

The Tariff in Congress

President Taft invited a number of senators to lunch with him at the White House. Among these senators were Beveridge, Dooliver, and Brown of Nebraska. He urged them to get in line for the tariff bill.

Speaking in the senate Mr. Bristow of Kansas recalled incidents of the last national campaign and declared that President Taft in Kansas had favored a revision of the tariff downward, and he (Bristow) had been elected to the senate on that issue. The fact was, he said, that practically no reduction had been obtained.

"The tax," said Mr. Bristow, "has been taken off of hides and it has been added to the sole leather suitcase that the American citizens buy. And yet it had been advertised that a reduction has been made on the leather schedule for the benefit of the American citizen.

"Apparently the only thing considered in formulating the cotton schedule has been the greed of the cotton manufacturer of New England. As a republican senator I will not be a party to placing Mr. Taft in the most embarrassing position in which it is possible for a president to be placed; that is, to require him either to sign a bill that is not what was promised the people, or to compel him to repudiate the action of a majority of his party in both branches of the congress by a veto. He has, in substance, appealed to this congress to keep faith with the people, but in effect it is a bill to ignore that appeal. I love the president. He has honored me with his friendship. I am devoted to the welfare of his administration and for one, I will never vote to send him a bill for approval that is a violation of his party's pledges, and which is also in my judgment fundamentally wrong and in many of its details iniquitous.

"I set up no standard for other senators. Every man should vote as his conscience and judgment dictate. But I feel that had I supported this bill I would be recreant to my duty as a senator and unfaithful to the people who sent me here to represent them, and I can not do it."

Regarding the exclusion of democratic members of the conference committee Senator Daniel said a practical fraud had been committed upon both houses of congress.

"The country stands, at this present moment, between the gallows and the ground," declared Daniel in commenting on the methods of the majority. "I hope mercy may be sought, and may be found. I charge that the senate is apparently in the control of lynch law."

Soon after the bill reached the senate several jokers were discovered. The situation was described in a Washington city dispatch printed in the Omaha World-Herald as follows:

"Cattle state senators discover that the phraseology of leather schedule is not according to the agreement. They declare the reduction of duty applies only to shoes that are made nowhere in the world. A canvass of the senate by 'regulars' showed that the bill would be defeated. There is a great rounding up of 'regulars' in Aldrich's room and elsewhere and consultations with the president, and the resolution for a reassembling of the conference committee. Several mistakes have been discovered in the bill which must be corrected. The bill, as changed, would have to be submitted again to the house. The attitude of President Taft with respect to the alleged 'joker' is the subject of conflicting reports."

The tariff commission provision of the republican tariff bill is described in an editorial printed in the Chicago Record-Herald, (Rep.) as follows:

"Congress, with the exception of the 'insurgents,' is determined that the present tariff shall not be the last based on guesswork and the clamor of 'interests.' The spectacle which has disgusted the overwhelming majority of the people is one after the standpatter's own heart. Platforms may talk about scientific tests and ascertained facts; the average politician finds in juggling, bargaining and darkness his natural element.

"The so-called tariff commission provision as Senator Aldrich drew it at the instance of the president, backed by the liberal manufacturers and public opinion, was by no means a model of strength and generosity. It was acceptable only as a germ, seed, promise. But in the conference, as the correspondents told us, it had not a single friend, some of the conferees dreading light and others imagining 'usurpation' behind it, and the poor, thin, innocent para-

graph was subjected to successive surgical operations. The clauses which spoke of 'information useful to congress' and of investigations 'into the production, commerce and trade of the United States and of foreign countries, and all conditions affecting the same' were ruthlessly cut out. How, pray, can information be useful to congress when it prefers ignorance?

After the first operation the president humorously remarked that, with a little executive ingenuity, tariff information of importance to the president could be rendered useful—that is, compulsorily enlightening—to congress. Of course a president with goods to deliver can deliver them in the 'message' vehicle and make things embarrassing to the perverse and besotted.

"How does the case stand now, after the second major operation? The whole provision reads as follows:

"To secure information to assist the president in the discharge of the duties imposed upon him by this section, and the officers of the government in the administration of the customs laws, the president is hereby authorized to employ such persons as may be required."

"The intention of the conferees is manifest. They wished to limit the investigation authorized to the maximum-minimum feature, to the determination of the existence or absence of 'undue discrimination' in foreign tariffs. It may be that the paragraph can still be vitalized and broadened by 'interpretation,' but all that could verbally be done to hamper the president, to 'screw the lid on,' to shut out light, has been done. Whether the effort fails or succeeds, the exhibition itself is disgraceful."

Senator Cummins of Iowa and Daniel of Virginia occupied the time of the senate largely on the day before the adoption of the conference report. The Associated Press says:

Conferences among senators were numerous. Several times Vice President Sherman found it necessary to call the body to order and insist that conversation be discontinued.

The effect of the maximum and minimum provision of the measure as agreed on by conferees was the chief subject of discussion during the session. Senator Beveridge, quoting the remarks of Chairman Aldrich, undertook to show that the senator interpreted the language as reported by the conferees as practically guaranteeing all the results that could be obtained through the instrumentality of a tariff commission. He provoked a prompt opposition to that view by Senator Hale who, at great length argued that exactly the opposite purpose was in the minds of the house conferees whose view had been adopted. He insisted that they carefully avoid giving any authority to the president by which he could gather information on which another revision of the tariff could be based. From the committee on finance, Mr. Aldrich reported a concurrent resolution by which as soon as the conference report has been reported on, the hide and leather schedule will be corrected, it is intended to meet the views of western senators who demanded lower duties on products manufactured from leather.

Mr. Cummins announced his determination to vote against the bill. "I am opposed to the conference report and to the bill which it embodies because it is not such a revision of the tariff as I have expended the best years of my life fighting for, and it is not a fair and reasonable performance of the promise of our platform," he said, and added: "This is no court of bankruptcy, and I am not willing to accept ten cents on the dollar in discharge of the obligations of the republican party. It has always been and is now, a solvent organization and it is not only able, but its rank and file will insist upon paying its debts in full. Its pledges will be redeemed at par and although the blindness of some of its leaders may at this time postpone the day of redemption, I shall await with patience, confidence and serenity the hour at which it will keep full and complete faith with the American people."

He expressed his admiration and applause for the courage and persistence of the president, "in attempting to secure, and to a degree in securing, lower rates in the range of dispute between the house and the senate." He said: "The range was very narrow and the president has done all that one man could do for the betterment of the bill."

Speaking "with the full consciousness that the president will sign the bill, and that it will

become a law with his assent," he recognized, he said, that there is a fundamental difference between the veto power and the voting power. "An executive ought not," he said, "to veto a measure simply because he would have voted against it had he been a member of the legislative body that passed it.

"I have always admitted," said the senator, "that with respect to those commodities of which we are capable of supplying the home demand, duties however high do not harm so long as there exist effectual competition between our own producers; and I repeat that admission now. I have seen, however, competition in the most important fields of production grow weaker and weaker until it has been easy to perceive that with many things prices have not been fixed by the fundamental and essential law of commerce, but have been fixed by the arbitrary will of the producer, and solely with reference to the utmost profit that trade would bear.

"Under these conditions it seemed to me that excessive duties would necessarily become a shield for avarice and greed. It seemed to me that duties should be so adjusted as to prevent the domestic producer from raising his price above a fair American level without exposing himself to foreign competition.

"These were the only reasons known to me for a revision of the tariff; and I will never vote for a revision that does not follow, or attempt to follow, these lines of economy through."

The tariff has been reduced, Mr. Cummins said, on iron and steel products more than on any other schedule in the bill. "And yet," he declared, "so far as the people who buy iron and steel are concerned they would have been quite as well off if there had been no reduction whatever." He attacked the various schedules of the measure as affording no relief to the American consumer.

Challenging the statement by Mr. Cummins that there had been no substantial reduction in the bill, Mr. Aldrich declared that there had been 500 reductions of rates. It would be impossible, he said, to show that these rates were above a reasonable protective point.

Mr. Cummins having invited the Rhode Island senator to visit him in Iowa, to help him convince the people that these rates were only high enough to be protective, Senator Bailey suggested that when those two senators "perform in double harness," he wished to receive an invitation to witness the event.

Drifting into a discussion of policies, Senators Cummins, Aldrich, Bailey, Dick, Beveridge and Smith of Michigan, entered upon a sort of experience meeting concerning the political issues of 1896. Mr. Aldrich insisted that the misrepresentation of the McKinley tariff bill first caused the defeat of the republican party and then resulted in the nomination and election of Mr. McKinley.

"It was the money question that controlled that campaign," suggested Mr. Beveridge.

"It was the absence of money that controlled it," facetiously suggested Mr. Smith of Michigan.

"On our side," interposed Mr. Bailey.

Concluding his remarks Mr. Cummins reiterated that he would vote against the conference report.

Contending that there was no raw material in this country, Mr. Elkins expressed regret that the so-called free raw material campaign had ever been started. Labor had been expended upon these articles called raw material, and he believed that whenever they were subjected to foreign competition they should have been protected by the tariff.

Senator Warren next took the floor and entered upon an extended denunciation of the hide and leather schedule. He called on Senators Aldrich, Gallinger and Dick to say what they thought of the doctrine of free raw material.

All declared that they did not approve of the idea of admitting hides free of duty. Very similar replies were received from Senators Bristow, Dooliver, Oliver and Flint, who were called on to state their views.

Never before had a tariff bill passed under such a storm of disapproval, said Mr. Bailey, speaking in opposition to the report.

"You hope," he said, addressing the republicans, "that with the returning tide of prosperity the people will forget the bad features of the bill."

He declared that the present bill would not improve conditions, although the republicans would endeavor to spread the idea that it would.

Crossing the aisle and directing his remarks specifically to Mr. Aldrich, Mr. Bailey declared that nobody believed in the doctrine of free raw material, adding that the Rhode Island senator