

Roosevelt Is for Mr. Taft

President Writes Letter Denying Bryan's Claim to Heirship

Oyster Bay—A letter written by the president to Conrad Kohrs of Helena, Mont., an old friend, was made public recently. The communication, it was said, was called forth by William J. Bryan's statement that he was the president's heir and natural successor.

Conrad Kohrs of Helena, Mont., is an old time cattle man and one of the most prominent citizens of Montana. He and the president came into close relationship more than twenty years ago when they were both members of the Montana Stock Growers' association, the president being at that time the representative of the Little Missouri Stock Growers in the association. The intimacy has been kept up ever since. Mr. Kohrs is one of the pioneer citizens of the northern Rocky Mountain region and one of the men who has taken a leading part in its great development. The letter follows:

Sagamore Hill, Oyster Bay, N. Y. Sept. 15—My Dear Mr. Kohrs: I have received your letter about the candidacy of Mr. Taft, the man who I feel is in an especial sense the representative of all that in which I most believe in political life.

Every good citizen should desire to see both prosperity and justice, prosperity and fair and religious dealings as between man and man, obtain permanently in this great republic. As a people we are justly proud of our business industry, of our energy and intelligence in our work; and it is entirely right that we should ask ourselves as to any given course of conduct, "Will it be profitable?" But it is also no less emphatically true that the bulk of our people, the plain people who found in Abraham Lincoln their especial champion and spokesman, regard the question, "Is this morally right?" as even more important than the question, "Is this profitable?" when applied to any given course of conduct. Indeed, in the long run our people are sure to find that in all dealings, alike in the business and political world what is really profitable is that which is morally right. The last few years have seen a great awakening of the public conscience and the growth of a stern determination to do away with corruption and unfair dealing, political, economic, social. It is urgently necessary that the great reform movement should go on. But no reform movement is healthy if it goes on by spasms; if it is marked by periods of frenzied advance must always be followed, by equally violent periods of reaction.

The revolutionary and the reactionary really play into one another, to the extent that each by his excesses necessarily tends to arouse such disgust, such feeling of revolt in the minds of quiet people, as temporarily to restore the other to power. To permit the direction of our public affairs to fall alternately into the hands of revolutionaries and reactionaries of the extreme radicals of unrest and of the bigoted conservative who recognize no wrongs to remedy, would merely mean that the nation had embarked on a feverish course of violent oscillation which would be fraught with great temporary trouble, and would produce no adequate good in the end. The true friend of reform, the true foe of abuses, is the man who steadily perseveres in righting wrongs, in warring against abuses, but whose character and training are such that he never promises what he cannot perform, but he always a little more than makes good what he does promise and that while steadily advancing he never permits himself to be led into foolish excesses which would damage the very cause he champions.

In Mr. Taft we have a man who

combines all of these qualities to a degree which no other man in our public life since the civil war has surpassed. To a flaming hatred of injustice, and a scorn of all that is base and mean, to a hearty sympathy with the oppressed, he unites entire disinterestedness, courage both moral and physical of the very highest type, and a kindly generosity of nature which makes him feel that all of his fellow-countrymen are in very truth his friends and brothers, that their interests are his, and that all his great qualities are to be spent with lavish freedom in their service. The honest man of means, the honest and law-abiding business man, can feel safe in his hands because of the very fact that the dishonest man of great wealth, the man who swindles or robs his fellows, would not so much as dare to defend his evil-doing in Mr. Taft's presence. The honest wage-worker, the honest laboring man, the honest farmer, mechanic or small trader, or man of small means, can feel that in a peculiar sense Mr. Taft will be his representative because of the very fact that he has the same scorn for the demagogue that he has for the corruptionist, and that he would front threats of personal violence from a mob with the unquailing and lofty indifference with which he would front the bitter anger of the wealthiest and most powerful corporations. Broad though his sympathies are, there is in him not the slightest tinge of weakness. No consideration of personal interest, any more than of fear for his personal safety, could make him swerve a hair's breadth from the course which he regards as right and in the interest of the whole people.

I have naturally a peculiar interest in the success of Mr. Taft, and in seeing him backed by a majority in both houses of congress which will heartily support his policies. For the last ten years, while I have been governor of New York and president I have been thrown into the closest intimacy with him, and he and I have on every essential point stood in heartiest agreement, shoulder to shoulder. We have the same views as to what is demanded by the national interest and honor, both within our own borders, and as regards the relation of this nation with other nations. There is no fight for decency and fair dealings which I have waged in which I have not had his heartiest and most effective sympathy and support, and the policies for which I stand are his policies as much as mine.

It is not possible in the space of this letter to discuss all the many and infinitely varied questions of moment of which Mr. Taft as president would have to deal; let him be judged by what he has himself done, and by what the administration, in which he has played so conspicuous a part has done. But to illustrate just what his attitude is, let me touch on two matters now prominent in the public mind.

Mr. Taft can be trusted to exact justice from the railroads for the very reason that he can be trusted to do justice to the railroads. The railroads are the chief interests of interstate commerce in the country, and they can neither be held to a proper accountability on the one hand nor given proper protection on the other, save by affirmative action of the federal government. All interstate business carried on by the great corporation should be affirmative and thoroughgoing. All interstate business carried on by the great corporation should, in the interest of the whole people be far more closely supervised than at present by the national government; but this is especially true of the railroads, which can-

not exist at all save by the exercise of power granted them on behalf of the people, and which, therefore, should be held to a peculiar accountability to the people. It is in the interest of the people that they should not be permitted to do injustice; and it is no less to the interest of the people that they should not suffer injustice. Their prime purpose is to carry the commodities of the farmers and the business men; they could not be built save for the money contributed to them by their shareholders; they could not be run at all save for the money paid out in wages to the railroad employes, and finally they could not be run judiciously, or profitably to any one, were it not for the employment by them of some masterful guiding intelligence, whether of one man or of a group of men.

Along certain lines all of these groups have the same interests. It is to the interest of shippers, farmer, wage-worker, business man honest shareholder, and honest manager alike that there should be economy, honesty, intelligence, and fair treatment to all. To put an effective stop to stock watering would be a benefit to everybody except the swindlers who profit by stock watering; it would benefit the honest shareholder because honest investments would not be brought into competition with mere paper, it would benefit the wageworker because when the money earned does not have to go to paying interest on watered capital, more of it is left out of which to pay wages, it would benefit the shipper because when only honest stockholders have to be paid interest, rates need not be improperly raised; it would benefit the public because there would be ample money with which to give efficient service. Similarly, the prevention of favoritism as among shippers does no damage to any one who is honest, and confers great good upon the smaller, business man and the farmer, whom it relieves of oppression. Again, such supervision of accounts and management as will prevent crookedness and oppression works good directly or indirectly, to all honest people. Therefore everything that can be done along all these lines should be done; and no man's legitimate interest would thereby be hurt. But after this point has been reached great care must be exercised not to work injustice to one class in the effort to show favor to another class, and each class naturally tends to remember only its own needs. The railroads cannot be built and successfully maintained and the rates to shippers and the wages to employes, from the highest to the lowest, must be all conditioned upon this fact.

On the other hand, in a public service corporation we have no right to allow such excessive profits as will necessitate rates being unduly high and wages unduly low. Again, while in all proper ways rates must be kept low, we must remember that we have no right and no justification to reduce them when the result is the reduction of the wages of the great army of railroad men. A fair working arrangement must be devised according to the needs of the several cases, so that profits, wages and rates shall each be reasonable with reference to each other two—and in wages I conclude the properly large amounts which should always be paid to those whose whose masterful ability is required for the successful direction of great enterprises. Combinations which favor such an equitable arrangement should themselves be favored and not forbidden by law; although they should be strictly supervised by the government through the Interstate Commerce commission, which should have the power of passing summarily upon not only the question of the reduction but the raising of rates.

The railroad problem is itself one of the phases of one of the greatest and most intricate prob-

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V. G. LYFORD