

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

VOL. 10, NO. 2

Lincoln, Nebraska, January 21, 1910

Whole Number 470

## Ship Subsidies

The corporation papers now teem with editorials and articles in favor of a ship subsidy. Papers that for years have insisted that the people should be taxed through a high tariff to keep out goods are now clamoring for a tax upon the people to subsidize ships to bring goods to our ports.

There are three arguments made in favor of a subsidy. First, that it will increase our foreign trade; second, that it will furnish a new employment for American capital, and third, that it will enable our country to train American seamen.

To answer the first argument it need only be said that a reduction of the tariff will accomplish more in increasing trade than can be accomplished by subsidizing ships. The subsidy plan imposes an additional tax to overcome the tax already collected; the democratic plan reduces the present tax. Can any one doubt which plan is best for the taxpayers? Or why not encourage American shipping by giving a reduction of the tariff on goods brought to our ports in American bottoms? This would help the American ship owners without increasing the burden of the people. Our tariff on all that enters into ships and our law prohibiting the purchase of foreign made ships—both of these have operated against our shipping; why not allow the purchase of ships?

The second reason for the subsidy is equally unsound. To turn American capital into shipping we must make shipping more profitable than domestic industry. The protective system has brought such large profits to capitalists that shipping has been left to foreigners. The trusts have still further increased the profits of capital. How much of a subsidy would it require to make shipping as profitable to ship owners as the iron business has been to Carnegie or the oil business has been to Rockefeller? No subsidy that any one would dare propose would bring the shipping industry into competition with the trusts as a money maker.

And as to the third argument, why waste money on subsidies when the same end can be accomplished so much more cheaply in another way? Instead of putting so much money into battleships why not build a few transports and then use the transports in time of peace to establish trade routes? The government can borrow money at half the rate charged to private individuals and need not make any profit at all. Its battleships are a continual expense; the government could save money if it rented out its transports for nothing. If it had a fleet of transports it could select the routes it wanted developed, fix the terms so as to insure the training of seamen and lease the ships to the highest bidders. As it would require less capital to conduct business with leased ships than it would require to own ships there would be more competition.

This plan would give the government ships for

use in time of war; it would enable it to train seamen; it would give it its choice of trade routes; it would be cheaper; and, not least in importance, it could suspend the policy at any time, while the beneficiaries of a ship subsidy would never be ready to let go. A subsidy once granted would create a "vested interest" that would protest against any withdrawal of the subsidy.

This plan of leased government ships would do more than a subsidy to extend American shipping, but it has one defect—a fatal one, in the eyes of the advocates of a ship subsidy, namely, it does NOT enable a favored few to get their hands into the treasury; it does NOT create a new privileged class.

### WRITE TO YOUR CONGRESSMAN AND SENATOR

Write to your senator and to your member of congress and ask them how they stand upon this tariff platform as proposed by Mr. Bryan:

1. A platform is a pledge, given by the candidate to the voters, and when ratified at the polls becomes a contract between the official and his constituents. To violate it, in letter or in spirit, is not only undemocratic, but repugnant to the principles of representative government, and constitutes an embezzlement of power.

2. We denounce the despotism known as Cannonism and favor such an amendment to the rules of the national house of representatives as will restore popular government in that body and insure the rule of the majority on every question.

3. We endorse the tariff plank of the last national democratic platform and believe that the measure carrying out the promise of that platform should, among other things, provide for:

Free wool, the abolition of the compensatory duties on woollens and a substantial reduction in the ad valorem rate on woollens.

Free lumber, free wood pulp and free paper.

Free hides, leather, harness, boots and shoes.

Free oil and products of oil.

Free iron ore, free coal and low duties on all manufactures of iron and steel.

Free binding twine, cotton ties and cotton bagging.

Material reductions in the cotton schedules and in the tariff upon all other necessities of life, especially upon articles sold abroad more cheaply than at home, the aim being to put the lowest duty on articles of necessity and the highest on articles of luxury. Articles coming into competition with trust-made articles should be placed on the free list.

No tariff rate should be above 50 per cent ad valorem, except upon liquor and tobacco, and all rates above 25 per cent, excepting those upon liquor and tobacco, should be reduced one-twentieth each year until a 25 per cent rate is reached, the purpose being to reduce the tariff gradually to a revenue basis and thereafter to collect tariff for revenue only.

This question should also be submitted to every candidate for congress. In propounding this question Mr. Bryan's outline of a platform may be used for convenience sake. It will enable you to state in a succinct way the identical points upon which you desire to be informed. Men who aspire to public office and men whose aspirations have been honored by the people, have no right to keep secret their views upon public questions. Their constituents have the right to catechise them and expect prompt and explicit answers.

## Time for Revolt

One of the interesting editorials on the Taft-Pinchot matter appeared in the Philadelphia North American, republican, issue of January 12. The editorial is entitled "The Dismissal of Pinchot." The editor explains this belated editorial by saying that he "waited almost a full week to talk about Gifford Pinchot and Taft" so that he would be in a position to deal with the subject in a calm, thoughtful way. He declares that the loss to the government through Pinchot's retirement is well nigh irreparable. Then he declares that Pinchot "has been fired from office—and properly so." He says Mr. Taft could have taken no other course than the one he adopted when he removed Mr. Pinchot from office. Then he calls those who imagine that Pinchot has been discredited "fools," and he declares that Pinchot will yet be honored and "the Ballingers" will yet be discredited. He pays a fine compliment to the manner in which Messrs. Taft and Pinchot conducted themselves, saying:

"And the fine thing for patriotic Americans to consider is the way that Pinchot and Taft have faced each other and fenced and finished, with politeness and respect for each other's motives preserved, while respect for each other's judgment long ago had disappeared."

Having said all this he declares that the Hill-Morgan-Harriman-Guggenheim-Standard Oil holders of illegal claims have attempted the monopolization of Alaska in a way that will affect every citizen of New England, Pennsylvania and the Gulf states as personally as it does the taxpayers of Seattle or Los Angeles. He charges that a whitewash of Ballinger and his allies has been deliberately planned and that an effort has been made to discredit Pinchot in order to relieve the secretary of the interior. He concludes in this way:

"Gifford Pinchot is right. He has done well. He has sought official immolation as young Glavis did months ago. Both men blocked for a time at least the completion of a long-planned thievery of a billion dollars from the American people. Both Pinchot and his devoted co-workers know and have known all along that there is one thing more vital to the welfare of the country than the continuation of the work of Pinchot—and that is to keep thieves from stealing the nation's wealth in such surety as to make useless all future effort of patriots of the Pinchot brand."

This being true, what about Mr. Taft's attitude? If the editor of the Philadelphia North American and other ordinary citizens can see these things, what about the man who holds the position of chief magistrate? He is a lawyer by profession, he is a widely traveled man, he has had large experience as a judge and served in executive capacity in the Philippines and as secretary of war. How does it happen that he is unable to see the evils that are so apparent to the editor of the Philadelphia North American? According to this authority Pinchot and Glavis were blocking "the completion of a long-planned thievery of a billion dollars from the American people." Their sole object was to "keep thieves from stealing the nation's wealth," yet both Pinchot and Glavis were removed from office upon the order of William H. Taft. And Secretary of the Interior Ballinger holds his place, not only as a member of the president's cabinet, but as such a close confidential adviser of the chief magistrate that he was his first counsellor in the preparation of the special message relating to conservation.

Thus analyzed the North American's editorial would seem ridiculous. Now it is not at all important that this Philadelphia newspaper has given space to an inconsistent, illogical editorial. With all of its good points—and it has many of them—the North American often does that. But this particular editorial is interesting at this time because inconsistent and illogical as it seems it is fairly representative of the attitude of a considerable number of republicans. Because the uncovering of this false attitude

## CONTENTS

SHIP SUBSIDIES
TIME FOR REVOLT
HUMAN NATURE A FACTOR
PRIVILEGE WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY
IN THE SIXTH MISSOURI DISTRICT
"JUST REPUBLICAN"
EDUCATIONAL SERIES — DEMOCRATIC
POSITION ON THE TARIFF
FRANKLIN PIERCE ON "KEEPING STILL"
INCOME TAX CHEAT
CURRENT TOPICS
WHETHER COMMON OR NOT
HOME DEPARTMENT
NEWS OF THE WEEK
WASHINGTON NEWS