

THE RANK AND FILE

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THIS campaign has been a fight by the rank and file against the bosses.

It is we Progressives who are the real Republicans, because it is we who are standing along with the rank and file. The popular primaries have shown that the Republican voters do not want any one else to govern them; they want to govern themselves.

The party is not made up of the bosses or the party workers alone; it is made up of all the voters of the party.

Every party has to have its leaders. The true party leader is the man who tries to lead and not drive the voters, and to put into effect their deliberate judgment. He has the right and the duty to go before the voters and try to persuade them, but he has no right, by trickery or violence, to try to impose his own will upon them against theirs. The man who tries to impose his will upon the voters, who

tries to do things against the will of the voters, is not a leader—he is a boss.

In this campaign we have shown that wherever the people have a chance to express themselves they have no use for bosses. Eleven States, including Ohio, have allowed the voters of the party to express their wishes. Out of three hundred and twenty-four delegates elected at these primaries, the most that Mr. Taft could secure with the help of party organization and patronage, and with the bosses on his side, amounts only to forty-eight. The only States where Mr. Taft has secured his real victories are the States where the party is in the control, not of the people, but of the bosses. That shows clearly on which side in this issue Mr. Taft stands. That shows that this is a straight issue between the bosses on the one side and the people on the other side.

When, in the face of that fact, Mr. Taft

says, in spite of this vote, that he expects the Chicago Convention to be under the control of the "friends of Constitutional government," it is clearly evident what he means by such "friends." All that this means is that the convention which will make the Presidential nomination would have to defy the will of the voters; it would have to override the people's will.

The only question that remains now is, Who is to be master—the boss or the people? In this campaign we have been showing the bosses that they cannot be masters, and that the real masters are the rank and file.

When he was speaking in Ohio, President Taft said, "Bossism is a false issue and a sham." Is it? The Republican voters in Ohio, where Mr. Taft made that statement, did not think so. They joined with the Republican voters of Illinois and Pennsylvania and Oregon and California and Maryland and Nebraska and Wisconsin and North Dakota in deciding that they did not want what the bosses had been telling them they must have. The only reason that this fight has taken so long, the only reason that it was not finished two months ago, is that there have been only eleven States in which the voters have had a chance to show plainly what they wanted. If they had had this chance in thirty-three States instead of eleven States, the result would have been settled in April. It is only because the voters have not had the chance in those other States that some bosses and the more ignorant or unscrupulous among boss-ruled or Wall-Street-ruled newspapers still talk about the chance of even yet defeating the will of the people. It is only because of their ignorance that they can say this; for the ordinary, plain man with common sense can see that the rank and file have determined to have their way.

Is bossism, then, "a false issue and a sham," as Mr. Taft says? Let us see. This is what the Republicans of North Carolina think about it. After instructing delegates for me, the thousand delegates assembled in the Republican State Convention at Raleigh by unanimous vote adopted this resolution:

Whereas, President Taft did on the seventeenth day of March by single order withdraw from the Senate the nominations of ten citizens of North Carolina without assigning any reason therefor and without any charges against the character or qualifications of said nominees; it being understood that the fate of the nominees

is to await the actions of this convention—the appointments to be awarded to the factional leaders who shall deliver the largest number of delegates to Mr. Taft;

We therefore resolve and declare that this action of the President is ill-advised, indefensible, subversive of good government and good morals, and in flagrant violation of the statutes governing the civil service.

We therefore declare that President Taft has underestimated the pride and self-respect of the Republicans of North Carolina in supposing that we would participate in a political auction whose object is to make merchandise of men.

We unhesitatingly repudiate, resent, and rebuke the whole proceedings and all parties thereto.

That is what Republicans have to say about the question whether public office shall be used by men to get mastery over the voters, or whether the voters should remain masters themselves. The Republican voters of North Carolina have had a good example of bossism, and they have decided that it is not a sham or a false issue, but real and true.

That is one way in which bossism becomes a real issue and a live issue. Another way is that which has been used in the State of Washington. Although there was no State-wide primary required by law there, the county committees were authorized by the law to order the election of delegates to the State convention at primaries. This was done in two counties, one of them including Seattle, and in both the primaries were carried by the Roosevelt delegates. In all, the Roosevelt forces carried eighteen counties; the Taft forces only six counties, the remaining counties being divided or contested. The State Committee, which was in the control of Taft men chosen two years ago, assumed authority that was unprecedented, and arbitrarily decided the contests. The "Post-Intelligencer," which is a pro-Taft paper, published the story that the State Committee, in an effort to appear fair, seated one Roosevelt delegation, and then, having found that it had miscounted, without further evidence reversed itself in order to secure a Taft majority. It unseated Roosevelt delegates, including a hundred and twenty-one delegates legally elected at the primaries, and by substituting delegates chosen by the bosses undertook to steal the State. This is the way the Taft men held their convention. The locked doors of the Taft convention hall were guarded by a platoon of policemen to prevent the entrance of the rightful delegates. A clear majority

of the delegates, however, met in conformity with the regular call for the convention and elected Roosevelt delegates to the National Convention in accordance with the will of the voters. In the State of Washington the issue is a real issue and a live issue—the issue between the rank and file on the one side, and the bosses on the other.

Similar efforts to substitute the will of the bosses for the will of the people were made in Kentucky, in Indiana, in Michigan, in New York, and notoriously in the South, and elsewhere in State after State throughout the Union. In some cases these efforts have appeared to be temporarily successful; in other cases they have been defeated by the voters; and in still other cases, where the voters had no chance to express their own will directly, such efforts have been partly frustrated by those who have made common cause with the rank and file. Now the fight that once seemed almost hopelessly one-sided is ending in a victory. It has been proved that nothing can withstand the deliberate judgment of the people, not even the deliberate judgment of the bosses. In those places where the honest and decent citizens, the plain people, the rank and file, have had a chance to fight, they have done their own fighting, and, nine times out of ten, have overwhelmingly won. And where these citizens, these plain people, who belong to the rank and file, have been denied the chance to fight, we Progressives have been fighting their battles, and now have made it certain that they will have the right in the future to fight for themselves.

Our cause is the cause of justice for the rank and file. When special interests scheme to deprive the people of their property in the natural resources of the country, we stand for the right of the people to control that property against the special interests. When the burdens of industry are laid upon the plain people so that the workers have to bear all the weight of accident and death, that ought to be borne by the industry, we stand

for human rights, the right of the rank and file against the claims of property. When antiquated and worn-out views of the law and of social justice stand in the way of the courts' giving a square deal to the people, and nullify the laws that are intended to promote the general welfare, we stand for the rights of the rank and file, even against the traditions of judges. So, when the power of the office-holder and the political leader is used to prevent the rank and file from enforcing their will, we stand for the right of the rank and file against the boss.

Those who want special privilege very well know who their friends are. They are glad to make alliance with the bosses. This is what they mean when they talk about being "friends of Constitutional government." The way to break the power of special privilege is to break the power of the boss on whom it depends. There are well-meaning people among our opponents; but the fact that they mean well does not prevent them from being allies and friends of bossism. They are willing to be put in this position because they distrust the rank and file. It is no wonder that they dread the popular primary, for the popular primary is an appeal to the rank and file whom they distrust.

It has been said by my opponents that what I am standing for is "treason to the party." When they speak of the party they mean the bosses and their understrappers who have so often manipulated the party machinery. I decline to recognize the bosses as embodying in their own persons the party. I recognize the rank and file as making up the party, and it is to them that my loyalty is due. When I say, therefore, that no Republican is called upon to surrender to the irresponsible action of party bosses, I am showing my loyalty to the people. No loyalty is due to the bosses who defy or disregard the will of the people. The only loyalty I acknowledge is loyalty to the rank and file, loyalty to the people.