

THE SUBSIDY BILL.

NEW YORK, Dec. 20, '99.

EDITOR THE CONSERVATIVE,  
Nebraska City, Neb.

I wish to call the attention of your readers to the following resolution passed unanimously by the National Grange, at its recent session at Springfield, Ohio:

"Resolved, that while this National Grange does most heartily desire the upbuilding of the American merchant marine, we are emphatically opposed to the principle of subsidies and believe desired results can and will be accomplished without resorting thereto."

The American Agriculturist of December 9, which contains a partial report of this session, says:

The Grange Against Subsidies and Bounties.

"Mr. A. H. Smith of New York City, secretary of the New York chamber of commerce, spoke for an hour on the subject of subsidies and ship building. He desired the grange to indorse the subsidies bill before congress which would make an initial appropriation of \$200,000,000 and an annual appropriation thereafter of 100 to 150 millions."

The resolution prepared by Mr. Smith was referred back to the grange by the committee on transportation without recommendation.

Lecturer Messer "then took the floor and scored hard on many of the features advocated by Mr. Smith." After a prolonged discussion, participated in by nearly all the members, the grange accepted unanimously the substitute resolution mentioned above.

By this action the petitions or supposed petitions from supposed local granges—for we have as yet failed to get a reply from any of the granges addressed last October, and in some cases our letters have been returned marked "not found"—in favor of the proposed shipping subsidy bill are rendered worthless, though they will doubtless continue to be paraded before congress.

The National Grange is composed of delegates from the various state granges. It is the most representative and largest farmers' organization in this country. About 1,000 delegates and grange members were present at the last session. The strong resolution against subsidies to shipping was passed only after a long discussion and after the delegates had listened for one hour to the agent of the shipping companies which hope to pocket the millions of bonus which the bill proposes to take from the pockets of the people. This same agent, or some of the many others in the employ of these big bounty beggars, has, for a year, been appearing before all kinds of farmer, labor and commercial organizations and has attempted to obtain action favorable to subsidies. Their success has not been great and has apparently

been greatest where there was least discussion.

Many of the organizations, which have endorsed this subsidy scheme, are so small that they are only reminiscences of past organizations and some have not existed for years. At least one which did endorse the scheme—the Horticultural Society of Jefferson county, Indiana—is ashamed of the "snap" action which was taken.

On December 16, the American Federation of Labor, at its annual convention at Detroit, declared almost unanimously not only against subsidies to ship owners but against the principle and practice of subsidy legislation. This action was taken after three hours' vigorous discussion which was participated in by Mr. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, and other officers of the organization. Reports of the meeting say that "lobbyists, some of them federal officeholders, who had been lobbying to secure indorsement of the Frye subsidy bill, were chagrined at defeat."

The extent to which money is being spent and lobbyists employed by the shipping people is evident from an interview, in the Chicago Chronicle of December 18, with Mr. T. J. Elderkin, vessel dispatcher for the city of Chicago and ex-general secretary and treasurer of the International Seamen's Union, who had just returned from the Detroit convention.

He said: "This subsidy deal is the greatest confidence game ever attempted in the country." He said he met the most active body of lobbyists about the hotels during his visit that he had ever found interested in the passage of any measure. He counted nineteen men who were there especially to secure the passage of a resolution favoring the Hanna-Payne measure, while he was unable to tell how many of the delegates were lending their influence under the rose. The lobbyists were in charge of R. L. Smith, former editor of a marine paper. Smith's efforts are supplemented by Richard Powers of the United States revenue office in Chicago, J. J. Fitzgerald of Chicago, second grand vice-president of the Boilermakers' and Iron Shipbuilders' and W. J. Gilthorpe of Kansas City, Kan., grand secretary and treasurer of the same organization. Another Fitzgerald, representing the Toledo, O., ship yards, is exercising all his influence in an effort to secure the passage of this much hoped-for resolution.

"What right have these men, who are paid large salaries by the government, to go trotting off to Detroit to work in the interests of a bill that is recognized as antagonistic to the best interests of all?" demanded Mr. Elderkin. "You mark my words, congress will pass this bill because Hanna has the house in his hand and can do as he pleases with it.

\* \* \* The law will establish a trust, freight and passenger rates will remain the same. Where, then, are the people to derive a benefit? \* \* \* Of the many attempts to secure the adoption of resolutions favoring this law only one marine institution, the Lake Carriers' Association of Cleveland, O., has commended it. That institution, by the way, is owned by Mark Hanna and his brother."

During the debate President Gompers said: "This scheme for looting the treasury of our country is puerile in conception and wicked in execution."

The Knights of Labor are reported to have petitioned for the Hanna-Payne subsidy bill. We believe that if this honorable body will reconsider it will find that the welfare of the people who have to pay subsidies will not be promoted by such a measure.

The Tariff Reform Committee is investigating the action taken by the various organizations and will present the results to congress through senators and representatives who are opposed to subsidies. It asks for any information which will assist it in defeating what it regards as one of the most palpable and gigantic steals ever attempted by any party in power. It asks such farmer, labor, commercial and other organizations as have petitioned in favor of subsidies to reconsider their actions and requests all other organizations to at once petition congress not to pass the subsidy bill now before it.

We shall, with pleasure, answer any questions or supply any information in our possession to any one.

Yours truly,  
BYRON W. HOLT, Secretary.

Ex-Secretary of Agriculture J. Sterling Morton, through his Nebraska newspaper, THE CONSERVATIVE, attacks the government crop statistics, declaring that they are almost worthless. The reason for this, according to Mr. Morton, is that the persons who report crop averages, of whom there are supposed to be four in each county in every state, are not paid for their services and consequently most of them are either careless in their work or fail entirely to perform it. As a result of this poorly arranged system, these reports have often proved unreliable, and, if Mr. Morton may be believed, "they have cost the American farmers in the last quarter of a century one hundred millions of dollars through the fluctuations and depressions of the grain markets which they have caused." This is a matter which seems to be worthy of serious investigation, because it is much worse than having no reports at all to have erroneous ones put forth under the sanction of the government. Secretary Wilson ought to be asked to state how much truth there is in the charge brought against the reports by his predecessor in office.—Oakland (Calif.) Enquirer.