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Where Congressmen Stand

The Commoner will be pleased to publish brief letters from congressmen and democratic candidates for congress, giving their opinion of the tariff platform suggested by Mr. Bryan.

Texarkana, Texas, October 25, 1909.—Charles W. Bryan, Publisher The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.—Dear Sir: I am in receipt of your letter of October 21 asking my opinion regarding the platform suggested by Mr. Bryan in his Dallas speech of September 14. In immediate reply I beg to say that I am opposed to protection in any sense and from any standpoint whether on raw materials or finished products. I believe that tariff duties should be levied for purposes of revenue only and if I should vote for a duty at all on any article it would be strictly for such purposes. I would go further than Mr. Bryan as to the articles specified by him and favor free woolen goods as well as free wool, free cotton goods, and free iron and steel products as well as free iron ore and free coal. As to the other articles assigned by him to the free list I am in entire agreement. I believe in the binding force of platforms and in such an amendment to the rules of the lower house of congress as will restore popular government and majority rule in that body.

Yours very truly,
MORRIS SHEPPARD,
 First Texas District.

HOW IT LOOKS IN ILLINOIS

The president may be right—we hope he is; but undoubtedly he is on the unpopular side of the case, and in such a contest he will lose in respect of the great mass of the people. He will win the respect of the corporations who are trying to grab the public domain. His argument, if read without his signature, and its source unknown, would lead the general reader to think that it was the plea of a lawyer before a federal court for a wealthy corporation who was charged with violation of law.

We are sorry, but the president's action in sustaining Ballinger does not look good to us.—Alton (Ill.) Telegraph, Rep.

WHAT THEY WANT

Wanted: A new democracy that will so define a protective tariff that a protectionist democrat can be a protectionist without having to admit it.

Timely Editorials by
 Commoner Readers

Web M. Rubey, Macon, Mo.—I do not deem it necessary for me or any one to aid Mr. Bryan in his contention with the Texas advocates on the subject of tariff tax on raw materials, for he is able to take care of his side of the debate; but there is one thought connected with the matter I would emphasize, and that is that the theory of tariff taxation of raw materials means universal tariff protection, not only upon all raw materials in all sections of the country, but also upon all manufactured products. This must be apparent to every thinking person, for the reason that in order for every congressman who would have a tariff tax upon raw materials of his district, he must combine with those congressmen who demand protection on all manufactured products, and pledge himself to vote for protection on all manufactured products. Not only so, but if one locality gets protection on its raw materials, all localities have a right to also demand it, and when the raw products of all sections of the union get protection, by agreeing to reciprocate the favor by voting for protection on manufactured products, we will thereby spread protection universally over the United States, and the possibility of tariff reform will have passed, and the tariff as a party question will necessarily have to be abandoned. The democratic party had as well meet and declare its abandonment of the tariff question altogether, as to adopt the Texas idea of demanding a protective tariff on raw materials. The theory of protective tariff is either right or wrong. If wrong, as democracy has always held, then it is as wrong when applied to raw materials as when applied to manufactured products, and no democratic congressman can defend the application of protection to one thing and deny it to all other things. If protection is indefensible as to manufactured products, it is indefensible as to raw materials. I agree with Mr. Bryan that now is the time, in the congressional election of 1910, for democracy to decide whether it will stand against the principle of protection for protection's sake, or surrender to the republican doctrine of protection.

Wayne C. Williams, Denver, Colo.—I am enclosing selected portions of President Taft's speech on the income tax amendment, made in Denver on Tuesday, September 21. I believe it contains two remarkable admissions:

First, He admits that the income tax law would have passed congress had he not proposed the substitute of the amendment to the federal constitution and the corporation tax feature. I quote from a verbatim, stenographic report of his address:

"But the income tax amendment seemed quite likely to pass by vote of all the democrats and a sufficient number of republicans. Therefore those who were opposed to the income tax amendment looked about to see if a compromise could not be proposed less objectionable than the income tax amendment, which would satisfy enough republicans who were inclined to favor the income tax to prevent the passage of that amendment. Such a compromise was found in a proposal to pass the present corporation tax, and also the joint resolution already referred to, proposing an amendment of the federal constitution to the states authorizing the general government to impose an income tax without apportioning it as a direct tax according to the population of the states."

Second, He now says that he is opposed to an income tax law, based on the amendment, except in times of great stress or national emergency. Did President Taft admit this much when congress was in session and when he was persuading republican senators to accept his substitute for an income tax law? My best recollection is that he kept silent about his own attitude toward the passage of such a law. He now leaves the plain inference that he will veto such a law if it is passed, even pursuant to an amendment. He says:

"Assuming the constitutional authority to have been given, I am opposed to a general, individual income tax law, except in times of great national stress. I am opposed to it because of the difficulty already alluded to, that it puts such a premium on perjury as to have led other governments to abandon that method of levying an income tax and of imposing the tax wherever possible on the sources of income in the hands of those who are not ultimately to pay it."

Finally, is the president correct in this state-

ment as to England's experience in income tax collection? On this I ask for information:

"In England, after a hundred years of experience, the income tax is levied in only exceptional instances on the individual directly. It is first levied on the declared dividends of corporations; secondly, on rents before they leave the hands of the tenants, and finally, on the individual with respect to matters that are not covered by rents and corporate investments."

R. E. Morgan, Mankato, Kansas. — I frequently see you, as well as other editors, falling into the same error, namely, the error of raising the same question, whether, in a given case, goods are sold more cheaply abroad than at home. Now that question is immaterial and irrelevant and has nothing to do with the point at issue. The only question pertinent is whether goods made in America are sold abroad. If we find American goods on the foreign market, we at once know that they are sold in competition with foreign goods, a fact which denies and overthrows the argument in favor of a protective tariff. And the reason for the law having ceased, the law should no longer stand. If we should adopt the method of trying to ascertain whether goods are sold more cheaply abroad than at home, we might be worsted in a clever system of juggling with figures. But the chief reason why we should not indulge in such an inquiry is that it is not pertinent.

SUBSIDIZING INSTRUCTION

The more one reads the writings and sayings of Thomas Jefferson, the more one's admiration is excited at his wonderful insight into human nature. No matter what question arises, it is found that Jefferson said something bearing upon the subject, and his utterances were at all times on the side of the whole people and against the corrupt influence that attempt to pervert government.

At present increasing attention is being called to the subsidizing of our institutions of learning. Our trust magnates are silencing criticism by their donations to colleges and universities. The following from a letter written by Jefferson to Mr. Cabell is in point. (Volume 2, page 27, Jefferson Memorial Association edition):

"In most public seminaries text-books are prescribed to each of the several schools as the norma docendi in that school; and this is generally done by authority of the trustees. I should not propose this generally in our university, because I believe none of us are so much in the heights of science in the several branches as to undertake this; and, therefore, that it will better be left to the professors, until occasion of interference shall be given. But there is one branch in which we are the best judges, in which heresies may be taught, of so interesting a character to our own state, and to the United States, as to make it a duty in us to lay down the principles which shall be taught. It is that of government. Mr. Gilmer being withdrawn, we know not who his successor may be. He may be a Richmond lawyer, or one of that school of quondam federalism, now consolidation. It is our duty to guard against the dissemination of such principles among our youth, and the diffusion of that poison, by a previous prescription of the texts to be followed in their discourses."

NECESSARIES VS. LUXURIES

One of the claims made for the new tariff bill by Senator Aldrich and other sponsors was that it bore down strongly upon the luxuries, thus making the rich who consume them, pay more for them, while at the same time it greatly reduced the rates on the necessities, the things that the great middle class use, thereby reducing the prices upon them.

The News was curious to learn whether this was true or not. It listed eight articles that are distinctively luxuries, and it also listed eight other articles which are distinctively necessities. Here they are:

Necessaries		Luxuries	
	Per Cent		Per Cent
Sugar	78.87	Diamonds	10
Blankets	165.42	Automobiles	45
Yarns	138.12	Champagne	50
Carpets	66.72	Furs	35
Stockings	87.95	Paintings and	
Clothing	86.61	Statuary	20
Dress Goods,		Jewelry	60
(wool)	105.92	Jewel Boxes	32
Shirts	60.16	Yachts	35

These are official figures, taken from the publication issued by the senate committee on finance.—Lincoln (Neb.) Evening News, Rep.