

## THE PIONEER SPIRIT AND AMERICAN PROBLEMS

For a number of years I have believed and urged the principles I set forth in the following article. Their presentation here is in substance what I said in three recent speeches at Cheyenne, Denver, and Omaha.

The men who have made this great republic what it is, and especially the men who have turned it into a continental commonwealth, have possessed in the highest degree the great virile virtues of strength, courage, energy, and undaunted and unwavering resolution. Their typical leaders—of whom Abraham Lincoln, though the most exceptional, was the most typical—have possessed keen intelligence, and a character not merely strong but lofty, a character exalted by the fact that great power was accompanied by a high and fine determination to use this great power for the common good, for the advancement of mankind. Such men were the builders of New England. As the country grew, such men were the pioneers that pushed the frontiers of civilization westward. A hundred years ago, when men spoke of the West, they meant the country between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi. Fifty years ago the white man's West took in Minnesota, Iowa, and Kansas, and then skipped across to California and Oregon. The country of the great plains and the Rockies has grown up within my own lifetime. I myself saw and took part in the closing years of the pioneer period, and it was my great privilege to work side by side with the pioneers—the ranchmen, the miners, the cow-punchers, the mule-skinners, the bull-whackers—who actually opened up the country. I now travel in every comfort on railways across lands which, when I first rode across them, were still the home of the Indian and the buffalo; and I find cities where one can obtain not merely comfort but luxury, in the places

where, thirty years ago, there was not a building beyond a log hut or a 'dobe house. The men who did this work were engaged in the final stages of conquering the continent; and it was their privilege to do one of the great works of all time, to do their part in the performance of an epic feat in the history of the progress of mankind.

The pioneer days are over, save in a few places; and the more complex life of to-day calls for a greater variety of good qualities than were needed on the frontier. There is need at present to encourage the development of new abilities which can be brought to high perfection only by a kind of training useless in pioneer times; but these new qualities can only supplement, and never supplant, the old, homely virtues; the need for the special and distinctive pioneer virtues is as great as ever. In other words, as our civilization grows older and more complex, while it is true that we need new forms of trained ability, and need to develop men whose lives are devoted wholly to the pursuit of special objects, it is yet also true that we need a greater and not a less development of the fundamental frontier virtues.

These qualities, derived from the pioneers, were not confined to the pioneers. They are shown in the deeds of the Nation; and especially in the two great feats which during the past decade have made the deepest impression abroad—the cruise of the battle fleet around the world, and the digging of the Panama Canal.

Now, there is no use of a nation claiming to be a great nation, unless it is prepared to play a great part. A nation such as ours cannot possibly play a great part in international affairs, cannot expect to be treated as of weight in either the Atlantic or the Pacific, or to have its voice as to the Monroe Doctrine or the management of the Panama Canal heeded, unless it has a strong and thoroughly efficient navy. So far from this increase in naval strength representing on our part either a menace of aggression to weaker nations or a menace of war to stronger nations, it has told most powerfully for peace. No nation regarded the cruise as fraught with any menace of hostility to

itself ; and yet every nation accepted it as a proof that we were not only desirous ourselves to keep the peace, but able to prevent the peace being broken at our expense. No cruise in any way approaching it has ever been made by any fleet of any other Power ; and the best naval opinion abroad had been that no such feat was possible ; that is, that no such cruise as that we actually made could be undertaken by a fleet of such size without innumerable breakdowns and accidents. The success of the cruise, performed as it was without a single accident, immeasurably raised the prestige, not only of our fleet, but of our Nation ; and was a distinct help to the cause of international peace.

As regards the Panama Canal, I really think that outside nations have a juster idea than our own people of the magnitude and success of the work. Six years ago last spring the American Government took possession of the Isthmus. The first two years were devoted to the sanitation of the Isthmus, to assembling the plant and working force, and providing quarters, food, and water supplies. In all these points the success was extraordinary. From one of the plague-spots of the globe, one of the most unhealthy regions in the entire world, the Isthmus has been turned into a singularly healthy place of abode. Active excavation on a large scale did not begin until January, 1907. Three years and a half have gone by since then, and three-fifths of the total excavation has already been accomplished. In 1908 and 1909 the monthly average of rock and earth removed was three million cubic yards, notwithstanding the fact that nine months of each year constituted a season of very heavy rainfall ; but it is impossible to maintain such a ratio as the depth increases. Still, it is certain that such a rate can be maintained as will enable the workers to finish the excavation considerably in advance of the date fixed for opening the Canal—January 1, 1915. Indeed, I shall be surprised if the Canal cannot be opened six months or even a year in advance of the time set. The work has two great features : The Culebra Cut, which I have been considering, and the great dam at Gatun. The construction of the dam has advanced

sufficiently to convince the engineers in charge of the work of its absolute stability and imperviousness. The engineer in charge has announced that all the concrete in all the locks will be in place two years hence.

This is a stupendous record of achievement. As a people we are rather fond of criticising ourselves, and sometimes with very great justice ; but even the most pessimistic critic should sometimes think of what is to our credit. Among our assets of the past ten years will be placed the extraordinary ability, integrity, and success with which we have handled all the problems inherited as the result of the Spanish War ; the way we have handled ourselves in the Philippines, in Cuba, in Porto Rico, in San Domingo, and in Panama. The cruise of the battle fleet around the world was a striking proof that we had made good with the navy ; and what we have done at Panama represents the accomplishment of one of the great feats of the ages. It is a feat which reflects the highest honor upon our country ; and our gratitude is due to every man who has taken an honorable part in any capacity in bringing it about.

The same qualities that have enabled Americans to conquer the wilderness, and to attempt tasks like the building of the Panama Canal and the sending of the battle fleet around the world, need to be applied now to our future problems ; and these qualities, which include the power of self-government, together with the power of joining with others for mutual help, and, what is especially important, the feeling of comradeship, need to be applied in particular to that foremost of National problems, the problem of the preservation of our National resources.

The question has two sides. In the first place, the actual destruction, or, if this is not possible, at any rate the needless waste, of the natural resources must be stopped. In the second place, so far as possible, these resources must be kept for the use of the whole people, and not handed over for exploitation to single individuals or groups of individuals.

The first point I shall not here discuss at length. It is rapidly becoming a well-settled policy of this people that we of the present generation hold the land in part

as trustees for the next generation, and not exclusively for our own selfish enjoyment. Just as the farmer is a good citizen if he leaves his farm improved and not impaired to his children, and a bad citizen if he cares nothing for his children and skins the land and destroys its value in his own selfish interest; so the Nation behaves well if it treats the soil and the water and the forests as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value, and behaves badly if it leaves the land poorer to those who come after us. No farm should be so used that the soil is permitted to depreciate in value; no forest so used as permanently to impair its productivity.

The second part of the question relates to preserving and using our natural resources in the interest of the public as a whole. We do not intend to discourage individual excellence by improperly diminishing the reward for that individual excellence; on the contrary, our desire is to see that the fullest reward is given to the men of exceptional abilities, up to the point when the abilities are used to the detriment of the people as a whole. We favor the sheep man who feeds his sheep on his own range in such manner that the range increases instead of diminishes in value; and we are against the big man who does not live in the country at all, but who sends migratory bands of sheep with a few hired shepherds to wander over it, destroying pasturage and forests, and seriously impairing the value of the country for actual settlers. We are for the liberty of the individual up to, but not beyond, the point where it becomes inconsistent with the welfare of the community as a whole.

Now, to preserve the general welfare, to see to it that the rights of the public are protected, and the liberty of the individual secured and encouraged as long as consistent with this welfare, and curbed when it becomes inconsistent therewith, it is necessary to invoke the aid of the Government. There are points in which this governmental aid can best be rendered by the States; that is, where the exercise of States' rights helps to secure popular rights, and as to these I believe in States' rights. But there are large classes of cases where only the authority of the

National Government will secure the rights of the people, and where this is the case I am a convinced and a thorough-going believer in the rights of the National Government. Big business, for instance, is no longer an affair of any one State; big business has become nationalized; and the only effective way of controlling and directing it, and preventing abuses in connection with it, is by having the people nationalize this control in order to prevent their being exploited by the individuals who have nationalized the business. All commerce on a scale sufficiently large to warrant any control over it by Government is nowadays inter-State or foreign commerce; and until this fact is heartily acknowledged, in particular by both courts and legislative bodies, National and State alike, the interest of the people will suffer.

Take the question of the control of the water power sites. The enormous importance of water power sites to the future industrial development of this country has only been realized within a very few years. Unfortunately, the realization has come too late as regards many of the power sites, but many yet remain with which our hands are free to deal. We should make it our duty to see that hereafter the power sites are kept under the control of the general Government for the use of the people as a whole. The fee should remain with the people as a whole, while the use is leased on terms which will secure an ample reward to the lessees, which will encourage the development and use of the water power, but which will not create a permanent monopoly or permit the development to be anti-social, to be in any respect hostile to the public good.

In this country, nowadays, capital has a National and not a State use. The great corporations which are managed and largely owned in the older States are those which are most in evidence in developing and using the mines and water powers and forests of the new Territories and new States, from Alaska to Arizona. I have been genuinely amused during the past two months at having arguments presented to me on behalf of certain rich men from New York and Ohio, for instance, as to why Colorado and other Rocky Mountain States should manage their own water power sites. Now, I am

sure that those men, according to their lights, are good citizens; but, naturally enough, their special interest obscures their sense of the public need; and as their object is to escape efficient control, they clamor to be put under the State instead of under the Nation. If we are foolish enough to grant their requests, we shall have ourselves to blame when we wake up to find that we have permitted another privilege to intrench itself, and another portion of what should be kept for the public good to be turned over to individuals for purposes of private enrichment.

Our people have for many years proceeded upon the assumption that the Nation controls the public land. The coal should be kept for the people, and those who mine it should pay part of the profit back to the people.

Remember also that many of the men who protest loudly against effective National action would be the first to turn round and protest against the State action if such action in its turn became effective, and would then unhesitatingly invoke the law to show that the State had no Constitutional power to act. I am a strong believer in efficient National action; and if there is one thing which I abhor more than another, it is the creation by legislative, by executive, or by judicial action of a neutral ground in which neither the State nor the Nation has power, and which can serve as a place of refuge for the lawless man, and especially for the lawless man of great wealth, who can hire the best legal counsel to advise him how to keep his abiding-place equally distant from the uncertain frontier of both State and National power.

Let me illustrate what I mean by a reference to two concrete cases. The first is the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Knight Sugar Trust case. This was really a decision rendering it exceedingly difficult for the people to devise any method of controlling and regulating the business use of great capital in inter-State commerce. It was a decision nominally against National rights, but really against popular rights, against the democratic principle of government by the people.

The second case is the so-called New York Bake-Shop case. In New York

City, as in most large cities, the baking business is likely to be carried on under unhygienic conditions, conditions which tell against the welfare of the workers, and therefore against the welfare of the general public. The New York Legislature passed, and the New York Governor signed, a bill remedying these improper conditions. New York State was the only body that could deal with them; the Nation had no power whatever in the matter. Acting on information which to them seemed ample and sufficient; acting in the interest of the public and in accordance with the demand of the public, the only governmental authority having affirmative power in the matter, the Governor and the Legislature of New York, took the action which they deemed necessary, after what inquiry and study were needed to satisfy them as to the conditions and as to the remedy. The Governor and the Legislature alone had the power to remedy the abuse. But the Supreme Court of the United States possessed, and unfortunately exercised, the negative power of not permitting the abuse to be remedied. By a five to four vote they declared the action of the State of New York unconstitutional. They were, of course, themselves powerless to make the remotest attempt to provide a remedy for the wrong which undoubtedly existed, and their refusal to permit action by the State did not confer any power upon the Nation to act. In effect, it reduced to impotence the only body which did have power, so that in this case the decision, although nominally against State rights, was really against popular rights, against the democratic principle of government by the people under the forms of law.

If such decisions as these two indicated the Court's permanent attitude, there would be real and grave cause of alarm; for such decisions, if consistently followed up, would upset our whole system of popular government. I am, however, convinced, both from the inconsistency of these decisions with the tenor of other decisions, and furthermore from the very fact that they are in such flagrant and direct contradiction to the spirit and needs of the time, that sooner or later they will be explicitly or implicitly reversed. I mention them merely to illustrate the need of

having a truly National system of government under which the people can deal effectively with all problems, meeting those that affect the people as a whole by affirmative Federal action, and those that merely affect the people of one locality by affirmative State action.

In dealing with future problems like this one of Conservation, we need to keep in mind the lesson taught by the American pioneer. It is a lesson that is to be found in the fact that the pioneer is so good an American. He is an American, first and foremost. The man of the West throughout the successive stages of Western growth has always been one of the two or three most typical figures, indeed I am tempted to say the most typical figure, in American life; and no man can really understand our country, and appreciate what it really is and what it promises, unless he has the fullest and closest sympathy with the ideals and aspirations of the West.

The great lesson that all of us need to learn and to keep is the lesson that it is unimportant whether a man lives North or South, East or West, provided that he is genuinely and in good faith an American; that he feels every part of the United States as his own, and that he is honestly desirous to uphold the interests of all other Americans in whatever sections of the country they may dwell.

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