

The Burden of the Tariff

Imposed on the People for the Benefit of a Class

THE higher the tariff the higher the cost of living. The higher the tariff the less revenue the public treasury receives and the greater profits the protected manufacturers receive. The present unreasonable and unjust high tariffs place on the necessities in agricultural production, and also on the necessities of labor, also on building homes for the tiller of the soil and the wage earner, a very great handicap to production and a hardship on all kinds of labor. The tax is so heavy and also so hard to trace to the end of its costly effects that it is hard to get labor or the tiller of the soil to realize or believe what protection is costing them. For protection it is—tariff is a nickname, trying to make us believe that it is not protection, that it is tariff for revenue only.

The Invisible Tax

When Pitt introduced the bill of taxing imports in an invisible way by leaving the tariff on imports for the purpose of meeting the extraordinary war tax of that time, knowing as he did that the people of that time would rise in rebellion if they knew the amount of tax they would have to pay if it was done by a method of direct taxation, he said to his cabinet, that by means of this tariff on imports he could tax the clothes of the poor people's backs and the poor people would not know what was taking their clothes. That was the time he removed the window tax.

Later came the time when certain classes wanted to get protection at the expense of the general public and they invariably use the words "tariff for revenue only." For many years the common people did not realize that where the revenue was increased by \$1.00 the protected class was benefitted to the extent of not less than \$3.00, but since the war it has increased by at least one-third of the former amount.

The tariff of the present time was never intended chiefly for the benefit of the public treasury but it was secured for the protection of a privileged class. The word tariff is a misnomer, the proper wording is protection for a special privileged class, and by the extraordinary profits secured by this means at the expense of the common people this class have been able to control all legislatures on Parliament Hill of the past for many years—it matters not what party was in power. How could it be otherwise? No party could exist that would oppose such a powerful financial group of trained political lobbyists such as the world has never seen.

Farmers' Profits

Protected interests would have the people believe that farmers' profits are greater than the profits of the protected interests, but they do not tell the public that we had to get a war on our hands before we could get war profits. Where the crops have been good for the last two years the profits are something like the profits of the protected interests. Many farmers say they have made more in the last two years than they have made in 20 to 30 years previous to the war, but had there been no war the profits in most cases would have been losses instead. Farmers generally have never made profits except in war times. Past history proves the statement. They may in some cases have gained to the extent that the land increased in value. But in the last two years where the crops were good the yield passed all previous records. Such yields were never known in the history of the world for wheat. How long will this continue? At the present time it does not require a seer to see that the wheat crop this year in the West will not by any means reach an average crop. An average crop is about half of the big crops of the last two years. And then it must not be forgotten that 33 per cent. of our farmers, through unfavorable climatic conditions, in the last two years have not had sufficient to meet running expenses. Some time ago the organized farmers were attacked in an effort to show that their profits

exceeded the profits of the manufacturers. But in the statement they do not tell half the truth, and often half the truth is worse than a lie. It was volume of turn-over. Had the same volume been handled under the old methods of the past it would have cost the shippers of that volume four or five times the amount. The profits looked big on the paid-up capital, but it was the line of credit and the volume and the economy made the showing.

The Home Market

They would also have the public believe that extensive manufacturing employing much labor creates a better market for farm production. A dream. The price of all farm productions, with few exceptions is governed by the value for export to foreign markets. Export demand sets the price for home trade and consumption, and all lines of business buy at the lowest price possible and they just pay what export values compel them to pay. Just in the same way that imports set the price for all home manufactured goods as well as all products of the farm. Then why should we be prevented from getting from abroad that which can be produced cheaper in a foreign land than it can be produced at home? Why should we be coerced into placing, by artificial means, our cousins to the south in a similar position—from a commercial standpoint—as if they were thousands of miles away beyond the sea? We cannot continue to do this without great loss to ourselves.

It is easy to understand how our cousins to the south are not so much affected by such a policy, with their immense population, immense territory reaching from the east to the west and from the north to the south, covering all kinds of climatic conditions which enables them to produce mostly everything that is produced under the sun. But we, with our sparsely populated country spreading over a narrow belt several thousand miles long and practically just one climatic condition that prevents us from producing many of our wants and necessities, are in a different position. In reality the United States is a Free Trade country, as they have free trade between all their states which is equal in extent, from a commercial standpoint, to almost the rest of the christian world. They are a world within themselves.

Manufacturers Will Continue

They also sound a warning that we may find ourselves without manufacturing industries. No chance. If the protected manufacturers cease to manufacture farm implements and machinery the organized farmers can and will take good care of that part of the business and manufacture their requirements themselves if found necessary and employ labor on just as favorable terms as the protected interests.

Mr. McKenzie was right when he said, "show us any manufacturing industry that cannot succeed without protection and which we cannot get along without." It will take some showing. Who is it that cries so loud for protection? Is it not the people that manufacture something for sale in order that they may be able to tax the people a higher price than is necessary to manufacture the article. In what they have to sell they are protectionists, in what they have to buy they are free traders. They have at all times wanted to import free labor. They get much of their raw material free, except the war tax, and are trying to get more still—and so they should—but they should be consistent. Let all the people buy what they want free of hindrance and let it come just as fast as is consistent with sound business principles and good judgment in reducing the tariff. Let it come by a gradual scale and as time goes on we will learn by practical experience where to stop and how long to continue, and if it is found by practical experience in several years that Free Trade will be wholesome for all the people then in the name of what is good let us not stop until we have accomplished that great desire.—John Kennedy.

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