

Criticism of the President's Message

By Theodore Roosevelt

Ex-President of the United States .

Former President Roosevelt, on the same day the President's message was published, gave out the following statement to the press:

Oyster Bay, Dec. 7, 1915.

AT the outset President Wilson, speaking of the war, says: "We have stood apart, studiously neutral. It was our manifest duty to do so. Further on he says: "We insist upon security in prosecuting our self-chosen lines of national development. We do more than that. We demand it also for others." Later he says: "We regard war as a means of asserting the rights of a people against aggression," and continues: "We are fiercely jealous * * * of aggression from without."

What does Mr. Wilson mean when in one line he says that we have "stood apart, studiously neutral," because "it was our manifest duty to do so," and a couple of paragraphs later says that "we demand security in prosecuting our self-chosen lines of national development for others?" He can take either of the two positions, but he cannot take both. Did or did not Mr. Wilson "demand security" for Belgium to "prosecute its self-chosen lines of national development?" He knows he did not. Then what does he mean by saying that "we demand this security also for others?" Again, he says that he regards war as a means of asserting the rights of a people against aggression,

and yet he says that it was our duty to remain studiously neutral when Belgium asserted the rights of her people by war against the aggression of Germany.

How does he reconcile these two statements? He cannot do so. He is using words to cover a policy of dishonorable inaction. Again, he says that we are "fiercely jealous of aggression from without." How did he show his "fierce jealousy" as regards the aggressions on the Lusitania and Ancona, which resulted in the loss of several scores and the jeopardy of hundreds of American lives?

How has he shown his "fierce jealousy" as regards the sixty or seventy soldiers wearing the American uniform, not to speak of the women and children and civilians, killed or wounded on American soil by Mexican bullets? One symptom of his "fierce jealousy" to prevent "aggression from without" was the issuing of an order that our men should not fire back when fired upon. Does Mr. Wilson regard that order as "fierce jealousy"? It does not strike any other human being as such.

Three years ago Mr. Wilson said he believed in the policy of "pitiless publicity." We have never had as secretive an Administration. The exact numbers of the soldiers of the United States Army who have been killed or wounded by Mexicans cannot be told, because Mr. Wilson won't permit the figures to be made

public. Neither is it possible to ascertain the exact numbers of the American men, women, and children who have been killed or outraged in person or property in Mexico, because Mr. Wilson for three years has hindered all publicity, pitiless or pitiful, about these outrages in Mexico. Mr. Wilson's elocution and Mr. Wilson's action are in flat contradiction. His elocution is that of a Byzantine logothete—and Byzantine logothetes were not men of action.

President Wilson says that we have been put to the test in the case of Mexico and have "stood the test," and that we have supplied a "heroic principle to the case of Mexico." Of all possible adjectives that could be found in the English language by the most minute search on the part of the most subtle dialectician it would not be possible to find one more inappropriate to the Administration's course in Mexico than the adjective "heroic." Nearly three years ago Mr. Wilson refused to recognize Huerta on the ground that we were never to recognize a Government founded on violence. He then tentatively supported Villa, who represented the embodiment of violence; it being meanwhile asserted on behalf of the Administration that under no circumstances would we deal with Carranza, whose Government likewise was founded on violence.

The President has now eaten his words and recognized Carranza, and through his private secretary he has issued a defense of and apology for the outrages committed by the Carranzistas and by the other bandits of the other factions in Mexico, outrages as infamous as ever were committed by savages anywhere under the sun.

Mr. Wilson refused to employ the power of the United States to protect the lives of American men and the honor of American women or to save those wearing the United States uniform from death or from insult. He took no steps to save Mexican and foreign women, including nuns, married women, and unmarried women, when they were subjected to outrages and infamies which make the white slave traffic seem trivial by comparison. But he now uses the

power of the United States to help one set of the bandits responsible for these infamies against another set. This is Mr. Wilson's definition of "heroic" conduct. It is his conception of "standing the test." Such definitions and conceptions are interesting only from the standpoint of adroit dialectics.

In his present message President Wilson advocates as necessary certain propositions for putting this country in a state of preparedness to defend itself against foreign aggression. In his message one year ago he said such propositions were hysterical and improper. I am glad that he has changed his mind, but I am sorry that he has not taken the trouble to study the subject so as to make his proposals reasonably adequate to the country's need. His proposed enlargement of the regular army is utterly inadequate. With certain of his statements it is almost impossible to deal, simply because it seems incredible that their apparent and obvious meaning can be their real meaning.

For example, he says: "We will not maintain a standing army except for uses which are necessary in time of peace as in time of war; and we shall always see to it that our military peace establishment is no larger than is actually and continually needed for the uses of days in which no enemies move against us." What this means I have no idea, and I am certain that no one else has any idea, including the President himself. What "necessary use" have our forts and our coast guns "in time of peace"? How is our field artillery "continuously needed for the uses of days in which no enemies move against us"? I ask these questions seriously. I defy any man to give me a serious answer which shall not show that the statements are absurdities.

The proposed "continental" army cannot produce good results. It is a proposal that a few of the young men of the country shall for two months every year abandon their work and in the interest of the common defense train themselves to defend their successful business rivals who decline to abandon their work in the interest of the common defense. The

average young man of the right type cannot and ought not to put himself at a disadvantage by abandoning his work, or, if an employer, by permitting his employes to abandon their work, when no such burden is imposed upon his less patriotic competitors. This is not a square deal.

It is not in accordance with the democratic ideal. We ought to demand from all alike the same service and not ask people who are high-minded and patriotic to volunteer at their own personal cost and to their own detriment; for such action is to the profit of the less high-minded and less patriotic who won't volunteer. The President's proposal is merely to create an inefficient rival of the National Guard. It will damage the National Guard without achieving any useful purpose whatever.

It is the duty of this nation in time of peace to prepare for war; and it is no less the duty of this Administration now in time of war to prepare for the industrial struggles that will follow upon peace. The Administration has done neither and is doing neither. The proposal to purchase ships by the National Government is a proposal to prevent private business undertaking the permanent revival of the American shipping trade. As regards the tariff, we need a nonpartisan tariff commission of experts, who shall treat the tariff as a business proposition in the interests of the business of the country as a whole and of all our fellow-citizens, so as both to secure and adequately to distribute prosperity.

The message does not make clear what it is—if anything—which the President proposes in the way of industrial legislation or action. He states that the transportation problem lies at the very bottom of our efficiency as a people. This statement could be more appropriately made of the whole business problem, of which the transportation problem is only one side, although a very important side. He seems to stand, and in one sentence clearly does stand, for the regulation of the railways of the country. There is an even greater need of the encouragement, and incidentally

the regulation, of industry. We need efficiency in railroading; but if there are no goods to carry there is no use in having carriers, and therefore the fundamental thing is efficiency in business.

The trouble with our business in this country today is that it must be transacted at loose ends, largely because our business men, whose first desire is to obey the law, have been and are in jeopardy lest some Government official, national or State, may decide that they have disobeyed the laws, these laws themselves being often in hopeless conflict with one another. The honest business man of great capacity, whose great capacity should be at the service of the country, is often unable to find out how his business can be transacted legally on anything that approximates a large scale and that is in keeping with modern economic conditions and requirements.

In short, the President fails to make a single constructive recommendation as regards industry. Our utter lack of preparedness to meet foreign aggression is no greater than our utter lack of preparedness to meet the industrial crisis that will be upon us when this war is over. The two questions should be treated together, and the President treats with utter inadequacy of one and not at all of the other.

The most noteworthy part of the President's message is that in which he says that the gravest threats against our national peace and safety come from citizens of the United States born under other flags who have been disloyal and who have sought to bring the authority and good name of our Government into contempt and to destroy our industries wherever they thought it effective for their vindictive purpose. In this he is entirely correct. But the remedy lies in action such as Andrew Jackson took about nullification, such as Grover Cleveland took about anarchy in Chicago.

He states that we are without adequate Federal laws to deal with the situation. He says that such laws are necessary in order to "save the honor and self-respect of this nation"; he says

that it is possible to deal with the disloyalty, murderous anarchy, and conspiracies of which he speaks "very effectually"; but he adds that he "need not suggest the terms in which they may be dealt with."

The duty of a leader is to lead. If President Wilson has not adequate power, he should tell us exactly what he wishes in order to get the adequate power. He should demand that the National Legislature give him the power. But, as a matter of fact, Mr. Wilson is himself responsible for most of the conditions of which he complains.

He has met a policy of blood and iron with a policy of milk and water. Indecision, and the treatment of conversation as a substitute for action, and, above all, the making of threats which

are not carried into effect, put a premium upon exactly the form of anarchy and conspiracy of which the President complains. Nine-tenths of wisdom consists in being wise in time.

The President now wails to Congress that he is unable to control anarchy and would like them to supply what is lacking by passing laws the nature of which he does not indicate. There would be no need for this wail if ten months ago, when he wrote his note to Germany, stating that he would hold her to "strict accountability" for outrages against us, he had meant what he said, and had made it evident that he meant what he said. Such action would not provoke war. It would prevent the cumulative outrages which lay the foundation for war.