

THE JOHN LIND PAPERS¹

The life of John Lind spans a period of time antedating by five years the beginning of the Civil War and postdating by twelve years the close of the World War. His public career took its inception in the closing years of the reconstruction period, when Hayes was president, and terminated in the years of readjustment following the World War. His papers record the fortunes of an emigrant boy caught in the torrent of forces that brought hundreds of thousands of Swedes to a country which many of them, in flights of fancy, thought of as the "Land of Canaan." John Lind became successively schoolteacher, lawyer, county superintendent of schools, receiver of public moneys in a federal land office, congressman, governor, member of the board of regents of the University of Minnesota, and diplomat. Whether in office or out of office, his influence counted heavily in the inner councils of political parties; and throughout his career he was an oracle of progressive and independent thought.

The Lind Papers are important in themselves. But just as it is true that no man liveth unto himself, so is it also true that a man's personal papers become even more significant when they become a part of a manuscript collection of an institution like the Minnesota Historical Society.

¹ This paper was read by Dr. Stephenson at the meeting of the executive council of the Minnesota Historical Society on April 13, 1936. Mrs. John Lind presented the main group of her husband's papers early in January. Her gift consisted of twelve boxes and eight volumes of material, covering the years from 1870 to 1933. A smaller group of Lind Papers, which included one box and three volumes, had been presented in 1900 by Governor Lind himself. The materials comprised in the earlier gift related mostly to his duties and experiences as quartermaster of the Twelfth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry in the Spanish-American War and to the Lind Saddle Trail in Itasca State Park. The general importance of the large collection now presented by Mrs. Lind is brought out in Dr. Stephenson's paper. As a supplement to his appraisal, however, it may be noted that Governor Lind's correspondence includes let-

From the Lind Papers emerges a personality who not only reacted to an environment during a dynamic period of American history but who also swerved the course of events, sometimes slightly and sometimes powerfully. From these documents, read in the light of other material, including newspapers and manuscripts that have been and will be collected, emerges the story of a western commonwealth, with a society in the process of formation.

When the Lind family settled in Goodhue County in 1868, Minnesota was still a frontier state. From almost every state in the Union, and from Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Canada, came hardy pioneers to take homestead and pre-emption claims; the forest was falling before the onslaughts of the ax; streams carried logs to Stillwater and Minneapolis; the "iron horse," the steamboat, and the oxcart supplied flour mills with grist; churches and schoolhouses were being erected. The memory of the Sioux Outbreak was a grim reminder of the youthfulness of the state.

The Lind Papers reveal a man with an Old World background who became intensely American. Only a few letters suggest serious difficulty in orienting himself in the environment of the adopted country. Lind was, however, conscious of his Swedish origin; and during the last twenty years of his life he wrote and received letters that betray the awakening of this latent consciousness into a lively and

ters from a very large number of prominent persons both within and outside the state of Minnesota. Among Minnesotans who are thus represented in the collection, in addition to those mentioned by Dr. Stephenson, are, for example, Tams Bixby, Cushman K. Davis, Thomas D. O'Brien, Cass Gilbert, William C. Edgar, Frank B. Kellogg, Pierce Butler, Magnus Johnson, William Watts Folwell, James J. Hill, Charles A. Towne, Frank A. Day, Alexander P. Anderson, William J. Mayo, Henrik Shipstead, George E. Vincent, and Walter H. Newton. Dr. Stephenson mentions some of the distinguished men outside the state with whom Lind corresponded. To that list may be added such names as David Starr Jordan, Samuel Untermeyer, William E. Borah, J. J. Slade, Nelson O'Shaughnessy, Arnold Shanklin, William W. Canada, Lincoln Steffens, Clinton E. MacEachran, William Bayard Hale, and Loring Olmsted. *Ed.*

deep study of the history of his native land and of the contribution of the Swedish stock to the composite population of his adopted state and country.

During the years of Lind's candidacy for public office there were many speculations and assertions in the press with reference to the so-called Swedish vote. His surprisingly large vote in 1896 and his election in 1898 were at the time universally attributed to defection from the Republican party of voters of Swedish blood. In other words, it was said that Lind's countrymen were more loyal to their nationality than they were to the Republican party.

Although the Lind Papers in themselves do not present a conclusive answer to this interesting and important phase of the political history of Minnesota, they do furnish the key to the solution of the problem. Unlike his distinguished adversary, Knute Nelson, who played a shrewd game in his campaigns to ensnare the Scandinavian vote, John Lind did not mount the steed of racial loyalty and antipathy in order to ride into the promised land of political patronage. His letters and speeches show that he was too independent and contentious to truckle and buckle to this interest and that. He was throughout his life in reality a political orphan—a natural independent. There is not a single document bearing his handwriting to indicate that he even thought of making use of a church or a lodge to further his political ambitions. This is not to say, however, that certain politicians and newspapers who supported him did not resort to every known political device to route the opposition.

It has been somewhat of a puzzle why during the last thirty-five years the people of Minnesota have elected three Democratic governors and one Farmer-Labor governor and have saddled them with Republican or conservative legislatures. Perhaps the puzzle will never be completely solved; but the solution appears easier after perusing the Lind Papers. Without ignoring the factor of nationality, it seems clear that Lind came close to victory in 1896, triumphed in

1898, and was elected but counted out in 1900 not because he was a Swede, but because discord within the ranks of the Republican party caused a sufficient number of voters to mark their ballots for a man who had won the reputation of being fearless, honest, and independent of ring dictation and machine politics. Election statistics show that in the eighties and nineties Republican candidates for the governorship won by narrow margins; and when various disaffected and disgruntled elements, including Alliance men, Populists, Silver Republicans, and Democrats, fused and united on a candidate who publicly declared himself a political orphan, the miracle of electing a governor who did not wear the Republican badge was worked.

The Nelson-Merriam alliance, the Merriam-Clough entente, the Washburn-Nelson senatorial contest, the influence of railways and other corporations, and a number of other political developments and intrigues are either hinted at or clarified by the Lind Papers. For the student of Minnesota history, however, the chief value of the collection consists in its contribution toward an understanding of the agrarian movements beginning with the Farmers' Alliance, through Populism, and into the Nonpartisan League and the Farmer-Labor party.

From 1886, when Lind was elected to Congress as a Republican, down to 1896, when he bolted and reluctantly accepted the gubernatorial nomination tendered him by Democrats, Populists, and Silver Republicans, his papers represent him as a legislator and politician consciously and unconsciously influenced by the Alliance and by Populism. Profoundly disturbed by the policies of the Harrison administration and the trend of state politics in general—and by the course of the Merriam administration in particular—Lind sought to keep within the Republican fold voters who were tempted to try the panaceas offered by the Alliance and the Populist party. Although Lind voted for tariff and financial measures sponsored by Republican lead-

ership in Congress, and publicly defended them after they became laws, his correspondence takes us behind the scenes to reveal the mounting dissatisfaction with old-line leadership in both major parties, which culminated in the exciting "educational" campaign of 1896. From that epochal year through the years that remained to him, Lind was one of the leading exponents of Bryanism in the Northwest.

Though Lind did not exactly pose as a representative of organized labor, he recommended and supported prominent labor leaders for appointment to office; and in advocating and obtaining the passage of federal legislation endorsed by the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor, he won the gratitude of those organizations. As governor, his appointments and recommendations were in line with his record in Congress.

It was Lind's fortune to be a member of the board of regents of the University of Minnesota during the years when the institution inaugurated a program of expansion and building almost unprecedented in the history of higher education. Letters and mimeographed, typewritten, and printed reports bear witness to Lind's activity as president of the board in acquiring property to enlarge the campus and in planning for a greater and larger university.

Lind's part in conserving the resources of his state for the enjoyment and profit of future generations will not be overlooked by historians, who will find in his papers evidence of his interest in many forward-looking projects from early manhood down to the last months of his life. He corresponded with members of Congress, governors, captains of industry, and others in the interest of the Indians, state and national parks, timber reserves, and the preservation of wild life.

During the World War Lind was for a time a member of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety. This body was called upon to deal with almost every conceivable kind of disloyalty and alleged disloyalty. During the closing weeks

of the war Minnesota was the battleground of one of the most exciting and acrimonious political campaigns in its history. The intense bitterness of the campaign is partly explained by the fact that the Nonpartisan League was drawn up in battle formation against a coalition of Republicans and Democrats, who sought to stem the tide of what they conceived to be a radical revolt. Both before and after his resignation from the commission, Lind played the role of a mediator who tried to conciliate and to induce sanity and discretion. In perspective, the hectic years from 1917 to 1920 cast long shadows over the political contests that follow; and when the time is ripe to write the story of the Nonpartisan League and the Farmer-Labor party, the historian will not overlook the Lind Papers. The day will come when the elder Lindbergh will have a biography that will paint the man against a background of twenty-five years of agrarian agitation in which for a time Lind was one of the principal figures. The Lind Papers, together with the papers of men like Knute Nelson, Ignatius Donnelly, Charles A. Lindbergh, James Manahan, and others, provide a unique opportunity for the student of third-party movements in Minnesota and the Northwest.

It seems a peculiar turn of fortune that in the years to come students of diplomatic history will consult the manuscript collection of the Minnesota Historical Society for material on a dramatic chapter in the history of the relations between the United States and Mexico. When the present writer considered the possibility of preparing the biography of John Lind, he expected to find in the Lind Papers a fairly complete collection of dispatches and letters that passed between the department of state and President Wilson's personal representative, who spent seven long months of "watchful waiting" in Vera Cruz. He was not disappointed. Lind kept copies of practically every letter and telegram that he dispatched or received; but it was a surprise to find a voluminous correspondence that continued

for over two years after he had severed his official relations with the department of state.

For more than two years Lind was one of the most trusted advisers of the legal representative of the Carranza government in Washington, Judge Charles A. Douglas. The ups and downs of the path to the recognition of the Carranza government may be traced in Lind's correspondence with Douglas, Carranza, Arredondo, Zubaran, Cabrera, Bryan, Lansing, Colonel House, and Woodrow Wilson, not to mention many other men in both countries who were interested in the Carranzista cause. Interesting angles to this diplomatic episode, which had repercussions in the presidential campaign of 1916, are illuminated in the Lind Papers.

The Minnesota Historical Society is to be congratulated upon the acquisition of this, in some respects unique, collection of manuscripts and documents and also upon having facilities and a staff that make it possible to examine them under most favorable conditions.

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