

# Progressive Era Editorial Cartoons

See a lesson plan related to this material on the Wisconsin Historical Society website.



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

## Transcription: Speech of Robert M. La Follette on Railroad Rates

### La Follette's Message of Railroad Regulation, 1904 - - Wages and Rates

Whenever the public complains that rates are unjustly increased, we are at once told in sweeping, though somewhat indefinite way that advances have been made to meet increased expenses and higher wages paid to employees. The corporations well understand the public regard for all the men employed in this hazardous calling, and that such an explanation will go a long way to quiet criticism.

It is true that material is somewhat higher. It is likewise true that companies are paying higher wages or rather higher salaries. The total wages paid by the roads of late years have increased, owing mostly to the increase in the number of men employed to handle the traffic or business. But the total wages per mile of road from 1897 to 1902 did not increase over 32 cent which is a much lower ratio of increase than the increase in both gross and net earnings.

Torelle, Ellen. *The Political Philosophy by Robert M. La Follette*,  
Madison: The Robert M. La Follette Company, 1920, p.93.