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DOMESTIC.

TO THE PEOPLE *Of the United States.*

[Address of the Anti-Tariff Convention—continued from our last paper.]

We are the advocates of free trade. The argument which sustains it rests upon a proposition which may not be denied. It is the unquestionable right of every individual to apply his labor and capital in the mode which he may conceive best calculated to promote his own interest. It is the interest of the public that he may so apply it. He understands better than it can be understood by the government, what will conduce to his own benefit;—and since the majority of individuals will, if properly protected, be disposed to follow their interests, such an application of their industry and capital, must produce in the result the greatest amount of public good. Let it be remembered that the question relates exclusively to the *application* of capital. It cannot be *generated* by an act of legislation. The power of the government is limited to its *transfer* from one employment to another. It takes from some less favored interest, what it bestows on the one which it professes to protect. It is equally untrue that such a system gives greater employment to labor. Its operation is confined to the simple change of its application. Laws which protect by bounty any peculiar species of labor, cannot be said to encourage *American* industry—that is, directed to various objects. These laws favor only a single class; and since the bounty is not supplied by the government, but taken from the pocket of the individual, the protection which is given to one species of labor, is so given at the expense of every other. That course of legislation, which leaves American capital and labor to the unfettered discretion of those who possess the one and apply the other, can alone be denominated the "American System."

The interference of government, with the right of the individual to apply his labor and capital in such mode as he may think most conducive to his own interest, thus necessarily operates to diminish the aggregate amount of production. In other words, the amount of the necessaries and conveniences of life which are enjoyed by the community is necessarily diminished. If all nations then were willing to adopt the system of free trade for which we contend, which is accordant to the spirit of Christianity and calculated to unite nations in harmony and peace, it cannot be doubted that the interest of each would be promoted. The only question which can be raised on this part of the subject is, whether the adoption of a restrictive policy by one or more nations makes it the interest of others to reciprocate those restrictions. The answer seems to be sufficiently obvious and satisfactory. The proposition which asserts the superior advantages of a free trade among all nations, rests upon the following principle. The universal freedom of action which it allows, tends most thoroughly to develope the moral and physical energies of each nation, and to apply them to those objects to which they are best adapted. The proposition must be equally true in relation to each nation, whatever may be the policy adopted by others. The nation which resorts to a restrictive policy, legislates to her own disadvantage by interfering with the natural and most profitable employment of capital. To the extent to which she thus excludes another nation from an accustomed or from a desirable market, she occasions, it is true, in that nation also a displacement of capital from its natural channels. But can the remedy consist in a retaliatory system of legislation? in a system of further restrictions imposed by the latter nation? If it be true that a restrictive system is injurious to the nation imposing it, does it cease to be so in regard to the latter nation, because of the wrong done by the former, and because it is also injurious to such nation? When we apply these views to the Corn Laws of Great Britain, considered with reference to their effect upon us, is it not then obvious that a system of pretended retaliation, which enfetters the productive energies of our own people, whatever may be its effect upon that nation, must necessarily increase the evils we ourselves are destined to sustain?

It is strongly urged as a motive to the continuance of the existing tariff, that its operation has been to effect a reduction of prices. These have in fact fallen since 1816, and our opponents contend that this has been the result of domestic competition. A moment's reflection will demonstrate the fallacy of this assertion. We present a single fact in the outset. The diminution of price has been *general*—as well in relation to articles which are *not* protected by the existing tariff of duties, as to those which are. It cannot therefore have arisen from this cause. Let us remember now, that this diminution of price has occurred every where—abroad as well as at home—and not only in an equal, but, as a necessary consequence of the tariff, in a greater degree there than here. Among the causes which have produced this result, two prominent ones are presented to your consideration—the diminished amount of the circulating medium of the world, and the astonishing improvements which have been introduced in the modes of production. The cost of production is less—the comparative value of money has become greater. Can we wonder at the result! Take the case of cotton goods—these have fallen in price here since the enactment of the tariff. But the same thing is true not only in an equal, but in a greater degree abroad—and the reason is obvious. The causes which have produced this result—those which have been before stated—have elsewhere been left to exert their full influence in effecting the reduction of price. Here their operation has been restrained by the conflicting influence of the tariff. The reduction therefore with us has necessarily stopped at a point, which is ascertained by adding the amount of duty to the price of the imported article. Thus the diminution of price here has not been produced by the tariff, but in despite of it—and has been retarded by it. But for this law the imported, which would take the place of the domestic article in the consumption of the country, would be obtained at a price greatly below that which we actually pay, and the difference, amounting yearly to many millions of dollars, would be saved to the community. It cannot be doubted that the prices of all commodities, the domestic production of which is *forced by the imposition of a duty on a foreign article* of similar description, are raised by the amount of duty necessary to effect the exclusion of the foreign article, or that this increase of price is paid by the consumer, and that the loss to the nation which is occasioned by this system of protection is nearly equal to such difference of price.

The success which has attended the manufacture of cottons, is used to illustrate and enforce another suggestion in favor of the tariff. It is said that by the means of the protection afforded by government manufacturers are enabled to overcome the difficulties incident to new enterprises, and that this protection is ultimately repaid to the community in the reduced price at which the article is furnished. We have already shown that this reduction in price in the case referred to, has not resulted from the protective system. Let us look however at this suggestion apart from that consideration. If it be conceded for the purpose of the argument, and only for that purpose, that a manufacture might be established by a temporary encouragement from government, which would not otherwise, at least at that time, come into successful operation, and that the community might ultimately be repaid in the manner which is supposed, the following considerations seem decisively to repel the force of that suggestion. The idea of permanent protection is excluded by the nature of the proposition. That which is proposed, is temporary merely, and the question whether it is to be ultimately repaid to the community, is of course made to depend on the successful operation of the protected establishment. It is Congress who are to determine in advance, upon the propriety of putting at hazard the interests of the community, by the forced establishment of the proposed manufacture. The question to be determined depends upon the calculation of probabilities, to the correct estimate of which much practical information is obviously indispensable. Constituted as that body is, it is difficult to conceive of one less fitted for such reference. On the other hand, there is always enough of individual enterprise, intelligence and capital, to test any experiment which gives a fair promise of ultimate remuneration, notwithstanding it may be subject to temporary loss. Left to individual enterprise, the question would be decided by those who have every motive and every means to come to a just conclusion—while the proposed suggestion would throw upon Congress those visionary projectors who, having failed to obtain the support of discreet and intelligent capitalists, would play the sure game of securing profit, if by the rarest accident profit should arise, and of throwing the loss upon the community, if loss should ensue.

It is said that a dependence upon other nations, for those manufactures which are essential to our wants, is inconsistent with our character as a nation; and in this view that the tariff is essential to our national independence. To us the term seems to be strangely misapplied. It is by securing the application of the highest energies of each, to those objects which it was best qualified to produce, would enlarge the amount of production, and increase the sum of human comfort. But such a state of things would, according to the argument which is urged, be a state of universal dependence, and precisely the same consequence would follow in relation to the commercial intercourse of any given nation with the other nations of the world, to the extent of that intercourse, whether a system of free trade or of partial restrictions should prevail. That intercourse consists in the mutual interchange of commodities, and it is impossible to conceive the idea of a dependence on the one side, without recognising the fact of a corresponding dependence on the other. But such a state of mutual dependence is a source of gratulation rather than of regret, since it gives to each nation an increased facility for the development of its highest energies, enlarges the sum of its enjoyments, and affords the surest guarantee for the peace and harmony of the world.

If the suggestion be urged in its application to the necessities of the country during a state of war, an equally satisfactory answer may be given. It is unquestionably the duty of every government to be prepared for those conflicts with other nations, which it is not always possible to avoid; but this is most effectually done by the unrestricted exertion of its peaceful energies. In a government constituted as ours is, and separated as it is by the Atlantic from the nations of the old world, it is reasonable to presume that such conflicts will be rare. The intervals of peace will probably be of much the longest duration, and our system of permanent policy should therefore be regulated chiefly with a view to this state of our national existence. But the decisive answer to this suggestion is, that money constitutes the sinews of war, and that its exigencies are best provided for by enriching the nation in time of peace. A system of free trade will mainly conduce to this object. The resources which it will furnish will second the services of the neutral trader, and these with our own internal manufactures which are already independent of legislative protection, will amply supply our wants in such an emergency.

It is one and not the least of the evils of the system which we deprecate, that it has a tendency to demoralize our citizens, to habituate them to evasions of the laws, and to encourage the odious and detestable practice of smuggling. It is the effect of the protecting duty to raise the price of commodities considerably above that, at which they could be imported at a moderate revenue duty. Unless this is so, it fails to accomplish its destined object, and is entirely useless. The inevitable consequence is, the temptation to clandestine importation, and the facilities which are afforded by our widely extended inland and ocean frontier, give impunity to the smuggler.

On the several interests of agriculture, navigation, commerce, the mechanic arts, and even on manufactures themselves, this system operates with an injurious influence. Speaking with reference to that portion of agriculture, which is employed in the production of articles which must be exported to a foreign market, it is obvious that any considerable diminution of commercial capital, by its transfer to other employments, must have a tendency to diminish their price. It is in the southern portion of the Union that this will be most extensively felt. The domestic market will consume a portion of its great staple, which is, comparatively, small, and the immense residue will seek in vain for a foreign market, if the manufactures of other nations are in effect, and permanently excluded from our ports. This state of things may not at once occur. The necessity of having a supply of the raw material for the employment of her manufactories, may induce our great customer to submit, for a time, to a system of purchase instead of exchange; but she will be urged by the strongest considerations to seek that supply from those who will receive her manufactures in return. If this system be rendered permanent, and pushed to the prohibitory extent, to which it seems inevitably to tend, the fate of the cotton planter is therefore irrevocably sealed. Nor is he alone affected by this system of protection. The farmer of the Middle States will feel its influence in the increase of the price of labor, as well as of every article which he buys; and if those in the manufacturing