

Roosevelt and His Regime (April 20, 1907)

The only time in my life I ever saw 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 that 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 redhanded 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.

Then Roosevelt stepped out of the White House and called Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone *murderers*, men he had never seen and did not now; 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 prejudge 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 kidnappers.

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 pronounce 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 right, 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

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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."