

THE CONVICT LABOR BILL *

MR. SPEAKER: My course has not been inconsistent upon this measure. I voted against the hat bill when it first came up, and also upon its final passage. I think this measure is no worse and no better than that. Neither have I laid myself open to the charge that has been made by some of the gentlemen upon my left in relation to men pretending to have the interests of working men at heart when they in reality did not. I have never said that I claimed to represent labor, and that I would go as far as I could and do all I could for the working man. I represent neither capital nor labor; I represent every American citizen, be he laborer or be he capitalist. I do not claim to know more than they do what the working men of this State desire. I can only say that I will try to do them justice, as I have tried to do all other classes justice; or, to speak more properly, according to my lights I will strive to mete an equal measure of justice to every citizen of this State, no matter what his occupation or nationality. I vote No.

* Speech in the New York Assembly, April 18, 1883. From the original manuscript in Mr. Roosevelt's scrap-book for 1883.