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"Protectionists"

There are several things to be considered by the congressman who is called upon to vote on the tariff question. He is to represent his district, of course, but before a democrat can justify a vote in favor of a protective tariff he must decide, first, that the principle of protection is right, second, that the policy of protection is wise, and third, that the protection asked for is necessary. If it is not right to tax one man for the benefit of another, then a protective tariff can not be justified, even though the benefits of the tariff on a particular schedule might go into a congressman's district. If the principle of protection is wrong, no democratic congressman can afford to vote for it. As a rule the industry which demands protection is owned by a comparatively few and the protection given them is not only at the expense of other districts, but at the expense of a majority of the people of their own district. But, even if a majority of a man's constituents would be benefited by a tariff law, that in itself would not justify the vote if the principle is wrong.

Can a democrat defend the policy of protection? Sometimes a member of congress deludes himself with the idea that he can oppose the principle of protection, and yet secure for his district a part of the benefits of protection. A number of the congressmen have been led away by the seductive argument, "I will oppose the bill on its final passage, but during its consideration I will get all the tariff I can for my district." If the policy of protection is a wise one, it ought to be dealt with upon broader lines, and the protection ought to be given where it will do the nation most good, not where it will help the congressman who supports it. No one can logically oppose the principle of protection and then claim a part of its benefits, for his district, and the reverse is true, that no one who is claiming a part of the benefits of protection is likely to make a strong argument against the protective principle. The democrat who tries to get some of the protection for his district will find that in proportion as he succeeds he is likely to make protectionists out of the persons benefited, and they will threaten to defeat the congressman and his party unless the protection is continued. A congressman who favors a reduction of only those schedules which do not affect his district is a crippled soldier and will be found in the ambulance or hospital whenever the battle for tariff reform is on.

Even if the principle of protection were admittedly right and the policy admittedly wise, no effort is made by the protectionists to show that we need the tariff rates for which they ask.

A large portion of the value of lumber, for instance, is in the stumpage, and a reduction of the tariff would not reduce the labor cost, but merely the value of the pine lands. What argument can the owner of timber lands make in support of a law designed to increase the value of his land by putting a tax upon all other kinds of land—for it must be remembered that the tax on lumber must be paid by somebody and the burden falls upon those who buy lumber. Aside from the arguments made against the duty on other necessities of life there is an additional argument to be made against the tariff on lumber, namely, that it encourages the destruction of our forests. It is criminal folly to offer a bounty for the destruction of our forests at the very time when we are frightened at the climatic and other evils which follow in the train of this destruction.

The average labor cost is but a little more than one-half of the present tariff, and this means that the protectionists, instead of asking for a tariff just equal to the difference in the cost of production here and abroad, are demanding a tariff of more than the entire cost of production. The democrat who votes for the endorsement of the protective principle may as well make up his mind to swallow the entire republican program, for he will soon find that in order to get the protection that he wants for his district, he must agree to protect the trusts and to permit predatory wealth to have all it demands, for the favor-seeking interests stand together and make trading material of the legislators whom they control.

The only safe position for a democrat to take is that the tariff should be levied and collected for the purpose of raising revenue and not for the benefit of any particular interest or industry. Whatever protection there is should be incidental, as soon as protection becomes the purpose, then the legislative session is given up to log-rolling, wire-pulling and combination of interests.

THE VOTING IN CONGRESS

Party platforms are necessary. It has been found by experience that unless a party formulates a platform, its representatives in office can not agree upon a definite policy owing to the influence brought to bear by favor seeking corporations. Even when there are platforms they are misconstrued unless they are positive and specific. Sometimes positive and specific platforms are violated, but a positive and specific platform is not apt to be violated, and when it is violated the guilt can be fixed and the guilty punished.

The trouble with the republican platform of last fall was that it was not specific and definite. The tariff plank used the word "revised" instead of the word "reduced," and now Senator Aldrich and his crowd construe it to mean an increase, while some of the western republicans insist it contemplated a decrease in the rates.

Mr. Taft dodged the question. So far as could be gathered from his speeches the nearest he ever came to a construction of the platform was to declare at one place in the west that it meant an "honest revision," and at another time declaring that while some schedules ought to be raised and some lowered, the revision would "probably" be downward.

The republican national convention was at fault in not making a specific promise of reduction, and the republican voters were at fault in accepting so indefinite, so evasive and so deceptive a word as "revision" as a sufficient promise. The voters ought to have known that "the friends of the tariff" would never give us any material reduction.

As to the democrats who voted for the imposition of duties, they have as a rule, defended their conduct on the ground that the duties voted for were "revenue duties" and they have not been high duties. Measured on an ad valorem basis, the rates on lumber and on iron ore are but a small portion of the price. The democrats who voted for the duty made a mistake, but they can hardly be put in the same

class with the republicans who are voting for duties running up to 100 and 200 per cent.

The democratic platform demanded free lumber and that platform is binding upon all who ran upon it, and it ought to have weight with the members of the party who were elected before the platform was adopted.

Those who voted for a duty on lumber probably did so because of lumber interests in their districts and states, but in doing so they gave the preference to a few owners of timber lands over those who buy lumber. There is no state in the union where the consumers of lumber do not out-number the persons who profit by the tariff on lumber and the man who votes for tariff on lumber votes to tax a majority of the people of his district and state for the benefit of a minority of his constituents. The men who get the benefit of the tax are more active in presenting their demands than the consumers are in presenting their protests and as long as this is true, the tax-eaters will have the advantage over the taxpayers.

If the taxpayers would take a little more interest in the tariff question and chastise the representatives who, ignoring the interests of the consumers, follow the advice of the protected interests, relief would come sooner.

As to the duty on iron ore, the chief objection to it is not that it is a high rate of duty, but that it helps people who do not need help, and gives an excuse for higher duties on manufactured iron. The man who owns a bed of iron has such an enormous advantage over one who owns farming land that it is hardly fair to make the farmer pay tribute to the ore owner.

Every duty placed upon raw material is a burden upon the manufacturer unless he is permitted to transfer it to the consumer. A tariff on iron ore, therefore, is sure to be transferred to the consumer. A duty put upon raw material increases as it proceeds, interest and profits being added each step. It grows like a snowball in the spring, and is therefore more objectionable than the same ad valorem rate levied upon the finished product.

In judging the two parties and their representatives at Washington, it must be remembered that the republican party went before the country on an ambiguous platform, while the democrats presented an emphatic demand for a reduction, outlining the course to be pursued. Our platform was, therefore, superior. A majority of the republican senators and congressmen favor an increase in the tariff—the tariff reformer in the republican party being the exception rather than the rule. The democrats, on the contrary, are demanding reductions and the democratic member who votes against a decrease is the exception rather than the rule. Even in such cases, the democrats who have voted against reductions, have voted for a low rate instead of a high rate, but the democratic votes against free lumber and free iron ore are an embarrassment to the party and will be used to answer democratic criticism of the high tariff republicans.

SENATOR JOHNSON IN ERROR

According to the press reports Senator Johnson of North Dakota "severely criticised Bryan as having been largely responsible for such a clause (the one giving the Standard Oil company a tariff as against Russian oil) remaining in the Wilson bill."

Senator Johnson is in error. Mr. Bryan's attention was never brought to the use that is made of that clause until less than two years ago. He called attention to it at once and has ever since then been urging its repeal. It is probable that most of the republicans who voted for the Dingley bill voted without knowing that it was a joker put in there for the Standard Oil company just as most of the democrats voted for the Wilson bill without knowing it was in there, for it was there. But now that it is known to be a duty levied in the interest of the Standard Oil company, will Senator Johnson and his republican colleagues insist upon maintaining it as Speaker Cannon and a large part of the republicans did?

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