

Roosevelt and His Regime (April 15, 1907)

The only time in my life have I ever seen Theodore Roosevelt was years before he became president of the United States. I was aboard of a train in the far west, where Roosevelt was then said to be following ranch life, and as he and several companions in cowboy costume entered the car at a station stop, he was pointed out to me. I did not like him. The years since have not altered that feeling of aversion except to accentuate it.

I have since seen the nation mad with hero worship over this man Roosevelt, but I have not been impressed by it. Very "great" men sometimes shrivel into very small ones and finally vanish into oblivion in the short space of a single generation.

The American people are more idolatrous than any "heathen" nation on earth. They worship their popular "heroes," while they last, with passionate frenzy, and with equal madness do they hunt down the sane "fools" who vainly try to teach them sense. Theodore Roosevelt and George Dewey¹ as "heroes" and Wendell Phillips and John Brown as "fools" are notable illustrations. American history is filled with them.

But my personal dislike of the cowboy in imitation who has since become president, however justifiable, would scarcely warrant a public attack upon his official character, and this review, being of such a nature, is inspired, as will appear, by entirely different motives.

There are those, and they constitute a great majority of the American people, who stand in awe of their president, supposedly their servant, but in fact their master; they speak of him with a kind of reverential adulation as a lordly personage, a superior being to be looked up to and worshipped rather than a fellow man to be respected and loved. There are others who betray equal ignorance in a more vulgar fashion by coarse tirades for which there is often as little excuse as extreme adulation.

Regarding the president of the United States, as I do, simply as a citizen and fellow man, the same as any other, I shall speak of him and his acts free alike from awe and malice, and if I place him in the public pillory, where he has placed so many others, to be seen and despised of men, it will be from a sense that his official acts, so often in flat denial of his professions, merit the execration of honest men.

In arraigning President Roosevelt and his administration I have no private spite nor personal grudge to satisfy, but an obligation to redeem and a principle to vindicate. I shall go about it as I would any other moral duty, asking no favors and prepared to accept all consequences.

In the first place, I charge President Roosevelt with being a hypocrite, the most consummate that ever occupied the executive seat of the nation. His profession of pure politics is false, his boasted moral courage the bluff of a bully, and his “square deal” a delusion and a sham.

Theodore Roosevelt is mainly for Theodore Roosevelt and incidentally for such others as are also for the same distinguished gentleman — first, last, and all the time. He is a smooth and slippery politician, swollen purple with self-conceit; he is shrewd enough to gauge the stupidity of the masses and unscrupulous enough to turn it into hero worship. This constitutes the demagogue, and he is that in superlative degree.

Only a few days ago he appeared in a characteristic role. Rushing into the limelight, as necessary to him as breath, he shrieked that he and “Root,”² were “horrified” because of certain scandalous and revolting charges made by one of his own former political chums. Of course, he and “Root,” of Tweed fame,³ the foxiest “fixer” of them all, were “horrified” because of the shock to their political virtue, but it so happened that the horror took effect only when they found themselves uncovered. The taking of Harriman’s⁴ boodle for corruptly electing him president and the use of the stolen insurance funds for the same criminal purpose did not “horrify” the president and “Root,” nor would they be “horrified” yet if they had not been caught red-handed in the act with the booty upon their persons.

The cry of the exposed malefactor and all his pack of yelpers that he is the victim of a “plot” by his own friends and supporters, the very gentlemen (*sic.*) who furnished him with free special trains, paid his campaign expenses, and in fact bought the presidency for him, is so palpably false as to be absolutely ridiculous and only brings into bolder relief the hypocrisy and fraud it was designed to conceal.

This much is preliminary to the extraordinary official conduct of the president which has “horrified” not only its victims but millions of others, and now prompts this review and protest.

Something over a year ago Charles Moyer, William Haywood, and George Pettibone, of Colorado, leading officials of the Western Federation of Miners, were overpowered and kidnapped by a gang of thugs and torn from their families at night by conspiracy of two degenerate governors and

another notorious criminal acting for the Mine and Smelter Trust, one of the most stupendous aggregations of force and plunder in all America.

Every decent man and woman was “horrified” by this infamy and the whole working class of the nation cried out against it.

Was Roosevelt also “horrified?”

Yes!

Because the Mine and Smelter Trust had kidnapped three citizens of the republic?

Oh, no!

The three citizens were only working cattle and he never had any other conception of them.

He was “horrified” because the Mine and Smelter Trust, unclean birds that feather their nests, especially in Colorado, with legislatures and United States senatorships, had not killed instead of kidnapped their victims.

Then and there Theodore Roosevelt disgraced himself and his high office, and his cruel and cowardly act will load his name with odium as long as it is remembered.

The Mine and Smelter Trust had put up the funds and used its vast machinery for Roosevelt, and now Roosevelt must serve it even to the extent of upholding criminals, approving kidnapping and murdering its helpless victims.

When Roosevelt stepped out of the White House and called Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone “murderers,” men he had never seen and did not know; men who had never been tried, never convicted, and whom every law of the land presumed innocent until proven guilty, he fell a million miles beneath where Lincoln stood, and there he grovels today with his political crimes, one after another, finding him out and pointing at him their accusing fingers.

No president of the United States has ever descended to such depths as has Roosevelt to serve his law-defying and crime-inciting masters. The act is simply scandalous and without a parallel in American history.

What right has Theodore Roosevelt to prejudice American citizens, pronounce their guilt and hand them over to the hangman? In a pettifogging lawyer such an act would be infamous; in the president of the nation it becomes monstrous and staggers belief.

All that Roosevelt knows about Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone he knows from his friends, their kidnapers. The millions of working men

and women, embracing practically every labor union in America, count nothing for him. He is not now standing for their votes. He is fulfilling his obligation to the gentlemen (!) who put up the coin that elected him; paying off the mortgage they hold upon his administration.

Theodore Roosevelt is swift to brand other men who even venture to disagree with him as liars. He, according to himself, is immaculate and infallible. The greatest liar is he who sees only liars in others.

When Theodore Roosevelt, president of the United States, denounced Charles Moyer, William Haywood, and George Pettibone as murderers, he uttered a lie as black and damnable, a calumny as foul and atrocious as ever issued from a human throat. The men he thus traduced and vilified, sitting in their prison cells for having dutifully served their fellow workers and having spurned the bribes of their masters, transcend immeasurably the man in the White House, who, with the cruel malevolence of a barbarian, has pronounced their doom.

A thousand times rather would I be one of those men in Ada County jail than Theodore Roosevelt in the White House at Washington.

Had these men accepted, with but a shadow of the eagerness Roosevelt displayed, the debauching funds of the trust pirates, they would not now languish in felons' cells. The same brazen robbers of the people and corrupters of the body politic who put Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone in jail also put Theodore Roosevelt in the White House. This accounts for his prostituting the high office Lincoln honored and resorting to methods that would shame a Bowery ward-heeler.

Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone are not murderers; it is a ghastly lie, and I denounce it in the name of law and in the name of justice. I know these men, these sons of toil; I know their hearts, their guileless nature, and their rugged honesty. I love and honor them and shall fight for them while there is breath in my body.

Here and now I challenge Theodore Roosevelt. He is guilty of high crimes and deserves impeachment.

Let him do his worst. I denounce him and defy him.

During my recent visit to Washington I learned from those who know him what they think of Roosevelt. Among newspaper men he is literally despised. Their true feeling is not apparent in what they write, for they know that the slightest offense to the president is *lèse-majesté* and means instantaneous decapitation.

For the second time, Theodore Roosevelt, president of the United States, has now publicly convicted Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. He has not pronounced condemnation upon Harry Thaw,⁵ or any rich man charged with murder. He has, however, made a postmaster of a man at Chicago charged by the *Chicago Tribune* with having shot another man in a midnight brawl over disreputable women, and then used his influence to make the same man mayor of that city.⁶

Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone, the three workingmen kidnapped by the Mine and Smelter Trust, have now been in jail fourteen months; they have not been tried, but twice condemned by President Roosevelt, the last time but a few days ago in connection with Harriman, his former political pal and financial backer. These men are in prison cells, their bodies in manacles and their lips sealed. They cannot speak for themselves. They are voiceless and at the mercy of calumny. No matter how grossly outraged, they must submit.

For a man clothed with the almost absolute power of a president to strike down men gagged and bound, as these men are, he must have an unspeakably brutal and cowardly nature, just such a nature as the governor of an Empire state must have to turn a deaf ear to the agonizing entreaties of a shrieking, shuddering woman and see her dragged into the horrors of electrocution.⁷

The true character of this man is becoming gradually revealed to the American people. He has never been anything but an enemy of working people. His writings, before he became a politician, show how he held them in contempt. When he entered political life he soon learned how to shake hands with a fireman for the camera and have his press agent do the rest, and it was this species of demagoguery, the very basest conceivable, that idolized him with the ignorant mass and gave him the votes of millions he in his heart despised as an inferior race.

In his book *Ranch Life and the Hunting-Trail*, page 10, written long before he entered politics, Roosevelt reveals his opinion of the toilers. After describing cowboys when "drunk on the villainous whiskey of the frontier towns," he closes with the comparison, which needs no comment: "They are much better fellows and pleasanter companions than small farmers or agricultural laborers; nor are the mechanics and workingmen of a great city to be mentioned in the same breath."⁸

The pretended friendship for the great body of workingmen who are not to be compared to drunken cowboys has served its demagogical

purpose, but the final chapter is not yet written. There will be an awakening, and every official act of Theodore Roosevelt will be subjected to its searching scrutiny. He has always been on the side of capital wholly, while pretending the impossible feat of serving both capital and labor with equal fidelity, and only the deplorable ignorance of his dupes has applauded him in that hypocritical role.

The anthracite miners, or their children at least, will someday know that it was President Theodore Roosevelt who handed them over to the coal trust with a gold brick for a souvenir, labeled "Arbitration."

Theodore Roosevelt is an aristocrat and an autocrat. His affected democracy is spurious and easily detected. He belongs to the "upper crust" and at the very best he can conceive of the workers as only contented slaves. And no one knows better than he how easily these slaves are duped and how madly they will cheer and follow a cheap and showy "hero."

The simple fact is that Theodore Roosevelt was made president by the industrial captains and the robbers in general of the working class. They picked him for a winner and he has not failed them. Elected by the trusts and surrounded by trust attorneys as cabinet advisers, Roosevelt is essentially the monarch of a trust administration.

If this be denied, Roosevelt is challenged to answer if it was not the railroad trust that furnished him gratuitously with the special trains that bore him in royal splendor over all the railways of the nation. He is challenged to publish the list of contributors to his political sewer funds, amounting to millions of dollars, and freely used to buy the votes that made him president.

Did, or did not, the men known as trust magnates put up this boodle? Boodle drawn from the veins of labor?

Will Mr. Roosevelt deny it?

Did he not know at the time that his man Cortelyou was holding up the trusts for all they would "cough up" for his election?

Will he dare plead ignorance to intelligent persons as to who put up the money that debauched the voters of the nation?

It is true that a spasm of virtuous indignation seized him when he found that the trusts had slipped the lucre into his slush funds when he was not looking, but this was only after he saw the people looking behind the curtain. Then he bounded to the footlights and denounced Alton B. Parker as a liar for charging that the trusts were furnishing the boodle to make

him president, but no man not feeble-minded was deceived as to who was the liar.

Read the Washington press dispatch in the *Kansas City Journal* of April 4th: "It was declared in banking circles that light could be shed on the question of campaign contributions in 1904 if the books of the National Republican Committee were thrown open."

The books will not be thrown open. Roosevelt will not allow it; he knows they contain the damning evidence of his guilt.

The case is clearly stated in the platform of the Democratic State Convention of Missouri, adopted in 1906, which reads as follows:

We believe Theodore Roosevelt insincere. Pretending to inveigh against the crimes of trusts and corporations, he openly defended Paul Morton when, as manager of the Santa Fe Railroad, he was compelled to confess enormous rebates to the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. It was Roosevelt who advanced the pernicious doctrine that you must punish the corporation, not its officials who cause it to commit crime. It was Roosevelt who denounced large campaign contributions, while his secretary of commerce and labor was fleecing the corporations out of one of the biggest slush funds ever known in the history of American politics.

President Roosevelt may shout "liar" until he turns as black in the face as are the cracksmen at heart who burglarized the safes of the New York insurance companies to land him in the White House, while he was toying with the names of "Jimmy" Hyde and Chauncey Depew as pawns in the corrupt game, but the "damned spot" will not out until the whole truth is known and the whole crime expiated.

The publication of the Roosevelt-Harriman correspondence places the president in his true colors before the American people. It explains his hot haste in condemning Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone to the gallows and sending Taft to Idaho to assure the smelter trust and warn the protesting people that the kidnapping of the workingmen had the sanction of the White House and would have the support of the national administration.

A more shameful perversion of public power never blackened the pages of history.

This national scandal shows up the president's two-faced character so clearly and convincingly that it leaves not so much as a pinhole for escape. It is a damning indictment of not only the president, but the whole brood

of plutocrats, promoters, and grafting politicians who have been looting this nation for years.

There is one among these illuminating epistles which I want to burn into the minds of the working class dupes who have been bowing in the dust before this blustering bully of the White House:

Personal. October 1, 1904.

My Dear Mr. Harriman:—

A suggestion had come to me in a roundabout way that you do not think it wise to come to see me in the closing weeks of the campaign, but that you are reluctant to refuse, inasmuch as I have asked you. Now, my dear sir, you and I are practical men, and you are on the ground and know the condition better than I do.

If you think there is any danger of your visit to me causing trouble, or if you think there is nothing special I should be informed about, or any matter in which I could give aid, why, of course, give up the visit for the time being, and then, a few weeks hence, before I write my message,⁹ I shall get you to come down to discuss certain government matters no connected with the campaign. With great regards,

Sincerely yours,

Theodore Roosevelt.

Does not this brand the president with the duplicity of a Tweed and the cunning of a Quay? Would a president who is honest with the people clandestinely consort with the villain he characterizes as a liar and all that is vicious?

The disclosures made in the secret correspondence strip the president of the last shred of deception with which to cloak his perfidy. The mask is lifted and the exposure is complete. It is in the president's own handwriting in a letter to Harriman that would never have seen the light in a thousand years had not circumstances forced it upon the attention of a betrayed people. It is adroitly phrased, but its meaning is not in doubt. He knew Harriman then as he knows him now; wanted his boodle and insinuatingly coaxed him to sneak to the White House when no one was looking, and only after he was discovered did he denounce Harriman as a liar and fall into his usual fit of moral epilepsy.

From now on there will be a sharp decline in the stock of Theodore Roosevelt. The capitalist papers may continue to boom him as the only

savior and his corps of press agents at the White House may continue to grind out three-column stories about the awful conspiracy of his “trusty” friends to ruin him, but his bubble is pricked and the cheap glory in which he reveled is departing forever.

The people have been sadly deceived for a time, but the march of events is opening their eyes. Only the very ignorant or the very foolish believe that a president who has surrounded himself with Wall Street pets as cabinet ministers has any serious designs on the trusts.

The Roosevelt, Ryan, and Root combination is ideal. It speaks for itself, and with such shining lights as Taft, Cortelyou, Knox, and Paul Morton surrounding it, all lingering doubt is removed and the fools’ paradise is in the full blaze of its glory.

Space will not permit a review of the personnel of the president’s official family, at least two of whom, had the law been enforced, would not be in penitentiary.

The story of President Roosevelt and Paul Morton, if truthfully told, would make a luminous chapter in the story of railroad rascality and political jobbery. It was to this notorious strikebreaker and self-confessed criminal that Roosevelt issued a bill of moral rectitude as long as the Pope’s essay that landed him into the \$80,000 a year insurance graft he now holds down. There is in this “promotion” the very climax of the irony of “buddle.”

Paul Morton, who began as a strikebreaker on the CB&Q road and reared a monument to theft at Hutchinson, Kansas, and left his trail of crime all the way from the Mississippi to the Pacific, is fit, indeed, to be the cabinet associate and confidential chum of a president who puts him at the head of the company whose funds were stolen to buy his election.

William H. Taft is another of the elect, and it is easy to understand why Roosevelt has decided to make this illustrious son his successor as president of the United States and is now grooming him with the patronage of the federal administration. Taft is a man after Roosevelt’s own heart. Among his early acts as a judge, he fined the bricklayers of Cincinnati \$2,000 for going on a strike; he was next whirled to Toledo by special train and ordered by the Toledo, Ann Arbor & North Michigan Railroad to issue an injunction binding and gagging its striking engineers and firemen and locking their leader up in jail, and he complied with alacrity. From that time on it has been smooth sailing for the accommodating judge, and there is not a plutocrat in the county who would not hail with joy the election of

William Taft as president — he would be almost as acceptable as Roosevelt himself.

The manner in which President Roosevelt manipulates the supreme court by bestowing lucrative offices upon the sons and other relatives and friends of its dignitaries can only be hinted at here, but will receive due attention later on. The case of ex-Senator J. R. Burton of Kansas is an example of Rooseveltian tactics. Other senators had taken thousands in similar cases to Burton's paltry few hundred dollars, but Burton was marked by Roosevelt for refusing to crook the knee to the sugar trust and pursued with merciless ferocity until he was lodged behind prison bars. The president did not have a call to "go after" his old friends, Chauncey Depew and Thomas Platt, with the same virtuous passion to see crime punished and criminals jailed.

When Roosevelt was making his continental campaign in the palatial special trains furnished free by the railroads, he stopped at Abilene, Kansas, the home of the then Senator Burton, and opened his speech there in these words:

I am glad to be at the home of the senior senator from Kansas and am delighted to meet and greet his neighbors and friends. I want to say that no man in this world has done more, and I had almost said, as much, to place me where I am now, than your distinguished senator.

Fine way the president had of expressing his gratitude. Burton should have known better and taken warning. Whenever Roosevelt gets that close to a man something is going to happen. "My dear" is then to be metamorphosed with startling suddenness into an "atrocious liar."

Roosevelt can brook no rivalry. He is the self-appointed central luminary in the solar system. All others must be contented with being fireflies. He must violate all traditions and smash all precedents. He is spectacular beyond the wildest dreams. He must have the center of the stage and hold the undivided attention of the audience. Any stunt will do when the interest lags. A familiar turn with a prizefighter or a "gunman" is always good for an encore. Nothing is overlooked. A dash to Panama with a fleet of battleships and a battery of cameras and a squad of artists and reporters is good for thousands of columns about the marvelous virility and fertility of the greatest president since Washington. He is followed in minute detail as he darts from the cellar to the roof, wears a solemn expression, throws a

shovelful of coal into a furnace, snatches a bite from a workman's pail, shakes hands with a section man, and is off like a flash to look after some other section of the planet, that it may not drop out of its orbit.

Mighty savior of the human race!

Such is Theodore Roosevelt, the president who condemns working-men as murderers when they are objectionable to the trusts that control his administration.

Archbishop Ireland, the plutocratic prelate, will cheerfully certify to Roosevelt as the anointed of the Lord. And this will make another interesting chapter for a later review; a chapter that will deal with Ireland as the political as well as spiritual advisor of "Jim" Hill and the Great Northern, and of court decisions awarding him thousands of acres of land and making of the alleged follower of the Tramp of Galilee a multimillionaire; a chapter that will tell of a high priest sounding the political keynote to his benighted followers in exchange for a promised voucher for a red hat to be worn in a land of freedom in which the state and church are absolutely divorced.

Only a few of the facts about Roosevelt and his regime have been here stated, but enough to satisfy all honest men that ***Theodore Roosevelt is the Friend of the Enemies and the Enemy of the Friends of this Republic.***

Written for *Appeal to Reason*, whole no. 594 (April 20, 1907), p. 1. Released to the press pre-publication, excerpt published as "Debs Stretches Teddy's Hide to the Side of the Barn Door to Tan" in *Chicago Daily Socialist*, vol. 1, no. 147 (April 15, 1907), pp. 1-2. Alternate excerpt provided by wire service; see, for example: "President Subject of Vicious Attack by Eugene Debs," *The Evening Star* [Independence, KS], vol. 7, no. 279 (April 15, 1907), p. 2.

¹ George Dewey (1837-1917) was an American commodore who became a national hero when he obliterated or captured the entire Spanish Pacific fleet while suffering minimal losses in the 1898 Battle of Manila Bay. Following this pivotal triumph of the Spanish-American War, Dewey enjoyed a series of promotions, culminating in his elevation to the special rank of Admiral of the Navy in 1903.

² Elihu Root (1845-1937) a Republican from New York, served as secretary of war and secretary of state under Theodore Roosevelt. He was elected to a term in the United States Senate in 1908. In June 1917 he was dispatched by Woodrow Wilson to Russia to head the so-called "Root Commission," which attempted to bolster the commitment of the new revolutionary regime to fight in World War I.

³ "Boss" William M. Tweed (1823-1878) was the legendary head of Tammany Hall, the nerve center of the Democratic Party's political machine in New York City. Tweed made

use of patronage to preserve his political power and enriched himself massively through graft and corruption in city contracts. Tweed was ultimately tried and convicted on corruption charges and served one year in jail.

⁴ Edward Henry Harriman (1848-1909) was a New York railroad speculator and executive who was president of both the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific railroads during the first decade of the twentieth century.

⁵ Harry Kendall Thaw (1871-1947) was the son of a millionaire Pittsburgh coal and railway tycoon. Thaw sensationally shot and killed renowned architect Stanford White on June 25, 1906 on the rooftop theater at Madison Square Garden in front of hundreds of witnesses. After a hung jury in a first trial, Thaw was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the second and was sentenced to a life term at Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Fishkill, New York.

⁶ Reference is to Edward Fitzsimmons Dunne (1853-1937), who served as mayor of Chicago from 1905-1907.

⁷ Governor Theodore Roosevelt had the final say in the scheduled March 20, 1899 execution of Martha Place at Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, New York. Roosevelt declined to intervene and the double-murderer Place became the first woman to die on the electric chair. The refusal of Roosevelt to commute the sentence of the "wretched, insane woman" was condemned by Debs's personal hero Robert Ingersoll as "a disgrace to the state."

⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting-Trail*. New York: The Century Co., 1899; p. 10.

⁹ That is, the 1905 State of the Union address.