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TARIFF TALK.

There seems to be a fixed opinion on the part of some Republican newspapers, that our present tariff law is somewhat of a fetich, and must not, under any circumstances, be in any way interefered with nor changed. They argue that the present prosperous condition throughout the United States is entirely due to our protective tariff laws.

It is difficult to understand how any honest minded man can come to such conclusion. Our prosperity is due, not to our protective laws, but in spite of them. It is a well known fact that when all classes of commodities sell for a fair price in the markets, that prosperity for the people results. Fair prices for commodities cause manufacturers to work full time and to pay employes fair wages. This enables the employe to live in reasonable comfort and, as a matter of course, he is fairly well contented.

The fact that our high protective tariff laws enables the manufacturer to demand from 25 to 50 per cent more from the American consumer, than he exacts from the foreign consumer, it seems to us, is an argument in favor of hard times rather than that of prosperity. The government books, it is claimed, will show a deficit at the end of the fiscal year, anywhere from $30,000,000 to $40,000,000. That is to say, our government is in debt for that amount more than she was one year ago. Now this fact argues that we must spend less money or, in some way, increase our revenues. Of course there are many ways in which we could practice economy, without in any way injuring the public service. But in these days of graft, it is hardly probable that we will do so. For instance, we could compel the railroads to carry the mails as cheaply as express matter is now carried. If this was done, a saving would be made that would easily wipe out the deficit and have a handsome surplus left. But this saving will not be made as long as our U. S. senate is organized on present lines.

An increase of revenue, then, becomes necessary, if our law makers will not economize. We can resort to methods of raising revenue that is popularly known as war taxes, that is, to place a revenue tax upon commodities and necessities that are now on the free list. But this will not be done; for the statesman or party that would argue for such a course, would write his or its own political death warrant. Then our only recourse is to so adjust our tariff laws, that they will produce more revenue. Our present tariff schedules on many commodities are so high that they are prohibitive and, hence, pay but very little if any revenue. If the duty on these prohibited articles should be reduced, say to one-half the present rates, importation would ensue and, as a matter of course, the revenue be increased. Whenever tariff revision is talked, the cry of "Free trade" is at once raised and the Republican fetich of protection is at once invoked to kill off revision sentiment.

As a matter of fact there is no considerable number of the American people in favor of free trade. We are all protectionists; but differ as to what degree protection should be carried. If a duty is placed so high upon an article, that none of said article is imported, no revenue can result therefrom. Whereas, if a moderate duty should be levied, the article would be imported and revenue would result. This is all that tariff revisionists asks for or expect. No one really wants absolute free trade; but all honest men who have patriotic hearts, want the tariff so adjusted, that ample revenue will be produced, and so arranged that trusts can no longer hold up the people and rob them at leisure.

The theory that a high protective tariff enables the manufacturer to pay his employe a higher wage, is no longer advocated by sensible people. Everybody knows that the manufacturer pays no higher wages than the supply and demand in the labor market compells him to pay. If labor is scarce and the demand for it good, wages are high. If labor is plentiful and the corresponding demand light, wages are low. These are well established facts and sensible people do not now dispute them.

The only people who derive benefit from our almost prohibitive tariff laws, are manufacturers, and the American consumer pays nearly double the value of the article for the manufacturer's exclusive benefit.

Whenever the people learn that they are submitting to being continually robbed for the benefit of the manufacturing trusts, they surely will not continue to support men who enact or support laws that permit the robbery. By administering a wholesome rebuke in the way of defeat, the supporters of extreme high protection would soon see wherein they were wrong.

Hence, there are several reasons why President Roosevelt and other tariff revisionists should be heartily supported. First—to increase the production of revenue; second—because high protection does not protect labor, but does protect the manufacturer and enables him to charge whatever he pleases for his product; and third—it is unjust to compell the American consumer to pay double the price that the foreigner is required to pay for the same article, manufactured in this country, that he consumes. It is, therefore, quite time for the American voter to study this tariff proposition and see wherein he is being made to "stand and deliver" at the demand of the manufacturing trusts that are now overburdened with their millions.

CONVICT LABOR IN ROAD BUILDING

The experiment was tried, during the past summer, of employing convict labor in road building, in the vicinity of Salem and, with some degree of success, it is said. A movement is now underway to enlarge upon this experience and build roads at points further away from the capital city.

It is a well established fact, that it is much better for the health and comfort of the prisoners confined in penal institutions, to give them reasonable employment. It is an aid in reformation and tends to keep the prisoners in a better state of health and contentment. And, too, as a matter of justice to the taxpayers, men and boys who forfeit their liberty because of law breaking, should do something towards their maintainance.

There has ever been strong protest, on the part of the laboring world, to the employment of prison labor, at any work that comes in direct competition with the product of free labor. Hence the employment of convicts in the manufacture of any of the ordinary commodities of life, has been discouraged. Only a part of the convicts down at Salem have been employed by the Northwestern Stove Works; the remainder, except during the past summer, being in absolute idleness.

To employ prison labor in road building, competes in no sense with free labor; for the roads built by this labor, would not otherwise be constructed. It is true, the state would derive no revenue from the employment of her enforced guests in this manner, but the general public would reap the benefit because of the improved highway.

It probably would not be expedient to take long term prisoners outside the prison walls to labor, but short term men, who would be allowed double time when so employed, could be used in this way with safety and with small expense.

If the state finds the plan of convict labor feasable, it might be necessary to construct branch prisons in different parts of the state; or build portable prisons, in order that the prisoners might be kept safely when not at work; yet being kept in the vicinity of their employment. However, when the state decides to employ convicts for this purpose, it will not be difficult to provide for the reasonable comfort and safe keeping of the prisoners.

Prisoners, who exhibit signs of treachery, or are troublesome in anyway, could be given labor of some description within the walls of the penitentiary. The state of Washington seems to be making a success of her prison jute mill. Something of this kind could be provided by our state for the "long termers."

It is simply justice to the taxpayer that prisoners should be made as nearly self sustaining as possible. Even when this is done the expense of capturing and convicting criminals, is not light and which the lawabiding taxpayer must support. If our highways could be greatly improved by this class of labor, this tax would be more cheerfully borne. A plan will, doubtless, be submitted to our next legislature, by which such labor can be employed in road building in different parts of the state.

THE COMING OF SOCIALISM.

It is not generally realized by the people that our country is rapidly trending towards socialism.

While the Socialist vote at our elections is not making a phenonimal increase, the education towards government and municipal ownership is making rapid progress. The news of the acquirement by cities of their light and water plants is becoming of almost daily occurence in our newspapers. The growth of the Socialistic sentiment is simply an effort upon the part of the people to better their condition. Cities take over their light and water plants in order that a cheaper and better service may be had. The greed and inferior service of private individuals or corporations are solely to blame for this action. Individuals or corporations believe in giving the least possible service for the largest possible amount of money. The people want just the reverse of this—the greatest amount of service for the least amount of money.

Cities that have taken charge of their water or light plants, have usually conducted the same successfully. That is to say, they have furnished a better service and at a less cost, than was furnished by private ownership. A very notable example in this line is furnished by the city of Portland in the conduct of her water plant. When private ownership, which existed formerly, river water at high cost was furnished. Now the very best of mountain water is supplied; at about one-half the former cost. In addition to this, the city has water for public purposes free; whereas, formerly the charge for water for city or public purposes was heavy. Other cities which conduct their light or water plants, as a rule, report equal success. They may not be so situated that they can have the splendid mountain water that Portland has; but in every case better and purer water is supplied than was furnished by private ownership.

The question at once arises, if cities can conduct water and light plants with such eminent satisfaction to the people, why may they not conduct street car and telephone lines with equal satisfaction?.

Our government is now conducting a railroad across the Isthmus of Panama successfully, and at one-half the cost to the people that was charged when operated by private corporation. The service has been increased and bettered in every way besides. Now if the government can accomplish such good results at Panama, why may not equally as good results be accomplished with a railway line, say from New York to San Francisco? Undoubtedly the government could employ just as skillful superintendents and subordinates, as either President Hill or President Harriman. Then it is nonsense to suppose that the government cannot do as well or better than it is done by private corporation.

Every railway or other corporation is limited Socialism. The railway or business is conducted for the benefit of the stockholders. Several railways enter into agreements and become what is called in railway parlance, a "system," thus increasing or enlarging the scope of this "limited Socialism." If this system should be enlarged so that it would embrace the entire railroad mileage in the country and the entire people should become the stockholders, you would simply be increasing or enlarging the scope of a private Socialism into national Socialism. The term "Socialism" is very much misunderstood everywhere, by a great many people. Oftentimes the idea of Communism is associated with it, which is entirely wrong. Socialism aims to give the people better service and for less cost in railway, street car, telegraph, telephone or express service than is supplied by private hands." It would place all of these public conveniences on the same basis as is now our postal system. It does not mean that personal endeavor shall cease, by any means." Under Socialism there would be less room for private greed and selfishness, is freely admitted; but there would be just as great incentive to personal endeavor as now exists. Nor is it expected that Socialism will make men more honest than they are now; but it would do away with much of th incentive to rascality that now exists.

There is in Socialism, an immense field for thought and men are thinking on these lines, to-day, as they never thought before. The inordinate greed and selfishness of Individualism, is the driving force that is bringing socialism to the front. The people are rapidly coming to the conclusion that Socialism or public ownership is the only remedy to regulate public utilities.

Yesterday the "faithful" of the g. o. p. assembled in Portland to attempt to harmonize the many diversified interests of the multitude of aspirants who want to gather about the political pie counter. If harmony is reached to any considerable degree, it will undoubtedly be at the dictation of the old time bosses. These prominent members of the g. o. p. will hardly dare tender a vote of confidence to Senator Mitchell and Congressmen Williamson and Hermann. Indeed they would be unsafe to give Senator Fulton such a vote; as long as Prosecutor Heney is in Oregon. Nor will they dare condemn the U. S. court nor Attorney Heney for the prosecution of land fraud criminals; though, no doubt, many of these prominent gentlemen would like to do so. They are confronted by a condition that tries men's (some men) souls. This Portland meeting is not unlike a crowd of people meeting after a cyclone had passed through their midst, to see what is possible to save from the wreck. The News thinks that many men who have hitherto been classed with and have acted with the g. o. p. have been driven from their political home by this Heney cyclone that they will fail to get back in time to vote next June. But harmony, blessed harmony, is the necessity of the hour and, no doubt, if resoluting will bring it about, the thing will be did.

If congress does not materially amend our public land laws at the session of the legislature next winter, it will fail signally to do its duty.

The coming session of congress promises to exhibit the hardest fight between capitalistic interests and the interests of the people, that the country has yet witnessed.

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The Santiam News.

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