

# COMMERCIAL UNION

## WHARTON BARKER FAVORS AN AMERICAN ALLIANCE.

In a Letter to Reciprocity Convention He Urges a Broad Continental Policy—Congressional Action the Proper Method.

Wharton Barker, of Philadelphia, wrote the following letter to the delegates to the reciprocity convention in Chicago:

Philadelphia, Aug. 14, 1905.  
Delegates to the Chicago Reciprocity Conference, Chicago, Illinois:

Gentlemen—Because of the many great questions that press upon the American people for solution at this time—none more important than trade relations of the United States with foreign nations—and because I have been for more than twenty-five years an aggressive advocate of a commercial union of all American nations under a common tariff with a fair distribution of the custom duties, I venture to ask you to indulge me in the presentation of some views and suggestions in regard to a commercial union of the nations and dependencies of America, that I believe will be acceptable to all, that will be permanent and far-reaching, that will insure peace on the American continent for many years, that will go far to keep this country out of entangling alliances with European and Asiatic nations and out of wars over European and Asiatic questions.

### Reciprocity Follows

I entertain the opinion, as I have done for thirty years, that the adjustment of trade questions can be best made not by treaty, not by the sinuosities of "negotiations," but by the direct declarations and open offers of an act of congress. The diplomats who undertake to negotiate a reciprocity treaty, on the one side and on the other, dicker, strive to get and believe they have got the best of the bargain; they do not proceed on the ground that the free interchange of natural products and manufactured commodities would be mutually advantageous, that both peoples, parties to the treaty, would gain from such interchange and gain equally as buyers and as sellers. No reciprocity arrangement that is made upon the basis of "grab" can be mutually advantageous. If it works as expected one people must lose what the other gains, and in such trade there is obviously no net gain, no profit in the exchange of commodities and it would be better if such exchange did not take place. Therefore, no broad-minded man can have patience with or give support to those who put forth so-called reciprocity propositions in the belief that by the acceptance of such propositions they would get the best of their neighbors, but that can only find acceptance if those neighbors are under the contrary belief. There is only one true way for a country to get rich and prosper, and that is by producing wealth, not by getting the best of other countries by trade.

### Basis of Mutual Gain

The notion that trade is one grand scheme of cheat, that it has its support, not in mutual profit, but in profit derived by one party to the trade at the cost of the other, and that, therefore, there is no net gain in trade, is so absurd that it is hard to believe that it should find any acceptance. Yet just such notion is held by many of the advocates of reciprocity; it is with such absurd ideas they they approach the building of a reciprocity treaty. It is petty treatment of great interests.

From the exchange of commodities

both parties to the trade should gain. It is on mutual profit that trade and commerce rest. We want, then, reciprocal trade more than reciprocity treaties. An open and candid course is, surely, our true policy. The rocks in the path of European and Asiatic trade expansion through reciprocity are many and dangerous. We cannot abandon the policy of protective tariff we have maintained for more than forty years, but we must treat industrial trusts as conspiracies against the public and we must remove all tariff import protection from articles which the trust monopolize. The time has come when our tariff legislation must throw overboard unhesitatingly every line and paragraph which is the product of jobbery and log-rolling, or which is used as the shield of monopoly. Free domestic competition is the indispensable counterpart of external protective charges.

### Let Congress Provide

The friends of protection must be explicit in refusing to include in its scope products which are not entitled to be so included. They must add to the free list, from time to time, articles, whose free entrance will be a benefit to the general interest of the country. We should so extend our trade with European and Asiatic countries and we should not make special reciprocity treaties with them. We must not take from congress the power to control our economic policy with regard to them.

Our relations with the Dominion of Canada, with Cuba, Haiti, San Domingo, Mexico, Central and South American countries, are of a different nature and the course for the United States to take is clear; there are no sound objections to it. We should at once through an act of congress offer to all American nations and dependencies, commercial union with the United States, and each other under a common tariff against European and Asiatic nations with a fair distribution of customs receipts among the nations within the American commercial union. Such union does not mean political union, nor territorial expansion, and does not involve settlement in a general congress of any local questions.

### Broadest Home Rule

All countries in the proposed union would have the broadest home rule, the union being confined to common economic questions. An American commercial union would ensure a very great trade expansion on natural lines—a vast increase of trade among the American nations and a like falling off of trade of those nations with Great Britain and the continental European nations. To understand the situation that exists we must realize that there are countries that we may rightly expect to buy more of our products, and those are the countries which supply products of a kind we do not and cannot profitably produce, and which we must, therefore, import, and there are countries lying in different latitudes from our own. To this requirement of different latitude I may add the requirement of the same general longitude. This is for the reason that it is cheaper to buy from near markets than from remote markets, cheaper to buy from the West Indies than from the East Indies, cheaper to buy our coffee from Brazil than from Java, the tropical products we consume from Cuba and other islands of the West Indies than from the Philippines, and it is cheaper, however, much lower may be the money cost of production in the Philippines, in Java, in China, than in the West Indies or in South America.

### Where We Gain and Lose

When natural conditions of production are equal, when the cost of producing in the West and East Indies is the same, while the cost of transportation to our markets is less from the West Indies than from the East, it is to our interest to buy from our neighbors. If we buy under such

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