

OUR OPPRESSIVE TARIFF.

The Burdens It Unjustly Imposes Upon the Working Classes.

A Shoe Manufacturer's Plain, Business-Like Talk to His Employees.

Why the So-Called Protective System Is an Injury to American Working People.

Burdened by Tariff Taxes on the Necessaries of Life—Robbing Peter to Pay Paul.

"Oppressive Tariff Taxation" is the title of a terse, well-written pamphlet just issued by the Massachusetts Tariff Reform Club, whose headquarters are at No. 66 State street, Boston. The officers of the club are Henry L. Pierce, President; James Russell Lowell, First Vice President; Willam Lloyd Garrison, Treasurer; Emerson W. Judd, Secretary.

The main portion of the pamphlet is written by James Means, the well-known shoe manufacturer, is addressed to his employees, and is as follows:

Among all the shoe-factories in the country, ours is one of the very few where there has never been a strike or any strife between those who buy labor and those who sell it. The reason for this we well know. It is that we talk things over carefully, and we find out what is best for us all.

Some of you were asking me the other day why it was that I thought the system which is called "protection" an injury to the working people of the United States. I told you that as soon as possible I would give you my reasons. Here they are:

"Good times" come all the consequent suffering has to be borne by the people who are dependent on their own exertions for living. Those who live on the interest of their money may be inconvenienced by the lessening of their incomes; but while they have their capital to fall back upon, suffering is out of the question. At no time in the history of the world has there ever been a country where the producing classes were prosperous unless that prosperity extended itself to the non-producing classes also; but to this day in many countries where the non-producing classes were prosperous with the producing classes were hardly able to keep body and soul together. This being the case, it follows beyond the possibility of doubt that if our Government is to promote "the greatest good of the greatest number," the first object of our legislation must be to promote the welfare of the producing classes. If their interests are guarded, their prosperity can not fail to be shared by the whole people. Bearing this in mind, it is evident that labor and capital are allies, not enemies, that each is dependent upon the other—that is, when labor is prosperous then is capital also.

"Good times" and "hard times" alternate; now, that we have the former, we want to stave off the latter as long as we can.

Hard times are not the result of any one cause, but a number of different causes acting together. Some of these are more important than others, but if we can surely discover any one of them we are aided in keeping ourselves out of the difficulty.

What we wish to ascertain now is, whether what certain people are pleased to call a "protective tariff" is a blessing and a help to the people of this country, or whether it is a curse and a hindrance. It is either on this or the other; there is no half-way about it. The time for straddling this question has passed by, and the people are beginning to divide already.

One thing has been said, and it is clear that in deciding the question the only thing which it is important for us to find out is, What is the effect of a protective tariff upon the industrial classes of our country?

The intention of these pages is to make clear to you the following points:

That the system which has been named "protection for American industry" has been falsely named, and that the true name for the system is "oppressive tariff taxation."

That the system which taxes the many for the sake of a few, is a system founded upon a mistake.

That the movement in favor of tariff reform is a patriotic movement.

That the movement against tariff reform is a thoroughly selfish movement.

That the attempt of the protectionists to oppose tariff reform by calling it a "British movement" is based upon nothing.

That the remedy for oppressive tariff taxation lies in the hands of the voters of this country.

That if they remain victims of this oppression it is their own fault.

That it is the duty of every voter in this country to look into this subject, and then to take hold and do what he can to help the cause of tariff reform.

Let us now consider the matter. The tariff is a tax placed on imported merchandise. When goods from any foreign country are brought to this country they must pass through the custom house of the port where they are landed. A United States official takes possession of them; and, in most cases, the man who bought them cannot get them into his possession until he has paid a tax on them—a duty, as it is called.

For example, if you had some friend in Canada who should write to you that he could buy you a suit of clothes in Montreal for \$10 which would be better than you could buy here for \$15, perhaps you would like to have him buy the clothes for you and send them to you; but the United States Government steps in here and says, "No; you shall not save anything in that way; we must protect home industry." So, when your suit of clothes reaches the custom house, a United States official takes charge of it, and you have to pay him \$10 to get it. You have to pay before you can have your clothes. This makes your suit about \$15, when otherwise it would have cost you only \$10. The Government says to you, "If you try to buy where you can buy the cheapest we will tax you so dearly that you shall not save a cent by it."

Now, there is what is called a "free list"—that is, there are some kinds of merchandise that can come in free of tariff taxes—but the list is comparatively small, and what has been said about the duty on your clothes applies to nearly all the necessities of life. They are almost all taxed by the tariff. The reason about this tariff tax is that the people are taxed without knowing it. That is the reason why they have largely borne the oppression so long. In the same way that you are taxed on your clothes you are paying thousands of taxes without being aware of it. Your iron and steel implements, your cotton goods, your woolen goods, your carpets, your stoves, your tools, your blankets, your stockings, your hats, your glassware, your soap, your molasses, and thousands of others of your necessities of life are taxed; and while you pay the taxes you do not realize that you are being taxed. Some one may say that your goods are not taxed, because they are, some of them, made in this country; but look at it for a moment. If the Government says you shall not buy a suit in Canada without paying a tax which makes it cost you \$15, if, on that account, you buy a suit of clothes here at \$15, and pay the full price of \$15, do you not see that you are taxed \$5 in either case, because the United States law makes you pay \$15 for what you might have bought for about \$10?

Now, before I go any further, let me say one word about the illustration I have just given. There are certain people who are very anxious to pick flaws in the arguments of those who are in favor of tariff reform, and it is sometimes well to answer them in advance. The suit of clothes is only one illustration which shows how you are taxed on thousands of commodities. But some one may say that I have not been correct in my statement about the cost of clothes in Canada. Well, perhaps my figures are all wrong, what then? I have only supposed the case. The point is this: If, between this country and any other country, there is a difference in the price of any goods on which there is a protective duty, then that duty is a tax upon the home article, which you have to pay when you purchase the goods. But if, on the other hand, the price of that kind of goods is

as low here as anywhere, then the duty is not protective, because no one will send abroad for what can be bought as cheaply at home.

Now we are coming directly to the question we have to consider. I have said you were burdened by tariff taxes on most of the necessities of life. The American people will never complain of a just tax; but when they are once made to see that they are taxed unjustly, they rebel against it. The point between protectionists and tariff-reformers is just here.

For what purpose shall the people be taxed?

Protectionists claim that the taxes we are talking about should be levied for the purpose of protecting individual industries, and that people shall be made to pay these taxes, no matter whether the Government needs the money or not. Tariff reformers, on the other hand, believe that it is inexpedient to impose upon the people any tax on imports, except to meet the expenses of an economically administered government. Do you see the difference clearly?

The protectionist says:

"Throw up a barrier around our country and do not let the people buy their necessities of life in the cheapest market; tax them so heavily that they will have to buy at home, no matter whether the money raised by taxation is needed by the Government or not, no matter whether the tax is just or unjust, no matter if we do have millions of surplus dollars in the Treasury tempting our politicians to dishonesty almost beyond the limit of human power to withstand temptation; no matter about anything except to prevent foreign goods from coming to our shores."

On the other hand, the tariff reformer says that it is inexpedient for the Government to impose a tax upon the people unless to raise money needed for a revenue; that it is inexpedient for the Government to take money out of the pockets of the citizens of this country by putting it into the pockets of another class.

The Government must have a revenue. The revenue must be raised by taxing the people in some way or another. Probably for years to come the best way to raise that revenue will be, in part, by means of the tariff. So let it be. But what shall we say of the protectionists?

They have taxed the people of the country by their high tariff so that they have filled from their pockets enormous sums which is a constant danger.

It is evident to a sensible man that we must either have a tariff for revenue, or else we must have a surplus. It is equally plain to any man who has not the tariff-madness in his brain, that the surplus must either be a thief-tempting hoard, or else it must be squandered. No protectionist dares to squarely face those self-evident truths.

On the tariff question the voters of this country are divided into three classes. The first class is the class of the rich. It is a very small class. The second class is composed of the tariff reformers. This also is a small class, although it is probably larger in number than the protectionist class. The third class is the largest. It is composed of the people who are undecided either way, but who are looking for the truth. These people are anxious to get all the information that they can; they are willing to consider that they may have intelligent opinions of their own. It is to this class that I am writing. I am not addressing protectionists—it is useless to waste words upon them. Part of them know the falsity of their pretenses, and the other part have been brought up to believe that what is false is true. When you argue with them they dodge every point; when you drive them into a corner they talk about irrelevant

topics. Here let me say that we all know men of high character who sincerely believe that "protection" is necessary to our national prosperity. These men are generally either directly or indirectly interested in the manufacture of certain protected goods, and they think that any lowering of the tariff would bring ruin to the business in which they are interested, and to the operatives engaged in it. They are men who have studied the interests of one class of labor so long that they do not realize how much smaller and less important are the interests of the non-protected classes. The protectionists are trying to make it look as if the workingman is a "poor workman."

Now protectionists are trying to do is to continue a system of war taxation which taxes the whole people: to keep alive a few aristocrats who will not pay unless they are "protected." If protectionists will pay in this country, it needs no protection. If it will not pay, can you see any reason why the people should be taxed to make it pay?

A high tariff is a stimulant. It is artificial; consequently it may keep a certain portion of the community engaged in industries which are less profitable to all concerned than some other industries would be. To admit that any high tariff is a protection, after it is once well established, is an admission that for natural reasons some other country is better fitted to carry on that industry.

Protectionists claim that there are many important industries now protected, which would decline under a revenue tariff. Tariff reformers do not believe that. But granting this to be true, for the sake of argument: then the protectionists hold to the shameful idea that it is wise and just to tax the people in order that certain members of the community may be kept in aristocratic riches while others fall only at a disadvantage which is that the decline of those industries should cause them to engage in some others for which their nature, circumstances, and surroundings better fit them. If any important industry should decline under a revenue tariff—which is to be doubted—then labor and capital would be forced into some other channel, where they could be more profitably employed. If protectionists are right, then it is evident that certain industries would decline under free trade, while the process of changing labor into new channels would be temporarily painful to an exceedingly small fraction of the people. Upon this conclusion, drawn from a false premise, rests the whole flimsy argument by which the protectionists attempt to justify themselves in oppressing the people by taxes to raise money which the Government does not need.

There are a few things which can be made better abroad than at home. We have a few unimportant industries here that might not well be given up. If the few people engaged in them cannot make a living in them without having the whole nation taxed in their behalf it is high time they looked about for some other work. This may sound like harsh doctrine, but any one can see that it simply means that we must always consider the greatest good of the greatest number.

A protective tariff causes depression in business by interfering with the law of supply and demand.

The protectionists do not realize that war taxes are unnecessary in time of peace. If they would give up thinking always of the past, and would consider the present and the future, I believe the many protectionists would come to favor tariff reform. But among protectionists such men are in the minority.

Most men who talk vehemently in favor of what they call "protection," are men who wish to see a Republican President in the White House again, and who know that the bloody shirt has ceased to be a potent political factor, can find nothing to talk about except this benignant scheme which they have to enrich the workingmen by taxing him.

Now let us consider the protectionists' arguments for advocating the levying of a tax to raise money which the Government does not need. The principal argument—or rather statement, for it is not an argument—which they bring forward is this: They say that a high tariff protects the workingmen from competition with the pauper labor of Europe; they say that the high tariff has made the wages of the American workman higher than those of the foreign workman, and that the protective tariff is the cause of a large measure of the prosperity which this country has seen. This, as I say, is not an argument, it is merely assertion. We ask them to bring proofs that their assertions are true, and they make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

It is evident to any thinking man that any industry will run with fewer "ups and downs" when the protective tariff is applied.

The protectionists have for a long time been trying to prove that their assertions are true. They make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

Now, these are the few things which can be made better abroad than at home. We have a few unimportant industries here that might not well be given up. If the few people engaged in them cannot make a living in them without having the whole nation taxed in their behalf it is high time they looked about for some other work. This may sound like harsh doctrine, but any one can see that it simply means that we must always consider the greatest good of the greatest number.

A protective tariff causes depression in business by interfering with the law of supply and demand.

The protectionists do not realize that war taxes are unnecessary in time of peace. If they would give up thinking always of the past, and would consider the present and the future, I believe the many protectionists would come to favor tariff reform. But among protectionists such men are in the minority.

Most men who talk vehemently in favor of what they call "protection," are men who wish to see a Republican President in the White House again, and who know that the bloody shirt has ceased to be a potent political factor, can find nothing to talk about except this benignant scheme which they have to enrich the workingmen by taxing him.

Now let us consider the protectionists' arguments for advocating the levying of a tax to raise money which the Government does not need. The principal argument—or rather statement, for it is not an argument—which they bring forward is this: They say that a high tariff protects the workingmen from competition with the pauper labor of Europe; they say that the high tariff has made the wages of the American workman higher than those of the foreign workman, and that the protective tariff is the cause of a large measure of the prosperity which this country has seen. This, as I say, is not an argument, it is merely assertion. We ask them to bring proofs that their assertions are true, and they make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

It is evident to any thinking man that any industry will run with fewer "ups and downs" when the protective tariff is applied.

The protectionists have for a long time been trying to prove that their assertions are true. They make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

Now, these are the few things which can be made better abroad than at home. We have a few unimportant industries here that might not well be given up. If the few people engaged in them cannot make a living in them without having the whole nation taxed in their behalf it is high time they looked about for some other work. This may sound like harsh doctrine, but any one can see that it simply means that we must always consider the greatest good of the greatest number.

A protective tariff causes depression in business by interfering with the law of supply and demand.

The protectionists do not realize that war taxes are unnecessary in time of peace. If they would give up thinking always of the past, and would consider the present and the future, I believe the many protectionists would come to favor tariff reform. But among protectionists such men are in the minority.

Most men who talk vehemently in favor of what they call "protection," are men who wish to see a Republican President in the White House again, and who know that the bloody shirt has ceased to be a potent political factor, can find nothing to talk about except this benignant scheme which they have to enrich the workingmen by taxing him.

Now let us consider the protectionists' arguments for advocating the levying of a tax to raise money which the Government does not need. The principal argument—or rather statement, for it is not an argument—which they bring forward is this: They say that a high tariff protects the workingmen from competition with the pauper labor of Europe; they say that the high tariff has made the wages of the American workman higher than those of the foreign workman, and that the protective tariff is the cause of a large measure of the prosperity which this country has seen. This, as I say, is not an argument, it is merely assertion. We ask them to bring proofs that their assertions are true, and they make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

It is evident to any thinking man that any industry will run with fewer "ups and downs" when the protective tariff is applied.

The protectionists have for a long time been trying to prove that their assertions are true. They make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

Now, these are the few things which can be made better abroad than at home. We have a few unimportant industries here that might not well be given up. If the few people engaged in them cannot make a living in them without having the whole nation taxed in their behalf it is high time they looked about for some other work. This may sound like harsh doctrine, but any one can see that it simply means that we must always consider the greatest good of the greatest number.

A protective tariff causes depression in business by interfering with the law of supply and demand.

The protectionists do not realize that war taxes are unnecessary in time of peace. If they would give up thinking always of the past, and would consider the present and the future, I believe the many protectionists would come to favor tariff reform. But among protectionists such men are in the minority.

Most men who talk vehemently in favor of what they call "protection," are men who wish to see a Republican President in the White House again, and who know that the bloody shirt has ceased to be a potent political factor, can find nothing to talk about except this benignant scheme which they have to enrich the workingmen by taxing him.

Now let us consider the protectionists' arguments for advocating the levying of a tax to raise money which the Government does not need. The principal argument—or rather statement, for it is not an argument—which they bring forward is this: They say that a high tariff protects the workingmen from competition with the pauper labor of Europe; they say that the high tariff has made the wages of the American workman higher than those of the foreign workman, and that the protective tariff is the cause of a large measure of the prosperity which this country has seen. This, as I say, is not an argument, it is merely assertion. We ask them to bring proofs that their assertions are true, and they make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

It is evident to any thinking man that any industry will run with fewer "ups and downs" when the protective tariff is applied.

The protectionists have for a long time been trying to prove that their assertions are true. They make no attempt to prove the truth of them; but they simply reiterate their original assertions again and again, putting them first in one form, then in another, mixing in with them false statements and all kinds of misrepresentations in order to deceive the working people into thinking that the oppressive tax is a good thing.

Now, these are the few things which can be made better abroad than at home. We have a few unimportant industries here that might not well be given up. If the few people engaged in them cannot make a living in them without having the whole nation taxed in their behalf it is high time they looked about for some other work. This may sound like harsh doctrine, but any one can see that it simply means that we must always consider the greatest good of the greatest number.

A protective tariff causes depression in business by interfering with the law of supply and demand.

The protectionists do not realize that war taxes are unnecessary in time of peace. If they would give up thinking always of the past, and would consider the present and the future, I believe the many protectionists would come to favor tariff reform. But among protectionists such men are in the minority.

Most men who talk vehemently in favor of what they call "protection," are men who wish to see a Republican President in the White House again, and who know that the bloody shirt has ceased to be a potent political factor, can find nothing to talk about except this benignant scheme which they have to enrich the working