

# THE SOFT-PEDAL TRIPLETS

## ROOT, KNOX, CRANE--APOSTLES OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY

SAMUEL G. BLYTHE, IN THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

When the Taft administration starts, moves and seems to feel a thrill of life along its keel it can be put down for a fact that, if a certain three big men in Washington have anything to do with it—and they think they will—we are in for four peaceful, calm and non-strenuous years. We are going to be safe and sane to a fare-you-well. This is to be a regime of reconstruction instead of destruction. To hear them tell it privately, it is now time for the business interests to get up and give three ringing cheers, for business is the watchword, and we are no longer going sky-hooting around, prosecuting everywhere, but intend to let everybody have a rest.

The soft-pedal triplets are Elihu Root, Senator Crane and Philander C. Knox. They are the three statesmen who have taken the job of putting on the brakes. They are the three patriots who have contracted to felt Mr. Taft, to felt him until he is as noiseless as a rubber-tired wagon on an asphalt street. Moreover, they are likely to make a good fist at it, for, as matters now stand, they are the three who will be closest to the throne and most influential.

It is a good combination, Root, Knox and Crane—a good, handy, working alliance, made up of good, handy workmen, who know the game and their game, and who have various reforms they desire to have instituted, the principal one being in the nature of less noise and more conservatism in the White House. Mr. Roosevelt has recently said he feared Mr. Taft was veering toward the reactionaries, and the suspicion appears to be reasonably justified by the facts; not that Mr. Taft has in any way tried to discourage or retard any of Mr. Roosevelt's policies, but that Mr. Taft has allied with him these three amiable gentlemen, the soft-pedal triplets, and they are not looking for action. There has been too much of that, from their viewpoint, and what they need now is reaction, rest, calm—a period of contemplation and self-examination.

### The Three Doves of Peace

Root—and Knox—and Crane. There are three gentlemen who have been skating around the edges of this period of hullabaloo; we have had them cutting curlicues and doing figure eights, from time to time, but not getting in so far that they could not back out on occasion. Root and Knox were both in the Roosevelt cabinet, and both great friends of the president. Now, Knox will go into the Taft cabinet as premier, and Root will take the place of Thomas C. Platt as senator from New York. It would be both ungraceful and untrue to charge that either of these men was ever disloyal to Mr. Roosevelt, for neither has been, although it is likely that Mr. Roosevelt did many things that were not approved by either Root or Knox. While they had service with Mr. Roosevelt they were in that service, but neither their tendencies nor their practices made them think all that was done was what should be done.

Root and Knox are great lawyers, great corporation lawyers, and Crane is a great business man. Root and Knox have been careful enough to keep to themselves what they thought of many of Mr. Roosevelt's policies, but soon they will be out in the open and at work, laying the foundations for an era of conservatism. So long as they have the Taft ear they will keep dinging into it the story that the business interests of the country deserve a rest, and, from the very nature of the man, they are likely to find a responsive listener in Mr. Taft. He is not strenuous. He is calm and judicial. He has plenty of nerve, but he goes ahead slowly, not with a hop-skip-and-jump.

Take Root. He is reputed to have one of the finest legal minds in the country, and men who do not know him have often wondered why he preferred to remain in Washington, in the cabinet, instead of in New York, where he could make as much money as he wanted to ask for as a lawyer. There would be practically no limit to his earning power except his physical limitations. The answer to the question is that Root likes life in Washington, likes the power, likes to be a part of things that go on here, and that his liking for the life and power at the capital is greater than any ambition he may

have to get money or to be the leader of the bar in New York or elsewhere. That is why he consented to become secretary of war under McKinley, and that is why, after he resigned and went back to New York to take up the law again, he responded eagerly to Mr. Roosevelt's call to come back to Washington and take the chair the death of John Hay vacated. Soon he will be in the senate, and for the very same thing. He wants to round out his career in public life.

Root is naturally a conservative. He was the president's adviser in almost everything when he was in the Roosevelt cabinet, and while he may not have approved nor have been able to stop many things that he, congenitally, was opposed to, nobody will ever know how many things he did stop of which the public heard nothing. He was a balance-wheel for Mr. Roosevelt, not always working, of course, but working whenever he could and getting results that those who were close to the inside know about. At that, there are some of the Roosevelt projects that he approved heartily, projects it would be hard to make his former legal and business associates think he could be brought to favor with a yoke of oxen.

### Taft's Right-Hand Man

Taft likes Root, respects him and depends on him. Himself a lawyer and a judge, Taft knows the tremendous legal ability of Root and appreciates it at its true worth in his administration. Thus, with Root in the senate, and always available for advice, Taft will consult with him as freely as if he were in the cabinet. The conservative leaders in the senate hall Root's advent with great joy. He will be a tower of strength to the old and tottering oligarchy, headed by Aldrich and Hale, that has ruled for so many years. Root has already aligned himself with this wing of the senate. He has fallen into step, naturally, with the column to which all his tendencies, convictions and associations direct him. He is no more of a radical than Senator George Peabody Wetmore, of Rhode Island, who lives in Newport and has every sympathy which that residence implies.

Aldrich and Hale have grabbed Root and taken him in. Instead of serving for a few years on probation, as does nearly every other new senator, Root has landed on the top first off. They know him in the senate, know his predilections and his temperament. They need him in their business. Thus, without the obligation of loyalty to a chief who is ultra-radical, responsible to nobody but himself—for they had to take him in New York whether they wanted him or not—Root will be just the kind of a senator he might be expected to be. Thus, too, Root will exert his influence on Taft to the end that there may be quiet and peace and a cessation of crusading that is so distasteful to Root's friends and to his new associates in the senate.

It is the same with Knox. He was a corporation lawyer when he came to be attorney general under McKinley. Nor can it be said of him that when he remained in Mr. Roosevelt's cabinet he was not loyal. He was. He obeyed orders, but, as is the case with Root he had much influence with President Roosevelt, and there is nobody who can tell how many things Knox stopped while he was attorney general. He was another adviser who had conservative leanings. So long as he was in the Roosevelt cabinet he was there with no other idea than to serve his chief and the people, for he is not the kind of a man who would accept a position of that kind with any other purpose in view. However, he threw his influence and his counsel always on the side of conservatism, as was natural. He was trained that way, brought up that way, and he had the habit and practice of a lifetime back of him.

When he left the attorney general's office to go into the senate he, too, aligned himself with the Aldrich-Hale oligarchy. His tendencies were all that way. Like Root, he is a great lawyer, and, like Root, he had served clients always who were opposed to many of the policies of Mr. Roosevelt. Knox never went so far as publicly to oppose many of his former chief's plans while he was in the senate, but his sympathies and influence were always with the Aldrich-Hale combination and against further disturbance. He let himself be made a candidate for president, not in the hope that he would be nominat-

### THE OREGON PLAN IN NEBRASKA

The Nebraska legislature has passed and Governor Shallenberger has signed the bill providing for the adoption of the Oregon plan of electing United States senators in Nebraska. This was house roll number one and was introduced by Hon. Fred Humphrey of Lincoln. This bill has been printed several times in The Commoner.

The Oregon statute will give to the people of Nebraska the advantage enjoyed by the people of Oregon, namely, the advantage of electing their senators by direct vote. Under the federal constitution, United States senators are elected by the legislators of the various states, and it is impossible to change this provision without constitutional amendment. Oregon, however, has by a practical method reached substantially the same end by a law, which provides for the submission of a pledge to candidates for the legislature. The candidate, of course, has the privilege of signing the pledge or of refusing to sign it, but his refusal to sign it, being a declaration against the election of United States senators by the people, would put him at a disadvantage, and his opponent would gain the advantage that naturally comes from a recognition of the right of the people to rule. Other states ought to take advantage of this plan.

### IS THIS REFORM?

Does the president's cabinet strike you as a reform cabinet?

Secretary of State Knox! Ex-attorney of the steel trust; after conference with Mr. Frick he as attorney general, advised the killing of the only anti-trust bill passed by the house in recent years. Is he likely to encourage the president to attack the trusts?

Secretary of War Dickinson, attorney for the Illinois Central railroad—an ex-democrat, drawn away from his party by his corporate connections.

Secretary of the Treasury MacVeagh, ex-democrat, who left the party when the party separated from Wall Street.

Secretary of Commerce and Labor Nagel, attorney for Standard Oil trust.

Attorney General Wickersham, not known for any activity in connection with the regulation of railroads or the prosecution of monopolies of a national character.

When has a chief executive selected a more conservative cabinet? There are no reformers in it; the progressive element of the republican party is as completely ignored as was the progressive element by Mr. Cleveland during his second administration. Will the result be the same?

### NEBRASKA DEMOCRATS BANQUET

A "Bryan birthday banquet" will be given at Lincoln March 19 under the auspices of the Bryan Volunteers of Nebraska. Mr. Bryan, Governor Shallenberger and other democrats will address the banqueters.

In the afternoon a meeting of the democratic editorial association will be held. A general invitation is extended.