

T.R., Heckled, Tells of His Sons Now Fighting in France

[event of Nov. 1, 1917]

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The big crowd at the [Madison Square] Garden gasped last night [Nov. 1, 1917] when Theodore Roosevelt was stopped at one of his climaxes by a Socialist auditor, who rose in his seat and addressed to the Colonel a sneering taunt concerning his failure to be fighting in France at this time. The Colonel was pleading for a “100 percent loyalty to the United States” and scoring the American pacifist as the great ally of the German militarist.

“We send our boys to fight across the seas so that they won’t have to fight here,” he declared. “If we don’t continue the war to a successful conclusion — if we let it be a draw — I tell you with all the conviction I have that your children and my children will have to fight it out here in this country, beside their ruined hearthstones, to defend themselves.”

“Why don’t you go over, then, and fight?” shouted the man from the gallery. “You go ahead over.”



*The Run
of the
Murphy
Candidate*

Anti-Hylan cartoon from a Mitchel campaign ad, Oct. 1917.

“He wanted to go!” yelled the crowd. “They wouldn’t let him.”

“Just a minute — just a minute; let me answer,” said Roosevelt.

“Yes, let him answer!” shouted the Hillquitter.

“You want to know why I’m not over there?” inquired Roosevelt, his lip quivering. “Well, you’ll have to ask somebody else.”

Then, as the crowd roared its approval, he added: “I did my level best, but I found that as far as I was concerned this was a very exclusive war. I was blackballed by the committee on admissions.

“But I’ll tell you — you creature over there. I have sent over my four sons. And you and those like you dare stay here and ask an American father what he means by sending them. Now, men, given the answer to that kind of man — to the man who sneers — give the answer by electing Mitchel Mayor.”

Colonel Roosevelt denounced the “Huns within” as even more dangerous than the “Huns without.” He added:

“In the long run, even worse than the ‘Hun within’ is the man who cringes before him. The American pacifist has been the great ally of the German militarist.

“Now, friends, during the last three years we have all of us gone through a period of education, and above all, on the two questions of Americanism and preparedness. John Mitchel doesn’t have to be questioned on either matter. If you think to yourselves of the typical American figures of this country, you think at present of the young fighting Mayor of New York City. (*Applause.*) And in this country if we are to be a real nation we have got to make up our minds that there can’t be permitted any fifty-fifty loyalty.

“The man who loves another country as much as he loves this doesn’t love this at all. It is with patriotism just about as it is in domestic life. If a man is of such an affectionate nature that he has a fifty-fifty loyalty between his wife and some other lady (*laughter*), if his wife is worth anything she will repudiate her fifty side.

“It is just the same thing in this country. If any man says that he is a good American, but he is a good some-other-countrian also, send him back to the other country. He is out of place in this.

“Now, in that list there, where Judge Hylan’s name appears with a black arrow pointing toward it (indicating reproduction of letterhead of Friends of Peace), there are some men who love another country more than they love the United States, and some men of an even less worthy type who hate another country more than they love the United States. The men of neither type are fit for citizenship in this land.”

Charles E. Hughes officiated as chairman of the meeting and pleaded for the retention of a non-partisan form of government for the “biggest and most difficult city to govern in the country.” He branded Judge Hylan as “Murphy’s man,” declaring he that never again in history would New York accept “a man of that brand” as its Mayor.¹ He urged New Yorkers to put their city on record as supporting the Allies and the world fight for world freedom.

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Henry Morgenthau, former Ambassador to Turkey, and William A. Pendergast, Controller, detailed the achievements of the Mitchel administration and urged its retention in its entirety. The crowd, before the speechmaking began, was entertained by motion pictures, in which public improvements during the Mayor’s term were shown.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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¹ Reference is to Tammany Hall boss Charlie Murphy, the son of Irish immigrants. During the 1917 campaign the Irish-American Democratic nominee (and eventual Mayor) John F. Hylan was only tepid in his support of the American war effort, in deference to prevailing anti-British sentiment among the Irish community.