

Thank you.

In 1912, when I was two, ex-president Theodore Roosevelt decided to get back in the reform game. During his term he had pushed through anti-trust, pure food & drug, forest conservation, water reclamation, fair labor standards, and many other reforms.

He then went on a long safari and wished Taft, his successor, well. When he returned, he found that Taft had backpedaled on many important reforms, at the behest of big industry. The soul of the party was in the balance. It was the main street, family-scaled businesses and farms versus the big railroads, oil, steel, and the rest.

So Roosevelt ran against Taft in 1912. While campaigning as the Progressive candidate, he traveled to Milwaukee to

make a speech to a civic group. It wasn't really his best speech, as he rambled and repeated himself, going on for an hour and a half.

Now, my rule for public speaking is that, if the speaker goes on for an hour and a half repeating himself and rambling, either he has been shot or he should be. In Roosevelt's case, he had been. A fellow named John Schrank, who followed Roosevelt around the country waiting for the right moment, pulled out a pistol and shot Roosevelt in the chest as the ex-president was getting out of an automobile and about to walk into the meeting hall.

The proper thing to do under the circumstances would be to make one's way to a hospital, post haste. Roosevelt, however, insisted that he give the speech first, as the audience was waiting and he had come a long way himself.

There was a stenographer in the room

who took down his every word. His speech started thus:

“Friends, I shall ask you to be as quiet as possible. I don't know whether you fully understand that I have just been shot; but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose... The bullet is in me now, so that I cannot make a very long speech, but I will try my best.”

He certainly knew how to get an audience's attention.

From time to time during that speech, particularly when he began to ramble and drift and look unsure on his feet, there would be a scurry of officials behind the rostrum, but Roosevelt would wave them off. Half way through the speech he said,

“I know these doctors, when they get hold of me, will never let me go back, and there are just a few more things that I want to say to you.”

He spoke for another forty-five minutes, laying hard into Mr. Wilson. I repeat his words here so that you may see the nature of his reform sentiment:

“And now, friends... Mr. Wilson has said that the States are the proper authorities to deal with the trusts. Well, about eighty percent of the trusts are organized in New Jersey. The Standard Oil, the Tobacco, the Sugar, the Beef, all those trusts are organized in the state of New Jersey and the laws of New Jersey say that their charters can at any time be amended or repealed if they misbehave themselves and give the government ample power to act about those laws, and Mr. Wilson has been governor a year and nine months and he has not opened his lips. The chapter describing what Mr. Wilson has done about trusts in New Jersey would read precisely like a chapter describing snakes in Ireland, which ran: "There are no snakes in Ireland." Mr. Wilson has done precisely and exactly nothing about the trusts...”

Roosevelt continued on about the need for federal laws to prohibit child labor and abusive labor practices, so that the harsh employers didn't just go shopping for the most lenient states to put their factories in. He finally agreed to visit a hospital, where I'm sure he continued speaking to the doctor's and nurses.

Mr. Roosevelt lost the election, but history went his way. A wave of reform sentiment in the nation is always more influential than any single elected official, even the president.

So, America got the 8-hour workday, and end to child labor, a right to organize workers, food and drug safety laws, civil service, securities laws, an anti-trust law, regulation of railroads and utilities, conservation of forests, and much more.

The time had simply come for these improvements, some of which had been building for a half century.

Soon after the Civil War, farmers, defending themselves against the growing scale of railroads and other monopolies, had formed Grange associations and other co-ops to combine their buying and selling powers. As Russian peasants were struggling against the concentrated power of the czar, so the American farmers were organizing against the concentrated power of railroads and packing houses and other industries. Our brand of revolution was creative and for the most part non-violent, but it was indeed a revolution.

The farm-based populist movement came into full flower in the 1890s with the creation of the Populist Party, which put tremendous reform pressures on state and national government. .

Where did progressive populists like Roosevelt come from? Well, as American cities and the American middle class grew, farm populists gave way to urban progressives, who, like the farm populists, thought that only good laws could protect them from the monstrously scaled corporations and monopolies and their bought-and-paid-for state legislatures. The newspapers and novelists of the day were ardent backers of reform.

The Progressive response to widespread corruption in the states was to pass a strong series of structural reforms, including new, direct powers for the people, such as citizen initiative, referendum, recall, the secret ballot, and the primary election. These reforms swept through many states, and the 17th Amendment was passed in 1913 to allow for direct election of senators, taking that power away from the crony-controlled state legislatures.

The Populist Party and the Progressive Party never won the White House under their own flags, but their people and their ideas did get into the White House and into Congress. The populist and progressive ideas changed America by introducing structural democratic reforms and by forcing the larger parties to adopt the most popular reform planks and elevate reform-minded candidates within those parties.

Now, at heart, populism is the rise of the common man against an oppressor elite.

The uprising can go in the direction of better government and more democracy, or it can go toward scape-goatism, demagoguery and dictatorship. All those elements are always visible in America's reform community, and are always cause for vigilance and caution.

The Progressive Movement certainly had a fine fist-waver in the form of Teddy Roosevelt, but he was too much dedicated

to the causes of fairness and legality to have ever considered becoming a dictator. Fairness, the Square Deal, was the tenor of Roosevelt and the Progressive movement generally, and we can thank our lucky stars and stripes that it was.

The rest of the world was not so fortunate, as strongmen and their cruelties began to rise up in Europe and elsewhere at that time. The world was moving toward what we now call World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam, but what historians may more rightly call the Sixty Years War—a war between two competing ideas: The one idea is that of individual freedom and welcome diversity; The other idea is that of individual control and uniformity, and the cruel enforcement of a small group of people's moral ideas upon others.

I would like to be able to say that the struggle was happily resolved in the world, but it never is—for it is the playing out of forces that fight daily and forever in the

human heart.

Now, friends, if we are to succeed in making any useful structural reforms that might give real political power back to the people, and which might defend the human scale of things—from the family farm and small business to our own position as free citizens—then we must know who we are, politically.

We can make a distinction between populist and progressive. The populists are the old, agrarians rising up against the oppressor elite. They defend traditional values and sometimes decry modernizations that undermine their marginal positions of respect and security. They don't like other oppressed people moving in on their slim territory. We see this sort of thing playing out all over the world, and at home. Then there are the Progressives, who are pro-democracy, pro-inclusion and often, pro-government—also at the expense of the wealthy elite. You can almost use these

definitions to define and distinguish the varieties of third parties and reformers in America today.

American reformers do agree on one thing: that an overscaled monster is stalking the land and and damaging the position of the individual. But if you set the reformers down with a police sketch artist and ask them to describe the giant, half of us will describe multinational corporations, and the other half of us will describe government itself.

[The traditional urban progressives, on the other hand, have felt that government is the common tool of community, and have tended to not see it as the enemy.]

While the anti-government and the anti-corporation reformers may be on a long term collision course, they can today agree on a common enemy: the control and expansion of government as a direct result of special interest campaign donations. If

we can all join hands just long enough to force corporate, union, and fat cat money out of our politics, then we will at least have a democracy to fight over again.

Here is old Teddy's comment about special interests. I know you have probably heard it before from me, but it is worth repeating. He said:

"Our government, national and state, must be freed from the sinister influence or control of special interests. Exactly as the special interests of cotton and slavery threatened our political integrity before the Civil War, so now the great special business interests too often control and corrupt the men and methods of government for their own profit. We must drive the special interests out of politics. That is one of our tasks today...The citizens of the United States must effectively control the mighty commercial forces which they have themselves called into being. There can be no effective control of corporations

while their political activity remains. To put an end to it will be neither a short nor an easy task, but it can be done."

Well, that is what that grand, old Republican said, and it frames the unfinished business of the 20th Century that we must successfully conclude with our efforts.

The American reform community, as we have seen so clearly this week, is a house divided.

We are divided by differing views of whether big government should be the arbiter of spiritually-driven values, or whether—and this is the authentic conservative position—we should leave the big decisions on life and death to free individuals and their own religious and ethical traditions.

We are divided by whether an overscaled government is the main

problem, or overscaled corporate organizations are the main problem, and we do not seem to have a consistent and useful principle for deciding what the proper scale for these human activities ought to be, so that they will not crush individual freedom and individual prosperity. But I think we could work out that principle if we tried.

In addition to our common call for campaign finance reform, there is another thing that unites America's third parties and should make us embrace each other as brothers and sisters—well, shake hands anyway. It is the fact that we are parties of heartfelt ideas; we are not here to sell our souls for contributions.

Now. What are we to make of this shakeout of the social conservatives from the anti-special interest reformers?

If some people are not interested in improving our democracy—the democracy that so many have sacrificed so much to defend and preserve—and if they are instead interested in making America a place where religious ideas are imposed on our secular government, let them make their case. But they must not be confused with the pro-democracy crowd, who believe in inclusion and a government so secular that it preserves action regarding the highest moral issues for the free individual.

Friends, let us all be reformers. Let us <sup>equipped</sup> self-governing people <sup>with</sup> the institutions necessary to that task. Let us also give each other our moral freedom.

Let us, however divided we are, be united in our work to remove corruption from our government—and by that I mean the corporate, union, and fat cat purchase of our candidates and our parties <sup>with</sup> huge campaign contributions. <sup>through</sup>

In my walk across this beautiful country, I met so many dear people who feel that they have no meaningful voice anymore. They no longer feel like self-governing people.

They did not seem to be longing for more instructions on how to live their lives—I think they are up to that struggle and they have their beliefs to guide them.

If you believe in the wisdom and kindness of your fellow Americans, as I do, you will help them clear special interests out of their way so that we can all be a free and self-governing people, and so that we may better serve each other's needs.

Thank you.