

Theodore Roosevelt's Columbus Speech

Theodore Roosevelt is now a candidate for the republican nomination for the presidency. Following is an Associated Press dispatch concerning his Columbus, Ohio, speech:

Columbus, O., Feb. 21.—Declaring for the people's power, so far as the initiative and referendum is concerned, although he wanted its exercise protected by "proper restrictions," Colonel Roosevelt today took the most progressive stand of his career. He also told the Ohio constitutional convention, before which he presented his "charter of democracy," that, although originally opposed to the recall, he now believed it also should be within the power of the people. He qualified the recall for judges by suggesting what he said was a better plan and avoided all reference to the tariff and certain other national issues by saying that he stood today exactly where he stood a year ago on such matters.

"The power to invoke direct action, by both initiative and referendum," said Roosevelt, "should be provided for the people in such fashion as to prevent its being wantonly or too frequently used. In the great majority of cases it is far better that action on legislative matters should be taken by those specially delegated to perform the task. Action by the initiative or referendum ought not to be the normal way of legislation; but the power to take it should be provided in the constitution; that if the representatives truly fail to represent the people on some matter of sufficient importance to arouse popular interest, then the people will have in their hands the facilities to make good that failure."

This reference came as the climax of an eloquent appeal for increased power for the voter, who, the colonel said, should be given unbridged power of direct nominations, including therein direct preferential primaries for the election of delegates to the national nominating conventions. In this connection some of his hearers saw a barbed reference to the present situation in his party, when Roosevelt said:

"As good citizens we are willing to acquiesce cheerfully in a nomination secured by the expression of a majority of the people, but do not like to acquiesce in a nomination secured by adroit political management in defeating the wish of the majority of the people."

So far as the recall is concerned, the colonel said that there exists no great necessity for it "as regards short term elective officers." However, after consideration, he said, he "believes it should be generally provided, but with such restrictions as will make it available only when there is a widespread and genuine public feeling among a majority of the voters."

In its application to judges, Roosevelt believed there was a better remedy than the recall and that was giving the people as a whole the power to decide what they wanted in the way of laws.

PEOPLE HAVE RIGHT TO DECIDE

"Legislators and judges alike are the servants of the people," he said, "and if two sets of public servants disagree as to the amount of power delegated to them by the people under the constitution and, if the case is of sufficient importance, then, as a matter of course, it should be the right of the people themselves to decide between them."

The ex-president's address, in full, was as follows:

"Mr. President, and Members of the Ohio constitutional convention:

"I am profoundly sensible of the honor you have done me in asking me to address you. You are engaged in the fundamental work of self-government; you are engaged in framing a constitution under and in accordance with which the people are to get and to do justice and absolutely to rule themselves. No representative body can have a higher task. To carry it through successfully there is need to combine practical common sense of the most hard-headed kind with a spirit of lofty idealism. Without idealism your work will be but a sordid makeshift; and without the hard-headed common sense the idealism will be either wasted or worse than wasted.

"I shall not try to speak to you of matters of detail. Each of our commonwealths has its own local needs, local customs, and habits of thought, different from those of other commonwealths; and each must therefore apply in its own fashion the great principles of our politi-

cal life. But these principles themselves are in their essence applicable everywhere, and of some of them I shall speak to you. I can not touch upon them all; the subject is too vast and the time too limited; if any one of you cares to know my views of these matters which I do not today discuss, I will gladly send him a copy of the speeches I made in 1910, which I think cover most of the ground.

"I believe in pure democracy. With Lincoln, I hold that 'this country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it.' We progressives believe that the people have the right, the power, and the duty to protect themselves and their own welfare; that human rights are supreme over all other rights; that wealth should be the servant, not the master, of the people. We believe that unless representative government does absolutely represent the people it is not representative government at all. We test the worth of all men and all measures by asking how they contribute to the welfare of the men, women, and children of whom this nation is composed. We are engaged in one of the great battles of the age-long contest waged against privilege on behalf of the common welfare. We hold it a prime duty of the people to free our government from the control of money in politics. For this purpose we advocate, not as ends in themselves, but as weapons in the hands of the people all governmental devices which will make the representatives of the people more easily and certainly responsible to the people's will.

COUNTRY BELONGS TO PEOPLE

"This country, as Lincoln said, belongs to the people. So do the natural resources which make it rich. They supply the basis of our prosperity now and hereafter. In preserving them, which is a national duty, we must not forget that monopoly is based on the control of natural resources and natural advantages, and that it will help the people little to conserve our natural wealth unless the benefits which it can yield are secured to the people. Let us remember, also, that conservation does not stop with the natural resources, but that the principle of making the best use of all we have requires with equal or greater insistence that we shall stop the waste of human life in industry and prevent the waste of human welfare which flows from the unfair use of concentrated power and wealth in the hands of men whose eagerness for profit blinds them to the cost of what they do. We have no higher duty than to promote the efficiency of the individual. There is no surer road to the efficiency of the nation.

"I am emphatically a believer in constitutionalism, and because of this fact I no less emphatically protest against any theory that would make of the constitution a means of thwarting instead of securing the absolute right of the people to rule themselves and to provide for their own social and industrial well-being. All constitutions, those of the states no less than those of the nation, are designed, and must be interpreted and administered, so as to fit human rights. Lincoln so interpreted and administered the national constitution. Buchanan attempted the reverse, attempted to fit human rights to, and limit them by, the constitution. It was Buchanan who treated the courts as a fetish, who protested against and condemned all criticism of the judges for unjust and unrighteous decisions, and upheld the constitution as an instrument for the protection of privilege and of vested wrong. It was Lincoln who appealed to the people against the judges when the judges went wrong, who advocated and secured what was practically the recall of the Dred Scott decision, and who treated the constitution as a living force for righteousness. We stand for applying the constitution to the issues of today as Lincoln applied it to the issues of his day; Lincoln, mind you, and not Buchanan, was the real upholder and preserver of the constitution, for the true progressive, the progressive of the Lincoln stamp, is the only true constitutionalist, the only real conservative.

EASY OF AMENDMENT

"The object of every American constitution worth calling such must be what is set forth to be in the preamble to the national constitution, 'to establish justice,' that is, to secure justice as between man and man by means of genuine popular self-government. If the constitu-

tion is successfully invoked to nullify the effort to remedy injustice, it is proof positive either that the constitution needs immediate amendment or else that it is being wrongfully and improperly construed. I therefore very earnestly ask you clearly to provide in this constitution means which will enable the people readily to amend it if at any point it works injustice, and also means which will permit the people themselves by popular vote, after due deliberation and discussion, but finally and without appeal, to settle what the proper construction of any constitutional point is. It is often said that ours is a government of checks and balances. But this should only mean that these checks and balances obtain as among the several different kinds of representatives of the people—judicial, executive and legislative—to whom the people have delegated certain portions of their power. It does not mean that the people have parted with their power or can not resume it. The "division of powers" is merely the division among the representatives of the powers delegated to them; the term must not be held to mean that the people have divided their power with their delegates. The power is the people's, and only the people's. It is right and proper that provision should be made rendering it necessary for the people to take ample time to make up their minds on any point; but there should also be complete provision to have their decision put into immediate and living effect when it has thus been deliberately and definitely reached.

THWARTING THE PEOPLE

"I hold it to be the duty of every public servant, and of every man who in public or private life holds a position of leadership in thought or action, to endeavor honestly and fearlessly to guide his fellow-countrymen to right decisions, but I emphatically dissent from the view that it is either wise or necessary to try to devise methods which under the constitution will automatically prevent the people from deciding for themselves what governmental action they deem just and proper. It is impossible to invent constitutional devices which will prevent the popular will from being effective for wrong without also preventing it from being effective for right. The only safe course to follow in this great American democracy is to provide for making the popular judgment really effective. When this is done, then it is our duty to see that the people, having the full power, realize their heavy responsibility for exercising that power aright. But it is a false constitutionalism, a false statesmanship, to endeavor by the exercise of a perverted ingenuity to seem to give the people full power and at the same time to trick them out of it. Yet this is precisely what is done in every case where the state permits representatives, whether on the bench or in the legislature or in the executive office, to declare that it has not the power to right grave social wrongs, or that any of the officers created by the people, and rightfully the servants of the people, can set themselves up to be masters of the people. Constitution-makers should make it clear beyond shadow of doubt that the people in their legislative capacity have the power to enact into law any measure they deem necessary for the betterment of social and industrial conditions. The wisdom of framing any particular law of this kind is a proper subject of debate; but the power of the people to enact the law should not be subject to debate. To hold the contrary view is to be false to the cause of the people, to the cause of American democracy.

"Lincoln, with his clear vision, his ingrained sense of justice, and his spirit of kindly friendliness to all, forecast our present struggle and saw the way out. What he said should be pondered by capitalist and workingman alike. He spoke as follows (I condense):

"I hold that while man exists it is his duty to improve not only his condition but to assist in ameliorating mankind. Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor should this lead to a war upon property. Property is the fruit of labor. Property is desirable, is a positive good in the world. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him work diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built."

"This last sentence characteristically shows Lincoln's homely, kindly common sense. His is the attitude that we ought to take. He showed the proper sense of proportion in his relative estimates of capital and labor, of human rights and the rights of wealth. Above all, in what he thus said, as on so many other occa-