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The Campaign in Canada

The readers of The Commoner may be interested in hearing about the fight over reciprocity in Canada. (The election was held September 21.) I am making a ten-days lecture tour through New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island and Cape Briton Island under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A.—this being the only populated section of Canada that I had not visited. Arrangements were made for the trip before the parliamentary election was called, so that this pleasure was unexpected. The campaign is on and it is getting hotter and hotter each day—at the rate the temperature is rising it is fortunate that election day is not far away. I am, following a long established rule, keeping out of the discussion. I do not discuss American politics away from home because foreigners do not understand our politics, and I do not discuss the politics of the countries I visit because I fear I might betray a lack of understanding of their politics.

But the situation in Canada is so much like the situation in our country that I am greatly enjoying the fight. The real issue is the old economic one between protection and a tariff for revenue only, colored by a few side issues which we do not have. The protectionists are combatting any reduction of the tariff and threatening dire disaster to Canadian industries if the wall is lowered.

Manufacturers are giving out interviews and the anti-reciprocity papers are printing "scare head" estimates of the number of men who will be thrown out of employment if reciprocity carries. Here are the views of one prominent manufacturer:

"I ask your readers not to misunderstand me. I am not claiming that our tariff will be immediately broken down. For the first year, possibly, things would go smoothly, and an increased immigration take place from the American west; they look forward to the great advantages that they are to reap in the future.

"We have witnessed in the past an immense delegation of farmers from the west, which, it must be conceded, was embarrassing to the government. How will the government stand, when farmers' deputations pour in from every section of the country demanding free trade? The only possible excuse to pacify them would be, 'We must raise our revenue.'

"A revenue tariff, pure and simple, to the manufacturer, means practically nothing for them. A revenue tariff is to let goods in, to collect the revenue. A protective tariff is to keep them out; to produce them at home, maintaining a healthy, strong labor market, ensur-

ing employment for our own citizens at remunerative wages, keeping the money in our own country; building prosperous cities; adding vastly to the value of agricultural lands by creating a home market; creating opportunities for our rising young men, and ensuring a prosperous country."

The friends of reciprocity are, however, well supplied with papers and they are as energetically picturing the advantages of freer trade between the countries. One of these papers publishes the picture of a railway station in China with the following comment:

"This is a picture of one of the few railway stations in China, a country which so fervently desires to 'let well enough alone' that the proposal to build a new road in the province of Szechuan has aroused armed revolt. They fear the menace of trade with the outer world. Local demagogues tell them that it means the invasion of their markets, the undermining of their national independence and ultimate annexation. Transportation in China is for the most part by means of canals and rivers, and the roadways are narrow or ill-paved. In some places grooved stones are laid in the roadway as a track for wheelbarrows. But the 'let well alone' party in China is still strong."

The Canadian Pacific railroad is opposing reciprocity. Sir William Van Horne, the ex-president, "fights for St. John," declares the St. John Standard in big headlines. The readers of the said journal are informed that Sir William "plainly shows the folly of the Laurier-Taft agreement," etc. Some of the defenders of reciprocity offset this by publishing an advertisement which appeared in the window of the Canadian Pacific land office in Seattle announcing that "Reciprocity will increase Canada lands one hundred per cent," but this is at once answered by a telegram from the Seattle agent who says: "This sign was not authorized by the Canadian Pacific Railway company, nor by me nor by any one in authority in the office but by a clerk during my absence and was immediately removed on my return." How much this is like the closing days of our campaigns.

The partisanship of the paper amuses the on-looker. Here is an instance: The St. John Telegraph says, "Sir Wilfred Laurier is making the greatest campaign of his career. Cheerful, confident, convincing, the great liberal leader is everywhere a herald of victory." The St. John Standard, on the other hand, (on the same morning) took its readers into its confidence and gave them the following bit of information:

"Laurier and loyalty is now the cry of the 'veiled treason' party of 1891. Laurier may be loyal to Laurier, but he is a traitor to Canada." And both papers find willing readers.

The newspaper reports of meetings are colored by the editorial policy of the papers, and recall an experience that I had at Creston, Ia., twenty years ago. The republican paper began by saying that I had a small crowd, criticised everything I said and concluded by declaring that the audience was relieved when I drew my remarks to a close. The democratic paper announced that I had a large audience, in spite of the short notice, praised my speech all the way through and wound up its report with the comforting assurance that though I talked two hours the audience would gladly have listened until morning.

The Canadian papers give reports of meetings quite as conflicting. The St. John Telegraph, for instance, declares that "Dr. Prigsley addressed two big meetings" and made "victory sure in Kent," while the Standard assures its readers that "only seventeen electors turned out to hear Mr. Prigsley" at one of those meetings, that "little enthusiasm was displayed" and that

the voters are "not impressed with the promises made."

The predictions vary much as they do in our own country the night before election. The liberals tell me that Laurier will win with votes to spare, while the conservatives seem confident that he will be beaten. One paper prints a list of "captains of industry" who have "come out against reciprocity" and another paper answers with a list of farmers who have declared for reciprocity—and so it goes.

I am surprised to find that fear of annexation is playing so large a part in the campaign waged by the conservatives against reciprocity. You would suppose, to read the editorials and the speeches as reported that there was an active movement on foot in the United States to annex Canada, whether or no. They quote from President Taft's speeches and appeal to the spirit of loyalty to Great Britain. The following extract is made the subject of a cartoon:

"I have said that this was a critical time in the solution of the question of reciprocity. It is critical because unless it is now decided favorably to reciprocity, it is exceedingly probable that no such opportunity will ever again come to the United States. The forces which are at work in England and in Canada to separate her by a Chinese wall from the United States, and to make her part of an imperial commercial band reaching from England around the world to England again by a system of preferential tariffs will derive an impetus from the rejection of this treaty, and if we would have reciprocity, with all the advantages that I have described, and that I earnestly and sincerely believe will follow its adoption, we must take it now, or give it up forever.—From the speech of President Taft at the joint banquet of the Associated Press and the American Newspaper Publishers' Association held in New York on April 27th, 1911."

They quote from Speaker Clark's speech and from the editorials in a few American papers and charge that reciprocity is but the thin edge of the annexation wedge. It would seem ridiculous were the arguments (?) not so seriously advanced and were not the consequences likely to be so unfortunate. Here are two great nations side by side with nothing but an unfortified boundary line between them; for nearly a century peace and friendship have existed between them. Now, for partisan purposes, the conservatives deliberately appeal to prejudice and try to make capital by cultivating a spirit of unfriendliness to the people of the United States. The indications are that the effort will fail, and yet, the very effort, like the effort of republicans to prevent tariff reduction in the United States by declaring that it was in the interest of Great Britain, shows how a pecuniary interest can blind people to fairness and justice.

It will evidently be some years yet before we are ready for the millenium but let us hope that time will remove prejudice on both sides of the line and convince both people that economic questions ought to be considered on their merits and national verdicts rendered upon the real facts and not on statements colored to suit the interests of the party making them.

W. J. BRYAN.

WHAT IS IT?

In opposing the recall in the governor's conference, Governor O'Neal of Alabama spoke of "the caprice of the majority," and added: "When you establish an arbitrary recall of judges you have instituted mob law in this country."

We have already established an arbitrary selection of judges. What about "the caprice of the majority" in the selection of these judges? Have we in that way "instituted mob law?"

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