

*** The Evils of Protection ***

W. D. Washburn, jr., of Minneapolis, son of the ex-senator from Minnesota and himself a well-known republican and business man, discusses existing political, financial and commercial conditions in the columns of the New York Evening Post as follows:

"Besides the surface causes there are deep-seated and radical reasons for the present unsatisfactory state of things. These involve the tariff and the trusts which have developed under it. The protective tariff was erected by the republican party for the legitimate purpose of defending our industries against European labor and capital until these industries could hold their own without assistance, and with a fair profit, against the outside world.

"It was expected that this would render us independent of the European markets and develop a large and thrifty class of American workmen, capable of sustaining a government on our basis. It was expected, too, that this body of well-to-do laboring people would afford a large consuming market for the products of another intelligent class, the agriculturists, who in turn would draw wealth from the soil in regions not adapted by nature to manufacturing enterprises.

"Incidentally it was supposed that competition among home manufacturers would provide all the people with good articles at a price assuring fair profits to capital and fair wages to labor.

"Of this system a republican might have boasted seven years ago that it had admirably accomplished its purpose. The people of the United States could compete with the world in the manufacture of all staple products, and that with little or no protection. There had been no general consolidation of interests to defeat competition. Small manufacturers could still do business in the open home market. What are the facts today?

"There is no longer competition, either in production or in distribution. The intelligent independent citizen, without whom no democratic government can survive, has been largely eliminated by combinations of individual capital, which have crowded him aside. He is now, really or practically, only a clerk. His place has been taken by a gigantic organization in restraint of trade.

With a tariff to all intents prohibitory of outside rivalry and no home competition, such an organization raises the price of all manufactures, from 30 to 50 per cent above fair and normal profit. Not content with this, it capitalizes its enormous profits in billions of inflated securities which hang as a constant menace over the financial and industrial markets.

"Today many staple articles manufactured in the United States are sold as cheaply in England, Japan or India as they are supplied to our people. Iron rails have been shipped to England, returned to the United States, paid the duty, and been placed on the market at \$2 less than rails which have never left the country. An iron manufacturer informs me that he sells his surplus abroad at cost, so that the prices may not be reduced by competition of these articles in the home market.

"By a fair price at home he means a price that will pay 30 per cent on his real capital, or 10 per cent on his stock and bonds, whose face value is three times what the property is worth. Competition under the protective system is a dead letter.

"What of the American workingman, whose well-being was to be protected against cheap foreign labor? Puritan New England is no longer American. It swarms with Italians,

Bohemians, Poles and miscellaneous mixed races, whose inheritance of bad morals and bad government is a menace to democracy.

"In one of the manufacturing cities of Connecticut a leading manufacturer told me that he had largely supplanted American laborers with Italians. He said that, though they were treacherous, they worked cheap. At New Haven I saw twenty Slav workmen escorted from the New York train, all tagged and numbered, in care of an interpreter, who was taking them to some smaller manufacturing town. I was informed that such convoys passed through there once or twice a week.

"In North Adams, Mass., one hears all the languages spoken from the Po to the Bosphorus. In Maine one may ride through miles of deserted farms to reach small manufacturing villages, whose inhabitants are chiefly French-Canadians. Paterson, N. J., is largely an Italian city. Nearly every manufacturing town within 100 miles of the Atlantic coast is overrun with low-class European labor, most of which has been introduced within the last ten years.

"The Pennsylvania coal fields are filled with hordes of Slavs, whose low intelligence and still lower standard of living depress wages to the margin of bare existence, and is rapidly brutalizing the social condition of the commonwealth. The coal magnates plaintively remark that there is a surplus of labor in the coal region.

"This surplus exists largely because it was brought there in defiance of the contract labor law to supplant American labor and reduce wages. Of what value is the high tariff in supporting the standard of wages paid to American labor?

"The manufacturer has secured the double advantage of cheap labor and exorbitant prices for his product. The occasional advance in wages bears no relation whatever to the enormous advance in profits. All this points to the gradual absorption of the profits of the land by a handful of men.

"It means the upgrowth of a class of working people totally unfit to sustain our form of government. It means the aggrandizement of a small upper class, whose idleness already leads to the licentiousness and the waste of wealth which has now reached its climax in certain eastern cities.

"What of the agriculturists and the non-manufacturing classes resident in the Mississippi valley? It may be admitted at once that times are now apparently good in that region. Why not? It contains 60,000,000 people who produce three-quarters of all the natural wealth of the United States. They have done well since the hard times, but they could have done better. They have received nowhere near the amount of profits to which their enterprises and their natural resources entitle them. They are now waking to the fact that their energy produces the wealth upon which the commercial prosperity of the nation depends.

"Under the present tariff system they pay exorbitant prices for manufactured articles, but sell their own staples at prices made in the cheapest markets of the world; they must compete with the cheapest labor in the world. Commercially, they are 'caught both coming and going.'

"While they have always supported protection, they now see their foreign markets gradually closed against them in retaliation for a tariff which shuts European manufacturers out of the markets of the United States. One may not have commerce without exchanging commodities. It is ridiculous to suppose that Europe will indefinitely submit to our present prohibitory

tariff and still give us free access to her own markets. She will not indefinitely trade gold for food products. She could not, even if she would.

"Although reciprocity has been promised to the Mississippi valley in every party platform for ten years, I am informed by a well-known and very practical politician in Washington that the protective element of the party has not the remotest intention of passing any reciprocity treaty whatever or taking any step toward the reduction of present duties.

"Our flour and corn, hogs and bacon may be gradually excluded from European markets, but nothing is to be done toward reducing the tariff which leads to these restrictions.

"In a nutshell, the Mississippi valley gives everything and gets nothing under the existing system. It sells cheap and buys high. It produces the wealth without which the east could not sustain itself for one day. But for its colossal railroad earnings and its increasing development of natural wealth, the Wall street operators would have to put up their shutters. The Mississippi valley should not submit indefinitely to the yoke under which, by the aid of the present high protective tariff, its riches are poured into the coffers of eastern speculators.

"It is this sentiment that overhangs the money markets at present like a dark cloud. Its meaning should not be misunderstood. The people will no longer buy industrial stocks at Wall street prices. The west will no longer lend its money to keep up inflated values. Thousands of millions of 'securities' earned by eastern banks and trust companies will have to be nursed at home. This means call money at high prices, small squeezes at any time, continual dullness till a large share of the poison of fictitious valuation is sweated out of the commercial system.

"That this must be done is inevitable. It is only a question of how and when, and accompanied by how much tribulation. The heyday of prosperity has passed, even in the west. Neither railroad nor industrial securities will rule as high as hitherto. The industries must slowly decline until they reach the point where they will pay a fair dividend in average times.

"This means the absolute obliteration of some stocks and heavy losses in others. Bad crops next fall would surely bring harder times. An attack upon the protective system at the next session of congress would shake to their foundations such of the trusts as depend upon exorbitant profits to pay interest on watered stocks. Altogether we can hardly escape commercial depression within the next few years.

"Notwithstanding the opinions of some senators from eastern pocket boroughs, the people of the Mississippi valley stand almost as a unit in favor of radical tariff reform and real reciprocity, which they have been promised, but have not yet obtained. Reading out of our party all republicans who demand tariff revision and reciprocity would mean reading out three-quarters of the republicans of the west.

"Were this done there would be no republican party, for there would be no western republican states—states which have elected all of the republican presidents since the time of Lincoln."

Speaking of Peace.

The democratic party wants peace, and Mr. Bryan persists in throwing a stone at it.—Atlanta Constitution.

The democratic party does not want peace now, any more than it did in 1893-4-5 and 6 when the Constitution was stripped of the waist and covered with gore, in its war upon Grover and his pie-eaters, including Hoke Smith. Then the corporations and the goldbugs were using the party to further their schemes to secure the demonetization of silver and the issue of hun-

dreds of millions of government bonds in order that they might make more money. Then the Constitution did not want peace. It wanted war and with the aid of an outraged and prostituted party, it drove from party direction a horde of political banditti who have since made billions of dollars through combinations of corporations and the watering of their stock. Now the Constitution wants peace on a compromise with these combines. What does Hoke Smith say about it?—Crete (Neb.) Democrat.

Hastings (Neb.) Democrat: There isn't the least danger that the democrats of the country will be stampeded by republican cheers for Grover Cleveland.

On June 4 it was reported from Kansas City and Topeka that relief work was still going on with vigor and that great need still existed. Several more bodies were recovered at Topeka, the list of known dead now reaching 71 persons. It is feared that many more bodies are still in the wreck. Everything possible is being done to aid the sufferers.

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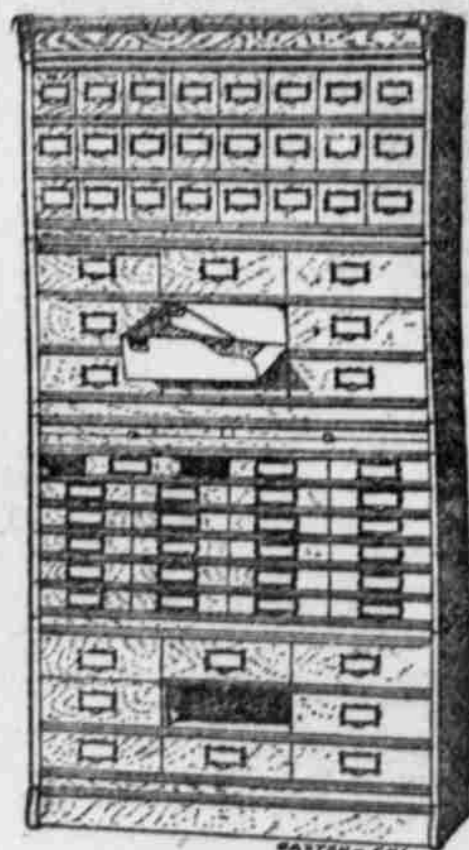
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