

The Commoner

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The Tariff Question Again

The tariff question is again before Congress and the present dispatches give us the same arguments, pro and con, that have been advanced for one hundred years. This is the question upon which party lines seem to be most clearly drawn. The Republicans believe in protection—not all of them, but nearly all—the Democrats are opposed to protection—not all of them, but nearly all. There are a few Republicans who have been emancipated from the fear entertained by the rest that a reduction in tariff will ruin the country. The number of these emancipated Republicans is greater now than ever before because a Democratic victory followed by prosperity proved that prosperity is not dependent on a high tariff. But, while this proof is abundant and complete, it is entirely ignored by the papers that represent the protected interests; they again repeat the old outworn arguments about protection to home industries.

While nearly all of the Democrats understand the fallacy of protection and are preparing to present the Democratic arguments against the system that taxes the many for the benefit of the few, we have still a few Democrats who plead for protection on the things in which they are interested "if there is to be protection" on anything. Of course, one who asks protection for himself is not in position to deny protection to any others who ask for it, but these constitute but a small fraction of the Democratic party. The tariff question gives the Democrats an opportunity to solidify the party ranks and to make occasional converts from the Republicans on schedules that are absurdly high.

There never was a sound reason for a purely protective tariff and never will be, and there is less now than in the earlier years of the discussion.

One of the points that should be emphasized is that the Republican leaders never vote the benefit directly to the parties in whose interest they claim to act. They always speak of the laboring man and predicate their support of the tariff on the ground that the tariff is necessary to keep up wages. If they really believe this why do they not favor a bounty paid directly to the wage earners instead of a tariff given to the employers as trustees for the laborers? The employers never pay any more wages than they are compelled to pay and the big employers are now uniting in an effort to destroy labor organizations in order to lower wages.

Republican leaders fail to see any inconsistency between the RAISING of the tariff and the LOWERING of wages, although the manufacturers profit by both processes. The vigor with which Republican leaders are now urging a high tariff indicates that they expect to give to the manufacturers and then "fry the fat out of them" in the campaign, as in the days gone by.

Success to the Democrats! Their attack upon a high tariff is just; if they fail in their effort to protect the public, the highest prices which will follow increased tariff will bring us votes this fall.

W. J. BRYAN.

A PROGRESSIVE VICTORY

The victory won by Candidate Brookhart, who secured the senatorial nomination at the recent Iowa primaries, is the most significant yet. Mr. Brookhart is more progressive than either Beveridge or Pinchot and his triumph is more distinctly a triumph of ideas. He had not the prestige or special advantages that Beveridge had, nor had he the campaign fund that contributed so materially to Pinchot's success. Then, too, he made his fight much more openly against the administration than the others. He was emphatic in his denunciation of the Esch-Cummins law, the seating of Newberry and the proposed high tariff. He has the farmers' viewpoint and his success is proof conclusive that the Republican masses are against the administration and don't care who knows it.

Brookhart in the Senate would be more radical than Pepper or Norris—on economic questions he would go as far as LaFollette. If anybody doubts that progressivism has broken loose in the Republican party, the three victories, especially Brookhart's, should be convincing. Now watch the other agricultural states.

W. J. BRYAN.

CONTROL SHOULD BEGIN SOMEWHERE

The New York World complains because the Federal Trade commission protests against the merger of the Bethlehem and Lackawanna Steel companies and suggests that it should begin with the steel trust. The trouble seems to be that the Supreme Court, after a prolonged hearing, discharged the steel trust, notwithstanding the evidence of its very large control of the steel industry. Now we are told that no protest should be made against OTHER mergers while the steel trust is unmolested.

That sort of logic would leave the way open to most anything that big business wants to undertake. Surely there should be, and must be, a beginning SOMEWHERE or monopoly will secure an increasing control over industry.

W. J. BRYAN.

BEVERIDGE AND PINCHOT

The victories won by Beveridge and Pinchot are indications of the progressive trend of public thought. The reactionary leaders of the Republican party may be overthrown in the primaries; if so, the Republicans may be able to prevent the defeat of their party in 1924. The chances are, however, that progressiveness in the Republican party will progress just far enough to divide the organization and the voters, thus insuring a Democratic victory. Our party's safety is to stand firmly for remedial legislation so that we can invite the progressive Republicans if the reactionaries continue their control of the organization.

W. J. BRYAN.

To Commoner Readers

I venture to present a brief review of the issues discussed in The Commoner since its establishment and by me since 1880. The first Commoner appeared in January 1901—more than twenty years ago. That was more than twenty years after I entered upon the public discussion of public questions.

In 1880, the fall before I was able to vote, I made four speeches in the Hancock and English campaign; they were brief and dealt with the tariff question. That question was the principal issue discussed for ten years afterwards, until 1890. My first speech of importance in Nebraska, made in the spring of 1888, dealt entirely with the tariff and my first congressional campaign, in 1890, was made against the McKinley law, although my platform contained a free silver plank, a declaration in favor of the election of United States senators by the people, and a demand for an income tax.

The money question played a prominent part in my campaign in 1892 and grew in importance until '96, when it was the paramount issue of the party. I continued to discuss the money question until 1900—the increased discoveries of gold relegating the money question to a place of decreasing importance.

Imperialism was the dominant issue in 1900 and I regard my acceptance speech of that year as one of the most important of my political speeches.

The trust question followed imperialism, and my declaration that a private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable found a place, in four Democratic national platforms, in President Wilson's speech of acceptance and in his recommendation on the trust question.

My views on the tariff question were not abandoned when the money question came up and it has not been necessary to abandon my views on the money question because the quantitative theory (not silver) for which we contended has been established, though it was the discovery of gold rather than the remonetization of silver that convinced the world.

The party's position on imperialism, which I formulated in 1898, was reiterated for some fourteen years until Congress passed a resolution promising ultimate independence to the Filipinos.

The campaign of 1912 was fought almost entirely upon the issues of 1908 and the promises of 1908 were carried out under the first Wilson administration. The currency law, the farm loan law, and the trade commissions and the law against government by injunction were in line with the platforms of 1908 and 1912.

In the meantime the demand for popular election of United States senators grew until the amendment was adopted and the demand for an income tax increased until the income tax amendment was adopted. I supported both of