

The Public

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EDITORIAL

Roosevelt's Political Creed.

"One of the greatest pronouncements ever made by a public or private citizen." It is not strange that Gifford Pinchot should thus have characterized Theodore Roosevelt's speech at Osawatomic. For Mr. Pinchot is intensely democratic, and in this speech Mr. Roosevelt struck some of the highest notes of democracy—though not with purity of tone, yet sharply and vigorously.

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If Mr. Pinchot had put his characterization of that speech in the superlative, as *the* greatest, which is probably what he felt, it would not even then have been remarkable. For his own democracy has been awake hardly long enough to qualify him for making comparisons. Without going back to Lincoln, whose democracy was related concretely to other political issues than ours, as great if not greater pronouncements directly upon the political issues of the present have been made by William J. Bryan, by John P. Altgeld, by George Fred Williams, by Henry George, and by many less distinguished men, all of whom Mr. Roosevelt has despised and some of whom he would have liked to hang simply because they made those pronouncements. Yet they were the same pronouncements in kind as his own at Osawatomic. In so far as they differ from Roosevelt's, it is in their freedom from "weasel words." Omit from his Osawatomic speech its Rooseveltian "buts," and its

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over emphasis of the minor delinquencies of workmen in order to balance the major offenses of the privileged, and one might suspect Mr. Roosevelt of having borrowed it, its socialistics included, from some scrapbook of Bryan's speeches or from Altgeld's volume of "Live Questions."

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A word of explanation about Mr. Roosevelt's over emphasis of workingmen's delinquencies. Of course mob violence should be frowned down and forced down. Of course poor workingmen, as well as rich capitalists, should be punished for crime. But when the workingman's crime is in the nature of impulsive resistance by impoverished and unsophisticated masses to capitalistic aggressions, which they feel keenly but do not understand (neither does Mr. Roosevelt, by the way), and when the burning question is not the secondary and resulting offenses of these masses but the primary capitalistic offenses from which they result—when in those circumstances a popular idol takes special pains to condemn in as loud a voice the resulting secondary and minor offenses as the generating primary and major offenses, his friends must not be surprised or offended if his good faith as a popular leader be suspected. If they themselves have suspected the good faith of Bryan and Altgeld and Williams and George, whose democratic speeches and writings were not honeycombed with "weasel words," how can they complain of the effect upon his reputation of Mr. Roosevelt's "weasel words" habit?

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Nevertheless, Mr. Roosevelt at Osawatomie did make declarations of a kind which, if he—as he moves eastward out of the political atmosphere of Kansas, where those sentiments shot through his lips—gives evidence of growing toward them instead of away from them, will evidently make him the leading figure of the new American democracy, whether it gain possession of an old party or clothe itself in a new one. Many will be glad to fall in line behind him; the rest of us may have to, or look on uselessly from the galleries.

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But if we read the signs of the times aright, the political revolt which Mr. Roosevelt's friends so fondly hope he may decide to lead, and which is rapidly bringing on a friendly appreciation by one another of democratic Democrats and democratic Republicans, is not a personal affair. No leader now in either party can make this movement or mar it, or lead it helplessly up some blind

alley or other. It is itself a living thing, which will survey its own course, and if it cannot borrow old leaders will train new ones. We do not believe that the Insurgents of Kansas and Iowa and California and Ohio and Illinois and Wisconsin—the La Follettes, the Cumminses and the Dollivers, the Bristows and the Whites and the Murdocks, the Johnsons and the Kents, the Garfields or the Pinchots, or any of their kind anywhere—will put all the Insurgent eggs into any man's market basket. At least we do not wish to believe it. They doubtless have become enthusiastically hopeful from the Osawatomie speech, but we misinterpret both the men and the movement that has caught them up, if they surrender it to Roosevelt or anyone else or continue long to live upon hope. The rising curtain on the political drama does not to us disclose Roosevelt as sitting in judgment on the new American democracy; it discloses the new American democracy as sitting in judgment upon him.

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Progressive Politics in Spokane.

Out in Washington, east of the mountains, William Mathews is a Democratic candidate for the lower house of the legislature, and another of the same political mould, E. R. Weeks, is a candidate for the senate in the same district. What their mould is may be inferred from Mr. Mathews' platform as we find it in the Review of Spokane. He will stand for the Democratic nominee for United States Senator as long as there is any reasonable prospect of his election, and then for the Republican Insurgent; he is for the election of United States Senators by the direct vote of the people and in the meantime favors the Oregon plan; he favors direct legislation, including the initiative, referendum and recall; he is for a State and national conservation policy that will not only prevent further concentration of natural resources into corporate and monopolistic control, but compel either use or disgorgement; and as natural bounties monopolized are far more valuable and numerous than those still in the public domain, he "would place a tax upon unused lands, according to actual selling value and sufficient to make it very unprofitable to hold them in idleness for purely monopolistic and speculative purposes."

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Governor Harmon.

Some of the reports of Roosevelt's circle-swinging speeches quoted him as attacking Gov. Harmon of Ohio for not putting down the Columbus street car strike with a high and Rooseveltian