

### THOMAS EDISON GIVES REASONS FOR SUPPORT OF WOODROW WILSON

Electrical Wizard Declares Proved Ability and Experience Make Change Unwise

#### IEWS ON CURRENT ISSUES

Foreign Relations, Mexican Problems and Domestic Trials All Are Discussed by Famous Inventor.

By George Creel.

While the Republican party was in the throes of selecting a presidential nominee, Thomas A. Edison made modest announcement of his faith in Theodore Roosevelt as the one man fitted above all others for the job. Time went on, the Chicago steam roller ran over the colonel as per plan and habit, the St. Louis convention renominated President Wilson and from the laboratory at West Orange came no comment of any kind whatsoever.

Now Thomas A. Edison, while cutting no large amount of ice with the master mechanics of the Republican party, as they strive to make quite plain, is, nevertheless, a gentleman of some importance where the thought of the people of the United States is concerned. Not only is it the case that his life and his genius have been devoted to the happiness of humanity and the advancement of civilization, but certain Lincolnian qualities have won him an enduring place in the popular heart. Along with their belief in him as a miracle worker, people have come to a great faith in his sturdy Americanism and his shrewd common sense.

#### For Industrial Preparedness.

Some weeks after the two conventions I interviewed him on industrial preparedness, a movement to which he has been giving much of his time and thought. Talking in ideas, rather than in words, he outlined the inventory of American industrial resources that is being made by 30,000 famous engineers, touched upon the myriad uses to which the national laboratory will be put by industrialists, inventors and technicians, and drove home the truth that the one solid rock upon which national defense may be built is the readiness of factories and skilled workers to turn to war production at a day's notice.

Something that he said gave very plain indication of his admiration of Woodrow Wilson, and out of my own ardent advocacy I took courage to ask him whether or not he had "made up his mind" between Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hughes.

"Not yet." He shook his head impatiently. "Wait until we see what this man Hughes has got to offer."

It was on the day of Mr. Hughes' final speech in California, the window of his coast to coast campaign tour, that I received a telephone message from W. L. Saunders, the mining engineer.

"I happened to be talking with Mr. Edison yesterday," he said, "and he told me to tell you that he was willing to make that Wilson statement if you still wanted it."

I was at Mr. Saunders' office almost before the click of the telephone receiver had ceased to echo. Here was a chance to make a campaign contribution worth more than money. We rode to Jersey through the Hudson tubes, and as we went Mr. Saunders told me how he had worked beneath the river bed as far back as 1881, a young man on his first engineering job. A story of broken lives and broken fortunes, started with Deion Haas, a young man who first conceived the idea of a tunnel, continuing through foreign syndicates, and winding up with William G. McAdoo's success where others had failed.

He talked also of his work in Mexico, Europe and the Orient, the fight of America for the conquest of her natural resources, of the difference between legitimate business and "loaded dice" business, of the disjunctions that must be made between enterprise and rapacity and as he talked it was plain that this man's support of Woodrow Wilson was based on his own party affiliation, but had its source in a tried and proved Americanism.

#### Mr. Edison at Work.

Mr. Edison, as a matter of course, was not in his office, but down in the shops. A boy went after him, and as we looked down the alley that ran between the factory buildings, the well known figure popped out of a far door. Bare headed, in his shirt sleeves, vest flying open, trousers baggy and unpressed, he looked like nothing so much as a country store keeper hurrying to fill an order for a pound of prunes.

Not until he came close enough to see his eyes and forehead, to catch the full effect of his dynamic force, was the impression dissipated. At a sort of half run he led the way into the laboratory and sat down with the effect of wanting to get through a disagreeable job as quickly as might be. "Well, Mr. Edison," I began, withdrawing myself by an effort from fascinated contemplation of that big, dominant face and necktie of the vintage of '76, "we..."

"Wait a minute," he interrupted. Leaning back so as to gain ingress, he pushed his hand into his trousers' pocket—the old fashioned kind that opens at the top, not at the side—and drew out a bunch of crumpled yellow paper.

"There," he said, "everything's right there." I smoothed them out—four or five sheets torn from a cheap tablet—all written over with pencil, and the writing firm and certainly like old English print. Glancing through them, I saw that he had merely jotted down a number of flat statements of political belief.

"But what about a discussion of these issues, Mr. Edison?" I urged. "The people of the United States feel that you..."

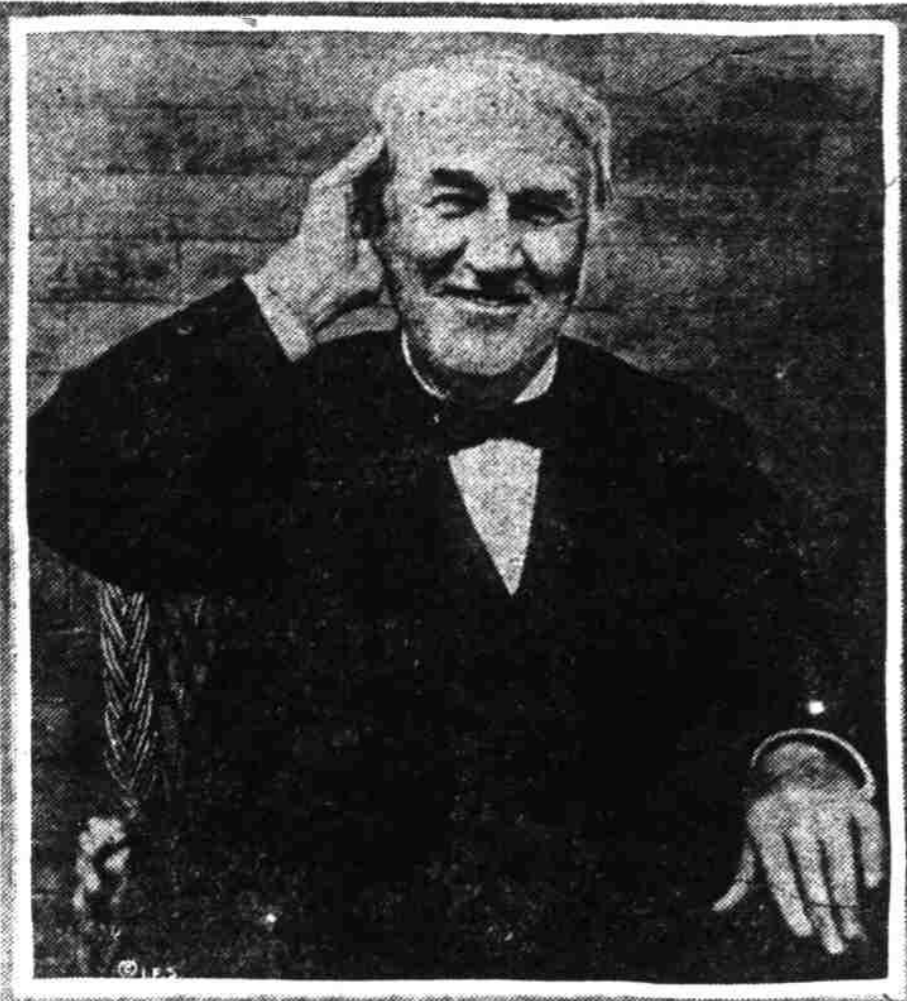
"Shucks!" With his fingers he wiggled the commitment away from him. "I say that I'm for Woodrow Wilson. I say it because I feel that it's up to every man in times like these to take a position. But, pshaw!" He shook his head. "It's just my opinion."

"Mr. Edison has always been a Republican," suggested Mr. Saunders, "and..."

#### Declares Talk of Party.

"Don't put in anything about party," Mr. Edison caught the suggestion and dissembled vigorously. "Times are too serious to talk in terms of Republicanism or Democracy. Parties are all right. Reckon we've got to have them with our system of government. But when it's America that's at stake, men have got to vote as Americans

### DECLARES FOR WILSON



Thomas A. Edison, who recently related to an interviewer why he is supporting President Wilson for reelection.

and not as Democrats or Republicans. "This man Wilson has had a mighty hard time of it," he continued. "I don't believe there was ever a president who had as many big questions to decide, as many big problems to solve. One has followed the other, and now and then they have come in bunches. He hasn't always pleased me, just as I suppose he hasn't always pleased other people, but when you look the record over, it's so good that criticism comes close to being nothing more than cheap fault finding."

"A fool or a coward would have had the United States in all sorts of trouble. As it is, we are at peace, the country was never more prosperous, and we have the strength that comes with honest and integrity of purpose."

"So you don't agree with these people who insist that the United States has earned the contempt of the world?" I asked.

"Neutrality is a mighty trying policy but back of it are international law, the rights of humanity and the whole future of civilization. Wilson has won victories by diplomacy that are far more important than making a public man even thought we could have won by war. I am no pacifist. I believe that there are times when a nation has got to fight. But war for the sake of war, or war for purposes of conquest is horrible and unthinkable."

"As to preparedness..."

"I imagine that Wilson wasn't very keen for preparedness at first. Maybe so. But when he saw that intelligent public opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of it, and that our own safety demanded it, he set machinery at work that will probably give us a sound, sane and adequate national defense. What if it was a change of mind? A president who refuses to change his mind to meet changed conditions would be a dangerous man."

"You say in your notes that it would have been neither wise nor right for the United States to have recognized Huerta?"

"Absolutely." Mr. Edison never gains emphasis by beating the table with his fist. He depends almost entirely upon finger shaking. "A murderous personality! Had we recognized him, it would have served notice upon the world that the United States, while believing in democracy for home use, was willing to stand for despotism where other peoples were concerned. It would have been a blow to constitutional government in every republic of South and Central America, stating to every scoundrel that all he had to do to win the approval of America was to assassinate a president."

"No, sir. President Wilson's Mexican policy has been wise and just and courageous. Mexico has been a troublesome neighbor, but war and conquest are not going to make her a better one. Both against England, and then against human slavery, the United States worked out her salvation through revolution, and it was a pretty slow, trying process."

"Belgium," suggested Mr. Saunders. "Hindsight!" exclaimed Mr. Edison. "Hindsight! In the light of two years, it's easy to say what should have been done. But at the time not a single paper or a public man even thought of anything but keeping the United States out of the European horror. At least a year went by before the world understood just what Belgium was being called upon to suffer."

#### An Instance of His Absorption.

He stopped abruptly and began to touseled his hair and fidget his feet. The shop was calling him. On the way over Mr. Saunders had told me an anecdote illustrative of Mr. Edison's absorption in his work. The iron and steel experts of the world were holding an international congress of some sort in the United States, and one day was set aside for a visit to the great inventor and his laboratory. Mr. Edison had just perfected the phonograph, and the Englishmen, particularly, refused to believe it until they had seen it.

The party was 800 strong, and headed by a number of gentlemen in silk hats. They marched solemnly into the hall where Mr. Edison was supposed to be waiting. But the place was empty. Guided by an infernal clamor, some of the American hosts entered a nearby room, and found the inventor on his knees watching an electric drill bite holes in a sheet of iron. While waiting, it developed, the invention had come from the back of his head to the front, and he had dashed away without another thought of the young army marching to honor him.

I seemed to see signs of this absorption in Mr. Edison at the moment and, inasmuch as we still had three precious minutes left us out of a ten minute interview, I nudged Mr. Saunders. He came nobly to the scratch.

"Tariff?" he said.

"There's another proof of Wilson's openness of mind," Mr. Edison declared, his interest instantly renewed. "No matter what he thought about the Underwood law, he had the courage to admit that the European war returned the tariff to the province of discussion. So he came to the front with his proposition for a tariff commission. That's sense! The tariff is a scientific affair, not political at all. A tariff commission will lift the whole business out of politics. It ought to be our hope that congress will give the

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