

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

VOL. 10, NO. 38

Lincoln, Nebraska, September 30, 1910

Whole Number 506

## Tariff Commission

The progressive republicans, including Ex-President Roosevelt, are urging the tariff commission as a means of settling the tariff question. This is an easy way of shelving the issue, much easier than pointing out a remedy for the extortion which they admit to exist. The commission plan gives those who advocate it a chance to denounce the present tariff law without making any practical recommendations in the way of remedy. "Leave it to a commission," they say. But do they not know that a commission would not report before the campaign of 1912? Suppose the senators and congressmen elected now favor a tariff commission, the next congress will convene in December, 1911. It would take some time to appoint a commission and it would then take the commission months to investigate and report. This would carry the question over the next election. Is that the purpose of the commission. The advocates of a protective tariff could avoid the discussion of the subject during the campaign of 1912; they could promise to reform the tariff as soon as the commission reported. Then if the high tariff men elected a president and congress, the commission's report would be ignored if the report favored reductions. That was the experience twenty years ago when the commission was used to quiet tariff discussion. If a tariff reform congress is elected it will reduce the tariff, regardless of the report made by this commission. The democrats ought not to allow the tariff commission project to lead them away from their fight for tariff reform. Tariff laws are written by congress, and congress will not delegate that matter to a commission when they get ready to act. They will use a commission when they want to continue the subject and get it out of the campaign, but whenever members of congress want to raise the tariff or lower the tariff they will not ask the aid or consent of any commission; they will go to work themselves. The tariff commission plan is merely a motion for a continuance; whether it is so intended or not, it is in the interest of the tariff barons. It does not need a tariff expert to understand that the tariff is outrageously high and ought to be reduced. Beware of the tariff commission plan—it is a delusion and a snare!

### THEN AND NOW

In a speech at Osawatimie, Kansas, Mr. Roosevelt said: "It is particularly important that all moneys received or expended for campaign purposes shall be publicly accounted for not only after election but before election as well."

The New York World points out that, replying to Mr. Bryan's plea made in 1908 for the publication of contributions prior to election day, Mr. Roosevelt said: "I emphatically approve of the publication of campaign expenses

after election. \* \* \* You have shown by this letter of yours that if Mr. Harriman's contribution to the campaign fund of 1904 had been known before election you and your supporters would have endeavored to use the fact of its having been made as an insincere and untruthful argument. No stronger argument against your proposition (for publication before election) has yet been advanced than this that you have unconsciously advanced."

The Aberdeen (S. D.) News, a republican paper, says it is inclined to think that Mr. Roosevelt's 1908 idea is superior to his 1910 idea. The News can not, of course, be serious in making this statement. Admitting that the people have the right to know the source of campaign contributions, they ought to be given the information at the time when it may be of service to the people. To make these contributions public prior to election day informs the people as to the character of the support given the various parties. Mr. Roosevelt makes progress none too rapidly, and now that he appears to be in a progressive mood republican papers should encourage him rather than put obstacles in his way.

### A POSTAL SUGGESTION

Why not reduce the postal charge on merchandise where it is sent by rural delivery from the starting point without having to come over the railroads. There is a substantial basis for a differential rate in the case of the carrying of local merchandise. It would be a great accommodation to the people living along the rural routes to be able to order from town and have the delivery made at once. It would also be an advantage to the local merchants. In addition to this it would largely increase the revenues. It would not be surprising if a low merchandise rate on the rural delivery would yield a very considerable return, and nobody can justly complain. Whatever may be said for or against the reduction of the general rate on merchandise, surely no argument can be made against a reduction where there are no railroad charges but simply the cost of carrying from the office and depositing to parties along the road.

### TWO COMING REFORMS

The success of the insurgent republicans seems likely to hasten two reforms, first, the election of United States senators by direct vote of the people; second, the initiative and referendum, and if they do not succeed in accomplishing anything more they will have done enough to recompense them for the effort they have put forth. The democrats and insurgents ought at the coming session of congress to bring before the senate a resolution submitting the constitutional amendment providing for the election of senators by a direct vote. If they find that they have not enough votes to pass it, the fight will help to bring it before the next congress. It can not be many years away.

In the states the democrats ought to secure the assistance of the progressive republicans and submit an amendment providing for the initiative and referendum. Direct legislation cures the imperfections of representative government. It is a coming reform and now is the time to press it.

### CAN AT LEAST DO HIS BEST

A publication whose editor appears to be very unfriendly to Mr. Bryan concludes a somewhat lengthy criticism in these words: "Mr. Bryan was never a leader. He was essentially a follower instead, and as a follower he has been left so hopelessly behind in the procession as to practically preclude all possibility of his ever catching up."

Well, a mere "follower" is a pretty useful citizen—provided he follows in the right direction and Mr. Bryan can at least do his best in this line. If his critics would devote more of their time to following some good lead and less to the criticism of others, they would make larger contribution than they now do to the progress and prosperity of the country.

## Just Like 1896

Most of the men who are now classed as "insurgent republicans" were in 1896 making vigorous attacks upon democrats and charging them with "fomenting envy and discontent." Now that these gentlemen have found it necessary to protest against the manipulation of their party, and through their party of their government, by the special interests, they understand something of the feelings of the faithful democrats who, in 1896, battled against the effort of private monopoly to obtain firm foothold in the councils of American government. Indeed, the attacks made upon insurgent republicans by the organs of the special interests are in language almost identical with the attacks that were made upon democrats during the campaign of fourteen years ago.

Take, for instance, the September 16 issue of the American Economist under the headline, "Fomenting Envy and Discontent." This organ of the tariff barons says that "the efforts of the western insurgents appear to be directed solely to creating a feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction among the people with the new tariff law and with everybody who had anything to do with placing that law on the statute books;" also: "If there ever was a time in the history of this country when large bodies of men were engaged in fomenting the spirit of envy, discord, and dissatisfaction among the people, the present is that time."

The American Economist must know that republican insurgency is merely representative of the larger insurgency that is going on among the people. The consumers of this country need not be preached to in order to stir them in revolt against the republican tariff. They are already in revolt against that tariff. In 1908 they were in revolt, and to such an extent that republican leaders were forced to write into their national platform a promise to revise the tariff. After the people had given power once more to the republican party, and on a tariff revision pledge, party leaders revised the tariff upward and then insulted public intelligence by pointing out that the party had not promised to revise it downward. And now the republican party, faithless as usual to its trust, is face to face with an outraged constituency, and the dissatisfaction is so widespread that even so stalwart a republican as Mr. Watson of Indiana announced a few days ago that the election of a democratic house in 1910 was among the probabilities.

Whenever a man, a small body of men, or large bodies of men protest against the impositions which special interests seek to put upon the public, and plead for justice to the people for whose benefit government has been organized, they are charged with "fomenting the spirit of envy, discord and dissatisfaction."

There is an abundance of discontent, to be sure, but the insurgent republicans are not responsible for it. The evidences of that discontent shown on every hand among the masses of the people have stirred these insurgents to action, and they are making a desperate effort to save their party from utter destruction. It is coming to be the general opinion that their well-meaning efforts were too long delayed, that the handwriting is on the wall, and that the party which has so long nursed and nourished the trust system is to be required to surrender the power it has so grossly abused.

### "THE SHADOW OF 1912"

President Taft and Mr. Roosevelt met recently at New Haven, Connecticut, and press dispatches say that "the shadow of 1912 cast a shadow over their meeting." "The shadow of 1912" appears to be hanging around in the vicinity of most republican meetings these days, although the shadow of 1910 is doing business a little more regularly just now in the precincts where republican candidates for the lower house of congress most do congregate.

## CONTENTS

TARIFF COMMISSION
JUST LIKE 1896
TWO COMING REFORMS
"THE SHADOW OF 1912"
"STATESMEN OF THE CORNROWS"
ARKANSAS
A LETTER FROM BEVERLY
PRACTICAL TARIFF TALKS
A CALIFORNIA PLATFORM
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL
MONOPOLIZING WATER POWER
CURRENT TOPICS
A NORTH DAKOTA PLATFORM
IF THE PEOPLE RULE WHY DON'T THEY
GET WHAT THEY WANT?
HOME DEPARTMENT
WHETHER COMMON OR NOT
NEWS OF THE WEEK