

The Commoner.

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Free Wool Indorsed

The caucus that indorsed the Underwood bill adopted the following resolution:

"Be it resolved, That the bill revising schedule K, as presented to this caucus by the majority members of the ways and means committee, is not to be construed as an abandonment of any democratic policy, but in view of a gradual reduction of the tariff and the depleted and depleting condition of the public treasury as a result of republican extravagance, a tariff of 20 per cent ad valorem on raw wool is now proposed as a revenue necessity."

The first part of the resolution rebukes those who deny that free wool is a democratic doctrine—how do the protectionists like that? The last part contradicts those who argue that a tax on wool is NOT a necessity. Like all compromises it displeases both sides—puts both sides in a false position. The protectionist democrats will repudiate it at the first opportunity and the advocates of free wool will disregard it as soon as they get a chance to substitute a tax on something else. It will answer one purpose, namely, keep the protection democrats from airing their views on protection during the discussion of the bill—thanks for small favors, and it will give the republicans a chance to point out ways in which the democrats could have collected more tax with less oppression.

Its temporary purpose is to disinfect the action of the caucus, but its future value will be in showing up the false basis on which the protectionist democrats won their victory in the caucus.

THE FIGHT FOR FREE WOOL

Harrison made a splendid fight for free wool and he will be useful in future tariff contests.

Ollie James was a tower of strength to the free wool side, as he is to every cause which he espouses.

Randell reflected credit on Texas by his advocacy of free wool. He took the part of the five million consumers of his state instead of the side of a few wool growers.

Kitchin will live to see his fight for free wool vindicated—the resolution that the protectionists were forced to accept must afford him some gratification, even now.

Rainey's stand for free wool will be endorsed by the sturdy democracy of his district—he deserves their support.

Possibly the amount which Mr. Underwood hopes to raise from a tax on wool might have been collected from a tax on the recommenda-

CONTENTS

FREE WOOL INDORSED

A BACKWARD STEP

RAW SILK

DEMOCRACY CANNOT SHIRK

A FABLE

ROOSEVELT ON TRUSTS

CANADA'S GREAT ANNUITIES SYSTEM

SEED-TIME AND HARVEST

"INDEFENSIBLE AND INTOLERABLE

OPPONENTS OF FREE WOOL WIN

GOVERNOR WOODROW WILSON IN

LINCOLN

HOW OREGON "STOOD PAT"

PRACTICAL TARIFF TALKS

HOME DEPARTMENT

WHETHER COMMON OR NOT

WASHINGTON NEWS

NEWS OF THE WEEK

NOT THE DEMOCRATIC IDEA

The United Press on June 1, carried the following dispatch: "I think we have proved that the democracy of the nation can be handled beneath the dome of the capitol, without assistance," declared Underwood today, discussing the defeat of the Bryan faction. "We adopted the wool bill unanimously, despite Mr. Bryan's earnest opposition, and we will put it through."

It is not the democratic idea that "the democracy of the nation be handled beneath the dome of the capitol" or among a coterie of men.

The democracy of the nation cannot be "handled" and live.

It was "handling" that brought the republican party to its present bad plight.

If the democratic party is to be of real service to public interests rather than the slave of special interests it will be controlled by the voice and conscience of the rank and file and in accordance with the party's principles.

tions filed by corporations on behalf of those of their brethren who apply for federal judgeships.

When can we expect an Underwood bill on the steel and iron schedule? That industry has a large plant in the chairman's district and is supposed to be controlled by a trust.

Having compromised with protectionist democrats in order to get the tariff bill out of a democratic committee, how much more compromise will be necessary to get it through a republican senate?

Keep your eye on the tariff bills yet to be reported and you will see how much log-rolling was necessary to get a tax on wool.

If the democratic party can be scared by the bleat of a sheep, what will it do when it hears the bellow of the bulls and the growl of the bears of Wall street.

SILENCE!

Silence is the word. The Commoner had the temerity to print an editorial argument in favor of free wool last week—a doctrine indorsed as democratic by the caucus—but Chairman Underwood serves notice that the discussion of public questions by democrats so unfortunate as to be outside of congress is neither expected nor desired—that editorials dealing with subjects under consideration will be regarded as attempts at dictation. He is quoted as saying:

"I think we have proved that the democracy of the nation can be handled beneath the dome of the capitol, without assistance. We adopted the wool bill unanimously, despite Mr. Bryan's earnest opposition, and we will put it through."

"SCHEDULE K"

The Underwood bill dealing with "Schedule K," the woolen schedule, reduces the average rate nearly one half and is therefore a great step in advance. No democrat can justify himself in voting against the measure and it ought to appeal to progressive republicans. The only fault that can be found with it is that it does not go far enough. If the plans of the free wool advocates had been accepted the average rate on woolen goods would have been still further lowered. No republican can justly criticize the bill, but democrats, while rejoicing at the reductions made, have reason to regret that the committee abandoned the free wool principle, and still more reason to regret that a democratic caucus indorsed the committee's action in this respect.

A Backward Step

The Underwood bill has been endorsed by a democratic caucus and will pass as it was reported, unless republican ridicule shames the democrats into amending the bill. The manner in which the resolution was received by the opposition when it was read in the house ought to give the democratic members some idea of the mortification which will be felt by democrats throughout the country when they have to meet the jeers and taunts of republican protectionists. The Underwood bill leaves a 20 per cent tax on wool. This is a step backward at a time when the tariff reform sentiment of the country is moving forward. The democrats put wool upon the free list bill nearly 20 years ago. Mr. Underwood defends the 20 per cent tax as a revenue measure and insists that it is necessary. That is the way most protective tariffs are defended. The Commoner does not accept Mr. Underwood's reasons and does not believe that the country will. It is absurd to argue that the tax on wool is necessary; the amount levied on wool could be collected with less hardship from other things. It is a conservative estimate to say that the tax on wool will cost the people from one hundred to two hundred millions, or at least from five to ten times as much as it brings into the treasury. The less than fourteen millions which will be collected on wool could be collected from a ten per cent duty on raw silk and raw rubber—not to speak of other methods. But instead of relieving the consumers of woolens to the extent they might have done the followers of Mr. Underwood sound a retreat on the wool question and they did it in the name of a revenue tariff. Many honest men have been misled by Mr. Underwood's specious argument, but The Commoner asks these democrats to watch the chairman of the ways and means committee. If he is tainted with protection, as The Commoner believes he is, he will show it on other measures as he has on this. The hope of tariff reformers is not in his leadership but in the fact that there may be enough tariff reformers on the committee to outvote him. If time proves that The Commoner's estimate of him is erroneous an apology will be forthcoming—if events prove that this estimate is correct those tariff reformers who have followed him will have an opportunity to repudiate him.

RAW SILK

Representative Harrison of New York, in a newspaper interview, points out where the revenue lost to the government on free wool could be gained in another direction. He says: "Approximately \$15,000,000 would be sacrificed by putting raw wool on the free list. If it is necessary that raw materials shall be taxed, why not tax raw silk and raw rubber, which now are free? Last year, \$67,000,000 worth of raw silk was imported without a cent of tax. Ten per cent ad valorem duty would bring in \$6,000,000. Last year \$106,000,000 worth of raw rubber came in without a cent of tax; 10 per cent ad valorem tax would produce \$10,000,000 revenue. In those two items the loss of revenue from putting raw wool on the free list is made up, and it is surely better to tax materials for making silk dresses and automobile tires than it is to tax the materials for woolen clothing of the poor."

Yes, as Chairman Underwood boasted, the caucus "answered Mr. Bryan," but (as Mr. Underwood did not say), "It is glory enough for one day To have dreamed the bright dream of the reign of the right."