

New York Newspaper Comment on the Roosevelt and Taft Speeches

Evening Post: With the substance of the president's speech at Provincetown today we see no reason to quarrel. It is a stout affirmation of his well-known views in his well-known language. Those anxious and confiding republican business men and editors who expected the president to utter a "reassuring" word did not know their man. His way of calming a nervous patient is to give another shock. To the time and manner of this presidential deliverance, however, we think there is grave objection. There was really no occasion for him just now to say anything. A prudent consideration of the strain under which the whole financial world is now laboring would have kept him from saying anything which might add to it and next to silence a quieter tone would have been golden.

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Brooklyn Eagle: The speech at Provincetown was awaited with impatience, Wall Street being especially curious, not to say solicitous. It has been furnishing an object lesson. It has been giving an illustration of the tremendous difference between the effect of fulminations. Mr. Bryan, for instance, may thunder at the thugs of capital until he has exhausted himself and those who listen to him, but then he does not occupy the White House, so "predatory capital" remains undisturbed. It is otherwise when the fulmination comes from Theodore Roosevelt, whose denunciation signifies, and additional significance comes with the knowledge that the presidential preacher practices. He translates word into deed. So Wall Street will peruse with corresponding care; it will inwardly digest, and it will find scant consolation.

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Globe: Mr. Roosevelt's speech to the pilgrims at Provincetown proves to be only a piece from the White House fourth reader. All the good boys among us know most of it by heart and the rest will like it no better than usual. Adverting presumably to the conflict between southern states and the federal courts, the president observes that "national sovereignty" is to be upheld insofar as it means the sovereignty of the people used for the real and ultimate good of the people, and states' rights are to be upheld insofar as they mean the "people's rights," especially in dealing with "the great corporations." How simple are the methods of the truly great.

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Sun: There is practically only one sentence in President Roosevelt's speech with which the public is likely to be much concerned. It is that in which he asserts that rich malefactors have combined to bring about financial stress for the purpose of discrediting the policy of the government. A more unscrupulous or a more desperate statement it would be impossible to make. His great position forbids its adequate characterization. We can only permit ourselves to say that if Mr. Roosevelt does not know it to be false both his circumstances and the circumstances of the country are such as to occasion grave alarm.

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Wall Street Journal: Secretary Taft takes up every plank in the Roosevelt platform respecting the corporations and defends them to the fullest degree. The Taft speech is substantially the Roosevelt speech expressed in Taft language. Its judicial tone, its strong opposition to government ownership and its defense of the courts and of the constitutional rights of private property are exactly what might be expected from Secretary Taft's training and character, but there is nothing in the speech to indicate any wavering whatsoever in the administration as regards its policy of enforcement of law against corporations which have violated law, and as regards its policy of regulation of railroads and the taxation of incomes and inheritances.

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Times: Mr. Roosevelt is a politician. He knows that he has "the people behind him" in the policies he is executing. In their present temper they would applaud and approve even more radical policies, we doubt not. How little he concerns himself about the disaster and ruin he threatens to bring upon the business com-

munity appears from his amazing hypothesis that recent violent declines in security values may have been caused by "certain malefactors of great wealth" who have combined "to bring about as much financial stress as they possibly can in order to discredit the policy of the government and thereby to secure a reversal of that policy." If Mr. Roosevelt were content to confine himself to the punishment of the wrongdoers and the enforcement of laws, business could get along with him; but he is seeking to remake the governmental and industrial system of the country, a task for which a restless temperament and boundless energy constitute his sole equipment. That they do not constitute fitness or competence and that undertaking of such a task by such hands is fraught with the gravest peril are truths now becoming increasingly evident to reasoning minds.

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Evening Post: Secretary Taft's speech was to have been a trumpet; it turns out to be a second violin. His long and rather tedious speech might have been condensed into the single sentence: "I say ditto to President Roosevelt." It may be said that as loyal friend and heir apparent, Mr. Taft could have done no less. It may also be said that the immense success politically, of Roosevelt's railway and corporation policies, justifies any aspiring public man in trying to enter into that splendid heritage of popularity and votes. But this is not what the people were given to expect. Not for this did they wait so eagerly to read Mr. Taft's speech. From it we were to learn that he was an original, independent, and fearless statesman. It was to be a direct and ringing appeal; in fact, it is a feeble echo.

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Globe: Secretary Taft is not a sermonizer or a lecturer. He has a preference for details rather than for the expression of loosely uttered general principles. He is familiar with the federal constitution and respects the limitations on federal action. His temperament is that of the judge and the practical administrator rather than that of the tempestuous shouter. While not shrinking from what are called advanced ideas, the methods he proposes are orderly and cautious. His prepossession being to reconcile progress with conservatism. In many ways his discussion of current issues is one of the most candid, practical and illuminating that have ever come from a presidential candidate when his friends were indulged in the labor of rallying support.

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Mail: The tone of Mr. Taft's address is good, particularly in the large and reasoning way in which he exposes the fallacies of Mr. Bryan. His exposition of the Nebraskan's distrust of the honesty, courage and impartiality of the individual as an agent on behalf of the people to carry on any part of the government will give the latter a bad quarter of an hour. Mr. Taft's reasons for demanding a revision of the tariff are convincing, and conclusive is his reason for deferring it until after the presidential election. The secretary in his discussion of the trust problem gives evidence of a broader conception of the question than that embodied in the Sherman law or in the utterances of any other public man who has the ear of the people.

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Press: Whether some of us agree or disagree with the methods and instruments which the chief executive employs to control the transgressor, all of us who seek to have the evil practice of the predatory powers suppressed leap to that challenge of the man who breathes the spirit of the Puritan either to control the wrongdoer, or, if there is no other way, to smite him down with the iron of wrath. It is this striding straight on to the battle field, instead of skirting its outer bounds, that has made the American people love Theodore Roosevelt among the first of their leaders and that has earned him free forgiveness for such mistakes as their impulsive but doughty champion has committed, as it will earn him more forgiveness for other errors that may be cast against his score. It is this Prince Rupert quality of Mr. Roosevelt that convinces his admirers that, though he fall and fall again, he will keep on trying.

Letters From the People

James Green, Thomaston, Conn.—In your issue of May 10, 1907, you gave it as your opinion the principles which should be put into the next national democratic platform at the request of the Kansas Democratic club. I do not know where this club is located in Kansas. Any member of the club has not said one word about the principles given or omitted. I should add to that list of principles the following: All money should be issued by the government of whatever kind. Because some citizens have property known as bonds, they should not have the privilege of handling any of our money before it gets into circulation and charging the rest of us fellows interest for its use. The issuing of money is a sovereign privilege and should not be delegated to any class of citizens. It creates a privileged class when you give some people so much advantage over their fellows. Will The Commoner please note and let one who has worked for your interest and principles in the past and permit the publication of the above in your valuable paper. To my mind this is the most important plank which should appear in the next democratic platform.

Phillip Brown, Huntingdon, Pa.—I have been a reader of The Commoner for the past two years, through which you advocate that all affairs of the government, state and municipal, be economically administered. I am sorry to confess I did not notice a single sentence of condemnation in The Commoner in relation to the late salary grab consummated by our representatives in Washington for the benefit of a few hundred government officials, to the tune of over one million dollars, at the expense of the taxpayer. I was of the opinion it required two or more parties to settle their respective grievances by arbitration, but our wise lawmakers reversed my opinion; they did not consult their employers about the justice of this graft. I am sorry to confess our much boasted representative system of government does not serve the purpose for which it was established, considering the existing mismanagement and corruption in all shapes and forms in every state of the union. I am opposed to government ownership of the railroads, for the following reasons: I think it would create a political machine which could not easily be eradicated. I further contend that our government officials are either incapable or else neglect the duty which they owe to the public to manage such properties successfully. We have a fair example of government management of the mail service, which should be self-sustaining, instead of producing a deficit of several million dollars annually. The only beneficiaries of this system, constitutes the postmasters of the first and second class cities, next the favored contractors for furnishing the supplies, and last but not least the railroad corporations who receive millions of dollars in excess of just remuneration for carrying the mail. Our war with Spain in 1898 was waged for the purpose of freeing Cuba at our expense and setting up another rotten borough republic like those already in existence on this continent, of which our government assumed the guardianship. The Cubans did have the trial of the new government system but they did fail to better their former condition, after which they did start a civil war for the purpose of finding a way out of the wilderness. Thanks to President Roosevelt, who was equal to the emergency, he did send for a second Moses of Panama by the name of Magoon of canal fame, to act as governor of Cuba, to teach the Cubans political science according to our method—"To the victor belongs the spoils." Our wards cause Uncle Sam a great deal of trouble and expense. Look at the performance of the government with the building of the canal, importing six engineers from Europe for the purpose of finding out the difference between a sea level canal and a lock canal, all of the foreign engineers and one of ours a majority, did report in favor of a sea level canal, but our wise men of Washington reversed their finding and substituted a lock canal. I am in accord with Senator Tillman, who compared the management with a hocus pocus performance. The above statements constitute the basis of my opposition to government ownership of the railroads. If the government is powerless to regulate the railroads by law the government is also incapable of operating them with success.