

Practical Tariff Talks

During the debate in the house on the wool schedule the position taken by defenders of the present law was that the duty on raw wool is so small that it cuts no figure in the price of a suit of clothes to the wearer. The same argument will be brought forward on the stump. If true, then a reduction in the duty would cut no figure in the price, and, considered logically, an increase would have the same effect. The question is, does anybody believe that? A tariff is placed on an article for the purpose of artificially raising the price to the consumer for the benefit of the producer. In the case of raw wool, the tariff forces the man who buys wool for the purpose of making it into cloth to pay more for it than he would if there were no tariff. It naturally follows that, being able to do so, he will pass that increased cost onto the next man.

It is true that there isn't very much wool in a suit of clothing. The average suit contains 3½ yards of cloth, and about two pounds of wool to the yard is a good average. At 20 cents a pound the cost would be about \$1.40 for the wool in the suit. By imposing a 45 per cent tariff on wool the price has been arbitrarily increased that amount, and adds just that much to the cost to the manufacturer for the wool utilized. Does anybody believe that the 40 cents more he must pay for his wool because of the tariff cuts no figure in the price he makes for his cloth? But this is not all. There is the compensatory duty, levied to compensate the manufacturer for this increased cost, but which is figured on a false basis and enables him to add materially to the price of his cloth.

If there were no duty on raw wool there would be no compensatory duty, and if there were no compensatory duties the American manufacturer would have to sell his cloth at a lower price. It is ridiculous to assert that a duty on raw wool cuts no figure in the price a man must pay for his clothing. At the least calculation, considering the fact that every person through whose hands the wool must pass from the time it is taken off the sheep's back until it is ready for delivery to the man's back adds his percentage, this tariff adds several dollars to the price. Nobody with a grain of gray matter will believe that a tax upon a raw material which admittedly does artificially raise its price does not add to the price of the finished article from which it is fashioned. The manufacturers might be able, through trusts or by price agreements, to prevent a reduction of the tax from being reflected in the price of the finished product, but the prevalence of such conditions is the best possible evidence that they pass the whole of the tax and all in addition that they can on to the consumer.

Another reason why the tariff on raw wool does cut a considerable figure in the price of clothing is that the schedule which is bottomed wholly on the tariff on the raw material, was so drawn that it discriminated in favor of that section of the cloth industry which is dominated by a gigantic organization of capital, and against that section in which competition freely exists, compelling the latter to follow the former and permitting the former to dictate prices. These preferences are cunningly interwoven into the schedule. In one case it consists of a differential between unwashed wool on the skin in two of the classes. In another case the preference arises from the fact that, by arbitrarily assuming that all wools shrink alike—which they do not—the worsted man gets his wool through at a much less duty than does the woolen man. In still another case the discrimination consists of a difference in the rate on the wool products which each consumes.

Summarized, it may be said that this is true: That a straight reduction in the raw wool duty might not affect the present price of clothing, but if along with it the compensatory duty were abolished or so amended as to be rid of all excess compensation, and if the tops and yarn schedules were so amended as to place both branches of the cloth-making industry on an equality, nothing ought to be more certain. The only preventative would be a combination of manufacturers, but this would be impossible under such a revision. It is a revision along

these lines that the democratic house has begun, and the opposition among woolgrowers and clothmakers is substantial evidence that that revision threatens prices. C. Q. D.

NO STRADDLER NEED APPLY

W. W. Chesley, Schaller, Ia.—I am decidedly in favor of the movement on foot where the voters can know how their candidates stand on public questions. Let the candidate state his position clearly and then win or lose in it. A straddler is very seldom reliable if he wins the name with a dark horse. If a candidate is too dignified to be questioned as to his position on public questions and prefers to straddle his way into office he deserves prompt rebuke and should be turned down the same as any other imposter. Let the good work go on.

George Hall, Newport, R. I.—As a reader of The Commoner, I am more than pleased with your civil service plan, in asking candidates for president those questions. It makes me think that when the wise men who made this a free and independent country they did not want this country governed as it was in some parts of Europe where the nobility made the laws and the poor had to submit to them whether they liked them or not, so they put it up to the people to make the laws indirectly, by voting for the laws. What have the voters done? Why, they have identified themselves with a party, and let the party do their thinking for them, and in a great many cases they have engrafted their party into their religion and they believe they will go to hell if they vote the other way even if their party places a dollar per pound on beef. Keep up the lesson on political civil service and tariff catechism.

Lee Mitchell, Carbon, Ind.—I want to commend the splendid work you are doing to place the democracy in an impregnable position for the campaign of next year. Your latest move—to get presidential candidates to declare their positions relative to important questions—should prove of unusual benefit to the party. Governor Thomas R. Marshall's ready response to your list of questions give particular sanction of your course from an eminent source. Our governor expressed willingness to rely upon the wisdom and good sense of the party membership, and abide by their wish as to the presidential nominations betokens political sagacity and sound sense in an important matter. Pure democratic ideals would seem to require primaries for the selection of our presidential candidates, as other of our public servants, and we shall have them, doubtless, in the course of time. While we are obliged to handle this business without the aid of primaries, the utmost effort should be made, nevertheless, for the nearest possible approach to the same result that might be gained by the primaries. It should be undertaken to secure the most able men, who may afford a truly representative delegation for the state and to have them instructed so as to serve the best interests of the people. It would seem that, considering the pitch to which the popular interest has been aroused, it should be an easy matter to secure nominations in the coming campaign that will be entirely friendly to the people, and it may be, too, if the popular will can find a proper medium for its expression; but, if the predatory interests by any means can throttle public opinion, they will do so and cheat the people of their victory. Careful watch should be had of the methods by which delegates to the national convention may be chosen and every effort put forth to make them duly representative of the democracy rather than trust to the agents of plutocracy. It means conflict, of course, or, at least, that "eternal vigilance" which "is the price of liberty." The enemy camps continually "upon the ground," always ready to set up prior claims, and so the brunt of battle is put upon the people to first dislodge this brazen usurper. As I believe my intuition true and irrepressible, I can not decline to direct such effort as I may devote along political lines very largely toward securing the free expression of popular preference in all governmental affairs. Such is the greatest problem of American politics today, according to my observation, and the greatest defect of our political system is the imperfect election machinery which precludes the ready settlement of public questions. Fifty years ago a costly civil war was precipitated in this country, because no possible other way could be found for settlement of a matter of great public concern. I can not see that we have yet progressed very far from the conditions of that day, and

do not know that we have now the way of escape from a like catastrophe in a similar strait.

A GOOD MEASURE

In the house of representatives Mr. Foster of Illinois submitted the following resolution, which was referred to the committee on rules and ordered to be printed. It is a good measure and right to the point:

House Resolution 283—Resolved, that a committee of nine members, to be elected by the house, be, and is hereby, directed to make an investigation for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not there have been violations of the anti-trust act of July second, eighteen hundred and ninety, and the various acts amendatory thereof, by the International Harvester company, incorporated under the laws of the state of New Jersey, or the International Harvester Company of America, organized under the laws of the state of Wisconsin, and the various corporations controlled thereby or holding stock therein, or whose stocks are held, in whole or in part thereby, which said violations have not been prosecuted by the executive officers of the government; and if such violations are disclosed by the investigation herein provided, said committee is directed to report the facts and circumstances to the house.

Said committee is also directed to investigate the organization and operations of said International Harvester company and the International Harvester company of America, and if, in connection therewith, violations of the aforesaid laws are disclosed, to report the same to the house.

Said committee shall also inquire whether the organization and operations of the International Harvester company or the International Harvester Company of America have caused or had a tendency to cause any of the following results:

First. The restriction or destruction of competition among manufacturers of harvesting and other farm machinery, gas engines, or farm vehicles.

Second. An increase in price in the assembled machine and in the repair parts thereof of harvesting machinery, gas engines, or farm vehicles over the prices paid for such machinery, vehicles, and so forth, prior to the organization of the International Harvester company and the International Harvester Company of America.

Third. An increase in the price of harvesting machinery, gas engines, and farm vehicles over the price paid for like machinery, gas engines, and farm vehicles in other countries.

Fourth. What relation the International Harvester company or the International Harvester Company of America has to the so-called independent harvester companies.

Fifth. What policy has been adopted by the International Harvester company or the International Harvester Company of America to secure control of the so-called independent factories, that is, the Keystone Manufacturing company, the D. M. Osborne and company, and other factories.

Sixth. What means the International Harvester company or the International Harvester Company of America takes to control the business of local agents of harvesting and other farm machinery, gas engines, and farm vehicles.

Seventh. To ascertain if the reported advance in wages is being paid the employees of the International Harvester company or the International Harvester Company of America.

And said committee shall report to the house whether by reason of the facts thus ascertained there should be any further legislation by congress.

Said committee as a whole, or any subcommittee thereof, is authorized to sit during the sessions of the house and the recess of congress, to employ clerical and other assistance, to send for persons and papers, and to administer oaths to witnesses.

And the speaker shall have authority to sign and the clerk to attest subpoenas to secure evidence for said committee during the recess of congress.

CONFESSES ITS INSINCERITY

Insincerity is seldom admitted and not always easily proven. The Douglas county democracy has inadvertently confessed its insincerity. It pretends indignation because Mr. Bryan refused to support a democratic candidate for governor who bolted the party platform and then indorses for president a man who refused to support a democratic candidate for president who stood squarely on the democratic national platform. Why did they not give their real reasons?