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“What It Means to Be a Citizen,” 1903 October 25.

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Oct. 25th, 1903.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CITIZEN.

The obligations of citizenship are reasonable. They should be willingly accepted by all sons of America. I shall consider what it means to be a citizen for business, a citizen for politics, and a citizen for morality. To be a citizen as a business man, from a business standpoint means to build up the business of the city. But not selfishly; for one's self only, but the business of the whole city. Our city should mean more to us than a place to do business in, more than city improvements and city advantages and city opportunities; more than splendid facilities of railroad and lake. We should have interest in the business character and reputation of our city. Its energy and enterprise should spring from solid foundations. We should help to develop legitimate and not wild-cat schemes. Every one of us should be jealous and zealous for the business honor of our city. A splendid spirit has been manifested in Cleveland. A thousand men or more are banded together in our Chamber of Commerce for unselfish work. The citizen for business should join with every effort which seeks to promote the development of our population, our industry, and our commerce.

To be a citizen as a politician means to be interested in city government. The weakness of our republic and the breakdown of democracy reveal themselves most plainly in the great cities; our splendid cities, with their bosses, great and small. Their bosses, corrupt and corrupting, perhaps a few of them incorruptible. Run through the list, - New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, - the first cities of the land, - and Cleveland too has been no exception. It seems almost beyond belief that we Americans, so strong, so self-reliant, so independent, so resourceful as a people, are politically so helpless.

Two causes stand out. We have too many citizens who are citizens for business, and still more citizens who are citizens for party. You have heard the business citizen talk with his business ideals and his worship of business as a god. He tells

you frankly election and politics are a nuisance. They disturb business, he prefers not to be bothered. Therefore thousands delegate their duties as well as their rights of citizenship to an oligarchy within the democracy. A people who wish to be self-governing must think concerning political questions and policies, and must be stirred to political action. If the decent, right-thinking people would act together the indecent and dishonest would never control. Yet somehow, the dishonest and the selfish are in power most of the time in city and county and state. The reason is plain; our business citizens are too busy with their private business, leaving the public business to those eager to make it their business.

And the party man, who holds party first of all; we hear it emphasized too much and too insistently that the destiny and prosperity of city and state and country are dependent on the triumph of a party. It is not true. The republic will endure and the democracy will continue to flourish even if present parties existed not at all. First is country, and state and county, and city, and then the party. Party is a means and not an end. Citizens and parties are not synonyms. To be a good citizen does not mean to be a good party-man.

The struggle for self-government is on in all our great cities. The good seem helpless in the grip of the evil. No, not in the grip, - for when the good wrestles with the evil in personal combat, I believe the good has power to triumph. The good are helpless in the snares of the evil, enmeshed in the many webs which ramify everywhere. We need an organized conscience, a political conscience awake intelligent and organized, then we can fight successfully against machines and factions and bosses. The people have triumphed in the past, they triumph whenever truly stirred, but victorious they forget so quickly and are lulled to sleep so easily. We should be steadfast and loyal to the fundamental American principle that government is by the people. To be a citizen politically means to have moral courage, to be willing to make sacrifices, even to incur danger of bringing down the wrath of the powers that be. A man is a coward who is afraid to speak what he thinks about political questions, who is afraid to do his duty politically. I would rather be victor in the fight for honesty and decency in our great cities, helping men and women and

children to live than be conquering hero on field of battle. We need in this country the patriotism of peace.

What does it mean to be a citizen for morality? It means to do positive work as a citizen, not to be guilty of wrong-doing, but to do and further the right. Hundreds say they don't care; the morality of a city does not concern them. They must care. Whether they will or not they are compelled to cast their influence with or against the moral or the immoral. The control of vice and the suppression of public gambling, the restraint of disorder and lawlessness are questions which concern us all. Is there any one of us who does not care for the decencies of home and the sanctities of childhood. Are we or are we not interested in respect for womanhood, in the protection from insult of our wives and daughters in public places and on public avenues? Not a man or woman among us who is not a force for a moral public opinion. A good name is precious, and precious should be the good name of our city. How dare any one say he doesn't care? The good citizen should be a factor in the fight for decency, to create and maintain a clean and moral city. The moral well-being of men, women and children concerns us all. The character of a city may be measured in dollars and cents; corrupt and incompetent administrations leave their trail in sickness and in death.

What, then, does it mean to be a citizen? Not mere protest against corruption and vice; not vain and futile denunciations of machines and factions and bosses; not foolish grumblings about taxes and burdens and laws. I believe in a positive citizenship with a positive program, whose interest is in the life and well-being of the thousands who live in cities. Its fundamental principle is the old, but ever new truth of Abraham Lincoln - government must be of the people and by the people and for the people. Life and property must be made secure. The necessities of life, - air and water and sunshine and food, - must be brought within the reach of all at the lowest cost. The homes of the rich and the homes of the poor must be sage-guarded for physical and moral health. Cities should be centers of health and beauty; centers of music and of art; with good schools and good libraries and wise philanthropies. These make the life and power and civilization of our land. Every citizen should have a part in them. The good citizen is the citizen at work for the good of his city, his state and his country.