

# COMMONER'S SPEECH ACCEPTING THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

Mr. Clayton and gentlemen of the notification committee: I cannot accept the nomination which you officially tender without first acknowledging my deep indebtedness to the Democratic party for the extraordinary honor which it has conferred upon me. Having twice before been a candidate for the presidency, in campaigns which ended in defeat, a third nomination, the result of the free and voluntary act of the voters of the party, can only be explained by a substantial and undisputed growth in the principles and policies for which I, with a multitude of others, have contended. As these principles and policies have given me whatever political strength I possess, the action of the convention not only renews my faith in them but strengthens my attachment to them.

**A Platform Is Binding.**  
I shall in the near future, prepare a more formal reply to your notification, and in that letter of acceptance, will deal with the platform in detail. It is sufficient, at this time to assure you that I am in hearty accord with both the letter and the spirit of the platform. I endorse it in whole and in part, and shall, if elected, regard its declarations as binding upon me. And, I may add, a platform is binding as to what it omits as well as to what it contains, according to the Democratic idea, the people think for themselves and select officials to carry out their wishes. The voters are the sovereigns; the officials are the servants, employed for a fixed time and at a stated salary to do what the sovereigns want done, and to do it in the way the sovereigns want it done. Platforms are entirely in harmony with this Democratic idea. A platform announces the party's position on the questions which are the issue and an official is not at liberty to use the authority vested in him to urge the personal views which have not been submitted to the voters for their approval. If one is nominated upon a platform which is not satisfactory to him, he must, if candid, either decline the nomination, or in accepting it, propose an amended platform in lieu of the one adopted by the convention. No such situation, however, confronts your candidate, for the platform upon which I was nominated not only contains nothing from which I dissent, but it specifically outlines all the remedial legislation which we can hope to secure during the next four years.

**Republican Challenge Accepted.**  
The distinguished statesman who received the Republican nomination for President said, in his notification speech:  
"The strength of the Republican cause in the campaign at hand is the fact that we represent the policies essential to the reform of known abuses, to the continuance of liberty and true prosperity and that we are determined, as our platform unequivocally declares to maintain them and carry them on."

In the name of the Democratic party I accept the challenge and charge that the Republican party is responsible for all the abuses which now exist in the federal government, and this is the most important to accomplish reforms which are comparatively needed. Furthermore I can concur in the statement that the Republican platform unequivocally declares for the reforms more necessary; on the contrary, I affirm that it openly and notoriously disappoints the hopes and expectations of reformers, whether those reformers be Republicans or Democrats. So far did the Republican convention fall short of its duty that the Republican candidate felt it necessary to add to his platform in several important particulars, thus rebuking the leaders of the party, upon whose co-operation he must rely for the enactment of remedial legislation.

As I shall, in separate speeches, discuss the leading question at issue, I shall at this time confine myself to the paramount question, and to the far-reaching purpose of our party as that purpose is set forth in the platform.

**Shall the People Rule?**  
Our platform declares that the overshadowing issue which manifests itself in all the questions now under discussion, is "Shall the people rule?" No matter which way we turn; no matter to what subject we address ourselves, the same question confronts us: Shall the people control their own government, and use that government for the protection of their right and for the promotion of their welfare? Or shall the representatives of predatory wealth prey upon a defenseless public while the offenders secure immunity

from subservient officials whom they raise to power by unscrupulous methods? This is the issue raised by the "known abuses" to which Mr. Taft refers.

**President's Indictment Against the Party.**  
In a message sent congress last January President Roosevelt said: "The attacks by these great corporations on the administration's actions have been given a wide circulation throughout the country, in newspapers and otherwise, by those writers and speakers who, consciously or unconsciously act as the representatives of predatory wealth—of the wealth accumulated on a giant scale by all forms of iniquity, ranging from the oppression of wage-earners to unfair and unwholesome methods of crushing out competition, and to defrauding the public by stock jobbing and the manipulation of securities. Certain wealthy men of this stamp, whose conduct should be abhorrent to every man of ordinarily decent conscience, and who commit the hideous wrong of teaching our young men that phenomenal business success must ordinarily be based on dishonesty, have, during the last few months, made it apparent that they have banded together to work for re-acton. Their endeavor is to overthrow and discredit all who honestly adhere to the law, to prevent any additional legislation which would check and restrain them, and to secure, if possible, a freedom from all restraint which will permit every unscrupulous wrong-doer to do what he wishes unchecked, provided he has enough money." What an arraignment of the predatory interests, is the President's indictment true? And, if true, against whom was the indictment directed? Not against the Democratic party.

**Mr. Taft Endorses the Indictment.**  
Mr. Taft says that these evils have crept in during the last ten years. He declares that, during this time, some "prominent and influential members of the community, spurred by financial success and in their hurry for greater wealth, became unmindful of the common rules of business honesty and fidelity, and of the limitations imposed by law upon their actions," and "the revelations of the breaches of trusts, the disclosures as to rebates and discriminations by railroads, the accumulating evidence of the violations of the anti-trust laws; by a number of corporations, and the over-issue of stocks and bonds of interstate railroads for the unlawful enriching of directors and for the purpose of concentrating the control of the railroads under one management," all these, he charges, "quickened the conscience of the people and brought on a moral awakening." During all this time, I beg to remind you, Republican officials presided in the executive department, filled the cabinet, dominated the senate; controlled the house of representatives and occupied most of the federal judgeships. Four years ago the Republican platform boastfully declared that since 1860—with the exception of two years—the Republican party had been in control of part or of all the branches of the federal government; that for two years only was the Democratic party in a position to either enact or repeal a law. Having drawn the salaries; having enjoyed the honors; having secured the prestige, let the Republican party accept the responsibility.

**Republican Party Responsible.**  
Why were these "known abuses" permitted to develop? Why have they not been corrected? If existing laws are sufficient, why have they not been enforced? All of the executive machinery of the federal government is in the hands of the Republican party. Are new laws necessary? Why have they not been enacted? With a Republican president to recommend with a Republican senate and house to carry out his recommendations, why does the Republican candidate plead for further time in which to do what should have been done long ago? Can Mr. Taft promise to be more strenuous in the prosecution of wrong-doers than the present executive? Can he ask for a larger majority in the senate than his party now has? Does he need more Republicans in the house of representatives or a speaker with more unlimited authority?

**Why No Tariff Reform?**  
The President's close friends have been promising for several years that he would attack the iniquities of the tariff. We have had intimation that Mr. Taft was restive under the demands of the highly protected industries. And yet the influence of

the manufacturers, who have for 25 years contributed to the Republican campaign funds, and who in return have framed the tariff schedules, has been sufficient to prevent tariff reforms. As the present campaign approached, both the President and Mr. Taft declared in favor of tariff revision, but set the date of revision after the election. But the pressure brought to bear by the protected interest has been great enough to prevent any attempt at tariff reform before the election—and the reduction promised after the election is so hedged about with qualifying phrases that no one can estimate with accuracy the sum total of tariff reform to be expected in case of Republican success. If the past can be taken as a guide, the Republican party will be obligated by campaign contributions from the beneficiaries of protection, as to make that party powerless to bring to the country any material relief from the present tariff burdens.

**Why No Anti-Trust Legislation?**  
A few years ago the Republican leaders in the house of representatives were coerced by public opinion into the support of an anti-trust law which had the endorsement of the President, but the senate refused even to consider the measure, and since that time no effort has been made by the dominant party to secure remedial legislation upon this subject.

**Why No Legislation?**  
For ten years the interstate commerce commission has been asking for an enlargement of its powers, that it might prevent rebates and discriminations, but a Republican senate and a Republican house of representatives were unmoved by its entreaties. In 1900 the Republican national convention was urged to endorse the demand for railway legislation, but its platform was silent on the subject. Even in 1904, the convention gave no pledge to remedy these abuses. When the President finally asked for legislation, he drew his inspiration from three Democratic national platforms and he received more cordial support from the Democrats than from the Republicans. The Republicans in the senate deliberately defeated several amendments offered by Senator La Follette and supported by the Democrats—amendments embodying legislation asked by the interstate commerce commission. One of the amendments authorized the ascertainment of the value of railroads. This amendment was not only defeated by the senate but it was overwhelmingly rejected by the recent Republican national convention, and the Republican candidate has sought to rescue his party from the disastrous results of this act by expressing himself, in a qualified way in favor of ascertaining the value of the railroads.

**Over-Issue of Stocks and Bonds.**  
Mr. Taft complains of the over-issue of stocks and bonds of railroads "for the unlawful enriching of directors and for the purpose of concentrating the control of the railroads under one management" and the complaint is well founded. But, with a President to point out the evil, and a Republican congress to correct it, we find nothing done for the protection of the public. Why? My honorable opponent has, by his confession, relieved me of the necessity of furnishing proof; he admits the condition and he cannot avoid the logical conclusion that must be drawn from the admission. There is no doubt whatever that a large majority of the voters of the Republican party recognize the deplorable situation which Mr. Taft describes; they recognize that the masses have had but little influence upon legislation or upon the administration of the government, but they are hesitating to understand the cause. For a generation the Republican party has drawn its campaign funds from the beneficiaries of special legislation. Privileges have been pledged and granted in return for money contributed to debauch elections. What can be expected when official authority is turned over to the representatives of those who furnish the sinews of war and then reimburse themselves out of the pockets of the taxpayers?

**Fasting in Wilderness Necessary.**  
So long as the Republican party remains in power, it is powerless to regenerate itself. It cannot attack wrong-doing in high places without disgracing many of its prominent members, and it, therefore, uses op-lates instead of the surgeon's knife. Its malefactors construe each Republican victory as an endorsement of their conduct and threaten the party with defeat if they are inter-

fered with. Not until that party passes through a period of fasting in the wilderness, will the Republican leaders learn to study public questions from the standpoint of the masses. Just as with individuals, "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the truth," so in politics when party leaders serve faraway from home and are not in constant contact with the voters, continued party success blinds their eyes to the needs of the people and makes them deaf to the cry of distress.

**Publicity as to Campaign Contributions.**  
An effort has been made to secure legislation requiring publicity as to campaign contributions and expenditures; but the Republican leaders, even in the face of an indignant public refused to consent to a law which would compel honesty in elections. When the matter was brought up in the recent Republican national convention, the plank was repudiated by a vote of 880 to 94. Here, too, Mr. Taft has been driven to apologize for his convention and then to declare himself in favor of a publicity law; and yet, if you will read what he says upon this subject, you will find that his promise falls far short of the requirements of the situation. He says: "If I am elected President, I shall urge upon congress, with every hope of success, that a law be passed requiring the filing, in a federal office, of a statement of the contributions received by committees and candidates in elections for members of congress, and in such other elections as are constitutionally within the control of congress."

I shall not embarrass him by asking him upon what he bases his hope of success; it is certainly not on any encouragement he has received from Republican leaders. It is sufficient to say that if his hopes were realized—if, in spite of the adverse action of his convention, he should succeed in securing the enactment of the very law which he favors, it would give but partial relief. He has read the Democratic platform; not only his language but his evident alarm, indicates that he has read it carefully. He even had before him the action of the Democratic national committee in representing and applying that platform and yet he fails to say that he favors the publication of the contributions before the election. Of course, it satisfies a natural curiosity to find out how an election has been purchased, even when the knowledge comes too late to be of service, but why should the people be kept in darkness until the election is past? Why should the locking of the door be delayed until the horse is gone?

**An Election a Public Affair.**  
An election is a public affair. The people, exercising the right to select their officials and to decide upon the policies to be pursued, proceed to their several polling places on election day and register their will. What excuse can be given for secrecy as to the influences at work? If a man is peculiarly interested in "concentrating the control of the railroads in one management" subscribes a large sum to aid in carrying the election, why should this part in the campaign be concealed until he has put the officials under obligation to him? If a trust magnate contributes \$100,000 to elect political friends to office, with a view to preventing hostile legislation, why should that fact be concealed until his friends are securely seated in their official positions?

This is not a new question, it is a question which has been agitated—a question which the Republican leaders fully understand, a question which the Republican candidate has studied and yet he refuses to declare himself in favor of the legislation absolutely necessary, legislation requiring publication before the election.

**Democratic Party Promises Publicity.**  
How can the people hope to rule, if they are not able to learn until after the election what the predatory interests are doing? The Democratic party meets the issue honestly and courageously. It says: "We pledge the Democratic party to the enactment of a law prohibiting any corporation from contributing to a campaign fund, before October 15 to be made public on or before that day, those received afterward to be made public on the day when received and no such contributions to be accepted within three days of the election. The expenditures are to be published after the election." Here is a plan which is complete and effective.

**Popular Election of Senators.**  
Next to the corrupt use of money, the present method of electing U. S. senators is most responsible for the obstruction of reforms. For one hundred years after the adoption of the constitution, the demand for the popular election of senators, while finding increased expression, did not become a dominant sentiment. A

constitutional amendment had from time to time been suggested and the matter had been more or less discussed in a few of the states but the movement had not reached a point where it manifested itself through congressional action. In the fifty-second congress, however, a resolution was reported from a house committee proposing the necessary constitutional amendment and the resolution passed the house of representatives by a vote which was practically unanimous. In the fifty-third congress a similar resolution was reported to, and adopted, by the house of representatives. Both the fifty-second and fifty-third congresses were Democratic. The Republicans gained control of the house as a result of the election of 1894 and in the fifty-fourth congress the proposition died in committee. As time went on, however, the sentiment grew among the people, until it forced a Republican congress to follow the example set by the Democrats and then another and another Republican congress acted favorably. State after state has endorsed this reform; until nearly two-thirds of the states have recorded themselves in its favor. The U. S. senate, however, impudently and arrogantly obstructs the passage of the resolution, notwithstanding the fact that the voters of the U. S. by an overwhelming majority, demand it. And this refusal is the more significant when it is remembered that a number of senators owe their election to great corporate interests.

Three Democratic national platforms—the platforms of 1900, 1904 and 1908—specifically call for a change in the constitution which will put the election of senators in the hands of the voters and the proposition has been endorsed by a number of the smaller parties, but no Republican national convention has been willing to champion the cause of the people on this subject. The subject was ignored by the Republican national convention in 1900 and it was ignored in 1904, and the proposition was explicit in repudiation in 1908, for the recent Republican national convention, by a vote of 866 to 114, rejected the plank endorsing the popular election of senators—and this was done in the convention which nominated Mr. Taft, few delegates from his own state voting for the plank.

**Personal Inclination Not Sufficient.**  
In his notification speech, the Republican candidate, speaking of the election of senators by the people, says:

"Personally, I am inclined to favor it, but it is hardly a party question." What is necessary to make this a party question? When the Democratic convention endorses a proposition by a unanimous vote and the Republican convention rejects the proposition by a vote of seven to one, does it not become an issue between the parties?

Mr. Taft cannot remove the question from the arena of politics by expressing a personal inclination toward the Democratic position. For several years he has been connected with the administration. What has he ever said or done to bring this question before the public? What enthusiasm has he shown in the reformation of the senate? What influence could he exert in behalf of a reform which his party has openly and notoriously condemned in its convention, and to which he is attached only by a belated expression of personal inclination?

**The Gateway to Other Reforms.**  
"Shall the people rule?" Every radical measure of a national character must run the gauntlet of the senate. The President may personally incline toward a reform; the house may consent to it; but as long as the senate obstructs the reform, the people must wait. The president may heed a popular demand; the house may yield to public opinion, but as long as the senate is defiant, the rule of the people is defeated. The Democratic platform very properly describes the popular election of senators as "the gateway to other national reforms." Shall we open the gate, or shall we allow the exploiting interests to "bar" the way by the control of this branch of the federal legislature? Through a Democratic victory, and through a Democratic victory only, can the people secure the popular election of senators. The smaller parties are unable to secure this reform; the Republican party, under its present leadership, is resolutely opposed to it; the Democratic party stands for it and has boldly demanded it. If I am elected to the presidency, those who are elected upon the ticket with me will be like myself, pledged to this reform, and I shall convene congress in extraordinary session immediately after inauguration, and ask, among other things, for the fulfillment of this platform pledge.

**House Rules Despotically.**  
The third instrumentality em-

played to defeat, the will of the people is found in the rules of the house of representatives. Our platform points out that "the house of representatives, was designed by the fathers of the constitution, to be the popular branch of our government, responsive to the public will and acts:  
"The house of representatives, controlled in recent years by the Republican party, has ceased to be a deliberative and legislative body, responsive to the will of a majority of the members, but has become the absolute domination of a few speakers, who has entire control of its deliberations; and powers of legislation.

"We have observed with regret the popular branch of our general government helpless to either the consideration or enactment of measures desired by a majority of its members."

This arraignment is fully justified. The reform Republicans in the house of representatives, when in the minority in their own party, are helpless to obtain a hearing or secure a vote upon a measure at the hands of the Democrats. In the recent session of the present congress there was considerable element in the Republican party favorable to remedial legislation; but a few leaders, in control of the organization, despotically repressed these members, and forced a real majority in the house to submit to a well organized minority. The Republican national convention, instead of rebuking this attack upon popular government, eulogized congress and nominated as the Republican candidate for vice president one of the men who shared in the responsibility for the coercion of the house. Our party demands that the house of representatives shall become a deliberative body, controlled by a majority of the people's representatives and not by a few speakers, and is pledged to adopt such rules and regulations to govern the house of representatives as will enable a majority of its members to direct its deliberations and control legislation.

"Shall the people rule?" They cannot do so unless they can control the house of representatives, and through their representatives in the house, give expression to their purposes and their desires. The Republican party is committed to the methods now in vogue in the house of representatives; the Democratic party is pledged to such a revision of the rules as will bring the popular branch of the federal government to harmony with the ideas of those who framed our constitution and founded our government.

**Other Issues Will Be Discussed Later.**  
"Shall the people rule," I repeat, is declared by our platform to be the overshadowing question and in the campaign progresses, I shall take occasion to discuss this question as it manifests itself in other issues, for whether we consider the tariff question, the trust question, the railroad question, the banking question, the labor question, the question of imperialism, the development of waterways, or any other of the numerous problems which press for solution, we shall find that the question involved in each, is whether the government shall remain a mere business asset of favor-seeking corporations or be an instrument in the hands of the people.  
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**The Knock-out Blow.**  
The blow which knocked out Cuba was a revelation to the prize fighters. From the earliest days of the ring the knock-out blow was aimed for the temple or the jugular vein. Successful punches were thrown in to weary and the fighter, but if a scientific boxer had told one of the old fighters that the most vulnerable spot was the region of the stomach, he'd have laughed at him for an ignoramus. Dr. Pierce is bringing home to the public a parallel fact: that the stomach is the most vulnerable spot out of the prize ring as well as life. It protects our heads, throat, feet and hands, but the stomach is utterly indispensable, until disease finds the solar plexus and knocks us out. Make your stomach sound and strong by the use of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. You'll find it in your most healthful shop. "Golden Medical Discovery" cures "weak stomach," indigestion, dyspepsia, torpid liver, bad, thin and watery blood and other diseases of the organs of digestion and nutrition.  
The "Golden Medical Discovery" has a specific curative effect upon all mucous surfaces and hence cures catarrh of the bladder, leucorrhoea, and other diseases which may have reached the bladder. In Nasal Catarrh it is well to cleanse the passages with Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy. Dr. Pierce's "Discovery" is a constitutional remedy. Why the "Golden Medical Discovery" cures catarrh, indigestion, and other diseases of the stomach, bowels, bladder and other organs will be plain to you if you will read a booklet of extracts from the writings of eminent medical authorities, explaining its ingredients and explaining its curative properties. It is mailed free on request. Address Dr. R. V. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y. This booklet gives all the ingredients entering into Dr. Pierce's medicines from which it will be seen that they contain not a drop of alcohol, opium, triple-refined glycerine being used instead. Dr. Pierce's greatest thousands of grateful Common Sense Medical Discoveries will be sent free, paper-bound, for 100000 stamps, or cloth-bound for 200000 stamps. Address Dr. Pierce as above.