President Roosevelt's Message to Congress of the United States

His Review of the Buffalo Tragedy, Together With an Analysis of Anarchy.

INDUSTRIAL AND TERRITORIAL TOPICS

Handled With Force and Characteristic Grasp of Detail---Trusts, Social Conditions---Tariff and Reciprocity---Forestry---Irrigation.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The congress assembles this year under the shadow of a great calamity. On the 6th of September President McKinley was shot by an anarchist while attending the Pan-American exposition at Buffalo and died in that city on the 14th of that month.

Of the last seven elected presidents he is the third who has been murdered, and the bare recital of this fact is sufficient to justify grave alarm among all loyal American citizens. Moreover, the circumstances of this, the third assassination of an American president, have a peculiarly sinister significance. Both President Lincoln and President Garfield were killed by assassins of types unfortunately not uncommon in history. President Lincoln falling a victim to the terrible passions aroused by four years of civil war and President Garfield to the revengeful vanity of a disappointed officeseeker. President McKinley was killed by the bitterly depraved criminal belonging to that body of criminals who object to all governments, good and bad alike, who are against any form of popular liberty if it is guaranteed by even the most just and liberal laws and who are as hostile to the upright exponent of a free people's sober will as to the tyrannical and irresponsible despot.

It is not too much to say that at the time of President McKinley's death he was the most widely loved man in all the United States, while we have never had any public man of his position who has been so wholly free from the bitter animosities incident to public life. His political opponents were the first to bear the strongest and most sincere tribute to his broad kindliness of nature, the sweetness and gentleness of character which endeared him to his close associates. To a standard of lofty integrity in public life he united the tender affections and home virtues which are all important in the making of national character. A gallant soldier in the great war for the union, he also showed an example to our young people of the best type of the citizen soldiery. There could be no personal hatred of him, for he never acted with aught but consideration for the welfare of others. No one could fail to respect him who knew him in public or private life. The defenders of those murderous criminals who seek to excuse their criminality by asserting that it is exercised for political ends inveigh against wealth and irresponsible power. But for this assassination even this base apology cannot be urged.

TRIBUTE TO McKINLEY.

President Roosevelt Eulogizes the Lamented Victim of Anarchy.

President McKinley was a man of moderate means, the whose stock sprang from the sturdy tillers of the soil, who had himself belonged among the wageworkers, who had entered the army as a private soldier. Wealth was not struck at when the president was assassinated, but the honest toil which is content with moderate gains after a lifetime of unremitting labor largely for the benefit of the public. Still less was power struck at in the case that power is irresponsible or centered in the hands of any one individual. The blow was not aimed at tyranny or wealth. It was aimed at one of the strongest champions the wageworker has ever had, at one of the most faithful representatives of the system of public rights and representative government, and at one rising to public office. President McKinley filled that political office for which the entire people vote, and no president, not even Lincoln himself, was ever more earnestly anxious to represent the well thought out wishes of the people. His one anxiety in every crisis was to keep in closest touch with the people, to find out what they thought and to endeavor to give expression to their thought after having endeavored to guide that thought aright. He had just been reelected to the presidency because the majority of our citizens, the majority of our farmers and wageworkers, believed that he had faithfully upheld their interests for four years. They felt themselves in close and intimate touch with him. They felt that he represented so well and so honorably all their ideals and aspirations that they wished him to continue for another four years to represent them.

And this was the man at whom the assassin struck! That there might be nothing lacking to complete the Judas-like infamy of his act he took advantage of an occasion when the president was meeting the people generally, and, advancing as if to take the hand outstretched to him in kindly and brotherly fellowship, he turned the noble and generous confidence of the victim into an opportunity to strike the fatal blow. There is no baser deed in all the annals of crime.

His Death a Crowning Glory.

The shock, the grief of the country, are bitter in the mouth of all who saw the dark days while the president yet hovered between life and death. At last the end was stilled in the kindly eyes and the breath went from the lips that even in mortal agony uttered no words save of forgiveness to his murderer, of love for his friends and of unfaltering trust in the will of the Most High. Such a death crowning the glory of such a life leaves us with infinite sorrow, but with much pride in what he had accomplished and in his own personal character that we feel the blow not as struck at him, but as struck at the nation. We mourn a good and great president who is dead, but while we mourn we are lifted up by the splendid achievements of his life and the grand heroism with which he met his death.

When we turn from the man to the nation, the harm done is so great as to excite our gravest apprehensions and to demand our wisest and most resolute action. This criminal was a professed anarchist, inflamed by the teachings of professed anarchists and probably also by the reckless utterances of those who on the stump and in the public press appeal to the dark and evil spirits of malice and greed, envy and sullen hatred. The mind is cowed by the men who preach such doctrines, and they cannot escape their share of responsibility for the whirlwind that is reaped. This applies alike to the deliberate demagogue in the exploiter of sensationalism and to the crude and foolish visionary, who for whatever reason applauds or excuses for crime or excites slumberous discontent.

The blow was aimed not at this president, but at all presidents, at every symbol of government. President McKinley was peculiarly the embodiment of the sovereignty of the nation expressed through the forms of law as a New England town meeting is in similar fashion the embodiment of the law guiding purpose and practice of the people of the town. On no conceivable theory could the murder of the president be accepted as due to protest against inequalities in the social order; save at the murder of all the freemen assembled in a town meeting could be accepted as a protest against that social inequality which puts a malefactor in jail. Anarchy is no more an expression of "social discontent" than picking pockets or wife beating.

Must Suppress Anarchy.

The anarchist, and especially the anarchist in the United States, is merely one type of criminal, more dangerous than any other because he represents the same depravity in a greater degree. The man who advocates anarchy directly or indirectly in any shape or fashion or the man who apologizes for anarchists and their deeds makes himself morally accessory to murder before the fact. The anarchist is a criminal whose perverted instincts lead him to prefer confusion and chaos to the most beneficent form of social order. His protest of concern for workingmen is outrageous in its impudent falsity, for if the political institutions of this country do not afford opportunity to every honest and intelligent son of toil then the door of hope is forever closed against him. The anarchist is everywhere not merely the enemy of system and of progress, but the deadly foe of liberty. If ever anarchy is triumphant, its triumph will last for but one red moment, to be succeeded for ages by the gloomy night of despotism.

For the anarchist himself, whether he preaches or practices his doctrines, we need not have our particle more concern than for any ordinary murderer. He is not the victim of social or political injustice. There are no wrongs to remedy in his case. The cause of his criminality is to be found in his own evil passions and in the evil conduct of those who urge him on, not in any failure by others or by the state to do justice to him or him. He is a malefactor and nothing else. He is in no sense, in no shape or way, a "product of social conditions" any more a highwayman is "produced" by the fact that an unarmed man happens to have a purse. It is a travesty upon the great and holy names of liberty and freedom to permit them to be invoked in such a cause. No man or body of men preaching anarchistic doctrines should be allowed at large any more than if preaching the murder of some specified private individual. Anarchistic speeches, writings and meetings are essentially seditious and treasonable.

I earnestly recommend to the congress that in the exercise of its wise discretion it should take into consideration the coming to this country of anarchists or persons professing principles hostile to all government and justifying the murder of those placed in authority. Such individuals as those who not long ago gathered in open meeting to glorify the murder of King Humbert of Italy perpetrate a crime, and the law should insure their rigorous punishment. They and those like them should be kept out of this country, and if found here they should be promptly deported to the country whence they came, and far-reaching provision should be made for the punishment of those who stay. No matter calls more urgently for the wisest thought of the congress.

The federal courts should be given jurisdiction over any man who kills or attempts to kill the president or any man who by the constitution or by law is in line of succession for the presidency, while the punishment for an unsuccessful attempt should be proportioned to the enormity of the offense against our institutions.

Anarchy is a crime against the whole human race, and all mankind should band against the anarchist. His crime should be made an offense against the law of nations, like piracy and that form of man stealing known as the slave trade, for it is of far blacker infamy than either. It should be so declared by treaties among all civilized powers. Such treaties would give to the federal government the power of dealing with the crime.

A grim commentary upon the folly of the anarchist position was afforded by the attitude of the law toward this very criminal who had just taken the life of the president. The people would have torn him limb from limb if it had not been that the law he defied was at once invoked in his behalf. So far from his deed being committed on behalf of the people against the government, the government was obliged at once to exert its full police power to save him from instant death at the hands of the people. Moreover, his deed worked not the slightest dislocation in our governmental system, and the danger of a recurrence of such deeds, no matter how great it might grow, would work only to the direction of strengthening and giving harshness to the forces of order. No man will ever be restrained from becoming president by any fear as to his personal safety. If the risk to the president's life become great, it would mean that the office would more and more come to be filled by men of a spirit which would make them resolute and merciless in dealing with every friend of disorder. This great country will not fall into anarchy, and if anarchists should ever become a serious menace to its institutions they would not merely be stamped out, they would involve in their own ruin every active or passive sympathizer with their doctrines. The American people are slow to wrath, but when their wrath is once kindled it burns like a consuming flame.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY.

Caution Is Needed to Preserve the Present Reign of Prosperity.

During the last five years business confidence has been restored and the nation is to be congratulated because of its present abounding prosperity. Such prosperity can never be created by law alone, although it is even enough to destroy it by misdirective laws. If the hand of the Lord is heavy upon any country, if flood or drought comes, human wisdom is powerless to avert the calamity. Moreover, no law can guard us against the consequences of our own folly. The men who are idle or credulous, the men who seek gains not by genuine work with head or hand, but by gambling in any form, are always a source of menace not only to themselves, but to others. If the business world loses its head, it loses what legislation cannot supply. Fundamentally the welfare of each citizen and therefore the welfare of the aggregate of citizens which makes the nation must rest upon individual thrift and energy, resolution and intelligence. Nothing can take the place of this individual capacity, but wise legislation and honest and intelligent administration can give it the fullest scope, the largest opportunity to work to good effect.

The tremendous and highly complex industrial development which went on with ever accelerated rapidity during the latter half of the nineteenth century brings us face to face at the beginning of the twentieth with very serious problems. The old laws and the old customs which had almost the binding force of law were once quite sufficient to regulate the accumulation and distribution of wealth. Some of the industrial changes which have so enormously increased the productive power of mankind they are no longer sufficient.

The growth of cities has gone on beyond comparison faster than the growth of the country, and the upbuilding of the great industrial centers has meant not merely a stupendous increase not merely in the aggregate of wealth, but in the number of very large individual and especially of very large corporate fortunes. The creation of these great corporate fortunes has not been due to the tariff nor to any other governmental action, but to natural causes in the business world, operating in other countries as they operate in our own.

The process has aroused much antagonism, a great part of which is wholly without warrant. It is not true that as the rich have grown richer the poor have grown poorer. On the contrary, never before has the average man, the wageworker, the farmer, the small trader, been so well off as in this country and at the present time. There have been abuses connected with the accumulation of wealth, yet it remains true that a fortune accumulated in legitimate business can be accumulated by the person specially benefited only on condition of conferring immense incidental benefits upon others. Successful enterprise of the type which benefits all mankind can only exist if the conditions are such as to offer great prizes as the rewards of success.

Deal with Caution.

The captains of industry who have driven the railway systems across this continent, who have built up our commerce, who have developed our manufactures, have on the whole done great good to our people. Without them the material development of which we are so justly proud could never have taken place. Moreover, we should recognize the immense importance to this material development of leaving as unhampered as is compatible with the public good the strong and forceful men upon whom the success of business operations inevitably rests. The slightest study of business conditions will satisfy anyone capable of forming a judgment as to the personal equation as the most important factor in a business operation; that the business ability of the man at the head of any business concern, big or little, is usually the factor which fixes the gulf between striking success and hopeless failure.

An additional reason for caution in dealing with corporations is to be found in the international commercial conditions of today. The same business conditions which have produced the great aggregations of corporate and individual wealth have made them very potent factors in international commercial competition. Business concerns which have the largest means at their disposal and are managed by the ablest men naturally to the front in this competition, and it is this competition which takes the lead in the strife for commercial supremacy among the nations of the world. America has only just begun to assume that commanding position in the international business world which we believe will more and more be here. It is of the utmost importance that this position be not jeopardized, especially at a time when we are on the verge of an abundance of our own natural resources and the skill, business energy and mechanical aptitude of our people make foreign markets essential. Under such conditions it would be most unwise to cramp or to fetter the youthful strength of our nation.

Careful Legislation Needed.

Moreover, it cannot too often be pointed out that to strike with ignorant violence at the interests of one set of men almost inevitably endangers the interests of all. The fundamental rule in our national life, the rule which underlies all others, is that on the whole we shall all of us either go up or down together. There are exceptions, and in times of prosperity some will prosper far more and in times of adversity some will suffer far more than others; but, speaking generally, a period of good times means that all share more or less in them, and in a period of hard times all feel the stress to a greater or less degree. It surely ought not to be necessary to enter into any proof of this statement. The memory of the lean years which began in 1893 is still vivid, and we can contrast them with the conditions in this very year which is now closing. Disaster to great business enterprises can never have its effects limited to the men at the top. It spreads throughout, and while it is bad for everybody, it is worse for those farthest down. The capitalist may be shorn of his luxuries, but the wageworker may be deprived of even bare necessities.

The mechanism of modern business is so delicate that extreme care must be taken not to interfere with it in a spirit of rashness or ignorance. Many of those who have made it their vocation to denounce the great industrial combinations which are popularly, although with technical inaccuracy, known as "trusts" appeal especially to hatred and fear. These are precisely the two emotions, particularly when combined with ignorance, which unfit men for the exercise of cool and steady judgment. In facing new industrial conditions the whole history of the world shows that legislation will generally be both unwise and ineffective unless undertaken after calm inquiry and with scheerself restraint. Much of the legislation directed at the trusts would have been exceedingly mischievous had it not also been entirely ineffective. In accordance with well-known sociological law the ignorant or reckless agitator has been the really effective friend of the evils which he has been nominally opposing. In dealing with business interests for the government to undertake by crude and ill-considered legislation to do what may turn out to be bad would be to invite the risk of such far-reaching national disaster that it would be preferable to undertake nothing at all. The men who demand the impossible or the undesirable serve as the allies of the forces with which they are nominally at war, for they hamper those who would evolve order out of the chaos of our own natural resources and the skill, business energy and mechanical aptitude of our people make foreign markets essential. Under such conditions it would be most unwise to cramp or to fetter the youthful strength of our nation.

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