

## NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

*This is the tenth of the series of editorials by Mr. Roosevelt on "Nationalism and Progress."—THE EDITORS.*

The true object of government has been happily defined as the effort to accomplish a general distribution of welfare. The true object of democracy should be to guarantee each man his rights, with the purpose that each man shall thereby be enabled better to do his duty. Government is a failure, no matter how well it preserves law and order, if it results only in securing to a few people an enormously disproportionate share of power and of material well-being, while the conditions for the great mass of men are such as to forbid them achieving success by hard, honest, intelligent work. Similarly, democracy means failure if it merely substitutes a big privileged for a small privileged class, and if this big privileged class in its turn desires nothing more than selfish material enjoyment. The man who receives what he has not earned and does not earn, the man who does not render service in full for all that he has, is out of place in a democratic community; and he is equally out of place, whether he be a man living in idle luxury on millions which he has not earned or which he has won in ways that represent no service to the State; or whether he be a man living in idle poverty, enjoying the luxury of squalid sloth, content to exist on some form of charity, or, what is still worse, on what is in its nature the plunder of the industrious. Effortless ease ignobly enjoyed and the avoidance of serious work render a man equally unfit for citizenship in a republic, whether he be a multi-millionaire or a tramp. The division between the worthy

and the unworthy citizen must be drawn on conduct and character, and not on wealth or poverty. Arrogance and envy, the bitter scorn of the rich man for the poor man and the bitter hate of the poor man for the rich man, are merely the opposite sides of the same dark shield.

In this country at the moment our chief concern must be to deprive the special interests of the power to which they are not entitled and which they use for the corruption of our institutions and to our economic and social undoing. There are persons who contend that "special interests" is a vague and indeed a demagogic term, and incapable of definition. Undoubtedly it is difficult in certain cases to draw the line sharply between corporations which conduct themselves with entire propriety and are beneficial to the public, and other corporations which distinctly come in the category of the special interests, of the beneficiaries of special privilege. But such difficulties of demarcation on the border line always exist. Practically there is little difficulty in saying whether or not the average big concern is the beneficiary of special privilege. A special interest is one which has been given by law certain improper advantages as compared with the mass of our people, or which enjoys such advantages owing to the absence of needed laws. As regards certain great corporations, the facts are so patent—being often made so by confession or judicial proceeding—that no discussion of them is necessary. When the Sugar Trust, for instance, through its chief officer, testified that it subscribed to the campaign funds of both parties in order to protect itself from Governmental interference, the officer adding with cynical candor that it was Republican in Republican States and Democratic in Democratic States, it becomes easy to understand why its management should have been of such a character as to result in its having to return to the Government between two and three millions of dollars of which it had swindled the Government by debauching custom-house employees—and this aside from the fines it paid for illegally securing railway rebates. When the Southern Pacific dominated Californian politics and industry, there was no room for doubt as to its being a special

interest. Full Government reports of investigations undertaken by the order of Mr. Garfield when he was Secretary of the Interior showed clearly to those willing to see that the Standard Oil Company, in point of power, and of its relations to competitors, to the railways, and to consumers, embodied everything which we think of as typical when we speak of a special interest. In my judgment, the way for a democracy to deal with special interests of this character is plain. The Sugar Trust should be deprived of every particle of the tariff protection which it has abused. The same is, of course, true of the Standard Oil Company. The great railway should be put completely and effectively under the control of the Inter-State Commerce Commission. Furthermore, as regards these two great trusts, the Sugar Trust and the Standard Oil Trust, the Bureau of Corporations in the Department of the Interior should be given precisely such control as the Railway Commission now exercises over railways, precisely such control as is exercised by the German Government at this moment over potash—a control which shall be efficient and thoroughgoing in every department of the business.

I mention these three corporations merely as examples, as showing what ought to be done with all corporations of similar type. Men who believe in the democratic principle should realize that true Nationalism is only another name for true democracy. The special interests which are powerful, and therefore potentially formidable, are always of Nation-wide, and not merely State-wide, power. I cannot too often repeat that true Nationalism represents in its essence merely a demand for the people's rights, for the rights of the whole people. Therefore true Nationalism means championship of the rights of the States when insistence on their rights offers the best method of securing popular rights, and championship of the power of the Federal Government when the rights of all the people are involved, because then the rights of the people as a whole can be secured only by the action of the Federal Government. So far as the great trusts are concerned, only the National Government can deal with them, for their economic power is achieved only

by reason of their participation in inter-State commerce, and so only the Federal Government can effectively control them.<sup>1</sup>

The democracy, if it is to come to its own in this country, must set its face like steel against privilege and all the beneficiaries of privilege. It must war to cut out special privilege from our frame of government, and in doing so it must count upon the envenomed hostility, not only of the great industrial corporations and individuals who are the beneficiaries of privilege, but of their servants and adherents in the press and in public life.

Yet it is even more important that the people should be on their guard against themselves than it is that they should be

<sup>1</sup> In attacking special privilege, in attacking the great moneyed interests which have exercised so sinister a control over our political and social life, we have to count not only upon the open and avowed opposition of our enemies, but on their much more dangerous indirect opposition. I earnestly commend the reading of Judge Lindsey's book "The Beast" to all men who wish to understand the methods by which these great sinister interests work. Judge Lindsey has been a true friend of the people, a fearless and incorruptible champion of genuine popular rights, and the upholder of a high standard of popular duty. He has therefore been violently assailed and vilified by the orators and newspapers directly or indirectly subsidized by the interests. One of his illuminating experiences has been with certain journals of a nominally philanthropic type. One of these was a paper nominally issued in the interest of the protection of children and dumb animals by the State itself, and another a private paper of the same type. Each is designed to influence religious and philanthropic people who mean well and do not think deeply, or who are entirely intelligent but lack the means of ascertaining the facts. Each accordingly is filled with articles advocating virtue in the abstract, or virtue somewhere else, or virtue which does not interfere with the financial well-being of the great corrupt corporations. Each will praise temperance, for instance—especially in the shape of an impractical temperance agitation—and reproduce sermons in support of the family virtues; or support a campaign against race-track gambling; and then, having thus predisposed its auditors in its favor, insert a vicious assault upon Judge Lindsey in an effort to discredit him in the minds of religious people ignorant of the facts. As an amusing incident I may mention the fact that one of these papers last summer, not deeming it wise to attack me openly for my speeches in Denver and elsewhere against the corrupt special interests, endeavored to create a feeling against me among well-meaning sentimentalists because, forsooth, I had collected in Africa, for the National Museum, a group of wild ostriches consisting of cock, hen, and eggs! The writer trusted that those of his readers who ate hens' eggs and spring chickens could, nevertheless, be moved to horror at the thought of preserving in the National Museum, for the pleasure and instruction of hundreds of thousands of visitors, the only such group of wild ostriches to be found in any American museum.

I mention Judge Lindsey's experience in Colorado merely as a sample, not as unique. In New York City the press directly or indirectly influenced by and responsive to those special interests which are as a matter of rough convenience designated as the Wall Street interests is naturally very large, and any man engaged in the effort to bring about a genuine betterment of social, political, and industrial conditions, especially if he lives in New York or the neighborhood, must accept as a matter of course the virulent hostility of this portion of the press; and the hostility shown by certain papers which pride themselves upon representing the educated classes is marked by as much mendacity as is the case with the newspapers which are frankly "yellow."



on their guard against others. Each of us must hold his own against outsiders at times, but, after all, the chief dangers to each man dwell within that man's own heart and brain; and what is true of each of us individually is true of all of us in a mass. No man can do good work in the world for himself, for those whom he loves who are dependent upon him, or for the State at large, unless he has the great virtue of self-mastery, unless he can control his passions and appetites, and force head and hand to work according to the dictates of conscience. This is so obvious that to many people it will seem too obvious to need repetition. But, though obvious enough in theory, it is continually forgotten in practice; and the political leaders who address, not each man individually, but men in a mass, often forget to inculcate it even in theory. A flatterer is not a good companion for any man; and the public man who rises only by flattering his constituents is just as unsafe a companion for them. I do not mean that he should continually find fault with them or blame them. In private life, the nagging and fault-finding friend is often quite as unworthy a creature as the flatterer, and, moreover, cannot normally long remain a friend. So it is with the public man. Unless he genuinely loves and trusts the people, as Abraham Lincoln did, he has no real place in popular government. But he need be no more a flatterer than Abraham Lincoln; and, like Abraham Lincoln, he should steadily set before the people, not the ideal of mere ease and personal enjoyment, but the ideal of high achievement for noble ends, of work well worth doing which is worthily done.

The greatness of our Nation in the past has rested upon the fact that the people had power, and that they used it aright for great and worthy ends. Washington and Lincoln, each in the degree that his generation rendered possible, trusted to and believed in the people, steadfastly refused to represent anything save what was highest and best in the people, and by appealing to this highest and best brought it out and made it prominent. Each called upon his countrymen to lay down their lives for an ideal, and then called upon the survivors to perform the

even harder task of leading their lives in such shape as to realize the ideal for which the dead men had died. Our aim, the aim of those of us who stand for true progress, for true Nationalism, for true democracy, is not only to give the people power, but, ourselves as part of the people, to try to see that the power is used aright, that it is used with wisdom, with courage, with self-restraint, and in a spirit of the broadest kindness and charity toward all men.

At the moment we are engaged in a campaign to secure to the people the right to elect their Senators by popular vote. We hold that the recent exhibitions in Illinois, in New York, and in various other States amply warrant the change. Furthermore, we believe that, exactly as benefit came by the practical abolition of the electoral college and the substitution for it of the election of President by popular vote, so benefit will come by taking the election of the Senators away from the legislatures and giving it to the people. But it must ever be remembered that no benefit whatever will come from the change unless the people themselves are honest. A constituency which elects a Lee Neil Browne to the State Legislature has forfeited all right to complain about any deed of the Legislature which elects a Lorimer as Senator; and, indeed, such a district represents in our public life a greater menace than a corrupt Legislature itself. When corruption becomes widespread, it is not of the slightest consequence whether it is due to the efforts of great corporations to secure special privileges or to the sordid willingness of private individuals to make money out of their suffrages. In the "Review of Reviews" Dr. Albert Shaw recounts in vivid fashion just what occurred in Adams County, Ohio, where Judge Blair—a man to whom the whole Nation ought to be grateful—by a singular exhibition of fearlessness, ability, and honesty, uncovered a system of corruption so widespread that it had embraced a large minority, and possibly even a majority, of the voters of the county. If a condition of public morality such as Judge Blair exposed ever became general in this country, no shift of governmental form could save democracy from overthrow. The referendum, the

initiative, and the recall can serve a good purpose only if the heart of the people is sound. The Roman Republic fell, not because of the ambition of Cæsar or Augustus, but because it had already long ceased to be in any real sense a republic at all. When the sturdy Roman plebeian, who lived by his own labor, who voted without reward according to his own convictions, and who with his fellows formed in war the terrible Roman legion, had been changed into an idle creature who craved nothing in life save the gratification of a thirst for vapid excitement, who was fed by the State, and who directly or indirectly sold his vote to the highest bidder, then the end of the republic was at hand, and nothing could save it. The laws were the same as they had been, but the people behind the laws had changed, and so the laws counted for nothing.

We need good laws just as a carpenter needs good instruments. If he has no tools, the best carpenter alive cannot do good work. But the best tools will not make a good carpenter, any more than to give a coward a rifle will make him a good soldier. We wish to see the mass of our people move steadily upward to a higher social, industrial, and political level. To do this we wish to change the laws, and by this change to render it steadily easier for the right type of man, the right type of woman, to achieve better conditions. But unless the man and the woman are of the right type the laws can accomplish nothing. It rests within our own hands, it rests with us, the people of America, to determine our own fate; and character is the main factor in the determination. If betterment in social and industrial conditions means merely an increase in ease and sensual enjoyment, no good can permanently follow such betterment.

Nor will any one virtue suffice. Thrift and hard work will avail no more than a cultivated taste and an amiable philanthropy if there is willful sterility in marriage, if men and women forget the great primal and elemental law of racial well-being, and this whether the fault be due to vice in its crude and repulsive forms, or to timidity and unwillingness to run risk, or to cold and selfish shrinking from the trouble and labor which are insepa-

able from every kind of life that is really worth living.

Moreover, as it is in the things of the home, which are most important, so it is with the things outside the home, which are only less important. It is absolutely necessary that the people as a whole should have complete control of the instrumentalities of government, for only by obtaining and retaining such control can we work out the genuine principles of democracy on this continent; but, having obtained this, our fate will be evil if we use the power in a spirit of vindictiveness toward others, or in an effort to get for ourselves something which we have not earned.

I believe that the average American citizen wishes nothing save what he can honestly obtain for himself by hard work and decent living. This is one reason why I so heartily believe in democracy. I believe in the future of the American people because I believe that fundamentally and at heart the average man and the average woman of America are sound; that, however deeply they may at times err, yet they have in them, fundamentally, the power of self-mastery, of self-control, the power to live their lives in accordance with a high and fine ideal, to do strict justice to others, and to insist upon their rights only as a vantage-point for the better performance of their duties.

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