

1-1-1926

New Mexico in the Great War, I: The Breaking of the Storm

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Recommended Citation

Bloom, Lansing B.. "New Mexico in the Great War, I: The Breaking of the Storm." *New Mexico Historical Review* 1, 1 (2021). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol1/iss1/2>

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NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW

Vol. I

January, 1926

No. 1

NEW MEXICO IN THE GREAT WAR

I The Breaking of the Storm

The winter months of 1916-1917 marked the lull before that storm which was to involve the United States in its violence and destructiveness.

No part of the United States was farther removed from the storm center than was the State of New Mexico. A great inland commonwealth on the watershed of the continent, the isolation of three centuries still obtained in various respects, -a protecting isolation to which to cling, in the opinion of some perhaps; certainly an isolation to be overcome if New Mexico was to share on a par with her sister states in carrying the Great War to a finish and in making the world safe for democracy.

What New Mexico did to help meet the storm, in mobilizing all her resources and in sending forth her sons to battle, is to be set forth in subsequent chapters, and it may safely be left to the judgment of the reader to say whether New Mexico did her part adequately and generously.

But before any consideration of the civilian and military activities of New Mexico, it will be well to glance briefly at the situation which had developed in Europe by the winter of 1916-1917 and to review the events which had, by then, strained our relations with Germany to the breaking-point. And we shall also see that when the break came, New Mexico, inland state though she was, responded to the president's call as promptly as any part of the Union.

In Europe, after two and a half years of ebb and flow in the fortunes of war a casting-up of the whole situation seemed to indicate a virtual deadlock between the central powers and the entente allies. As winter settled down, Falkenhayn and Mackensen with their armies of Huns were continuing their devastation of Roumania northwards toward the Danube River, but on all other fronts the gains and losses were relatively insignificant and appeared to have in them no promise of anything better than a stand-off. To those who appreciated the principles of justice and freedom which were at issue, to those who pondered on the awful toll of blood and sorrow already exacted from crucified peoples and a suffering world, such a conclusion of the war was intolerable even in thought. Yet at this time apparently the only alternative from a continuance of the terrible struggle was a peace which would have left Germany dominant in central Europe, a menace to the whole liberty-loving world.

That Germany would, at this time, gladly have welcomed such a settlement became apparent on December 12, 1916, when the German kaiser proposed to the hostile powers that they enter on "a peace conference." Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, in a speech before the reichstag announcing this action of the kaiser, boasted of "the glorious deeds" of German arms and in a thinly veiled threat gave warning of what would follow in case the German proposal to confer were not acceded to. Said he: "If our enemies decline to end the war, if they wish to take upon themselves the world's heavy burden of all these terrors which hereafter will follow, then even in the least and smallest homes every German heart will burn in sacred wrath (sic) against our enemies who are unwilling to stop human slaughter, in order that their plans of conquest and annihilation may continue." Many and more explicit warnings reached the United States government that if the German peace move proved abortive, the submarines were to be unleashed for unrestricted and ruthless war upon all commerce.

It is well to remember that, coincident with this peace move, Germany was issuing her apology in defense of her wholesale deportation of Belgian workmen, an outrage which had raised to a new pitch the wrath of the allied world and protest against which had been formally registered by the United States government.

But what aroused the United States most directly was Germany's use of her submarines. As Germany violated repeatedly all accepted principles of international law, the position of our nation as a neutral power had become increasingly difficult. From the sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915, our controversy over this matter had grown more and more acute, and up to the issuing of Germany's peace note nearly 200 American lives had been sacrificed by the German submarines. Nor were outrages of this character mitigated by the papers of Wolf von Igel, seized in New York by secret service men on April 26, 1916, which revealed German machinations within the United States and explained numerous outrages which had occurred throughout the country, outrages in which the German embassy itself was found to be directly implicated.

In view of these facts, it is not strange that public opinion in this country, as well as in the allied countries, realized that such a peace as Germany proposed would leave the world in for worse situation than when the war began and that it would in effect be a German victory. The allied world had good reason to become utterly sceptical of German honor and consequently of any German overtures, and they were therefore determined to see the war through, to a settlement which should carry with it "adequate reparation for the past and adequate security for the future."

Nor is it strange that the new premier of Great Britain, David Lloyd-George, announced on December 19th to the house of commons that the first act of his administration had been to reject the proposal of the central powers for "a peace

conference." He announced that the allies separately had concluded to reject it, although they had exchange views informally and would within a few days present a joint reply. A comment on Lloyd-George's speech appeared in the *Kreuz Zeitung* which indicated the alternative which Germany had in mind, even while holding out her blood-stained olive branch: "We have learned that our enemies do not want peace but war to the knife, so we must abandon all considerations and grasp all the means of war at our disposal."

Such in brief was the situation as reported in the dispatches of December 20, 1916. On the following day the world was startled by the news that President Wilson had issued an appeal to all the belligerents that they discuss terms of peace and that each nation announce openly just what it was fighting for. The president had done this on his own initiative, independently of the various suggestions which had emanated from Berlin or from any other quarter, and he asked that his request be considered entirely on its own merits. His note was in effect an invitation to the hostile powers to compare their views as to the terms fundamental to any peace settlement and it was issued in the hope that such an interchange of views would clear the way at least for conference by giving definiteness to the announced aims and demands of the respective nations. His request seemed a reasonable one because of the similarity in some respects in the demands of the hostile powers, in so far as these had been declared.

Our federal administration evidently realized that our nation might be compelled to give up its attitude of careful neutrality and to take an active part in reestablishing peace in the world. As President Wilson said at Topeka on February 2, 1916, "We are not going to invade any nation's right. But suppose, my fellowcountrymen, some nation should invade our rights. What then?--- I have come here to tell you that the difficulties of our foreign policy---daily increase in number and intricacy and in danger, and I should be derelict to my duty to you if I did not deal with you in these matters

with the utmost candor, and tell you what it may be necessary to use the force of the United States to do.”

On May 25, 1916, before the League to Enforce Peace the president outlined the main principles on which a stable peace must rest, principles which, if accepted, meant that the United States must assume the responsibilities of a world power. It was a new and significant note in our foreign policy which he sounded. “So sincerely do we believe these things that I am sure that I speak the mind and wish of the people of America when I say that the United States is willing to become a partner in any feasible association of nations formed in order to realize these objects and make them secure against violation.” The Sussex outrage had occurred just two months before this address; the von Igel papers had been seized in April. These and other recent events had shown up Germany in such a way that President Wilson’s views, as set forth in this address, were very generally and emphatically endorsed throughout the nation.

The concessions yielded by the German government after the Sussex affair seemed for some months to have been made in good faith, but in October eight Americans were lost in the sinking of the *Marina*, and on December 14th the *Russian* was sunk with the loss of seventeen of our citizens. In view of all the evidence which had been accumulating on the criminal activities and intrigues of Germany against the United States, a statement given out by Secretary Lansing on December 21st, explanatory of the president’s note, is interesting:

“The reasons for sending of the note were as follows:

‘It isn’t our material interest we had in mind when the note was sent but more and more our own rights are becoming involved by the belligerents on both sides so that the situation is becoming increasingly critical.

‘I mean by that, that we are drawing nearer the verge of war ourselves and, therefore, we are entitled to know exactly what each belligerent seeks in order that we may regulate our conduct in the future.

"No nation has been sounded. No consideration of the German overtures or of the speech of Lloyd-George was taken into account in the formulation of the document. The only thing the overtures did was to delay it a few days. It was not decided to send it until Monday. Of course, the difficulties that face the president were that it might be construed as a movement toward peace and in aid of the German overtures. He specifically denies that that was the fact in the document itself."

The suggestion carried by this statement that the United States might shortly be drawn into war caused consternation in diplomatic circles and an attempt was made, with partial success, to modify its effect by a second statement issued the next morning; but as one looks back with a knowledge of later developments he realizes that our federal administration was, in a sense, clearing the decks for action, should "action" prove necessary. The note was a step consistent with the president's policy to keep the United States out of the war if this could be done with honor, yet it was a step consciously taken towards "the verge of war."

Germany's reply to the note was evasive, for it declined to state her terms for peace; and in view of the refusal of the allies to discuss the subject unless the central powers would first disclose the terms on which they would end the war, any prospect of peace was thus made impossible. As Lloyd-George put it, they did not propose to put their neck in a noose of which Germany held the rope-end. Germany wanted an old-style "conference", and this the allies would not agree to without first having a "complete guarantee against Prussian militarism again disturbing the peace of Europe" and such guarantee must be more binding than a treaty which might be cast aside as a mere "scrap of paper."

The allies considered Germany's peace note as insincere and not a peace offer so much as a war maneuver, and on December 30th their formal reply so stated. Their answer reviewed the Belgian invasion, admitted by the German chancellor on

August 4, 1914, to have been "an injustice contrary to the law of nations", and remarked that "at this very moment, while Germany is proclaiming peace and humanity to the world, she is deporting Belgian citizens by thousands and reducing them to slavery."

Thus the year 1916 drew to a close, with all prospect of peace receding into the unknown future beyond many a blood-drenched battlefield. Along that path alone lay any surety of genuine peace and therefore in that path the allies would keep their feet. As the Albuquerque Morning Journal of January 1, 1917, well said, "It was easy for Berlin to launch a war on the first day of August, 1914.... but making peace at the end of 29 months of desperate bloodshed was quite a different matter. Russia, France and Great Britain had to go to war, but the time has not come when they have to make peace."

With the opening of the year 1917, the situation for the United States drew rapidly to the breaking-point. The dispatches which came out of Germany by "wireless to the Associated Press, via Sayville" showed that government deliberately preparing to put her threats into operation. Ludendorff's universal service law was in force; stupendous quantities of amunitions were being assembled; many thousands of guns were being turned out every week. In a word, the German government was resolved to drive to a finish the storm of destruction which it had loosed, and now the storm was to smite the United States and other neutral countries as well as the avowed enemies of Germany.

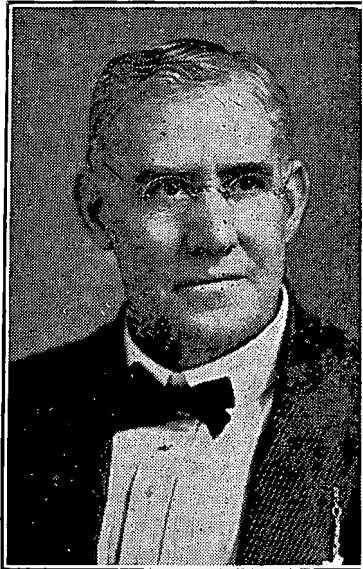
That the United States was awake to the impending crisis was evident in the deliberations and enactments of congress during the winter session. Congress had hardly convened after the holiday recess when Senator Lodge created a sensation by openly referring to the German ambassador, von Bernstorff, when attacking him for giving out an interview on the president's peace note. The \$800,000,000 military budget for 1918, the matter of oil lands for the navy, machine-guns, motorcycles, armored tanks, and other national defense

measures were subjects which had a generous share of congressional attention. Much time was given to hearings on, and discussion of, the federalized national guard and considerable support developed for universal military training. The Army Act which later embodied this principle was not passed until May 18th, during the first session of the War Congress, but the exhaustive consideration given to the matter during the winter session was preparatory to the later action and the time was by no means lost.

Such in brief survey were the crowding events which heralded to the people of the United States the approaching storm. Citizens of New Mexico who read the daily dispatches had a fair knowledge of the trend of affairs, but it can hardly be said that the people as a whole realized that war with Germany was almost upon us. For the present, therefore, state affairs loomed larger for New Mexico than did any world crisis.

This New Year's Day in New Mexico marked the beginning of a new state administration. The governor-elect to succeed Governor MacDonald was Ezequiel Cabeza de Baca, descendant of the famous Spanish explorer of four centuries before. De Baca had served as lieutenant-governor from the beginning of statehood and, as presiding officer of the state senate through three sessions, had set a record for dignified, able, and impartial administration.

But Mr. De Baca was destined never to enter the executive office nor even to step inside the executive mansion as governor of the state. Assailed by a serious malady, premonitions of which were recognized even at the time of the fall campaign, Mr. De Baca put up a brave fight and increased the high esteem in which he was already held throughout the state. He had gone in November to a hospital in Los Angeles and great anxiety had been felt lest he could not return for the inauguration. But he made the journey with an attendant nurse and, in a room at St. Vincent's Sanitarium, took the oath of office on New Year's Day in the presence of a few officials and close friends.



EZEQUIEL CABEZA DE BACA

Washington E. Lindsey, who had been elected to the office of lieutenant-governor, expressed the regard which Governor de Baca had won for himself by his brave fight against disease when, on this occasion, he grasped de Baca's hand and said: "My name is Lindsey. I want to assure you of my heartiest cooperation and assistance in the discharge of the duties of your high office." With equal warmth Governor de Baca replied, "Thank you, governor. You also will have my cordial support in your own office."

The message which Governor de Baca sent to the legislature on January 9th was commendable for the matters on which he asked action. Among these were an inheritance tax, a tax on mining properties, a budget system, a new election law providing for secret ballot, and a better jury system. In dignified, conservative, sincere, and business-like manner he invited the cooperation of the legislature in the program which he outlined. Bills along the lines indicated were introduced but none of the measures were carried through until after his death.

One incident occurred, however, during de Baca's brief tenure of office which may well be recorded as marking the first formal expression from New Mexico relating to the war. It was occasioned by the crisis which was at last reached when the German government informed our administration on January 31st that from the following day the submarines would attack all ships sailing for allied ports. To such a challenge only one course was possible. On February 3rd the German ambassador was handed his passports and President Wilson announced to congress the complete severance of our relations with Germany. It was on the same day, in answer to inquires sent out by the New York World, that Governor de Baca sent the following wire:

"Santa Fe, New Mexico, Feb. 3, 1917

"The World, New York, N. Y.

"New Mexico will stand loyally behind the president and hold up his hands. We endorse the action already taken. We

believe the avenues of trade on the high seas should be kept open to neutral commerce in accordance with the law of nations and that the armed force of the United States should be used for that purpose, if necessary.

E. C. de Baca,
governor of New Mexico''

With the death of Ezequiel C. de Baca on February 18th, Washington E. Lindsey succeeded to the office of governor, and as his tenure was practically coterminus with the active period of the war, he may well be styled "the war executive."

Just a week after his inauguration, the *Laconia* was sunk with the loss of eight American lives, and President Wilson asked congress to take the next step towards open conflict by authorizing "armed neutrality." It was characteristic of Senator A. B. Fall of New Mexico, and to his credit and that of his state, that he immediately introduced a resolution authorizing the president to use all the armed forces of the country in protecting its right.

In his inaugural address a few days later, President Wilson declared that there could now be no turning back from the tragic events of the last thirty months which had brought upon Americans a new responsibility as citizens of the world. He declared anew that America must stand for peace, for the stability and self-government of free peoples, and that the seas must be free to all.

Nevertheless, there was some opposition to "armed neutrality" until the federal administration gave out the text of a German note dated January 19th and addressed by the foreign minister Zimmermann to the German minister in Mexico. This note, instigating an attack by Mexico upon the United States even while conducting peace negotiations with us, revealed such treachery as to be convincing proof that sooner or later we must have a definite settlement with this criminal among nations. Accordingly, on March 12th, after Ambassador Gerard had safely reached home and reported, our government issued orders to place armed guards on our

merchant ships. Then at intervals of a few days each, came in reports of other sinkings: On March 16th the *Vilgilancia* went down with the loss of 5 Americans; two days later, the *City of Memphis* and the *Illinois*, with a loss of 17; the *Healdton* was sunk on the 21st and 7 Americans perished; and on April 1st the *Aztec* went down with 28 more. As officially stated, "In all, up to our declaration of war, 226 Americans, many of them women and children, had lost their lives by the action of German submarines, and in most instances without the faintest color of international right."

The winter session of the New Mexico legislature had ended on the 10th of March, before the federal administration had decided upon "armed neutrality", but our citizens showed in various ways that the national situation was being watched with keen interest and with that cordial sympathy which Governor de Baca had voiced. On March 10th, the Santa Fe chamber of commerce affirmed its patriotic support of the president in a set of emphatic resolutions, and similar action was taken by other organizations over the state. By the middle of March, the Red Cross was energetically engaged in recruiting new members, and war-gardening was already well under way. Not the least interesting display of patriotism was the voting of a gold medal by the state legislature to General Pershing in appreciation of his services to the state, and its bestowal by Governor Lindsey at El Paso on March 19th.

Just as the national guard on the border was being mustered out of federal service came the first call from Washington for navy and army volunteers and recruiting stations were promptly opened in New Mexico. It was already recognized very generally, however, that some method of selective service must be formulated and put into operation, and it is therefore interesting to recall that, as early as March 26th, Governor Lindsey sent a wire to New York City in which he strongly favored action by the war congress, call-

ed to convene on April 2nd, which should provide for universal military training.

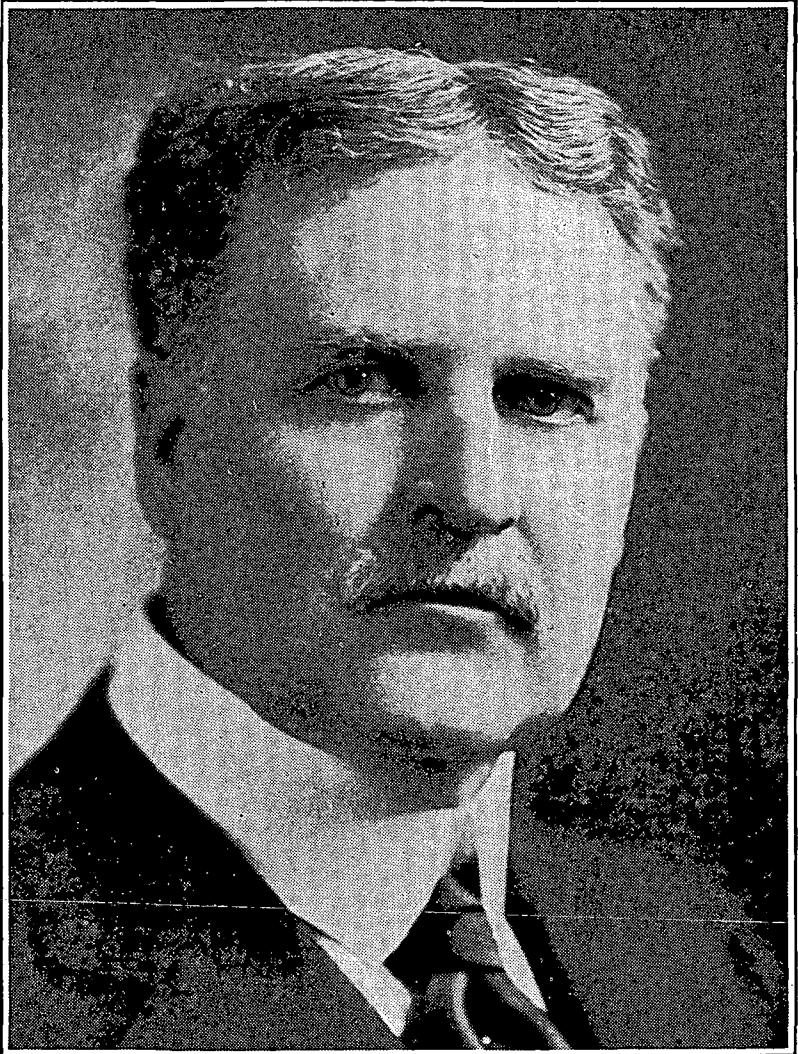
"Good Friday", 1917, will be a day long remembered in New Mexico, for on that day at last came the formal declaration of war on the German government. April 6, 1917, summoned New Mexico to the field of combat, both at the home-base and overseas, and nobly did she rise to the occasion and take up the gauge of battle, equally with her sister states. A special session of the state legislature was promptly called by Governor Lindsey and in the brief space of eight days measures were passed which were necessary to the proper carrying on of our part in the war.

Aside from appropriating the small sum of \$7,440 to cover the expenses of the special session, the legislature enacted and Governor Lindsey signed, five measures which were very largely to shape and guide the activities of New Mexico during the period of the war.

The Public Defense act appropriated \$750,000 for preparedness and defense, the money to be raised by the issuance and sale of certificates of indebtedness, and expended and disbursed solely under the direction of the governor. It created a state council of defense of nine members. It authorized a special county levy of not to exceed one mill in 1917 and 1918 for the repair and construction of highways. It empowered the governor to equip any portion of the national guard reserve up to a battalion as mounted infantry in case of emergency. It authorized the state treasurer to invest the permanent state funds in the certificates of indebtedness issued, and gave the governor authority to sell certificates to the federal reserve banks or to negotiate loans through them on the certificates as security.

Another act of the legislature accepted the provisions of the National Defense act and arranged for the drafting of men for the national guard.

A Third enactment provided for the further extension of



WASHINGTON E. LINDSEY

cooperative agricultural work and made possible the employment of an agricultural agent in every county.

A fourth bill passed accepted the provisions of the Smith-Hughes act for vocational education and appropriated \$15,000 annually for two years to meet a like appropriation from the federal government.

One other important measure was enacted which empowered the governor, for the purpose of giving aid to the national government or providing for public health, welfare, and safety in the state, to organize and employ all the resources of the state, whether of men, property, or instrumentalities.

Thus unreservedly, promptly, and wholeheartedly did the people of New Mexico, through their chosen representatives, throw themselves and all their resources into the Great War. The Sunshine State fears no storm.

Lansing B. Bloom.

II The War Executive

In every state the "War Governor" is of special interest -- his administration is more generally studied than those of other men of equal ability and success. There is no question but that the War Governor of New Mexico will be of special interest to the future historian. His ability and his fidelity to the interests of the State and Nation will rank him among the outstanding governors.

Every biography is of interest to two classes -- the young and the experienced. Childhood and youth and their formative influences appeal to the young, while opinions and acts hold the attention of the mature.

The youth of Lincoln or of Garfield contained no more interesting elements of privation and no more evidence of surmounting difficulty than can be found in the life of Washington Ellsworth Lindsey, who was born December 20, 1862, in Belmont County, Ohio, on Capitana Creek, of a sturdy Scotch parentage.