

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.

Bryan and Mr. Cleveland, and this is not changed by Mr. Cleveland's recent death. As to that responsibility, then, what are the facts?

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If Mr. Bryan did take leadership in the Democratic party against the "sound money" humbugery, he did not do so until Mr. Cleveland had taken leadership in its favor. Mr. Bryan turned for the time from the tariff question to the money question, after the tariff question had ceased for the time to be the dominant issue in our politics; but Mr. Cleveland had already turned from the tariff question to make the money question the dominant issue. Mr. Cleveland had been elected with a popular mandate to put down Republican protection as a fraud. Instead of obeying that mandate, instead of listening to his disinterested advisers, he listened to his Whitneys and his Morgans, and shifted the issue from tariff to money. It was not until Mr. Cleveland had completely succeeded in that treacherous coup that Mr. Bryan sprang into party leadership on the money issue.

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We have no desire to revive unpleasant recollections about dead men, although Mr. Cleveland was not squeamish in that respect with reference to Altgeld, and even to the point of misrepresentation; but when his friends persist, as the *New York Evening Post* has done in this case, in perpetuating so deceptive a superstition as that which we quote above, the verity of history and the rights of living men demand that the responsibility of the dead be remembered even if unpleasantly.

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President Taft, Showman.

We should beg pardon for calling President Taft a showman were it not that we merely quote from one of the most faithful of Taftian organs, the *Chicago Tribune* of August 7. "For two months," says the *Tribune*, "the President will lead the nomadic life of a traveling theatrical company on the one night stand circuit." But the *Tribune* neglects to explain that the expenses of Mr. Taft's showmanship, to begin September 15 and to take in a circuit of 13,000 miles, rest upon rather shaky ethical foundations.

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Congressman Rainey of Illinois tells the story in a speech reported in the *Congressional Record* of June 19, at page 4676. Briefly, these are the facts: On the 24th of February last, an appropriation bill of the lower House which had gone to

the Senate and come back loaded with amendments was again under consideration in the House of its origin. Among the amendments was one increasing the salary of the President, who had been elected a few weeks before, from \$50,000 to \$100,000. It was in the nature of a contribution by the party in power to its own successful candidate, made between his election and his inauguration, one that could not have been made after inauguration because the Constitution provides that the President's compensation "shall neither be increased nor diminished during the period for which he shall have been elected." The amendment was not, however, so bald a diversion of public funds as it appeared to be on its face; for the usual allowance of \$25,000 a year for traveling expenses was to be included in the \$50,000 increase of salary, thereby making the increase approximately only \$25,000. Even this was cut down, the salary being increased to \$75,000 inclusive of traveling expenses. So far so good, but now comes the sequel.

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After President Taft had been inaugurated,—indeed as late as the middle of last July—his friends in Congress gave him \$25,000 more for traveling expenses for the current year, and out of that gift he is to pay the expenses of the trip which the *Chicago Tribune* quite aptly even if irreverently likens to a theatrical company "on the one night stand circuit." Mr. Taft's generous friends in Congress ignored the fact that his traveling expenses had been distinctly provided less than six months before by the increase of his salary from \$50,000 to \$75,000 inclusive of expenses for traveling; they ignored the fact that this appropriation for his theatrical trip of "one night stands" was in contravention of the clause of the Constitution forbidding his receiving, during his term of office, "any other emolument" than the compensation fixed before his term began; and President Taft himself ignores both, by taking his traveling expenses out of public moneys instead of paying them out of a salary distinctly intended to cover precisely such expenses.

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It is almost wicked, to be sure, to criticize President Taft for this—for anything, in fact, he being a Republican of the Brahman variety. It indicates also a pessimistic temper, as of one who sees only the hole in the law instead of the halo around it. But think of the example he sets! Or shall we have one moral law for the exalted Brahman and another for the despised pariah? Is it