



Is Democracy Sufficient?

AN ADDRESS

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BY

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Mr. President:

The world has reached the end of an epoch. The problems that confront us are world-wide in their relation because they involve principles that vitally affect the governmental and economic structures of every country. Autocracy in government and plutocracy in economics are becoming archaic and are tottering to their fall. Hysterical effort to suppress opinion and still the tempest that is coming up from the depths can only serve to fan into flame the smouldering fires that one would fain extinguish. Civilization is in labor preparatory to a new birth. No earthly power can stay it. By intelligent effort men may assist and bring to pass by easy stages that which if left to itself would come in course, but by harsher and more destructive processes. It is manifestly a time when high purpose should dominate us, and conclusions based upon our best thought should direct us. In this spirit we should earnestly and anxiously enquire if democracy is capable of adaptation to the new order; if it is sufficient to furnish in accord with the principles of its being the vehicle for the accommodation and safe carriage of a civilization so radically different from that which has existed in the past.

DEMOCRACY UNDEVELOPED

Democracy resting upon the primary of equal rights to all and special privileges to none, is as yet in an embryonic state. It is a philosophy rather than a method. It is an ideal, little of which has so far been realized.

The desire for equal rights and opportunity is basic. It owes its origin to the individual's desire to excel, expressed differently, to the natural and laudable purpose of the individual to develop in competition with his fellows his capacities to their utmost under conditions that admit of no handicap. Democracy then demands a fair field and no favors—an equal chance to all. It can only be said to exist to the extent that equality of opportunity obtains. It has its limitations but is all sufficient within its sphere and can be safely applied whenever a common interest exists. Its virility and life depend upon the full acceptance of the principle of majority rule.

Democracy is subservient to moral law—and it can do no act in contravention of this higher law without at the same time destroying itself, for such acts are not those of democracy but of an arbitrary power parading under a false name.

Democracy subscribes fully to the efficacy of law and under the moral law accepts without question the majority opinion as its rule of action.

Democracy is debarred from determining any question in which there is not a common interest—hence, when a government nominally democratic assumes jurisdiction of matters involving irreconcilable differences, such as questions between races whose ethnic distinctions and differences will not be eliminated by amalgamation, it ceases to function as a democracy and becomes an oligarchy that forces the dissenting elements to accept its judgments.

It should be understood that democracy may, with entire propriety and right, assume jurisdiction of matters of common interest that involve no infraction of moral law, and compel the minority to accept the majority decision. Without this power to compel obedience to the decrees resulting from a proper exercise of democratic power, there could be no democracy, and society would at once be compelled either to accept autocracy or to adopt the principle of voluntary association, which is anarchy pure and simple.

INDIVIDUALISM

It is conceded that the minority has rights which no majority, however great, has the right to invade. These rights pertain not to the minority as such but to the individuals composing it. The individual has an inalienable right to adopt the religious belief that he may choose, or have none at all, if he so desires. He has the right to think and form his own opinions, even though they may differ from those of the rest of mankind. He has the right to freedom of expression of opinion, to the extent that such act does not contravene the rights of others. His right of voluntary association, the exercise of which involves a social act, is necessarily limited to conformity to the general good.

The theory of the extreme individualists, involving as it must, the laissez-faire policy contending for the individual's right to develop under natural laws, the stronger rising on the crushed remains of the weaker, finds its best exemplification in the Jungle law—the tooth and the claw. Instead of being a spiritualizing method to elevate man to a higher plane it takes him down to the level of the brute. It is the antithesis of democracy. Man is not only under the material law, but is likewise subject to the higher spiritual law that overrides the material promptings and bids him protect his neighbor instead of crushing him.

It is true that there is room in every society for individualism with its voluntary association, but its sphere becomes more restricted as the growing complexity of the social body makes increased function of democracy necessary.

While the majority is within its rights to reserve to itself the power to control concrete acts involving a social relation, those who love liberty and democratic freedom may well look with suspicion and alarm upon anything that savors of interference with the individual's right to be master of his own religion, or his liberty to think and freely express his thoughts. The danger line has been reached when, as at present, our department of justice is deporting, without judicial determination, aliens because it does not approve of their political opinions, and when legislators are earnestly promoting the enactment of law giving power to prosecute American citizens for the same reason. It is opportune to recall that Thomas Jefferson, in the preamble of the act establishing religious liberty, stated the cor-

rect principle in the following language: "That it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government, for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order; and finally, the truth is great and will prevail if left to herself, that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free arguments and debate, error ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them."

It presents a curious turn of history that the Democratic party should have been born of opposition to the principles of alien and sedition laws while now some of its leaders have espoused them to insure public safety.

Suppression of adverse opinion has no proper place in a well ordered democracy. If aliens or citizens commit overt acts, they should have a fair and impartial trial, and, upon conviction, receive such punishment as the law may provide, but whatever our judgment of the soundness and rectitude of the opinions of others may be, we should zealously guard their rights to them, if for no other reason than to preserve our own liberties. Defense of the freedom of opinion and speech is the guardian angel of all other individual rights.

Abuse of power is the source of greatest danger to democracy. History teaches no lesson more plainly than that the abuse of power leads inevitably to the loss of it. Germany and Austria, dismembered and suffering, are today reaping the effects of this cause.

The hope of democracy resides in the orderly processes of evolution. It can only act within the limitations placed upon it by moral law and the public will. Revolution, on the other hand, assumes and exercises powers not necessarily within either of these limitations. It is not sufficiently well recognized that even democracy, acting with or against the popular will, may, and often does, commit acts of revolution. When the governing body invades minority rights or fails to provide the methods that are necessary to the enjoyment and expression of them, it subverts democratic government and thereby commits acts of revolution. These infringements and delinquencies that serve to deprive the people of their rights and opportunities are the germs of revolution that are planted from time to time in the democratic garden, which spring up later to dwarf and finally to destroy free government. If this process is permitted to pro-

ceed, and accumulated evils become too strongly entrenched to admit of being displaced by democratic methods, the resulting tyranny destroys democracy or excites a counter revolution to save it. This appeal to arbitrary force comes usually from the submerged, and man's past history lends color to the view that democracy in its evil hour must look not to the high, mighty and learned, but to the poor, humble, wretched for its redemption.

In the contemplation of the unthinking, the protest and outbreak of the disinherited against vested wrong is the revolution, but rightfully considered, it is the necessary counter result of the insidious revolutionary acts that have been perpetrated in the past by the ruling powers.

These sins against moral law and democratic principles are usually committed in such a quiet, unobtrusive way that they assume dangerous proportions before the unsuspecting public becomes conscious of them. They, too, are often introduced by the majority, or with its tacit consent, but they are none the less dangerous because they are supported by an unsound public opinion.

In the light of these facts one will more fully appreciate the wisdom of the trite observation that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

Democracy then is more than the mere counting of noses. It is an ideal of social relation with certain fixed principles and its very existence depends upon strict fidelity to them. It is true that democracy demands acquiescence in majority rule, but its principles place upon this majority the controlling obligation to rule in accordance with moral law.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

While democracy demands the widest possible participation by the citizens in government, the representative method is the most practicable that human ingenuity has as yet devised. The constant trend is toward the enlargement of the electorate through a more general recognition that among homogeneous people moral and intellectual fitness, without distinction of sex, form the true standard for induction into the governing class.

The agitation for and introduction of initiative, referendum, recall and proportional representation are but evolutionary efforts to develop democratic government, and make it more representative.

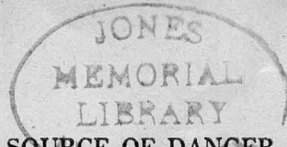
It may be said that political democracy is in a healthy state of evolution. Waiving certain ethnic conditions which do not admit of democratic determination, there is reason to hope that the political machinery for democratic expression will, within a reasonable time, be fairly well perfected.

The most ominous cloud that looms in the distance is the rapid growth of class interests that strive both to mould and control public opinion, as well as to compel the co-ordinate branches of government to do their will. Recognizing the power of concentrated effort, it becomes apparent that these organized bodies, usually dominated by selfish purposes, can influence government quite out of proportion to their numerical strength. Is it possible that this principle of sovietism is to displace that of democracy that properly knows no class and confers no favors? The United States for a half century under democratic forms has been rapidly developing class government. There seem to be many who are greatly disturbed about bolshevism in Russia, but are apparently unconscious of the fact that their own government, since the civil war, has been brought more and more into conformity to the bolshevik principle.

Capitalism and bolshevism in one respect conform to the same principle. They are each class interests, the difference between them being that of the class of beneficiaries, since the first embraces the richer classes, while the latter embraces the poorer classes. Both of them are undemocratic.

Bolshevism claims the elimination of class privilege as its ultimate objective, and democrats, without subscribing to its procrustean methods, may sympathize with its ultimate aim—while plutocracy logically leading to the destruction of democracy and the enslavement of the masses, must under all conditions be regarded as a deadly foe against whom democrats must wage relentless war to the bitter end.

Bolshevism enslaving the people now that they may eventually be made free, and capitalism continually strengthening the bonds that hold them in its grasp, enabling it to place the world under tribute for ever, present alternatives that those who believe in the efficiency of democracy will not willingly accept.



A SOURCE OF DANGER

Freedom of speech and the press is at once the eyes, ears and mouth of democracy. Deprived of the information that an untrammelled press and free discussion give the public, its judgment must of necessity be not only partial but dangerous. Of what avail is mere literacy when the facts of the case are either distorted or hidden? When the press comes under the control of powerful class interests that corrupt the stream of public intelligence, by misrepresenting and suppressing the facts of current national life, thus depriving the public of access to the truth impartially stated, democracy must of necessity cease to function normally. What confidence can be placed in the correctness of public judgment when it is based upon a misinterpretation, and a biased statement of facts collected and promulgated by press agents paid by special interests?

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Mr. Frank I. Cobb, chief editorial writer of the New York World, in a recent address said: "Private propaganda is not one of the by-products of war, but it has taken on new phases since the war. It established itself long before the war and was a development of the press agent, who, from being merely a theatrical attachment, had extended himself to Wall Street, to big business and to most of the institutions that have to deal with public opinion. Shortly before the war the newspapers of New York took a census of the press agents who were regularly employed and regularly accredited and found that there were about 1200 of them. How many there are now I do not pretend to know but what I do know is that many of the direct channels to news have been closed and the information for the public is first filtered through publicity agents. The great corporations have them, the banks have them, the railroads have them, all the organizations of business and social and political activity have them and they are the media through which news comes. Even statesmen have them. These publicity agents on the whole are a very able body of men and in some respects they perform a highly valuable service, but, at the same time, they are essentially attorneys for their employers. Their functions is not to proclaim the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but to present the particular state of facts that will be of the greatest benefit to their clients—in short, to manipulate the news. A great deal of the confusion of public opinion today is the direct product of that system."

In common with other productive enterprises the agencies for the collection and dissemination of news have enlarged their units, requiring larger aggregations of capital to operate them, and with the growing complexity of financial and commercial life, they have become more and more dependent upon successful co-operation with other great interests for the support necessary to their success. Under such circumstances, it would be a miracle if the counting room did not make its influence felt in the news room, and invade even the editorial sanctum sanctorum itself, coloring or suppressing the news if it appeared desirable, and directing editorial suggestion along lines consistent with profitable policy. Under such conditions the fact or theory that ran counter to special privilege would meet short shrift. As this illegitimate interference with the freedom of the press increases the public will likely become increasingly skeptical of its integrity, but this negative reaction will in no sense compensate for the loss of opportunity to base public opinion upon a full and impartial array of facts. It is to be doubted if the extent and gravity of the danger to democracy from this source are fully realized.

Suppression and misrepresentation of fact and opinion dim the vision and becloud the judgment of those upon whom democracy must depend for guidance. Unfortunately no immediate remedy for this dangerous evil is in sight. Special Privilege, as it comes more fully into possession of the means of production and distribution, and the need of control of public opinion becomes more pressing, will redouble its effort to prostitute the press to selfish purpose.

A press, dependent upon profit for its life and growth, functioning under the same principles that govern predatory monopolies, in its very nature must act in harmony with them.

The press has a very practical proposition to meet: stand for the powers that prey and share their prosperity and growth, or espouse the cause of equality of right and opportunity with its precarious returns that promise at best a struggle for existence, with the chances in favor of death from inanition. It is, of course, admitted that there are notable exceptions. The purpose here is to point out a serious danger rather than to draw an indictment.

Freedom of thought and expression is democracy's breath of life. It is indispensable to righteous judgment. Decisions based upon exparte presentations have little weight. If then the high court of public opinion has only a partial and prejudiced presentation of

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facts and reasons, upon what theory can we expect a sound judgment?

Those who have an abiding faith in democracy must view with grave concern the disposition of reactionary and hysterical elements to make difference of opinion a crime. Truth thrives best in God's sunlight, while error multiplies most in cimmerian darkness. What if there be those who entertain strange views and dangerous opinions? Let them exploit them when they can be met, modified or overthrown in the forum of reason. Shall those who claim to have right and reason on their side shun this test and resort to tyrannical methods of suppression to preserve public safety?

This great country has not grown great on its fears. With a full and fair presentation of facts and opinions, the American people can be safely relied upon to retain all that is worthy of preservation in the present social order.

Democracy demands free speech and opinion but when these are to be translated into concrete acts, it must be done according to law. There is no room in a democracy for lawlessness. When the overt act is committed, it seizes the culprit and subjects him to a fair and impartial trial, meting out to him such punishment as the law provides.

So long as democracy itself is true to its own principles, there is little to fear from those who would subvert it. Its injuries, as a rule, are self-inflicted. It is from within rather than from without that its most serious danger may be apprehended.

THE HOUR OF TRIAL APPROACHES

Political or representative democracy, as we have it, may be said to have had its nascency in America. It was the child of revolution. If some radical of that day had told the nations of Europe that the propaganda of this foundling of the western wilds, in less than two centuries would undermine and destroy the foundations of their governmental structures, divest their Czars, Kaisers and kings of power and establish governments by the despised people in their places, incarceration in a mad house, deportation to a penal colony or execution would likely have been his fate. Nevertheless, history will so record it.

More powerful than the armies and navies of the allies was the call of Woodrow Wilson to the spirit of democracy that had found

lodgment in the hearts of the European peoples. It was this spirit that disintegrated the morale of the Central Powers, sent the Czar to a deserved fate and drove the Kaiser into exile. There are those, who having used this spirit to accomplish their selfish purposes, would now fain exorcise it and re-establish autocracy and special Privilege upon their former foundations. In their contemplation it will likely prove a Pandora's box from which the spirit has escaped, never to be imprisoned again.

As might have been expected, this spirit in instances is running into extravagancies, but it will eventually find itself, put its house in order, and all the world will be lifted to a higher plane on account of it. But he who supposes that political democracy, as this term has been understood, is the limit of this social philosophy, will be rudely awakened to a realization of the fact that his vision must needs be enlarged if he would comprehend the full scope of democratic possibilities. If democracy is not to suffer arrest of development, if it is to evolve normally, its principles must permeate the social body and control its functions. Industry, commerce and finance must be reorganized to the extent necessary to bring them into harmony with it. He is indeed a careless observer who does not see that this process is already producing marked changes in the character of the social structure. All classes are coming under the spell. The old concepts are rapidly being displaced by the new, necessitating rapid readjustments that necessarily give rise to disconcerting jars and jolts. All signs indicate an impending change, deeply fundamental in character and of far reaching importance.

Employers and employees are both in a state of metamorphosis. Few of them seem to have very clear ideas of the ultimate objective. The most of them are simply drifting hither and thither as the currents and cross currents affect them—an aimless opportunism that will likely obtain until the old forms and customs have become sufficiently weakened and plastic to admit of remolding the social structure to the extent necessary to permit democracy to function normally. Many seem to be under the delusion that the whole trouble may be cured by mutual agreement between capitalists and laborers by which a more just distribution of benefits would result, obviously overlooking the fact that the greater third party in interest—the public—must be a party to the contract, and likewise that the democratic philosophy restricts the three to limitations consistent with its

program of equal rights to all and special privileges to none. Society has developed the present economic system, the life principle of which is special privilege. This system, in order to live and grow, must make profit its controlling motive and service secondary. Coming up from the embryo, society necessarily had to adopt makeshift methods at first, and by a process of elimination, improve its machinery as it became possible. The porter with his pack, the donkey, the camel and the stage coach were the forms of transportation leading up to the Sunset Limited and the flying machine. Signal fires on the hill tops and runners were the forerunners of the telegraph, telephone and wireless.

As each serves its age and gives place to that which better suits a succeeding age, just so must economic methods give place to those which are better adapted to the needs and conceptions of succeeding stages of human development. These changes are inevitable. The forces of both evolution and revolution compel them. As democratic philosophy has been diffused, the service principle has steadily encroached upon the profit principle, and if democracy is to triumph, service must become the controlling incentive of human action.

The struggle that has existed through all the past between equal right and special privilege will always continue, because the social organism will never be perfect, but the signs of the times are that the service system will increasingly assume the leading role in the world's work. Public opinion, the final ruler in all lands, has been undergoing a great change in this regard. The change has so far been more in spirit than in form of organization. The profit system itself has not been impervious to it. Business is rapidly humanizing, and this is an important introductory step toward final change of form to bring social operation into final accord with the service principle. This change, too, in America is the more remarkable when it is considered that while political democracy is highly developed here, nowhere has special privilege so nearly reached its ultimate development of private monopoly—transportation, the financial system, transmission, the manufacture of basic supplies and public utilities of various kinds are essentially private monopolies, or controlled by class interests that in essence are the same thing.

Can it be inferred that the conditions are riper here than elsewhere for the final change from private monopoly to public monopoly?

Private monopoly in a democracy is an anachronism, and can only be regarded as a passing stage.

The contest between public service and special privilege, through all the stages of economic evolution, has been growing more intense. The need for the protection of the public against private rapacity has all along been recognized. At first reliance was placed in the competitive theory with its small units and wasteful duplications, but the economic law of elimination of the inefficient and unnecessary destroyed this hope, and, at the same time, developed the cooperative principle which is responsible for the growth of monopolies. The public then resorted to public regulation, unmindful of the fact that effective control and ownership are inseparable. The legislatures, courts and commissions have in turn tried their hands at regulation and dissolution, but in spite of it all the great aggregations continually grow greater, for the very simple reason that they are the products of a state of civilization, and, notwithstanding their scarlet sins, have been constructively meeting a public need. The hands of the clock cannot be turned backward. The world must and will advance and these institutions and organizations must be brought into full conformity with the democratic spirit of the age so that they may continue to develop to the highest degree their capacity to serve. The present condition cannot last—to paraphrase Lincoln—we cannot remain half democratic and half plutocratic. Democracy must dominate our civilization or perish from the earth. These are the alternatives offered us.

The highest form of economic development is public monopoly. It functions on the service principle. It is devoid of special Privilege. It squares exactly with democratic principles. It places the operation on a moral foundation, where the taking of more than is necessary is ignoble in contradistinction to the unmoral principle of private monopoly that makes the fleecing of the public a source of distinction and honor. Shall we then say that public ownership is the panacea for all economic and governmental ills? By no means. It is neither desirable nor practicable in all things. It has its sphere, and in so far as it may be necessary to maintain the common right and fulfill the demands of economic law it should obtain. It is not as many suppose an invasion of the right of private property, and in no true sense is it opposed to individual ownership. It takes nothing without paying its worth to the individual owner. It simply extends

the principle upon which the school house, the court house, post-office and the capitol are publicly owned.

The public operation of agencies of service renders unnecessary the unmoral practice inherent in the profit system of expropriating the private property of the individual served for the benefit of the owner of the privately owned utility rendering the service. It destroys the opportunity of the individual or association to use instruments of social service for the unjust purpose of levying public tribute for private benefit. The ultimate effect of the principle is to leave in the possession of the individual producing it the full measure of the wealth he creates. It does deny and destroy the theory that the few shall acquire the surplus wealth of the world and hold it in trust relation for the benefit of the exploited masses.

Democratization of industry, finance and commerce involves more than mere public ownership. It includes management and operation in the spirit of brotherhood, not only for those immediately concerned, but for the people of the nation as well. As already pointed out, this spirit is growing in all these spheres of activity, whether private or public initiative, and as it comes to dominate public thought and shape policies, progress toward the desired end will be accelerated. We should not be discouraged because the task viewed as a whole seems large. It is reassuring to remember that

“We reach not heaven at a single bound
But build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies
And mount to the summit, round by round.”

THE PRESENT NEED

Since the introduction of our democracy, we have acted on the assumption that it was merely a political method, and that its functions should be restricted as much as possible. Its aid was only to be invoked in cases that could not possibly be cared for by private initiative. Democracy's capacity for service and the necessity for this service to preserve the basic principles of democracy itself have been little appreciated and even less understood. All possible assistance has been given private initiative to develop our economic machinery to its highest power, with the result that private monopoly,

overgrown and ungovernable like a veritable frankenstein, glowers down upon us. Even though it be benevolent, although it renders most efficient service, its existence makes democracy impossible. Whatever may be our choice, we cannot have both. The life of the one is dependent upon the death of the other.

Assuming that democracy is to live, it is pertinent to enquire to what extent it is capable of functioning in those spheres which hitherto have been reserved peculiarly and almost exclusively for private effort. Democracy is born of the co-operative principle but there is no economic reason for the employment of the co-operative method in anything which can be done as efficiently by the individual. Democracy is the highest form of co-operative organization. It is superior to private organization in that it can compel the co-operation of all within its jurisdiction. It, through its taxing power, can compel all to contribute their share of the reserve capital necessary to the conduct of the enterprise. It can borrow at a lower rate of interest and can save enormous amounts by the elimination of wastes in advertising, duplication of work, etc. For these reasons private capital, ever preaching the superior efficiency of business under private initiative, invariably and peremptorily declines to compete with a government with the cost of the service as the basis. Democratic operation not only is superior to private organization in power of organization, but excels it still more in capacity for distribution of benefits arising from co-operation. Business under private initiative must reserve the amount necessary to cover risks, and, in addition, keep for its owners a sufficient amount to induce co-operation. With less than this it disintegrates. Public action on the other hand can continue operation indefinitely, distributing every thing above bare cost.

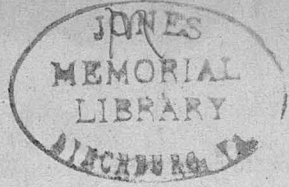
There is nothing in democracy's principles or organization that debars it from any field of co-operative effort. Each undertaking presents a question of expediency only. In the last analysis it comes down to the people themselves. Democracy offers them all the method necessary to bring all forms of co-operative effort into subjection to their will, and it remains only a question of the extent to which they will avail themselves of it. Manifestly, then, there is no necessity for the substitution of any other form of government to meet public needs.

The real question to be answered is: Whether the public would prefer to make democracy impossible by continuing the present system of exploitation in transportation, transmission, industry and finance, or avail themselves of the facilities for service and protection that democratic organization can afford them. It is a matter that they alone can determine.

It is not a question of democratic deficiency or failure, but whether democracy shall be permitted to live and serve, or be rejected in favor of a system of special privilege that must exploit the masses and make utterly impossible the realization of the loftiest ideals and hopes that ever inspired the brain of man.

The patriotic citizen, the liberal thinker and those who feel the divine urge toward the more abundant life that can only be realized under the flag of democratic freedom, will not surrender their hopes and aspirations, but with an unshakable faith in the wisdom and justice of an almighty and beneficent God will continue their struggles to preserve and hand down to their children the priceless gift of democracy that came to them stained with the blood of their fathers.

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FOR REFERENCE
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