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EDITORIAL

## “THE CHARTER OF DEMOCRACY.”

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**W**HILE capitalist papers of the New York *Evening Post* and Chicago *Inter-Ocean* stamp are howling with more or less suppressed rage at the address delivered by Colonel Theodore Roosevelt before the Constitutional Convention of Ohio at Columbus, stigmatizing the address “a program of upheaval and revolution”; and while capitalist papers of the stamp of the New York *Sun* poke fun, or affect to be amused thereat; fact is the address marks an epoch in the annals of America.

Roosevelt said:

“What is needed is, first the recognition that modern business conditions have come to stay, in so far, at least, as these conditions mean that business must be done in larger units, and then the cool-headed and resolute determination to introduce an effective method of regulating big corporations,” etc., etc.

So far, John D. Rockefeller, besides other “captains of industry,” have said substantially the same thing; they all recognize and proclaim that the day of “small business” is gone, and the day of “big business” has come. Nor does any of them fail to declaim in favor of some sort of “regulation.”

Roosevelt’s above-cited theory is of different stamp. It has a “bone” in it. The bone consists of the passage that follows closely upon the heels of the theory: “It is absurd to endeavor to regulate business in the interest of the public by means of long-drawn lawsuits without any accompaniment of *administrative control*.” Although the italics do not appear in the text, the italicized words stick out de facto, and prominently.

In other words—

“Big business” has come to stay. Its potentiality for evil is obvious. That is the problem. How solve it? Place its control in the hands of the Executive with discre-

tionary powers to discriminate between "the deliberate lawbreaker" and the honest "big business," in the interest of the people as a whole.

That is the keynote in Roosevelt's Columbus address—and that keynote strikes a note never before heard in the land.

"Big business"—meaning thereby concentrated production—Socialism points to as an economic stage instinct with good. It renders possible production in abundance and without arduous toil—the aim of civilization. But the good that concentrated production is instinct with is a possibility only. Socialism reasons that the possibility is thwarted by private ownership.

Private ownership—

by producing for sale, and not for use, it limits production, and when, despite the check, production is so bountiful as to interfere with the profitableness of sales, coffee is burned in Brazil by order of the London market; fruit is dumped into rivers by order of the fruit market; pianos, as happened only the other day in this vicinity, are made a bonfire of; and so forth; and so forth;

by producing more economically, it wipes out competition de facto. The mammoth and ever more mammoth privately owned plant of production limits ever and ever more the number of capitalists for the competitive field;

by shutting out ever larger and larger portions of the population from the competitive field, it throws ever larger and larger portions of the population into various degrees of economic dependence upon "big business," thereby robbing them even of their civic and political independence.

The problem thus presented by "big business" Socialism solves, not with a reactionary reformer's nostrum to "smash the Trust"—that would throw civilization back by stripping concentrated production of its possibilities for good; nor with the Top-Capitalist's fatalistic nostrum to presume to interfere with the "immutable laws of Nature," some call it the "will of God"—that is tantamount with denying the power of the human agency to improve its environment. The problem offered by "big business" Socialism solves by the light of the sociologic principle that "the method of production determines the tenure of the ownership of the tool of production": production having ceased to be individual, and having become collective, collective also, and no longer individual, must be the tenure of society's plant of production. The

solution of Socialism proceeds from the diagnosis that the reason why the blessings that should flow from "big business" are nipped, and, instead, a torrent of evils now flow from it, a scourge to the Nation, is its now archaic form of ownership, its private ownership. Accordingly the solution of Socialism, dovetailing the economic with the social evolution, is the collective ownership of the Nation's productive forces, in other words, the Industrial Republic—in other words, actual universal freedom.

Roosevelt's solution rejects the reformer's nostrum; it rejects the Top-Capitalist's fatalistic nostrum; it rejects the Socialist method; it offers a fourth. What is the nature of that fourth?

The word "Tyrant" had not of old the meaning it has to-day. To-day, the "Tyrant" is undisguisedly undemocratic. Originally, the Tyrant, as he first arose in the Greek republics, set himself up as a pre-eminent respecter of the people, in whom alone he acknowledged the source of power, to whom alone he held himself accountable. The Greek Tyrant and the Oriental Mufti are closely akin. Whatever the office has since developed into, originally the Tyrant was a "democratic autocrat." Mufti-like he exercised his discretionary control and regulation of the community. Of course, the Tyrant was not wholly a sociologic product. He was to a great extent a psychologic manifestation also. Megalomaniacally possessed with abiding faith in his God-like virtues, the Tyrant of old, as Roosevelt now at Columbus, promulgated his "Charter of Democracy."

Say what one may, and however justly, about the puny mental stature of Colonel Roosevelt, nevertheless, the flat-footed announcement of executive control with discretionary powers over "good" and "evil," as his solution to the seething Social Question,—such a flat-footed announcement coming from a personage of his status, a one-time President and present idol of a large element of politico-economic brigands, is an event of prime magnitude.

Colonel Roosevelt not unfittingly calls his solution the "Charter of Democracy"—a democracy whose note is the shrill premonition of a social storm which, should it actually break out, bodes evil only.

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