

# The Public

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

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## EDITORIAL

### Mr. Taft as a Ready Letter Writer.

Another important letter from President Taft. The last previous one, which condemned Glavis unheard and whitewashed Ballinger (pp. 460,466), turned out to have been written with the friendly co-operation of the land grabbing syndicate with which Ballinger is identified; the latest, exhibits traces of the influence of the ship subsidy ring.

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### Where Roosevelt Stands.

In his speech at Cheyenne Mr. Roosevelt seemed to say something with substantial meaning in it. "I would preach fiery wrath against wrong," he exclaimed; "but I would not preach such wrath against the wrongdoer, save in those cases where his wrongdoing really is due to evil moral attributes on his part, and not to a wrong social system of which he is almost as much the victim as the beneficiary." But how shall any one know that this sound doctrine is any thing but a plea for rich beneficiaries of monopoly who may be "almost as much" its victims, and a denunciation with fiery wrath of victims of monopoly who are not "almost as much" its beneficiaries? How can any one say that the victim who is not "almost as much" a beneficiary does not fall into Mr. Roosevelt's category of the wrongdoer of evil attributes, though he may have been driven to his minor crimes by monopolistic pressure; while the rich beneficiary who is "almost as much" a victim does

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fall into the Rooseveltian category of those whose wrongdoing, though enormous, is due to "a wrong social system"? How shall any one know that Mr. Roosevelt was not as platitudinous in those remarks as when in the same speech he said: "I stand for progress, as all men must stand who are progressive!"

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At Denver, Mr. Roosevelt became somewhat more substantial in his utterances than at Cheyenne; although he still trifled enough with verbal modifiers to further confirm the prior impressions of the "D. K. L." editorial in another column. His proposals at Denver for the conservation of natural resources were unexceptionable simply as proposals; but they were too general in formulation to inspire confidence until Mr. Roosevelt shall have specified. That "needless waste must be stopped," and that development must be prompt, complete and orderly, would probably arouse no opposition from Taft, Guggenheim, Morgan or Ballinger, if done according to *their* specifications. And though those men might object to having the resources "kept for the whole people and not handed over for exploitation to single individuals" (Mr. Roosevelt's proposal), it is not inconceivable that they would compromise on some Big Business plan for realizing Mr. Roosevelt's modifying suggestion, which was, "But we should not discourage individual enterprise by unwisely diminishing the reward," for "men of exceptional abilities should have exceptional rewards up to a point where the reward becomes disproportionate to the service." We are inclined, however, to infer that Mr. Roosevelt headed off such a compromise when he added another "but"—"but we are against the man who tries to monopolize large masses of public land." Yet, with so agile a gymnast may there not be a possibility of adopting a modifier denying that a corporation is a man? We don't like even to hint at the possibility of such verbal trifling, but Mr. Roosevelt's speeches are as slippery as eels in a tub. He may be more definite later on. Let us wait and watch.

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Meanwhile, how is this episode of the Denver meeting to be understood? Mr. Pinchot spoke before Mr. Roosevelt. He spoke with directness and in language and tone of unmistakable intelligence and sincerity. There is no temptation to play chuck-a-luck with any words of his. When he had finished, Mr. Roosevelt said: "Mr. Pinchot has stated my platform to you better than I can tell it myself." This might have been a friendly compliment; it might have been a politi-

cal declaration. If the latter it would be intensely convincing, for Mr. Pinchot had said this among other things: "The great movement that is sweeping the country—call it insurgency or what you will—is the idea that it is better worth while to help the small man make a living than to help the big man make a profit. If I were making a political speech I would ask the authors of the Payne-Aldrich tariff law if they had that idea in mind when they framed that measure." This was a key note. Had Mr. Roosevelt said it, or only echoed it, he would have given a hostage to his sincerity. But when asked by the reporters if he meant thereby to endorse Pinchot's defense of insurgency, "Col. Roosevelt," says the Chicago Tribune's report, "would not discuss his exact meaning."

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### A Socialist and a Public Guest.

An interesting contrast between a Socialist gentleman in office and—ah, no, we'll not adopt Mr. Roosevelt's standards; but all the same it truly is interesting, the contrast suggested by the letter of Emil Seidel, Mayor of Milwaukee, Socialist, which he wrote to the Milwaukee Press Club on the 29th explaining the necessity for his declining to serve on its committee for receiving Theodore Roosevelt. Read the letter, and note the sense of official responsibility even as to social amenities, also its kindly tone, yet with no descent from true personal dignity nor any enraged leap above the fraternal obligations of democratic office-holding:

Your valued communication of recent date notifying me of my appointment to the reception committee on the occasion of the visit of Mr. Roosevelt has been received. Let me assure you that the distinction intended by the committee to be conferred upon me by this appointment is appreciated. I regret, however, that in view of the unscholarly and unfair position Mr. Roosevelt has taken in the discussion of the movement for which I have spent all my spare time and energy, it is impossible for me to accept the intended honor. However, I wish to assure you that as Chief Executive of the city I extend to your guest the courtesy every man is entitled to in a republic. Hoping it will be possible for me to serve you and our city in any capacity in the future, I remain, yours very truly, Emil Seidel.

Every fair man of whatever party, if his sense of fairness is more than verbal, will appreciate and commend this letter and respect Mayor Seidel all the more for having written it. Of course he could not go upon that reception committee without loss of his own self respect, he being a Socialist, nor without thereby insulting every other self-respecting Socialist; for Mr. Roosevelt has