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EDITORIAL

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By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Republican national convention will be called to order at noon to-day in the city of Chicago. This convention will nominate as its candidate for President the most popular, and in some respects unpopular man in the Republican party. President Roosevelt is without doubt the idol of the rank and file of Republican voters. His showy and popular qualities appeal to them. On the other hand the various groups of capitalists, and their political leaders, who direct the party machinery, have no use for him as the candidate. The party leaders consider the President dangerous, because he is impulsive and erratic. They look upon him as a demagogue because of his action on the trust question and on the coal strike. The friends of Roosevelt say he is not to be “controlled by anybody” and this last is really the gist of the opposition to him. The things that have endeared him to the rank and file of his party have estranged him from the interests that control the party.

The situation is not without interest. Roosevelt, the “hero” of San Juan Hill, was put on the ticket with McKinley to give vent to whatever enthusiasm had been engendered by the war with Spain. Had those who placed him on the ticket been gifted with second sight as to future events, the rough rider would not have been heard of. But the capitalist press lauded him as a wonder and he was sent out to do the campaigning for the ticket.

To-day no one in his party is strong enough to stand against him as his equal in the public eye. Five American Presidents have died in office. None of the four Vice-Presidents who acceded to the office received nomination for the full term. Roosevelt, the fifth Vice-President made President by the death of a President, will break this record. He will receive a unanimous nomination for a full term. The convention will apparently bow to the popular will of the party voters.

How is Roosevelt, once nominated, to be beaten at the polls? is a question that is bothering some people. It must be remembered that the capitalist interests have another agency by which they can encompass the defeat of the "man of risk and of shock." They have the Democratic party. The Republican President, his opponents say, has the Bryantic temperament and impulse. He must be opposed by a man who will allay the apprehensions that have been aroused. When they speak thus they mention Judge Parker as an ideal candidate to overthrow Rooseveltism. They mention Parker but they mean Cleveland. Parker has been merely the stalking horse used to consolidate an effective opposition to Yellow Journal Hearst. The Republican and Democratic parties have in a sense changed positions. The Republican organization has a sort of Bryantic candidate, while the Democratic party, be it Cleveland, or be it Parker, will be the party of McKinley-Hanna stand-patism.

While the Senate remains unchangeably Republican, which it will for six years yet, one would think that no "novel" legislation could get through. But Roosevelt has shown that the power of the President, not only to influence, but to command legislation, is very great. The King of England is a mere figurehead compared with the President of the Republic, so, too, is the President of France. The Russian Czar, generally styled the despot, is only nominally such. He is practically controlled by his nobles.

In the beginning the constitution gave the chief executive immense powers, but the growth and development of industry has enlarged them. What was once the duty of the State to perform has become the duty of the national government with the consequent centralization of power in the hands of the executive. Transportation has become continental in scope and a President can order out the regular army to break a strike. This is but one instance of many that might be adduced.

So far as the capitalist parties are concerned the coming campaign promises to be one of "men" and not "issues." This, of course, depends upon the action of the Democratic national convention. If Bryan-Hearstism receives its death blow there the only "issue" will be the personality of the opposing candidates. Twenty years ago there was such a campaign, when the Democrats attacked Blaine's honesty and the Republicans attacked Cleveland's morality.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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