

When Mr. Taft Did Not Stand Pat

Referring to Mr. Taft's remarks on the tariff Senator Foraker says: "One who was able a year ago to declare himself unqualifiedly in favor of immediate revision at that time should be able now to give some specifications as to what then prompted him to make such a declaration."

Senator Foraker might have reminded the secretary of war that it was something more than two years ago when protection circles were greatly stirred by what was known as "Taft's free trade order." It will be remembered that early in the spring of 1905 the Associated Press made what it said was an authoritative announcement that the Isthmian canal commission had decided to purchase in the markets of the world the material necessary for the building of the Panama canal. In this connection the Associated Press said:

"This important decision was reached with some reluctance because it was appreciated by Secretary Taft and the executive committee that there would surely be a great outcry from two great interests in this country, the producers of material and the ship owners, if the purchases were not limited to the American products.

"But it was decided that the money consideration was so great that it could not be ignored, for it was held that in many cases fully fifty per cent more would be charged for the material needed in the canal construction than the same goods could be procured for in Europe."

Referring to this order by Mr. Taft, Walter Wellman, then the Washington correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald, said that it "came like a Shimose bomb-shell into the camp of the standpatters and high tariffites."

Mr. Wellman added: "The decision has been the sensation of the day in political circles. There is much talk among the high protection apostles of the republican party of appealing to President Roosevelt for a reversal of the decision, but there is little prospect that this will do them any good. The determination of the executive committee is understood to have the approval of the president, as well as of the secretary of war, and if the big wall-builders do not like this blow at their favorite policy they will have to lump it. No one should understand that the determination of the executive committee is to buy all its ships, machinery and materials in foreign countries. Probably the great bulk of all purchases will be made in the United States. But the decision of the committee is that it will buy where it can buy cheapest. If it can get the lowest prices in the United States, it will purchase here; if foreign manufacturers and dealers underbid American sellers the contracts will go abroad. On the face of it this looks nothing more than good business policy. But it does not please the high tariffites at all. They look upon it as rank heresy. They perceive, as everyone perceives, that it raises the whole tariff question, and raises it in a manner calculated to give far more comfort to democrats and independents and tariff reformers than to those who have helped push up the walls and who have made exclusion of foreign trade in any form an article of party faith. It will be a long time before the Panama commission and the country hears the last of the storm brewed by this important decision."

Many of the comments on the Taft order were decidedly interesting. A member of congress, interviewed by Mr. Wellman, said: "For generations we have been teaching that it is better to buy at home, even if we have to pay a little higher prices, because that is for the general good. That is the very essence of the protection doctrine. Yet here comes the government and says it is not willing to abide by the practice of the country. It will break down the rule to which it is at least morally a party, and will buy abroad whatever it can buy there cheaper than at home. In other words, you and I can't go into the world's markets and buy where we can buy cheapest. The tariff prevents us. But the government, having no duty to pay on what it imports into the isthmus, announces its intention to go into the world's markets and save all the money it can. A fine example indeed for a government to set in a protection country! What are we coming to anyway?"

A United States senator, evidently devoted to the republican party's protection theory, said

that he could hardly credit the statement that a commission, acting under the republican party proposed to purchase a considerable amount of supplies abroad. And another senator, who, according to Mr. Wellman, "stands high in the republican party," said that Mr. Taft's action was "highly unfortunate and certain to bring the republicans face to face with the tariff issue in its keenest form." This senator added that Taft's order would give the democratic party "just the weapon it most badly needed in its fight against the protective tariff system."

Representative Grosvenor of Ohio was "much disgusted." While declaring that he did not care to pose as a critic of the administration Mr. Grosvenor said: "We have built up the policy of the protective tariff in this country on the basis of higher prices. Those prices were higher because we paid our labor better wages. People have become more cognizant every year of the benefits of that policy, and understand the reason for higher prices. The country would rather pay a little more for something that was made at home, furnished employment for home folk and gave them better pay than their more unfortunate neighbors abroad enjoyed. If the government is to be the complainant against the prices that are the result of this employment of American labor at American wages, it will certainly furnish a theme for some very interesting deliberations over the tariff."

The facts leading up to the Taft order were stated by Mr. Wellman in this way: "Chief Engineer Wallace reported to the commission that in addition to the regular ships now running in the Panama railroad line between New York and the isthmus at least two vessels would soon be needed to carry supplies and materials for the canal work. No suitable American ships could be bought at any reasonable price, and when he came to inquire into the matter Secretary Taft found that to build ships in this country would cost about twice as much as to buy them abroad. Two 6,000-ton steamers would cost \$1,400,000 in this country and could be bought abroad for \$750,000. Neither the secretary nor the members of the executive committee could see any good reason why the government should lay out two dollars when one dollar would do just as well. As to supplies and machinery, it is not believed that much will be bought abroad. It is understood that the executive committee wished to serve notice upon American manufacturers and dealers that if they wished to do business with the canal management they must be prepared to cut their prices. It is hinted that efforts were making to induce the government to pay the same prices that other purchasers have to pay. But the government agents are determined to have at least the export price. For instance, it is known that the steel rail pool has asked the commission for rails for double-tracking the Panama railroad a price several dollars in excess of what the same pool has sold the same rails for in foreign markets. The government wants the advantages of that lower price and is determined to have them."

But Mr. Wellman said that even if most of the supplies and machinery be finally purchased in this country at the lowest possible of export prices the champions of high tariff declared that "the damage is already done." Mr. Wellman explained: "The action of the government serves as confirmation strong as holy writ of the cry which the democrats and the tariff reformers who are not democrats set up in last year's presidential campaign. Voluminous pages of last year's republican campaign text-book were devoted to meeting this argument of the enemy that American manufacturers deliberately sell abroad cheaper than they sell at home, and that home consumers are entitled to at least as much consideration as foreign consumers. At that time it was not expected the Roosevelt administration itself, in whose behalf all those ingenious arguments were compiled, would be the first to establish the truth of the democratic position. When congress meets again the high tariffites say the democrats will be sure to make the most of the opportunity which this canal affair has thrown their way, and they are at a loss to know how to meet the looked for onslaught. Apparently events are conspiring to bring the tariff question very much to the front during the coming winter."

Some of the republican leaders and newspapers that are now paying high tribute to Mr.

Taft's statesmanship criticized him bitterly. Representative Dalzell of Pennsylvania denounced the order in unmeasured terms. One Washington dispatch of that day said: "Senators Scott and Burrows, both high tariff republicans, called on Secretary Taft and criticized the administration's policy. 'I have dropped in to your political funeral, Mr. Secretary,' said Senator Scott. 'Can't come to my funeral without bringing flowers, and I see no flowers,' replied the secretary. At the same time Mr. Taft said he would stand by the action to the very end, funeral or no funeral. He told his callers there was no reason why the government should pay a quarter more for material made in America or pay for two ships here a sum that would buy four ships in Europe."

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat, republican, said that Taft's policy would "reduce American labor to the level of the pauper labor of Europe."

The New York Press, republican, said it was a "treasonable order."

The Chicago Inter Ocean, hotly indignant, declared: "That is so manifestly a reversal of American policy that it is only necessary to state it to secure its condemnation. As the case stands there is no excuse."

The commotion over this order was so great that it was found convenient to send Mr. Taft on a trip around the world and that was the last of the "Taft free trade order." Canal supplies were purchased at the same old prices. Mr. Taft and his associates were not then such determined "standpatters" after all.



"REFERENCE TO ALLUSIONS"

The first thing Congressman McCall of Massachusetts knows he will find himself classed among the "undesirables" if, indeed, something worse does not befall him—classification with the "nature fakirs" or receipt of a membership certificate in an Ananias Club. Recently Congressman McCall referred to some person or persons who have "recourse to a maximum of noise to achieve a minimum of good," and a little later drew the following word portrait of a president such as the nation may have at some future time:

"You are liable some day to have a president supremely lacking in the qualities of a statesman and one who is egotistic, impulsive, of immature judgment, a mere glutton of the limelight, ready to barter away prosperity and even his country's freedom for momentary popular applause. If he is an autocrat, such as he is such for the time will your country be. Instead of a mighty nation, great in her physical strength and greater in her moral qualities, you may have a strutting, confiscating, shrieking, meddling America."

Congressman McCall will not be interfered with pending an investigation to ascertain whether he has "reference to allusions" in the above quoted utterances.



THE HEIGHT OF FOLLY

The forest service of the department of agriculture is doing everything in its power to impart knowledge and to create a just sentiment in the minds of the people of the country on the necessity of forest preservation and restoration. It has to combat a mountain of ignorance and indifference on the subject, but when the pinch of necessity comes with the timber famine this will change. Tree planting will then become popular, but unhappily, it takes some thirty, forty and fifty years to grow a good tree.—Philadelphia Press.

But can the forest service educate the people into preserving and restoring the forests as fast as those forests are being destroyed under the stimulus of a premium for their destruction? With a tariff on wood pulp that compels the destruction of upwards of 100,000 acres of popular, spruce and hemlock forests every year, and with a tariff on lumber that puts a premium on the destruction of a million acres of pine and hardwood forests every year, how long will it take for the forest service of the department of agriculture to catch up and pass the destructionists?

Is it not the height of folly to spend a million a month in forest preservation while at the same time offering a handsome premium for forest destruction?