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Nationalism in the United States.

By Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on "The Growth of Nationalism in the United States," Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—I can best thank you for the honor you have conferred upon me, and the opportunity which you have opened before me, by spending no time in introduction, but by recognizing the fact that you are busy men, and want me to begin at the beginning, and especially to stop when I get through.

Nationalism, or the growth of nationalism, is a world movement: a growth of liberty, and a growth of organization. The unification of Italy and the liberation of Italy were one and the same thing. The unification of Germany has been accompanied by a measure of liberty which was never enjoyed in Prussia or Bavaria, if in any of the old German provinces. The great democratic uprising in England which has been characteristic of the last century has been accompanied by a closer drawing together of the various correlated parts of the Greater Britain, and by a prospect, if I read the signs aright, of something akin to a federation between the mother country and her colonies. (Applause.) If I were not liable to be misunderstood, I should have joined in that applause, not for the speaker, but for the prospect.

That growth of democracy and nationalism has nowhere been more clearly seen than in the history of the United States in the last century and a half. The colonies, as we all know, were separate sovereign states. At the end of the revolution they were brought together into what was fitly called the United States: it was primarily, at least in the conception of the people, if not in the conception of the founders, a union of separate communities, separate states, one might almost say

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separate nationalities. This confederacy of the states, this federal government, possessed in general but limited powers, clearly defined by a written constitution; the powers of Congress were specifically enumerated, and it was provided that all powers not conferred upon Congress by the allied States were reserved to the States or to the people. Thus, as a nation, it was a nation with defined, limited powers, not with a universal application of national sovereignity.

So true was this, that at first it was a grave question how that written constitution should be interpreted, and by whom. Mr. Calhoun insisted that in this Confederacy agreed to confer sovereign powers upon the federal government, and if anything conflicted with the State's powers, the State should define its scope, and could refuse to accept it. This was the famous doctrine of nullification, which maintained that a State could set aside a law of congress if it regarded that law as conflicting with its own powers. Chief Justice Marshall said that it is the Supreme Court of the United States that should determine what laws are in accordance with the laws of the States and what are in violation of them, and determine what are the powers reserved by the States and what are conferred on the national government. This was the first step towards true nationalism: our constitution did not confer that power on the States, it assumed it, and the people said "Amen." And when the people say "Amen," there is not much more to be said: to that extent we are all Methodists.

Thus it was decided that if the Federal Government passed laws which the States regarded as unconstitutional, although that State could not stay in the Union and not obey the law, it could leave it: the union was a partnership, and if dissatisfied, it could go out of the partnership. That was the doctrine of secession. Whether it was to be a true union bound by indissoluble bonds, and indissoluble union of inviolable States,—that question was fought out afterwards; and while it did not determine what the fathers intended it to be, it did fix what the sons intended it should be in the future, which was far more important. In my judgment, such men as Robert E. Lee, were just as truly loyal as General Grant: the difference was not between loyal men and disloyal, but between men who thought their loyalty was due to one authority and men who thought their loyalty was due to another authority.

At the close of the Civil War, Mr. Lincoln proposed that the Federal Government should take some action to fix a currency. Up to that time it was a purely State affair, and bank bills of one State were not always accepted at their face value

in another. New York bills were taken with reluctance in Georgia, and Georgia bills were not taken at all in New York. When the Act was adopted by Congress creating a Federal banking system, the third step was taken towards the growth of nationalism.

Up to a later date than that, I might go on to say, a grave question with the Federal Government was whether it had not a right to control certain internal matters, such as the dredging of harbors, and widening of rivers. It was expressly denied by President Polk, and doubted by President Buchanan. The constitution of the United States gave no such power; but it was assumed,—we took it for granted—that we had a right to do things which were necessary for the welfare of the people as a nation. It was felt that the several States, for example, could not keep the River Mississippi free from filling up with sand right down to the sea. Now no one doubts the constitutionality of that provision.

Then in the matter of the interstate commerce. The constitution provided for exclusive control by the Federal Government; but whether railroads were created by an act of the Government or by an act of the individual corporations, was doubted as late as 1883 by President Arthur; now it is doubted no longer, either by the most conservative lawyers, or by railroad presidents.

Thus our nation has been growing together, and it is no longer a federation of States, but something more than a union of States: we are a nation! And this nationality has been so recognized by the Supreme Court of the United States that it has decided, because it is a nation, and not because the constitution provides for it, that it can make war and treaties, may secure property by conquest, may rule states and individuals by conquest or treaty, though those people are not in the United States or citizens of the United States. I don't know how much farther we could go.

While this process of nationalism was going on, curiously enough there has been going on a process of democracy as well, growing stronger with the nation. It is not possible for the people of the United States to elect a President, so they elect Electors, who are supposed to be wise and virtuous and excellent men. These Electors are supposed to get together and elect a President. Now we have got away from all that, and though we still elect Electors, I venture to say that no body of Electors and no single Elector would dare to vote against the President whom he was elected to elect when he was nominated. They are simply ornamental figure-heads,

whom we allow to go through the form, because it is too much trouble to change our constitution, and we still get virtuous and excellent and wise Presidents!

Now, while thus the nation was growing on the one hand in democratic responsibility and authority, and on the other hand in national concentration and power, other things were growing as well. Population was growing, not by birth rate only or chiefly, but by the great host of immigrants landing on our shores. And we were growing in territory, so that the United States, which at the beginning was a little fringe of settlements along the shores of the Atlantic, now extends from the Gulf to the Great Lakes and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Then we have been growing in wealth,—how much, I do not know; I could have told you last week, but this week I don't know.

And with this growth in territory, population, and wealth was a great growth in industrial organization. The nation had been growing more organized, but industry had been growing more organized also. The railroad system of the United States had extended with marvellous rapidity: a line of steel was laid that bound the Atlantic and the Pacific, and that later was to bind the Gulf to the Lakes. At first the great railroad systems were competing systems: one rivalled another. They were pitted against one another for freight and passenger business. But they came to realize that this cut-throat competition injures the public and inflicts a signal loss on the working man, and then the great railroad magnates and presidents did a wise thing: they got together, and undertook to unite their interests and work for a common purpose. They did not get together quite enough; they did not recognize what their common purpose was to be; their aim was not always for all the people,—in some cases it was the interests of the stock-holders they sought to serve, and in some cases those of the board of directors.

Such was the condition of affairs at the time Mr. McKinley was first elected President. The great highways of the nation had passed under private control; the railways were administered as other private property is administered. If the directors could make money by giving a rebate to one man and denying it to another, they gave it to the one and denied it to the other. In this way grew up the system of discrimination; I do not think that in the beginning it was criminal, and hardly unethical; it was simply that we did not know any better. And so it could be possible for the railroads to build up one town or demolish another. And they were so administered with

favored rates for certain shippers. Some men grew very rich, and some correspondingly poor. Out of this grew our system of monopolies. The coal mines were useful only as the railroads went into them and brought the coal to the market; and the railroads determined whose coal they would bring out. A certain man told me that he had been offered a certain price for his coal, and said he, "I have nothing to do but take that price, for if I don't, it will lie there mined and I can't afford to get it out."

The same thing happened in respect to oil, and a monopoly grew up, because certain men could carry oil at rates that others could not meet. Thus also arose the beef trust, the sugar trust, and the tobacco trust, and other trusts less large and less famous. And with this growth of control of our highways, there grew up a resultant control of food products and the necessaries of life. And there grew a restless discontent, growing greater as the country grew greater, especially in the West.

Mr. Bryan discovered this discontent, and thought he found a remedy for that, and that was free silver. But the support of other countries is needed and that was not obtained. Mr. Bryan was defeated, and Mr. McKinley went into office, advocating international bimetallism. He tried to get that policy endorsed by other nations. A second election came along, and Mr. Bryan thought that if other nations would not enter into the plan, the United States could do the thing by itself. Now, I don't think the men of our side of the border could ever be accused of execessive modesty; but they are not so vain as to think they can do everything all by themselves. So the people said "No," and "Gold" was the verdict of the nation.

Then Mr. McKinley died, and there came to take his place Theodore Roosevelt, perhaps the best known man in America, including Canada, and certainly as much misunderstood as well-known men ordinarily are. His education had equipped him for great catholicity. Born and reared in one of the best aristocratic families of New York, an old Dutch family, educated at one of the best universities, Harvard, he understood the culture and the wealth of the east. For his health he went to the plains, where he came into touch with pioneer life and the life of the cowboys. He came east again, and becoming Police Commissioner, he came to understand the great immigration problems. At Washington he entered the civil service, and became acquainted with the politicians, from the highest to the lowest—and there are no better men than the

highest, nor—I will let you finish the sentence. Then he became Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and an officer in the Army, and came to understand those two branches.

In order to shelve him, they nominated him for the Vice-Presidency, and reluctantly he accepted the office. I wonder if he could have survived presiding for four years over the sleepy transactions of the Senate? But he was not called to do that for long. When Mr. McKinley was assassinated, he took the chair. This varied experience enabled him to understand the varied experiences of the different kinds of men. He invited all sorts and conditions of men to the White House. I venture to say, that never did such a curious conglomeration of men meet as you might find almost every day at the White House. Invited there to dinner, you might come across a cowboy or a university professor, a Roman Catholic ecclesiastic, or a Jewish rabbi, a Southern fire-eater, or a Northern abolitionist, a Radical or a Conservative. You were only sure that you would meet some kind of man you never met before. The first time I was at the White House during Mr. Roosevelt's Presidency, I met there a Jewish Democratic financier from Wall Street, whom he had invited to consult with him over a financial policy.

I shall now indicate the breadth of his humanity by a single incident. He knew the restless discontent, he read it in the eyes of the people, in grasping their hands, by hearing people talk, and he was in the Presidential chair only a little time when he started his famous campaign against the trusts, which have given him, in the vernacular of some newspapers, the epithet of "trust-buster." He first took Rhode Island. I am told that the wealth concentrated in Rhode Island is more than in other States, and in Providence more than in any other city. If the story told by Tarbell is true, there is greater wealth and greater poverty there than in any other State,—I hope it is not so,—but in that city, wealth is concentrated, and there he issued his first pronunciamento, that the great corporations must be controlled by the national government. It was a challenge, and from Providence he went west to other cities. Carlyle says that the people are inarticulate, they know not how to express themselves. If Mr. Roosevelt had simply expressed this discontent, he would have been merely an agitator; but he pointed out remedies, though these remedies were not all formulated at the same time in his addresses. They are these: the railroads are highways of the nation, therefore they must be under the control of the nation, not for the purpose of making rates cheaper, but of making them

just and equal; they must be so administered that rich and poor, the large shipper and the little shipper, the big town and the little town, shall get what Mr. Roosevelt is accustomed to call "a square deal," a fair opportunity.

His second proposition was this: the monopolies which have grown up under the favoritism of the railroads must be dissolved. There is a law on the statute book that all combinations in restraint of trade are illegal; the State aims to break up these combinations in restraint of trade. Two of those great suits, that against the oil trust, and that against the tobacco trust, are still pending in the Supreme Court of the United States. Democracy is sometimes accused of running amuck, but we have walked *a-muck* rather slowly.

The third great propsition concerned our natural resources. Our minerals, coal and oil, our lands, our forests and water powers should be under national control. It was not a proposal to take from any one by whom such are now owned, but a proposal that they should not be in the future given over to any individual State or individual capitalist. In eating up our forests, our coal, any of our natural resources, we are eating up men and women.

These three constitute the Roosevelt policy, or progressive nationalism, the power of democracy acting through the national organization, so to control the highways of the nation that they shall be free from favoritism, the industrial organizations that they shall be free from the incubus of monopoly, and the resources of the nation that in belonging to us they shall not make monopolies in the future. These are the three essential elements in the Roosevelt policy and the progressive nationalism.

Mr. Roosevelt has been charged, accused bitterly, for not attacking the tariff. For two reasons he has not attacked the tariff. Napoleon said, "War succeeds when you concentrate your troops on a single point." Mr. Roosevelt believes in the Napoleonic maxim, and concentrated his attack on the trusts, the railroads, and the national resources, which as you see are all concerned with the same essential point. In the second place, he did not believe that the tariff is the mother of trusts, and that any revision of the tariff would destroy the trusts. He does believe in a protective system, but any revision, he thinks, is necessarily a matter of policy to be worked out by experts, not by men who don't know anything about it.

Now, gentlemen, your presiding officer offered me more time than you usually allot to your speakers, and I am much obliged to him, and to you; but although I am a minister, I

learned a good while ago, that it is better to stop when people want you to go on, than to go on when they want you to stop.

I will take a very little of that time to add one word more: I have said that nationalism is a world movement; it is not peculiar to the United States; and it is also a great industrial movement, not peculiar to the United States. Gentlemen, democracy means that government exists for the benefit of the people. We all believe in that. Gentlemen, democracy means that education is to be conducted for the benefit of the people, and I venture to say we all believe in that. I don't know whether you all believe the next sentence: the great organized industries of the nation must be carried on for the benefit of the people, not of one special class. If those who now have control of those industries, whether in America or in Europe, whether in England, Canada or the United States, fail to recognize this principle, that the great organized industries of the nation must be carried on for the benefit of the people, then they may look to see the socialistic spirit more and more ominous; if on the other hand, the men in whose hands is the wealth, and the control of the industries of the nation, realize that the train is run for the passengers and not for the engineer, you will achieve what the Socialists dream, but what the Socialists never will accomplish.