

# The Public

A National Journal of Fundamental Democracy &  
A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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## EDITORIAL

### Governor Wilson and the Presidency.

Both those who favor and those who oppose Governor Wilson for the Democratic nomination for President, should reflect upon the situation at the present moment. We profess no ability to advise, and have no intention of discussing the subject, but two or three suggestions may not come amiss.

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There is hardly a reasonable doubt that Governor Wilson and Speaker Clark are just now the only probable candidates. Governor Folk's possibilities and those of some "dark horse" are within the range of rational political vision, and Governor Harmon's chances as the favorite of the Interests are not to be despised; but Wilson and Clark are as yet ahead of all others.

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Neither is there any reasonable doubt that Governor Wilson is well in the lead of Speaker Clark. The weakness of Speaker Clark—we are stating a fact with reference to public opinion, not making an argument *a priori*—is that his long career in public life creates an impression that he is a politicians' candidate. His tendencies toward radical democracy back in the days when they seemed never to be worth while and often to be prejudicial to a career, must be repeated like ancient history, and rather vainly, to a generation of voters who

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know of him only as a Democratic politician. Governor Wilson, on the other hand, is regarded as "new blood"—as a *La Follette* who happens to have sprung from the Democratic instead of the Republican party.

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But the popular attitude in favor of Governor Wilson may not continue. His availability is already widely questioned on the ground that his conversion to radical democracy, however genuine, has been too sudden to justify confidence in its resisting the wear and tear of a national campaign and four years of plutocratic temptations at the White House. Nevertheless, so far as we are able to interpret the signs of political tendencies, Governor Wilson holds the lead in spite of that questioning—in consequence of it, one might almost say, for the oftener the point is raised the greater seems to be public confidence not only in the genuineness of his conversion but also in his mettle as a dependable Progressive.

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Governor Wilson's very "thus far and no farther"—as when he refused to add the judicial Recall to the Initiative and Referendum he had begun to champion—has strengthened him even with those who disagree, for it signifies sincerity and courage. Only he himself can check or dissipate this growing confidence, and there are signs of his taking the risk. They may be false signs, and no conclusion from them should be swiftly drawn. But there they are. We allude to the recent Democratic convention in New Jersey, as we find its proceedings reported in *The Jersey Journal*, the leading independent daily paper of that State. Although it was exclusively a platform-making convention and Governor Wilson was chairman of the platform committee, the platform was milk-and-water, pretty much; so much so that the *Journal* quotes a reactionary Democrat as "delighted with the way the Governor had turned his back on the suggestion to extend the Initiative and Referendum to State offices," and as saying "we plugged the Initiative, Referendum and Recall good and hard today." And so it would seem they did.

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But we shall be slow to believe that this convention indicates any weakening either in principle or policy on the part of Governor Wilson. There are too many possible explanations in the other direction. He may have realized that the convention was hopelessly hostile. He may have considered that the occasion necessitated finesse rather

than a bold leadership that would tell all the better for it under other circumstances and later on. A trusted leader must not be rashly doubted on questions of temporary tactics. Allowance for these considerations must be made, yet without losing sight of the fact that it is not tactics but boldness for democracy, that has thus far told for Governor Wilson in public estimation. Apparently the candidate of the Interests fifteen months ago, his election for Governor would have been hopeless had he not convinced the people of his State that he cared less for the Governorship than for progressive civic service. So with the Presidency. It is not because he has played for it but because he hasn't played for it, that his name now leads all the rest.

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### The Supreme Object of Mr. Taft's Love.

In the interval between Mr. Bryan's counter challenge to Mr. Taft and Mr. Taft's possible response, to which we give attention elsewhere in this issue of *The Public*, Mr. Taft's declaration of great love for judges furnishes food for wholesome thought. "I love judges and I love courts," said Mr. Taft in his renomination campaign speech at Pocatello, Idaho, on the 6th. "So do the corporations," retorts the *Chicago Daily Socialist*. But that is perhaps an impudent interruption from an outsider, and we pass on.

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Having spoken the day before at Salt Lake, under the auspices of Mormon hierarchs who are standpat Republicans, and in the warmth of Mormon enthusiasm for his second term aspirations, Mr. Taft at Pocatello emulated Mr. Wegg but without effort at rhyme. Judges and courts, he said, "are my ideals on earth that typify what we shall meet afterward in heaven under a just God." The hierarchical spirit was strong within him, and, having been "a judge and a good judge, too," he gave it judicial form where another type of aristocrat might as naturally have given it the episcopal form or another the monarchical.

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To Mr. Taft the judicial bench seems to be in some sort a cathedral chair. No Wegg's blank verse was necessary to disclose his faith in that respect; his whole career testifies to his idolatrous love for courts and judges. They constitute what is to his imagination a veritable type of the eternal judgment when the last trump blows. Not all judges, though! Not a justice of the peace, for instance. He may be criticized and