

Why President Roosevelt is For Taft

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"There was nothing really interesting," said the President, about our first meeting. It occurred in Washington in 1890, when I was thirty-one and Taft about a year older." They just met that was all Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft as other Federal officeholders by appointment of President Harrison came to know one another. At the New Year reception in the White House, Mr. Taft, the Solicitor General, took the precedence over Mr. Roosevelt, the Civil Service Commissioner. Mr. Taft, moreover, enjoyed a certain distinction in official life which was his by inheritance. Judge Alonzo Taft, his father had been in Grant's cabinet, first as Secretary of War and then as Attorney General, after which he had represented the United States at Vienna and later in St. Petersburg. Mr. Roosevelt's father on the other hand, never held public office, and yet with such abundant esteem was he regarded by rich and poor alike, that when he died, two years before his son's graduation from Harvard, flags were displayed at half-mast all over the city of New York.

Taft Sat on the Bully.

"My father was the finest man I ever knew," said the President, "and the happiest." Never once in all probability, has Mr. Roosevelt regretted that his father was not a public man. And yet he is frank acknowledging that there may be certain advantages to one who is born into public life.

"Taft belongs to a family," said the President, which has always done remarkable public service. He graduated from Yale in 1878; and a few years later, when Yale gave him the honorary degree of LL. D., he was the youngest of her graduates upon whom she had ever conferred this honor. On graduation he took up the study of law, and also entered actively into public life. In both careers he rose steadily and rapidly."

The one episode in Mr. Taft's earlier life which, it might be supposed, would make a deep impression on Mr. Roosevelt, was not alluded to. If ever he had heard of the incident, he had entirely forgotten it. Nevertheless the President's eyes sparkled and he gleefully bared his teeth, when reminded how "Old Bill" Taft, not long out of college, had thrashed a formidable citizen named Rose. He was something of a "slugger," this fellow Rose, who had criminally libeled Judge Alonzo Taft in a filthy article printed in his blackmailing sheet indignantly resenting the attack on his father, young Taft knocked Rose down, sat upon him, and delivered this ultimatum:

"If you leave town to-night, I will let you up."

Rose unhesitatingly promised and thereby believed his crushed person of some two hundred pounds of militant young manhood.

"Now, then," said Taft by way of farewell. "I am coming downtown to-night and if you are still here, then this thing has only started." But knowing when he had enough, Rose left Cincinnati that day.

This is about the best of the "Taft hero tales," and yet it isn't so strange that the President did not have the story on the tip of his tongue. The truth is he thinks of Taft not primarily as a fighter, not as a man of his own kidney, but rather as a great conciliator, a practical and effectual worker for the "peace of justice."

The most characteristic of Mr. Taft's early acts, to President

Roosevelt's mind, was that of throwing up what politicians term a "fat office." By way of "promoting harmony" Taft, then not twenty-five, was appointed Collector of Internal Revenue, at Cincinnati, by President Arthur. Although the position paid about \$10,000 a year, it was not at all to Taft's liking. It was a money handling, moneymaking position, essentially commercial in its nature, and as Taft's father and grandfather before him had been lawyers and judges, mere money making was not in the blood. Before he had drawn a full year's salary, Taft resigned and returned to the practice of law. In this circumstance, "not of great importance," according to one of the biographers, William

him poor and squalid. He never surrendered his convictions," repeated the President "and yet he worked successfully with men in single life—better than I did. For instance, he got along excellently with President Harrison,—much better than I did."

When William H. Taft accepted President Harrison's appointment to the Federal Court of the Sixth Circuit, it was at what the workaday world call a "distinctly personal sacrifice," which means a financial sacrifice. As Solicitor General of the United States, he had proved himself a masterly advocate, and had gained an enviable reputation at the bar. Therefore, he was much sought after as a partner, and the law firms of national stand-

ed public questions at the same angle, and I wished to benefit from his sane, fair judgment."

"You remember my fight in New York for the bill taxing public utility corporation on their valuable franchises. You recall that I sent an emergency message to the legislature, urging the passage of the Franchise Tax Bill; that my special message wasn't read; and that I sent in another on the following day which was read; and that the bill was passed and became a law. I was sure of my ground in that fight, and for that certainty of mind I was considerably indebted to Taft."

"Knowing that the contest with the corporations was to come over this legislation, I

Theodore Roosevelt is the "original Taft man." As long ago as 1901, he looked upon William H. Taft as of Presidential timber, and said so unequivocally. In the brief period when he was Vice-President of the United States, Colonel Roosevelt wrote for "The Outlook" an article under the title, "Governor William H. Taft." This was published in September, 1901, after Mr. Roosevelt had assumed the Presidency. It was introduced in this manner:

"A year ago a man of wide acquaintance both with American public life and American public men remarked that the first governor of the Philippines ought to combine the qualities which would make a first-class President of the United States with the qualities which would make a first-class Chief Justice of the United States, and that the only man he knew who possessed all the qualities was Judge William H. Taft, of Ohio." The statement was entirely correct. Few more difficult tasks have devolved upon any one man of our nationality during our century and a quarter of public life than the handling of the Philippine Islands just at this time; and it may be doubted whether among men now living as well fitted as Judge Taft to do this incredibly difficult work.

"I dislike speaking in hyperbole; but I think that almost all men who have been brought in close contact, personally and officially, with Judge Taft are agreed that he combines as very, very few men can combine, a standard of absolutely unflinching recititude on every point of public duty, and a literally dauntless courage and willingness to bear responsibility, with a knowledge of men and a far-reaching tract of kindness, which enable his great abilities and high principles to be of use in a way that would be impossible were he not thus gifted to work hand in hand with his fellows."

This remarkably high opinion President Roosevelt proceeded to back up at the very first opportunity. A vacancy occurred on the bench of the highest court in the land and the President offered to appoint Governor Taft a Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The most cherished ambition of his life was within the grasp of Judge Taft, but, realizing that he was needed still longer in the Philippines, he declined the appointment.

"When you tendered Mr. Taft a place on the Supreme bench, Mr. President, did you then consider him best fitted for judicial life?"

"I knew it was the height of his ambition to be a member of the Supreme Court," Mr. Roosevelt replied "He conspicuously merited the honor and thoroughly deserved the appointment. I told him that he must decide the matter for himself. Just as I told him," interpolated the President, "that he must determine for himself whether or not to run for the Presidency."

That declination of the judgeship," observed President Roosevelt, with a look of real pleasure, "was particularly characteristic of Taft. In all my life I have never known a man so absorbed in unselfish service. With him the 'joy of working' is a passion. The trouble with Taft is that he would have the nation—meaning the average citizen—as disinterested as himself. And Taft is too disinterested. He has hardly given enough consideration, for instance, to material things, considering that he is a man with a family."

The President had in mind the

time when Mr. Taft threw up his collectorship of internal revenue, at Cincinnati, and the occasion when he turned his back on an annual income of \$50,000 to accept a six-thousand-dollar-a-year Judgeship. Mr. Roosevelt knows, moreover, that when Taft returned from the Philippines, all he possessed in the world was \$1,500. Taft's capital was his name and fame.

William H. Taft came home from the Far East to enter the cabinet of his friend, Theodore Roosevelt. "Why did you fix him on the War portfolio?" the President was asked.

"Wanted him in my cabinet. I knew he would make an excellent Secretary of War, as he unquestionably has done; but I desired especially his counsel. Root was going out, and I needed an adviser of similar breadth of view to take his place. Taft's experience gained in the Philippines and his acquaintance with the Spanish-speaking laymen and prelates, was bound to help him in dealing with Cuba."

"And that is why you selected him as the man to send to Cuba to head off a revolution?"

"Precisely," replied the President. "For reasons not unrelated I sent him to Panama when it looked as though there might be trouble on the Isthmus. And he succeeded—he has succeeded in every diplomatic mission—because of his unwearied patience, his kindness, his firmness, and because of his ability to persuade a suspicious people that he is working with an eye single to their interest."

We had come to the main line of inquiry at last. "Why Mr. President, in your judgment is Mr. Taft so well equipped for the Presidency?"

"The bigness of the job demands a man of Taft's type," was the reply. He is "thoroughly prepared for the task which will confront him. Never has there been a candidate for the Presidency so admirably trained in verified administrative service. Then, Taft is a thoroughly national man. There is no stronger appeal to him from the North than from the South, from the West than from the East. Creed and color make no difference to him. He seeks to do substantial justice to all. There isn't a mean streak in the man's make-up."

"He is not of the fighting type though."

"Yes he is," insisted the President; "no man fights harder when he thinks it is necessary; but he hates to fight unless it is necessary."

"It is said that he would carry out your policies 'quietly,'—too quietly, perhaps, to obtain real results."

"Taft has his way of doing things and I have my way. I gave out my recent statement regarding the Standard Oil decision without consulting him.

He wouldn't have made that public statement, and yet he was greatly disappointed at the decision. Perhaps Taft's way of accomplishing results is better than mine. But I have to do things in my own way."

"You blazed the way, Mr. President. If elected, Mr. Taft will find the people alive as never before to public questions. It will be much easier for him to obtain popular support for what are the Republican policies, than it was for you, at the outset, to get backing for those same policies."

"That may be true," agreed the President. "But I think Taft will succeed with Congress better than I have done."

The point had been reached (Continued on page 7)

NO RETREAT



THE SENTINEL STANDS FIRMLY IN DEFENSE OF HIS FLAG.

—From the Baltimore American

Howard Taft displayed a trait which, more than any other, perhaps, commends him to the admiration of Theodore Roosevelt.

What Roosevelt Saw in Taft.

"What was it Mr. President, that drew you and Mr. Taft together?" I asked.

"I was drawn to him because he never surrendered his high convictions and yet he got along well with people of less high convictions. Holding fast to lofty ideals, he nevertheless accomplished things much worth while. We had I soon found the same views of life," continued Mr. Roosevelt. "He despised, as I did—and do—the selfish and sordid view of life that rates everything by the money standard. He could not tolerate, any more than could I, the stock-ticker attitude of mind; the mere moneymaking seemed to him a poor creature—as he is. Greed, whether realized or unrealized, seemed to

ing offered to guarantee him earnings if he would enter into co-partnership agreements with them. To practice law meant at least \$50,000 a year to sit on the bench, an annual salary of but \$6000. Mr. Taft chose the judgeship, offering this simple explanation to his friends.

"There are more desirable things in the world than money." That act has always pleased Mr. Roosevelt mightily; he said so emphatically when reminded of Mr. Taft's indifference to the pocketbook argument. It delights Theodore Roosevelt's soul to think of his friend Taft, at this quiet period of his career, wholly content in his modest McMillin Street home, seeing little and caring less of those of the "stock ticker type of mind."

"When I became governor of New York, and was confronted with new and perplexing problems, I turned instinctively to Taft. I knew that we approach-

visited Taft in Cincinnati and went into the subject deeply with him. His advice proved to be invaluable. Taft really had a hand in that first fight of mine for corporation control."

"As I have often said, I consider the franchise tax law a part of my general policies of railroad regulation and corporation control. In view therefore of the experiences I have cited, you can understand me fully when I say that Taft knows my policies. They are as much his as mine. And he will carry them out, as he has promised to do in his speech of acceptance."

Why the President is for Taft.

This brings squarely before us our main proposition, Why the President is for Taft. It may not be generally known, but Roosevelt has been "for Taft" for several years—not as a politician is "for" his boon friend, but as a good citizen would have the office seek a worthy man.