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Mr. Bryan's Dallas Speech

In Favor of Free Raw Material

Mr. Bryan spoke on the tariff question at Dallas, Texas, September 14.

After a few introductory remarks, Mr. Bryan said:

There has been some discussion as to the reason for my coming here at this time to deliver this speech, and an explanation may not be out of order. The support which has been given me by the state of Texas in three national campaigns would be a sufficient reason for my coming here to make a speech at any time. I might find an additional reason in the fact that last year Texas not only endorsed the Denver platform after the national convention but endorsed the Nebraska platform before the national convention. But there is a special reason for my coming at this time. Finding that I would be in the state for the delivery of several lectures, I thought it an opportune time to make a tariff speech at Dallas and Fort Worth, and that I may not be accused of partiality, I will add that later in the fall I expect to speak on the subject in a number of other places in the state. I am not here at the invitation of any person or group of persons; I am here rather in response to a summons, for I am one of the defendants in an indictment brought against the democracy of the nation in the platform adopted by the Texas state convention in 1896. The platform to which I refer says:

"We favor a tariff for revenue only, but in a sufficient amount, supplemented by other taxation, to meet the expenses required so as to render it unnecessary to increase the public debt, in any manner or form whatever. And we believe that the present tariff law, which lets into this country raw materials free of duty and levies heavy duties on manufactured products, thus subjecting our agricultural and pastoral classes to competition with the world, while it enables the rich manufacturers by means of combinations and trusts to extort their own prices for their products from the people, violates the federal constitution as well as the principles of the democratic party; that tariff duty should be levied and collected for the purpose of revenue only."

I am not only one of the democracy of the nation, but I was in congress at the time the Wilson bill was passed, and a member of the committee that framed it. As I voted for it, and for other bills providing for the admission of raw material free, I have a right to be heard, when this question is under discussion.

The law to which the Texas platform refers was the Wilson tariff law, enacted in 1894. Your platform condemns "the present law," that is the law on the statute books in 1896, and that was the Wilson law, and your plat-

form condemns that law because it let "into this country raw materials free of duty." There are several phrases in the platform which I would be glad to consider, but I shall only mention them briefly and devote my time to the discussion of the main question raised by the platform.

In the first sentence of the plank above quoted there is an implied condemnation of the law, because it did not provide sufficient revenue to support the government. This condemnation is unfair, because the failure of the law to raise sufficient revenue was due to the decision of the supreme court, nullifying the income tax provision of the law. The Wilson law provided for an income tax, and this income tax, with the import duties provided for, would have supplied the needs of the government. I need not remind you that the income tax provision was constitutional at the time it was passed. It was constitutional when the court first decided the question, because the court stood four to four. The law only became unconstitutional when one judge changed his mind, and it is not fair to charge that up against those who supported the bill.

I might also object to the unfairness of that plank of the Texas platform, because it condemns the rich manufacturers without condemning the rich lumber barons, the rich ship owners and the rich cattlemen, who demand a tariff on their raw materials which they produce. But the question which I desire to discuss relates to the tariff on raw materials. The platform condemns the Wilson law because it admitted raw materials free of duty "thus subjecting our (Texas) agricultural and pastoral classes to competition with the world." This, the Texas platform proceeds to declare, violates the federal constitution, as well as the principles of the democratic party. We who supported that law, and who favored the principle embodied in it, are accused not only of violating democratic principles, but of violating the constitution. Surely no Texas democrat will deny me the right to defend myself and those who believe as I do against so serious a charge.

While this indictment has been standing for some thirteen years, the case was not called for trial until recently. So far as I have been able to learn, the subject of raw material has not been referred to specifically in any Texas platform since 1898, but in the last session of congress the subject was under discussion and the discussion led to a great deal of difference of opinion and to a wide divergence in action among senators and members; it led some democrats in the senate and house to vote against specific demands contained in the last democratic national platform, and in some cases it led democratic senators from the same state to vote on opposite sides of a question.

I am not going to discuss the binding force of platforms; that a platform is binding upon one who runs upon it is axiomatic. I would not discuss the ten commandments with a Christian; no more need I discuss with a democrat the binding force of a platform.

I believe that a candidate has a right to repudiate a part of his platform if he believes the platform wrong, but this repudiation must be made before the election, so that his declarations on the subject may constitute a new platform, which will be binding upon him.

In my acceptance speech at Lincoln, Neb., a year ago I discussed this subject and outlined what I regard as the democratic position for the subject. I expressly recognized the right of Mr. Taft to dissent from the action of his convention on certain questions, and to substitute his own pledge for the pledge that the convention refused to make, and when I was in congress I refused to vote for the repeal of the tax upon state banks, because I had in my campaign dissented from that plank of the platform and promised my constituents to vote against it. There was not a voter in my district—so far as I know—who favored the issue of state bank notes, and I was not only carrying out their views, but my own, in opposing the restoration of a state bank currency, but I would not have felt justified in voting against

the proposition if I had not openly declared my opposition to it during the campaign.

Owing to the fact that a number of senators and members have refused to be bound by the national platform on some propositions, I think that every congressional platform adopted next year should begin with a plank declaring that platforms are binding, and I will later suggest a form for such a plank.

In view of the fact that Texas seems to have taken the lead in the movement to tax raw materials, and in view of the further fact that Texas must convert the democracy of the rest of the country to this position, or find herself separated in sentiment from the rest of the country, I take the liberty of presenting some of the reasons that lead me, and those who think as I do, to favor the admission of the principal raw materials free of duty, and in order that the issue may be made plain, I submit three planks which I think should be inserted in every congressional platform:

The first relates to the binding force of platforms; the second to the amendment of the rules of the house, so as to restore popular government in the house of representatives, and the third to the specific declarations which should, in my judgment, be made upon the tariff question.

If all of the democrats in the senate and house had voted against every proposed increase in the tariff, and for every proposed decrease, we might have made our fight next year upon the party's record, without making a specific declaration on items or schedules, but in view of the fact that democrats, in both the senate and the house, differed as to the interpretation of the democratic platform and as to the rates that should be imposed under the various schedules, I believe that it is necessary for our platform to be specific and emphatic. If we expect to secure control of congress we must convince the public that we will, if entrusted with power, favor material reductions, and unless our candidates for congress can agree before the election they are not likely to agree after the election. With our democratic senators and representatives differing among themselves as to the tariff on important articles, we can never hope to frame a satisfactory tariff measure.

And now I will read you the three planks to which I have referred:

1. 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.

2. We denounce the despotism known as Cannonism and favor such an amendment to 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.

2. We denounce the despotism known as 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 woollens and a substantial reduction in the ad valorem rate on woollens.

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 on the free list.

No tariff rate should be above 50 per cent ad valorem, except upon liquor and tobacco, and all rates above 25 per cent, excepting those

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