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Democratic Prospects

(Written by W. J. Bryan for Norman E. Mack's National Monthly)

We ought to elect a democratic congress this year—there would be no doubt about it but for the unfortunate division that manifested itself in our party during the discussion of the Aldrich bill. The attempt of some of the democratic members and senators to secure protection for local interests put them in the attitude of opposing reductions proposed by the progressive republicans. While the rates asked by these protectionist democrats were low as compared with the high rates of manufactured products still the very fact that they demanded PROTECTION, and not only demanded protection but MORE protection, in some instances, than the progressive republicans were ready to give to those particular articles puts our party on the defensive when it urges tariff reduction. In addition to supporting protective duties a few of the democratic representatives in the senate and the house attacked the national platform and denied the binding force of platforms. The position was so broadly stated in some cases as to make the platform worse than useless if such position is endorsed by the democrats of the nation.

A platform that is not binding is a fraud, because it invites support on a pledge that is only made to be broken. I am sure that the almost unanimous sentiment among democrats is that a platform is binding upon the representative, and that to violate it in letter or in spirit is not only undemocratic but subversive to the principles of representative government. It is sometimes urged that a platform ought not to go into detail, but that depends upon conditions. The convention which adopts a platform has authority to decide whether it will deal with general principles or present specific demands. The official can not, after his election, reject the platform upon which he secured his position.

Most of the democratic votes cast against proposed reduction were defended by those who cast them on the ground that raw materials should be taxed so long as there is a tax on the manufactured product, and, strange to say, the democrats who presented this defense insisted that they were only asking for a revenue tariff. A tariff that is asked for the PURPOSE of protecting a producer of raw material can not be called a revenue tariff, no matter how small it is. A revenue tariff is a tariff collected for the purpose of raising revenue and without regard to the question of protection. There may be incidental protection under a revenue tariff, but a tariff is not incidental when it is planned for and demanded on the ground of "justice to



TO EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE—AND FOREVER!

the producer of raw material," or on the ground that it is not "fair" to subject the producer of raw material to foreign competition as long as there is a tariff on manufactured products.

Those who voted against reductions vigorously denounced protection to manufacturers, overlooking entirely the fact that a large part of the protection secured by manufacturers is under the guise of compensatory duties. Whenever a tax is placed upon raw material it is immediately transferred to the consumer by the imposition of a tax on the manufactured article. Even a flat ad valorem tax on both raw material and manufactured products much more than compensates the manufacturer for the tax imposed on raw material because the raw material is but a part of the total value of the article, while an ad valorem tax is collected on the entire value. It is impossible to secure any great reduction in the tariff on manufactured goods without reducing the tariff on raw material, and a much larger advantage can be given to the consumers in the way of reduction if raw material can be placed upon the free list.

While our chances of winning the next congress have been seriously impaired by the votes cast and speeches made by democrats in favor of local protection, still this disadvantage can be, in a measure, overcome if our democratic candidates will come out upon strong platforms, declaring first, that a platform is binding, second, declaring against Cannonism and in favor of the restoration of popular government in the house of representatives; third, in favor of specific reductions in the tariff. I have proposed the following platform:

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.

This platform is presented tentatively. Some democrats may not be willing to endorse all the platform, some may be willing to go even farther, but all who ask the support of those who favor tariff reform ought to be willing to state their position and to state it so clearly that there can be no question as to their attitude.

The moment a democrat begins to talk about protection to local interests in his district or state he ceases to be of any aid as a tariff re-

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