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## ISSUES OF FREEDOM.

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT BANQUET OF THE KNIFE AND  
FORK CLUB OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, MAY 5,  
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THERE can be no mistaking the fact that we are now face to face with political changes which may have a very profound effect upon our political life. Those who do not understand the impending change are afraid of it. Those who do understand it know that it is not a process of revolution, but a process of restoration, rather, in which there is as much healing as hurt. There are strain and peril, no doubt, in every process of change, but the chief peril comes from undertaking it in the wrong temper. It lies not in the change itself so much as in the method of some of those who promote it. It is a noteworthy circumstance that in proportion as the people of the country come to recognize what it is that renders them uneasy and what it is that is proposed by way of reformation they lose their fear and take on a certain irresistible enthusiasm.

The American people are naturally a conservative people. They do not wish to touch the stable foundations of their life; they have a reverence for the rights of property and the rights of contract which is based upon a long experience in a free life, in which they have been at liberty to acquire property as they pleased and bind themselves by such contracts as suited them. No other people have ever had such freedom in the establishment of personal relationships or property rights. They do not mean to lose this freedom or to impair any rights at all, but they do feel that a great many things in their economic life and in their political action

are out of gear. They have been cheated by their own political machinery. They have been dominated by the very instrumentalities which they themselves created in the field of industrial action. The liberty of the individual is hampered and impaired. They desire, therefore, not a revolution, not a cutting loose from any part of their past, but a readjustment of the elements of their life, a reconsideration of what it is just to do and equitable to arrange in order that they may be indeed free, may indeed make their own choices and live their own life undominated, unafraid, unsuspecting, confident that they will be served by their public men and that the open processes of their government will bring to them justice and timely reform.

What we are witnessing now is not so much a conflict of parties as a contest of ideals, a struggle between those who, because they do not understand what is happening, blindly hold on to what is and those who, because they do see the real questions of the present and of the future in a clear, revealing light, know that there must be sober change; know that progress, none the less active and determined because it is sober and just, is necessary for the maintenance of our institutions and the rectification of our life. In both the great national parties there are men who feel this ardour of progress and of reform, and in both parties there are men who hold back, who struggle to restrain change, who do not understand it or who have reason to fear it. Undoubtedly the present moment offers a greater and larger opportunity to the Democratic party than to the Republican party; but this is not because there are not men in the Republican party who have devoted their whole intelligence and energy to necessary reform, but because the Democratic party as a whole is freer to move and to act than the Republican is and is held back by a smaller and weaker body of representatives of the things that are and have been.

We generally sum up what we mean by the reaction-

ary forces by speaking of them as embodied in the Interests. By that we do not mean the legitimate but the illegitimate interests, those which have not adjusted themselves to the public interests, those which are clinging to their vested rights as a bulwark against the adjustment which is absolutely necessary if they are to be servants and not masters of the public. The chief political fact of the day is that the Republican party is more closely allied with these Interests than the Democratic party. This circumstance constitutes the opportunity of the Democrats. They are free to act and to move in the right direction if they will but accept the responsibility and the leadership. The Democratic party is more in sympathy with the new tendencies than the Republican. Its free forces are the forces of progress and of popular reform.

Both parties are of necessity breaking away from the past, whether they will or no, because our life has broken away from the past. The life of America is not the life it was twenty years ago. It is not the life it was ten years ago. We have changed our economic conditions from top to bottom, and with our economic conditions has changed also the organization of our life. The old party formulas do not fit the present problems. The old cries of the stump sound as if they belonged to a past age which men have almost forgotten. The things which used to be put into the party platforms of ten years ago would sound antiquated now. You will note, moreover, that the political audiences which nowadays gather together are not partisan audiences. They are made up of all elements and come together, not to hear parties denounced or praised, but to hear the interests of the nation discussed in new terms—the terms of the present moment.

We have so complicated our machinery of government, we have made it so difficult, so full of ambushes and hiding places, so indirect, that instead of having true representative government we have a great inextricable



jungle of organization intervening between the people and the processes of their government; so that by stages, without intending it, without being aware of it, we have lost the purity and directness of representative government. What we must devote ourselves to now is, not to upsetting our institutions, but to restoring them.

Undoubtedly we should avoid excitement and should silence the demagogue. The man with power, but without conscience, could, with an eloquent tongue, if he cared for nothing but his own power, put this whole country into a flame, because the whole country believes that something is wrong and is eager to follow those who profess to be able to lead it away from its difficulties. But it is all the more necessary that we should be careful who are our guides. The processes we are engaged in are fundamentally conservative processes. If your tree is diseased it is no revolution to restore to it the purity of its sap, to renew the soil that sustains it, to reestablish the conditions of its health. That is a process of life, of renewal, of redemption.

There is no ground for alarm, therefore. We are bent upon a perfectly definite programme, which is one of health and renewal.

Let us ask ourselves very frankly what it is that needs to be corrected. To sum it all up in one sentence, it is the control of politics and of our life by great combinations of wealth. Men sometimes talk as if it were wealth we were afraid of, as if we were jealous of the accumulation of great fortunes. Nothing of the kind is true. America has not the slightest jealousy of the legitimate accumulation of wealth. Everybody knows that there are hundreds and thousands of men of large means and large economic power who have come by it all perfectly legitimately not only, but in a way that deserves the thanks and admiration of the communities they have served and developed. But everybody knows also that some of the men who control the wealth and have built up the industry of the country seek to control

politics and also to dominate the life of common men in a way in which no man should be permitted to dominate.

In the first place, there is the notorious operation of the bipartisan political machine: I mean the machine which does not represent party principle of any kind, but which is willing to enter into any combination, with whatever group of persons or of politicians, to control the offices of localities and of States and of the nation itself in order to maintain the power of those who direct it. This machine is supplied with its funds by the men who use it in order to protect themselves against legislation which they do not desire and in order to obtain the legislation which is necessary for the prosecution of their purposes.

The methods of our legislatures make the operations of such machines easy and convenient, for very little of our legislation is formed and effected by open debate upon the floor. Almost all of it is framed in lawyers' offices, discussed in committee rooms, passed without debate. Bills that the machine and its backers do not desire are smothered in committee; measures which they do desire are brought out and hurried through their passage. It happens again and again that great groups of such bills are rushed through in the hurried hours that mark the close of the legislative sessions, when every one is withheld from vigilance by fatigue and when it is possible to do secret things.

When we stand in the presence of these things and see how complete and sinister their operation has been we cry out with no little truth that we no longer have representative government.

Among the remedies proposed in recent years have been the initiative and referendum in the field of legislation and the recall in the field of administration. These measures are supposed to be characteristic of the most radical programmes, and they are supposed to be meant to change the very character of our government. They have no such purpose. Their intention is to restore,

not to destroy, representative government. It must be remembered by every candid man who discusses these matters that we are contrasting the operation of the initiative and the referendum, not with the representative government which we possess in theory and which we have long persuaded ourselves that we possessed in fact, but with the actual state of affairs, with legislative processes which are carried on in secret, responding to the impulse of subsidized machines and carried through by men whose unhappiness it is to realize that they are not their own masters, but puppets in a game.

If we felt that we had genuine representative government in our State legislatures no one would propose the initiative or referendum in America. They are being proposed now as a means of bringing our representatives back to the consciousness that what they are bound in duty and in mere policy to do is to represent the sovereign people whom they profess to serve and not the private interests which creep into their counsels by way of machine orders and committee conferences. The most ardent and successful advocates of the initiative and referendum regard them as a sobering means of obtaining genuine representative action on the part of legislative bodies. They do not mean to set anything aside. They mean to restore and reinvigorate, rather.

The recall is a means of administrative control. If properly regulated and devised it is a means of restoring to administrative officials what the initiative and referendum restore to legislators—namely, a sense of direct responsibility to the people who chose them.

The recall of judges is another matter. Judges are not lawmakers. They are not administrators. Their duty is not to determine what the law shall be, but to determine what the law is. Their independence, their sense of dignity and of freedom, is of the first consequence to the stability of the state. To apply to them the principle of the recall is to set up the idea that determinations of what the law is must respond to popular



impulse and to popular judgment. It is sufficient that the people should have the power to change the law when they will. It is not necessary that they should directly influence by threat of recall those who merely interpret the law already established. The importance and desirability of the recall as a means of administrative control ought not to be obscured by drawing it into this other and very different field.

The second power we fear is the control of our life through the vast privileges of corporations which use the wealth of masses of men to sustain their enterprise. It is in connection with this danger that it is necessary to do some of our clearest and frankest thinking. It is a fundamental mistake to speak of the privileges of these great corporations as if they fell within the class of private right and of private property. Those who administer the affairs of great joint stock companies are really administering the property of communities, the property of the whole mass and miscellany of men who have bought the stock or the bonds that sustain the enterprise. The stocks and the bonds are constantly changing hands. There is no fixed partnership. Moreover, managers of such corporations are the trustees of moneys which they themselves never accumulated, but which have been drawn together out of private savings here, there, and everywhere.

What is necessary in order to rectify the whole mass of business of this kind is that those who control it should entirely change their point of view. They are trustees, not masters, of private property, not only because their power is derived from a multitude of men, but also because in its investment it affects a multitude of men. It determines the development or decay of communities. It is the means of lifting or depressing the life of the whole country. They must regard themselves as representatives of a public power. There can be no reasonable jealousy of public regulation in such matters, because the opportunities of all men are

affected. Their property is everywhere touched, their savings are everywhere absorbed, their employment is everywhere determined, by these great agencies. What we need, therefore, is to come to a common view which will not bring antagonisms, but accommodations. The programmes of parties must now be programmes of enlightenment and readjustment, not revolutionary, but restorative. The processes of change are largely processes of thought, but unhappily they cannot be effected without becoming political processes also, and that is the deep responsibility of public men. What we need, therefore, in our politics is an instant alignment of all men free and willing to think, and to act without fear upon their thought.

This is just as much a constructive age in politics, therefore, as was the great age in which our Federal government was set up, and the man who does not awake to the opportunity, the man who does not sacrifice private and exceptional interests in order to serve the common and public interest, is declining to take part in the business of a heroic age. I am sorry for the man who is so blind that he does not see the opportunity, and I am happy in the confidence that in this era men of strength and of principle will see their opportunity of immortal service.

I am not one of those who wish to break connections with the past, nor am I one of those who wish change for the mere sake of variety. The only men who do that are the men who want to forget something, the men who filled yesterday with something they would rather not recall to-day. Change is not interesting unless it is constructive, and it is an age of construction that must put fire into the blood of any man worthy of the name.