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Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Party

Theodore Roosevelt, in the Outlook: With Woodrow Wilson, a progressive democrat, as a presidential candidate, is there any need for a new party? Why should not those, without regard to party, who believe in progressive principles vote the democratic ticket?

This question, raised in a letter printed elsewhere in this issue, is asked in countless forms all over the country.

No one pretends to find a reason for not voting for Mr. Wilson in the character or in the ideals of Mr. Wilson himself. It is plain that he approaches public questions from the point of view of the public interest. What he said the other day in a speech at Atlantic City is a genuine expression of his spirit. He was speaking of an issue raised in that place by lawlessness and corruption, of the need of moral pride, and of the willingness to fight evil at all costs. "There can be," said Mr. Wilson, "so long as we are honest men, no quarrel with any man who deals privately or publicly in a practice that is unrighteous; and a man who lays himself, his life, down for that purpose, ought to die more happy than he lived. Life is a little thing. Life lasts only a little while, and if it goes out lighted with the torch of glory, it is better than if it had lasted upon a dull level a thousand years. * * * That is the test of manhood, it is the test of humanity, and it is the glory and sign of Christianity, that a man will lay down his life for another, no matter what the consequences may be to himself, either in this world or in the next."

These words, especially as they come from a man just chosen to receive the highest gift in the hands of his party, present a view of public service that should actuate all men in public life. They are a pledge of his own purpose.

So far as the country at large knows it, Mr. Wilson's record since he entered public life two years ago has not been inconsistent with his lofty purpose or his high character. While in office he has been not only the chief executive of his state, but also the leader of his party in the state.

With such a candidate before them why is it that thousands upon thousands of progressives throughout the country, south and north, are turning, not to the democratic party, but to a new organization?

It is because they know that when they vote for a presidential candidate they vote not only for a man, but also for a party organization and a party creed; they know that when the country elects a president it puts a party organization into power and gives to the party creed its indorsement; and these progressives believe neither in the methods of the democratic machines that are largely dominant in the democratic organization, nor in the soundness of the democratic platform which is the latest and most authoritative form of that party's creed.

These progressives well know the power of party machines as agents of those who seek privilege. They know well that special interests have no party prejudices, and are as ready to receive favors from a democratic as from a republican boss. These progressives are no more ready to go into partnership with bosses like Mr. Murphy of New York, Mr. Taggart of Indiana, or Messrs. Evans and Hughes of Colorado, or Mr. Roger Sullivan of Illinois, than they are to go into partnership with

bosses of the same stripe, though of different party name, such as Mr. Barnes of New York, Mr. Penrose of Pennsylvania, Mr. Guggenheim of Colorado, and Mr. Lorimer of Illinois. They have learned that it matters little whether you change the agent so long as you have to deal with the same principal; and they think it matters even less if in changing agents you substitute for one agent another of exactly the same type. And these progressives have seen nothing to convince them that Mr. Murphy is losing his hold upon the democratic party in New York, or that Mr. Roger Sullivan is losing his hold upon the democratic party in Illinois, or that the men who have been associated with Mr. Taggart are losing their hold upon the democratic party in Indiana, or that the machine manipulated by Messrs. Evans and Hughes is losing its hold upon the democratic party in Colorado.

These progressives recognize that the Baltimore convention, while it nominated a progressive man for the presidency, strengthened rather than weakened the hold of the democratic bosses in their several states. They had eyes for other events in that convention besides the vote that finally determined the nomination. They know that that nomination was not the spontaneous action of a converted oligarchy, but that it came only as a result of the acquiescence of bosses in what they came to believe was the best policy.

These progressives moreover, know that a president must deal with his party organization as such; that his appointments can not possibly be the result in all cases of his own personal knowledge, but must come upon the recommendation of those who are the accredited representatives of the party in the various states. They know that no president can, of his own power, break the hold of a state machine in his own party. They remember that Mr. Cleveland was a foe of Tammany Hall, but that Mr. Cleveland's election strengthened Tammany's grip. They remember what consistent foes of President Roosevelt Messrs. Platt, Quay, and Hanna were, and yet how little that fact could affect their hold upon the organization in their several states. The president is not a knight crusader, but the chief servant of his party. He can no more escape obligation toward his party than he can escape his obligations toward his country. It is only as he works through his party that he can work for his country. If these progressives were compelled to choose merely between Mr. Taft working through the republican machine, and Mr. Wilson working through the democratic machine, a majority would probably choose the latter, not because they think that the the democratic machine is any better than the republican machine, but because they have lost their confidence in Mr. Taft and are more ready to trust Mr. Wilson. These progressives, however, find that they are no longer confined to a choice of two kinds of corrupt machines; that they no longer need to decide whether the partnership between political bosses and industrial bosses shall bear a democratic or a republican label; they see in the formation of the national progressive party a chance to get rid of this partnership altogether. They see in the very principles upon which the party is founded, and in the very occasion which brought it into existence, the same assurance that it will be the

impregnable enemy of corrupt partnership as that which made it evident from the beginning that the republican party would be unalterably opposed to slavery. These progressives represent that body of citizens who, for a generation, have been waiting for just this opportunity of aligning themselves against bossism of every description, and they refuse to lose this chance now that it is offered to them. They are not chiefly concerned in an immediate political victory, though they recognize that an immediate political victory will save their country from coming trouble as the victory of an anti-slavery party in '52 or '56 might have averted the pains of war; but they are chiefly concerned that bossism and oligarchical rule be made to face from now on a well-organized hostile army.

That is not all, however. These progressives are not only unwilling to ally themselves with the democratic organization; they are equally unwilling to indorse the democratic creed.

They recognize that the democratic platform, as well as Mr. Wilson, discerns present evils and proposes change. In this respect they recognize that the candidate and the platform are progressive. But at that point their agreement practically ceases. They believe that Mr. Wilson and the democratic party are attacking social injustice today in exactly the same mistaken way in which Judge Douglas and the democratic party proposed to attack human slavery in the fifties. The difference between the republicans and Judge Douglas was not that one side opposed slavery and the other favored it, but that one side believed it a great social wrong with which the whole nation should deal, while the other believed it to be a local evil to be dealt with by the states and by the consciences of individual men. The same difference divides the progressives from the democrats today. The methods proposed by the democratic party for dealing with great national problems are the methods of individualism, of disintegration, and of states' rights. The democratic party and Mr. Wilson emphasize the limitations of the power of the nation to deal with these problems.

This is the substance of its view on the tariff—that the nation's power to tax is limited to revenue purposes. To hold this view is to deny the right of the nation to control state banks by the taxes it levies upon them, or to control corporations by means of the corporation tax, or to control the distribution of wealth by means of inheritance or income taxes. The progressives, on the other hand, believe that the taxing power of the government is one of the instruments by which a sovereign people can control its creatures.

This, too, is the substance of the democratic party's proposal with regard to trusts—not regulation, but dissolution; not control, but prosecution.

This, too, is the substance of the democratic party's only distinctive contribution to the problem of conservation. It proposes, not the extension, but the limitation, of the conservation policy by hampering the work of the forestry service.

This is the substance of its proposal with regard to the Philippines. The democratic party denies to this nation the right to hold island possessions. It would treat the Philippine problem, not on a basis of national sovereignty exercised for constructive and human purposes, but on a basis of individualism and separation.

These are examples of the general attitude toward the great problems of today on the part of the demo-