

The Commoner.

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DEMOCRATS DID GOOD WORK.

The democrats of the house won a great victory by a single move when they forced through a bill that not only gave a degree of reciprocity to Cuba, but also provided for the removal of the sugar differential.

The house democrats are to be congratulated because they voted solidly for this measure. As the bill is now framed it suits neither the cane sugar trust or the beet sugar trust. It is true it is not exactly what the people would like to have but it is a move in the right direction.

As we were instrumental in driving Spain out of the Western Hemisphere, and as we are not willing for Cuba to annex herself to any other nation, we are under a moral obligation to treat her liberally with respect to trade relations. The only protest against reciprocity came from the beet sugar industry, but such a protest was to be expected. The manufacturers of beet sugar—like other manufacturers—have shown a disposition to look at legislation entirely from their own standpoint, and they have been consistent champions of every proposition that gave them a chance to get into the public treasury. They have favored state bounties and national bounties, and have clamored for high tariff. They are no worse than other protected industries, but they have been as insatiable as any.

They claim to represent the farmers, but the farmers do not, as a rule, have stock in the factories, and if a few farmers did hold stock they ought not ask for a special benefit at the expense of all other farmers. Even if all the sugar tariff went to farmers it would go to comparatively few and would be insignificant as compared with the total burden borne by the farmers because of the high tariff system.

It is a mistake for members of congress to urge a tariff on sugar on the theory that "if we are to have a tariff on some things, the farmer ought to have his share." The farmer can never make as much out of a high tariff as he loses by it, and it is a delusion to think that he can. A farmer cannot oppose protection to others while he claims it for himself, and the sooner all the farmers get out from under the protective system the sooner it will fall. As long as beet sugar is protected every factory will be a center for the propagation of a high tariff sentiment, but as soon as the tariff is reduced on sugar the manufacturers of sugar will help reduce the tariff on other things. Democrats can therefore welcome every step toward lower tariff, no matter from what source it comes. If we refuse a small reduction in the hope of a greater one, or if we reject a proposed reduction because the adjustment of duties is not equitable, we shall make no progress. It is the part of wisdom to take what reduction we can get and then set about to secure more.

Every brick removed weakens the wall; every industry exposed to competition will increase the demand for tariff reduction. Cuban reciprocity is in the right direction, the removal of the differ-

ential is a yet greater move, and for such advance toward tariff reform, thanks.

Senator Blackburn's Good Service.

Senator Blackburn did his country a service when he called attention to the fact that Senator Depew is a conspicuous representative of the railroad interests of the United States, and especially of the New York Central. Senator Depew's votes reflect, not the wishes of the people of New York, but the wishes of the New York Central railroad, and the fact that senators like him are opposed to the popular election of United States senators ought to bring to the support of this reform every democrat of the senate and every republican who is not under obligations to the railroads for his election.

"OUR WORD" AND "OUR DUTY."

In his speech at Charleston, referring to the actions of the United States in helping Cuba to establish a free republic, President Roosevelt said, "We have kept our word and done our duty just as an honest individual in private life keeps his word and does his duty."

Is it not true that we would have been in honor bound to do "our duty" toward Cuba even though we had not given "our word?" The discharge of a plain duty is, to "the honest individual in private life," just as important as the fulfillment of his word. We gave "our word" to Cuba in Senator Teller's amendment to the war resolution. This was a promise that we would not exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over the island of Cuba except for the pacification thereof, and after that was accomplished, then it was our intention to leave the government of that island to the people thereof. This was "our word" given, not as charity is bestowed, but in recognition of our duty to the principles upon which our own government was founded.

Testimony is conflicting as to whether we really gave "our word" to the Filipinos, and yet there is sufficient uncontradicted testimony that the Filipino leaders understand that the destruction of Spanish authority by the co-operation of Americans and Filipinos meant independence for the Filipinos.

Even though nothing in the shape of a promise was made in this respect, "our duty" remained unchanged, and if, in helping the Cubans to establish a free republic, "we have done our duty just as an honest individual in private life does his duty," then in refusing to help the Filipinos to the establishment of a free republic, we have failed in that duty.

Referring to our conduct toward Cuba, Mr. Roosevelt said, "It would be difficult to find a parallel in the conduct of any other great state that has occupied such a position as ours." Would not the American people have great reason to be proud if they could congratulate themselves upon the discharge of their duty toward the Filipinos, as they congratulate themselves because of the discharge of their duty toward the Cubans?

THE EXACTIONS OF THE BEEF TRUST.

The beef trust, under whose impositions the people are now suffering, is not represented by a single corporation into which a number of other corporations have been merged. It might properly come under the very charitable definition provided by some trust magnates of "community of interest." In truth, however, it is covered by the definition in the Sherman anti-trust law and may properly be termed a "conspiracy."

Every definition provided by the Sherman anti-trust law covers the beef trust. It is a "contract," it is a "combination," it is a "conspiracy." Under that law the agents of every packing house are liable to fine and imprisonment. Under that law the meat shipped from one state to another is subject to confiscation by the federal authorities. And whatever may be the difficulties attending the enforcement of the federal anti-trust law against other trusts, there is no conspiracy in existence that can be required more readily to yield to that law than this beef trust if Mr. Roosevelt's administration is really determined to enforce the law, and to destroy this conspiracy against the welfare and the existence of the people.

The Kansas City Journal, a republican newspaper, in its issue of April 16, throws light upon the methods of this combine. The Journal says:

The sales agents of the packers meet every week and agree upon a scale of prices for the next week. Any packer who cuts any price thus decided upon is subject to a fine. If it is suspected that any one of them has been cutting prices they have an arbitrator who is authorized to go over the books for the purpose of determining whether the suspicion is well founded.

The Journal also points out that Monday, April 14th, was the first business day for eighteen months on which the packers did not issue a list, the figures on which were identical with each other. It is shown by the Journal that on that day the packing houses in Kansas City issued a price list in which the figures were somewhat lower than those issued by the other packing houses, and this, the Journal explained, was evidently done for the purpose of refuting the idea that a combine existed.

The friends of the trust system have insisted that the extraordinary increase in the price of meat was due to the increase in the price of corn and of cattle, and that therefore the farmers obtain their proportionate share of the increase. The Commoner has already referred to the claim made by the secretary of agriculture that the advance in the price of wheat is due "to a large supply of prosperity and a small supply of corn." It has also quoted the Chicago Tribune, an eminent republican organ, in indorsement of the secretary's claim, the Tribune having said that this explanation was "undoubtedly the correct one." The Tribune also insisted that if blame must be attached to anyone for the present high price of meat, "let it be providence, and not the packers." This seems to be a very popular defense for the beef trust; and in the light of these protestations it would be well if every consumer