## THE PROGRESSIVES AND THE COLORED MAN

## EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The Outlook emphasizes its hearty agreement with the principles which Mr. Roosevelt defines in the following article, and which he enunciated in his letter to Mr. Julian Harris and in his speech at the Chicago Progressive Convention. These will not suit the extremists on either side. On the one hand, it is said that the Negro, whatever his character, must be kept out of all participation in political activity, contented to be without any voice in the government under which he lives, and must trust to others to protect him in his personal and property rights. On the other hand, it is desired that the Negro be thrust forward into political activity regardless of the effect on him or on his neighbors. We might quote actual utterances from both classes of extremists here: it is not necessary. A very satisfactory justification of the position taken by Mr. Roosevelt is furnished by the fact that it is at the same time attacked by Negro politicians of the South because he has not stood by them, and by representatives of the Negrophobe element who revolt against this position on the ground that he has not stood by them. He has, in fact, taken the ground of reason and justice—the ground that in a representative government no man is to be accepted as a representative unless he does in fact represent the community from which he comes; and no representative is to be rejected if he does in fact represent such community. It is perfectly notorious that the Negro delegates who have claimed to represent the extreme South in Republican conventions have not truly represented the community; in the Progressive Convention every Negro delegate accepted did represent the community and came with the good will of his white neighbors. The fact that after Mr. Roosevelt's speech the delegates from East and West, South and North, Negroes and whites, radicals and conservatives, accepted his principles without a dissenting voice indicates that he stands upon a recognized ground of common sense and common justice.—The Editors.

THE recent Progressive National Convention differed strikingly, in many ways, from all previous conventions of both the Republican and the Democratic parties, and in no way more markedly than in its action toward the colored man. For many years the attitude of the Democratic party towards the colored man has been one of brutality, and the attitude of the Republican party towards him one of hypocrisy. One party has brutally denied him, not only his rights, but all hope of ever being treated aright; the other has hypocritically pretended to be zealous for his rights, but has acted only in ways that did him harm and not good. The Progressives, on the contrary, have at the very outset of their party career acted towards him with good faith and also with entire frankness and sincerity, keeping true to their ideals and yet also looking facts in the face, performing for him in the present more than either of the old parties has ever

performed, acting so that there will be an increased measure of performance in the future, and yet promising nothing that cannot be performed.

The reasons for the action which we took were set forth in my letter to Mr. Julian Harris, son of Joel Chandler Harris and a delegate in the Convention from Georgia; and also in my speech to the Convention, in answer to a question asked me from the galleries. The action of the Convention proved the good faith with which we spoke.

In National Republican Conventions there have usually been a number of Negro delegates from the South—largely men of bad character, almost openly venal—and practically none from the North. In the Democratic Conventions there have been none from the South, and rarely one from anywhere. In the Progressive National Convention there were numerous colored delegates from the North—from Massachusetts, Rhode Island,

New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois-and also from the belt of States in the South that used to be called "border " States-Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas. From all these States taken together, in all of which there already existed a real and strong Progressive party, there were several times as many colored delegates as had ever been in a Republican National Convention. All these delegates were men of character and standing, who stood on a level with their white fellow-delegates in point of ability and integrity. From the South Atlantic and Gulf States there were no colored delegates, and from two of them no white delegates. In these States the Progressive party had to be formed out of absolutely new material.

The Progressive Convention, therefore, on this point differed from the Democratic Conventions in the fact that there were many colored delegates instead of none. It differed from the Republican Conventions in the fact that these colored delegates came from the States where there were strong white Progressive parties, whereas in the Republican Conventions the colored men came from States where there was no white Republican party. The Progressives did justice to their own colored neighbors who dwelt among them, whereas the Republicans had always exercised a cheap virtue by admitting colored delegates from the States where they themselves did not dwell. Incidentally, I wish to emphasize the fact that absolutely no good of any kind resulted to the colored man from being allowed to appear as a farcical "delegate" from States wherein he possessed no shred of real political power.

I instance the Progressive National Convention, in the first place because in this regard it is an instance of performance instead of mere promise; and in the next place because it shows just the attitude we Progressives are taking towards the difficult question of actually getting fair play between the two races, instead of merely indulging in fine talk about it.

We feel with all our hearts that in a democracy like ours, and, above all, in such a genuinely democratic movement as ours, we cannot permanently succeed except on the basis of treating each man on his worth as a man. The humblest among us, no matter what his creed, his birthplace, or the color of his skin, so long as he behaves in straight and decent fashion, must have guaranteed to him under the law his right to life and liberty, to protection from injustice, to the enjoyment of the fruits of his own labor, and to do his share in the work of self-government on the same terms with others of like fitness. Our movement is in the interest of every honest, industrious, law-abiding colored man, just as it is in the interest of every honest, industrious, law-abiding white man. To this cause, embodying this as one of our chief tenets, we have dedicated ourselves, with whatever of high purpose, of wisdom, patience, and resolute courage we possess.

Now, as regards the colored man, the only way to realize these principles is to promote good will and the spirit of fair dealing between him and the white man who is his neighbor. The white man in other countries can do very little to help the colored man in this country; and so, within our own limits, the white man in one section can do but little for the colored man in another section compared to what can be done by that colored man's own white neighbor, if this white neighbor will only himself undertake the task. For nearly half a century the Republican party has proceeded on the theory that the colored man in the South, in order to secure him his political rights, should be encouraged to antagonize the white man in the South: for nearly half a century the Democratic party has encouraged the white man of the South to trample on the colored man. The Republican policy has utterly and miserably failed in its object; it has not only done no good to the colored man, but has harmed him, has also harmed the white man of the South, and through the votes of the colored man of the South in the National Convention has finally destroyed the Republican party itself. The Democratic party has succeeded in its policy, but at the cost of the utmost damage not only to the colored man, but also to those in whose interest the policy was supposed to be carried on-the white men of the South themselves. One of the greatest services that can be performed for the white men of the South is to emancipate them from their slavery to the Democratic party. As regards the colored man, I need hardly point out that the Democratic party is, as it always has been, his consistent foe; and no man who supports the Democratic party and its candidates in this contest can honestly say that he is the friend of the colored man, or entitled to be listened to when he pretends to be such.

Unlike the Democratic party, the Progressive party stands for justice and fair dealing towards the colored man; and, unlike the Republican party, it proposes to secure him justice and fair dealing in the only practicable way, by encouraging in every part of the country good feeling between the white men and the colored men who are neighbors, and by appealing in every part of the country to the white men who are the colored man's neighbors, and who alone can help him, to give him such help, not because they are forced by outsiders to do so, but as a matter of honorable obligation freely recognized on their own part. The plans already tried by the Republican and Democratic parties have failed utterly and hopelessly. No other plan than the one we propose offers the remotest chance of benefiting either the white man or the colored man of the South. Therefore it is merely the part of wisdom to try our plan, which is to try for the gradual re-enfranchisement of the worthy colored man of the South by frankly giving the leadership of our movement to the wisest and justest white men of the South.

Now, the first essential is to show that we are honest in our proposals. The Republican party became deeply tainted with hypocrisy because it practically confined its manifestations of friendship for the Negro to loud protestations and to acts on behalf of the Negro who lived somewhere else. We have begun and must go on by showing our good faith in our treatment of the Negro at home.

This we have already done; in the States where the Progressive party is already flourishing we have given him a share in its councils such as the Republican party never dreamed of doing. This is true not only as regards the numbers but as regards the character of the colored men who have sat in our conventions. We realize that it behooves us to look to the conditions of life among our colored as well as among our white fellowcitizens of the North; there have been plenty of lynchings and race riots in the North; and we intend to make serious and conscientious effort to do away with the conditions which have brought about these race riots and lynchings.

In the South we propose to proceed just as we are proceeding in the North, by appealing to what is best in the best men in the country, the most upright and honest and far-sighted citizens. The average American objects to being driven, but he is susceptible

as made the effort, until the Progressives in Chicago took the action they did. No other plan than that we propose offers even the remotest chance of success. That ours, if

to any appeal made frankly to his sense of honor and justice. We no more propose to try, or pretend to try, to dragoon the people of Georgia or Louisiana than the people of New York or Illinois. We feel that when the movement is allowed to come from within, the men of the right type from the South Atlantic and Gulf States will act as their brethren elsewhere act; and then the colored man who is a good citizen will have the same chance in one place as in another. The Progressives of West Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, Kentucky, have set a standard to which we have the reasonable hope that the States touching them on the south will attain when there is no longer any attempt made to drive them, when the matter is left to their own awakened consciences, and when the men who live elsewhere, under easier conditions, themselves do their duty by the Negro, showing neither brutality and lack of consideration nor foolish sentimentality and the attempt to treat shams as facts.

Our hope is that under the lead of practical, competent, high-minded white men, we shall in the end everywhere see-and nowhere save under such lead will we ever see -the right of free political expression secured to the Negro who shows that he possesses the intelligence, integrity, and self-respect which justify such right of political expression in his white neighbor. That this is a reasonable hope is shown by Mr. Harris in his letter answering mine. He says: "The white man in the South is desirous of genuinely helping the Negro. The progress of the Negro industrially and agriculturally in the South has been under the supervision and with the co-operation of his white neighbor. That this progress has been amazing only a glance at the proper Government reports is necessary to prove. The patriotic, sensible white men of the South desire to see the Negro built up in character and stimulated to a sense of personal responsibility. . . .

"Under these conditions (created by the action of the Progressive party) it will become for the first time possible that the Negro who shows the qualities that entitle him to respect and confidence will, with the cordial good will of his white neighbors, do his part in healthy political work for the common good."

Both of the old parties have utterly failed even to attempt to look this question squarely in the face, and to try to solve it in a spirit of justice combined with common sense. Indeed, no party for half a century so much

honestly carried out, will work a measurable betterment in conditions in both North and South seems to me certain. Such being the case, it should surely be tried.