

The Republican Panic Fallacy Exploded

So many requests have been made for copies of *The Commoner*, dated October 12, 1906, and containing the following article, that no more copies can be supplied. The article is therefore reprinted in order to supply the demand:

G. Clay, a Mexico, Mo., reader, writes: "General Grosvenor, speaking at our chautauqua, said that low tariff and hard times are found co-existing throughout our history—always found together. Without any dates he supported this statement of the usual old stock-in-trade argument of the protectionist. Is he right?"

General Grosvenor is mistaken. The reason he did not give the dates, is that the dates would have confounded him. The truth is that every panic since the civil war originated under republican rule and developed under republican legislation.

The great panic which gave "Black Friday" to history occurred during the month of September, 1869, when the republican party was in power.

The great panic marked by the failure of Jay Cooke & Co., occurred in September, 1873. Then the republican party was in power and eleven months prior to the beginning of that panic that party had been re-elected to power.

The "panic of 1893" began long prior to that year and, indeed, long prior to the presidential election of 1892; and it is a fact, although republican orators and republican organs try to forget it, that the so-called panic of 1893 began and played its greatest havoc under that famous tariff law known as the McKinley bill.

It may be well for Commoner readers to keep readily at hand some of the facts and figures relating to this question.

The republican party was restored to power March 4, 1889.

The McKinley tariff bill became a law October 6, 1890, and remained in effect until August 27, 1894.

The Wilson tariff law, enacted by a democratic congress went into effect August 27, 1894.

If any one will take the trouble to examine the republican campaign text-book for 1904, pages 125, 126 and 127 he will find considerable space devoted to a statement of business disasters from July 18, 1893, until November 13, 1894. The republican managers expected their readers to remember that the Cleveland administration was inaugurated March 4, 1893, and that all these disasters occurred under democratic administration; but they expected their readers to forget that the republican tariff law was in force up to August 27, 1894, or covering more than twelve months of the sixteen months period of business disasters as described by the republican text-book.

In their references to the panic of 1893 republican orators and organs habitually overlook the date when the McKinley law ceased and the Wilson law went into effect. But when in their tariff discussions they are required to face the fact that that panic played its greatest havoc during the life of the republican tariff law they answer that it was the anticipation of tariff legislation growing out of democratic victory in 1892 which brought on these business disasters. For this reason in their list of business disasters they place July 18, 1893, as marking the beginning of that great panic.

Let it be remembered that the McKinley

tariff bill became a law October 6, 1890, and that the first indications of the so called panic of 1893-4 were given November 11, 1890, A LITTLE MORE THAN THIRTY DAYS AFTER THE M'KINLEY TARIFF BILL BECAME A LAW. From that date the panic raged.

The Harrison administration was inaugurated March 4, 1889, and when the first indications of this panic were given President Harrison had not exhausted the half of the term for which he was elected. It is admitted by everyone familiar with the facts that President Harrison's administration had plates prepared for the bonds and Mr. Harrison's secretary of the treasury made a visit to New York for the purpose of negotiating the bond deal. He was wired by Mr. Harrison to return to Washington. Mr. Harrison said that he had concluded not to have any bond issues under his administration and in order to avoid the stigma the Harrison administration warded off the bond issue and unloaded it on the incoming Cleveland administration.

It may not be out of place to point out that when the democratic administration surrendered the reins of government, March 4, 1889, there was in the federal treasury the largest surplus in history. When the republican party went out of power, March 4, 1893, there was a large deficit and the incoming administration was finally persuaded to make the bond issues which its republican predecessor had at one time thought to be necessary, but had skillfully avoided.

The claim that the business disasters of the period referred to were due to the popular fear of tariff legislation to be enacted by democrats is, as has been said, met by the fact that this panic began two years prior to the presidential election day of 1892. The following will serve as reminders on this point:

November 11, 1890, the reports showed financial distress in New York. The New York clearing house association voted its certificates to banks in need of assistance.

The Boston clearing house association did the same thing November 17. Barker Bros. & Co., big bankers in Philadelphia, suspended at that time, with liabilities placed at \$5,000,000.

November 19, 1890, there was a run on the Citizens' Savings bank of New York, and a receiver was appointed for the North River bank.

November 22, 1890, the United Rolling Stock company of Chicago assigned, with liabilities at \$6,851,000.

November 28, 1890, B. K. Jamieson & Co., the Philadelphia bankers, failed, with liabilities at \$2,000,000.

December 6, 1890, the Oliver iron and steel mills of Pittsburg shut down, discharging 2,000 employes. On the same date the cotton firm of Myer & Co., of New Orleans failed, with liabilities at \$2,000,000.

January 3, 1891, the Scottdale rolling mills and pike works and the Charlotte furnace and coke works in Pennsylvania closed, throwing 10,000 employes out of work.

January 18, 1891, the American National bank at Kansas City suspended, with liabilities at \$2,250,000.

May 8, 1891, the Spring Garden National bank at Philadelphia closed its doors, and the Pennsylvania Safe Deposit and Trust company made an assignment.

The Homestead strike and other strikes

during 1892, and prior to election day, are well remembered by the people.

The record discloses that the first indications of the so called panic of 1893 were given November 11, 1890, a little more than thirty days after the McKinley tariff bill became a law. From that date the panic raged, and while its effects were felt for several years it reached its worst stage in 1893, and during the early days of 1894, during all of which time the republican tariff law was in effect.

The late Thomas B. Reed after his retirement from the speakership delivered a speech in New York in which he said: "Another thing which led this whole country into the error of 1892 was the history of the last thirty years. During all that time we have been prosperous." The *New York World* called this "cold, colossal and impudent falsification of history," and said that it must have astonished those among his hearers whose memories were more than one year long. Then this *New York* paper gave Mr. Reed these interesting reminders:

"The panic of 1873, under republican rule and twelve years of high tariff taxation, was the most disastrous and the period of business depression for five years thereafter was the most severe of any in history. It was officially estimated that 3,000,000 workingmen were out of employment. Bankruptcy was widespread. A tidal wave of ruin and distress swept over the country.

"From 1881 to 1886, under two republican tariffs, there were labor strikes involving 22,304 establishments and 1,323,203 workmen. Of these strikes 9,439 were for an increase of wages and 4,344 against reductions of wages.

"Mr. Reed's party tinkered the tariff in 1883. In that year there were 9,184 business failures, involving \$172,874,000. In 1884 there were 10,968 failures, involving \$226,343,000. In the next year, still under the republican tariff and currency laws, there was a general business depression. More than 1,000,000 men were out of employment.

"In 1890 the McKinley bill was passed, and there were 10,673 failures in that year, and 12,394 the next, with liabilities in each year amounting to nearly \$200,000,000. The tariff was raised to nearly fifty per cent, but wages either stood still or declined, while the prices of necessities advanced. The protected manufacturers kept all their 'bonus' as usual.

"Tramps and trusts, the twin products of a monopolists' tariff, were practically unknown in this country until we had endured uninterrupted republican rule for a dozen years.

"The worst labor troubles, the bloodiest riots, the most destructive strikes, the most brutal lockouts ever known in any country have occurred here under the high tariffs, bought, made and paid for by the contributors of the republican campaign funds."

It might be well for Commoner readers to clip this statement from *The Commoner* and have it in convenient form to show to their republican neighbors who may have been deceived by the Grosvenor claims.

Washington Letter

Washington, D. C., January 20.—Within two days Secretary Taft made two important utterances relative to the questions of capital and labor. Both are calculated to please neither side of that great controversy. Mr. Taft's reply to Llewellyn Lewis, secretary of the Ohio Federation of Labor, and his address in New York on labor problems, clearly indicate that he is willing to meet organized labor half way, but is unwilling to come the whole distance. The secretary of war may be a very honest man, but he is certainly a very bad politician. These latest utterances, which have been so widely printed that it is unnecessary to repeat their contents here, clearly indicate that he does not understand organized labor, much less his own political party. He forgets that the republican party is today dominated by the forces of capi-

talism, and that the men who control its nominations will not be pleased to learn that their party's prospective candidate for the presidency is opposed to exparte injunctions, to the black list, and even applauds strikes when properly conducted. Nor will organized labor accept the half a loaf the secretary offers them as recompense for the wounds he has already inflicted on their cause. No words the secretary of war can now utter will placate the lasting antipathy his deeds have aroused in the minds of organized laboring men. If proof of this were needed, Mr. Taft has but to turn back to a recent editorial printed in the *Federationist*, the official organ of organized labor, by Mr. Samuel Gompers, its recognized leader. Mr. Gompers in that editorial declared unqualifiedly against the injunction as now used in labor disputes, and gave reasons, which it is impossible to summarize here, but which have yet to be answered by Mr. Taft or anyone else who favors "government by injunction." And it may not be amiss at this time to quote the significant words used

by Mr. Gompers in concluding this editorial. If Mr. Taft thinks that anything he said at Cooper Union is calculated to placate organized labor on this injunction question, let him harken to the following words of Mr. Gompers:

"And it may not be amiss to sound a word of warning and advice to such as seek to rob labor of its lawful rights by the unwarranted injunction process. * * * The full power of labor has never yet been exercised in the defense of its rights. It is not wise to compel its exercise."

This should be sufficient to convince Mr. Taft that organized labor will accept no compromise on the question of injunctions in labor disputes such as he proposes. Labor in fact has long since ceased to look upon Mr. Taft as a friend, and it is probable that the reactionary and conservative forces that now control his own party will look upon him as an enemy.

Taken as a whole, Secretary Taft's speech on labor and capital in New York was a most inconclusive document. The *New York Press*,