

DOWN WITH WAR TAXES

THE NATIONAL TARIFF REFORM CONVENTION AT CHICAGO.

An Able, Earnest and Thoughtful Body of Men—A Resume of the Interesting Proceedings—Talks on the Tariff—President Cleveland's Letter.

[SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.]

CHICAGO, Feb. 23, 1889.

A more earnest, thoughtful, interested, and popular body of men never assembled in this great city of conventions than were the 1,000 representatives who opened the Tariff Reform Conference in Central Music Hall on Tuesday of this week, and adjourned yesterday. The assemblage represented every degree of opposition to the protective system, and was composed of politicians, labor-reformers, writers, teachers, and business men from seventeen States. The mention of President Cleveland's name was loudly applauded, and when the reading of his letter began the applause continued for a minute and broke out again at the conclusion.

Mr. John Z. White, Corresponding Secretary of the American Tariff Reform League, called the assembly to order, read the call, and introduced Mr. E. Burritt Smith of Chicago, who was selected by the Committee on Arrangements for Temporary Chairman. Mr. Smith, in taking the gavel, said in part:

"We believe the time has come to press home to the American people the inquiry whether a man is free who is required to pay taxes to his neighbor; that the time is at hand when the time has come to lay aside in these States the peculiar privileges of its friends, by those who will have no reason to sacrifice the taxes on whisky and tobacco in order to perpetuate its abuses, by those who hold that the great power of taxation should only be used for public purposes and not for the creation and maintenance of a wealthy socialistic class."

The net result is a "tariff for protection with incidental revenue; in other words, a tariff for private gain with incidental public revenue."

The stupendous tariff rates of the war (in many cases 100 per cent) revenue taxes on all kinds, except on whisky, tobacco and sugar, have disappeared, and these exceptions are seriously threatened by the great party of moral ideas, 'fair' and 'factors in blocks of five.'

After much revision of the tariff by its friends most of our national taxes are not only unequal and unjust, but they have not even the merit of being levied for public purposes. In the course of your proceedings we shall lay before you some definite plans for advancing the work of the league."

The secretary then read the letter of President Cleveland, it said:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, D. C.,

January 24.

John Z. White, Esq., Secretary American Tariff Reform League:

"DEAR SIR: I have received the invitation of the American Tariff Reform League to be present at the convention of tariff reformers to be held in the city of Chicago on the 19th, 20th and 21st of February, 1889."

"I have also received the circular of the League accompanying the invitation, in which the objects and purposes of the proposed convention are specifically set forth."

"The scheme of practical and efficient work described therein meets with my hearty approval, and I promise, if honestly adhered to, the most valuable aid in the furtherance of a cause which is very dear to the interests and welfare of our people. The danger which we have to guard against is the misleading of our countrymen by specious theories, cunningly contrived, and falsely offered to the people, resulting from personal burdens and the legitimate expenses necessary to secure the benefits of basic rule under the sanction of free institutions."

"The declared purposes of your league will not be attained until all those instructed in the economic question which is now pressed upon their attention are freed from all sophistries and clouding fallacies and until the subject of tariff reform is presented to them as a topic involving the relief of the plain people of the land in their homes from useless and unjust expenses."

"The question is a simple and plain one, and needs but to be fairly presented to be understood."

"It is the positive duty of your organization to guard the people against deception."

"My extreme interest in the work which your league has undertaken, and in the expressed objects of the proposed convention, would lead me to accept your invitation if it were possible to do so. But my public duties here positively prevent such acceptance."

"Hoping that the convention will be very successful, and with an earnest wish for the prosperity and success of your league in its efforts to enlighten and benefit the people, I am yours very truly,

GROVER CLEVELAND."

Mr. Culin, of the Permanent Organization announced the selection of ex-Gov. J. Sterling Morton for Permanent Chairman. Stepping forward with a valiant air, Mr. Morton said he would rather preside over the convention which he believed represented honest principles than to be Chairman of a national political convention. "The conservation of all human affairs," said he, "is in the principles we represent. We are not here to engage in the juggling of dictum, but to put into action principles. It is not our province to state the truth to the people, and that is what is meant to tax all of us for the benefit of a few of us. The tariff has been formed for robbery. It must be reformed for revenue or repealed for justice. The ideal of to-day shall be the real of to-morrow."

"The other officers of the convention are:

■ Vice-residents: Charles W. Deering, Illinois; Horace White, New York; Henry A. Robinson, Michigan; Enoch Harpole, Kansas; E. W. Judd, Massachusetts; S. W. Wilbains, Indiana; James McCleary, Rhode Island; W. B. Kirkland, Wisconsin; Gov. Simon B. Buckner, Kentucky; K. G. Hargrave, Iowa; E. M. Wilson, Minnesota; James D. Hancock, Pennsylvania; J. Lawrence Dunham, Connecticut; Herbert Boggs, New Jersey, and J. Q. Smith, Ohio.

Secretaries: Aretas W. Thomas, Texas; Walter H. Page, Massachusetts; J. Lawrence Dunham, Connecticut, and John Z. White and W. E. Thorne, Illinois.

Charles K. Ladd, of Illinois, addressed the convention.

He began by observing that a contest was going on between the laborers and the owners of a few. The issues to-day were the same as the issues of 1860. The masses were contending against a money aristocracy. For the last twenty-five years the country had been nothing but a great junk-shop, full of slave-chains, broken bayonets, and polished brass buttons. When a tax bill was presented for payment the politician would harangue the people and say: " Didn't we save the country? Didn't the war cost something?" The flattered voters would sweep up with a consciousness of having saved the country and give their votes to sustain the schemers.

The speaker said the country adjoining the town in which he lived was as beautiful and fertile as any in the world. The people were honest and thrifty, and yet during the last winter more auction sales and extensions of interest had been made than in any previous year. The debts for which the sales had been made were due men who twenty-five years ago were not worth a dollar and who had grown rich off the taxes of a poor people. A merchant in Canada had told him that he had sold American axes for twenty years in competition with Canadian axes, although he had been obliged to pay a duty upon them of \$2 a dozen, and yet the tariffites said that a duty must be levied in order that Americans might be able to make axes at all. In conclusion Mr. Ladd said the convention should be named the "emancipation convention" rather than a tariff-reform convention.

Gov. Buckner said that a President had just been elected by fraudulent votes and that he was about to go to Washington to inaugurate an administration whose chief purpose was to perpetuate anurious system for the benefit of a few. He believed, however, that the movement had only received a check and that the movement would gather such momentum within four years as would gain victory in 1892.

Mr. Sherman began by saying that slavery was robbery, though John C. Calhoun had been honest in his belief in it. Protection was robbery, though many are honestly deluded by it. "Protection is the enemy of the farmer," said he. "The protectionists pat the farmer on the back and say: 'What you want is a market. Cut off the market, and now you will pay for it.' There is a dear farm market, and the competition of those who have to sell, begin by reducing one-half the competition you already have. Shut out everybody else and you will increase the competition at home. These people across the water don't pay you enough, and therefore we will cut in half what you already get."

"The government, which is the manufacturers,

just take \$47 out of every \$100 and puts it in its pocket. The farmer gets \$53, or just as much more as the part is greater than the whole. See? If you don't tax the farmer does, for he outvotes you every time."

Mr. Sherman gave some statistics by which it was apparent that the protected market only bought 5 per cent of the farm products. Protection was also the deadly foe of shipping. Mr. Sherman said: "It was destructive to the manufacturers. Every time a ship came in it had a new set of foreigners were transplanted to this country to lower the wages of American workmen. Mr. Sherman gave figures to show that only forty-four of the 7,000 children in the north Michigan mining region were American born."

"Finally, I am against protection," said he, "because it is the enemy of humanity. It sets one workingman against another. It sets class against class, and it is at the root of all the labor strife of this country. See? The whole selfish and domineering system down to hell, and let it no longer sulky this fair land."

The convention thereupon adjourned for the day.

The third day of the convention was marked by an interesting debate between the radicals and the conservatives. The discussion was precipitated in the middle of the afternoon session by the unexpected presentation of a report by the Committee on Resolutions. George A. Clark had just ended his paper upon "Leather," and the Chairman of the Protective Farm Upon, and the vice-chairman of the Free Trade Club Upon, were engaged in a discussion of the protective system.

Mr. John Z. White, Corresponding Secretary of the American Tariff Reform League, called the assembly to order, read the call, and introduced Mr. E. Burritt Smith of Chicago, who was selected by the Committee on Arrangements for Temporary Chairman. Mr. Smith, in taking the gavel, said in part:

"We believe the time has come to press home to the American people the inquiry whether a man is free who is required to pay taxes to his neighbor; that the time is at hand when the time has come to lay aside in these States the peculiar privileges of its friends, by those who will have no reason to sacrifice the taxes on whisky and tobacco in order to perpetuate its abuses, by those who hold that the great power of taxation should only be used for public purposes and not for the creation and maintenance of a wealthy socialistic class."

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The following supplementary resolutions accompanied the report:

"Resolved, That the Chairman shall appoint a committee of nine, which committee shall prepare an address to the public as soon as practicable, which shall conform and be limited to the principles in these resolutions announced."

"Resolved, That said committee of nine is to be composed of nine men, and shall make perfect plans for propagating the principles in these resolutions announced and plans for such further organization and co-operation of existing organizations as may seem practicable and advantageous."

The Committee on Resolutions, about evenly made up of pronounced free-traders and tariff-for-revenue men, had wrestled over the abominable report for five hours. Each of the twenty-one men on the committee had marched to the meeting at the Iroquois Club room with his pockets studded with pins and buttons, and ready to fight against trusts, illuminations against protection, declarations approving President Cleveland's administration, and expressing all the views upon tariff reform from a mid-modification of the present protective system to absolute free trade.

After spending an hour in sorting over the papers the members of the committee settled down to a tussle over the real point of divergence to free trade or tariff taxes for revenue. Henry George, Bro. of Michigan, George of New York, and Davis of Ohio were strenuous for free trade, while Chairman Hancock, Bishop of Indiana, and the Iroquois Club men were for a declaration for a modified tariff for governmental expenses. The discussion went on until noon and was resumed at 1 o'clock. It was finally determined as a compromise to offer the report in two parts, so that it might be conveniently divided.

The report was read over, a dozen delegates jumped to their feet and ranged themselves in front of the Chairman like pickets on a fence, determined to catch his eye. Byron G. Stout, of Michigan, was the first to call for attention.

Mr. Jones said that the usual wages of a man are what his strength and sunniness enable him to gather from the elements of nature. Therefore, whatever adds to a man's energy and skill adds to his wages. The constant endeavor has been to obtain the greatest amount for the smallest expenditure of time and strength. This desire leads to exchange of products, which adds to the wages of the producer. A protective tariff is a tax levied on foreign goods, high enough to either keep them out or to enable the home producer to obtain more for his articles than if he sold them in the open markets of the world. This reduction of trade reduced wages.

He asked why it was that this country, so rich and great, so fertile and prosperous, filled with an active, honest people, could not compete with the world.

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Captain Codman talked upon American shipmen.

"Andrew Carnegie has written a book entitled, 'Triumphs of Democracy.' Strange book to be written by a protectionist, for the triumphs of Democracy have been in spite of the protection of the tariff which has weighed us down as a weight unbearable. What we are to-day, and what we hope to be in our progress, has been in spite of these things which have stood in the way and path of our progress. It is noticeable that the great progress of the world is on a usual line of latitude, and we are upon that latitude of progress. We see the growth of those elements of power, and the development of them in the Western trade of the old world, which has been drawn and planted in our power in our own world. We see the great wheel of progress from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in the valley of the Mississippi, the valley of the Sierras, until with the enterprise of active men and the spirit of the people, the wheel of progress is turning southward, and it is beating against the Pacific slope, and it runs through all that channel that separates the two oceans, as well as the channel that connects the two continents. The restless tide of empire is moving."

"If I may be permitted to speak provincially, I would say there are few States in our Union that have a more thriving industry than has the State of Michigan. We have our lumber and our salt, our wheat and our wool, our iron and our copper, almost unbound in supply, and yet from the simple fact that we cannot manufacture copper and that iron here as cheaply as across the water, we only get the profit in the first sale of the raw material. We wish a different policy inaugurated; but our public men are chained to that idol of protection. We have two Senators in Congress, both of them monopolists, both great lumber men, but fortunately I will say that one of them has promised, in the interests of the developments of agriculture, to send next year to Italy, and propose to transplant macaroni plants, to grow macaroni in Michigan. This is in the interest of protection."

"Resolved, That the said committee of nine shall appoint a committee of nine, which committee shall prepare an address to the public as soon as practicable, which shall conform and be limited to the principles in these resolutions announced, and submit the same to the convention for adoption, after which the convention adjourned.

The third and last day of the convention witnessed little diminution in the attendance or in the interest taken in the work of the conference. Mr. J. H. Raymond opened the session by reading the report of the Committee on Resolutions, containing the following proposition, with the recommendation that they be considered in the order in which they appear:

"Resolved, That the Chairman of this convention shall appoint a committee of nine, which committee shall prepare an address to the public as soon as practicable, which shall conform and be limited to the principles in these resolutions announced, and submit the same to the convention for adoption, after which the convention adjourned.

"Resolved, That the said committee of nine is hereby empowered and required to perfect and prosecute plans for propagating the principles in these resolutions announced, and plans for further organization and co-operation of existing organizations as they may deem practicable and advantageous."

As first read these resolutions did not contain the words "and prosecute," but they were subsequently incorporated and the whole adopted.

Mr. Foster, of Indiana, was glad the convention had come to a point where they seemed willing to stop talking and begin sawing wood. He had been flying low, but wanted now to get to work on the practical features. "There are men here," he said, "who have talked from the platform, but have not done anything."

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