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WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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Republican Promise to Revise the Tariff

A WARNING

From Mr. Bryan's tariff speech at Des Moines, Ia., August 21, 1908:

The democratic party in its platforms and through its representatives in congress has for years pointed out that the tariff schedules are excessively high and ought to be reduced, but the republicans have until recently, refused to admit that there was any necessity for reduction. They now confess, through their platform and through their presidential candidate, that the need for revision is so great as to justify the party in declaring "unequivocally for a revision of the tariff" and the need is so urgent that the work is to be undertaken at "a special session of congress immediately following the inauguration of the next president." The use of the word "unequivocally" indicates that those who wrote the platform recognize that they are under suspicion. They want to distinguish this promise from the unkept promises of the past by adding as emphatic an adjective as could be found in the dictionary. If former republican promises had been conscientiously fulfilled, it might not have been necessary to thus strengthen the promise made this year. The use of the words "immediately after the inauguration" is evidence that the republican leaders are conscious that the patience of the public has been strained to the point of breaking, and it is almost pathetic to note the solicitude which they now feel about doing a thing which, but for willful neglect, might have been done at any time during the last ten years.

Are we not justified in saying that "the people can not safely entrust the execution of this important work to a party which is so deeply obligated to the highly protected interests as is the republican party? The "fat frying" process has become familiar to the American people. Pressure has been brought to bear upon the protected interests every four years—and to a less extent in the congressional campaigns between presidential elections—to compel contributions to the campaign fund in return for former favors and in anticipation of favors yet to come. It is difficult to overestimate the corrupting influences introduced into the political life of the nation by this partnership between the government and the favored industries. The literature circulated in support of a protective tariff has studiously cultivated the idea that suffrage should be employed to secure pecuniary returns, and the appeal made by the republican

leaders has come to be more and more a selfish one. Every man engaged in a protected industry has been approached with the proposition that it is dollars in his pocket to maintain the system, while those who could not possibly trace any tangible benefits to themselves have been beguiled with the assurance that it was all a matter of public spirit, and that they ought to support the system out of patriotic love of country. If attention was called to the fact that the farmer was taxed for the benefit of the manufacturer, the triple answer was that it would come back to him indirectly; that it did not amount to much for each farmer anyhow, and that a man was small minded who would begrudge so insignificant a contribution to the nation's prosperity. The plan has been to keep the taxpayers quiet by keeping them in the dark as to the operation of the law, and then to concentrate the votes and influence of the taxpayers in favor of a continuation of high tariff legislation. If a tariff of 50 per cent was imposed upon a given article of merchandise, it was assumed that those engaged in the production of the article would contribute liberally to keep up the tariff. It was also assumed that the employees would vote with their employers to keep from having their wages reduced, and it was expected that the business men of the town would also vote for the tariff because of the business brought to the community by the protected industry. Those who are acquainted with the tariff fight know to what an extent the pecuniary argument has been used. The recent republican platform is a bugle call to every beneficiary of special privilege to enlist again under the republican banner, and when the election is over and the republican committee publishes the list of contributors—too late to make the information valuable—it will be found that the republican party has again so obligated itself to the protected interests as to be unable to make a revision in the interests of the consumers.

With a president who, toward the close of his term, admitted the necessity for tariff revision, with a two-thirds majority in the senate and nearly sixty majority in the house, the republican party has refused to permit any revision whatever. Mr. Williams, the leader of the minority in the house, introduced a bill providing for a reduction of the tariff to 100 per cent, wherever it is now more than 100 per cent. It would look like the republican party might have taken this step toward tariff revision, had it been deeply in earnest; but no, the bill was not even reported from the committee. Whenever attention was called to an indefensible schedule, the answer was that they could not afford to open the subject for debate just before a campaign, but there is no force in this objection because the house rules are so framed that the majority can cut off debate, prevent amendment and silence opposition.

The administration has claimed credit for the fine against the Standard Oil company in the case which was lately reversed, but no effort has been made to relieve the people from the fine which is imposed upon them every day by the Standard Oil company through the operation of the tariff law which gives that company more than 100 per cent protection against its chief rival, Russia. What faith can a real tariff reformer, whether he be a republican or a democrat, repose in the republican leaders, when they deliberately put off all reduction until after election, and then call for contributions, with the understanding that the public shall not know the names of the contributors until after the polls are closed?

The republican platform says that the tariff

is intended for the American manufacturers, farmers and producers, and especially for the wage earners. If the farmer and the wage earner are really the chief beneficiaries of the protective system, will the republican candidate explain why the farmer and the wage earner have contributed so little to the republican campaign fund? Is he willing to publish a list of contributors on the 15th day of next October and allow the relative advantage of protection to the manufacturer, the farmer and the wage earner to be measured by the contributions received from each class? Why is it that the manufacturers are expected to furnish so large a proportion of the money to run the campaign, if, as the republicans claim, the farmers and the laborers enjoy so large a proportion in the benefits of the system? Is it not a significant fact that the farmers and wage earners who are always put in the foreground when the blessings of a high tariff are being enumerated are in the background when the collections are being made? Is it not significant that the manufacturers, who furnish the funds, are so little advertised as beneficiaries? Is it not significant also that the wage earners, instead of the manufacturers, are always described as "the most direct beneficiaries of the protective system?"

Are the present leaders more honest than the ones who framed the existing tariff? Are they not, in fact, the same men who are responsible for tariff extortion during the last decade? If this new-born zeal for revision were a hundred times greater than his notification speech indicates, what chance would the republican candidate have of securing any real tariff reform at the hands of such republicans as now represent that party in the senate and house, the very men who represented it in the recent national convention? Speaker Cannon, who has suppressed tariff legislation in the present congress, was a dominating factor in the convention and, if the republicans retain control of the house, will be the speaker of the next congress. Does his prominence afford tariff reformers any assurance of a reduction of the tariff in the interest of the consumers? In case of a republican victory, Congressman Sherman will become the presiding officer of the senate. He has been the confidential companion of Speaker Cannon, and in the convention it was Speaker Cannon who vouched for him. But as a matter of fact, Mr. Sherman's standpatism needed no endorsement; his record is a guaranty that no beneficiary of special privileges will be disturbed. It was Congressman Sherman who, in a speech in the house on the 18th of last April, boastfully declared, "We recognize the fact that we have a republican majority in the senate," that we have a republican majority in the house, that is ready to resort to every legal, every proper constitutional right to enact such legislation as it deems for the best interests for the greatest number of our people, and which is willing and ready to accept full responsibility for all those measures which are introduced here and which are not enacted into law."

We would not expect a jury to do justice to the defendant if it was composed entirely of the relatives of the plaintiff; neither can we expect a congress to do justice to the masses if it is composed of men who are in sympathy with, and obligated to, the corporations which have for a generation been enjoying special privileges.

There is no prospect of relief from a republican president and congress.

CONSERVATIVE

The republican party's appropriations from the federal treasury for the coming fiscal year aggregate \$1,044,000,000.

It is estimated that the treasury deficit for the twelve months ending July 1, 1909, will be \$130,000,000.

And it is the boast of the republican leaders that their's is the conservative party!

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