

President Entertains Chautauqua with Bad Logic

President Roosevelt is engaged in making what the military writers would call "a retrograde movement." He is, perhaps, striving to strike a balance that will permit him to "stand pat" on the execrable Morton decision and at the same time give him freedom for political purposes to wave the "big stick" at the trusts.

In a number of his recent speeches the president has told how difficult it is for the government to deal with the law-defying trusts. At Chautauque, N. Y., in a most gingerly style, he suggested that "congress may well inquire whether it should not seek other means of carrying into effect the law." He thinks that, perhaps, publicity may turn the trick; if not, suppose we try other means. Perchance we shall be able some time and in some way to make the trusts squirm.

But the most startling and at the same time the most deplorable statement yet made by President Roosevelt is contained in these words: "The government has very properly exercised moderation in attempting to enforce the criminal provisions of the statute."

The president was speaking of the Sherman anti-trust law, which has a criminal provision that should be enforced with as much fidelity as any other portion of the law. This theory that government can exercise "moderation" in the enforcement of law is essentially vicious. It is akin to the theory that laws may be "liberally interpreted," which is tantamount to saying that the will of the people shall be defied, that only such portions of the laws adopted by the people shall be enforced as meet with the approval of the executive power. It is the old fallacy of preferential treatment for the favored few. And now the chief executive seeks to elevate this detestable fallacy to the status of a political doctrine. Hitherto the strong have seized special privileges without seeking to defend them as rights. Their action has been brutal, cold-blooded, defiant, but it has been frank. It has not sought to shelter itself behind the mean hypocrisy of all the law for the poor and weak and part of the law for the rich and mighty. Candid robbery is always preferable to pious fraud. President Roosevelt deludes himself if he thinks it possible for him by sheer reiteration to make this pious political fraud a doctrine of government.

Those who, six months ago, were willing to support the president loyally because they believed him to be in favor of trust control and railway regulation, cannot but view with disgust his change of position. Roosevelt is finding that San Juan Hill was a poor test of courage as compared to waging relentless and unflinching war on corporation tyranny. Who is he that can cay with certainty at this time where Roosevelt stands on the question of railway regulation? One day he seems to be in favor of giving the interstate commerce commission the power to fix rates and the next day he is vaguely advocating some milk-and-water scheme of government supervision.

When Roosevelt was a police commissioner in New York city nine years ago he was an apostle of law enforcement. The rigid Raines law had been passed by the legislature and Roosevelt was insisting that it be enforced to the letter. He tramped the streets late at night, going into obscure corners of the great metropolis, to see that no liquor was sold after hours and that no free lunches polluted the side tables of lowly taverns. Not a theatre, big or little, opened its doors on Sunday because Theodore Roosevelt wanted the law enforced without the least moderation.

But the president is not so radical today. He shudders at the word drastic and in his Chautauqua speech he declared that if "drastic legislation" should be proposed he would be hostile to it. The drastic police commissioner has become the moderate president. The advocate of law enforcement has become the special pleader for the powerful criminal.

The president expressed the belief that if normal commercial conditions were restored "the more able and the more fortunate" would be more benefitted than at present under the regime of special privilege. Continuing, he said:

"If, under such circumstances, the less fortunate man is moved by the envy of his more fortunate brother to strike at the conditions under which they have both, though unequally, prospered, he may rest assured while the result may be damaging to the other men, it will be even more damaging to himself."

It may be assumed that the president, when he uttered the foregoing words, did not know that he was grossly insulting the American people. By implication, however, he declares that, after normal industrial conditions are restored, the less fortunate man will seek to destroy his brethren and his government, and will suffer the consequences of such iniquity. But why should the president of the

United States imagine that the American people would wish to commit such iniquity after the "square deal" had been restored. Is it not heaping insult on injury to hint that the people who are now demanding that the reign of special privilege shall end, will still be eager to drag down the more fortunate when everyone is enjoying a fair chance? It is true that there will always be men protesting against the established order without reason, but why should the president concern himself with this unimportant class? The great mass who are opposed to special privilege will be satisfied with the fair chance, even though there can never be a just distribution of stolen wealth.

The philosophic president is prone to bad logic. The sweeping term "the more able and the more fortunate" is vast in its scope but vague in its significance. It is an attempt to express the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. The president should be reminded, however, that those who are able to survive under one order of industrial conditions are not those who will survive under a wholly different order. Under present conditions a premium is placed on craft and cunning, and, therefore, the clever thief and grafter is "the more able and the more fortunate," speaking, of course, without any reference to the ethical phase of the question, because from the moral point of view, the thief can never be the more fortunate.

But the president is willing that the American people shall have "a square deal" again, and he tells how, in his opinion, normal conditions may be restored. On the other hand, he is too solicitous lest the rich shall not be given "a square deal." For example, he refers to the "just, but sometimes misguided, popular indignation." Here is bad logic again. If the indignation is just it is not misguided, and if it is misguided it is not just. He earnestly believes that it is true of only a relatively small portion of the rich men that they strive to override and circumvent the law. Having been rich all his life, and having associated much with rich men, the president, of course, ought to know what he is talking about, and it would certainly be fallacious to say that as a class the rich differ fundamentally from the poor. Redistribute the wealth of the nation, so that the rich would be poor and some of the poor would be rich, and we would not find the new-rich deviating very much from the conduct of those who now possess the wealth. Apparently the president believes that the vast majority of his fellow countrymen are crying out on the rich because they hate the rich. But the president should know better, for he has been thrown much with the poor men of the land. The poor do not hate the rich; they hate "the system," Mr. President. They hate "the system" that buys juries, legislatures and presidential elections; that feeds fat on special privilege; that centralizes the wealth into the hands of the few by dishonest means, and finally they do hate the rich who are rich and dishonest, rich and cruel, rich and unjust, rich and uncharitable. In a word they hate those who know not what it is "to love and be loved." Only a relatively small proportion of the rich are in this class. It is true, and the nation would be in a sorry plight were it not true.

The president, however, need not be solicitous lest the rich be made to suffer injustice. The world's history has kept no account of the rich who were not able to take care of themselves. Contrary-wise, the history of mankind is filled with the annals of the poor who have been the victims of injustice. Let the president, therefore, go forward in his work of reconstruction, confident that the rich will not be driven to the wall and that the poor will not gain anything that does not belong to them.

~~~~~ "MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM"

Those who opposed municipal ownership of public utilities are striving to disparage it by laying stress on its socialistic phase. Evidently their theory is that the vast majority of people in this country can be thoroughly intimidated by the menace of socialistic reconstruction. In England, where municipal ownership has made great progress, the term "municipal socialism" is commonly used, but in England there is not as much hypocrisy about socialism as there is in the United States. Nevertheless the lord mayor of London, who was in Chicago the other day, condemned municipal ownership as being "too socialistic." He also found fault with it because he held that it interferes with private enterprise.

In the United States the demand is simply for the public ownership of those utilities which are natural monopolies. There is a fundamental difference between a demand that the state shall own all the means of production and distribution and a demand that the public shall own their transit, water, lightning, and telephone systems. These systems are for the public service, and every indi-