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ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT ON
THE OCCASION OF THE LAYING OF THE
CORNER STONE OF THE PILGRIM ME-
MORIAL MONUMENT, PROVINCETOWN,
MASSACHUSETTS, AUGUST 20, 1907 ❁ ❁



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
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Gilt
Justice E. T. Sanford
Oct. 4. '28

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It is not too much to say that the event commemorated by the monument which we have come here to dedicate was one of those rare events which can in good faith be called of world importance. The coming hither of the Pilgrim three centuries ago, followed in far larger numbers by his sterner kinsmen, the Puritans, shaped the destinies of this continent, and therefore profoundly affected the

destiny of the whole world. Men of other races, the Frenchman and the Spaniard, the Dutchman, the German, the Scotchman, the Irishman, and the Swede, made settlements within what is now the United States, during the colonial period of our history and before the Declaration of Independence; and since then there has been an ever-swelling immigration from Ireland and from the mainland of Europe; but it was the Englishman who settled in Virginia and the Englishman

who settled in Massachusetts who did most in shaping the lines of our national development.

We can not as a nation be too profoundly grateful for the fact that the Puritan has stamped his influence so deeply on our national life. We need have but scant patience with the men who now rail at the Puritan's faults. They were evident, of course, for it is a quality of strong natures that their failings, like their virtues, should stand out in bold relief; but

there is nothing easier than to belittle the great men of the past by dwelling only on the points where they come short of the universally recognized standards of the present. Men must be judged with reference to the age in which they dwell, and the work they have to do. The Puritan's task was to conquer a continent; not merely to overrun it, but to settle it, to till it, to build upon it a high industrial and social life; and, while engaged in the rough work of

taming the shaggy wilderness, at that very time also to lay deep the immovable foundations of our whole American system of civil, political, and religious liberty achieved through the orderly process of law. This was the work allotted him to do; this is the work he did; and only a master spirit among men could have done it.

We have traveled far since his day. That liberty of conscience which he demanded for himself, we now realize must

be as freely accorded to others as it is resolutely insisted upon for ourselves. The splendid qualities which he left to his children, we other Americans who are not of Puritan blood also claim as our heritage. You, sons of the Puritans, and we, who are descended from races whom the Puritans would have deemed alien—we are all Americans together. We all feel the same pride in the genesis, in the history, of our people; and therefore this shrine of Puritanism is one

at which we all gather to pay homage, no matter from what country our ancestors sprang.

We have gained some things that the Puritan had not—we of this generation, we of the twentieth century, here in this great Republic; but we are also in danger of losing certain things which the Puritan had and which we can by no manner of means afford to lose. We have gained a joy of living which he had not, and which it is a good thing for every people

to have and to develop. Let us see to it that we do not lose what is more important still; that we do not lose the Puritan's iron sense of duty, his unbending, unflinching will to do the right as it was given him to see the right. It is a good thing that life should gain in sweetness, but only provided that it does not lose in strength. Ease and rest and pleasure are good things, but only if they come as the reward of work well done, of a good fight well won, of

strong effort resolutely made and crowned by high achievement. The life of mere pleasure, of mere effortless ease, is as ignoble for a nation as for an individual.

The man is but a poor father who teaches his sons that ease and pleasure should be their chief objects in life; the woman who is a mere petted toy, incapable of serious purpose, shrinking from effort and duty, is more pitiable than the veriest overworked drudge. So he is but a poor leader of the people, but a poor national

adviser, who seeks to make the nation in any way subordinate effort to ease, who would teach the people not to prize as the greatest blessing the chance to do any work, no matter how hard, if it becomes their duty to do it. To the sons of the Puritans it is almost needless to say that the lesson above all others which Puritanism can teach this nation is the all-importance of the resolute performance of duty. If we are men we will pass by with contemptuous disdain alike the advisers who would

seek to lead us into the paths of ignoble ease and those who would teach us to admire successful wrongdoing. Our ideals should be high, and yet they should be capable of achievement in practical fashion; and we are as little to be excused if we permit our ideals to be tainted with what is sordid and mean and base, as if we allow our power of achievement to atrophy and become either incapable of effort or capable only of such fantastic effort as to accomplish

nothing of permanent good. The true doctrine to preach to this nation, as to the individuals composing this nation, is not the life of ease, but the life of effort. If it were in my power to promise the people of this land anything, I would not promise them pleasure. I would promise them that stern happiness which comes from the sense of having done in practical fashion a difficult work which was worth doing.

The Puritan owed his extraordinary

success in subduing this continent and making it the foundation for a social life of ordered liberty primarily to the fact that he combined in a very remarkable degree both the power of individual initiative, of individual self-help, and the power of acting in combination with his fellows; and that furthermore he joined to a high heart that shrewd common sense which saves a man from the besetting sins of the visionary and the doctrinaire. He was stout hearted and

hard headed. He had lofty purposes, but he had practical good sense, too. He could hold his own in the rough workaday world without clamorous insistence upon being helped by others, and yet he could combine with others whenever it became necessary to do a job which could not be as well done by any one man individually.

These were the qualities which enabled him to do his work, and they are the very qualities which we must show in doing our

work to-day. There is no use in our coming here to pay homage to the men who founded this nation unless we first of all come in the spirit of trying to do our work to-day as they did their work in the yesterdays that have vanished. The problems shift from generation to generation, but the spirit in which they must be approached, if they are to be successfully solved, remains ever the same. The Puritan tamed the wilderness, and built up a free government on the stump-dotted clearings amid

the primeval forest. His descendants must try to shape the life of our complex industrial civilization by new devices, by new methods, so as to achieve in the end the same results of justice and fair dealing toward all. He cast aside nothing old merely for the sake of innovation, yet he did not hesitate to adopt anything new that would save his purpose. When he planted his commonwealths on this rugged coast - he faced wholly new conditions and he had to devise new methods of

meeting them. So we of to-day face wholly new conditions in our social and industrial life. We should certainly not adopt any new scheme for grappling with them merely because it is new and untried; but we can not afford to shrink from grappling with them because they can only be grappled with by some new scheme.

The Puritan was no Laodicean, no *laissez-faire* theorist. When he saw conduct which was in violation of his rights—

of the rights of man, the rights of God, as he understood them—he attempted to regulate such conduct with instant, unquestioning promptness and effectiveness. If there was no other way to secure conformity with the rule of right, then he smote down the transgressor with the iron of his wrath. The spirit of the Puritan was a spirit which never shrank from regulation of conduct if such regulation was necessary for the public weal; and this is the spirit which we

must show to-day whenever it is necessary.

The utterly changed conditions of our national life necessitate changes in certain of our laws, of our governmental methods. Our federal system of government is based upon the theory of leaving to each community, to each State, the control over those things which affect only its own members and which the people of the locality themselves can best grapple with, while providing

for national regulation in those matters which necessarily affect the nation as a whole. It seems to me that such questions as national sovereignty and state's rights need to be treated not empirically or academically, but from the standpoint of the interests of the people as a whole. National sovereignty is to be upheld in so far as it means the sovereignty of the people used for the real and ultimate good of the people; and state's rights are to be upheld in so far as they mean the people's rights.

Especially is this true in dealing with the relations of the people as a whole to the great corporations which are the distinguishing feature of modern business conditions.

Experience has shown that it is necessary to exercise a far more efficient control than at present over the business use of those vast fortunes, chiefly corporate, which are used (as under modern conditions they almost invariably are) in interstate business. When the Constitution

was created none of the conditions of modern business existed. They are wholly new and we must create new agencies to deal effectively with them. There is no objection in the minds of this people to any man's earning any amount of money if he does it honestly and fairly, if he gets it as the result of special skill and enterprise, as a reward of ample service actually rendered. But there is a growing determination that no man shall amass a great fortune by

special privilege, by chicanery and wrongdoing, so far as it is in the power of legislation to prevent; and that a fortune, however amassed, shall not have a business use that is antisocial. Most large corporations do a business that is not confined to any one State. Experience has shown that the effort to control these corporations by mere State action can not produce wholesome results. In most cases such effort fails to correct the real abuses of which the cor-

poration is or may be guilty; while in other cases the effort is apt to cause either hardship to the corporation itself, or else hardship to neighboring States which have not tried to grapple with the problem in the same manner; and of course we must be as scrupulous to safeguard the rights of the corporations as to exact from them in return a full measure of justice to the public. I believe in a national incorporation law for corporations engaged in interstate business. I believe,

furthermore, that the need for action is most pressing as regards those corporations which, because they are common carriers, exercise a quasi-public function; and which can be completely controlled, in all respects by the Federal Government, by the exercise of the power conferred under the interstate-commerce clause, and, if necessary, under the post-road clause, of the Constitution. During the last few years we have taken marked strides in advance

along the road of proper regulation of these railroad corporations; but we must not stop in the work. The National Government should exercise over them a similar supervision and control to that which it exercises over national banks. We can do this only by proceeding farther along the lines marked out by the recent national legislation.

In dealing with any totally new set of conditions there must at the outset be hesitation and experiment. Such has been our

experience in dealing with the enormous concentration of capital employed in interstate business. Not only the legislatures but the courts and the people need gradually to be educated so that they may see what the real wrongs are and what the real remedies. Almost every big business concern is engaged in interstate commerce, and such a concern must not be allowed by a dexterous shifting of position, as has been too often the case in the past, to escape thereby all responsi-

bility either to State or to nation. The American people became firmly convinced of the need of control over these great aggregations of capital, especially where they had a monopolistic tendency, before they became quite clear as to the proper way of achieving the control. Through their representatives in Congress they tried two remedies, which were to a large degree, at least as interpreted by the courts, contradictory. On the one hand, under the anti-

trust law the effort was made to prohibit all combination, whether it was or was not hurtful or beneficial to the public. On the other hand, through the interstate-commerce law a beginning was made in exercising such supervision and control over combinations as to prevent their doing anything harmful to the body politic. The first law, the so-called Sherman law, has filled a useful place, for it bridges over the transition period until the American people shall definitely make up

its mind that it will exercise over the great corporations that thoroughgoing and radical control which it is certain ultimately to find necessary. The principle of the Sherman law so far as it prohibits combinations which, whether because of their extent or of their character, are harmful to the public must always be preserved. Ultimately, and I hope with reasonable speed, the National Government must pass laws which, while increasing the supervisory and regulatory power of

the Government, also permits such useful combinations as are made with absolute openness and as the representatives of the Government may previously approve. But it will not be possible to permit such combinations save as the second stage in a course of proceedings of which the first stage must be the exercise of a far more complete control by the National Government.

In dealing with those who offend against the antitrust and interstate com-

merce laws the Department of Justice has to encounter many and great difficulties. Often men who have been guilty of violating these laws have really acted in criminal fashion, and if possible should be proceeded against criminally; and therefore it is advisable that there should be a clause in these laws providing for such criminal action, and for punishment by imprisonment as well as by fine. But, as is well known, in a criminal action the law is strictly con-

strued in favor of the defendant, and in our country, at least, both judge and jury are far more inclined to consider his rights than they are the interests of the general public; while in addition it is always true that a man's general practices may be so bad that a civil action will lie when it may not be possible to convict him of any one criminal act.

There is unfortunately a certain number of our fellow-countrymen who seem to accept the view that unless a man can be

proved guilty of some particular crime he shall be counted a good citizen, no matter how infamous the life he has led, no matter how pernicious his doctrines or his practices. This is the view announced from time to time with clamorous insistence, now by a group of predatory capitalists, now by a group of sinister anarchistic leaders and agitators, whenever a special champion of either class, no matter how evil his general life, is acquitted of some one specific crime.

Such a view is wicked whether applied to capitalist or labor leader, to rich man or poor man; (and by the way, I take this opportunity of stating that all that I have said in the past as to desirable and undesirable citizens remains true, and that I stand by it).

We have to take this feeling into account when we are debating whether it is possible to get a conviction in a criminal proceeding against some rich trust magnate, many of whose actions are severely to be condemned from

the moral and social standpoint, but no one of whose actions seems clearly to establish such technical guilt as will ensure a conviction. As a matter of expediency, in enforcing the law against a great corporation, we have continually to weigh the arguments pro and con as to whether a prosecution can successfully be entered into, and as to whether we can be successful in a criminal action against the chief individuals in the corporation, and if not whether we can at least be successful

in a civil action against the corporation itself. Any effective action on the part of the Government is always objected to, as a matter of course, by the wrongdoers, by the beneficiaries of the wrongdoers, and by their champions; and often one of the most effective ways of attacking the action of the Government is by objecting to practical action upon the ground that it does not go far enough. One of the favorite devices of those who are really striving to prevent the enforcement of these laws is

to clamor for action of such severity that it can not be undertaken because it will be certain to fail if tried. An instance of this is the demand often made for criminal prosecutions where such prosecutions would be certain to fail. We have found by actual experience that a jury which will gladly punish a corporation by fine, for instance, will acquit the individual members of that corporation if we proceed against them criminally because of those very things which the

corporation which they direct and control has done. In a recent case against the Licorice Trust we indicted and tried the two corporations and their respective presidents. The contracts and other transactions establishing the guilt of the corporations were made through, and so far as they were in writing were signed by, the two presidents. Yet the jury convicted the two corporations and acquitted the two men. Both verdicts could not possibly have been cor-

rect; but apparently the average jurymen wishes to see trusts broken up, and is quite ready to fine the corporation itself; but is very reluctant to find the facts "proven beyond a reasonable doubt" when it comes to sending to jail a reputable member of the business community for doing what the business community has unhappily grown to recognize as well-nigh normal in business. Moreover, under the necessary technicalities of criminal proceedings, often the only man

who can be reached criminally will be some subordinate who is not the real guilty party at all.

Many men of large wealth have been guilty of conduct which from the moral standpoint is criminal, and their misdeeds are to a peculiar degree reprehensible, because those committing them have no excuse of want, of poverty, of weakness and ignorance to offer as partial atonement. When in addition to moral responsibility these men have a legal respon-

sibility which can be proved so as to impress a judge and jury, then the Department will strain every nerve to reach them criminally. Where this is impossible, then it will take whatever action will be most effective under the actual conditions.

In the last six years we have shown that there is no individual and no corporation so powerful that he or it stands above the possibility of punishment under the law. Our aim is to try to do something effective; our purpose is to stamp

out the evil; we shall seek to find the most effective device for this purpose; and we shall then use it, whether the device can be found in existing law or must be supplied by legislation. Moreover, when we thus take action against the wealth which works iniquity, we are acting in the interest of every man of property who acts decently and fairly by his fellows; and we are strengthening the hands of those who propose fearlessly to defend property against all unjust attacks. No individual,

no corporation, obeying the law has anything to fear from this Administration.

During the present trouble with the stock market I have, of course, received countless requests and suggestions, public and private, that I should say or do something to ease the situation. [There is a world-wide financial disturbance; it is felt in the bourses of Paris and Berlin; and British consols are lower than for a generation, while British railway securities have also depreciated. On the New

York Stock Exchange the disturbance has been peculiarly severe. Most of it I believe to be due to matters not peculiar to the United States, and most of the remainder to matters wholly unconnected with any governmental action; but it may well be that the determination of the Government (in which, gentlemen, it will not waver), to punish certain malefactors of great wealth, has been responsible for something of the trouble; at least to the extent of having caused these men to combine to

bring about as much financial stress as possible, in order to discredit the policy of the Government and thereby secure a reversal of that policy, so that they may enjoy unmolested the fruits of their own evil-doing. That they have misled many good people into believing that there should be such reversal of policy is possible. If so I am sorry; but it will not alter my attitude. Once for all let me say that so far as I am concerned, and for the eighteen months of my Presidency that remain, there will be

no change in the policy we have steadily pursued, no let up in the effort to secure the honest observance of the law; for I regard this contest as one to determine who shall rule this free country—the people through their governmental agents or a few ruthless and domineering men, whose wealth makes them peculiarly formidable, because they hide behind the breastworks of corporate organization. I wish there to be no mistake on this point; it is idle to ask me not to prose-

cute criminals, rich or poor. But I desire no less emphatically to have it understood that we have sanctioned and will sanction no action of a vindictive type, and above all no action which shall inflict great and unmerited suffering upon innocent stockholders or upon the public as a whole. Our purpose is to act with the minimum of harshness compatible with attaining our ends. In the man of great wealth who has earned his wealth honestly and

uses it wisely we recognize a good citizen of the best type, worthy of all praise and respect. Business can only be done under modern conditions through corporations, and our purpose is heartily to favor the corporations that do well. The Administration appreciates that liberal but honest profits for legitimate promoting, good salaries, ample salaries, for able and upright management, and generous dividends for capital employed either in founding or continuing

wholesome business ventures, are the factors necessary for successful corporate activity and therefore for generally prosperous business conditions. All these are compatible with fair dealing as between man and man and rigid obedience to the law. Our aim is to help every honest man, every honest corporation, and our policy means in its ultimate analysis a healthy and prosperous expansion of the business activities of honest business men and honest corporations.

I very earnestly hope that the legislation which deals with the regulation of corporations engaged in interstate business will also deal with the rights and interests of the wageworkers employed by those corporations. Action was taken by the Congress last year limiting the number of hours that railway employees should be employed. The law is a good one; but if in practice it proves necessary to strengthen it, it must be strengthened. We have now secured a national em-

employers' liability law; but ultimately a more far-reaching and thorough-going law must be passed. It is monstrous that a man or woman who is crippled in an industry, even as the result of taking what are the necessary risks of the occupation, should be required to bear the whole burden of the loss. That burden should be distributed and not placed solely upon the weakest individual, the one least able to carry it. By making the employer liable the loss will ultimately be dis-

tributed among all the beneficiaries of the business.

I also hope that there will be legislation increasing the power of the National Government to deal with certain matters concerning the health of our people everywhere; the Federal authorities, for instance, should join with all the State authorities in warring against the dreadful scourge of tuberculosis. Your own State government, here in Massachusetts, deserves high praise for the action it has taken in these

public health matters during the last few years; and in this, as in some other matters, I hope to see the National Government stand abreast of the foremost State governments.

I have spoken of but one or two laws which, in my judgment, it is advisable to enact as part of the general scheme for making the interference of the National Government more effective in securing justice and fair dealing as between man and man here in the United States. Let me add,

however, that while it is necessary to have legislation when conditions arise where we can only cope with evils through the joint action of all of us, yet that we can never afford to forget that in the last analysis the all-important factor for each of us must be his own individual character. It is a necessary thing to have good laws, good institutions; but the most necessary of all things is to have a high quality of individual citizenship. This does not mean that we can afford to neglect legislation.

It will be highly disastrous if we permit ourselves to be misled by the pleas of those who see in an unrestricted individualism the all-sufficient panacea for social evils; but it will be even more disastrous to adopt the opposite panacea of any socialistic system which would destroy all individualism, which would root out the fiber of our whole citizenship. In any great movement, such as that in which we are engaged, nothing is more necessary than sanity, than the refusal to be led

into extremes by the advocates of the ultra course on either side. Those professed friends of liberty who champion license are the worst foes of liberty and tend by the reaction their violence causes to throw the Government back into the hands of the men who champion corruption and tyranny in the name of order. So it is with this movement for securing justice toward all men, and equality of opportunity so far as it can be secured by governmental action. The

rich man who with hard arrogance declines to consider the rights and the needs of those who are less well off, and the poor man who excites or indulges in envy and hatred of those who are better off, are alike alien to the spirit of our national life. Each of them should learn to appreciate the baseness and degradation of his point of view, as evil in the one case as in the other. There exists no more sordid and unlovely type of social development than a plutocracy,

for there is a peculiar unwholesomeness in a social and governmental ideal where wealth by and of itself is held up as the greatest good. The materialism of such a view, whether it finds its expression in the life of a man who accumulates a vast fortune in ways that are repugnant to every instinct of generosity and of fair dealing, or whether it finds its expression in the vapidly useless and self-indulgent life of the inheritor of that fortune, is contemptible in the eyes of all men capable of a thrill of

lofty feeling. Where the power of the law can be wisely used to prevent or to minimize the acquisition or business employment of such wealth and to make it pay by income or inheritance tax its proper share of the burden of government, I would invoke that power without a moment's hesitation.

But while we can accomplish something by legislation, legislation can never be more than a part, and often no more than a small part, in the general scheme of

moral progress; and crude or vindictive legislation may at any time bring such progress to a halt. Certain socialistic leaders propose to redistribute the world's goods by refusing to thrift and energy and industry their proper superiority over folly and idleness and sullen envy. Such legislation would merely, in the words of the president of Columbia University, "wreck the world's efficiency for the purpose of redistributing the world's discontent." We should all of us

work heart and soul for the real and permanent betterment which will lift our democratic civilization to a higher level of safety and usefulness. Such betterment can come only by the slow, steady growth of the spirit which metes a generous, but not a sentimental, justice to each man on his merits as a man, and which recognizes the fact that the highest and deepest happiness for the individual lies not in selfishness but in service.

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