

A WORD TO REFORMERS *

My friends, we should cultivate the habit of speaking the truth about evils that threaten us through our public servants. There is a greater temptation for legislators to rail against corporations than to support them, and the danger here is that the man, generally speaking, who will yield quickest to the undue influence of corporations is the man who will cry out loudest against them and inveigh against the "Money Power," spelled with a capital M and a capital P. Gentlemen, you should watch your representatives in their handling of public measures that come before them. The line of cleavage between the honest man and the dishonest man is not the line which divides the man with means from the man without means. The line does not run that way. Rather it is that virtue and the lack of virtue are divided by a line that runs perpendicular to comparative fortunes. Each measure must stand on its merits. There is nothing good or bad in standing for or against a corporation any more than there is anything good or bad in standing for or against a man. A corporation is simply a collection of men, who may do well or who may do ill. The thing to do is to make them understand that if they do well you are with them, but if they do ill you are ever and always against them.

I hope no party will make a direct issue against corporations. There is as much harm in making an issue

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of this kind as there is in standing for things that are vicious. The thing to do is to be sure your public men live up to the professions they make. Make the man who says he is for the corporations see to it that he doesn't give those corporations undue protection, and let the man who is against corporate wealth remember that he has no right to pillage a corporate treasury.

Now, gentlemen, don't be content with mere effervescent denunciation of one thing or another. Evil can't be done away with through one spasm of virtue. We must cultivate the habit of clean living, and we must cultivate the habit of standing always for clean government. We may have made mistakes at Albany this winter, but no laws are on the statute-books, and none will be there, that shouldn't be. We have got a sound civil-service law, the Amsterdam Avenue question has been settled as it should have been, and we have investigated the affairs of this city in such a way as to justify the course of those who started it and those who carried it on. We have started a tax on public franchises, which means that corporations must pay a fair share of the public burdens. We have worked along party lines when it was expedient to do so, and when we thought the party wanted to go wrong we wouldn't let it.