

# The Commoner.

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## Speaker Henderson's Withdrawal

Speaker Henderson's withdrawal from the congressional race furnishes the most sensational feature of the campaign. He is the present speaker of the house of representatives and was a candidate for re-election. His district having an overwhelming republican majority his election seemed assured, notwithstanding the activity of the democrats and the desertion of some republicans—supposed to be comparatively few. It must have required some powerful cause to have forced a withdrawal under such circumstances. What was the cause? In his letter he gives but one, namely, that he finds many republicans in his district in favor of putting trust-made articles on the free list as a remedy for private monopolies, and as he is opposed to that remedy he declared that he preferred to retire to private life rather than strike such a blow at the system of protection. It is only fair to assume that the republican defection in his district is so serious as to make him believe his election impossible, for on no other theory would he be justified, even according to his own logic, in refusing to make the fight. If he believes, as he evidently does, that the nation's prosperity depends upon maintaining a high tariff wall, then it was his duty to fight for its preservation. He could not in such a case consult his own convenience or the effect of defeat upon his own political fortunes. A surrender without a fight is rank cowardice except in the case of overwhelming odds, and even then it is better to die fighting if, by so doing, the cause can be strengthened elsewhere.

Mr. Henderson is the leader of his party in the house of representatives and he must have known that his abandonment of the fight for the reasons given would weaken the very cause to which he declared himself devoted. It must be remembered, too, that the action was taken without consulting those who share with him the responsibilities of leadership—taken on the very day when the president and five republican leaders in the senate—Hanna, Aldrich, Spooner, Allison, and Lodge—met at Oyster Bay and decided to ignore the tariff question in the present campaign. No wonder the republicans are panic-stricken; no wonder they are explaining it on various and contradictory grounds. Some say that Mr. Henderson, finding that he could not conscientiously represent his constituents on that question, withdrew as a matter of honor, but how could Mr. Henderson ascertain before election the views of his constituents? How could he measure in advance the effect of his own speeches in influencing the views of his constituents? If he, the speaker of the house, with his great prestige, ability and personal popularity could not hold one of the strongest republican districts in the United States, what chance is there for less conspicuous, less able and less popular republicans to hold close congressional districts? This explanation, while creditable to the speaker's candor and honesty, is a confession of judgment against the republican party on this issue, and republicans cannot afford to make it.

Mr. Henderson has put his party in a position where it must condemn him in order to save the party. It must charge him with lacking leader-

ship, with being deficient in courage and unwilling to sacrifice himself for the good of the party, or they must charge that he acted in a fit of passion and did not take time to consider the widespread effect of his deed. They must accuse him of a crime against his party, or of a blunder that is as disastrous as a crime in its influence upon the party.

Knowing of General Henderson's devotion to his party and of the bravery he has displayed on many occasions, The Commoner will assume that he recognized the irreconcilable conflict between his own views and the Iowa platform, and rather than surrender his own convictions or embarrass his party in the state he preferred to sacrifice his own ambition without stopping to consider how his conduct would demoralize the ultra-protectionists in the republican party and give increased prominence to an issue which the national leaders of his party are trying to avoid.

This question is one which is likely to make a division in his party and its settlement cannot long be postponed. The republican party must reform the tariff at the risk of losing the entire system of protection or it must resolutely oppose all tariff reform at the risk of losing a great many republican voters.

The other leaders of his party were attempting to delay consideration of the question in the hope that the agitation would subside without the necessity of any action whatever, but General Henderson's hasty move has focused public attention on the subject and compelled republicans to take sides.

The fight is now on and no one can tell how extensive the disaffection may be or how many republicans may be driven out of the party by a refusal of the manufacturers and their advocates to make any concessions to the consumers.

When Governor Cummins forced through the state convention of Iowa a tariff reform platform, The Commoner pointed out that the platform might hold republicans in line this year, but that it would in the end educate them out of the republican party if the party in the nation refused to lower the schedules. The work of education is in progress. If the republicans of General Henderson's district fill the speaker's place with a tariff reform republican he will hold the Cummins men but lose the Henderson men; if the place is filled by a Henderson man he will be necessarily weaker than General Henderson himself. The chances, therefore, are good for Governor Boies, the democratic candidate, unless his abandonment of the Kansas City platform weakens him among the democrats.

But while the withdrawal of Speaker Henderson brings dismay and confusion to the republicans it also brings responsibility to the democrats. Public attention is now attracted to the free list as a remedy for trusts. That is the only remedy the reorganizers have proposed and its insufficiency will soon become apparent on investigation. It must not be put forward as a complete remedy for the trust evil, but as a means of preventing the extortion now practiced by manufac-

turers who hide behind the tariff and sell at a high price at home while they sell abroad in competition with the world.

If democrats propose tariff reduction as a complete remedy for the trusts they will be met by two unanswerable arguments; first, that a trust that can export can exist without a tariff, and, second, that there are trusts in England, which is generally pointed to as a free trade country.

Democrats who rely upon the free list as a complete remedy or as the only remedy for the trusts will soon be on the defensive, but democrats who rely upon the free list as a remedy for trust extortion will put the republicans on the defensive.

As The Commoner has repeatedly pointed out, trust-made articles should be put on the free list for the protection of the public, but the party will make a fatal mistake if it stops with that. It must attack the principle of monopoly and present a remedy which will make it impossible for a private monopoly to exist in the United States.

The Kansas City platform presents such a remedy and it is the only remedy now before the public. It is simple, and easily applied, and it has the merit of striking the evil it aims at without disturbing corporations engaged in legitimate business.

The monopolies are here and they are growing; the republicans are at sea; the leaders of the party, raised to power by trust contributions, are impotent to do anything. They dare not enforce the criminal law against trust magnates; they dare not offend manufacturers who have both money and the power to coerce voters. The republicans have talked about publicity, but they have allowed six years to go by without even trying that remedy. Now, the president suggests a still more remote remedy. Without evidence he assumes that congress is powerless to apply an effective remedy and proposes an amendment which requires, first, two-thirds of both houses; second, three-fourths of the states, and, third, a federal statute carrying out the new amendment. Why thus postpone action for an indefinite period unless it is certain that present power is exhausted? Why not enforce the criminal law now on the statute book? If they refuse to enforce that, are they likely to enforce some future law? If the republicans will not adopt remedies already permitted by the constitution are they likely to enact legislation to be authorized by some future amendment?

The democrats can charge that the republicans do not intend to destroy private monopolies and they can cite as proof the inaction of republican presidents, republican senators, republican congressmen and republican judges, and they can also cite the arguments made by republicans from the president down in defense of the very monopolies which they promise to attack. They are doing now on the trust question exactly what they did on the money question in 1896. Then they promised international bimetallism while they made arguments in favor of the gold standard (which they called "sound money"); now they promise to curb the trusts, while republican edi-