

TOM L. JOHNSON'S GREAT FEAT How 1,200,000 copies of "Protection or Free Trade" were circulated

"Peterborough," who writes the column "London Day by Day" in the *Daily Telegraph*, referred on the 15th June to Huey Long's reading of the Bible to fill up his 15½ hours obstructionist speech in the U.S.A. Senate, and remarked how in the House of Representatives it is possible to "read" a whole book into a speech which can afterwards be circulated freely to the speaker's constituents. "Peterborough" said that a notable example of this use of a propagandist device was when Henry George's book *Progress and Poverty* was thus distributed free by the "One Taxers," as he called them.

A letter was sent from 94 Petty France and was published putting "Peterborough" right. The book so circulated was not *Progress and Poverty* but *Protection or Free Trade*. The "debate" took place on 11th and 31st March and 6th and 8th April, 1892, and the incident is thus described in the *Life of Henry George* :—

"Under a 'leave to print' rule, members of the House of Representatives had long been accustomed to publish speeches that limited time for debate prevented them from delivering, or to publish extensive supplementary printed matter to their delivered 'remarks.' But as the issue of the 'Congressional Record' was necessarily limited, members invariably reprinted matter from the 'Record' to send to their constituents or whoever else in the United States they chose. This printing they themselves had to pay for; but they had the privilege of sending out such matter free through the mails, under the 'franking privilege.' It was a time-honoured custom for members in this way to send a great quantity of reprinted 'Congressional Record' matter into their districts, especially preceding Congressional or Presidential elections."

"Acting upon this 'leave to print' privilege, Tom L. Johnson, with Mr George's hearty approval, divided *Protection or Free Trade* between himself and five other Congressmen, namely, William J. Stone of Kentucky, Joseph E. Washington of Tennessee, John W. Fithian of Illinois, Thomas Bowman of Iowa and Jerry Simpson of Kansas. Each man on a separate day introduced his section of the book as a 'part of his remarks' in the tariff debate. The Republican minority beheld this performance with astonishment. . . . The Republican press all over the country took up and increased the outcries of the Republican Congressmen, with the misrepresentation, perhaps unintentional, that the work was being printed at the public expense . . . the entire country was for the time turned into debating clubs with *Protection or Free Trade* as the subject-matter. Nothing could have better suited Mr Johnson's

purpose. He had the book printed compactly in large quantities at the rate of five-eighths of a cent a copy. . . . Many Congressmen sent large quantities of the book into their districts and Mr Johnson himself sent two hundred thousand copies into the State of Ohio. . . . In all more than one million two hundred thousand copies of this edition were printed and distributed and perhaps as much as two hundred thousand of a better, two cent edition; so that of this single book by Henry George almost two million copies were printed within less than eight years after being written—something never approached by any other work in economic literature save by the incomparable *Progress and Poverty* which with its many translations may have exceeded that number of copies."

It may interest some of our readers to see a specimen of the edition that was so widely distributed under the "leave to print." We have a small stock available and copies may be obtained price 3d. each on application to our offices.

WHERE IS SUTTON COMMON?

Writing in the *Daily Herald* (15th July) on the growth of Greater London in the neighbourhood of Sutton and Epsom Mr Hannen Swaffer says :—

Large fortunes have been made by all this land development.

Councillor Walkden, who sits for Labour on the Sutton and Cheam Council, told me how, seven years ago, their population was just 40,000. Now it is 78,000!

Walkden has little liking, apparently, for the business methods of the Church of England.

He lives at Sutton Common.

"I wanted to find out where Sutton Common really was," he said, "because it's all houses everywhere now."

"Sutton Council had no map that showed it. The oldest one it had was dated 1815. That showed Thomas Hatch as the possessor of large parcels of land round about where I live. There was no Sutton Common, even in 1815!"

So Walkden had a search made at Somerset House, and there it was discovered that between 1808 and 1815 the common land "disappeared."

Thomas Hatch, the "owner" of it, represented the Church of England.

"We must assume that was 'enclosed' by the Church!" said Walkden.

"Now, recently, in Sutton, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have been selling part of this land at as much as £1,500 an acre!"

Walkden, who was a great friend of Stephen Walsh, added how Walsh delighted to quote at meetings the old lines :—

*They prosecute the man or woman who steals the goose
from off the common,*

*But let the greater felon loose who steals the common
from the goose.*

If you are bringing forward motions in the Reichstag there is one which should not be forgotten. The State lands are mostly let out to big farmers; the smallest portion of them is sold to peasants, whose holdings are, however, so small that the new peasants have to resort to working as day labourers on the big farms. The demand should be made that the great demesnes which are not yet broken up should be let out to co-operative societies of agricultural labourers for joint farming.—Letter of Friederich Engels to August Bebel, 1884 (*The Correspondence of Marx and Engels*, p. 434).

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