July 10, 1924

Dear President Alderman:

I hope you will forgive me for having delayed so long in replying to your letter of June 22. It came to my desk while I was away, recovering from a rather sharp illness. Since I have been back at my work I have been somewhat crowded, and, then, too, I wanted some little time to think over the letter. You will remember that in it you told me of the opportunity that had come to you to appraise the services of Woodrow Wilson before Congress, and you did me the honor to ask me what I regarded as his root values.

Here they are, set down practically in the order in which they came to me in my observation of the man.

At the top of the list I place rigid character, a truthfulness, a jealousy of honor, a profound belief in the Christian virtues; then comes his faith in sound intellectual processes. It was like his faith in God, and I think he tried to be quite as loyal to his intellect as he did to his God. It was through his thinking, I judge, that he came to so profound a faith in democracy as the one real solution for the world's troubles. That faith was so strongly allied to his faith in God - he seemed to think it God's way for men.

It always seemed to me that Woodrow Wilson felt that his chief duty was to help men to a better understanding of the democratic system. He realized better than most, I think, that when we talk about democracy many of us have very vague notions about what is meant, now he had very definite notions. Take his public speeches and letters and you can make up from them an admirable short text book on democracy sound, clear, convincing. His interpretations had an integrity, a clarity, a soundness that sunk into minds that listened; and it was part of his faith that the masses did listen. Those who slight the value of his words because the jugglers at the top ridiculed and belittled them make a great mistake. What he said "got over" and is alive and at work in the national consciousness today.

It seems to me a strong proof of the soundness of these interpretations of his that they have spread around the world, reviving its faith in the possibility of the masses of men working to bring about more peaceful and prosperous life to mankind. His ideas were so large and all embracing that they literally reached even the

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backward nations. They are at work today in a marvelous fashion - they cannot be killed. That this or that piece of machinery that he advocated as a method of making actualities of his notions has not developed as he expected is a matter of small importance. As a matter of fact his ideas are, as I see it, developing in a more fundamental way than he had imagined. They have profited by the struggle that they have had to make to find expression.

One great quality he had was his far seeing. He realized that what he was after were things of the future, he knew they could not be destroyed and so was willing to sacrifice himself, as I believe myself he consciously did.

There you have Mr. Wilson's root values, as I see them - rigid virtue, jealousy of his own and his country's honor, intellectual sureness born of faith in the conclusions that he arrived at by hard and disinterested thinking, faith in what we call democracy and in its future, willingness to trust it to the future because he believed it to be God's way with men.

This is not very well put, I know, but it is the bones of what I have in my mind about him, and if it is of any use to you, I shall be glad.

In your letter you ask if I recall the interesting evening we had in 1911 motoring to Jersey City to hear Woodrow Wilson speak. Indeed, I shall never forget it. You know that was my first look at Mr. Wilson, and he entirely captivated me that night. I never had realized how completely and delightfully a scholar and a gentleman can adapt himself to the mixed audience of good and bad, high and low that a political meeting calls together. There was not a trace of superciliousness; he put no distance between himself and his humblest auditor - at least that was the marked impression that I have after all these years.

I wish some time when you are in New York, my dear President Alderman, you would, if you have time, call me up and let me have the opportunity to talk with you about Mr. Wilson. I am more and more inclined, like the rest of the world, to try to get down on paper my reasons for calling the man "great." I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of a little article that I wrote for Colliers' Weekly some two years ago or so. It happened to appeal to a good many people so Colliers set it up in this way for distribution, and were good enough to turn over to me a certain number of copies.

Sincerely yours,

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