

# WHY ROOSEVELT?

## A Statement to Progressive Americans

For many weeks it has been clear that the Republican choice lay between Roosevelt and Hughes. It has now become evident that no national convention can this year select a nominee whose views on the vital issue of the moment are unknown. It is unfortunate for Mr. Hughes that a strong committee of hyphenated German-American editors forms an important element of his strength at Chicago. The issue is Americanism, as we all know. Roosevelt made that issue, and he is the man best equipped by experience and executive power to fight and carry it through.

The coming nomination of Roosevelt by the Progressive and Republican conventions raises certain questions which Progressives must face. Does this common choice mean the amalgamation of the two parties? Is the task of the Progressive party accomplished? Ought the Progressive organization to be abandoned or maintained.

It is true that the nomination of Col. Roosevelt will unite, in co-operation behind a single candidate, substantially all those who are opposed to the principles and the practice of the Democratic party and the Wilson administration. It does not, and in my judgment it should not, mean the amalgamation of the Progressives and the Republicans. The Progressive party still has a function to perform, a function of vital consequence to the people of the United States, in marking out the road along which the increasing welfare of the average man can best be sought and obtained.

The Progressive platform of 1912 was a new departure in American politics. It set forth, as the platform of no party with a chance to win had ever done before, the doctrine that human rights are supreme over property rights. It held in the large and in particular that the public welfare comes first. Nearly every item of this platform has so commended itself to the people of the United States that while many are still opposed to the principles it proclaims, few dare to announce their opposition.

Except for the recall of judicial decisions, substantially the whole of the Progressive platform of 1912 has been adopted into the political creeds of our people, and that irrespective of party. In 1912 the Progressives sounded the note of human rights. In 1916 they are needed to sound it again.

It is true that in 1916 the overwhelming issue is the issue of Americanism—national safety, national honor, the United States as a single nation, standing united for common protection, common ideals, and common rights. Men of the most divergent views in other matters will come together this year upon this issue. It is right that they should, for until the safety, honor and welfare of the nation are made secure, other issues must wait. Until this great question of Americanism has been settled, the American people will give scant attention to any other. That much has already been made clear.

But when our foreign relations have been adjusted once more to our own self-respect, and have thereby secured the respect of other nations, when through preparedness we have supplied ourselves with reasonable assurance against the danger of aggression from abroad, when we have made it certain that the opportunity to work out our internal problems in peace has been secured to us, then these internal problems will come once more to the front, and the issues which have been temporarily laid aside will press for attention and decision. Then we Progressives must be ready.

We have in the Progressive organization a means for forcing the consideration of these questions of human welfare whose effectiveness for that purpose no one can doubt. We have done it once, and if necessary we can do it again. At least, until we can be assured of some other equally effective means of advancing the cause of human rights, of protecting the people against extortion, exploitation and monopoly, I am in favor of maintaining the Progressive party organizations in the nation and the states.

If the foregoing is true, then it is evident that such a platform should be adopted by the Progressive convention at Chicago as will, without obscuring the present issue, leave us in position, when the right time comes, to force to the front once more the principles of human welfare upon which our party was founded, and to demand, in whatever way may then seem best, that these principles shall be taken up, discussed and enacted into law.

I am strongly in favor of uniting with the Republicans to meet the present crisis, but I am strongly against any plan which would leave us Progressives powerless if it should hereafter appear that the reactionary and not the progressive elements of the Republican party are in control. I will work with almost any one to meet the crisis, but afterward, when the crisis has been met, I shall want to join with other Progressives in having something to say as to whether this nation shall be run in the interest of the magnates or the people.

Until the question of Americanism has been settled everything else takes second place. Roosevelt made that issue. His nomination will unite all those who stand against Wilson and for the safety, honor and welfare of America.

No President nominated or elected by the support of any group of hyphenated voters can be free to carry out a program of straight Americanism.

This year the man outweighs the platform. What one man has not merely said, but lived, will become the platform this year.

No bare announcement of any man's position is enough. The nation needs the guarantee of a record of things done.

Roosevelt alone has the experience to meet the demands of the international situation.

Roosevelt, better than any other man, can give us an effective army and navy, and keep down the cost.

Roosevelt wants no war. No other man alive has such a record in promoting peace. He can assure us peace with self-respect.

Roosevelt's executive power gave us an efficient government and made possible the building of the Panama Canal.

As a Progressive I am strongly in favor of uniting with the Republicans to meet the present national crisis. But full co-operation must be based on mutual understanding. They must not forget that we polled more votes than they did in 1912.

I am strongly against any plan that would leave us Progressives powerless if it should appear that the Republican leaders fail to see and meet the issue of the present time.

*I believe in maintaining the Progressive organizations in the nation and in the states. There are many others who hold the same belief.*

---GIFFORD PINCHOT