

The Commoner.

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VOL. II, NO. 52

Lincoln, Nebraska, January 5, 1912

Whole Number 572

A Bit of History

In an interview recently published in the New York Herald, President Taft gave the public a bit of history. In discussing the submission of the income tax amendment to the constitution he said:

"There was strong pressure from the democrats and some of the republicans, including all the insurgents, for the revival of the old income tax, on the plea that the personnel of the supreme court had changed since its decision that the act of 1894 was unconstitutional, and hence we might hope for a different decision.

"I have always been in favor of an income tax laying power in the general government, because it may some time be needed to save the nation; but I did not think this the proper way to secure it, having a due regard for the prestige of the supreme court.

"Presently, in fear of the income tax law's passing, Mr. Aldrich ceased laughing at my plan for a corporation tax and came down to see me about it. 'Can you induce enough doubtful senators, if we put the corporation tax in the bill and adopt a constitutional amendment permitting an income tax, to defeat the general income tax law proposed by the democrats and insurgents?' he inquired. I expressed my belief that I could, and the sequel showed I was right. I am proud of having taken such a part in obtaining the corporation tax."

It will be remembered that in 1908 he opposed the democratic plan of securing an income tax amendment; he said that an income tax could be secured by statute whenever the country needed it. Now he tells us that the democrats and progressive republicans combined to secure an income tax by statute—his plan—and that AT THE SUGGESTION OF MR. ALDRICH—who did not want any income tax at all—he brought forward the constitutional amendment to defeat a statutory income tax. This is a confession that he does not deserve any credit for this great reform—for the income tax amendment, when adopted, will be a great economic advance. While this reform will come under his administration the democrats and progressive republicans will deserve credit for compelling the submission of the amendment.

A QUESTION OF BIAS

Congressman Littleton takes offense at an editorial in The Commoner suggesting his retirement from the Stanley committee. He should not be so sensitive. He is right in saying that his personal relations with Mr. Bryan are friendly and the criticism ought not to make them less. Mr. Littleton's bias is toward the trusts, at least Mr. Bryan thinks so, and as an

editor Mr. Bryan must deal with situations as he sees them. Mr. Littleton's bias is none the less harmful because unconscious. Mr. Bryan's criticism did not rest on the charges made by Mr. Martin; it rested on the action of Mr. Littleton as a member of the committee. But since Mr. Littleton's speech it is not necessary to rely on the conduct as a member of the Stanley committee. His speech shows him to be a reactionary and the party can not afford to let reactionaries speak for it on the trust question no matter how honest they may be.

THE McNAMARA LESSON

As might have been expected the McNamara confessions have given the enemies of labor a chance to libel all who are connected with organized efforts to protect the wage earners. Men who are indignant whenever the sins of sweatshop owners are charged against all manufacturers, when the crimes of the trust magnates are imputed to all who are engaged in big business and when the vices of the "Napoleons of finance" laid at the door of bankers generally—these hasten to hurl broadsides at all who earn their bread in the sweat of the brow. This is unfair in the extreme. The McNamaras have been guilty of an awful crime and all law-abiding citizens rejoice that punishment has been meted out to them. They have not only sinned outrageously against society, but they have sinned even more grievously against their associates who trusted them and, who, believing in their innocence, contributed liberally to their defense fund. Organized labor is not to blame for them, however; on the contrary, it is stronger for their elimination, and only those who encouraged them or defend their conduct ought to share their condemnation.

Organized labor has learned a lesson—it will be more careful in the selection of its leaders; and society may well pause and inquire if there is anything wrong in the conditions which led these men to enter into so dastardly a conspiracy against life and property.

THE PLOT THICKENS

A meeting was recently held in Chicago to organize a movement to push the Aldrich currency scheme. The name, "The National Citizens League" does not indicate the purpose of the organization—a national citizens league can work for anything. Neither does it describe its purpose to call it a currency reform movement, for there are many ways of reforming the currency—some good and some bad. Its real purpose is to bring pressure to bear upon congress to force the passage of the ALDRICH currency scheme. It will not be urged at the regular session—it will probably be left to the "job session" which convenes after the election. Let democrats be on their guard and fight it always and everywhere.

HOW THE LAW STANDS NOW

The National Civic Federation submitted a list of questions to a number of business men. Mr. Fenton Lawson of F. H. Lawson & Co., at Cincinnati, manufacturers of sheet metal goods, answered the first question in this way:

"Question 1. Do you believe that the Sherman law, as now interpreted, is made clear and workable?"

"Answer. No. The only thing about the recent supreme court decisions is that any concern charged with violation of the law will be condemned or cleared as the personal opinion, whim, prejudice or financial interest of the judge on the bench may dictate."

The New York Herald is urging as ITS plan a uniform price for trusts. The democratic national platform of 1908 urged this plan as a part of the license system proposed. The Commoner is glad to welcome the Herald to the support of the plan and sorry that it did not support it in 1908.

Now would be a good time for a democrat to begin the fight for free ships.

Another Vindication

The New York Herald is making much of a suggestion that as a means for the suppression of a trust monopoly the law require uniform prices in commodities changed only by transportation charges in different sections of the country. The Herald prints interviews from a number of public men from various sections of the country, in which interviews the uniform price plan is enthusiastically upheld.

The Herald is to be congratulated upon its good efforts and the democracy is to be congratulated in that one of the planks of its 1908 national platform has been vindicated. The trust plank in 1908 was as follows:

"A private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable. We therefore, favor the vigorous reform of the criminal law against guilty trust magnates and officials, and demand the enactment of such additional legislation as may be necessary to make it impossible for a private monopoly to exist in the United States. Among the additional remedies, we specify three: First, a law preventing a duplication of directors among competing corporations; second, a license system which will, without abridging the right of each state to create corporations, or its right to regulate as it will foreign corporations doing business within its limits, make it necessary for a manufacturing or trading corporation engaged in interstate commerce to take out a federal license before it shall be permitted to control as much as twenty-five per cent of the product in which it deals, the license to protect the public from watered stock and to prohibit the control of such corporation of more than fifty per cent of the total amount of any product consumed in the United States; and, third, a law compelling such licensed corporations to sell to all purchasers in all parts of the country on the same terms, after making due allowance for cost of transportation."

Speaking at Indianapolis in August, 1908, and referring to this trust plank, Mr. Bryan said: "The license, however, would not prevent the growth of the corporations licensed. It would simply bring them under the eye of the federal government and compel them to deal with the public in such a way as to afford the public the protection necessary. One of the restrictions suggested is that such licensed corporations be compelled to sell to all purchasers in all parts of the country on the same terms, after making due allowance for cost of transportation." Mr. Taft attacks this restriction as 'utterly impracticable.' He says: 'If it can be shown that in order to drive out competition, a corporation owning a large part of the plant producing an article is selling in one part of the country, where it has competitors, at a low and unprofitable price, and in another part of the country where it has none, at an exorbitant price, this is evidence that it is attempting an unlawful monopoly and justifies conviction under the anti-trust law.'

"If such an act is now unlawful, why is he so frightened at a plan which gives to the small competitor this very protection? The trouble with the present law is that it does not restrain the evils at which it is aimed. The plan proposed in the democratic platform brings the corporation under the surveillance of the government when it has reached the danger point, and thereafter subjects it to federal scrutiny. The present law simply prohibits it in an indefinite sort of way, and then leaves the officers of the law to scour the country and hunt up violations of the law's provisions. Mr. Taft is unduly alarmed at this proposal, or else he entirely fails to comprehend the details of the plan. He says:

"To supervise the business of corporations in such a way as to fix the price of commodities and compel the sale at such price is as absurd and socialistic a plank as was ever inserted in a democratic political platform."

"And yet this sentence is found in the same paragraph with the sentence above quoted in which he declares that it is even now a violation

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