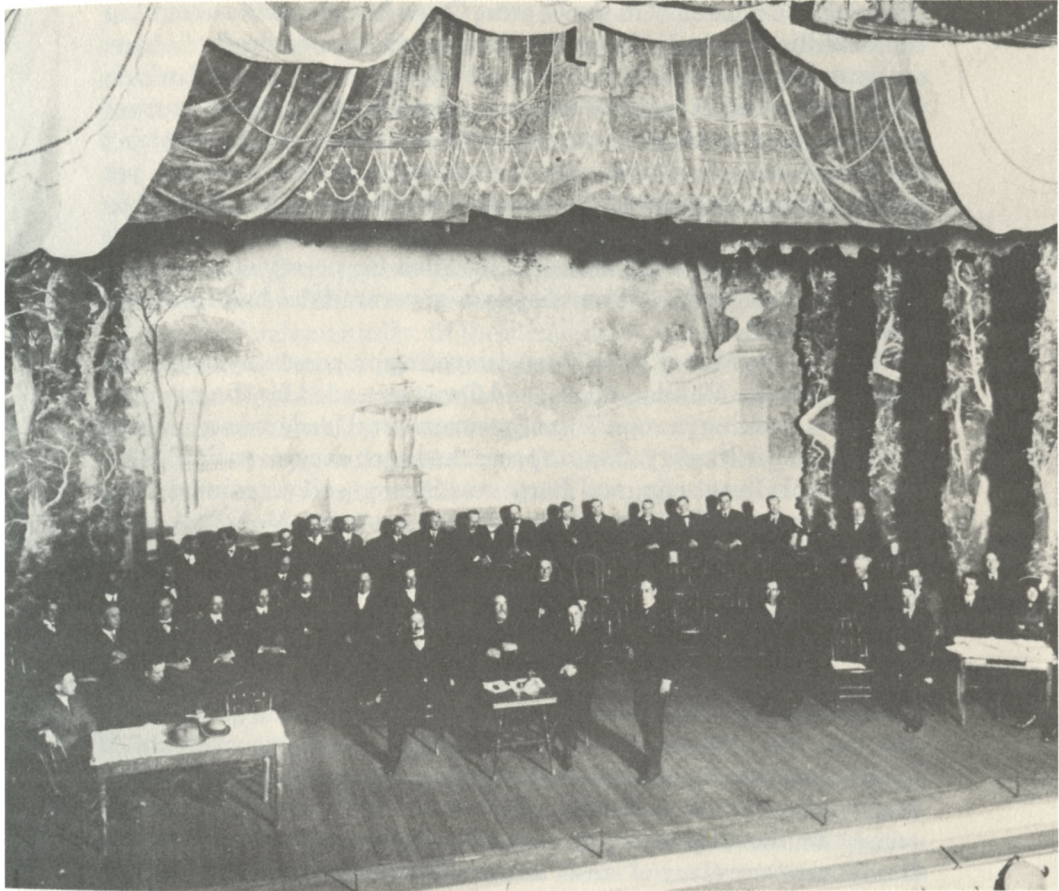
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on the lands of the Five Civilized tribes. One of Owen's first actions in Congress was to introduce a bill removing restrictions, but it failed. Later he vigorously supported the bill that ultimately passed in the spring of 1908. While this aided the business interests of Oklahoma, it also helped Owen, who was trying to gain final control of thousands of restricted acres for himself. He also pushed through legislation allowing the United States Court of Claims to review a case in which he stood to gain thousands of dollars. Of less personal interest to Owen was the sale of Choctaw and Chickasaw coal and asphalt lands still held for the tribes. This proposal died in committee; nevertheless, it too reflected Owen's long-held attitude that protection for the Indian should not block commercial development.<sup>23</sup>

Most Oklahomans approved of Owen's actions on state affairs, and they were quite aware of his national importance. This enabled him to win reelection easily in 1912. The Democratic Party as a whole was quite successful largely due to its identification with progressive programs. Also helpful was the continuing split among Republicans. Roosevelt, angry at his former friend Taft, bolted the Republican Party and formed his Progressive Party. With the opposition irrevocably divided, Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey, the Democratic nominee, captured the presidency, while his party also won substantial majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This strong Democratic control of Congress, combined with a masterful understanding of government, enabled Wilson to become a very effective president. In the first two years of his administration, he guided through Congress such major measures as the Underwood Tariff, the Federal Reserve Act, the Clayton Anti-trust Act, and the Federal Trade Commission Act.<sup>24</sup>

Of this important legislation, Owen aided most with the Federal Reserve Act, a far-reaching reform designed to change the monetary system of the country. This new law was necessary because the Aldrich-Vreeland Act of 1908 was inadequate. The continued inelasticity of the monetary supply and the still weak relationships between banks failed to meet the seasonal demands of a rapidly growing agricultural and industrial economy. The result was frequent tight credit and risk of periodic financial panics. Recognizing the need for change, President-elect Wilson moved quickly. In December, 1912, he generally approved a proposal by Representative Carter Glass of Virginia, who would soon become head of the new Banking and Currency Committee in the House of Representatives. The plan was actually coauthored by H. Parker Willis, Glass's aide

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*Owen (standing) before a joint session of the Oklahoma Legislature, January 22, 1913. He had just been reelected to the U.S. Senate (Courtesy OHS).*

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and a professor of political economics. It called for a decentralized banking system composed of at least twenty independent reserve banks and controlled by private bankers. Wilson liked the proposal, but insisted on adding a central board to oversee, yet not dominate, the regional reserve banks.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, Owen was developing ideas of his own. By March 18, 1913, when he was chosen head of the newly formed Committee of

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Banking and Currency in the Senate, Owen heard rumors about the Glass-Willis proposal. He quickly completed his own draft of a currency and banking bill. It called for a national currency board, which would oversee eight regional reserve banks. The distinctive feature of his plan was that the government would control the central banking board and assume liability for the currency. In May of 1913, yet another proposal appeared. Secretary of the Treasury William Gibbs McAdoo roughly outlined a plan to form a governmental central bank within the Treasury Department. It called for no regional reserve system and would have been simply a governmental bank without private control.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, by late May of 1913, three competing proposals lay before the administration. McAdoo, Glass, and Owen crusaded for their respective plans, seeking the opinions of governmental leaders and bankers throughout the country. Owen approached such experts as Paul Warburg, Frank Vanderlip, and Benjamin Strong—all prominent New York financiers. They generally rejected his plan. McAdoo's ideas were even less popular, and the Glass-Willis bill received only lukewarm support. Ultimately, the final decision rested with President Wilson. After considering all the plans, he selected the Glass-Willis bill on June 7, 1913, as the official plan of the administration.<sup>27</sup>

This was not the end of the struggle. Owen continued to insist that the Federal Reserve Board should be controlled by the government and that the currency should be the liability of the government. If bankers exclusively controlled the system, he argued, large banks in major cities would dominate and would continue to manipulate money to the detriment of small businesses. William Jennings Bryan, now secretary of state, allied with Owen and insisted on the same stipulations. To reach a final decision, Wilson met for several hours with Owen, McAdoo, and Glass at the White House on June 17. Glass pleaded for strong domination by bankers, while Owen argued for governmental control. Wilson delayed his decision and the following day announced his support for the Owen-Bryan point of view. A final draft of the proposal was quickly prepared. On June 19 it was released to the public. One week later Owen and Glass introduced identical measures in both houses of Congress.<sup>28</sup>

Now called the Glass-Owen bill, it was fundamentally the same as the original Glass-Willis proposal. But Wilson's addition of a central reserve board and the Owen-Bryan governmental control made the measure somewhat different than the original plan. It was a compromise, yet one that Wilson, Glass, Owen, and McAdoo were willing

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to support. They immediately set out to gain approval for this bill, and Owen contributed substantially to this promotion. On June 20 he addressed a gathering of the Virginia Bankers Association and explained the plan. Two days later at the Waldorf Hotel in New York City, he conferred with nationally prominent bankers, all members of the Currency Commission of the American Banker's Association. Later in June he again met with several of these same representatives at a White House conference that also included Wilson, Glass, and McAdoo. During this discussion, the financiers persuaded the sponsors of the bill to make several modifications, but none that changed it fundamentally. In these meetings, in his speeches, and in his numerous letters on the subject, Owen defended his two pet provisions—governmental control of the Federal Reserve Board and governmental backing of the currency.<sup>29</sup>

Despite strong propaganda from Owen and his allies, the bill underwent a hard-fought and frustrating struggle for passage. In the House of Representatives the strongest opposition came from various Southern and Western radicals who were former supporters of Bryan. To appease these rebels, Wilson promised to destroy the interlocking directorates of the money trust in the upcoming anti-trust legislation; then he compromised by allowing some rediscounting of short-term agriculture paper; and he threatened, begged, and bargained with the congressmen. After considerable delay, the measure passed the House of Representatives on September 18, 1913.<sup>30</sup>

The struggle for passage in the Senate was even more arduous. Strong opposition came in the Senate Banking and Currency Committee. In addition to Chairman Owen, only three pro-administration Democrats served on the committee. Three other Democrats (James A. Reed of Missouri, James A. O'Gorman of New York, and Gilbert M. Hitchcock of Nebraska) opposed the bill for both selfish and philosophical reasons. The remaining five Republicans on the committee likewise were generally unfriendly to the measure.<sup>31</sup>

The committee members who opposed the bill were so hostile and uncompromising that even Owen seemed to falter in his support of the bill. During a meeting on August 19, 1913, Owen hinted he might be willing to drop the provisions for the regional reserve banks. He also indicated the committee might eliminate a requirement that all national banks join the system. The next day, after newspapers in New York City gave alarming attention to his remarks, Owen reconfirmed emphatically his support for the bill. Yet on this same day, he again informed his committee that he was willing to compromise. He



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also disavowed authorship of the bill. Whether Owen was actually intimidated or was simply trying to manipulate his adversaries on the committee, his erratic behavior reflected the domination of the hostile majority on the committee.<sup>32</sup>

As the debate continued, Owen showed fewer signs of compromise, but he could do little to move his committee toward approval of the bill. In early September of 1913, hostile members of the committee insisted on time-consuming hearings, probably in an attempt to block progress. Their justification for the hearings was that numerous bankers had continually called for testimony but had been given only limited input into formulating the measure. Although Owen did not favor the hearings, the opposition prevailed. The result was a delay lasting two months.<sup>33</sup>

During the passing weeks Owen began holding daily evening conferences with committee members to iron out differences. Wilson's patience deteriorated as the debate lengthened. He followed closely the committee's progress and used all the power he could do pressure the rebellious Democrats on the committee. By early November of 1913, Senators Reed and O'Gorman finally fell into line. At this point, six Democrats were then supporting the original Glass bill, and they agreed to report it with some amendments to the full Senate. This amended plan was known as the Owen bill. But Hitchcock remained stubborn and allied with the Republicans on the committee to produce a counterproposal called the Hitchcock bill. In late November the committee submitted both reports without recommendation to the full Senate. After much fierce debating, the Senate finally passed the Owen bill on December 19. In the next few days, the remaining details were worked out in the House of Representatives-Senate conference, and the final version quickly passed both houses. Wilson promptly signed it on December 23. The president was delighted. He sent letters of congratulations to those most responsible for passage. In a note to Owen he wrote: "May I now extend to you my most sincere and heartfelt congratulations, and also tell you how sincerely I admire the way in which you have conducted a very difficult and trying piece of business?"<sup>34</sup> Owen, too, was pleased, although to him the new law was a compromise. He preferred even more governmental control and such provisions as bank guarantees. As with the Aldrich-Vreeland Act, he was willing to compromise provisions designed to protect the people for the sake of increased efficiency. In the years to come he continued to call for changes in the system, and many of his views were ultimately adopted.<sup>35</sup>

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With the most important legislation of Wilson's administration accomplished, Owen had more time to work on other matters. Despite his allegiance to Wilson on the Federal Reserve Act, Owen tended to be more radical than the president on other issues. Sometimes he seemed to be a Democratic version of an insurgent. In late 1913 Owen helped to form the National Popular Government League, a bipartisan group of prominent reformers who promoted progressive legislation throughout the country. Owen led this organization in opposition to Roger Sullivan, a conservative Democrat running for the United States Senate in Illinois in 1914. Sullivan, a long-time political boss, received the support of several regular Democrats, who were anxious to increase their majority in Congress. Owen believed Sullivan was a representative of large business interests and accused him of supporting Lorimer, the Republican whom Owen had opposed earlier. Along with a few other congressional leaders of both parties, Owen issued a manifesto condemning politicians who represented special interests. But he did not stop with this statement. He actually went to Illinois and campaigned against Sullivan and in favor of the candidate from the Progressive Party. It was highly unusual for politicians to oppose members of their own parties in another state. The *New York Times*, praising Owen, said: "Altogether the incident is unprecedented and startling; and, whether the voters are justified or not, proceeding from the motives it unquestionably does, shows a higher conception of public duty than is at all usual."<sup>36</sup>

Owen crusaded vigorously for other issues as well. Between 1914 and 1916, he introduced several bills to curb corruption and fraud in elections. His principal proposal was a bill designed to limit expenditures in elections, but this and his other measures failed. He also found little support for a bill to control the stock market. Actually written by Samuel Untermyer, a New York attorney, this plan sought full disclosure of information on stocks and proposed some governmental control over the market. There was strong opposition to this proposal, even within his own Banking and Currency Committee, which considered the bill. As with the Federal Reserve Act, Owen was willing to compromise and modify his plan, but because Wilson refused to endorse the measure, it failed. Years later, during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called upon Untermyer to write the Truth in Securities Act of 1933, which had many provisions identical to the earlier measure.<sup>37</sup>

Despite his somewhat nonconformist posture on several issues, Owen enthusiastically joined rank-and-file Democrats with strong

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support for many of Wilson's proposals. For instance, he led the fight in the Senate in one of the president's first important victories in foreign affairs—the controversy over Panama Canal tolls. Under Taft, Congress passed a law that exempted American ships from paying tolls on the Panama Canal in some cases. The British objected to this because it discriminated against other nations and violated the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty. Wilson decided to concede to the British point of view, and in 1914 he persuaded Democratic congressional leaders to support his position. Repeal of the exemption passed the House of Representatives on March 31. Owen, leading the fight in the Senate, introduced the measure there and then sponsored the repeal in the Inter-oceanic Canal Committee. Owen also went outside the Senate in his promotion of the bill. In an article published in the May issue of the *American Review of Reviews*, he argued that the standing of the United States with other nations was at stake. When the outcome seemed in doubt, Owen suggested Wilson take disciplinary action against Democrats who opposed the bill. Wilson rejected Owen's call for punishment, but managed to exert enough pressure to acquire passage.<sup>38</sup>

In another area of foreign affairs, World War I, Owen also helped Wilson. When the war began in the summer of 1914, Owen introduced a resolution requested by the administration to change the Aldrich-Vreeland Act. The Federal Reserve System was not yet in place, and conditions of panic existed as foreigners withdrew investments from the United States. Various emergency measures were taken, such as closing the stock market. In addition, Owen's resolution of July 31, made emergency currency more readily available.<sup>38</sup>

As the war continued, Owen followed Wilson's lead. In early 1915 when the president was emphasizing neutrality, Owen proposed a world army and navy to enforce international law. He also suggested that an international peace conference be held at The Hague, Netherlands, following the war. After relations with Germany deteriorated, Owen approved Wilson's program for preparedness and unveiled his own plan to strengthen the merchant marine of the United States. He proposed a United States Shipping Board, which would build and operate a government-controlled merchant marine. The fleet would offer services not adequately provided by private enterprise. During wartime these vessels would be incorporated into the United States naval fleet as ammunition boats, transports, hospital ships, and the like. His plan received some attention, but was never seriously considered.<sup>40</sup>

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Owen's strongest support for Wilson during the war came in the controversies surrounding German submarine warfare. The Germans decided in February of 1915 to use their U-boats to counteract the British blockade. On May 7, 1915, they sank the *Lusitania*, an unarmed British passenger liner, off the coast of Ireland. One hundred twenty-eight citizens of the United States died, prompting Wilson to make a strong protest. Owen called the act "illegal, inhuman, and barbarous," and advised Wilson to demand that the German government issue explicit orders to discontinue the violation of American rights. On the other hand, Owen also cautioned: "The ability of the United States to serve the human race during this gigantic international war would be better served by supreme self-control than by permitting the influence of passion to sweep us into sudden war."<sup>41</sup> After Wilson later issued a strong protest, Owen praised it and predicted the Germans would abide by international law. He was wrong. Several similar incidents followed, culminating in the *Sussex* Pledge of May 4, 1916. In this message the Germans agreed to stop their submarine warfare if the United States would demand that the British also respect neutral rights.<sup>42</sup>

The following peaceful months were welcome relief for Wilson, who was facing reelection. Here too, Owen gave valuable assistance to the president, particularly in the passage of two pieces of legislation—the Federal Farm Loan Act and the Keating-Owen Child Labor Law. These two enactments were part of Wilson's new liberal policies designed to placate progressives for the approaching election. Owen's role in the Federal Farm Loan Act was to steer it through the Banking and Currency Committee in the summer of 1916. Although Owen was not the author, the bill included several provisions he had been advocating since 1913. It established the Farm Loan Bank that extended credit to farm loan associations, which in turn provided long-term loans to farmers at low interest rates. At about the same time, Owen helped in the passage of the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act. He was cosponsor of this measure, which prohibited the interstate transportation of goods manufactured by child labor. Strong actions from President Wilson pushed the bill through Congress, but two years later, the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. Owen's role in both the child labor legislation and the Farm Loan Act, nonetheless, helped Wilson solidify progressive support for the election of 1916.<sup>43</sup>

Equally important was Owen's vigorous campaigning. He wrote several articles promoting Wilson in such publications as *Harper's Weekly* and *Everybody's Magazine*. He also traveled extensively mak-

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ing speeches praising him. The long list of accomplishments that Owen cited were impressive indeed. According to Owen, the Income Tax Amendment, Underwood Tariff Act, Clayton Anti-Trust Act, Federal Farm Loan Act, and other similar reforms were proof of the excellence of the Wilson administration. Like Wilson's other chief supporters, Owen emphasized that the president had kept the United States out of the war then raging in Europe. This argument for peace aided substantially in Wilson's successful reelection. He easily defeated the Republican nominee, Charles Evans Hughes.<sup>44</sup>

Several months after the election, Wilson again faced the menace of German aggression. In February, 1917, the Germans resumed their submarine warfare, and events soon rushed the United States into war. Owen backed Wilson in each instance. When Wilson broke diplomatic relations on February 3, 1917, Owen suggested: "In view of the armed submarine policy, however, there is only one course left."<sup>45</sup> Following the publication of the Zimmermann Note, in which Germany proposed an alliance with Mexico, Owen seemed resigned to war. Hypothesizing that if war came, he said: "I shall be reconciled in the belief that at least the United States has at last thrown her great powers on the side of democracy, on the side of liberty and justice and mercy and humanity."<sup>46</sup> This sounded very similar to Wilson's appeal when the United States declared war later in April.

Following the declaration of war, Owen took a leading role in the development of monetary policy. He introduced resolutions to amend the Federal Reserve Act and generally added constructive input to measures that financed the war. In most instances, he was quite helpful to Wilson. When the president unveiled the Fourteen Points—his goals for peace—Owen responded by offering a resolution in the Senate affirming the plan. This same support would continue when Owen later became one of the strongest proponents of the League of Nations. He had some disagreements with the president, however. In June of 1918 he became disgruntled when the War Department failed to locate an army camp in Oklahoma. He also sponsored a proposal in the Senate that would have established a Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. This was a threat to Wilson's leadership, and the president struggled to keep it from being established.<sup>47</sup>

While working hard on problems before and during the war, Owen did not ignore his home state in his second term. Indian affairs continued to occupy much of his time. Particularly disturbing was a report made in 1912 by the attorney for the Creek tribe, M. L. Mott. It

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revealed alarming graft in the old Creek Nation. Lawyers were charging huge fees for handling estates of Indian minors whose allotments were still restricted. The attorneys' fees were ten times larger than those charged for handling estates of white children. The revelation attracted national attention, and the congressional delegation from Oklahoma was embarrassed. Writing to Governor Lee Cruce, Owen said: "Obviously the remedy is in your hands, as Governor of the State, to see that the Indian children are protected."<sup>48</sup> The entire delegation from Oklahoma later sent Cruce several letters and telegrams warning that they would have trouble representing Oklahoma in Indian affairs if the problem was not solved. Owen, along with the others, preferred state control of the situation, but no reforms resulted, and the matter simply died away.<sup>49</sup>

Also during his second term, Owen took strong interest in protecting the independent oil companies in Oklahoma, reconfirming his interest in that segment of the state's economy. On several occasions he attacked Standard Oil Company for stifling competition, and he periodically advocated investigations of the industry to determine if prices were being fixed. In the spring of 1914 he became particularly aggravated over the actions of the Magnolia Pipe Line Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil. As the major outlet for oil from the new Healdton field in south-central Oklahoma, this company used its control to dictate low prices for the oil. Owen informed federal agencies of the problem and soon introduced a resolution for governmental ownership of pipelines. About the same time Owen also befriended Theodore N. Barnsdall, an independent oil man who controlled several subleases in Osage County and who was deeply in debt to the Rockefeller interests. With his subleases due to expire in 1916, Barnsdall wanted to regain control of the 334,000 acres that he had developed. Arguing that Standard Oil might gain control of Barnsdall's company, Owen proposed an unsuccessful measure that would have given Barnsdall a renewal.<sup>50</sup>

By the end of his second term, most Oklahomans believed Owen had represented them well. He easily won reelection in 1918. Other members of his party throughout the nation were not as fortunate. Although the war was being successfully brought to an end, the Democrats lost control of both houses of Congress. When Owen returned to the capital, he was part of the minority again.<sup>51</sup>

This new situation was particularly frustrating for him in dealing with monetary matters because he was no longer chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee. This doomed any real prospect of

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getting approval for a favorite proposal, the establishment of a Federal Reserve Foreign Bank. This system was to consist of foreign branch banks that would establish United States dollars at par with other currency. Traders could go to the banks to exchange their currency at a set rate, regardless of fluctuations within countries. The bank would take any loss on the exchange. Owen believed this would make the dollar the means of international commerce and would cause New York City to become the financial center of the world. Despite the fact that Owen spent several weeks in Europe studying the possibilities of his proposed bill in 1919, the measure failed to attract any significant support. Owen likewise had little effect when he demanded that the Federal Reserve Banks loosen credit to meet the needs of business following the war.<sup>52</sup>

Owen's newly weakened position in the Senate seemed like a small problem in comparison to President Wilson's struggle for United States membership in the League of Nations. Based on one of the president's Fourteen Points, this international organization was not a new idea, but it was extremely controversial. Many senators feared that the League of Nations would commit the United States to decisions that would compromise the United States Constitution and abrogate the Monroe Doctrine. Owen disagreed with this assessment. He believed the League of Nations would be a deterrent to war and would forestall any future arms race. Curiously, he also injected his domestic progressive philosophy into the proposal, characterizing it as an opportunity to establish "universal people's rule."<sup>53</sup>

After the war Wilson decided to go to Europe to oversee the formulation of the peace treaty. After arriving in Versailles, France, early in 1919, he soon found that many of his idealistic Fourteen Points were unattainable, except for the League of Nations, which he uncompromisingly insisted should be included in the final treaty. Upon Wilson's return, the Senate debated the issue, and Owen was one of the strongest defenders of the League of Nations. In a lengthy speech delivered on February 26, Owen discussed the covenant of the League of Nations section by section. He realized that opponents strongly objected to Article X, which committed all member nations to take action against any country that started a war. This did not disturb Owen; in fact, he insisted that it was a crucial necessity. He proposed the insertion, nevertheless, of a minor amendment that in part said: "Nothing contained in the instrument itself should be construed as granting any rights to the League over the internal affairs of member nations."<sup>54</sup>

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Republican senators attacked the League of Nations fiercely in its original form. Anticipating this opposition, Wilson had purposely tied provisions covering the League of Nations to the entire treaty so the Senate would not dare reject it. Wilson's bitter rival, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, responded with equal defiance. Lodge stalled the treaty by opening hearings on the bill when it reached his Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Owen attacked Lodge for his opposition, accusing him of blocking approval simply to enhance the position of Republicans. This was obviously true, Owen asserted, because Lodge actually had advocated an international organization similar to the League of Nations as late as 1915. Concerning Lodge's fears that other nations would conspire to destroy American independence, Owen replied: "The Senator is seeing ghosts."<sup>55</sup>

President Wilson decided to take the issue to the people. While on a speaking tour, he collapsed at Pueblo, Colorado, on September 25, 1919, and later suffered a paralyzing stroke. Directing the crusade for ratification from his sickbed in the White House, Wilson stubbornly ordered Democrats to support the treaty only if the covenant was left in its original form. No reservations or amendments would be allowed. When the matter came to a vote on November 19, Owen obeyed his leader and voted against the version of the treaty with reservations. In a later vote that day, however, he switched to support the treaty with Lodge's amendments. Finally, when the treaty without reservation was considered, Owen voted yes, but it was defeated.<sup>56</sup>

The Democrats refused to submit and in the following months worked to bring the matter to another vote. Willing to compromise to save the League of Nations, Owen issued a call for a bipartisan conference in January of 1920. Five Democrats and four Republicans joined in the meetings and tried to effect a compromise. Surprisingly, Lodge was one of the participants. Even more startling, on January 23, 1920, he seemed close to agreeing with the Democrats in the conference. William H. Borah, Republican senator from Idaho and staunchly anti-League of Nations, learned of the agreement and bullied Lodge into discontinuing his discussions.<sup>57</sup>

The failure of Owen's bipartisan meetings dashed the one real hope for passage. In March as another vote approached, Wilson commanded his followers again not to submit to reservations, especially to any changes in Article X. When the treaty with reservations came to a vote later that month, enough Democrats voted against it to



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*Always a fastidious dresser, Owen was seen here in 1920 when he was a candidate for President (Courtesy Oklahoma Publishing Company).*

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defeat it. Owen and several other compromising Democrats deserted Wilson and voted for approval of the treaty with reservations. To Owen, any participation in the League of Nations was better than none.<sup>58</sup>

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In taking this stand on the League of Nations, Owen was embracing the position of former Secretary of State Bryan, a potentially valuable ally for someone seeking the presidency. Owen was one of those aspiring to be president, and many of his activities were geared at gaining him the Democratic nomination for 1920. His campaign opened at McAlester, Oklahoma, on May 18, 1919, when the Owen for President Club was formed. Governor James B. A. Robertson was president of the organization, while all former governors also became honorary officers. Through this club, Owen widely publicized his accomplishments, emphasizing his work on the Federal Reserve Act, the Farm Loan Act, the Child Labor Act, and other legislation. He also campaigned on such new proposals as membership in the League of Nations, repeal of the excess profits tax imposed during the war, and formation of a Federal Reserve Foreign Bank.<sup>59</sup>

Running on these issues, Owen toured several states in the spring of 1920 and received the unimpassioned support of Bryan, who accompanied him on his campaign in some Western states. Owen gained few other important endorsements. Because no front-runner emerged, most delegates supported their own favorite sons and bypassed Owen. He had little success at San Francisco, where the convention was held. Bryan's lukewarm approval was ineffective as the old leader had lost much of his influence with the party. During several days of deadlocked voting, Owen picked up little backing outside of the Oklahoma and Nebraska delegations, and the convention finally turned to Ohio's Governor James M. Cox on the forty-fourth ballot.<sup>60</sup>

Following this disappointment, Owen returned to his role as senator. He faced grim prospects, however, because the Republicans won a strong majority of congressional seats when Cox lost to Warren G. Harding. With his party weakened, and with the progressive movement stymied by Harding's "return to normalcy," Owen seemed to lose interest in his job. He spent much of the remainder of his third term criticizing the high discount rates and other policies of the Federal Reserve Board. He also was preoccupied with the question of who caused World War I. After once reading secret documents released by the Russian Bolsheviks and others, Owen concluded that imperialistic Russian designs for hegemony over Eastern Europe forced Germany to turn to militarism. He revealed his findings before the Senate in December, 1923. Many Oklahomans reacted negatively to this revelation that the hated "Huns" were not entirely at fault for the war.<sup>61</sup>

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Owen's opponents in Oklahoma were pleased by his new controversial position on war guilt because they believed it would hurt him with the electorate. This did not matter, for in February, 1924, Owen announced that he would not seek reelection. Many newspapers reacted with surprise at his retirement, but others indicated it was a wise choice due to Owen's apparent political apathy. Retiring on March 4, 1925, at sixty-eight years of age, he determined to stay busy.<sup>62</sup>

Owen remained in Washington, D. C., opened a law practice, and reminisced frequently about past accomplishments. During the 1920s and 1930s, he became sometimes obsessed with the controversy over who authored the Federal Reserve Act. In major books, Glass, Willis, and several other political and financial leaders all claimed they were the principal architects. Most interested people eventually believed Glass was the principal author because he truly deserved a large share of the credit and because he remained in the public limelight. This became a bitter disappointment for Owen. He periodically corresponded with old colleagues, who usually soothed his ego by agreeing that he deserved the greater credit.<sup>63</sup>

Owen did not spend all of his time mulling over this problem, for he remained interested in national political issues. In 1928 he made headlines across the country when he became the first prominent Democrat to bolt the party in opposition to its presidential nominee, Alfred E. Smith of New York City. Owen disliked Smith's strong anti-prohibition position and his connections with the Tammany political machine; he gave his support, therefore, to the victorious Republican Herbert Hoover. Owen soon regretted his decision, for when the depression began, Hoover supported a program of tight credit in the Federal Reserve System. Owen so disliked this policy that he repented for his betrayal of his party and strongly endorsed Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt for president in 1932. After Roosevelt assumed office and implemented liberal monetary policies, like abolishing the gold standard, Owen praised his actions and enthusiastically endorsed the New Deal. Owen later turned critic when Roosevelt began emphasizing costly and bureaucratic public works projects instead of implementing inflationary policies. For Owen, the solution to the depression was so simple: stimulate commerce through controlled inflation. He continued to support the New Deal, but constantly suggested ways to improve it.<sup>64</sup>

By the late 1930s Owen's health began failing, and he became almost totally blind. This did not deter him from giving advice to

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*Four Senators from Oklahoma, left to right: Josh Lee, T.P. Gore, Robert L. Owen, and Elmer Thomas (Courtesy OHS).*

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governmental officials. With World War II approaching, he sent several letters advising the Secretary of State on preparedness and neutrality. As the war was ending, Owen set out to invent a global alphabet that would provide a uniform writing system for several languages. It was designed for diplomats in the crucial post-war era. Owen was in his late eighties when he devised the alphabet.<sup>65</sup>

Owen's wife died in October, 1946, and his own health continued to deteriorate. In early July, 1947, he underwent prostate surgery. He never fully recovered, and died on July 19. His death brought a wave of eulogies in the newspapers of Oklahoma, and once again the press outlined his career. The *Daily Oklahoman* was representative of the comments on his passing. Referring to him as Oklahoma's best asset in early statehood, the newspaper said: "The state was young and it had things to learn, but it sent to the senate a veritable Chesterfield, who met in every detail the requirements of a scholar and a gentleman."<sup>66</sup>

Owen's refined ability and his prestigious contributions at the

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national level proved that Oklahomans chose the proper man for their first senator. Few other political leaders from the state have risen to a like degree of prominence, and few have accomplished achievements of such national importance. At the same time, Owen's representation of Oklahoma reflected the attitudes and desires of its people. When he provided pork barrel benefits, when he protected independent oil men, and when he pushed for removal of restrictions on Indian lands, he was supporting his constituents' strong desire to develop the state economically.

Owen was not promoting and protecting Oklahoma's business interests only to please home state voters, for it was his own desire as well. This conflicted with Owen's radical progressivism at the national level. His conservative background as a businessman, banker, and rancher, likewise, contradicted his liberal tendencies. This inconsistency is not as irrational as it seems. All politicians are somewhat provincial because they must represent the sometimes narrow interests of their constituents. Also many progressives of the period had a similar pro-business attitude locally but a liberal posture nationally. Owen thus resented governmental restrictions and interference in Oklahoma, but believed the federal government could regulate villains elsewhere. Federal officials could keep Standard Oil of New Jersey from controlling Oklahoma's independent petroleum producers, and the national government could restrain Wall Street

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*Planting of a Sweet Gum tree to the memory of Senator Owen, April 16, 1949. The site was just north of the National Capitol Building (Courtesy OHS).*

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bankers from manipulating the monetary supply at the expense of local businessmen and bankers. It was consistent, therefore, for Owen to be pro-business for Oklahoma but pro-regulation for national monopolies. With a clear conscience, he could openly promote Oklahoma corporations in the Senate yet go to Illinois to campaign against Sullivan for being unduly influenced by giant Chicago businesses.

Particularly in his first term, Owen promoted popular issues that many people believed would wrest control of the government from the monopolist and place it in the hands of the common man. Owen's fervent appeal for such action was not surprising because Oklahomans elected him at the peak of progressive sentiment. The movement, however, served mostly as a catalyst for a more subtle and fundamental trend of politics: the striving for efficiency. In areas such as monetary affairs, Owen compromised away reforms designed to increase voters' control over government. He often did so in favor of legislation that promised to increase efficiency in society and government.

Much to the dismay of staunch Wilsonians, Owen also was willing to compromise on the League of Nations. Characteristically he sought a solution that would salvage some type of involvement in the international organization. Owen stood more firmly with the president on several other very important issues. His assistance with the Federal Reserve Act, repeal of the Panama Canal tolls, the campaign of 1916, and other major concerns, made the Oklahoman one of Wilson's most stalwart allies in the Senate.

Owen probably hoped his prestige would catapult him into the presidency, but it did not, even with the support of his old friend Bryan. Perhaps his national stature was simply not large enough, or perhaps his plan for the presidency did not fit the timing of events. Owen was likewise disappointed that most of the public did not recognize him as the principal author of the Federal Reserve Act. He at least deserved much credit for it and his many other accomplishments. If Owen failed to live up to the expectations of his own ambition, he was in any case an industrious and productive United States senator of the first order.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; S. Allen Chambers, Jr., *Point of Honor: Its Past and Its Potential* (Lynchburg, Virginia: Lynchburg Historical Society, 1967), pp. 10–12; O. P. Sturm, "Oklahoma's Accomplished Senator," *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine*, Vol. V, No. 3 (November, 1907), pp. 35, 38; Narcissa Owen, *Memoirs of Narcissa Owen, 1831–1907* (Washington: Author, 1907), pp. 85–87.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87; *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), March 15, 1907, p. 6; Wyatt W. Belcher, "Political Leadership of Robert L. Owen," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (Winter, 1953–1954), p. 363; United States Department of the Interior, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1887* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 112.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Oklahoman*, March 15, 1907, p. 6; *Fort Smith Elevator*, November 22, 1889, p. 2; *New York Times*, June 10, 1893, p. 15, May 1, 1906, p. 5; B. B. Chapman, "Cherokee Allotments in the Outlet," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. LIX, No. 4 (Winter 1981–1982), pp. 404, 412–18.

<sup>5</sup> Grant Foreman, *Robert Latham Owen* (Muskogee, Oklahoma: First National Bank and Trust Company, 1947), pp. 5, 10–11; *Daily Oklahoman*, March 15, 1907, p. 6; *Oklahoma State Capital* (Guthrie), September 15, 1907, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Wyatt W. Belcher, "The Political Theory of Robert L. Owen" (Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1932), pp. 17–18.

<sup>7</sup> Amos Maxwell, "The Sequoyah Convention," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1950), pp. 170, 178; C. M. Allen, *The Sequoyah Movement* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Company, 1925), pp. 43, 79; *Muskogee Phoenix*, June 26, 1895, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Daily Oklahoman*, March 15, 1907, p. 6; Danney Goble, *Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), pp. 201, 214–18; Jimmie Lewis Franklin, *Born Sober: Prohibition in Oklahoma, 1907–1959* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), pp. 18–19; Lousie Boyd James, "The Woman Suffrage Issue in the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. LVI, No. 4 (Winter, 1978–1979), pp. 380–81; *Muskogee Phoenix*, February 16, 197, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Elmer Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen* (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1938), pp. 18–19; *Daily Oklahoman*, March 15, 1907, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>11</sup> George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America, 1900–1912* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), pp. 211–12; Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 40, 42, 51, 117; David Sarasohn, "The Democratic Surge, 1905–1912: Forging a Progressive Majority" (Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976), pp. 8–13.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900–1916* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp. 153–57; Robert H. Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 73–74.

<sup>13</sup> *Washington Times*, February 25, 1908, pp. 1–2.

<sup>14</sup> Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement*, pp. 73–74; Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900–1916*, pp. 157–58; *Vinita Leader*, July 2, 1908, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Belcher, "The Political Theory of Robert L. Owen," p. 21; *New York Times*, March 1, 1908, section 5, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Robert L. Owen, "The Restoration of the Popular Rule: The Greatest of All Non-Partisan Issues," *Arena*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 223 (June, 1908), pp. 643–50; Belcher,

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"The Political Theory of Robert L. Owen," pp. 21–22.

<sup>17</sup> Sarasohn, "The Democratic Surge, 1905–1912: Forging A Progressive Majority," pp. 117–20, 136–47.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127–36; *Daily Oklahoman*, June 1, 1909, p. 6; *Congressional Record*, 61st Congress, 1st session, pp. 3823–24.

<sup>19</sup> *New York Times*, May 16, 1910, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> William Jay Schieffelin, "Work of the Committee of One Hundred on National Health," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2 (March, 1911), pp. 77–78, 84–86; United States Senate, 61st Congress, 2nd Session, *Document 637* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 9, 53; James A. Tobey, *The National Government and Public Health* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1926), pp. 377–79.

<sup>21</sup> Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, p. 40; George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1946), pp. 168–69; *Congressional Record*, 61st Congress, 3rd Session, p. 668; *New York Times*, January 5, 1911, p. 5; *Daily Oklahoman*, March 23, 1911, p. 1; Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 170–71.

<sup>22</sup> Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 42–47; John Temple Graves, "Owen of Oklahoma," *World Today*, Vol. XXI, No. 9 (March, 1912), pp. 1928–31; *Daily Oklahoman*, March 22, 1911, p. 6, March 15, 1911, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Robert L. Owen to Charles N. Haskell, March 31, 1909, Correspondence Files, Charles N. Haskell Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Lee Cruce to Robert L. Owen, February 4, 1911, Robert L. Owen to Lee Cruce, May 1, 1911, Correspondence Files, Governor Lee Cruce Collection, Archives and Records Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; *Congressional Record*, 60th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 3250–51, 6382, 7017, 60th Congress, 2nd session, pp. 1014, 1661, 2561; Robert L. Owen, *A Brief Report of Work Done During the 61st Congress* (n.p., 1911), pp. 7–8; *Congressional Record*, 60th Congress, 1st Session, p. 4960; Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 24–25; Owen, *A Brief Report of Work Done During the 61st Congress*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, p. 21; Sarasohn, "The Democratic Surge, 1905–1912: Forging a Progressive Majority," pp. 274–77, 293.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 199–200, 203–204.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207–209; Robert L. Owen to Samuel Untermyer, May 14, 1927, in Samuel Untermyer, *Who is Entitled to the Credit for the Federal Reserve Act? An Answer to Senator Carter Glass* (New York: n. p., 1927), pp. 10–11.

<sup>27</sup> Paul M. Warburg, *The Federal Reserve System: Its Origin and Growth: Reflections and Recollections* (2 vols., New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), Vol. I, p. 97; Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement*, p. 134; Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, p. 210.

<sup>28</sup> Robert L. Owen, *The Federal-Reserve Act* (New York: Century Company, 1919), pp. 67, 73–76; Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, pp. 210–13.

<sup>29</sup> Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement*, p. 134; *New York Times*, June 22, 1913, Section 2, p. 1, June 23, 1913, p. 1; United States Senate, 63rd Congress, 1st Session, *Document 144* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 3–5; Robert L. Owen, "The Federal Reserve Bank Bill," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (October, 1913), pp. 4–7; Robert L. Owen, "The Origin, Plan and Purpose of the Currency Bill," *North American Review*, Vol. CXCVIII, No. 695 (October, 1913), pp. 565, 567.

<sup>30</sup> Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, pp. 218, 221–22, 229.



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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228

<sup>32</sup> *New York Times*, August 20, 1913, p. 1; Ellen Axson Wilson to Woodrow Wilson, August 30, 1913, Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (41 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966–1983), Vol. XXVIII, p. 200; *New York Times*, August 21, 1913, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, p. 228; *New York Times*, September 1, 1913, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Woodrow Wilson to Robert Latham Owen, December 23, 1913, Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. XXIX, p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Henry F. Hollis to Woodrow Wilson, October 17, 1913, Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 414–15; Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, pp. 228–31, 234–38; J. Laurence Laughlin, *The Federal Reserve Act: Its Origin and Problems* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1933), pp. 167–69; *Remarks of George H. Clay and W. W. Keeler at Ceremonies Dedicating a Memorial to Senator Robert Latham Owen* (Tahlequah, Oklahoma: Northeastern State College, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Mangum Weekly Star*, May 22, 1913, p. 4; Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, p. 7; *New York Times*, October 9, 1914, p. 6, October 22, 1914, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1914, Section 2, p. 11, September 7, 1916, pp. 1, 3, June 26, 1914, p. 15; Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, p. 426.

<sup>38</sup> Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, pp. 304–306, 312; *New York Times*, March 14, 1914, p. 3; Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 150–51; Robert L. Owen, "Why the Panama Tolls Exemption Should Be Repealed," *American Review of Reviews*, Vol. XLIX, no. 5 (May, 1914), p. 560; *New York Times*, April 2, 1914, p. 2; Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, p. 313.

<sup>39</sup> Robert L. Owen to Samuel Untermyer, May 14, 1927, in Untermyer, *Who is Entitled to the Credit for the Federal Reserve Act? An Answer to Senator Carter Glass*, p. 9; Martin H. Lutter, "Oklahoma and the World War, 1914–1917: A Study in Public Opinion" (Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1961), p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> *New York Times*, January 6, 1915, p. 5; Lutter, "Oklahoma and the World War, 1914–1917: A Study in Public Opinion," pp. 239–42; Robert L. Owen, "What Congress Should Do to Develop an American Mercantile Marine," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (October, 1915), pp. 49–50, 58–60.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 4, May 15, 1915, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, p. 76; Belcher, "The Political Theory of Robert L. Owen," pp. 35–36; Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910–1917* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), pp. 226–27.

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<sup>45</sup> *Daily Oklahoman*, February 4, 1917, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Congressional Record*, 64th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 5012.

<sup>47</sup> Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 129–34; *New York Times*, February 1, 1918, p. 3; Seward W. Livermore, *Woodrow Wilson and the War Congress, 1916–18* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), pp. 52–53.

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<sup>50</sup> Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 106–107; Robert L. Owen to Lee Cruce, April 7, 1914, Correspondence Files, Cruce Collection, Archives and Records Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 33–34.

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<sup>52</sup> Robert L. Owen, "Observations on Foreign Exchange," *American Economic Review*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (March, 1919), Supplement, pp. 154–55; *New York Times*, December 8, 1918, p. 18; Keso, *The Senatorial Career of Robert Latham Owen*, pp. 135–36, 139; *Remarks of George H. Clay and W. W. Keeler at Ceremonies Dedicating a Memorial to Senator Robert Latham Owen*, p. 14.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, February 27, 1919, p. 3; *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 3rd Session, pp. 4320–25.

<sup>55</sup> *New York Times*, August 31, 1919, Section 4, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Congressional Record* 66th Congress, 1st Session pp. 8786, 8802–8803.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1945), pp. 229–31.

<sup>58</sup> *Congressional Record*, 66th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 4599.

<sup>59</sup> *New York Times*, May 19, 1919, p. 18; *Senator Owen for President* (Oklahoma City: Owen for President Clubs of Oklahoma, 1920), pp. 3, 9–12; Robert L. Owen, *The Political Creed of Robert L. Owen* (Washington: n. p., 1920), n. p.

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<sup>63</sup> Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900–1916*, pp. 242–43; W. E. Chilton, Sr., to Robert L. Owen, September 17, 1937, Correspondence File, Robert L. Owen Collection, Archives Division, Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1947, p. 4; *Lynchburg News*, July 20, 1947, p. 1; *Daily Oklahoman*, July 22, 1947, p. 10.