

NEBRASKA'S DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATURE

In an editorial entitled "Some Good Laws," the Lincoln Evening News (republican) pays this tribute to the democratic legislature:

"Notwithstanding that the senate of the legislature was swayed too often by a bunch of men of the familiar corporation type, that body redeemed practically every pledge the party had made, and enacted a number of other laws as to the value of which there will be no disagreement.

"The bank deposit guaranty law fell short of what was promised, but it does compel a mutual insurance of deposits that can not fail to be of material benefit to the people. There was no reason other than that the attorney for the company did not want it for the omission of the stockyards from the physical valuation bill, but otherwise the measure apparently meets the need of the hour. If in the selection of the men to make the valuation partisan interference can be eliminated, Nebraska will have made a good start to a final solution of the railroad problem. Some weak spots in the primary law have been made strong; we have a good reciprocal demurrage law; a law putting the election of senators closer to the people; a law that ought to stop watering of corporation stock; a law giving judges the power to confer indeterminate sentences upon offenders against the criminal statutes; a law that will prevent monopolistic corporations compelling the people of one section to pay for the price wars they make in other sections to crush out competition, by prohibiting discrimination in prices between communities.

"Then we have a corporation tax law that ought to bring in a big revenue yearly; laws for publication of campaign contributions before elections and preventing coercion of voters; a law taking the election of judges and school officers out of partisan politics; laws reducing rates on fuel oil and crude petroleum; a law making the supreme court clerk a salaried office; a model divorce law; a law that ought to put an end to the extortion of the surety bond combine; a law compelling railroads to run full crews on all trains; a law compelling hotelkeepers to provide sanitary accommodations for guests; laws extending the benefit of normal school education to various sections of the state; laws establishing experimental farms that ought to prove a valuable aid to agriculture; a law minimizing drunkenness on trains; a daylight saloon bill.

"The chief criticism that can be lodged against the legislature is that it refused to pass a number of equally excellent measures. It touched the railroads very lightly, it killed all county option and prohibition measures, but redeemed itself in part by its daylight saloon bill. It is possible that it passed some bad bills, but they do not now occur to us. The legislature made considerable progress, less than the preceding one did, but not as much as could reasonably be expected of it, not as much as it should have done. Its shortcomings, however, ought not to weigh too heavily against the record of its achievement, which we are glad to commend."

THE TARIFF AND THE COST OF LIVING

Those politicians who hug the flattering belief that the tariff is a local question and that their seats are secure so long as they please their locality will find out some day that the tariff is a class question and a moral class question at that.

For example, in a recent letter to the Milwaukee Journal, a poor woman who is trying to live on less than \$500 a year says:

"My husband gets \$11 a week for eleven and a half hours' work, where others get \$18 for the same work. Now, say rent is \$13, coal \$8, food \$20 a month and poor food at that. Count in that with five or six in the family, and where do the doctor, medicine, shoes, clothes, insurance on life, water, gas meter, milkman, furniture man, paper man, car fare, tickets, hats, insurance on furniture, school books and the Lord knows what else, come from? As for a piece of candy or cake or a pie or the theatre, when you pay your honest debts, what can you do with \$44 a month?"

This is not the opinion of a trained political expert or even of an office-holding statesman; it is just the bare statement of facts from one who is trying to live in a country where every article of necessity is oppressively taxed in order that overgrown giants may have that protection which was once thought necessary for struggling infants. And when the talk is over and done about the tariff helping the workingmen it is worth while for the workingmen

to stop and consider how much of this oratory is based on truth and how much of it is mere claptrap used to obscure the real facts and to maintain a burdensome and killing tax on the poorer classes of a community.

For example, the poor wear clothes, and yet the tariff on wools is 11 cents a pound, and woolen clothing and blankets carry a tax that varies from 134.97 on the cheapest to 94.32 on the highest grades. We have been nourishing and protecting our cotton industry for nearly a century; yet the average tax on cotton today is 49.40, and when the amount of cotton cloth used by the poor is considered the weight of this tax stands out in all its severity.

There are 80,000,000 people in the United States and they all wear shoes, but congress and the politicians have taken small note of this fact from the wearers' standpoint, for there has been an increase of 25 per cent in women's shoes alone in the ten years between 1890 and 1900. The raw material for shoes is hides, and W. L. Douglas, the great shoe manufacturer, who was also democratic governor of Massachusetts a few years ago, is authority for the statement that \$30,000,000 per annum could be saved the people of this country by taking the duty off hides, but the duty stays on.

The fact that a man is poor does not make him any less desirous of living in a house; yet every stick that goes into his humble dwelling is taxed under a lumber tariff. This means, according to the estimate of the labor bureau at Washington, that it would cost 41.4 per cent more for material alone to build a house in 1905 than it would have cost in 1908. Nor does the tariff hold its hand with what we have enumerated. Practically everything that is consumed or worn or used levies an oppressive tax on the poor in order that the government may gain some revenue, while favored beneficiaries amass stupendous fortunes.

The tariff tax is not only unwise; it is unjust, and some day the people who are bearing that burden will find it out, and then the national government will reduce its expenses and change its source of revenue until the cost of living is made to harmonize more nearly with the income of the great body of the citizens.

It was just such letters as the one we have printed above that made the workingmen of England rise sixty years ago and break down the bread monopoly of that country. The workingmen of America also will rise some day when they understand the true inwardness of the tariff monopoly in this country.—Richmond, Va., Times-Dispatch.

STUART GIBSON BARR

Stuart Gibson Barr of Hollidaysburg, Pa., who was widely known in the circles of democracy in the east, died recently. Concerning this fine democrat the Altoona (Pa.) Tribune prints this editorial:

"The death of former Burgess S. Gibson Barr, of Hollidaysburg, which was announced in yesterday's number of the Tribune, removes one of the best known citizens of the county capital. He lived in Hollidaysburg all his life and was a good citizen of the town. Politically he was a democrat of the old school. The writer had not been closely associated with him during the last quarter of a century, although he often visited the Tribune office, and does not know whether advancing years softened his political views or not. But in the decade from 1871 to 1881, he was certainly a devout and aggressive democrat, profoundly attached to the principles of that historic party. His determined and aggressive attitude sometimes made him enemies, but aside from these little peculiarities he was a good citizen and sincerely devoted to the welfare of his native town."

HUMORS OF THE TARIFF

There are in the Payne tariff bill a few illustrations of the ingenious way in which a duty can be raised, while the artless consumer is made to believe that it has been lowered.

Take, for instance, linoleum, an article of common use among those who are not particularly well to do. Under the present law there is a duty of 8 cents a square yard and 15 per cent ad valorem on all under twelve feet in width. On all over that width the duty is 20 cents a yard and 20 per cent ad valorem. The ways and means committee in its summary of reductions says: "Linoleum above nine feet from 20 cents a square yard and 20 per cent ad valorem to 12 cents and 15 per cent ad valorem."

This is an increase, not a decrease. There

were imported a year ago about 160,000 square yards of linoleum above twelve feet in width and 4,874,000 square yards under that width. Probably three-fourths of the goods paying the lower duty ranged in width from over nine feet to nearly twelve feet. So what really is proposed is that the bulk of the importations shall pay 4 cents more a square yard than at present.

Here is a display of ingenuity not of a praiseworthy kind. The consumers may not be able to see any fun in the joke. The Pennsylvania manufacturers who asked for and got the higher duty do see the fun of it.

In the case of cast polished plate glass an attempt is made to make an increase in a duty seem harmless by coupling with it a nominal decrease. The duties on all sizes under 720 square inches are raised. That covers the sizes employed for furniture purposes. The duties on the larger sizes are lowered. Taking the 1907 importations as a basis, this would mean higher duties on about 5,700,000 pounds of glass and a decrease on 180,000. The American manufacturer can stand that trifling cut, for he has a protection of 155 per cent on the larger sizes.

The farmer and the workingman would be profoundly grateful to congress for legislation giving them cheaper window glass. They rejoiced, doubtless, when they saw that mentioned among the articles on which duties were to be reduced. The laugh is on them, not on the manufacturers. The duty is reduced a little on cylinder, crown, and common window glass above 24x30 inches, but not on the lower sizes. The importations under that size amount to 30,000,000 pounds and those above it to about 1,600,000.

One glass manufacturer was honest enough to write to the ways and means committee that his industry could stand a cut of 25 per cent. So it can. The difference between the cost of production of a square foot of polished plate glass in Belgium and the United States is a little over 3 cents. The present tariff gives as much protection as if the difference were 15 cents. The consumer of this article of universal use is paying too much for it now. The committee on ways and means should have made genuine instead of sham reductions. Probably it reckoned that they were being humbugged.—Chicago Tribune (republican.)

WATCH THE FISH

It is impossible for all the voters to go to Washington to watch the progress of the tariff bill, but those who live at some distance from the national capital can get an idea of what is going on if they will visit a fish hatchery and watch the fish when they are being fed. When the one in charge of the hatchery throws in a handful of food, the fish rise to the surface and grab at everything in sight, returning to the depths when the food is gone. In like manner, a tariff bill is the signal for the protected interests to collect about congress; they grab everything they see and only return home when there is nothing more in sight.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE OF COLLEGE CLUBS

The National Democratic League of College Clubs is at work on democratic organization within its particular sphere. Roger Sherman Hoar of Massachusetts is president of this league. His address is 72 Main street, Concord, Mass. The league is doing effective work and promises to be of great service in future campaigns.

Informal meetings of the officers of the league have been held as follows: On February 16 at Cambridge, Mass.; on March 5 in Washington, D. C., and on March 6 in New York City. At these conferences the president of the league met with the first vice president, the secretary, the treasurer, two members of the graduate committee, and the state vice presidents from ten of the states. The following advisory action was taken: To have each state vice president call a college convention in his state at the beginning of the next state campaign; to establish permanent democratic clubs in all the colleges; and to have league letter-heads printed for sale to the officers of the league at cost. Several of the vice presidents volunteered to start leagues in their states at once without waiting for the next campaign. The question of organizing girls' democratic clubs in the equal suffrage states caused much discussion and was finally dropped. At the Cambridge conference, it was voted to organize an electoral democratic in addition to the open one at Harvard.