

THE ADMINISTRATION OF WILLIAM MCKINLEY *

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MY FELLOW DELEGATES, MY BELOVED REPUBLICANS AND AMERICANS: I rise to second the nomination of William McKinley, the President who has had to face more numerous and graver problems than any other President since the days of the mighty Lincoln, and who has faced them.

Four years ago the Republicans made William McKinley their nominee for President. The Republican nominee, even before a fortnight had passed, had become the candidate not merely of all Republicans but of all Americans far-sighted enough to see where the true interests of the nation lay, and keenly sensitive to the national honor. Four years ago we were confronted with the gravest crisis which this nation has had to face since Appomattox was won and the Civil War came to a close. We were confronted by a situation where, if our opponents had triumphed, it meant not only an immense aggravation of the existing and already well-nigh intolerable physical distress, but a stain on the national honor so deep that a generation would have had to pass away before it could have been wiped out.

We appealed to the nation to put William McKinley in the first place on the two simple issues that if he were elected prosperity would come to the country and the country's honor would be upheld at home and abroad.

* Speech before the Twelfth Republican National Convention, Philadelphia, Pa., June 21, 1900. From "Official Proceedings of the Twelfth Republican National Convention," Philadelphia, 1900, pp. 117-119.

We did not promise the impossible. We did not say that prosperity would come to every man, no matter whether that man did or did not try to get it. In the long run each man's own thrift, industry, and energy must be the prime factors in determining his success. No legislation can supply their lack, but it is easy enough, by unwise or dishonest legislation or administration, to nullify them absolutely, and it is, though less easy, possible by good administration, clean and wise legislation, to give them the freest possible scope. And it was that scope which we promised should be given.

Well, we kept our word. The opportunity was given, and it was seized by American energy, ingenuity, and thrift, with the result that this country now, as we sit here, has reached a pitch of prosperity never before attained in the nation's history.

So it has been in foreign affairs. Four years ago the nation was uneasy because at our very doors an American island was writhing in hideous agony under a worse than mediæval despotism. We had our Armenia at our threshold. The situation in Cuba had become such that we could no longer stand quiet and retain one shred of self-respect. The President faced this duty as he faced all others. He exhausted every expedient to get Spain to withdraw peacefully from the island which she was impotent to do aught than oppress, and when every peaceful means had failed, we drew the sword and waged the most righteous and brilliantly successful foreign war that this generation has seen.

It was not a great war because it did not have to be; because when we could accomplish a result with one finger, we did not need to exert all our strength. But it was momentous indeed in its effect. And like every

other great feat that has ever been performed in the history of humanity, it left those who performed it not only a heritage of honor, but a heritage of responsibility. Great is our responsibility; heavy indeed; and we are meeting it as it must be met when President McKinley sends to the island men like Wood, and Taft, and Allen; men whose names are synonyms of integrity and honesty, and earnest of the fact that we intend that in those islands liberty, justice, and orderly law shall prevail from now onward.

This is what the nation has done during the three years of President McKinley's administration, and this is what he stands for and typifies. To him it has been given—and thrice blessed the man to whom such is given—to embody in his own personality all that is loftiest, most earnest, most disinterested in the nation's hope, in the nation's desire, and to represent the nation's strength in the struggle for righteousness.

We have done so well that our opponents actually use the fact as an argument for turning us out. We have put our economic policy on a basis so stable, we have enacted such wise financial legislation that they turn to the wise and honest men who deserted them at the last election and beg them to come back and support them now because even if they do get in we will prevent them from doing the harm they would like to do. I am not exaggerating. That is the exact argument they use; and to all who might be affected by it let me address one word of warning. Wise legislation is vitally important, but honest administration is even more important. No matter how perfect our financial legislation, if the management of the national finances were intrusted to any man who would be acceptable to the Populistic Democracy of to-day, we should be

plunged back into an abyss of shame, disgrace, and business chaos.

Our opponents have not any more even the poor excuse of honesty for their folly. They have raved against trusts, they have foamed at the mouth in prating of impossible remedies they would like to adopt; and now in my own State we have discovered all the chief leaders of the Democracy, including that leader before whom the other lesser leaders stand with bared heads and trembling knees in a trust which really is of infamous and perhaps of criminal character. These apostles of Democracy, these prophets of the new dispensation, have themselves been discovered in a trust through which they hope to wring fortunes for themselves from the dire needs of their poorer brethren. I pity the Democratic orator who in New York State this fall speaks the word "trusts."

Now for the Philippines. The insurrection still goes on because the allies in this country of the bloody insurrectionary oligarchy in Luzon have taught their foolish dupes to believe that Democratic success at the polls next November means the abandonment of the islands to the savages, who would scramble for the bloody plunder until some other strong civilized nation came in to do the work that we would have shown ourselves unfit to perform. Our success in November means peace in the islands. The success of our opponents means an indefinite prolongation of the present bloody struggle.

We nominate President McKinley because he stands indeed for honesty at home and for honor abroad; because he stands for the continuance of the material prosperity which has brought comfort to every home in the Union; and because he stands for that kind of policy

which consists in making performance square with promise.

We stand on the threshold of a new century big with the fate of mighty nations. It rests with us now to decide whether in the opening years of that century we shall march forward to fresh triumphs or whether at the outset we shall cripple ourselves for the contest. Is America a weakling, to shrink from the world work of the great world-powers? No. The young giant of the West stands on a continent and clasps the crest of an ocean in either hand. Our nation, glorious in youth and strength, looks into the future with eager eyes and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. We do not stand in craven mood asking to be spared the task, cringing as we look on the contest. No. We challenge the proud privilege of doing the work that Providence allots us, and we face the coming years high of heart and resolute of faith that to our people is given the right to win such honor and renown as has never yet been vouchsafed to the nations of mankind.