# President Wilson to First Voters

Address of President Wilson, at Convention Hall, Philadelphia, May 10, 1915: Mr. Mayor, Fellow-citizens:

It warms my heart that you should give me such a reception; but it is not of myself that I wish to think tonight, but of those who have just become citizens of the United States. This is the only country in the world which experiences this constant and repeated rebirth. Other countries depend upon the multiplication of their own native people. This country is constantly drinking strength out of new sources by the voluntary association with it of great bodies of strong men and forward-looking women. And so by the gift of the free will of independent people it is being constantly renewed from generation to generation by the same process by which it was originally created. It is as if humanity had determined to see to it that this great nation, founded for the benefit of humanity, should not lack for the allegiance of the people of the world.

You have just taken an oath of allegiance to the United States. Of allegiance to whom? Of allegiance to no one, unless it be to God. Certainly not of allegiance to those who temporarily represent this great government. You have taken an oath of allegiance to a great ideal, to a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race. You have said, "We are going to America, not only to earn a living, not only to seek the things which it was more difficult to obtain where we were born, but to help forward the great enterprises of the human spirit—to let men know that everywhere in the world there are men who will cross strange oceans and go where a speech is spoken which is alien to them, knowing that whatever the speech, there is but one longing and utterance of the human heart and that is for liberty and justice." And while you bring all countries with you, you come with a purpose of leaving all other countries behind you,-bringing what is best of their spirit, but not looking over your shoulders and seeking to perpetuate what you intended to leave in them. I certainly would not be one even to suggest that a man cease to love the home of his birth and the nation of his origin — these things are very sacred and ought not to be put out of our hearts -but it is one thing to love the place where you were born and it is another thing to dedicate yourself to the place to which you go. You can not dedicate yourself to America unless you become in every respect and with every purpose of your will thorough Americans. You can not become thorough Americans if you think of yourselves in groups. America does not consist of groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American, and the man who goes among you to trade upon your nationality is no worthy son to live under the Stars and Stripes.

My urgent advice to you would be, not only always to think first of America, but always. also, to think first of humanity. You do not love humanity if you seek to divide humanity into jealous camps. Humanity can be welded together only by love, by sympathy, by justice, not by jealousy and hatred. I am sorry for the man who seeks to make personal capital out of the passions of his fellow men. He has lost the touch and ideal of America, for America was created to unite mankind by those passions which lift and not by the passions which separate and debase. We came to America, either ourselves or in the persons of our ancestors, to better the ideals of men, to make them see finer things than they had seen before, to get rid of the things that divide, and to make sure of the things that unite. It was but an historical accident no doubt that this great country was called the "United States"; yet I am very thankful that it has that word "United" in its title. and the man who seeks to divide man from man, group from group, interest from interest, in the United States is striking at its very heart.

It is a very interesting circumstance to me, in thinking of those of you who have just sworn allegiance to this great government that you were drawn across the ocean by some beckoning finger of hope, by some belief, by some vision of a new kind of justice, by some expectation of a better kind of life. No doubt you have been

disappointed in some of us. Some of us are very disappointing. No doubt you have found that justice in the United States goes only with a pure heart and a right purpose as it does everywhere else in the world. No doubt what you found here did not seem touched for you, after all, with the complete beauty of the ideal which you had conceived beforehand. But remember this: If we had grown at all poor in the ideal, you brought some of it with you. A man does not go out to seek the thing that is not in him. A man does not hope for the thing that he does not believe in, and if some of us have forgotten what America believed in, you, at any rate, imported in your own hearts a renewal of the belief. That is the reason that I, for one, make you welcome. If I have in any degree forgotten what America was intended for, I will thank God if you will remind me. I was born in America. You dreamed dreams of what America was to be and I hope you brought the dreams with you. No man that does not see visions will ever realize any high hope or undertake any high enterprise. Just because you brought dreams with you, America is more likely to realize the dreams such as you brought. You are enriching us if you came expecting us to be better than we are.

See, my friends, what that means. It means that Americans must have a consciousness different from the consciousness of every other nation in the world. I am not saying this with even the slightest thought of criticism of other nations. You know how it is with a family. A family gets centered on itself if it is not careful and is less interested in the neighbors than it is in its own members. So a nation that is not constantly renewed out of new sources is apt to have the narrowness and prejudice of a family; whereas, America must have this consciousness, that on all sides it touches elbows and touches hearts with all the nations of mankind. The example of America must be a special example. The example of America must be the example not merely of peace because it will not fight, but of peace because peace is the healing and elevating influence of the world, and strife is not. There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right.

You have come into this great nation voluntarily seeking something that we have to give, and all that we have to give is this. We can not exempt you from work. No man is exempt from work anywhere in the world. I sometimes think he is fortunate if he has to work only with his hands and not with his head. It is very easy to do what other people give you to do, but it is very difficult to give other people things to do. We can not exempt you from work: We can not exempt you from the strife and the heartbreaking burden of the struggle of the day-that is common to mankind everywhere; we can not exempt you from the loads that you must carry; we can only make them light by the spirit in which they are carried. That is the spirit of hope, it is the spirit of liberty, it is the spirit of justice.

When I was asked, therefore, by the mayor and the committee that accompanied me up from Washington to meet this great company of newly admitted citizens, I could not decline the invitation. I ought not to be away from Washington, and yet I feel that it has renewed my spirit as an American. In Washington men tell you so many things every day that are not so. and I like to come and stand in the presence of a great body of my fellow citizens, whether they have been my fellow citizens a long or a short time, and drink, as it were, out of the common fountains with them and go back feeling what you have so generously given me, the sense of your support and of the living vitality in your hearts of its great ideals which made America the hope of the world.

Mr. Bryan's resignation will permit him to give more time to editorial work on The Commoner and enable him to discuss the many important issues of the approaching presidential campaign with a freedom and an effectiveness that will make the paper of more service to the cause of peace and progressive democracy.

# DALLAS NEWS ANSWERS ITSELF

The June 10th issue of the Dallas News contained a severe criticism of Mr. Bryan's resignation, but in the make up two stanzas from an anonymous contributor were by some strange mistake imbedded in the editorial. The lines read:

"Be thou like the old apostles,
Be thou like heroic Paul;
If a free thought seeks expression,
Speak it boldly! Speak it all!

"Face thine enemies—accusers; Scorn the prison, rack or rod; And if thou has truth to utter, Speak! and leave the rest to God."

Thanks to the News for thus putting the answer in the editorial.

#### INDIANA'S SHAME

On another page will be found an editorial which recently appeared in the Indianapolis Times, entitled "Back of Roberts."

The readers of The Commoner are invited to consider the facts set forth in the Times ed-'Terre Haute is not worse than many itorial. other cities; it has simply been brought into the limelight by an exposure of real conditions, but that exposure ought to shock the people of other cities into an investigation of local affairs. Nowhere have the liquor interests been more brazenly and impudently in evidence than in the state of Indiana. They have aspired to the doinination of both political parties and of the machinery of the state. The lid was taken off at Terre Haute and the public was permitted to look in upon a mass of corruption, sickening and repulsive. But this is only a sample; take off the lid anywhere and you will find the same loathsome condition. The saloon is the testering source of political and moral pollution.

"How long, O Lord, how long" will the respectable elements of a community sell for a paltry pittance the right to poison the people and their government? How long will brewers, distillers and saloonkeepers be permitted to pick out the members of the party organization and by bribery or intimidation force upon the municipalities and the commonwealth a business which begins with a conspiracy against the public welfare and ends in every conceivable crime against society?

W. J. BRYAN.

### A CASE IN POINT

When there was trouble at Vera Cruz a year ago and when war was much nearer than it is now, it was not thought improper for senators like Root and Lodge to criticize the position taken by the administration and to oppose the resolution asked for. But now, in the opinion of the very papers that opposed Root and Lodge, it is extremely reprehensible for a member of the cabinet to resign and dissent from methods employed on the ground that those methods might result in war.

## THE PEACE TREATIES SPREADING

The A. B. C. countries, as Argentina, Brazil and Chile are often called, have just joined in a treaty providing for investigation of all disputes. The treaty follows the line of the thirty treaties negotiated by the United States with as many countries. We have reason to feel proud that the example set by one nation has been followed by these important republics. Hasten the day when all the nations will be united by such treaties.

W. J. BRYAN.

Western republican editors are rising up to denounce the standpat and calamity howl character of the literature being sent out from the republican press bureau at the national capital. These editors are unreasonable. What other kind of literature would the reactionaries who are financing this publicity instruct their press agents to send out?

Mr. Bryan greatly appreciates the many telegrams and letters that have poured in upon him, commending him for the position he has taken in regard to the German note. He asks these friends to pardon delay in answering as it is impossible at this time for him to do so, but later he will make personal acknowledgement to each communication.