

What the Tariff Has Done for Me

(The Commoner will print brief letters describing personal experiences with the republican high tariff. Letters must necessarily be brief and to the point.)

In discussing the tariff question I will lay down the basic or fundamental principle that the law of supply and demand controls in every thing. That being the case labor must be measured by that standard, as well as labor's products, and as the immigration gates have swung inward for the last forty or fifty years, labor in the United States has had absolutely no benefit from the so-called protective tariff, insofar as wages were concerned.

The wage earner being forced to sell his labor in open and free competition with Tom, Dick and Harry from every quarter of the globe, and at the same time being forced to buy the supplies he needed in a restricted or artificial market produced by setting aside the law of competition, through foolish tariff laws left him exposed to a raking fire from all sides with absolutely no shelter and no way to escape.

With such a strangle hold on the consumer the employers of labor have been enabled to build up enormous fortunes as if by magic and through the agency and power of their vast wealth have succeeded in controlling the pulpit, the bench, the bar, halls of legislation and in many instances the public press.

With such tremendous power on one hand and the ignorance and carelessness of the voter on the other hand they were enabled to raise the tariff wall so high that few goods come into the country from abroad, and the government was thereby deprived of its revenues, and the tramp and the millionaire multiplied with rapidity in our fair land.

But that is not all: This short-sighted and foolish policy has driven the American flag off of the commercial high seas and turned the world's carrying trade over to other flags and other nations.

In 1850 with a population of 23,191,876 we had 1,802 vessels with a gross tonnage of 285,304 tons, while in 1900 with a population of more than 75,000,000 we only had 1,491 vessels with a gross tonnage of 468,331 tons, showing an increase in tonnage in fifty years of about 70 per cent, while our population increased 350 per cent.

During the same period, under free trade, England increased her tonnage from 133,695 tons in 1850 to 729,307 tons in 1899, an increase of nearly 600 per cent.

That is a sample of what the protective tariff has done to the American marine in the short period of fifty years, for prior to its adoption the American flag was supreme and American bottoms carried more of the world's commerce than those of all other nations combined.

What can be more absurd than to build great expensive lines of transportation on land and sea to carry the commerce of the nation and then deliberately tax commerce out of existence?

Now you hear the grafters hollering subsidy, subsidy, subsidy for a merchant marine, which is taxation under another name.

According to the United States census in the decade from 1880 to 1890 there were annually employed in manufacturing lines in this country 4,251,613 persons at an annual average income of \$444.83 each. During the period from 1890 to 1900 there were employed in the shops and factories 5,321,087 persons, but their incomes had fallen to \$437.93 each, which showed an annual loss to the toilers of over \$36,715,500, while the cost of living had increased about 15 per cent, and during this period the tariff had been revised upwards three times.

Worse still 200,000 children under 16 years of age and 1,100,000 women were forced into the tread mills and sweat shops to grind out gold for the tariff hogs.

Out of 16,239,797 homes in the United States in 1900 only 7,218,755 were owned by their occupants and of those 2,180,229 were mortgaged and 8,246,747 were occupied by tenants and had it not been for our vast and almost inexhaustible natural resources the government itself would have become bankrupt long ago.

No less an authority than Professor Elliot, of Harvard, said recently "that it was possible that the protective tariff may have done a little good, but the harm it had done the American people was incalculable."

Monopoly is the child of the tariff system in the United States and monopoly has crushed out,

wherever possible, all competition, which is the life of trade.

What the tariff has done for the people collectively, as outlined above, it has done for me individually as I am one of its many victims.

Well has the poet sung:

"Ill fares the land to growing ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade—
A breath may make them, as a breath has made—

But a bold peasantry, the country's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied."

Every honest, thoughtful citizen who holds the interest of the country at large above the right to plunder and rob through the agency of tariff laws should use every honorable means within his power to the end that the infamous system may be wiped from our statute books.

Yours for reform,

Seattle, Wash.

R. J. WILSON.

EAGER TARIFF TAXERS AND THE HOME

A beefsteak raw is tariff-taxed 1½ cents a pound, poultry 5 cents a pound and chops or cutlets 10 per cent.

The steak is cooked on a broiler tariff-taxed 40 per cent, or in a frying-pan (a barbarous method of the backwoods), and the frying-pan is taxed 40 per cent.

You test the steak with a fork tariff-taxed on a varying scale, but by the tariff law it must never be less than 40 per cent. Forks, 40 per cent or more.

You trim it with a knife that may pay more but must never pay less than 40 per cent.

It rests in state on a platter tariff-taxed 55 per cent.

The stove it has just left is tariff-taxed 45 per cent.

The dab of melted butter is tariff-taxed 6 cents a pound.

Even the pepper is taxed one-fifth of a penny an ounce.

The Worcestershire sauce is tariff-taxed 40 per cent.

The prepared mustard, five-eighths of a penny an ounce.

The celery salt, 40 per cent; ordinary salt, one-tenth of a penny a pound.

If there is a small bit of cheese it is taxed 6 cents a pound.

The pickles are tariff-taxed 40 per cent, or the onion pickles also 40 per cent; the apple sauce, 35 per cent, and in addition one penny a pound.

The butcher who sold the steak has his share of tariff tax to bear.

He has carved the steak from a quarter of beef with a knife taxed 40 per cent.

His butcher's cleaver has been tariff-taxed perhaps more, but by the law never less than 40 per cent.

The wooden chopping block on which it was trimmed is tariff-taxed 35 per cent.

It is weighed on scales tariff-taxed 45 per cent.

It is wrapped up to be delivered in paper tariff-taxed 35 per cent.

What a splendid affair the Payne tariff tax law is?—New York World.

THE PERILS OF COMPROMISE

The Indianapolis News, an independent republican newspaper, prints this editorial:

"The insurgents, of all people, should understand the dangers that are liable to come to them and their cause through the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt. In their attitude toward the Payne bill they stand for principle. In congress and out they have refused to compromise. But Mr. Roosevelt comes home and assumes to place himself at the head of the movement. Two great dangers immediately developed. The first was that insurgency, which was a simple, natural, and easily understood movement, would be swallowed up in the 'new nationalism,' and the other was that the cause might be weakened if not destroyed through weak compromises. It soon became apparent that Mr. Roosevelt was ready and willing to talk about everything except the tariff. True to his record, he sought to evade that. Yet he did say something from which the insurgents derived considerable encouragement. But when his convention in New York endorsed the Payne bill, they began to see—surely this must be so—how fatal this

spirit of compromise might be to a cause that can be got through only by the hardest fighting

"The plain truth is—and it had best be spoken—that Mr. Roosevelt is at any time willing to compromise a principle for votes, offices and power. He has won many fights simply for the fight's sake. He never has in the whole course of his life espoused one cause which he believed to be unpopular, never made the hard choice, never sacrificed one thing for principle. On the contrary, when he has won his fight he, as a rule, always seeks some way to compromise with the enemies of the cause championed by him. The pure food bill was got through with practically no help from him, and he at once proceeded to weaken its effectiveness with the help of his referee board. He criticized the Payne tariff in his western speeches and praised it in his New York platform—and crowned his performance with a repudiation of the New York tariff plank! We have never had another such compromiser in our history. This disposition has led him to take all sides of great public questions. Two years ago he denounced the plan providing for pre-election publicity of campaign funds. A few weeks ago he proclaimed as though it were a discovery of his own—that there ought to be such publicity. Then his New York convention meets and ignores the whole subject! In short, it is impossible to get from him any sharp, decided and clear-cut deliverance on any practical and pressing issue. He will denounce crooks and crookedness in general terms, proclaim his opposition to corruption, but on all controverted questions and principles he has invariably played safe. And he is playing safe today. With him victory for its own sake, or for the sake of the job or of control is everything, and the cause nothing. One wonders whether such battles are worth fighting, such victories worth winning. How do things get forward through such conquests? Slightly to paraphrase Hosea Biglow:

"He's willin' enough to go tollable strong
Agn wrong in the abstract, fer that kind o' wrong

Is ollers unpop'lar an' never gits pitied,
Because it's a crime no one never committed.
But jest to decide 'twixt stan' pat an' insurgent
He finds ain't expedient, not to say urgent;
He hums an' he haws, backs an' fills till you'r dizzy;

In Kansas is one thing; in New York whut is he?

"Now, if insurgency means anything, it means straight and hard fighting, not for the sake of victory, but for the sake of relief from oppressive burdens corruptly imposed on the people. Men who are fit to lead this movement can not afford to go into the business of political bargaining. In such a war as this there is and can be no place for trimmers, for men who condemn the Payne law in the west and praise it in the east. Here, then, is the danger which threatens the insurgent movement. Let it once be known that it is a mere attempt to 'save' the republican party by promoting a false harmony, and the movement will swiftly collapse. If it is not based on principle it will make no appeal to the American people. If it is based on principle it lies beyond the sphere of compromise. Let it be remembered that at a time when men were risking their political careers, putting everything in danger, Mr. Roosevelt chose the safe and easy way, as when he abandoned his free trade principles, and came to the support of Mr. Blaine. He has never made one choice that cost him anything. There is nothing of the martyr in him. We refer all who are disposed to question these statements to the book entitled 'The Man Roosevelt,' which is a most flattering biography, written by Mr. Roosevelt's friend and admirer, Francis E. Leupp. To be sure, Mr. Leupp often explains at great length why Mr. Roosevelt took the easy way. But the fact itself is not, and can not be denied.

"The question, therefore, is whether the insurgents are going to allow their cause to fall under this blighting influence of compromise. If they do they might as well give up the fight at once. But we do not believe that they have any such notion. Cummins, LaFollette, Dolliver, Beveridge and the others evidently believe what they say, and say what they believe. There is not one of them that would not greatly prefer to lose on the right issue than to win on the wrong one. Mr. Roosevelt has never shown a glimmer of that spirit. What he is after is power, and when he gets it he fritters it away. He is great in strengthening the organization, but when he gets it he does nothing with it. It is for the insurgents to say whether they will fight their way into the fortress of privilege, or whether they will hand over their