

Practical Tariff Talks

The tin plate industry has been built up in this country within the last two decades, and today stands a monument to the power of congress working through the tariff to make men rich by law.

The Payne-Aldrich tariff law carries a ten per cent decrease in the tariff on tin plates. This came about purely and simply because the manufacturers came before congress, as represented by its committees, admitted that they were making money and recognizing that there was a demand for a tariff revision downwards they consented to cutting the rate from one and one-half cents a pound to one and one-fifth cents.

The tariff of 1883 carried a duty of one cent a pound, but only one mill attempted the business of manufacture. McKinley came along with his tariff bill in 1890, and placed the duty at two and two-tenths cents. This allowed such a wide margin of profit that a number of mills were started.

A duty of a cent and a half or of a cent and a fifth doesn't seem very much, but when it is also calculated that there are 2,000 pounds in a ton and that a ton costs about \$7, it will be plain that the per ton duty is considerable—\$3 under the old law, \$2.40 under the present one.

The United States has but one large competitor in the tin plate making industry. That is Wales. Germany has a few mills, but her output is limited. They form no part of competition in the industry, say the American manufacturers.

that this reduction was made voluntarily by the manufacturers, and that they and not the committee or congress fixed what the new rate ought to be. Which seemed to be quite a popular way of making schedules in 1909.

OWEN IS WILLING TO LOAN TO PROGRESSIVE REPUBLICANS

The following article appeared in the January 25 issue of the Washington (D. C.) Times:

The Hon. Robert Latham Owen, A. M., LL. D., a senator from Oklahoma, has been frisked.

But a few short and fleeting days ago, the Hon. Owen was full of political doctrine and dogma of which he was the undisputed proprietor. It bulged from his every pocket, it filled his utterances from the forum, and, safeguarded by the potent espionage of his senatorial frank, it more or less cluttered up the United States mails.

The Hon. Owen, be it known, was the originator of the modern manifestation of that school of political doctrine which has become known as "the people's rule." He was for the people when nobody else knew they existed; at least, when nobody else recognized them as an available asset that could be cashed in at the central bank of political exchange.

He was head of "an advisory committee" which long ago put forth literature proposing that the "leaders of democracy" organize themselves into a great national movement for the promulgation of certain reforms calculated to restore to the people the right to run the country. He wrote literature, circulated it, talked it into the Record so that it could be franked, and got busy in a myriad of ways.

He talked to republicans and democrats alike about the desirability of having the people take a larger part in the government. He was for real primaries, for popular election of senators, for the initiative, referendum, recall, short ballot and all those things, before anybody else had thought of mentioning them in public.

But today, the Hon. Owen is a bankrupt. He has been held up, and the entire scheme of popular government has been taken off his person.

The National Progressive Republican League has done the business. It appropriated the Owen program, put an insurgent label on it, and flashed it forth to the country as the project of the progressive wing of the republican party. Senator Owen is wondering just what is left for him. But he doesn't worry much.

"Haven't these progressive republicans stolen all your thunder?" was asked of Senator Owen, just after the new league had thundered forth its declaration of intent to fix things right.

"Perhaps they have," was the sorrowful reply, "but I am always willing to have anybody steal the text of the Ten Commandments from me. They'll do him more good than the theft can possibly do me harm."

Senator Owen has been a people's rule advocate since before the Hodges were hung, whoever they were and wherever that was. He made speeches about it before Jonathan Bourne had started propagating the idea. And, oddly enough, he doesn't claim that the democratic party has a copyright on the idea.

The Owen program was put out many months ago, and the fact that it is now being pushed forward by a group of republicans is regarded by Senator Owen as merely an evidence that the program is one that cannot fail to gather up followers wherever it is talked about. He opines that democrats and republicans are all people, and as his game is to get the people interested in the scheme, he is glad to get all kinds of them active.

His scheme includes everything the Progressive Republican League has put forth in its platform, and still more. Owen would have publicity of campaign contributions before election, and he believes further that the public treasury might well contribute the campaign funds, and permit free use of the mails for distribution of proper campaign literature.

Well, of course, with a program of that kind, which he has been circulating and talking about for a few years back, he was a bit disconcerted

when he found that the republican progressives had taken it all over. But he bore up bravely. "Everybody will be taking it up pretty soon," he declared. "I am glad to see republicans coming in. It is the program that will win."

Senator Owen's organization, including prominent democrats—senators, governors, editors, publicists—all over the country will soon elect officers and put out a pronouncement which will probably be a remarkable parallel to the National Progressive Republican League statement, and to the declarations of Theodore Roosevelt in his late Outlook article.

The people's rule democrats are against Harmon; the people's rule republicans are against Taft.—Washington Times.

FREE RAW MATERIALS

The following letter, from Congressman Sims, of Tennessee, will be interesting to Commoner readers:

Editor Tennessean and American:—I am glad to see that the Tennessean and American is editorially calling attention to the hardship the German export tax on potash is working on the southern farmers who have to buy fertilizers for their crops.

It is pointed out that the American manufacturer of fertilizers must add this German export tax to the price he must ask for fertilizer; that the farmer must pay it, and in the last analysis he must add it to his farm products which is at last paid by the consumer of these products. You are very properly urging our government to take such steps as may be necessary to have the German government remit this odious export tax.

The discussion of this subject makes it opportune to call attention to the fact that tariff taxes on the crude, raw materials used by the American manufacturers are as certainly and surely added to the price of the finished product, and as certainly and surely paid by the ultimate consumer, as is this German export tax.

But this is not all, nor the worst of it. A tariff tax on crude raw materials used by manufacturers is not only added to the price of the manufactured article to the extent that such materials are imported, but the amount of this tariff tax is also added to the price of all domestic raw materials used by the American manufacturer on which no tariff has been collected, that it is, in fact, and in effect, a bonus to the owner of such raw materials, a statutory profit not arising out of the natural laws of trade and commerce, and is as certainly and as surely paid by the ultimate consumer as is this German export tax on potash.

The amount of this German export tax pales into significance as a burden upon the farmers of our country, when compared with the burdens they bear in the way of increased prices paid for manufactured goods due to this protective tariff tax upon crude raw materials used by manufacturers.

It is impossible to place the finished products of the manufacturer on the free list, or on the revenue-producing basis, as long as he must pay protective tariff tax on the crude raw materials he must use in his mill.

In the very nature of things, a tariff tax of any amount, however small, on coal, iron ore, logs, rough lumber and like products, is and must be protective and a compensatory progressive duty must be added to all articles made from such materials, and be paid ultimately by the consumer. The freight rates that must be paid on such materials from any foreign country ought to be protection enough to the American mine and timber owner against any foreign competition.

I hope that the guns of the Tennessean and American will be trained upon this bed rock, mudsill foundation of the protectionists, a tariff tax on crude raw materials used in the manufacture of the necessities of daily life, and never let up until all such crude raw materials are placed upon the free list and all articles manufactured therefrom placed upon the lowest revenue producing basis.

Nashville, Tenn.

T. W. SIMS.

The American Homestead, a monthly farm journal of national scope, will be sent to all Commoner subscribers, without additional cost, who renew their subscriptions during the month of March if this notice is mentioned when writing.