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EDITORIAL

Which Shall It Be?

Mr. Roosevelt, at Pittsburgh: We must supervise and direct the affairs of the people.

Mr. Wilson, at Philadelphia: We must establish conditions under which the people will be free to manage their own affairs.

S. C.



The Right Trust Remedy.

Former President Roosevelt correctly declares a failure the effort for twenty-four years to regulate the trusts. "The only alternative," he says, "is the Progressive plan." Where did he get that information? The Progressive plan is neither the only nor the most desirable alternative. A better plan is to quit fooling with commissions and investigations and repeal all tariff laws, excise and other labor taxing laws, all franchise grants and other grants of special privileges, and take all publicly earned values for public use. All big business combinations that will survive such a change will be those that are natural and useful. Those that will not survive will be the unnatural and predatory ones. A proposition to put this plan into the national Progressive platform received all but five votes of the twenty-five members of the Committee on Resolutions. But for some reason, still not satisfactorily explained, it never appeared in the platform.

S. D.



Roosevelt a National Asset.

Theodore Roosevelt has talked so much and so loud that some, seeing the smallness of his deeds in comparison with the magnitude of his promises, have been disposed to underrate his public worth. His deeds have been small, it is true; and many of those that are in themselves good are yet, owing to the manner of their doing, evil in their final effect. Nevertheless, ideas have a value, even when embalmed in sounding words; and though their author contents himself too often with ut-

terance without performance, they stand as a challenge to those who would perform, and fire the imagination of those who await performance. Mr. Roosevelt is a political gadfly, and there is nothing that the Democratic donkey now stands more in need of than vigorous goading. The Democratic party, standing on a hodge-podge platform of paternalism and democracy, has been pulled, by its addle-pated leaders, this way and that way, until it is almost at a standstill. The progress made during the last year has been due mainly to the momentary mastery of one commanding personality; but even that is now threatened.



The Democratic party, goaded by the President, has done some of the good things that it promised to do, and it deserves commendation; but at the very moment when it should press on toward the goal of economic freedom, it is threatened with political palsy. And it is at this opportune moment that Mr. Roosevelt alights upon the flank of the drowsy donkey. It is not that his program is better than that of the Democrats, for it is not, but that if the Democratic program does not bring results, the people will turn to the Progressive party. Absurd and ridiculous as Mr. Roosevelt's Pittsburgh speech is to real Democrats, it bears the semblance of reason in the mind of the average voter; and if the Democratic party is to have an opportunity to apply democracy it must be answered in the mind of the average voter. Mr. Roosevelt charges the Democrats with having promised to restore prosperity, reduce the cost of living, and control the trusts; and he declares that business is moribund, the cost of living is still high, and predicts failure from the trust-regulation laws. And he does it all in a manner well calculated to arouse enthusiasm in unwary voters.



Mr. Roosevelt would regulate the tariff by means of a non-partisan commission "divorced from favoritism and the fostering of special interests"—assisted, doubtless, by the aid and counsel of the National Association of Manufacturers. Another commission, with "thorough knowledge disinterestedly acquired," would "give proper encouragement to our merchants while also giving proper protection to our wageworkers, our farmers, and our business men." Still another commission "should exercise strict supervision and control over big business." Had not Mr. Roosevelt been under the doctor's care, with strict injunctions against "overdoing," he doubtless would have had commissions to regulate marriage and divorce, the in-

tensive culture of rutabagas, the fashions in ladies' hats, and the various activities of mankind. But not all will see the humor of universal government by commission. There are many earnest men and women who, seeing the failure of other plans, will turn to that of Mr. Roosevelt.



But just what is the function of a commission blessed with "thorough knowledge disinterestedly acquired?" and how would it give proper encouragement to all commercial activities? Suppose it considered the woodpulp industry, which has already been investigated? Consumers declared their prices too high. Investigation showed that some manufacturers made pulp at a much lower cost than others. The latter made a bare return on their capital; the former made abnormal profits. What would the commission do with such a problem? It could not fix one price for the efficient, and another price for the inefficient. If it fixed the price at a point to give a profit to the inefficient, the efficient would enjoy the abnormal profit made possible under the Aldrich tariff. If it cut the profit of the efficient to a reasonable figure, the inefficient would be driven out of business. Where then would be the economic justice that the commission form of government promises? It is one thing to be forced out of business by the competition of the open market; it is an entirely different thing to be shut out by the specific act of a commission. With the profits of business dependent upon the arbitrary fiat of the commission, greater pressure would be brought to bear upon its members than has yet fallen on public officials. Does past experience warrant a belief in the success of this plan?



Mr. Roosevelt proposes a commission to regulate monopoly. Mr. Wilson presents a commission to compel competition, within certain legal restrictions. Ultimately some one must offer a plan to remove all legal restraints of trade. Mr. Roosevelt proposes—if we reduce the proposition to concrete terms—that a public commission shall watch over the slaves to see that the masters are not too harsh. Mr. Wilson would give the slaves the privilege of selecting their own masters. But the day is not distant when the slaves will have restored to them the right to work for themselves. It is better to have some freedom than none at all. But man will not be satisfied until he is entirely free. The partial freedom offered by Mr. Wilson will be ineffectual, because the remaining restraints will ultimately overcome what has been released; and

the people, finding themselves without relief are likely to listen to the offer of another kind of commission regulation. People never stand still. They must go ahead, or go backward. The American people must either go on to complete freedom, or they will turn toward Socialism, democratic or plutocratic. Mr. Roosevelt's plan of state regulation of all forms of business is nothing more nor less than plutocratic socialism, and will afflict society with all the evils of paternalism.



The Democratic party can demonstrate its right to power only by boldly meeting Mr. Roosevelt's declaration, "unlimited competition has proved one of the greatest curses of modern civilization." It is not unlimited competition, but limited competition that has done the mischief. All business is shackled by legal privileges, and the enterprises so bound have been compelled to compete. Such competition must, from its very nature, lead to the evils of combinations on the one hand, and to the crushing of the weaker on the other. And the only positive and permanent relief possible must come from striking off the shackles. It is not necessary for the Democratic party, to announce at this time that it is opposed to all tariffs and other indirect taxes, and in favor of the complete exemption of all business from the burden of landlordism; but it must have this goal in mind, and it must move toward it fast enough to convince the people that it is going in that direction. s. c.



Roosevelt and the Wilson Administration.

Theodore Roosevelt's criticism of the administration's tariff policy, in his Pittsburgh speech of June 30; does not justify confidence in his judgment. It is true that this tariff policy is defective. Any tariff policy that falls short of absolute Free Trade is deserving of severe criticism and the Underwood tariff falls far short of even hailing distance of Free Trade. But Roosevelt does not criticize the Underwood law's defects but its merits. He does not advocate an improvement but the very opposite. He condemns the Underwood law for its failure to impose protective duties in behalf of certain interests. Evidently the Colonel is so little of a statesman, that he does not know that one competent to perform a useful service has no need of putting an artificial handicap on a potential competitor; while one who is himself incompetent should not be allowed to render others still more incompetent. Yet because the administration has taken the position that competent producers need no protection and incompetent ones don't

deserve any, Roosevelt criticizes it. His idea of a tariff commission to investigate and seek out the incompetents and protect them, makes him in principle, though not in degree as much a defender of Privilege as Penrose, Barnes, Root and others whom he delights in denouncing. He, too, is in favor of allowing parasitic business to continue living off of business that can stand on its own merits.



Even in attacking such vulnerable propositions as the pending anti-trust measures, Colonel Roosevelt failed to rise to his opportunity. He might well have referred to them as puerile efforts to remove an evil without touching its cause. He might have denounced them as examples of vicious legislation to the extent that they authorize governmental interference in matters that no government should interfere with, and authorize no interference where interference is needed. With the exception of the anti-injunction and labor exemption section of the Clayton bill, these bills as they stand can with little trouble be shown to be based on entirely wrong principles. Yet so little is Roosevelt able to see the real faults of these measures that in criticizing he represents them as having characteristics they do not possess. "We cannot make every man compete with every other man," he says in comment, "we cannot go back to 1850, still less to 1650." How bravely the Colonel attacks a man of straw! And the saddest part of it is that he sincerely imagines the straw to be flesh and blood.



Following the lead of his friend, George W. Perkins, Roosevelt delivers himself of the following:

Unlimited competition has proved one of the greatest curses of modern civilization. It was unlimited competition which created the great trusts, exactly as it created the sweatshop, and is chiefly responsible for child labor. The new freedom is merely the exceedingly old freedom, which permits each man to cut his neighbor's throat.

Thus Roosevelt finds two objections to his conception of the New Freedom. One is it will take us back to conditions of 1650, when our great trusts were impossible. Another is it will keep us under conditions of 1914 which have created the great trusts.



But let his statement concerning competition be analyzed. Has "unlimited competition created the great trusts"? How could there be unlimited competition with a protective tariff in operation, with