

assert that which cannot be proven by their words or deeds.

Admitting, then, that a tariff for revenue is constitutional, and is sanctioned by unbroken usage from the first, I desire to show the great importance of regarding such laws with jealousy and confining them within reasonable and legal bounds. At the very best a tariff operates most unequally. It is scarcely possible to frame one that will bear with equal weight on every man. Knowing this, legislators are less solicitous in striving for equality, and the temptation to give one class or section an advantage over another is very great. The difficulty of evenly adjusting the burdens and of detecting the inequalities affords ample shelter for this iniquity. Of course, the natural and undisputed basis of justice in taxation is found in the requiring of every man to pay in proportion to his ability. That is to say, that every citizen of a State shall contribute to the support of the government which protects him, in proportion to the interest which he has protected. Accordingly, as all men have an equal interest in the protection of their lives, persons and liberties, so in all countries the personal tax is the same. So in all State taxes on property the amount levied against each individual is an ad valorem percentage on his taxable possessions. There is no other rule which strikes hands with strict justice. No man in America would submit without a struggle to any other in the levying of direct taxes. A direct tax on persons and property which contained as much of injustice and inequality as is covered by our existing tariff laws would provoke armed resistance all over the United States in ten days. But the tariff methods are unperceptible to the ordinary victim. He finds prices high, perhaps, but attributes it to natural causes. He does not know that they are artificially produced for the benefit of his neighbor. If he did, that neighbor would perhaps, hear "something drop" some fine morning. Hence the dangerous nature of tariff taxation. It is said there is no sensation more pleasant and soothing than that of bleeding, yet there is nothing that more certainly ends in death. The process of paying taxes without knowing how or when is equally soothing, but its inevitable ending is equally certain. The difficulty is always great of awakening the patient to the danger he is incurring.

The chief inequality of a tariff arises from the fact that it is a tax upon consumption. Whilst it is true that men do not consume alike and equally, the deficiency in their consumption is not nearly so great as the difference in their wealth. If there was a certain and well-established ratio between wealth and consumption, so that the greater the one just so much greater would be the other, then consumption would be as fair a measure for the imposition of taxes as any other and as convenient. But there is no such invariable proportion; not only so, but very frequently the position is inverted, and the man of least wealth pays largely the most taxes. Duties upon food and clothing will illustrate this. A common day laborer will eat and drink as much, and wear as much clothing as a millionaire. The only difference is that the millionaire consumes costlier food and raiment, and therein pays more tax; but the just proportion of the amount which each should pay is by no means observed. They are miles and miles apart. To tax each one in proportion to his ability to pay would take from the man whose income was \$60,000 per annum hundreds of times as much as would be required of the laborer whose income the year round was \$6 per week. Estimating that such a man pays annually tariff duties on what he consumes at

so low a figure as \$10, it is not in the capacity of any sane human being to consume so much of taxable articles as to bring the duty on them up to five thousand times that sum. Practically, the duties on consumption which such a man ordinarily has is not one-tenth of that amount. Social conditions and the variable dispositions of men everywhere aggravate these inequalities. The man of moderate means and a large family consumes vastly more than the rich man without a family or the miser. The whole income of the farmer may be, and often is, expended in the consumption of dutiable goods, whilst the millionaire spends no more, and his houses, lands, furniture, horses, plate and jewelry, works of art, vehicles, stocks and bonds, and securities of all sorts, pay not one dollar to the support of the government. Wild horses, chained to his limbs and struggling to burst forth, could not make an honest man say that kind of taxation is right and just. Yet such is the operation of tariff taxes every day, even with the most judicious which can be levied, and whose only aim is the proper one of revenue. There is always much endeavor to meet the force of this consideration by talk of discriminating in favor of the people of small means by imposing higher duties on luxuries than on the necessities of life. Even if this was fairly done, and it never is, it could not by any possibility remedy the inequality of the tax, for the reason already stated, that the rich man cannot in the very nature of things consume as much more than the poor man as to make his taxes greater in the proper proportion. In short, it is physically impossible to attain to abstract justice and equality in taxation by a duty on consumption. In our present laws it has not even been attempted, though the talk of discriminating against luxuries is in every man's mouth whenever the subject is mentioned. They are framed with special reference neither to the wants of the government nor the needs of the people, but to the interest of the manufacturers alone. In reality, the bulk of whatever discrimination there may be in the law is against the necessities of life and in favor of luxuries. A glance at the treasury reports of duties on goods will satisfy any one of this. In most women goods the greater the cost the less the duty. Iron and steel goods pay four to five times as much duty as gold and silver jewelry; common spirits five to six times as much as fine wines; common cotton goods twice as much as fancy straw goods furs. Common woolen goods pay fifty per cent. more than silks and satins, whilst common window glass is taxed six times more than polished and silvered plate glass of the same size; a homely illustration of this species of iniquity may be found in an ordinary whisky toddy. The whisky of which it is the chief ingredient is taxed in the neighborhood of 400 per cent, the sugar which sweetens it is taxed 82 per cent, and the nutmeg which is grated upon it for flavoring is free. That is a fair sample of the discrimination of our tariff against luxuries. Nutmegs cannot be grown in the United States, therefore a tax on nutmegs would protect nobody but would go straight into the public treasury; therefore to that extent it obviates the necessity of taxing some article which is made or grown in the United States; therefore it stands in the way of some manufacturer; therefore the duty on nutmegs is repealed, and, *pro tanto*, it is placed on salt, or trace-chains, or children's slates, or some other item of prime necessity. Of all the wrongs contained in the existing tariff there is not one more flagrant than the admission of tropical luxuries free of duty in order to force the heavy taxation of the necessities of life.

There is no law, human or divine, under which it can be justified either in policy or morals. It is unjust to all; it is cruelty to the poor.

In the imposition of income taxes it is sometimes provided that the rate is increased as the net income becomes larger, and in all cases when the income sinks below a given point. This is a manifest discrimination against the rich not reconcilable with strict justice; but men forgive it on account of its obvious humanity. But whoever heard of any country save free America, by any law save our Morrill tariff inverting the process and taxing the poor more than the rich—increasing the rate as the ability to pay is decreased—so that the poor man's poverty becomes a crime for which his country punishes him with pains and penalties and shortens the allowance of his children's bread and diminishes the warmth of their clothing? Let any honest man look at that tariff and study its effects before he denies these things. He will find all here stated to be true, and based upon the official reports of the Treasury Department.

To such absurdities and outrageous results does unconstitutional taxation lead when once we depart from principle. No matter how good our intentions, may be it is dangerous to enact any laws or methods of taxing the citizen that is not grounded in justice. There is no safety, the preachers tell us, outside of the church. So there is no security for our rights and liberties outside of the organic law which guarantees them. For the good of mankind it is provided that outraged law will avenge itself. If, therefore, we violate the manifest dictates of justice in the matter of taxation, we may be sure that one portion of the community will suffer in proportion to the benefit which has been reaped by another. We cannot escape the great law of compensation. We must reap whatsoever we have sown. If the seed be injustice, the harvest must needs be suffering. Therefore, to recapitulate, whilst a constitutional tariff is at the best, open to many and serious objections, and has many avenues leading to monopoly and injustice, yet as it has become the settled policy of our country, no tariff reformer wishes to change it for another. But we do desire earnestly to restore our system to its original and only lawful objects, to conform it to justice and humanity, and make it as nearly as possible free from oppression and all kinds of inequality. In short, we strive to make the taxing power of the government the shield and support of the people, and not the dormant partner of the manufacturing firms. Z. B. VANCE.

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The situation at the present time seems to resolve itself into this: Shall America be foreignized or the foreigners Americanized? The events of the past two years have demonstrated that the problem must be grappled with and a solution effected.

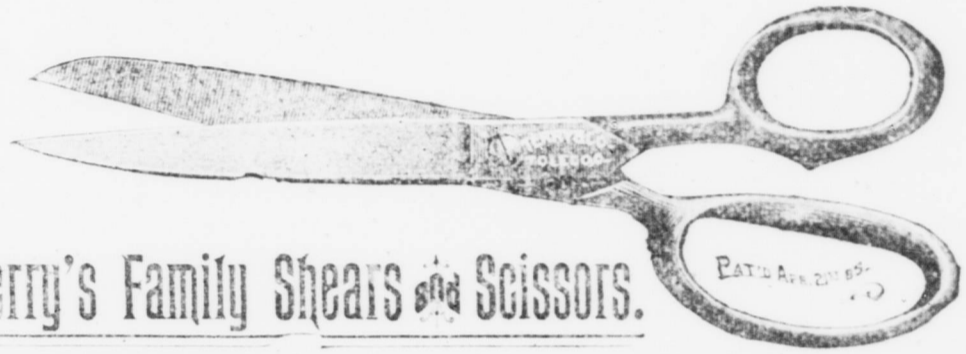
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