

The Good and Bad of the President's Policies

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That good has come out of the administration of President Roosevelt is evident from the popular approval accorded it.

The public declaration of the president that under no circumstances would he accept a third term, marked the beginning of this approval.

His friendly offices in the settlement of the Russo-Japanese war made him a world figure, and gave him more prestige at home than all of his "big stick" performances in connection with our army and navy.

The steps taken to preserve the public lands and mineral wealth from private despoliation has met with universal praise.

His public utterances against plutocratic domination and the menace of predatory wealth have also opened the hearts of the people to him.

The official investigations set on foot and consequent exposure of the high crimes and misdemeanors of some of our "captains of industry" and a few of our public men, have also commended the president to the masses. The efforts of the president to secure some sort of control of the railways have likewise added to his reputation.

The fact that President Roosevelt was not pledged by the platform on which he was elected to any of these reforms has made his course of conduct a happy surprise to the country, and this has probably accorded to him a larger measure of praise than would otherwise have been meted out.

Considering his obligations to the insurance and other trusts for campaign contributions, and the powerful influences brought to bear upon him in the interests of the big corporations, the president has done so much better than the public had a right to expect, that his star shines with the greater brilliancy.

The good that has come from his speeches and messages is the more far-reaching because of its source. That which in a democratic president would have been denounced as anarchistic is patriotic in a republican president; and much that has been sneered at as "Bryanism" has thus been made respectable.

The good of the president's policies has made his name a household word, and given him a hold upon the country which must be reckoned with in the future, for the president will finish his present term while yet in the full vigor of his manhood, and he is not without ambition.

And yet the president's policies are by no means faultless and it is a question whether the bad in them does not outweigh the good.

That Mr. Roosevelt's egoism has made him blind to the reserved rights of the states, and oblivious of the barriers which the constitution has raised between the executive and the other branches of government, is well known to every thoughtful, unprejudiced mind. However well-intentioned these obliquities the danger to which the precedents thus set will expose the republic in the future are none the less serious.

The course of the administration is marked with extraordinary inconsistencies. How can the president's sincerity in his reform declarations be reconciled with a number of his official acts?

Why did he retain in his cabinet, Mr. Knox, the attorney for the trusts, appointed attorney general at the instance of the trusts?

Why did he make Mr. Morton, a railroad magnate of malodorous repute, a member of his cabinet, and defend this self-confessed violator of the rebate law?

Why did he appoint, and why does he keep in his cabinet, Mr. Root, a notorious attorney of the very trusts the president is denouncing?

Why does the president affiliate with the Addickses and the Spooners et id omne genus, while he turns his back on men like Governor Cummins and Senator LaFollette?

And why did he go to the assistance of the "Quay" republicans, as against the "Lincoln" republicans in Pennsylvania?

Mr. Knox, the favorite candidate of the trust barons for the succession is able to parade before the country the most fulsome praises of himself from Mr. Roosevelt.

A review of the significant facts tends to prove that the so-called war of the president upon the predatory corporations is not intended to be heroic.

In addition to those already mentioned many others might be cited which create a sus-

picion, that after all this warfare is largely a "play to the galleries" or a species of "four-flushing" if not a sham.

In spite of his solemn declaration that he would under no circumstances be a candidate in 1908, interviews are being given out to the effect that the president will rue his pledge as to a third term if he can break the solid south by carrying one southern state, and Mr. John Temple Graves does not hesitate to pledge to him the state of Georgia. Doubtless some other seeker after notoriety or public office will be equally ready to pledge to him the state of Texas.

The so-called "merger suit," so often boasted of, seems to be a case against rather than in favor of the administration. The decree of the supreme court in that case upholds the criminal as well as the civil clauses of the Sherman anti-trust act, but instead of following up the civil with criminal action against the law breakers, Attorney General Knox hastened to Wall Street to assure the trust magnates that the administration was not going to "run amuck;" and thereupon the railroads concerned immediately proceeded to organize another merger under a different name, which new trust has openly continued the same violations of law denounced by the court.

The president's singular change of front on the question of the control of rates when the amendment to the interstate commerce act was before the senate, has never been explained. The senate amendment, approved by the president, emasculated the original act of what the president had previously insisted was the vital point concerned; and thus the matter of rates is by legislative act made a judicial instead of an administrative or legislative act.

When Mr. Harriman was caught by the inter-state commerce commission "with the goods on him" and the country had every right to expect criminal action against that bold financial buccaneer, the Associated Press was quick to publish the news that at a cabinet meeting it had been concluded that no criminal measures would be resorted to in the case, and Mr. Harriman has since boldly proceeded with his policy of consolidation and public despoliation.

It is true that civil suits are being brought and that some of the trusts are being "fined" but what trust has been made to halt in its unlawful career, or to feel the terrors of the law?

The fines imposed have no terror for the trusts for the reason that these law breakers, by raising the prices of their product, and railroad rates, are able to shift the fine upon the public which is thus made to pay the penalty for the crimes others commit, and of which they complain. Could there be a worse travesty upon justice than this?

Thus it is that in spite of all the hue and cry raised against the trusts, the mergers continue, the consolidations go on, the trusts still ply their nefarious trades, prices soar, and the people, instead of finding relief, are fleeced worse than ever.

None of the remedies invoked by the administration have been effective for the reason that they do not go to the bottom of the evil. The axe is not laid at the root of the tree.

The spoils of the trusts are built up by special privileges of which the tariff was the beginning. By thus shutting off foreign competition, the combines are able to charge the people of the United States more than they charge for the same kind of goods to foreigners. Yet the president and his cabinet stand with "the standpatters" and stave off all revision of the robber tariff.

Still more to blame is the president for his failure to execute the laws required of him by his oath of office. Under the common law it is within the power of the president's attorney general and district attorneys to dissolve every trust engaged in inter-state commerce, and under the inter-state commerce and Sherman acts to clothe with stripes and put behind prison bars every trust magnate. One example of this kind would do more to protect the public from the menace of predatory wealth than all the fines that could be heaped upon the offenders. If the president is really sincere in his war upon plutocracy, why does he not thus enforce the law?

In view of these derelictions, the question naturally arises, why is the president so popular? The reason is not hard to find.

There is a growing fear of the trusts by

the people, and they are ready to hail as a Moses any high official who seems to be their friend as against their enemy. They will realize the magnitude of the danger which confronts them, and still less do they comprehend what is necessary for their relief.

Science and invention, in the last half century, have worked a revolution in transportation, in agriculture, in printing, in manufacture. The transition from primitive to modern methods, accompanied by a multiplication of man's labor power ten, a hundred, and in some instances a thousand fold, has raised the per capita wealth from \$307 in 1850 to \$1,300 in 1900, which, if equally distributed, would give five thousand dollars to each family in the United States. This has been done in spite of the vast sums squandered by our idle rich abroad, and over and above the billions destroyed in our civil war, and the cost of that war. But our vast wealth of one hundred billions of dollars is mostly concentrated in the hands of a few. It requires all the labor of all the people for one year to add to our wealth the fortune held by John D. Rockefeller. Mr. Rockefeller owns at least one-fourth of the total wealth of the United States, and the "Standard Oil group," of which he is the head and center, owns about one-tenth of that wealth. The wealth of this octopus has increased five thousand per cent, while the total wealth of the nation has increased only two hundred and fifty per cent. How long will it take five thousand per cent to overtake two hundred and fifty per cent? How long will it be before the Rockefellers, Ryans, Hills, Harrimans, etc., own the United States?

It is estimated that already three-tenths of one per cent of the population own seventy per cent of the total wealth.

Wealth is power and sits enthroned in our city council, legislative and congressional halls, and even in the judges' seats. It makes, interprets and executes the laws. The power to despoil the people through franchises and by means of gigantic combinations increases every hour. Stock jobbing and stock watering goes on with haste, and railroads are conspired and gas and street car and electric franchises are multiplying and the earnings of future generations are being mortgaged, and the millionaires are made "immune" from punishment. The rich and powerful have seized not only upon the industries of the country, but upon the government itself.

They control the party machinery. Behind the boss stands the millionaire and the corporation. Hundreds of thousands of children are made to work in the factories, mills and mines, with long hours and small pay, and the future fathers, mothers, and children are being dwarfed in body, mind and soul. Graft is rampant not only in the insurance companies whose wards are the widows and the orphans, but in public places, and corruption reigns in political conventions and at the polls.

It is facts like these that are putting the people in fear of the future and compelling them to look for a Moses and making them ready to hail as a redeemer the first president they have had in fifty years who has shown any disposition to stand by them as against their despoilers.

When they learn how ineffective the president's policies will prove, Mr. Roosevelt may lose some of his popularity.

The president has taken the position that the water now extant in the issues of the capital stock of the corporations must be upheld as "vested rights." When the public comprehends that these fraudulent issues aggregate untold billions and in effect constitute a mortgage upon the productive resources of the country, and that this mortgage, in connection with the tremendous concentration of the resources of the country in the hands of the few must necessarily eventuate in industrial slavery, it is certain that Mr. Roosevelt will have to change his policy or lose his popularity.

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The Lincoln (Neb.) Journal, republican, wants an explanation from the packing trust about the sudden advance in the price of dressed beef and pork. The explanation is very simple. The injunction that enjoins a labor union is enforced; the injunction that enjoins the packing trust is for republican advertising purposes only.