

# The Commoner.

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## Far Reaching Influence

The democrats who are interested in the future of the party ought to consider the far-reaching influence that the party's action on the wool bill will exert. It must be remembered also that our party is poorly supplied with newspapers and that we have great difficulty in answering the misrepresentation of the republican press. The public is being informed that the caucus unanimously indorsed the tax on wool. The fact is that a very large element of the caucus opposed the tax on wool. The party is being put, therefore, in a false attitude.

The supporters of the Underwood bill consented to a resolution declaring that the bill should not be construed as a surrender of the party platform, but anyone can find by talking to these men that they do intend to surrender the principle of free raw material so far as it applies to wool. The action of the caucus was due not to revenue necessities but to the fact that the wool men had by log-rolling and by the aid of lobbyists secured a majority in favor of the tariff on wool, and no relief is to be expected from those who led the fight against free wool no matter how soon a surplus revenue is secured.

The action of the caucus is heralded as a victory for the protectionist element of the party, and it will assist the candidates who represent that element in the pending contest within the party. Every advocate of free wool who is a candidate for the senate or congress will be charged with favoring a policy that congress has turned down. He will be accused of disturbing the harmony of the party if he advocates free raw material, and all the power that the protectionist influences can bring to bear will be exerted in favor of democrats who will consult the financiers of protection instead of the masses of the people, and we have seen how potent those influences are. They can supply campaign funds; they can spread misrepresentations broadcast, and they can assail every defender of the public interests. When the democratic party takes up the protectionist idea, it must expect the introduction of the corrupting methods that protection has brought in the republican party.

The same influences that led to the imposition of a tax upon wool will be active when other schedules are being prepared. Good men will be misled by the specious arguments that are being used. Governor Wilson, for instance, while stating he is for free wool, is quoted as saying that the schedule by schedule plan limited the freedom of congress in the matter of tariff rates. He was persuaded that the wool schedule had to be so revised to raise practically as much revenue as it did before. This argument, however plausible, is absolutely unsound, and we have recently seen a demonstration of its unsoundness. The farmers' free list bill made a reduction of ten millions in the customs

receipts. If the theory which Governor Willson has been led to apply to the wool schedule had been applied to the farmers' free list, it would have been necessary to have rearranged the tax upon enough articles to make up for the ten millions lost by putting articles on the free list.

But the object of this editorial is not to discuss the details of any plan but merely to call attention to the fact that the protectionists have won a victory which they will use to the limit in the effort to pack congress with protectionist democrats. It behooves the people to be on their guard. The democrats responsible for the party's apostasy ought to be held to account if, as The Commoner believes, they misrepresent the sentiment of the voters. A secret caucus in which the decision was reached without a record vote makes it difficult for the constituents to locate the responsibility and raises the question whether a secret caucus is defensible from a democratic standpoint. If the constitution requires a record vote for the passage of bills when that record vote is demanded, why should the rule not be applied to caucuses which determine the party's position.

But whether it is difficult or easy to fasten responsibility upon those who have forced the party into its present attitude, the readers of The Commoner are warned against an effect which must already be apparent to those who read the papers. The democrats who are opposed to the principle of protection ought to be on the alert; they must be vigilant if they would protect themselves from misrepresentation and their party from disaster.

### DIAZ ABDICATES

President Diaz abdicates and calls for Spain, thus concluding the insurrection begun some six months ago. For several weeks the uprising seemed to make but little progress; it was not until the cabinet resigned and the president promised several important reforms that the outside world became aware of the seriousness of the struggle. The letter of President Diaz in which he presented the resignation which the insurgents forced from him is a pathetic document and touches the hearts of those who appreciate the great service he has rendered his country. He is a great man and history will award him a high place among the heroes of Mexico. His chief fault was that he did not fully recognize the advance that Mexico has made—that he attempted to rule modern Mexico by the rules which he applied before education had enlarged the capacity of the people. It was a fatal mistake and his career ends in exile, but when the lapse of time separates his faults and failures from his virtues he will stand with Hidalgo and Juarez. May his life be spared to realize his last wish: "I hope, gentlemen, that when the passions which are inherent to all revolutions have been calmed, a more conscientious and justified study will bring out in the national mind a correct acknowledgement, which will allow me to die carrying engraved in my soul a just impression of the estimation of my life, which throughout I have devoted and will devote to my countrymen."

### HISTORY REPEATS

The Houston Post devotes a column to four quotations from newspapers attacking Mr. Bryan's position on the wool question. Three of the quotations are from papers which opposed the democratic ticket in 1896, and the fourth is from a paper whose editor was a member of one of the two delegations that at Denver refused to vote for Mr. Bryan even when he had nearly nine-tenths of the convention. It would seem from this that Mr. Bryan still fails to please the men who have been unfriendly in the past.

### IS IT POSSIBLE?

A Washington correspondent says free wool would have hurt Governor Harmon's chances. Is it possible that the chances of presidential candidates were considered as well as revenue interests?

## A Word as to Dictation

The protectionist democrats, instead of defending the principle of protection, are now spending their time in charging Mr. Bryan with an attempt at dictation. While every so-called democratic paper which is opposed to Mr. Bryan as a candidate is at liberty to discuss public questions, it seems that Mr. Bryan is, in the eyes of the protectionist democrats, estopped from saying anything. Some of the papers invite him to retire to Nebraska and keep silent. That the readers of The Commoner may know what to expect, a word is submitted in reply to these criticisms.

Mr. Bryan has never attempted to dictate to the democratic party and has no desire to do so, but as a member of the democratic party Mr. Bryan has exercised the right to express an opinion upon public questions and upon public men, and this right he expects to continue to exercise. He will not be deterred from discharging what he regards as a sacred duty by abuse, but he is accustomed to abuse. His body, politically speaking, is scarred all over by the knives that have been wielded by the representatives of plutocracy inside of the democratic party and outside. He has made three campaigns and in every one of them he has had to meet treachery within the party as well as assailed from without. He has had to conduct his campaigns through committeemen, some of whom were in league with the opposition and in secret correspondence with the enemy. He has had to meet false and malicious misrepresentation on the part of papers subsidized by the predatory interests. He has seen the party platform attacked, sometimes openly and sometimes by innuendo, by those pretending to support the ticket, and he has seen the platform repudiated immediately after the election by papers who professed to support it during the campaign. He has had to oppose distinguished members of his own party when those members attempted to insert weasel words in the platform and make it ambiguous and uncertain. He has had to contend with timid politicians who professed friendship only out of fear of their constituents and only so long as that pretended friendship would help them. But he has found the heart of the party sound. He has found the rank and file of the party true. To this multitude of democrats, uncorrupted and undefiled, he owes whatever strength he has. He is indebted to them for the honors which have come to him, and he will spend the remainder of his days guarding their interests as best he can. He is in a position to speak with freedom, and he will be free to speak. He knows the record of the public men of the country—democrats and republicans—and this knowledge is at the service of the party. He is in favor of harmony when harmony means honest, straightforward democracy, but he is opposed to a harmony that is built upon false pretenses and used for the purpose of deception. He believes that the democratic party must deserve to win in order to win, and he believes it is better to oppose evils in the beginning than when they are full grown. He asks no one to accept his opinion, but he has no reason to doubt that the facts which influence him will influence others when they are known. He expects differences of opinion even among friends, and he knows that honest differences of opinion do not keep men from acting together when they agree in purpose, but he knows that people who differ in purpose cannot be expected to agree on plans.

In other words, Mr. Bryan is a citizen of the United States, and expects to live up to the responsibilities of a citizen as best he can. He is a member of the democratic party, and he expects to live up to the responsibilities of the position. The fact that he has been the party's candidate does not deprive him of the freedom to think and to speak. On the contrary, his responsibility is the greater because of the confidence reposed in him. He asks no favors, and he will show no favors to those who are identi-

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