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THERE are two theories of government that have been contending with each other ever since government began. One of them is the theory which in America is associated with the name of a very great man, Alexander Hamilton. A great man, but in my judgment, not a great American. He did not think in terms of American life. Hamilton believed that the only people who could understand government, and therefore the only people who were qualified to conduct it, were the men who had the biggest financial stake in the commercial and industrial enterprises of the country.

That theory, though few have now the hardihood to profess it openly, has been the working theory upon which our government has lately been conducted. It is astonishing how persistent it is. It is amazing how quickly the political party which had Lincoln for its first leader—Lincoln, who not only denied, but in his own person so completely disproved, the aristocratic theory—it is amazing how quickly that party founded on faith in the people forgot the precepts of Lincoln and fell under the

<sup>1</sup>This interview was published so near in point of time to the first inaugural that it seems to be an appendix and hence is published as the second article of this volume.—THE EDITORS.

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delusion that the "masses" needed the guardianship of "men of affairs."

For indeed, if you stop to think about it, nothing could be a further departure from original Americanism, from faith in the ability of a confident, resourceful, and independent people than the discouraging doctrine that somebody has got to provide prosperity for the rest of us. And yet that is exactly the doctrine on which the government of the United States has been conducted lately. Who have been consulted when important measures of government, like tariff acts, and currency acts, and railroad acts were under consideration? The people whom the tariff chiefly affects, the people for whom the currency is supposed to exist, the people who pay the duties and ride on the railroads? Oh! no. What do they know about such matters! The gentlemen whose ideas have been sought are the big manufacturers, the bankers, and the heads of the great railroad combinations. The masters of the government of the United States are the combined capitalists and manufacturers of the United States. It is written over every intimate page of the records of Congress; it is written all through the history of conferences at the White House, that the suggestions of economic policy in this country have come from one source, not from many sources; the benevolent guardians, the kind-hearted trustees who have taken the troubles of government off our hands have become so conspicuous that almost anybody can write out a list of them. They have become so conspicuous that their names are mentioned upon almost ev-

ery political platform. The men who have undertaken the interesting job of taking care of us do not force us to requite them with anonymously directed gratitude. We know them by name.

Suppose you go to Washington and try to get at your government. You will always find that while you are politely listened to, the men really consulted are the men who have the biggest stake—the big bankers, the big manufacturers, the big masters of commerce, the heads of railroad corporations and of steamship corporations. I have no objection to these men being consulted, because they also, though they do not themselves seem to admit it, are part of the people of the United States. But I do very seriously object to these gentlemen being chiefly consulted, and particularly to their being exclusively consulted, and if the government of the United States is to do the right thing by the people of the United States it has got to do it directly and not through the intermediation of these gentlemen. Every time it has come to a critical question, these gentlemen have been yielded to, and their demands have been treated as the demands that should be followed as a matter of course.

The government of the United States at present is a foster-child of the special interests. It is not allowed to have a will of its own. It is told at every move, "Don't do that; you will interfere with our prosperity." And when we ask, "Where is our prosperity lodged?" a certain group of gentlemen say, "With us." The government of the United States in recent years has not been administered by the common people of the United States. You

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know just as well as I do—it is not an indictment against anybody, it is a mere statement of the facts—that the people have stood outside and looked on at their own government and that all they have had to determine in past years has been which crowd they would look on at; whether they would look on at this little group or that little group who had managed to get the control of affairs in its hands. Have you ever heard, for example, of any hearing before any great committee of the Congress in which the people of the country as a whole were represented, except it may be by the Congressmen themselves? The men who appear at those meetings in order to argue for this schedule in the tariff, for this measure or against that measure, are men who represent special interests. They may represent them very honestly; they may intend no wrong to their fellow citizens, but they are speaking from the point of view always of a small portion of the population. I have sometimes wondered why men, particularly men of means, men who didn't have to work for their living shouldn't constitute themselves attorneys for the people, and every time a hearing is held before a committee of Congress should not go and ask, "Gentlemen, in considering these things suppose you consider the whole country? Suppose you consider the citizens of the United States?"

Now I don't want a smug lot of experts to sit down behind closed doors in Washington and play Providence to me. There is a Providence to which I am perfectly willing to submit. But as for other men setting up as Providence over myself, I seri-

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ously object. I have never met a political saviour in the flesh, and I never expect to meet one. I am reminded of Gelett Burgess' verses:—

“I never saw a purple cow,  
I never hope to see one,  
But this I'll tell you anyhow,  
I'd rather see than be one.”

That is the way I feel about this saving of my fellow-countrymen. I'd rather see a saviour of the United States than set up to be one, because I have found out, I have actually found out, that men I consult with know more than I do—especially if I consult with enough of them. I never came out of a committee meeting or a conference without seeing more of the question that was under discussion than I had seen when I went in. And that to my mind is an image of government. I am not willing to be under the patronage of the trusts, no matter how providential a government presides over the process of their control of my life.

I am one of those who absolutely reject the trustee theory, the guardianship theory. I have never found a man who knew how to take care of me, and, reasoning from that point out, I conjecture that there isn't any man who knows how to take care of the people of the United States. I suspect that the people of the United States understand their own interests better than any group of men in the confines of the country understand them. The men who are sweating blood to get their foothold in the world of endeavour understand the conditions of business

in the United States very much better than the men who have arrived and are at the top. They know what the thing is that they are struggling against. They know how difficult it is to start a new enterprise. They know how far they have to search for credit that will put them upon an even footing with the men who have already built up industry in this country. They know that somewhere by somebody the development of industry in this country is being controlled.

I do not say this with the slightest desire to create any prejudice against wealth; on the contrary, I should be ashamed of myself if I excited class feeling of any kind. But I do mean to suggest this: that the wealth of the country has, in recent years, come from particular sources; it has come from those sources which have built up monopoly. Its point of view is a special point of view. It is the point of view of those men who do not wish that the people should determine their own affairs, because they do not believe that the people's judgment is sound. They want to be commissioned to take care of the United States and of the people of the United States, because they believe that they, better than anybody else, understand the interests of the United States. I do not challenge their character; I challenge their point of view. We cannot afford to be governed as we have been governed in the last generation, by men who occupy so narrow, so prejudiced, so limited a point of view.

The government of our country cannot be lodged in any special class. The policy of a great nation

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cannot be tied up with any particular set of interests. I want to say, again and again, that my arguments do not touch the character of the men to whom I am opposed. I believe that the very wealthy men who have got their money by certain kinds of corporate enterprises have closed in their horizon, and that they do not see and do not understand the rank and file of the people. It is for that reason that I want to break up the little coterie that has determined what the government of the nation should do. The list of the men who used to determine what New Jersey should and should not do did not exceed half a dozen, and they were always the same men. These very men now are, some of them, frank enough to admit that New Jersey has finer energy in her because more men are consulted and the whole field of action is widened and liberalised.

We have got to relieve our government from the domination of special classes, not because these special classes are bad, necessarily, but because no special class can understand the interests of a great community.

I believe, as I believe in nothing else, in the average integrity and the average intelligence of the American people, and I do not believe that the intelligence of America can be put into commission anywhere. I do not believe that there is any group of men of any kind to whom we can afford to give that kind of trusteeship.

I will not live under trustees if I can help it. No group of men less than the majority has a right to tell me how I have got to live in America. I will

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submit to the majority, because I have been trained to do it—though I may sometimes have my private opinion even of the majority. I do not care how wise, how patriotic, the trustees may be, I have never heard of any group of men in whose hands I am willing to lodge the liberties of America in trust.

If any part of our people want to be wards, if they want to have guardians put over them, if they want to be taken care of, if they want to be children, patronised by the government, why, I am sorry, because it will sap the manhood of America. But I don't believe they do. I believe they want to stand on the firm foundation of law and right and take care of themselves. I, for my part, don't want to belong to a nation, I believe that I do not belong to a nation, that needs to be taken care of by guardians. I want to belong to a nation, and I am proud that I do belong to a nation, that knows how to take care of itself. If I thought that the American people were reckless, were ignorant, were vindictive, I might shrink from putting the government into their hands. But the beauty of democracy is that when you are reckless you destroy your own established conditions of life; when you are vindictive, you wreak vengeance upon yourself; the whole stability of democratic polity rests upon the fact that every interest is every man's interest.

The theory that the men of biggest affairs, whose field of operation is the widest, are the proper men to advise the government is, I am willing to admit, rather a plausible theory. If my business covers the United States not only, but covers the world, it is

to be presumed that I have a pretty wide scope in my vision of business. But the flaw is that it is my own business that I have a vision of, and not the business of the men who lie outside of the scope of the plans I have made for a profit out of the particular transactions I am connected with. And you can't, by putting together a large number of men who understand their own business, no matter how large it is, make up a body of men who will understand the business of the nation as contrasted with their own business interest.

In a former generation, half a century ago, there were a great many men associated with the government whose patriotism we are not privileged to deny nor to question, who intended to serve the people, but had become so saturated with the point of view of a governing class, that it was impossible for them to see America as the people of America themselves saw it. Then there arose that interesting figure, the immortal figure of the great Lincoln, who stood up declaring that the politicians, the men who had governed this country, did not see from the point of view of the people. When I think of that tall, gaunt figure rising in Illinois, I have a picture of a man free, unentangled, unassociated with the governing influences of the country, ready to see things with an open eye, to see them steadily, to see them whole, to see them as the men he rubbed shoulders with and associated with saw them. What the country needed in 1860 was a leader who understood and represented the thought of the whole people, as contrasted with that of a special class which

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imagined itself the guardian of the country's welfare.

Now, likewise, the trouble with our present political condition is that we need some man who has not been associated with the governing classes and the governing influences of this country to stand up and speak for us; we need to hear a voice from the outside calling upon the American people to assert again their rights and prerogatives in the possession of their own government.

My thought about both Mr. Taft and Mr. Roosevelt is that of entire respect, but these gentlemen have been so intimately associated with the powers that have been determining the policy of this government for almost a generation, that they cannot look at the affairs of the country with a view of a new age and of a changed set of circumstances. They sympathise with the people; their hearts no doubt go out to the great masses of unknown men in this country; but their thought is in close habitual association with those who have framed the policies of the country during all our lifetime. Those men have framed the protective tariff, have developed the trusts, have coördinated and ordered all the great economic forces of this country in such fashion that nothing but an outside force breaking in can disturb their domination and control. It is with this in mind, I believe, that the country can say to these gentlemen: "We do not deny your integrity; we do not deny your purity of purpose; but the thought of the people of the United States has not yet penetrated to your consciousness. You are

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willing to act for the people, but you are not willing to act through the people. Now we propose to act for ourselves."

I sometimes think that the men who are now governing us are unconscious of the chains in which they are held. I do not believe that men such as we know, among our public men at least—most of them—have deliberately put us into leading strings to the special interests. The special interests have grown up. They have grown up by processes which at last, happily, we are beginning to understand. And, having grown up, having occupied the seats of greatest advantage nearest the ear of those who are conducting government, having contributed the money which was necessary to the elections, and therefore having been kindly thought of after elections, there has closed around the government of the United States a very interesting, a very able, a very aggressive coterie of gentlemen who are most definite and explicit in their ideas as to what they want.

They don't have to consult us as to what they want. They don't have to resort to anybody. They know their plans, and therefore they know what will be convenient for them. It may be that they have really thought what they have said they thought; it may be that they know so little of the history of economic development and of the interests of the United States as to believe that their leadership is indispensable for our prosperity and development. I don't have to prove that they believe that, because they themselves admit it. I have heard them admit it on many occasions.

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I want to say to you very frankly that I do not feel vindictive about it. Some of the men who have exercised this control are excellent fellows; they really believe that the prosperity of the country depends upon them. They really believe that if the leadership of economic development in this country dropped from their hands, the rest of us are too muddle-headed to undertake the task. They not only comprehend the power of the United States within their grasp, but they comprehend it within their imagination. They are honest men, they have just as much right to express their views as I have to express mine or you to express yours, but it is just about time that we examined their views and determined their validity.

As a matter of fact, their thought does not cover the process of their own undertaking. As a university president, I learned that the men who dominate our manufacturing processes could not conduct their business for twenty-four hours without the assistance of the experts with whom the universities were supplying them. Modern industry depends upon technical knowledge; and all that these gentlemen did was to manage the external features of great combinations and their financial operation, which had very little to do with the intimate skill with which the enterprises were conducted. I know men not catalogued in the public prints, men not spoken of in public discussion, who are the very bone and sinew of the industry of the United States.

Do our masters of industry speak in the spirits and interest even of those whom they employ? When

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men ask me what I think about the labour question and labouring men, I feel that I am being asked what I know about the vast majority of the people, and I feel as if I were being asked to separate myself, as belonging to a particular class, from that great body of my fellow-citizens who sustain and conduct the enterprises of the country. Until we get away from that point of view it will be impossible to have a free government.

I have listened to some very honest and eloquent orators whose sentiments were noteworthy for this: that when they spoke of the people, they were not thinking of themselves; they were thinking of somebody whom they were commissioned to take care of. They were always planning to do things for the American people, and I have seen them visibly shiver when it was suggested that they arranged to have something done by the people for themselves. They said, "What do they know about it?" I always feel like replying, "What do *you* know about it? You know your own interests, but who has told you our interests and what do you know about them?" For the business of every leader of government is to hear what the nation is saying and to know what the nation is enduring. It is not his business to judge *for* the nation, but to judge *through* the nation as its spokesman and voice. I do not believe that this country could have safely allowed a continuation of the policy of the men who have viewed affairs in any other light.

The hypothesis under which we have been ruled is that of government through a board of trustees,

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through a selected number of the big business men of the country who know a lot that the rest of us do not know, and who take it for granted that our ignorance would wreck the prosperity of the country. The idea of the Presidents we have recently had has been that they were Presidents of a National Board of Trustees. That is not my idea. I have been president of one board of trustees, and I do not care to have another on my hands. I want to be President of the people of the United States. There was many a time when I was president of the board of trustees of a university when the undergraduates knew more than the trustees did; and it has been in my thought ever since that if I could have dealt directly with the people who constituted Princeton University I could have carried it forward much faster than I could dealing with a board of trustees.

Mark you, I am not saying that these leaders knew that they were doing us an evil, or that they intended to do us an evil. For my part I am very much more afraid of the man who does a bad thing and does not know it is bad than of the man who does a bad thing and knows it is bad; because I think that in public affairs stupidity is more dangerous than knavery, because harder to fight and dislodge. If a man does not know enough to know what the consequences are going to be to the country, then he cannot govern the country in a way that is for its benefit. These gentlemen, whatever may have been their intentions, linked the government up with the men who control the finances. They may have done it innocently, or they may have done it corruptly,

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without affecting my argument at all. And they themselves cannot escape from that alliance.

Here is the old question of campaign funds: if I take a hundred thousand dollars from a group of men representing a particular interest that has a big stake in a certain schedule of the tariff, I take it with the knowledge that those gentlemen will expect me not to forget their interest in that schedule, and that they will take it as an implicit honor that I should see to it that they are not damaged by too great a change in that schedule. Therefore, if I take their money, I am bound to them by a tacit implication of honor. Perhaps there is no ground for objection to this situation so long as the function of government is conceived to be to look after the trustees of prosperity, who in turn will look after the people; but on any other theory than that of trusteeship no interested campaign contributions can be tolerated for a moment—save those of the millions of citizens who thus support the doctrines they believe and the men whom they recognized as their spokesmen.

I tell you the men I am interested in are the men who, under the conditions we have had, never had their voices heard, who never got a line in the newspapers, who never got a moment on the platform, who never had access to the ears of Governors or Presidents or of anybody who was responsible for the conduct of public affairs, but who went silently and patiently to their work every day carrying the burden of the world. How are they to be understood by the masters of finance, if only the masters of finance are consulted?

That is what I mean when I say, "Bring the government back to the people." I do not mean anything demagogic; I do not mean to talk as if we wanted a great mass of men to rush in and destroy something. That is not the idea. I want the people to come and take possession of their own premises; for I hold that the government belongs to the people, and that they have a right to that intimate access to it which will determine every turn of its policy.

America is never going to submit to guardianship. America is never going to choose thralldom instead of freedom. Look what there is to decide! There is the tariff question. Can the tariff question be decided in favour of the people so long as the monopolies are the chief counsellors at Washington? There is the currency question. Are we going to settle the currency question so long as the government listens only to the counsel of those who command the banking situation?

Then there is the question of conservation. What is our fear about conservation? The hands that are being stretched out to monopolise our forests, to prevent the use of our great power-producing streams, the hands that are being stretched into the bowels of the earth to take possession of the great riches that lie hidden in Alaska and elsewhere in the incomparable domain of the United States, are the hands of monopoly. Are these men to continue to stand at the elbow of government and tell us how we are to save ourselves—from themselves? You cannot settle the question of conservation while monopoly

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is close to the ears of those who govern. And the question of conservation is a great deal bigger than the question of saving our forests and our mineral resources and our waters; it is as big as the life and happiness and strength and elasticity and hope of our people.

There are tasks awaiting the government of the United States which it cannot perform until every pulse of that government beats in unison with the needs and the desires of the whole body of the American people. Shall we not give the people access of sympathy, access of authority, to the instrumentalities which are to be indispensable to their lives?

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