

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 231.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

RAPID TRANSITION.

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IT is a truism, but one that can not be repeated too often, that the form of government reflects the material conditions that the respective government is intended to safeguard. As the political movement of Labor is bound to be a reflex of the Trades Union organization which constitutes its base, so, likewise, systems of government can not choose but reflect the stage of economic development of which they are the flower. This principle explains the system of “checks and balances” upon which the Constitution of the United States was constructed. Capitalism, then in its infancy, neither needed nor wanted a centralized administration. What on the field of trade was known as “competition”, found in politics its equivalent in “checks and balances”. Accordingly, no branch of the government, the Executive least of all, was entrusted with controlling power. All the three branches—Executive, Legislative and Judicial—were co-ordinate. They mutually checked one another, just as in old Rome the two Consuls were elected to do. But the times have changed; that is to say, the material interests that government is born of have since assumed a developed body. How far the development has gone may be measured by the practical change that the Constitution has undergone, or to be more accurate, is rapidly undergoing.

Within the last four years the Executive, under President Roosevelt, has in six noted instances wiped out the Legislative branch. It repealed the Spooner Act on Nicaragua; it assumed legislative function in the matter of Pension Order No. 78; it struck out, by the theory of “constructive recess”, the function vested in the Senate to confirm appointments; it seized and exercised, in the matter of Panama, the House’s exclusive privilege to declare war; it put, in the matter of the Indian School Fund, a rider on the Act of Congress which prohibited appropriations for sectarian purposes, and turned the Act into exactly the opposite; finally, latest to date, it

excluded, in the matter of Puerto Plata, San Dominigo, the prerogative of the Senate as a co-ordinate treaty-making power.—The transition is rapid; and Trustified Capital is compelling submission on the part of the Senate and the House. From being a power, checked at every motion, the Executive is becoming, if it has not yet become, the sole governmental power in the land. Concentrated Capital at the Trust stage of to-day, needs and wants a “checked-and-balanced” Executive as little as Imperial Rome, having grown giddy with conquest, needed or wanted two mutually checking Consuls. These continued to be elected as a matter of form, of custom and to save appearances—the same as with us, the Senate and House will soon continue to meet wholly as a matter of form, of custom and for the sake of saving appearances. In Imperial Rome, the Emperor’s will became law, Consuls or no Consuls; so to-day in Trustified America, the Executive is becoming the sole administrative wheel.

There are those, who, looking at President Roosevelt’s course, pronounce him a jockeyer of the land. In so far as Roosevelt is blissfully ignorant of the social evolution of which he is but the momentary tool, and characteristically delights in the show of safe despotism, the epithet is just. Taking, however, a broader survey of the field, Roosevelt is but the exponent of a social and economic evolution that has reached and is now undergoing its period of rapid political transition—the transition of the conservative form of our bourgeois Republic’s existence into its political revolutionary form, into the stage of unbridled despotism.

A question of deep interest, at this season, is this: How far and how deep does the acclaim reach with which the Catilina of the approaching American Caesar is being now greeted by washed and unwashed mobs? Or whether the cheers that are reported to “rend the welkin” wherever Mr. Roosevelt appears, are of the nature of those that “rend the welkin” when the present shivering Czar was “hailed by his devoted subjects” only seven months ago, or of those that were gotten up to order when King Edward of Great Britain was recently “welcomed by his loyal Irish subjects” in Dublin.

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Uploaded November 2007

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