

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jingo-Liberal

by Benjamin Mandel

ANOTHER Sir Galahad has sauntered forth into the presidential arena, clad in the shining armor of liberalism, to challenge, it would seem, the mighty hosts of privilege and champion the cause of "the forgotten man." But on closer examination the armor proves to be mere tinsel to cloak as fine a jingo, as brazen an imperialist, and as despicable a demagogue, as ever followed the dictates of big business.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt is no common product of the sidewalks of New York. He comes of conservative blue-blooded stock which traces its ancestry back to Claes Martensen Van Roosevelt, a wealthy landowner, who settled in New Amsterdam in 1636. His father was a leading railroad lawyer, vice president of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad and president of the Lake Champlain Transport Company. As the fifth cousin of Theodore the First, and the bearer of the magic name of Roosevelt, the Governor of the Empire State now comes forward to claim his political heritage. But he possesses neither the brains nor the guts of his predecessors. A mediocrity of this type by any other name would have dropped from sight long ago.

In spite of the present acute, nationwide distress, the powers-that-be have little cause to fear the benign but innocuous Rooseveltian appeals for "the little fellow," his plea for "a fundamental change in our popular economic thought," for "organized planning" and for a "more equitable distribution of the national income." He will arouse no social disorder nor fan the flames of discontent. "As a rabble-rouser," William Allen White sagely declares, "he is badly infected with weasel words . . . When he seems to be going well as a progressive or a liberal he checks himself with a string of 'althoughs', 'buts', 'on-the-other-hands', and 'on-the-contraries.'"

"It is clear from Roosevelt's record," says the *Atlanta Constitution*, "that he will do no injustice to big business." In answer to Al Smith who charged him with fomenting class hatred in defense of the "forgotten man," he reassuringly replied in his St. Paul speech, "I plead not for a class control but for a true concert of interest." "This is not radicalism," says the *Omaha World-Herald*, "It is sound Americanism. It is the wisest conservatism."

However, one can more accurately judge this political tight-rope walker by his specific past conduct rather than by his present utterances which are calculated to "unite East and West, North and South, in one grand brotherhood of inconclusive phrases and glittering generalities."

War Record

Franklin D. Roosevelt first broke into national "fame" as the Assistant-Secretary of War under President Woodrow Wilson. Here he showed himself as a shining understudy of the man "who kept us out of war," as a ruthless imperialist, blatant and unashamed. This indecisive, weak and wavering character, proved that he could bang the mailed fist as hard as any of the war mongers.

In the *Ladies Home Journal* of June, 1917, under the title of "What the Navy Can Do For Your Boy," Mr. Roosevelt writes: "We all know more or less that our Navy is the first line of defense and we are coming to realize that the definition of the word 'defense' does not mean alone the prevention of hostile land forces from landing on our seaboard, but that in its broader sense and in the light of modern conditions the word 'defense' means also the keeping open of our highways of commerce across the seas and along our coasts." The Navy League itself could not formulate its imperialist doctrine more clearly.

"Now at last," he declares, "the country has reached a time when a change of method must come. We have heard of universal training, we have heard of the militia system of a dozen different ways of doing individual duty to the Government. Has not the time arrived for the country to organize all this thought, all these schemes into a particular purpose, into a splendid national whole, into the definite and democratic principle that is in entire accord with our theory of government? Is it not time that the people of the United States should decide to adopt definitely the principle of national government service by every man and woman for a short period during their lives?" Mussolini himself could ask for nothing more.

In the *New York Times* of January 27, 1917, Roosevelt is quoted as fol-

lows: "I advocate military preparedness, not for the sake of war, but for the sake of safeguarding against war if that is possible, and of guaranteeing our honor and safety if war should nevertheless come . . . I wish to see our navy second only to that of Great Britain because Great Britain is the only power whose naval needs are greater than ours." Perhaps now that Roosevelt has become more "liberal," and since times have changed, he may advocate a navy second to none.

To insure the rich investments of the National City Bank, in Haiti, a force of American marines landed at Port au Prince on December 14, 1914, seized \$500,000 from the National Bank of Haiti, and subsequently placed the unhappy island under martial law. Franklin D. Roosevelt directed this invasion and drafted the new constitution whereby the Haitian people were deprived of their basic rights in the interests of the investments of Wall Street bankers.

"When war or peace hung in the balance," says the author of "Mirrors of 1932," "he announced that our fleet was sufficiently strong to conquer Mexico. He rivaled the Kaiser in rattling the sabre."

That there has been no fundamental change in Mr. Roosevelt's militaristic outlook is indicated by his letter written to Representative Collins of Mississippi as late as May 12, 1932, in which that gentleman is congratulated for not having reduced the National Guard activities in drafting the new War Department appropriation bill.

The Power Issue

The National Popular Government League rates Governor Roosevelt highest as the ally of the public against the "power trust." Fifteen United States Senators and twenty-two Representatives endorsed the survey in which this conclusion was drawn. Let us examine the record of this so-called "enemy of the power trust," in view of the fact that these Senators and Representatives claim that power is "one of the most important issues before the American people in this campaign of 1932."

The Public Service Commission of New York State, headed by Mr. Milo R. Maltbie, an appointee of Roosevelt, recently granted an increase in electric rates to the Edison Company and affiliates of Greater New York, which

resulted in an increase in rates for 58 percent of the residential consumers, the poorer consumers. In New York City, 896,903 families found their electric bills increased in a period of severe unemployment and decreased earning power, while these companies are making the highest profits in their history.

Mr. Roosevelt has repeatedly advocated public ownership of electric power systems. Plans are now under way for distributing the enormous resources of St. Lawrence power throughout New York State. In order to secure the maximum benefit for the people of the State in the form of cheap electric power, Governor Roosevelt has proposed that the State enter into the business of transmission of power if satisfactory arrangements cannot be made with private companies and that municipalities be encouraged to do so, thus competing with the Niagara Hudson Power Corporation, a Morgan octopus, controlling the power industry of the entire State. To date no municipalities have found themselves in a position to comply with this suggestion. The State has not indicated what these satisfactory arrangements are and has made no effort to construct transmission lines. Meanwhile the Niagara Hudson Power Corporation with the approval

of the Public Service Commission has almost completed constructing its own lines between Niagara and New York and is thus left with a complete monopoly over the most valuable power resources in the entire country.

The Niagara Hudson is the largest power company in the United States. Under the administration of Governor Roosevelt it has grown steadily, taking over the Buffalo, Niagara and Eastern, the Mohawk Hudson, Northeastern Power, St. Regis Paper Company, Consolidated Gas Company—controlling the New York Edison Company—and 21 affiliated companies. On June 29, 1929, Governor Roosevelt asked State Attorney General Ward about the legality of these tremendous mergers. Upon receiving a reply from Mr. Ward that the mergers were legal, he instituted his own investigation, of which nothing more was heard.

When the attention of Mr. Roosevelt was called to the fact that the Brooklyn Edison Company had laid off 2,000 men in the midst of the present severe depression, and when he was informed that this corporation was discharging men without cause, the Governor claimed that he was powerless to act, as did also the Public Service Commission.

On the power issue, there is little

reason to disagree with the comment made recently by Mr. William H. Woodin, president of the American Car and Foundry Company, chairman of the Board of the American Locomotive Company, and a warm supporter of the Governor. "I have every confidence that with Mr. Roosevelt as president," he said, "the problem (of power) will be tackled in the spirit I have indicated—of fair dealing and of equal justice to all concerned. There is nothing of a destructive nature in Governor Roosevelt's make-up and outlook on life and affairs—for which reason I have no fear that in his approach to the problem he will bring to it either inclination or desire to destroy or hamper the many companies that for years have devoted their time, care and money to the development of this great industry."

Labor

It is estimated that there are fully 1,000,000 unemployed in New York, the richest state in the Union. The State of New York has failed to handle this problem adequately except to suggest a study of unemployment statistics and to make a mere gesture toward relief. New York City boasts today of more than 100 breadlines and all relief agencies have admittedly

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broken down. Unemployment insurance, shorter hour legislation, were all scrapped by the recent session of the Legislature, the Governor having made no real fight on any of these issues. Aside from attending abortive conferences, the Governor can boast of no substantial step to relieve the vast and growing army of New York's unemployed.

On December 10, 1930, the Bank of the United States of New York City closed its doors, impoverishing 400,000 depositors, most of whom were workers living in the poorest sections of the city. Mr. Joseph A. Broderick, State Superintendent of Banks, appointed by Mr. Roosevelt, knew of the condition of the bank before its collapse, and knew furthermore, that the big banks had refused to furnish funds to prevent this catastrophe. Neither the Governor nor Mr. Broderick took any action that would save the situation. In fact, the Governor is at this very moment unwavering in his defense and support of Mr. Broderick and his conduct.

Some time ago, the Mooney Pardon Conference of New York urged Governor Roosevelt to intercede in behalf of Tom Mooney, as a number of other governors had done. Mr. Roosevelt declined to do this on the ground that he did not wish to intervene in a matter which concerned the State of California.

Although he has appointed a few labor "skates" to various public offices, the Governor has given scant sympathy to the demands of labor in his own state.

His running mate as Lieutenant Governor is Herbert H. Lehman, of the powerful banking firm of Lehman Brothers, which is heavily interested in the garment industry of New York City and the exploitation of its many thousands of miserably paid wage slaves.

It should be noted further that Mr. Roosevelt was in 1922 the president of the American Construction Council, a powerful body of building trades employers.

Roosevelt seems to have captured the support of such varied elements as "sons of the wild jackass," the progressives of both major parties, the MacAdoo democrats, the Bible Belt democrats, and various confused liberal elements. "Mirrors of 1932" describes this curious situation as follows: "He draws support from so

many rival factions that he defies definition . . . He is a political cavorter . . . The Republican Roosevelt called him a 'maverick' . . . Despite his brawls with the political boys and bosses, he is noted for his regularity once the convention—or the party pooh-bah—has passed upon platforms and candidates."

Tammany Hall

We can therefore confidently count upon Roosevelt not to burn his organizationally valuable Tammany bridges, in spite of his recent clash with Al Smith. He keeps his back fences intact. Supreme Court Justice Samuel I. Rosenman, whom Roosevelt has called his "right arm," who serves as liaison officer between the Roosevelt forces and Tammany Hall, keeps in constant touch with the Governor at Warm Springs, Georgia. When the Seabury Commission made things too hot for "Tin Box" Sheriff Farley, Roosevelt removed him and a successor was promptly appointed agreeable to John F. Curry and Tammany Hall. However, when Rabbi Wise and Dr. John Haynes Holmes demanded the removal of McQuade, another corrupt Tammany satellite, they were sternly rebuked by the Governor. It is not unthinkable that

Roosevelt who so eloquently nominated Al Smith for President at the last Democratic convention, and who wrote the touching tribute to Smith, entitled "The Happy Warrior," will not be so easily ditched by the Tiger and that on proper terms some understanding will be reached between Roosevelt and Tammany Hall.

The picture of this stalwart advocate of universal military service, this exponent of navies second to none, this invader and oppressor of colonial peoples, this smooth-tongued graduate of Tammany Hall, this tried and true friend of big business, parading as a liberal, as the sworn foe of privilege and the champion of the common man, is a piece of bald hypocrisy baffling comparison. If this very dark horse finally climbs to the presidency, the chances are that labor will find him far blacker than we have painted him here.

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