

THE COLVILLE EXAMINER

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Blame the Proper Persons

The 1907 financial flurry has caused many people to give thought to questions of economics who heretofore have been content to draw their regular stipends and, as they often expressed it, let economics care for themselves. But matters of political economy have not lately been "left to themselves." Corporate interests are not blind, nor are they ignorant. When a people neglects or refuses to handle a matter of direct concern, capital has ever been eager to "handle it for the people"—and incidentally to shape matters of public concern so that they may not conflict with matters of private interest.

The judgment of Judge Landis rendered against the Standard Oil Company caused many people to awaken from their troubled slumber and find that the incubus of Standard Oil was in truth a threatening reality. Invective and threat were hurled at the oil trust. Rockefeller and Rodgers were held up to public odium. Corporate greed was again denounced. But all this came too late. Lamentation that the people had slept was not heard in the land, for it was easier to lay blame other than where it belonged.

The growth of Standard Oil and its increasing grasp upon the country have not only been permitted but fostered by the republican congress. Paragraph 626 of the present or Dingley tariff puts on the free list oils of many kinds and lastly petroleum crude or refined: "Provided, that if there be imported into the United States crude petroleum, or the products of crude petroleum, produced in any country which imposes a duty on petroleum or its products exported from the United States, there shall in such cases be levied, paid, and collected a duty on said crude petroleum or its products so imported equal to the duty imposed by such country."

The only country that is able to ship petroleum or its products into this country in any considerable measure is Russia. Russia levies a duty on crude petroleum and its products varying from 100 to 200 per cent. The Standard Oil Company at first sought to get protection by direct enactment but was refused. Easy as congress is toward trusts and great corporations, it drew the line at the Standard Oil as an open proposition, put oil on the free list and then added this joker that gives the oil trust three to five times what it would have been happy to get openly and, as some might say, honestly.

The Standard Oil Company is thus protected by a duty of from 150 to 200 per cent. Why? Because congressman elected by the people are elected FOR

the trusts. Corporations are not to be blamed for doing what the people sanction and evidently like. When oil advances, who is the cause of it—who allows it? Not the company, for a company can only do as it is permitted by law. Ask your congressman about it. He knows. His vote perhaps helped to pass the infamous law, and his inaction in the people's behalf has helped to strengthen the company's power—power to make more oil to get more money to buy more congressman to control the prices on more oil.

This office has received a copy of the pamphlet of protest sent out by the directors of the Standard Oil Company. Its statement of grievance is that the company has been fined for acting within the law. The president of the United States and the department of injustice are now waging war upon a corporation which, with the aid of congress, backed by the voters, has grown strong. Of course the company is grieved. If the people didn't want this company to grow and become such as it is, why didn't they say so before? If the people went to sleep and congress took a vacation, should the company now be blamed for running the country as best it could?

The entire matter resolves itself into a question of past inaction and future action by the voters at the polls. Even if things have been allowed to go by the board for years, a new generation of educated voters can work wonders by united effort. Congress can not be changed in a moment, nor will corporate effort immediately cease to gain or retain special privileges. Democratic platforms for years have attempted to unite a long-suffering populace on matters of action in restraining monopolistic growth. If the country is ready to legislate for its own benefit, the democratic hosts will see that this desire is fulfilled. If the people are not sufficiently educated to their own welfare, present conditions may continue for a time. One ray of light just now apparent is that the moneyed interests are fearful of taking any unwarranted step at present, lest too many ordinarily careless voters be aroused to summary action and in one election remove from congress the pliant tools and men of steel selected by the trusts, and supplant them with men of steel tempered only with a spirit of justice to all the people.

Democrats are pleased to note that the wave of thought now speeding over the county is even being reflected in some of the republican papers. In last week's issue of the Statesman-Index the statement was made that "it seems our financial affairs are in the hands of a few financiers who make the rest of us dance like puppets at their will." It is only too true, thanks to a republican congress for years, and if only a few more republican papers will aid in letting this be thoroughly understood,