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Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Raymond Robins

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Private

August 25th, 1916

My dear Mr. Robbins:

Three cheers for you! Your letter of the 25th of July did my soul good. Of course I will take you; and I will jump at the chance of taking you if there is any opportunity to go. My idea would be to give you a Lieutenant's Commission and tell you to raise a platoon of men in Illinois or wherever you wished; and, if you could raise a troop, choosing your own two lieutenants, I would make you Captain. I know your stuff; I don't have to try you out.

Now to answer in the second place your first letter. It comes in the second place just as at this moment all our social reform planks come in the second place. Religion was a model in many respects as regards social and industrial reform; but now there is not the smallest fragment of her work for social and industrial betterment left, because she failed to consider national security.

I understand absolutely your view on the religious issue. But it really does seem to me that as regards this matter "he who seeks to save his life shall lose it." At any rate that would be my position. You did exactly right from the larger standpoint when you refused the support of the Knights of Luther and Guardians of Liberty last Fall. I take the liberty of sending you my Fourth of July article in the Metropolitan, where I have spoken straight on the Public School question and also on all the movements which we can symbolize under the head of the A. P. A.

I am very much afraid that the mass of the people most influential in the Republican party are bitterly against me; and I am afraid that the others would be against me if they gained any idea that I expected anything from them. But the incidents you tell me touch me more than I can say. I remember well when you told me before about the statement of that State painter. As long as I live I will try to deserve the feeling that man had and try to do everything in my power, big or little, to make conditions in this country such that they will be a little bit better for the boys of just such men as he is. As for what you say about action in 1916 I agree absolutely with you. Wilson Johnson feels just as I do. He would like the Republican party to put up a man whom we can support; but he does not believe that this is probable, and if, as now seems likely, they put up a reactionary candidate, as he expresses it, he and I will have to go fishing. He does not wish to run as our candidate in such event, as he thinks it would be asking him to make more of a sacrifice than he is called upon to make; but he will support anyone whom we do put up; and in my judgment in such event we would have to put up some one, even if all we did was to cast a conscience vote such as the Free Soil men once cast for slavery.

With high regard,

Faithfully yours,

(Robins)

Raymond Robins, Esq.,
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Chicago, Ill.

Enclosure: Article on "Americanization Day" from July Metropolitan