

THE RAILROAD LORDS

Congress may pass what tariff laws it pleases, but the railroad managers decide how much "protection" shall be allowed. There is, for instance, a high "protective" tariff on salt. The claim made in passing it was that we must protect the "infant" salt industry, but the railroad managers concluded that salt didn't need any protection so they just knocked it out. The managers also thought that the tariff on tin was a nuisance (in which they were right) and concluded to modify that. They way they did these things is told by the interstate commerce commission. That commission says:

A twelve months' contract for the shipment of salt from an English port to Kansas City through an American port was taken at the rate of 143-4 cents per 100 pounds, when the rate from Hutchison, Kas.—a point which can supply the entire salt trade of the territory west of the Missouri river—to Kansas City, a distance of 200 miles, was 10 cents. A rate was made on tin plate from Swansea, Wales, to Missouri river points which was only 50 per cent of the rate from the Indiana gas fields to the same point."

As for a tariff on cement the railroads would have none of it. They use large quantities of cement in construction work, and they made a rate on cement from New Jersey to Chicago greater than the rate on imported cement plus the tariff.

The railroads under private ownership are lords of all they survey from the center clear round to the sea, including tariffs and everything else. When an article can be delivered here in the west at so low a rate that foreigners can ship it in, pay the tariff and yet have an advantage over the home manufacturer, the tariff is knocked clear out by the manipulation of the freight rates.

TAXATION

It is impossible that the people should not know that the trusts, the great corporations, the banks and the railroad managers all favor the republican party, or the plutocratic wing of the democratic party. Here and there among those classes there is a man who rises above his environment and comprehends the results that must certainly follow the policies that the republican party has inaugurated and defends, but the exceptions are few. Those being the facts, it is not at all strange that legislation, both state and national, will be in the interest of the corporations, trusts, railroads and national banks, where the republican party rules.

If a glance is taken at the legislation in congress and the state legislatures under the control of that party for the last year, it will be seen that it is all of that kind. The total appropriations of the present congress have been \$1,564,108,496. When the first billion-dollar congress closed, all that the republicans had to say was that this was a billion-dollar country, and The Independent replied that when the expenses rose to two billions, by a parity of reasoning, all that would have to be said in defense would be that this was a two billion-dollar country. Now that national taxation has risen to more than a billion and a half, at the same rate of increase the next congress will be a two billion congress.

If the result of such extravagance was felt the next day after congress adjourned, there would be something akin to a revolution, but as it will come slowly, and the burden grow little by little the unthinking will make no protest.

That such heavy taxation will produce distress no thinking man will deny. To take a billion and a half dollars out of the products of labor every two years, for which nothing goes toward the reproduction of wealth except the appropriations for the postoffice, irrigation, the light house service and the part that is actually expended for the improvement of rivers and harbors, must reduce the

expenses for comfortable living among the working population to a degree that will make it a very heavy burden. The question is: Can the laboring portion of the population be made to see why it becomes hard to make a living?

In every state, county and municipality, where the republican party rules, taxation has been increased at a greater rate than by the national government. Those taxes are many times greater than national taxation. When they are all added together the amount is appalling. While this increase is going on, the corporations and the rich generally, more and more shirk their share. If all the taxes from school districts to that of the national government were added together it will amount to about \$50 per capita, or \$250 for each family of five.

Taxes in the main are per capita. The tariff is strictly so. A tariff on sugar is a per capita tax. The poor man consumes as much sugar as the multi-millionaire. Taxes that increase the cost to the consumer of any necessity, is a per capita tax. It will be seen that the main portion of this heavy taxation must be borne by the common people because there are so many of them. The question is, how long will they bear the burden before they discover the cause?

The railroad legislature in this state which is determined to relieve the railroads of their share of taxes is only a sample of republican legislatures everywhere. The same tale comes from Wyoming, Idaho, Wisconsin—from everywhere that the republicans rule. It is not to be expected that after the railroads have gone to the trouble to control conventions, nominate men for state offices and the legislature and have spent thousands of dollars to carry elections that they would make a mistake in the men whom they have thus nominated and elected to office and that those men, after being thus elected, would make the railroads pay their share of taxes. That is not what they were elected for and if they did it they would be worse scoundrels than they are at present. They have a right to say that if the people vote for them, knowing that they are candidates of the railroads, that they would betray their constituents if they voted to make the railroads pay the same rate of taxation that the farmer pays on the value of his property.

THE INDEPENDENT OBJECTS

The Independent is forced to take exceptions to the course that some reform papers in this state are pursuing. It cannot see the thing in the same light they do. The facts, which none of these papers will deny, are as follows:

The fusionists held the state government for a time and during that time greatly decreased the state debt. This they did in the most severe years of depression and hardship that this state has ever known. They greatly increased the apportionment to common schools. They provided generously for the state university. They did this after the state treasury had been robbed of over a half million dollars by a representative of the republican party, and without increasing taxation in the slightest degree. The people of the state did not like that kind of government, turned them out and restored the republicans to power.

Upon regaining power, the republicans pardoned the man who had robbed the treasury, reduced the appropriations to the common schools and their governor vetoed an appropriation for the state university and greatly crippled it in its work. By the appointment of inefficient guards two of the state buildings were burned down, a large number of convicts were released from the penitentiary through pardons and commutations and the state debt began to increase at an astonishing rate.

To meet this new condition of affairs the fusionists proposed that railroad and other corporations should be

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taxed at the same rate as other property in the state. That was the issue in the last campaign. The subject was given so much prominence and so fully discussed that it was impossible that the voters should not know what the issue was. The railroads maintained that they were taxed enough. They went to great expense to publish their views, paying for the insertion of articles at regular advertising rates.

The other side of the case was just as fully presented. The fusionists claimed that the value of property was what it would exchange for in money and that all property should be assessed upon that basis. That where roads had lately been sold for from \$50,000 to \$80,000 a mile that that should be the basis of assessment for taxation. The campaign was fought out on that line and a majority of the people of the state said by their ballots that they did not want railroads and other corporations to pay the same rate of taxation that the remainder of the people of the state paid on their property. They voted that they did not like the kind of government that reduced the state debt, doubled the apportionment to the common schools, provided for the state university, declined to pardon convicts, refused to increase taxation, and that they wanted a government that would not tax the property of corporations the same as other property was taxed, that would increase the state debt, reduce the apportionment to common schools, curtail the usefulness of the university and raise the rate of taxation. They did that after all the facts were presented to them.

The Independent holds to the principle that the majority should rule and will not abandon it. The majority said

what kind of government they wanted and they should have it. Members of the legislature elected by the republican party who refuse to exempt the railroads from the payment of the same rate of taxation as other property, are traitors to their constituents and are not heroes and patriots. If they held those views before election, then they deceived the men who furnished the funds and secured their election. Deception is not an attribute of patriotism. Representatives in the legislature should carry out the wishes of those who elected them and not turn over to the opposition. A republican member of the legislature who votes with the fusionists to tax the railroads is not a hero, but a base deceiver and betrayer of those who elected him.

A fusionist who betrays his constituents and votes with the republicans to exempt the railroads from paying their share of taxes is a man of the same character. No reform paper would think of making a hero of him.

PLEASE BE GOOD

Unless the railroads put an end to the tax war by cheerfully or regretfully consenting to pay their just share of the burdens of taxation—state, county and municipal—the paramount issue in Nebraska for the next two years will be, "Up with railroad taxes—down with railroad freight rates." —Omaha Bee.

"Consenting," eh? Did any one ever hear of a legislature inquiring if the small taxpayer will "consent" to pay his taxes? This "please-be-good" attitude of the Bee would be laughable if it were not such a serious subject.

Uncle Mark, he lay low and say nuffin. He gwine to lay a trap for Brer Teddy.