

What Newspapers Think of Centralization

New York Tribune (rep.)—The nation has centralized itself and can not now be decentralized. And the constitution will continue to be interpreted more and more in the terms of national life rather than in the terms of the dictionary.

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Houston (Texas) Post—The president's theory would destroy one of the vital principles of democracy. It would take from the states the power to protect their citizens against oppression. For immediate conditions that might be intolerable, there would be no immediate relief and possibly no relief at all, if the oppressor happened to have influence at the federal capital. Mr. Roosevelt has a beautiful theory, but in practice it would accentuate the oppression and injustice against which he seems anxious to shield the public.

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Richmond (Va.) Journal—Centralization is bad, but this goes a bow-shot beyond the wildest schemes of centralization yet proposed. It amounts to the abrogation of the organic law, and the substitution in place thereof of the will of a majority of nine judges practically appointed by the president.

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Fort Worth (Tex.) Record—The position of the attorneys general is founded upon the broad principle of states rights, and there is growing evidence that that principle is not bounded by the United States. Only recently has the country been treated to the spectacle of a southern federal judge in Alabama sustaining a federal court as against the state courts, and of a northern federal judge in Minnesota sustaining a state court as against a federal court. This shows that the question of states rights has ceased to be either a political or a sectional issue. This fact will clear the atmosphere for the state officials very materially.

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Philadelphia Record—The states are abundantly capable of regulating industrial enterprises in accordance with their own respective judgments and policies. The president's demand would degrade the states to the level of counties and erect in Washington a central government, holding in its grasp all the commerce of the country and able to perpetuate its power by its control of business. When that shall be accomplished the United States of America will cease to exist, whether the name is retained or not. The name of republic was retained in Rome, and the consuls and the senate existed after the empire was established, but only the names and the forms remained; the thing they stood for had disappeared. When the president's commissioner of corporations shall control all the industrial establishments of the country we shall have Russian bureaucracy fully established, and with the control of business will go the control of politics. It will be idle, then, to hold presidential elections. The president can construe them out of the constitution as easily as he can construe into it the national regulation of the industrial life of the people.

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Springfield (Mass.) Republican—Where is located any successful resistance by the roads to the orders of a commission largely chosen by Mr. Roosevelt himself? Where are the ex parte injunctions upsetting the commission's orders, which the new law made provision against after one of the ablest debates (on the powers of the federal judiciary) ever heard in the United States senate? The president can not go on talking as he does without raising the presumption that he is beginning to lean to public ownership as the only means of providing an adequate "sovereign" over transportation.

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St. Louis Republic—The Chicago Inter Ocean estimates that 750,000 stock companies in the United States, 25,000 of them in Illinois alone, would be subject to the crushing power of the "index finger of the president of the United States" under what it calls the stupendous centralization of power he demands. Long one of the leading republican papers of the country and still holding its republican position, the Inter Ocean declares that "no graver issue has ever been presented by a president even in

times of war." It is true that the logic of this demand is that the private business, as well as the "public utility" business now done between Missouri and Illinois, as among all the states, must be taken from private control and the control of the states and centralized in Washington. It is true that all incorporated private business is asked to submit wholly to this control at Washington if even a small part of its output goes into a neighboring state. But what is the real point? The American public has demanded reforms, through the enforcement of existing laws and through the repeal or modification of some which are responsible for the worst abuses. The only answer so far is that reform must be postponed until revolution has been accomplished. According to the president, the whole working system of government must be changed before the republican party, as he represents it, can reform its own abuses. The Inter Ocean calls his plan "a monstrous proposition." It is a monstrous absurdity and a dangerous one. But reform is possible in spite of it and in spite of the republican party.

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Milwaukee Sentinel—All that is wanted is for the states to recognize the justice, expediency and practical necessity of uniformity of laws and regulations governing these inter-state corporations, and the only way to get such uniformity is for the states to leave their regulation largely to the national government. That, we understand, is what the president had primarily in mind when he argued for "a sovereign for the great corporations engaged in interstate business, that is, for the railroads and the inter-state industrial corporations."

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Birmingham (Ala.) News—The adoption of the president's views would unquestionably center vast powers in the federal government and would be a long step in reducing the powers of sovereign states. Indeed, the states would be largely shorn of their authority even in its application to matters within their own jurisdiction, and the federal government would be the dominating influence the country over. Local self-government would be reduced to a minimum, and our long-boasted republican form of government would drift dangerously near an imperialistic system which the framers of the constitution undertook to avoid. President Roosevelt is a centralizationist. He has done more to encourage, yea, to develop that system of government in America than any man who has occupied the White House since the civil war. His fine distinctions in this respect do not suggest real differences. He believes in well-nigh unlimited powers for the federal government and he practices it so far as a healthy American public sentiment will permit.

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Florida Times-Union—The president now insists that the nation join the state in caring for the schools. The south knows what that would mean to her; California can see that in a national school it will no longer be possible to segregate the Chinese and Japanese. Here is a function that has not been "neglected by the state;" why, then, under the Root-Roosevelt ruling should it be usurped by the nation?

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Philadelphia Record—When the president's commissioner of corporations shall control all the industrial establishments of the country we shall have Russian bureaucracy fully established, and with the control of business will go the control of politics. It will be idle, then, to hold presidential elections. The president can construe them out of the constitution as easily as he can construe into it the national regulation of the industrial life of the people. We know now just exactly what the "Roosevelt progressive policies" are. The people will not vote next year to inaugurate them.

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New York Journal of Commerce—An industrial corporation whose product enters into interstate commerce occupies a totally different position from that of a common carrier or a national banking institution. It is not at all obvious what good end could be accomplished by subjecting such a corporation to federal supervision and control which can not be already at-

tained by the exercise of the state authority, from which it derives the right to exist. There is no guarantee that national supervision may not be laggard or corrupt except the influence of public opinion, which is more likely to find effective expression in correction of the failures of state administration than in criticism of those of a federal department. It is quite possible to overload any department of the national government with functions whose intelligent exercise calls for thorough knowledge, unbending rectitude, and constant vigilance. In matters relating to the control of great corporations, it is probable that the government at Washington has already quite as much on its hands as it can properly supervise.

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St. Louis Republic—President Roosevelt's reference to the railroad which is doing business in far western states under a New Jersey charter doesn't affright the intelligent student of political economy half so much as the reverse view he offers of a national railroad chartered at Washington doing business in any state it pleases to enter. As things are now, the railroad chartered by New Jersey enters other states by the license of their statutes, and not by the inherent right of its foreign charter; but under the Roosevelt plan of Federal incorporation, the nationally chartered railroad would enter any state without asking leave or fearing hindrance. That is the radical revolution Mr. Roosevelt invites, and he may be sure that the American people are against him on that issue by an overwhelming majority.

THE PRIMARY PLEDGE

As this copy of The Commoner may be read by some one not familiar with the details of the primary pledge plan, it is necessary to say that according to the terms of this plan every democrat is asked to pledge himself to attend all of the primaries of his party to be held between now and the next democratic national convention unless unavoidably prevented, and to secure a clear, honest and straightforward declaration of the party's position on every question upon which the voters of the party desire to speak. Those desiring to be enrolled can either write The Commoner approving the object of the organization and asking to have their names entered on the roll, or they can fill out and mail the blank pledge, which is printed on page 12.

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