

Where Democratic 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.

Boston, Mass., October 30, 1909.—Charles W. Bryan, Lincoln, Neb.—Dear Sir: Your favor at hand asking for my opinion on the tariff planks of October 1. No question is finally settled until it is settled right. To this maxim, the tariff is no exception.

The tariff plank suggested by Mr. Bryan brings forward the real issues on which the people in the country should rally. Free raw materials, reduction in the cotton and woolen schedules, and a general reduction in trust controlled articles should add stimulus to our industries and bring to the people of our country added happiness.

Yours very truly, ANDREW T. PETERS.

Birmingham, Ala., November 1, 1909.—Charles W. Bryan, Publisher The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.—Dear Sir: There has never been a platform of a national convention since the organization of the democratic party that has advocated free trade theories. The platforms of the party have always maintained that the true position of the party was in favor of a tariff for revenue. There never has been a tariff bill enacted into law by the democratic party that has not favored the doctrine of a tariff for revenue as opposed to a tariff levied along free trade lines, such as the revenue laws of Great Britain.

The most distinctive democratic tariff bill that was ever written on the statute books of this country was the Walker tariff of 1846, and, although the duties levied under this tariff did not exceed a thirty per cent ad valorem rate, they were levied on competitive articles, such as wool and cotton, iron and steel; sugar and coffee, then non-competitive articles, were placed on the free list, which demonstrates that the democratic party in preparing its tariff bills has favored a duty levied for revenue. There was no exploitation of a free list in the Walker tariff on articles that could raise a material amount of revenue. If we write a tariff bill for the purpose solely of raising revenue for the treasury, we are no more concerned with the incidental benefit that some citizens may derive from having raw material placed on the free list, than we are concerned with the incidental benefits that may arise to some manufacturers from having a very high protective tariff placed on the articles they manufacture.

To fairly adjust the burdens of taxation, a tariff tax should be levied on as many articles as possible, so that the burden may be borne by as many people as possible and be distributed equitably to all portions of the country.

From a revenue standpoint there is no reason why the citizen of the northwest should be exempt from taxation on the lumber he buys and the citizen of the south required to pay taxes on the sugar he consumes. It has been suggested in The Commoner that wool, lumber, hides, iron ore and a number of other products should be placed on the free list; if that is done there is no reason why meats, wheat, rye, barley, and all other food products should be placed on the free list. In recent years the farmers of the country have been prosperous; the laboring people in the cities have not had their wages advanced and the cost of living is becoming exceedingly burdensome. Why should the democratic party stand for a proposition that proposes to exempt from taxation the prosperous agricultural classes and allow the burden of taxation to remain on the food products that the labor in the city must consume? Is it not far more equitable, far more just to distribute the burden of taxation so that it will fall evenly upon all? Make your tariff rate as low as possible on all articles, consistent with raising sufficient revenue to supply the needs of the government economically administered and play favorites with no one, either by giving them free raw material or protection.

The republican party in the enactment of its recent tariff bill gave the manufacturers of boots and shoes over two million dollars of revenue by placing hides on the free list; the result has been that shoes are higher than they were before hides were made free. They practically gave free iron ore to the eastern manufacturer by reducing the duty on raw ore from forty cents a ton to twelve cents a ton on the ore that comes from Cuba. In other words,

they reduced the rate from ten per cent ad valorem to about three per cent ad valorem, with the result that pig iron and all other iron products have advanced from twenty to twenty-five per cent since the reduction was made. In other words, the free raw material has been a gift to the manufacturer and has not benefited the consumer at all.

In my judgment, the true democratic position is for a tariff for revenue, without attempting to play favorites with any one. I believe that the democratic party in its platforms should declare the general principles of the party and the representatives of the party in congress should endeavor faithfully to follow in their legislation the principles their party has declared for, but I think it the utmost folly for a national convention hastily, and without due consideration, to attempt to write a bill of particulars on any subject in a platform and expect the representatives of the party to be guided by it.

OSCAR W. UNDERWOOD.

Minden, Tenn., October 27, 1909.—Mr. Charles W. Bryan, Lincoln, Neb.—Dear Mr. Bryan: Replying to your letter of the 21st, I beg to say that I am in perfect accord with the views of Hon. W. J. Bryan as to a tariff on raw materials, especially on crude raw materials used only by manufacturers. It will be seen by reference to my speech on the conference report on the Payne-Aldrich bill, that I printed as a part of my remarks an extract from the reply of Mr. Bryan to the speech of Senator Stone, setting out his position as to a tariff on raw materials and that I unreservedly endorsed the same.

I am opposed to protection in any guise or form, be it called incidental or direct.

Protective duties on the crude raw materials used by manufacturers, makes a compensatory protective duty on the manufactured products from such raw materials absolutely necessary which added to the direct protective duty on the finished article, must be paid by the consumer. Tariff duties on raw materials are not paid by the manufacturer, but in every instance are added to the price of the finished article as a compensatory duty and passed on to the consumer.

If the next national democratic convention declares for tariff duties on crude raw materials used by manufacturers, which in the very nature of things is a protective tariff and must be added as a compensatory duty in addition to the duties levied on the finished product and the burden of both thus laid upon the consumer, the democratic party had as well make no nominations and go into liquidation. The people do not want and will not tolerate two protectionist parties in this country.

Yours truly, T. W. SIMS.

Springfield, Mo., October 30, 1909.—Hon. Charles W. Bryan, Publisher The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.—My Dear Sir: Replying to your letter of recent date asking me to give my views on the proposed tariff platform as outlined by Mr. Bryan in his recent Dallas, Texas, speech and published in The Commoner, I beg to say that I am a firm believer in the idea that a platform is binding on the party so long as it is in force and that it is especially binding on the candidate who asks election on said platform, and I further believe that it is doubly binding on the man who is elected to office on said platform without protesting against its provisions prior to his election. And unless the people who elected him first repudiate the platform I do not believe that he can, in good faith, do so and retain his position.

I have always been of the opinion that platforms (national) should deal with principles and not details, yet if it is the wisdom of our party that a condition now exists when every democratic candidate for congress should specifically declare his position I for one have no objections to doing so.

I believe that the despotism, known as Cannonism, is one of the most dangerous things which is now threatening the liberties of the people. It is dangerous for various reasons, but it is especially so in that it enables the "special interests" to control legislation in this country. I believe that every candidate for congress, whether democrat or republican, ought to be pledged, if elected, to oppose Cannonism.

I have no objection to Mr. Bryan's tariff

plank; the truth is I would have liked it better if, instead of saying "a substantial reduction in the ad valorem rate on woolens," he had said "a reduction on woolens to a purely revenue basis" and this suggestion also applies to the cotton schedule and to many other prime necessities of life.

Every man, woman and child must wear clothing of some kind, either woolen or cotton, and the tariff ought to be so adjusted on these articles that they may be purchased as cheaply as possible.

I am in favor of putting on the free list: Agricultural implements. Hides, boots and shoes, leather and harness. Oil and oil products. Articles sold cheaper in foreign countries than at home.

Lumber, wood pulp and print paper. The products of concerns which by combinations have shut out competition.

These are some of the principal things I would put on the free list.

On the articles not on the free list I am in favor of imposing only a revenue tariff.

The necessity for protection in this country has long since passed, if indeed it ever existed.

I could prolong this communication but I remember you asked for a "short letter" and I will, therefore, subscribe myself.

Yours truly, C. W. HAMLIN.

Lincoln, Neb., November 3, 1909.—Charles W. Bryan, Publisher The Commoner.—Dear Sir: In view of the events of the recent session of congress W. J. Bryan's tariff suggestions are very timely. I endorse them unreservedly. That a representative should obey party platform pledges and be guided by the source of his authority—the people—is a principle as old as representative government. He who wilfully violates this principle strikes at the foundations of our government and ought to be relieved of responsibility.

The special session of congress demonstrated the necessity of a clear understanding between the people and their representatives. It showed clearly that the essential items and principles in a tariff platform should be set forth more in detail. Schedules should, of course, always be framed with the view of reducing to the minimum the rates on necessities and correspondingly increasing, if necessary, the rate on luxuries.

I have long believed that the power of the speaker of the house is too great. More than a year ago I issued a platform and challenged the power of the speaker in part as follows: "I am unqualifiedly opposed to a member of congress surrendering his sacred powers to any oligarchy, within whatever party it may spring up. I am in favor of restoring the house of representatives to its proper place in our system of government, with every member an active participant in legislation and free to suggest or protest as the interest of his district may require."

His power has grown not through constituted authority or as a necessary aid to legislation but through desire to pervert the popular will and prevent wholesome or needful legislation. The rules of the house should be amended limiting the power of the speaker and restoring the usefulness of the house as a legislative body.

JOHN A. MAGUIRE, First Nebraska District.

LEMONS

The New York World says: "Congress raised the duty on lemons to 'help the California growers.' Now the railroads have raised the freight rate on lemons from sea to sea. That is the way it works. The railroads get the money, the producer gets healthful, open-air labor, the consumer gets the lemon."

Decorative border containing the text: WHEN THE FOREIGNER PAYS THE TAX. "An' so it goes, Hinnissy. Never a sordid worrud, mind ye, but ivrything done on th' fine old principle iv give an' take." "Well," said Mr. Hennessy, "what diffrance does it make? Th' foreigner pays th' tax, annyhow." "He does," said Mr. Dooley, "if he ain't turned back at Castle Garden." From "Mr. Dooley on the Tariff."