

The Commoner.

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A TARIFF BATTLE-LINE

In every fight there must be a battle line. If the democrats desire to control the next congress they must convince the voters that they not only intend to reduce the tariff, BUT CAN BE RELIED UPON TO DO SO. If the democrats in the senate and house had voted solidly for every proposed decrease in the tariff and against every proposed increase we might make the next congressional fight on the party's record without outlining a specific affirmative policy, but the fact that a considerable number of democrats in the house and a majority of the democrats in the senate repudiated parts of the last democratic national platform and voted against reductions urged by the rest of the democrats and by progressive republicans makes it impossible for us to make the fight next year upon the party's record in congress.

THE COUNTRY MUST HAVE ASSURANCE THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY CAN AGREE UPON A TARIFF POLICY AND CARRY IT OUT. If the democratic candidates for congress can not agree upon a program BEFORE the election they are not likely to agree upon a bill AFTERWARDS. The influence of the special interests is so great that it is absolutely necessary to pledge congressmen in advance in order that they may be fortified against the pressure which the protected interests bring to bear against the legislators. The necessity for specific declarations was shown in the last congress when the republican tariff reformers attempted to interpret their ambiguous platform. Even the democratic platform was interpreted differently by different members of the party.

In view of the fact that some of the democrats denied the binding force of platforms every democratic platform should contain a plank endorsing the democratic doctrine that platform pledges are inviolable.

The Commoner presents, below, a sample tariff plank. It contains three propositions, the first, declaring that a platform is binding, the second, promising a revision of the rules of

the house of representatives and the third, outlining a tariff policy. No democratic candidate is deserving of support who denies that a platform is binding or who refuses to announce his position on questions at issue, and no democrat should be elected to congress who is not willing to assist in restoring popular government in the house of representatives. Democrats may honestly differ as to schedules but they are not likely to differ much unless they are tinctured with the protective tariff idea. It is only when they are seeking a pretext for giving protection to some industry that they begin to manufacture reasons for opposing reductions. Here is the sample tariff plank:

First, A platform is a pledge, given by the candidate to the voters and, when ratified at the polls, becomes a contract between the official and his constituents. To violate it, in letter or in spirit, is not only undemocratic but repugnant to the principles of representative government, and constitutes an embezzlement of power.

Second, We denounce the despotism known as Cannonism and favor such an amendment of the rules of the national house of representatives as will restore popular government in that body and insure the rule of the majority on every question.

Third, We endorse the tariff plank of the last national democratic platform and believe that the measure carrying out the promise of that platform should, among other things, provide for:

Free wool, the abolition of the compensatory duties on woolsens and a substantial reduction in the ad valorem rate on woolsens.

Free lumber, free wood pulp and free paper. Free hides, leather, harness, boots and shoes. Free oil and products of oil.

Free iron ore, free coal and low duties on all manufactures of iron and steel.

Free binding twine, cotton ties and cotton bagging.

Material reductions in the cotton schedules and in the tariff upon all other necessities of

life, especially upon articles sold abroad more cheaply than at home, the aim being to put the lowest duty on articles of necessity and the highest on articles of luxury. Articles coming into competition with trust made articles should be placed upon the free list.

No tariff rate should be above fifty per cent ad valorem, excepting upon liquor and tobacco, and all rates above twenty-five per cent, excepting those upon liquor and tobacco, should be reduced one-twentieth each year until a twenty-five per cent rate is reached, the purpose being to reduce the tariff gradually to a revenue basis and thereafter to collect tariff for revenue only.

A congress elected on a platform like the above would be pledged to real tariff reduction and a tariff bill embodying these principles, would, if passed by a democratic house and rejected by a republican senate, make a tariff issue for 1912—an issue which would draw the line between tariff reformers and protectionists. The platform should, of course, cover all other questions at issue.

The Commoner will be pleased to publish brief letters from democratic candidates for congress endorsing or rejecting the above platform in whole or in part. If each candidate will announce his platform the public can decide intelligently and The Commoner urges the nomination of that democratic candidate, whoever he may be, whose platform reflects the wishes of the democrats of his district. If the democratic party is really a protectionist party it should nominate democrats who believe in the principles of protection, but the tariff reform element of the party ought to have a representative in every district to contest the democratic nomination with any democrat who believes in protection or who refuses to make his position on the subject clear and specific.

The Commoner will give a hearing to all democratic candidates, but it will give whatever assistance it can to those democrats who oppose the principle of protection and favor immediate reduction, with a tariff for revenue only as the end in view.

TAINTED NEWS

Have you read in your local paper a news item telling about "the International Harvester company's welfare, work and pensions?" And have you read another declaring that the Indiana state plant for the manufacture of binding twine is a failure? The editor of The Commoner saw these two items on the same page of a South Dakota paper and, suspecting that

they were advertisements, made inquiry and learned that they were furnished by the International Harvester company and published under an advertising contract. The name of the company does not appear in the article on the Indiana state plant, but the harvester company seems to think that it is worth the money (at advertising rates) to make the people believe that the state of Indiana can not afford to make binding twine at the penitentiary. But why does the harvester company have it published as a news item? Why is it not signed by the company? The reason is obvious—the company prefers to mislead the public. And why does the company pay for the published praise of its dealings with its employes? To conciliate the public. And here, too, it reads better as a news item than it would as an advertisement. And what shall we say of the ethics of this kind of advertising? The reader ought to know when he is reading a paid advertisement and when he is reading impartial news.

FROM A COMMONER READER

J. R. Jarvis, Cobden, Ill.—One of the causes for our (the common people's) support of The Commoner is that your paper treats its readers as if they had sufficient intelligence to form their own opinions on all political questions, providing they have the necessary information, facts, etc., on which to base their opinions. These your paper gives to its readers, and, as one of these, I thank you for this compliment to our intelligence.

KEEP THE BLAZE BURNING

Writing to the Boston Journal, George Fred Williams says:

"For years we have had certain democrats howling for tariff reform. When they at last have a chance, what do we find them doing? The whole democratic crowd in congress are ready to reform everybody else, but when their own states are reached they jump in and take their part of the loot. They are perfectly willing to trim off duties which affect the other fellow, but for themselves they'll hold tight to what they have or perhaps go it one better. I'm all through with politics until I can see some light ahead. Just now there isn't even a gleam for a progressive democrat."

It is not surprising that men who have worked faithfully for the public interest should, at times, be discouraged. But while Mr. Williams is waiting for the "light ahead" he should continue his good efforts to "keep the blaze burning on the hill top." Men like George Fred Williams should not undertake to estimate the results of their labors by the political victories won. In every age they have had the opportunity of deriving satisfaction from the fact that they have protected the people from some imposition and have forced some reforms from majority parties.

Was national incorporation the consideration for the Wall Street support that went to Mr. Taft all at once last year.

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