

Tariff, Tax and Freight Cut, Restore European Market, Davis Farm Remedy

Nominee in Answer to Dawes Here

Democratic Party Chieftain Attacks Agricultural Commission Proposals of Republicans as Ineffective. Says Co-Operate Abroad

Following is the text of the address by John W. Davis, democratic candidate for president, at Omaha Saturday night.

This generous welcome which the citizens of Omaha and of Nebraska give to a comparative stranger is evidence of that hospitality for which the west is so justly famous. You are not afraid, in this part of the world, of new ideas, and after tonight I shall be willing to testify that you are not inhospitable to new faces.

It was at my personal request that those who were arranging my western itinerary fixed on Nebraska as the spot for my first utterance west of the Mississippi river. I had personal reasons for this choice.

I shall be willing to testify to my genuine satisfaction at the action which the New York convention took in associating me on the ticket with the present governor of Nebraska. There is not a democrat in the United States to whom he has not been known in person or by name for more than 20 years. During the whole of that time he has been a fearless and active champion of democratic ideals and principles. When you called him to your service here in Nebraska he was quick to show how these principles can be exemplified in action. Others have talked of tax reduction, but he has actually reduced your state levy by 33 1/2 per cent. Many have proposed to help the farmer; but he has saved to the state the value of its entire wheat crop in reduced prices of some of the necessities of life. Others have deplored the multiplication of government boards and bureaus, the growing numbers of government employees.

State Loses: Nation Gains.

He has shown you that the way to reduce is to reduce. That he should have been elected governor of Nebraska by the great majority ever given any candidate for that office, and should have received a renomination before the expiration of his term are things of which not only himself, but his party in the state and nation may be justly proud. What you in Nebraska lose by the draft we have made upon him, his party and the state gain.

I welcome him as my running mate, and I count with confidence on his aid and counsel.

My second reason for coming to Nebraska was also distinctly personal.

I am here primarily to learn rather than to teach. I wish to take counsel with the people of these western states to study with them their problems and to fit myself to deal with them in an intelligent and sympathetic manner, if the responsibilities of the presidency should come to rest upon me. While it cannot be too often repeated that we are one people in America, that the prosperity of one consumed all the capital earnings of the farmers of the United States during the crop years of 1920-1921, and 1921-1922.

Within that period there was a depletion of capital value of land, buildings, machinery, livestock and working capital of more than twenty billions of dollars, while the earnings of farm operatives on the capital owned by them sunk from 8.3 per cent for 1919-1920 to an actual loss in the two succeeding years, and a profit for 1923-1924 of only 1.2 per cent and 1.4 per cent for 1923-1924. This return barely sufficed to pay interest charges and left the farmer nothing as a return upon his capital.

Taxes, Interest Take All.

Another side of the picture is presented by the statement from the Department of Agriculture, that leaving out of consideration all indirect taxes imposed by the farmer on the things he buys, property taxes and interest charges for the year 1920 consumed the entire value of the wheat and tobacco crops; for the year 1921, the entire value of the wheat, oats, potato and tobacco crops; and for 1922, the entire value of the cotton crop plus two-thirds of the wheat.

When we turn to the question of price ratios, the burden which the farmer has been given to carry seems even more extreme. The national industrial conference board, in figures recently prepared, shows that the change in value of our principal food export products—wheat, corn, beef, cattle and hogs—averaged but 53 per cent of their value in 1914. No decline approximating this has occurred in the prices of any other commodities.

Figures such as these tell their own story. If they are alarming to the farmer, they should be even more so to the rest of the country, which is dependent upon him for its daily bread. They may well reflect upon a statement once made by W. J. Bryan, that if all the cities should disappear, the farms could rebuild them, but the cities would die, never to be reborn.

In spite of the recent welcome rise in the value of certain staple crops, no man will question the statement that the situation of agriculture is desperate and the problem is in its last stages. The failure is in its last analysis, not one of anger, but of human lives.

There is no duty which the government can be called upon to perform more pressing or more sacred than to organize the economic life of America so that the farmer who produces the food which is the basis of our civilization, and our means of living, can share with American needs and American traditions. The outstanding problem of the hour is to provide some means by which this can be done.

We hear much talk of economic

laws, and there are those who declare that the farmer must be left to work out his salvation by his own hands, under the inexorable domination of economic forces which neither he nor his government can control.

Of course there are such things as natural and economic laws. No amount of government persuasion will induce human beings to consume or desert a given amount of food. No legislative fiat can bring the sunshine or withhold the rain, nor do away with the lean kine and the fat that disturbed the dreams of Pharaoh.

Republicans Ignore Economics.

The republican party which through its candidate has most to say on the subject of economic laws, has been the last to recognize in its legislation that such things exist. The chief complaint today of agriculture is that it no longer enjoys economic equality with industry and commerce. At whose door shall this fact be laid? What party is it that has followed the consistent practice in legislation of giving a deliberate preference as against the farmer to the manufacturing industries of the country?

It is ignorant or insincere to cry out against the farm bloc in congress as if it were a new thing. Each succeeding republican administration has been a government by an industrial bloc, the granting of undue preferences and subsidies to industry by republican administrations, and the attempt of agriculture to get a fair hearing in congress have been the main thread of domestic politics for the last generation. It explains the populist movement of the '90s. It explains the insurgent movement of 1910 and 1912 in the republican party. It explains the wide breach in that party today. The unrest back of these movements will continue until the voice of the farmer is listened to just as attentively in the White House and the halls of congress as that of the industrialist. The policy of the democratic party is to readjust the balance and put agriculture where it belongs—on an equality with industry.

Tariff as Cure-All.

In order to delude the farmer with a false promise of imaginary benefits and with utter disregard of economic laws, those in control of the republican party announced, in the spring of 1921, that all his ills would be promptly cured by the enactment of a protective tariff for his benefit. They declared that high tariff rates on wheat, corn, livestock, meat products, and so forth, would immediately raise the domestic price. Such a law was accordingly placed upon the statute books in May, 1921. But when wheat fell from \$1.47 in May to 41 in December, and corn from 62 cents in May to 47 cents in October, the promised relief was seen to be a pure political fiction.

Under cover of this pretense, however, the oppressive Fordney-McCumber bill was enacted in September, 1922. Lobbies representing greedy manufacturers stormed the nation's capitol and wrote their own excessive and extortionate rates in utter disregard of every theory, even of protective tariff legislation.

No consideration was given to the new and changed financial business and economic conditions. The "old guard" of the republican element in control ignored the fact that America is no longer a debtor nation; that our productive capacity had increased more than 30 per cent above the pre-war level; that our exports had jumped from \$2,428,000,000 in 1913 to \$8,000,000,000 in 1920; that we possessed nearly one-half of the world's gold; that we had constructed a great merchant marine intended to carry freight both ways; that our productive machinery and our intelligent labor were unequalled, and in most of our industries could produce a given amount of product per person as cheap or cheaper than any other nation; that our supplies of raw material and of foodstuffs were almost unlimited in variety and quantity.

Forget McKinley Axiom.

They ignored the axiom accepted by McKinley that "We cannot sell unless we buy".

This law was both a fence and an offense. It was a fence against reciprocal trade, no matter how profitable or desirable, and shattered our trade structure throughout the world. It was an offense to every consumer in the United States, and not let of all to the farmers who were left outside the scope of its pretended benefits. It might have been appropriately entitled "An act to obstruct our foreign commerce, to increase the prices of what the farmer buys and to reduce the prices of what he sells."

Thereafter, as an additional sop to the farmer, under the so-called flexible provision, the duty on wheat was increased by executive order and that ungrateful commodity promptly responded by a further fall in value.

Dawes Sees Light.

Surely the day when the farmer can be led to rest by a nominal tariff on the commodities of which he has a surplus to sell abroad has passed forever. Indeed, light seems to be breaking in high circles on this question, for in his speech recently made at Lincoln, Neb., on behalf of the administration, the republican nominee for the vice presidency said that:

"It is an admitted fact that in the case of any agricultural commodity of which we raise a substantial surplus, the price obtainable for this surplus in the world's markets established in a general way by the price level of the entire crop."

The scales are falling from their eyes. I commend that statement to the perusal of the republican congressmen and senators who boasted or still boast of benefits to the farmer from a tariff duty on his wheat.

When the war was over it should have been clear to everyone that the first duty which the government of the United States was called upon to perform was to assist in the prompt and permanent restoration of those nations who were our chief customers. It was only by restoring our mar-

Department of Agriculture instituted an investigation on its own account concerning the disparity between agricultural and other prices.

Much Debate; No Action.

And congress in 1923 debated the entire subject at length. No action has thus far resulted. We are now told that more can result until the process of investigation is begun again. If such a commission is needed now, why was it not needed a year ago, and why was the suggestion of its appointment delayed until the eve of election day? The patient seems in a fair way to die before the doctors have finished their diagnosis, so that our vast surplus, essentially of foodstuffs and raw materials, might find a market. It is a reproach to the collective wisdom of mankind that each year since 1920 there have been in Europe underfed and understarved, while during the same period America's storehouses of foodstuffs and raw materials have been vainly seeking a market at reasonable prices.

Reparations Problem.

At the bottom of the European problem lies, and has lain, ever since the armistice, the question of reparations. In 1919 President Wilson asked permission of congress to appoint an American representative on the reparations commission. In a spirit of partisan jealousy it was denied. And for five long years, so far as we are concerned, we left that question to bedevil the economic life of Europe, and delay the hour when Germany and the other defeated nations might be restored to health and be able once more to contribute to the economic prosperity of the world.

Today we hear from those most responsible for this state of affairs loud praise over the fact that Americans participated in the recent reparations conference that brought forth the so-called Dawes report.

That report is even claimed as a diplomatic victory for an administration that time and time again disclaimed in most positive terms all responsibility for the presence of General Dawes and his associates, or any participation in the preparation of their report.

Not Political Asset.

I have no desire to deny that report, and I have every wish that it may prove a step along the way. I am not even disposed to debate with those who claim that it was the end of the journey instead of merely the first milestone. But I resent the belated attempt to capitalize its possibilities as a political asset.

If Americans have, in fact, by their unofficial presence accomplished or aided in this result, it lays the responsibility of this situation on the shoulders of those who for five long years prevented any form of American participation.

In the speech to which I referred a moment ago and which I take to be an accurate statement of the position of the republican party, I read that the welfare of the American people is "a nonpartisan and economic question, and must not be and cannot be ever discussed or settled as a party question." The same thing might be said in the same bland terms in connection with the railroads, of foreign policy and practically every other problem that affects the welfare of the American people.

Parties Must Have Issues.

If we eliminate from political debate every question that is either national in its scope or economic in its character, and especially every question that is embarrassing to the party in power, we will reach that millenium when government through political parties will cease to exist. The very purpose of political parties is to frame policies, and to propose and execute them on all great questions that are national in their scope. Political parties that have ceased to have opinions or the courage to avow them have lost all reason for existence.

What, then, is the program which the republican party put forward by its accredited spokesman? It seems to have two propositions only to submit: One, the regulation—which in this case means a tariff on the part of the farmer, which connection the statement is made that "every reclamation project, whether by irrigation or drainage, furnishes added competition for existing cultivated farms, orchards and vineyards, at a time when we are already seriously embarrassed by overproduction in many lines."

Reclamation and irrigation, therefore, must be forthwith abandoned, and multitudes of other farmers must make up their minds to quit farming or let their fields lie fallow.

Dawes' Commission Proposal.

And the second proposal, in its prospect of immediate relief, is like the first. It has not even the merit of novelty, for its consists in remitting the consideration of the entire problem to an "impartial, nonpartisan, competent commission on economic guidance." This commission is to "suggest means" of protecting agriculture from inequality with other industries, and until a specific plan has emanated from such a tribunal the question cannot be properly considered or discussed. I seem to have heard something of this sort before.

In 1921 congress itself set up a joint committee of agricultural inquiry, which deliberated for six months concerning the agricultural crisis and its causes, and submitted to a republican house and senate—over the latter President Coolidge then presided—a most exhaustive report.

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The interstate commerce commission, with its control over railroad rates; the farm loan board and the federal reserve board, with their control over credits, and the federal tariff commission, with its present power of investigation and review, all deal with interests vital to agriculture. No person biased or prejudiced for or against any particular class or interest should be permitted to sit on any of these bodies. Personal honesty alone is not a sufficient qualification. Intelligence, integrity and courage are equally demanded.

Equally important to the farmer are the Department of Justice and the federal trade commission. It is to be an able and aggressive attorney general and an active and alert federal trade commission that the public must look to for protection and defense.

President is Responsible.

According to my views, the responsibility for providing such an administration rests upon the shoulders of him who is chosen to be president of the United States. He may share with others the burdens of the task; his responsibility he cannot divide. It is his business to select fit men for office, and when mistakes by a government have been made he must be prompt in their correction. He need not wait for congressional committees or grand juries to point them out; nor can he or the party that he leads escape responsibility on the plea of general good character or fair intent. It is his business to give the people a government to which they can look with confidence as the wish of the American people, I shall not seek to escape the duty or avoid the responsibility for its performance.

Speech By Bryan.

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"The democratic party has a record in the nation for honesty, economy and efficiency, the same as the democratic state administrations, have where they have been in control."

"I feel sure that the message which the democratic standard bearer brings to the farmers, stock raisers and common people of the prairie states this evening will not only make a profound impression upon them, but he may feel assured of their support in his desire to remove the republican handicaps and restrictions under which agriculture has suffered during the past four years."

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