

## THE TARIFF.

### Synopsis of the Debate in the National House of Representatives.

Mr. Wilson concluded his speech on the 9th. He began with a reference to the legend which he said had always been inscribed on the democratic banner: "Equal rights to all and special privileges to none." The people had brought the democratic party into power on the broad principle that it would not tax the poor.

"The democratic party raised itself as one man, takes up this great cause, plants its standard here to sink or swim, survive or perish, that the democratic party may continue in power. We will plant the banner here. We mean to have a fight and we will call every true believer in democracy to rally to our side. Let us call upon the American people, the silent masses, the farmers, scattered, unable to organize, who plod their way under the burdens of taxation. Our petition boxes are filled with protests of the trusts and combinations of this country. Let us be true to our faith. Let us be true to our principles. Let us be true where every man shall see the gateway of opportunity opening before him, where every man shall see before him the opportunity to rise to such influence, to such prosperity as his own merits justify, not weighted down with burdens of taxation. Let us labor for a country free to all, equal to all, with opportunity planted in every home, in every humble freestate in the land."

As Mr. Wilson finished the democratic side broke into cheers and a wave of applause swept over the galleries.

Mr. Everett (Mass., Mich.) replied to Mr. Wilson, and his remarks were liberally applauded by his republican colleagues. He said the measure under consideration had for its avowed object a radical modification of the tariff act of 1890. It involved not only a change of rates, but a complete reversal of an economic policy. The act of 1890 was enacted not only with a view of securing revenue for the support of the government, but for the further purpose of giving encouragement to the creation of new enterprises and protection to American industries and American workmen against unequal and injurious foreign competition. In its practical workings it accomplished both these results.

The act went into effect October 6, 1890, and as was to be expected, not so long after its operation was undisturbed, the market requirements of the government. Since July 1, 1891, however, there had been a marked decline in the revenues until they had actually fallen below the requirements for the public service. This decline in the public revenues during the present fiscal year was not attributable to any defect in the law of 1890, but rather to the general derangement and prostration of business throughout the country. The ascendancy of a political party pledged to the destruction of our protective policy had not only crippled and suspended the operation of our domestic manufacturers, but the importer of foreign fabrics and articles cut off their opportunities in the hope of securing their admission into our markets upon more favorable conditions. He confidently asserted that if the election of 1892 had resulted in the retention of the republican party in power, accompanied as it would have been with the assurance of continuance of the American policy of protection, the effect upon the public revenue, as well as general prosperity of the country, would have been entirely reversed.

President Harrison only affirmed the truth of history when in his last annual message to congress he said: "So high a degree of prosperity and so great a diffusion of wealth were never before enjoyed by our people." This explicit declaration made but a little over one year ago, to this moment, in the midst of present appalling conditions, was, nevertheless, grounded on indisputable facts.

We are justified in asserting that the act of 1890, could its permanency have been assured, would have accomplished the double purpose for which it was enacted—revenue and protection.

The McKinley tariff never closed a mill in the United States, shut up a mine, stopped a wheel, blew out a furnace fire or drove a single workman into the streets. This general paralysis of business throughout the country comes solely from the ascendancy of a political party pledged to the repeal of the act of 1890 and the substitution therefor of a tariff divested of all protective features. With such a party in the control of the government is it any wonder that domestic manufacturers suspend operations until advised of the conditions under which they must market their output?

Mr. Burrows then took up the tariff plank of the last democratic national platform and compared it with the South Carolina ordinance of nullification. He asserted that, whatever may have been the purpose of the majority in making this bill, in so far as it conforms to the democratic platform of 1892, it will, if enacted into law, prove disastrous to the interests involved, and in so far as it seeks to redeem the pledges, it is either a confession of error or an exhibition of cowardice. He said it would not escape notice that upon examination of the list of articles transferred from the dutiable to the nontariff the interests of the farmer seem to have been given up for special assault and destruction, as nearly one-half of the items embraced in this proposed transfer are the products of domestic husbandry. The bill is a free donation to foreigners, at a time, too, when the treasury of the United States is in pressing need of increased resources. There is not in it even a suggestion of reciprocity. It is a bold free gift—the price paid for a democratic theory.

After calling attention to individual items of the pending bill, and declaring that the minority in the house intended to stick to the last this wanton destruction of American industry, Mr. Burrows said that the bill was a bill which would stimulate a simile domestic industry or give employment to labor it had not been pointed out. Under the proposed policy of ad valorem for specific rates, coupled with the reduction proposed, revenue and domestic industries will alike diminish and the latter many instances disappear.

After quoting from leading authorities as to the advantage of specific duties, Mr. Burrows said starving families, clutching for the last morsel of food, cannot be lulled into forgetfulness of present misery by the announcement of lower ad valorem duties on the necessities of life. Tramping the streets, out of employment, seeking alms, lower valorem would not be a relief to the brave man who never before wore a diamond or a costly charity. The laboring people of this country ask not lower ad valorem, but work. They prefer high ad valorem, constant employment and abundant wages to low ad valorem, idleness and want.

After showing the growth of the country in recent years Mr. Burrows concluded as follows:

"The record of this year's industrial and individual suffering resulting from this proposed legislation will never be made up. It exceeded the possibility of human calculation, and I implore you to abandon this suicidal policy. Have you not waited long enough to be convinced of its disastrous consequences? You have it within your power to instantly relieve this appalling situation. You have it within your power to substitute for the pending measure a joint resolution declaratory of your purpose to maintain existing law in full force and effect during the continuance of this administration and business activity will instantly take the place of business depression. It would arrest the slaughter of our farms, open our mines, relight the fires of our furnaces, unchain the wheels of our industries, start every spindle and loom, while whistles and factory bells would cease the tramping, starving millions back from enforced idleness to profitable employment and the American republic would leap with a bound to its accustomed place in the sun of industrial nations."

At the conclusion of his speech there was a great outburst of republican applause.

Mr. Black (Ill.) then took the floor, and referred to Mr. Burrows' picture of dire disaster in this country and said the suffering depicted by him existed after thirty years of laws written by his own party. Not a law has been placed on the statute books by the democratic party since 1880. The democratic party's responsibility for the laws came only with this congress. "Before we took charge," said he, "the present condition of affairs had begun. If that condition is to exist the law you cannot say we did it. So far as the law is responsible for the present conditions it is the law of the high protective tariff."

Mr. Black proceeded to discuss the condition of the agricultural classes, who are now, he said, down by the lowest prices since records

have been kept. In referring to the state of affairs antecedent to the inauguration of the protective policy he declared that no public and little private indebtedness existed then.

Mr. Hopkins (rep., Ill.) said that the bill had been reported by the ways and means committee was certainly an anomaly of congressional legislation. It neither comes up to the standard of the bold and direct declarations of their party platform nor meets the expectations of the more conservative element of their party. As a revenue measure it is a confessed failure.

With the treasury almost depleted and the government marching on the high road to bankruptcy, this bill still further reduces the revenue of the government and cuts off its power to meet its obligations to the enormous amount of \$70,000,000 annually. He then proceeded to make a long review of the history of tariff legislation in this country.

On the 10th Mr. Johnson (Dem., O.) denounced the attitude of his party by the prolonged delay of action upon the tariff measure after coming into power. If Mr. Cleveland had shown the sagacity and courage the situation demanded, the ink could not have been dry on the commissions of his secretaries ere congress would have been called into executive session to relieve the country of its burdens of taxation. But instead of that we were expected to rest on our laurels and divide the spoils.

At last however, the committee charged by the house with the duty of bringing in a bill for the abolition of a system which the majority had declared a fraud and robbery had been heard from. They had given us a bill which did not go far enough. Its free list was not wide enough, but he accepted it as the best thing that could be done.

Mr. Black (Dem., Ga.) devoted a large part of his time to the defense of the income tax feature, which he understood to go hand in hand with the Wilson revenue bill. If any man should endeavor to escape from the imposition of such a tax as the income tax he would advocate a thorough search in every secret recess into which a man might hide, and he would do it by process of law in order that such a man might be compelled to bear his share of the burdens of the government. The wealth of the country was better able to bear the extra burden than the common people.

Mr. Pendleton (Dem., W. Va.) said it was unfortunate to find that one of the reasons for the protection of the tariff no longer existed. The surplus in the treasury had disappeared in the four years of the Harrison administration.

Mr. Reed (rep., Me.) said he was going to vote for this bill because he had believed for years that such a measure as this was demanded by patriotic considerations. He thought, however, that the Wilson bill did not go far enough. Its free list was not wide enough, but he accepted it as the best thing that could be done.

That the bill contained some good points, he said, was true. The McKinley bill contained some good points: it put raw sugar and some other things on the free list. This bill goes farther and puts wool, coal, iron ore and undressed lumber on the free list, and so far makes some show of redeeming the pledge to the sugar salt which he intended to him. The bill might suit tariff reformers, whatever they may be, but he was proud to say that he never was a tariff reformer. He was only a plain free trader.

But before a republican house by a republican ways and means committee, the pending bill would fitly represent the idea of "protection amended by the friends of protection." But proposed by a democratic ways and means committee to a democratic house, as representing the idea of an administration elected on a platform declaring protection an unconstitutional fraud and robbery, it is an evasion of a promise and a political blunder of the gravest kind, a confession that the democratic party lacks courage and honesty.

Mr. Johnson proceeded then to show that the bill, if enacted into law, would injure but one trust, the sugar trust.

Mr. Dalzell (rep., Pa.) followed Mr. Johnson.

He said: "In the few months that the dominant party has held the reins of government it has proved itself conspicuously incompetent to deal with a single important question presented by the responsibilities of civil administration. In this deplorable condition of things clouds and darkness all around us, what do those who rule our destinies propose by way of relief? A tariff bill that, if enacted, I predict posterity will pronounce the most legislative crime of our history. Instead of relief, brings aggression. To the manufacturers whose little capital is bringing him no returns, whose play is discrediting and whose income has been sadly narrowed or entirely cut off, it offers the deceptive lure of free raw materials and the ignis fatuus of the world's markets, while it strips him of the ability to compete in any market and be just to his employees. To the farmer it offers instead of protection an enlarged competition from abroad in the products of the farm, instead of a vast and growing home market, a market abroad in which his increased surplus cannot but degrade prices."

The speaker then proceeded to a discussion of the schedules of the bill and in conclusion remarked: "There is not a single industry in which we compete with our fellowmen across seas in which our laborers do not reap richer rewards than their fellow-timers abroad."

Mr. Warner (Dem., N. Y.) followed Mr. Dalzell, speaking in defense of the Wilson bill. In urging its prompt passing he admitted that it had not gone far enough. He thought in some places it bore unequally, and he protested particularly against the retention of the sugar bounty, and he protested still more strongly against the tax of one-quarter of a cent paid by which it was proposed to protect the sugar trust.

He protested against the reciprocity which was proposed to be revived for the benefit of the Standard Oil company. In conclusion he urged the passage of the bill, not as a compromise but as an attack on the outworks of protection in order that the guns might blow be turned upon the citadel and complete the work as a future day.

Mr. Coombs (Dem., N. Y.) followed, speaking on the same line, and when he had finished a recess was taken. Messrs. Snodgrass (Dem., Tenn.) and Cooley (Dem., N. Y.) occupying the time of the evening session.

On the 11th Mr. Breckinridge (Dem., Ky.) opened the discussion. He said he had always considered himself the foremost free trader in the house, but since the recent speech of his friend from Ohio, Mr. Johnson, he had learned that he (Mr. Breckinridge) did not occupy the most distant outpost of free trade democracy. In some particulars the Wilson bill did not enough. He would like to have seen it put on the free list even if a heavier tax would have been levied on whisky. He would like to see the sugar tax removed, but he wanted the sugar man of the south to be brought along with the sugar men of the north. The sugar men of the northeast placed, in order that they might be brought into the democratic fold, it was only by union that the reform could be consummated.

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