

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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## Real Tariff Reform

The editor of the Houston Post is in distress. He is deeply grieved, as well as sorely disappointed, at Mr. Bryan's refusal to allow "friends" to arrange a debate between Senator Bailey and himself.

Mr. Bryan has given his reasons for believing that a joint discussion is inadvisable, but the Post is disconsolate. It says: "The Post does not impute a lack of courage to Mr. Bryan, as some do," (many thanks) "but it does doubt the soundness of the reason he gives for avoiding the debate."

There are several other reasons which the Post may discover if it searches diligently. For instance: It may find that it would be a reflection upon Mr. Bailey's opponents in Texas to assume that there is no one there competent to represent those who differ from him. And again, the Post, but for its infatuation, might suspect that Senator Bailey does not represent all the people of Texas, on the question of free lumber. What reason has the Post for believing that the democratic congressmen of Texas (all but one voted for free lumber) misrepresent their constituents?

The Post espouses the tax on lumber as if it reflected a unanimous sentiment. Is there any reason to believe that, as a rule, a senator is more likely than a congressman to voice the wishes of constituents? Is not the presumption with the Texas congressmen?

And on the subject of free iron ore: Why does the Post not suggest a joint debate between Senator Culberson and Senator Bailey? Senator Culberson not only voted for free iron ore but he made a speech in favor of it. Senator Bailey has never answered Senator Culberson's arguments. Here is a chance for "friends" to arrange a joint discussion. Why not give the people of Texas a chance to hear these two distinguished gentlemen debate a question which divided the democracy of the senate, but would not, it might be added, be apt to divide the democracy anywhere else?

And what reason has the Post for believing that Senator Bailey represents anybody but himself, when he denies the binding force of platforms? Does the Post itself dispute the doctrine laid down in the first plank of the platform proposed by Mr. Bryan, viz: "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."

If the Post disputes this doctrine let it sub-

mit the question to a vote of its own readers, and report the result of the vote.

One (of several) troubles with the Post, is that it does not fairly meet the propositions presented by Mr. Bryan. The Commoner calls its attention to the fact that the first plank reads: "Free wool, the abolition of the compensatory duties on woollens and a substantial reduction in the ad valorem rate on woollens." Is the Post unwilling to give the consumer the benefit of "the abolition of the compensatory duties on woollens and a substantial reduction in the ad valorem rate on woollens," because to do so would require the admission of free wool?

If the Post insists on a tax on wool merely because 1107 men out of the total population of Texas raise sheep, how can it complain if the democrats of other states insist on protecting everything raised in those states?

The second demand of Mr. Bryan's platform is for "free lumber, free wood pulp and free paper." Does the Post still demand a tax on lumber in spite of the votes cast for free lumber by all the Texas congressmen, except one?

The third demand of Mr. Bryan's platform is for "free hides, leather, harness, boots and shoes." Does the Post oppose this demand? Both of the senators and all the congressmen from Texas have expressed their willingness to have hides put on the free list, providing leather, harness, boots and shoes are also admitted free, and that is what Mr. Bryan asks for.

Is the Post opposed to "free oil and products of oil?" and if it is in favor of free oil and the products of oil, why is it so afraid to put other things on the free list?

Is the Post opposed to "low duties on the manufactures of iron and steel," if in order to secure these it must favor "free iron ore and free coal?"

Is it opposed to "free binding twine, cotton ties and cotton bagging?"

Is it opposed to "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?"

Is it opposed to putting upon the free list "articles coming into competition with trust-made articles?"

Is it opposed to fixing a maximum of 50 per cent, so that no articles, except liquor and tobacco, will be taxed more than that?

Is it opposed to a gradual reduction to 25 per cent of all rates above 25 per cent?

The Commoner reproduces below the platform which Mr. Bryan read at Dallas, and which had been put into an editorial before he went to Texas:

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.

3. 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 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 upon liquor and tobacco, should be reduced one-twentieth each year until a 25 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.

Let the Post take this platform up, plank by plank, and state to its readers how much it approves and how much it condemns, and then its readers will be able to find several reasons why it is not necessary for Mr. Bryan to enter into a joint debate on these items with any democrat.

In favoring real tariff reform and a specific declaration in favor of tariff reduction, Mr. Bryan represents the democrats of Texas and of the entire south, as well as the democrats of the north.

On a number of these questions, the democratic congressmen of Texas have already gone on record, and Mr. Bryan will not assume that they are misrepresenting their constituents when they repudiate the protective tariff doctrine urged in behalf of a few Texas people who are peculiarly interested in producing the raw materials that demand a tariff for tariff's sake.

### MIGHT HAVE HELPED IN CONGRESS

At Fort Worth a few days ago, Senator Bailey expressed his willingness to help elect democratic congressmen in Nebraska. A Texas democrat makes the very obvious reply that if Senator Bailey had been anxious to help elect democratic congressmen in Nebraska, he would have shown it by his votes and speeches in the senate.

He, and those who voted with him, have done more to defeat democratic congressmen in the close districts of the north, than he could have assisted by all the speeches he could make in that district in one hundred years.

The democrats of the north believe that a platform is binding upon those who run upon it, and they believe that a platform ought to state the party position. They also believe that a tariff should be made for the purpose of raising revenue, and not for the purpose of protecting a few wool growers in one section, a few timber growers in another, etc., etc., throughout the country.

### WHY?

Query: If the democrats of Texas insist that a high tariff shall be collected on wool, because there are 1107 sheep owners in Texas, why should not the democrats of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York and New England insist upon a high tariff on everything produced in those states, where a much larger percentage of the population is connected with protective industries? Where can we expect tariff reform sentiment if not in Texas?

## Where Congressmen Stand

The Commoner will be pleased to publish brief letters from congressmen and democratic candidates for congress, giving their opinion of the tariff platform suggested by Mr. Bryan. (It will be found in another column of this issue.)

New York, October 6, 1909.—Hon. William J. Bryan, Lincoln, Neb.—My Dear Mr. Bryan: I am with you in your fight for free raw material, and true tariff reform, and 99 per cent of the democrats of the country will line up under this banner. It is the best unifying principle the democrats have today.

In my speeches in congress against the Payne-Aldrich-Cannon-Taft tariff bill, I came out flat-footed and as strongly as I possibly could in favor of free raw material, which is one of the ancient land marks of democratic policy. On these lines keep up the fight. We can carry the country on the issue in 1912.

With best wishes, believe me, as ever,

Very sincerely, your friend,

WM. SULZER.

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