

Organize for the Income Tax

Unquestionably a majority of the democratic and republican parties favor the income tax. If proof on this point were necessary it is found in the fact that a republican congress has been forced by public sentiment to submit an income tax amendment. It is no secret, however, that the republican leaders who reluctantly yielded to this necessity expect that the proposed amendment will fail by reason of not having a sufficient number of states.

The clause in the federal constitution providing for the method of amendments is as follows:

"The congress, whenever two-thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this constitution or, on the application of the legislatures of two-thirds of the several states, shall call a convention for proposing amendments, which in either case, shall be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of this constitution, when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several states, or by conventions of three-fourths thereof, as the one or the other mode of ratification may be

"WILL CONGRESS FOLLOW BRYAN?"

In an editorial entitled "Will Congress Follow Bryan?" the Philadelphia Inquirer, issue of July 5, says:

"William J. Bryan either wrote or dictated the platform of the democratic party as adopted at Denver last year. The attention of the republican members of the senate is directed to the following plank:

"We favor an income tax as part of our revenue system, and we urge the submission of a constitutional amendment specifically authorizing congress to levy and collect tax upon individual and corporate incomes, to the end"—etc.

"The republican senate seems to be taking its inspiration from the policy laid down at Denver by Mr. Bryan. The proposition before the senate is to pass an amendment to the tariff bill permitting of the immediate taxation of corporate incomes without waiting for a constitutional amendment. In this respect it accepts the Bryan idea and even enlarges on it. As to the submission of the amendment to the constitution, it coincides precisely with the Bryan view.

"Is it really necessary to out-Bryan Bryan?"

"Of course, it is understood that democratic senators in combination with some western heretofore-republicans have sought to foist an immediate individual income tax upon the country in practically the same manner that the supreme court has declared to be unconstitutional, and that to escape the issue of a direct vote the finance committee has adopted the Bryan proposition of suggesting a constitutional amendment to the people. But is the finance committee so afraid of the democratic-"insurgent" combination that it must submit to a corporation income tax without waiting for the amendment to clear up constitutional questions?"

"We confess that we do not altogether like the attitude of the finance committee. It is agreeing to a new system of taxation that, if it should stand, would inevitably raise up enemies to the protective policy. Collect a large revenue from income taxes and the free traders or tariff reformers or whatever name they may go by, would win by a round-about path precisely what they can not win in a straightforward contest. The democratic-"insurgent" indorsement of income taxation, corporate or individual, is not based primarily upon the necessity of raising additional revenue, but upon the belief that it would force low duties and thereby endanger protection."

THE INCOME TAX AND HOME RULE

When the house of representatives proposed to re-enact an inheritance tax law many protested on the ground that the states already tax inheritances and will inevitably resort more and more to that source of revenue. Now Justice Brewer opposes the income tax amendment to the constitution on account of its possible ultimate effect on the poor states, which might be robbed of their vitality by the exercise of the power demanded for the federal government.

"What will the states do," asks the justice, "in case they need large sums of money for their own revenue?"

For over a hundred years congress was recog-

proposed by the congress; provided, that no amendment which may be made prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any manner affect the first and fourth clauses in the ninth section of the first article; and that no state, without its consent, shall be deprived of its equal suffrage in the senate."

The fight for the income tax has only begun. The subject should, therefore, be studied by every citizen. It would be well if, in every precinct in the United States, men and women should congregate for the purpose of informing themselves upon this important topic.

ALABAMA FIRST TO ACT
The legislature of Alabama is in session and Alabama is the first state to take action on the income tax amendment. Both houses of the legislature on July 30, reported favorably on the income tax amendment, and the legislature adopted it.
NEXT!

nized by the supreme court as possessing the power to levy income taxes. It did levy them in emergencies, and no one on or off the federal bench felt any acute apprehension as to the future of the states. Because the supreme court reversed itself by a vote of 5 to 4 under very unusual circumstances, legal and political, it does not follow that the re-conferring of a power unexpectedly lost has become fraught with grave danger to the states. What congress "might do" is not what it is ever likely to do. Congress might destroy a thousand and one things by its existing power to levy taxes and excise duties. It might destroy industries and individuals; it might starve the federal executive by making all tariff duties actually prohibitive.

But common sense and common prudence will not die with this generation. The power to levy income taxes will not be exercised by wild men running amuck among the states, but by men attached to states and localities, by representatives of people who value home rule in its best sense. As a matter of fact, home rule is flourishing as never before in spite of the steady decline of "state rights." Home rule means county and municipal option as to various things, including taxation, and legislation based on local needs and conditions. It has precious little to do with the abstract doctrine of "state rights."

In a dual government it is not always possible to prevent double taxation, but if the taxation is reasonable and moderate, the citizen suffers no hardship. What he fears is oppressive taxation, whether by one or several powers, and discrimination. The income tax amendment is intended to prevent oppression and inequality, not to encourage them.—Chicago Record-Herald.

IDLE FEARS

Mr. Justice Brewer was one of the judges who pronounced the income tax act of 1894 unconstitutional. He has not changed his mind and has been moved by the submission to the states of an income tax amendment to say that it would be suicidal for them to ratify it.

The constitution, he says, makes the nation the exclusive possessor of the revenue from customs. License taxes can be imposed by the nation and the states, but the former can make them so high that no individual could pay a state license tax also and do business. Tangible property is left to the states to tax. The nation can not tax it except through the mechanism of a direct tax apportioned among the states on a basis of population. But, says Justice Brewer, real estate is worth no more than can be got out of it—its income. So, if the nation were allowed to levy an income tax, it could make the tax so high as to cover most of the income from real and personal property. Then, if the states needed large sums for their own use, where would they get them?

Justice Brewer's doleful prediction is: "If once you give to the nation the power to tax all the incomes you give it the power to tax the

states, not out of their existence but out of their vitality."

This is the old, irrefragable argument that it is dangerous to grant any power because it may conceivably be used to the injury of the grantor. It was the great argument against the ratification of the national constitution. It was contended that the powers which it was proposed to give the national government might be used for the subjugation of the states. That has not come to pass nor would such use be made of the income tax, if its levy were permitted, as would sap the vitality of the states.

Representatives elected by the people of the states could vote income and license taxes that would sweep in the income of the country and leave nothing for the states, but they would not do it. For they are not now, nor would they be, if armed with greater powers, oblivious of the welfare of the states they come from.

The states should not be held back from the ratification of the income tax amendment through fear of thereby depriving themselves of revenue for state purposes.—Chicago Tribune.

SUGGESTIONS TO COMMONER READERS

T. H. Maguire, Morris, Minn.—Having time to think it over, and to try to conclude what happened to us, and what we had best do to try to rouse the people up to the protection of their own best interests in public matters, I have come to the conclusion that with 95 per cent of the papers of the country advocating the cause of predatory wealth, it behooves those of us who followed you in the first, second and third battles to make an effort to put The Commoner in the homes of as many as it is possible to do, as I know by actual test what good results will come from it and to that end I am ready to try to do something in this locality. It is my notion that if the Bryan Volunteers will give their efforts to placing The Commoner in the homes of their neighbors throughout this union, we will be able to prevent the Declaration of Independence from being repealed. This county in 1904 gave the republican candidate for president 990 majority; in 1908 the majority for same was 301 votes. When these returns were coming in I felt better about results just then than I did the following day. I am wanting to enter into the fifth battle and to open the warfare; let us try to put The Commoner into as many homes as we can. I'll try; advise me about the undertaking.

D. W. McGeorge, Clarksburg, W. Va.—In 1896 the national democratic convention did just what I wanted them to do. I was an admirer of Mr. Bryan before that, and much disappointed when he was defeated. In 1900 I felt that it was not his time and did not hope for his election. I was really glad that he was not nominated in 1904. But from that time on hoped for his nomination in 1908, and began to work for The Commoner. I have no record as to how many subscribers I procured but made it a rule to have cards in my pocket and bought them in blocks of five and ten. I am not the only one in this locality that did so and therefore am not claiming all the credit for the work that was done, but am trying to show that it is not necessary to be a talented speaker or writer to be an effective worker for the democratic cause. The effect of The Commoner's teaching was that we were able to organize in March, 1908, a Bryan club of 500 members. We forced instructions from the ward primary and through the county convention, but was overcome in the district by other counties. During the national campaign I urged upon the county committee to conduct a literary campaign, but they claimed a shortage of funds. The Bryan club raised money by public subscription, rented a good room on a public street and circulated 10,000 pictures and nearly 40,000 pieces of literature. Whilst we did not carry the county for the national ticket, we cut down the republican majority and elected the first democratic sheriff in twenty years.

Otto M. Miller, Garfield, Ill.—Have read with interest John M. Fulton's letter in the middle column on page 6 of the April 2, 1909 issue of The Commoner. Heartily agree in the main with his sentiments. We ought not only to double our circulation, but ought to try to place The Commoner in the hands and home of every democrat in the United States. To secure this end I believe, as Mr. Fulton has suggested, you should start a special column or section in your paper. Then in that place, as often as he sends in, print the name of every subscriber who sends in, without receiving any other remuneration therefor, five new subscribers to The Commoner. Would suggest that you entitle this section "The Roll of Honor."