

### Are Protectionists Embezzlers?

We shall watch with no little interest the outcome of the Federation of Labor's appeal to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor for an investigation of labor conditions at the Pressed Steel Car Company's works (p. 847) at McKee's Rocks. The appeal is made by Frank Morrison as secretary of the American Federation of Labor. It is made directly to the Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor, who appears to have full power to comply with Mr. Morrison's request. The law requires him to make such special investigations and reports as he "may deem necessary and urgent"; and Mr. Morrison shows very clearly the necessity and urgency of this investigation. He shows that the strikers at McKee's Rocks comprised several thousand unorganized men; that their wages were reduced by the company to the starvation limit; that the men were driven to strike by sheer desperation; and that, while rioting with destruction of life is to be deplored, it should not be permitted to divert attention from "the unbearable and unbelievable conditions" that exasperated those defenseless and helpless workers. Here is necessity enough, if the Secretary of Commerce and Labor is ever to be influenced by necessity; here is urgency enough, if the Secretary of Commerce and Labor is ever to put the starvation of mere workmen into the category of things urgent.

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But there is an additional reason for the investigation which Mr. Morrison presses upon the Secretary of Commerce and Labor. Mr. Morrison contends that—

**the public has a right to know if the iron and steel companies who are profiting on account of a protective tariff are keeping faith with the government, and are paying their employes a reasonable wage rate, a wage rate in keeping with the protection enjoyed by the companies.**

In that contention Mr. Morrison takes hold of the question at the right end. Why has this never been done before? Isn't the protective tariff for "the maintenance of American wages"? If that is true, every protected business is subject to investigation. The government should know whether or not American wages are being paid in protected businesses. These businesses are not private. No subsidized businesses are private; and protected businesses are subsidized. They are therefore properly subject to investigation as to their uses of their subsidy. What excuse is there for the protective tariff, except to enable protected businesses to pay good wages? Protection couldn't last over a single Congressional election but for this pretense. It is

the right of the government, then—more than its right, it is its duty—to investigate every important instance in which any plant of a protected industry seems to be robbing its workmen of the high wages for the payment of which the consumers of the country grant the industry a monopoly of the American market.

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If the Secretary of Commerce and Labor doubts the necessity and urgency of this McKee's Rocks case, and therefore refuses the investigation for want of power, the appeal for investigation need not be dropped. President Taft can give him the power in a minute. For the Secretary is required by law to make investigations not only when he himself deems them necessary and urgent but whenever he is directed to do so by the President. If the Secretary of Commerce and Labor fails him, Mr. Morrison should lose no time in appealing directly to President Taft. The public ought to know, and to know promptly, to quote from Mr. Morrison's letter to the Secretary of Commerce and labor—

**whether the increased prices charged by the Pressed Steel Car Company, as the result of the existing tariff on their products and the materials of which they are composed, are received by their employes, or, on the other hand, if they are diverted in part or in their entirety to enlarge the profits of the various companies and to increase the dividends of their stockholders.**

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### A Bit of History.

We had hoped that the insane bitterness toward Mr. Bryan which used to be the most distinctive characteristic of Mr. Cleveland's coterie of New York friends, had died out—sufficiently at least to permit them to stop warping history. But here comes the New York Evening Post with another unwarranted whack at Bryan. "More than any other living man," says the Post, "Mr. Bryan is responsible for having induced the Democratic party to forsake its great historic issue"—by "historic issue" meaning tariffs for revenue only. It is not to be presumed that the Post intends by its qualifying words, "living man," to exclude Mr. Cleveland's part in that Democratic episode from its comparison. If it does, it is all the more culpable; for it implies, and will be understood to imply, notwithstanding its verbal reservation, that of the men who did drive the Democratic party over from the tariff question to the money question, Mr. Bryan was most responsible. To leave Mr. Cleveland out of such a comparison is to make the comparison valueless; for the controversy as to that responsibility has always related exclusively to Mr.