

Edison Tells Why He Will Vote for Wilson

By George Creel

WHILE the Republican Party was in the throes of selecting a Presidential nominee Thomas A. Edison announced his faith in Theodore Roosevelt as the one man fitted above all others for the office. Time went on, the Chicago steam roller ran over the Colonel, the St. Louis convention renominated President Wilson, and from the laboratory at West Orange came no comment of any kind.

It was on the day of Mr. Hughes's final speech in California, the wind-up of his coast-to-coast campaign tour, that I received a telephone message from W. L. Saunders, the mining engineer.

"I happened to be talking with Mr. Edison yesterday," he said, "and he told me to tell you that he was willing to make that Wilson statement if you still wanted it."

I went to Mr. Saunders's office and together we rode to Jersey through the Hudson tube. Mr. Edison, as a matter of course, was not in the office, but in the shops. A boy went after him, and as we looked down the alley that ran between the factory buildings the well-known figure popped out of a far doorway.

"Well, Mr. Edison," I began, "We—"

"Wait a minute," he interrupted. Leaning back, he pushed his hand into his trousers pocket—the old-fashioned kind that opens at the top, not the side—and drew out a wad of crumpled yellow paper.

"There," he said. "Everything's right there."

I smoothed them out—four or five sheets torn from a cheap tablet—all written over in pencil, the writing firm and curiously like old English print. Glancing through them, I saw that he had merely jotted down a number of flat statements of political belief.

"But what about a discussion of these issues, Mr. Edison?" I urged. "The people of the United States feel that you—"

"Shucks!" With his fingers he wiggled the compliment away from him. "I say that I'm for Woodrow Wilson. I say it because I feel that it's up to every man in times like these to take a position. But, pshaw!" He shook his head. "It's just my opinion."

"Mr. Edison has always been a Repub-

We Are at Peace, and the Country Was Never So Prosperous, Why Change?

lican," suggested Mr. Saunders, "and"—

"Don't put in anything about party," Mr. Edison interrupted. "Times are too serious to talk in terms of Republicanism or Democracy. Parties are all right. Reckon we've got to have them with our system of government. But when it's America that's at stake, men have got to vote as Americans and not as Democrats or Republicans.

"This man Wilson has had a mighty hard time of it," he continued. "I don't believe there was ever a President who had as many big questions to decide, as many big problems to solve. One has followed the other, and now and then they have come in bunches. He hasn't always pleased me, just as I suppose he hasn't always pleased other people, but when you look the record over it's so good that criticism comes close to being nothing more than cheap faultfinding.

"A fool or a coward would have had the United States in all sorts of trouble. As it is, we are at peace, the country was never more prosperous, and we have the strength that comes with honor and integrity of purpose."

"So you don't agree with the people who insist that the United States has earned the contempt of the world?" I asked.

"Bosh! Neutrality is a mighty trying policy, but back of it are international law, the rights of humanity, and the whole future of civilization. Wilson has won victories by diplomacy that are far more important to mankind than any victories that we could have won by war. I am no pacifist. I believe that there are times when a nation has to fight. But war for the sake of war, or war for purposes of conquest, is horrible and unthinkable.

"I imagine that Wilson wasn't very keen for preparedness at first. Maybe so. But when he saw that intelligent public opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of it, and that our own safety demanded it, he set machinery to work that will probably give us a sound, sane, and adequate national defense. What if it was a change of mind? A President who re-

fused to change his mind to meet changed conditions would be a dangerous man."

"You say here in your notes that it would have been neither wise nor right for the United States to have recognized Huerta?"

"Absolutely." Mr. Edison never gains emphasis by beating the table with his fist. He depends almost entirely upon finger shaking. "A murderous personality! Had we recognized him it would have served notice upon the world that the United States, while believing in democracy for home use, was willing to stand for despotism where other peoples were concerned. It would have been a blow at constitutional government in every republic of South and Central America, stating to every scoundrel that all he had to do to win the approval of America was to assassinate a President.

"No, Sir! President Wilson's Mexican policy has been wise and just and courageous. Mexico has been a troublesome neighbor, but war and conquest are not going to make her a better one. Both against England, and then against human slavery, the United States has worked out her salvation through revolution, and it was a pretty slow, trying process."

"Belgium?" suggested Mr. Saunders. "Hindsight!" exclaimed Mr. Edison. "Hindsight! In the light of two years it's easy to say what should have been done. But at the time not a single paper nor a public man even thought of anything but keeping the United States out of the European horror. At least a year went by before the world understood just what Belgium was being called upon to suffer."

Then Mr. Saunders mentioned the tariff.

"There's another proof of Wilson's openness of mind," Mr. Edison declared. "No matter what he thought about the Underwood law, he had the courage to admit that the European war returned the tariff to the province of discussion. So he came to the front with his proposition for a tariff commission. That's

sense! The tariff is a scientific affair, not political at all. A tariff commission will lift the whole business out of politics. It ought to be our hope that Congress will give the body all the dignity of the Supreme Court, so that the President will be in a position to get famous experts for the work. There are too many men in the public service already that private employment wouldn't pay a dollar to."

"I suppose you have noticed the attacks on the President because of the claim that certain professional politicians have been appointed to office?" I said.

"Umph!" His exclamation was one of disgust. "Mighty picayunish to talk about when there are so many big things demanding attention. Reckon Wilson has had a good many poor appointments put over on him, but, taken by and large, the men he has put on guard measure up beyond the average.

"As I said at the start," he continued, "it has just been one big thing after another with Wilson. I have never known so many dangerous questions brought up for decision to any one President. Look at the railroad strike that piled up on top of Mexico and all the other things. Why, such a strike would have thrown the whole country into confusion, and had disastrous results. I think he rose to the occasion splendidly, just as he has risen to every other occasion that called for courage and wisdom.

"In my opinion, Mr. Hughes, if President, would have found it difficult to decide on the best course for the Government to take in such matters. His capacity for hindsight, as we learn from his speeches, is highly developed, but as to his foresight we are not equally well informed.

"They say Wilson has blundered." Mr. Edison raised both hands to drive home his point. "Perhaps he has. But I notice that he usually blunders forward.

"Mr. Wilson has now had about four years of experience, and I think that he has earned faith and trust. I do not think it a logical or sensible thing to change to an inexperienced and untried man just for the sake of change, or without much better reasons being given for the change than any I have noticed.

"Roosevelt was my choice. He had had experience, and is one of the best Americans. But the machine-controlled Republican Party would not have him. Therefore I am for Woodrow Wilson."