

MR. TAFT'S MAJORITY: AN ANALYSIS

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THE Chicago "Evening Post" and the Indianapolis "Star" were originally Taft papers. They believed that the voters ought to choose Mr. Taft over me in the primaries, and advocated their doing so. But they also believed that the voters themselves had the right to decide. When the Taft managers in Indiana stole the majority of the delegates for Mr. Taft, these papers immediately protested, taking the same attitude that another paper which had favored Mr. Taft, the Spokane "Spokesman-Review," shortly afterwards took in reference to the theft of the Washington delegates. These several papers were for Mr. Taft, but they were for honesty first, and when it became evident that Mr. Taft's cause was identified with dishonesty they adhered to honesty and not to Mr. Taft.

The Chicago "Evening Post" on June 24 spoke of the Chicago Convention as follows:

In our judgment that nomination was a tainted nomination. There was in it trickery and fraud. Stripped of its practical essentials, it was a nomination made by a minority instead of a majority. The miserable 21 votes above the nominating point which the steam roller drivers were able to muster fade instantly away under scrutiny from any standpoint of representative determination.

When I went into the contest for the nomination, I was of course pitted against very heavy odds. To start with, Mr. Taft had over two hundred and sixty delegates from the Territories and from States controlled by Federal office-holders in which there was no real Republican party, and he thus began the contest with nearly half the necessary number of delegates to nominate him. In addition he had with him the votes of certain purely boss-controlled and privilege-controlled States like New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado, where the voters had no chance to express their preference (and where the leading papers were controlled by the special interests, so that the sources of general information were choked and the truth was sedulously hidden from the people). Adding these votes to the others, Mr. Taft had nearly four hundred delegates in whose selection the people had no say whatever.

Nevertheless, we started in, making our fight especially in the primary States. In these States the rank and file of the Republican voters had their say instead of the politicians, and in these States we beat Mr. Taft on the popular vote over two to one in

a total vote of three millions or thereabouts, and in delegates beat him very nearly in the proportion of seven to one. So overwhelming was our victory in the States where the people had even a partial chance to express themselves in primaries that we overcame Mr. Taft's nearly solid vote from the rotten borough States and among the boss-picked delegates, and obtained a clear majority of all the delegates elected to the Convention—that is, about five hundred and sixty delegates. By Mr. Taft's direction and connivance, and under the personal supervision of his private secretary and one member of his Cabinet, Messrs. Barnes, Penrose, Guggenheim, Crane, Franklin Murphy, and Mr. Taft's other lieutenants proceeded to steal from the people enough delegates fraudulently to convert my majority into a minority.

Later I shall set forth succinctly some of the more glaring among these frauds. In this article I shall merely give the analysis of Mr. Taft's vote on the roll call which nominated him.

The nominating vote for Mr. Taft was 561, being 21 beyond the majority necessary to nominate him. From these 21 the first to be subtracted are two votes which the Chairman, Mr. Root, in his capacity of modern Autolycus, the "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," took from Massachusetts. This leaves a majority of but 19. There were on the roll over 90 Taft delegates who had been defeated by the people as delegates, but had been seated as such by the National Committee. Not one of the 90 men opposing the Taft delegates had as poor a title as the Taft delegates from the Borough of Manhattan of the City of New York. As regards 78 of them, their title was absolutely plain, and quite as good as the title of any of the uncontested Taft delegates. Deducting merely the latter number, Mr. Taft's vote sinks at once to 481, or 60 less than were required for his nomination. These 481 represent the maximum of legally¹ obtained votes which Mr. Taft could claim in the Convention. It was 60 votes less than were necessary for a nomination. Not only was the nomination of Mr. Taft absolutely fraudulent, but so was the seating of Mr. Root, and so was every motion adopted by the fraudulent National Convention.

But there are other deductions which must

¹ I use legally in a purely technical sense; many of these 481 votes, such as, for instance, the six votes of the Ohio delegates at large, were obtained for Mr. Taft in a fashion that would have been instantly repudiated by any man with a high and fine sense of either private honor or public duty.

be made from Mr. Taft's delegates if we wish to find out the exact extent to which they represented the people. In the first place, we must deduct the 12 votes from the Territories, which cast no electoral votes. This reduces Mr. Taft's vote to 469. Subtract Florida, Georgia, Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia, where there is no real Republican party, and Mr. Taft's vote becomes 220. Subtracting from these the boss-picked delegates from the States where the people had no choice, there remain about 70 delegates, considerably less than ten per cent of the total number of delegates, 1,078 all told. To these 70 delegates, and to these only, Mr. Taft was morally entitled. The other seven-eighths of his nominating vote came from fraudulently seated delegates, delegates representing States and Territories where there was no Republican vote, and boss-picked delegations from States where the people had no power to express their will.

The National Convention, and the National Committee, and all other pieces of our political machinery, are supposed to represent effective ways of recording the popular will. At Chicago they were used with much adroitness and ingenuity and entire unscrupulousness to thwart the popular will. There were not ten per cent of the delegates to the Convention who represented any popular feeling for Mr. Taft. My delegates, a majority of the Convention, were honestly elected in every case, and in nine-tenths of the cases were chosen directly by the people themselves. Over half the delegates to the Convention had been honestly elected by the people on a fair appeal to the people against Mr. Taft. The bosses of certain Northern States, the Federal patronage crowd in certain purely Democratic States and in the Territories, and the National Committee by its cynically brazen theft, gave him seven-eighths of his vote. The action of the so-called Republican National Convention was in no shape or way representative of the feeling in the Republican party, and stands for nothing but barefaced trickery deeply discreditable to every man who took part therein or profited thereby. The Convention's make-up was fraudulent; its action was fraudulent, and binds no Republican; and it should be repudiated by every man who sincerely believes in honesty.

In my next editorial I propose to take up specifically the cases of certain of the fraudulent delegates.