

The Tariff and The Farmer

DESPITE the plainly evident fact that the greatly increased tariff rates on imported grain and other products imposed by the present tariff law have not brought any additional prosperity to the American farmer, the manufacturing interests have been able to persuade many of the leaders in the farm relief movement that they should become catspaws for the predatory protected industries, and join in another orgy of tariff raising similar to that of 1922. The story of the high tariff lobbyists who infest Washington is plausible. "See," they chorus, "how protection has enabled the manufacturers to raise prices, and has made them prosperous. Let the farmers follow their example, and all will be well with them."

Twenty years ago, a survey of farm sentiment would beyond question have shown that the majority of the farmers were opposed to the high tariff policy. Then came the ill-fated Canadian Reciprocity pact, putting all farm products on the free list so far as the principal competing agricultural country, Canada, was concerned, while making no substantial reduction in the oppressive tariff taxes on manufactured articles. The farmers regarded this proposal as a betrayal of their interests in order to furnish the industrial centres with cheaper foodstuffs, and decided that so long as high protection for manufacturers was to be the national policy, they would insist that farm products must also be "protected." Many of the farm leaders know full well that protection for the farmer is a fraud and a delusion, but in the absence of any prospect of a material reduction of duties on the goods they buy, they cling to the hope that sometime, somehow, the tariff may work to the farmer's advantage.

Because of their position in this matter, the farm leaders have been reproached as lacking consistency, in failing to protest against a system which they know has worked great injustice upon them. Possibly this is true, but it is no more inconsistent than the action of President Coolidge in vetoing the bill to aid in fixing the price of farm products, while cheerfully upholding such tariff taxes as that on aluminum kitchenware, which enables Secretary Mellon's corporation to fix prices to the millions of farmers' wives; or in his approving the bill voting millions of dollars as subsidies to shipbuilders.

The American farmers have for more than sixty years been cheated with false promises of prosperity to be secured through the protective tariff. They have been told that the encouragement of manufacturing, by enabling domestic producers to extort monopoly prices from the consumers, would create a home market for all the products of the farms. They have found these promises a delusion, and have seen their returns for labor and capital invested steadily falling. They see the promise of lower prices for what they buy denied by conspiracies of manufacturers to fix prices at all that the consumer can pay. They know

that so long as they can and do grow more farm products than the domestic market will absorb, they must sell their surplus abroad in competition with the rest of the world.

An object lesson to the farmers has been furnished in the appearance of hundreds of manufacturers, all begging for further favors from Congress in the shape of higher duties that will enable them to charge still higher prices. The iron and steel industry, which boasts of its efficiency and exports annually products valued at hundreds of millions of dollars, wants higher taxes on iron and steel, that if granted will cost the farmers at least \$50,000,000 annually. The farmers complain, and justly, of the high freight and passenger rates that they must pay the railways, but these excessive charges are largely due to the higher cost of rails, cars and all other equipment, due to the tariff.

If the American farmers can once more be fooled into supporting a system of tariff protection that robs and oppresses them, their plight may well be regarded as hopeless. If instead of lightening the farmer's burdens by taking the tariff taxes off the goods he buys, the Congress raises still higher walls against foreign competition, leaving the domestic consumer at the mercy of price-fixing industrial combinations, the condition of agriculture will grow steadily worse. Already city "financiers," and so-called economists, not to omit Mr. Henry Ford, are urging that the long existing system of independent small farm owners must be abolished, and give way to great corporations organized for efficiency—and for profits. If the home-owning American farmers are to be replaced by a peasant class getting employment for a few months each year, the chief factor in their downfall will be the protective tariff system, that while enriching a few manufacturers has impoverished a large percentage of the farmers.

—WHIDDEN GRAHAM, in Bulletin No. 38 Free Trade League.

The Meeting of The Boy and The Book

SINCE George's extraordinary work came out just fifty years ago this Fall, a word or two may be fitting.

Briefly it advocated a single tax, that on land; and advanced the theory that "the wages of labor are paid out of the value that the laborer creates, not from a fund of capital."

It was in England that the theory made its deepest impression. Most of all in a Scotch fishing village where a boy named J. Ramsay MacDonald lived. That meeting of the boy and the book has had immense results on the course of history.

It is not surprising that the Premier, arriving in New York, should have made a comment on the half century appearance of the book. The idea it germinated in his mind had very much to do with the formulation of the policy of the Labor Party, of which he is the head.