



Free Trade

The Road to Peace

by SELIM N. TIDEMAN

WE frequently forget that the program presented to the world by Henry George, in addition to making the resources of the earth the common heritage of all the people and collecting the social value of the land in the form of a tax for the benefit of society at large, also emphasized the importance of freedom of trade between nations. He would abolish all customs duties.

For hundreds of years the opportunity to work has been classed as a privilege. Work, rather than its product, has been regarded as the all important boon. As labor saving machinery was coming into existence, the mass of workers feared the loss of their jobs instead of exulting at the prospect of more goods resulting from their work. It remains basic labor union philosophy that jobs must be conserved even when such jobs are completely unproductive. Unions are organized in crafts where control over jobs against rival unions is a matter of constant contention and the "right to work" means the denial of this right to others. The constant demand for a shorter work week is based on spreading a limited amount of work around to a greater number. The fact that national wealth and well-

being is based on output and availability of goods seems beyond understanding.

In much of Europe industry is organized on a system of quotas to hold production down and make possible a price structure that will make high profits with out-moded production methods. In some industries only the minimum needs are produced to be sold at scarcity prices, and the demand for jobs is satisfied with inferior production equipment. This procedure is countenanced by governments as being beneficial to the people at large because it produces jobs and profits.

Western Germany now is proud of its export record, confessedly accomplished by inducing its labor force to accept a lower standard of living than would obtain if more of its products were of a kind to be consumed at home.

These systems would be infringed if the goods thus denied to the people could be imported from abroad; therefore protective tariffs are enacted. In this country where, generally speaking, production is free, there are tremendous advances in production machinery. We harbor a deadly fear that an influx of goods would lower our standard of living—consequently we enact

tariffs to protect our "right to work" and to make profits.

In capitalist circles those who most resent labor monopoly are horrified at the mention of free trade. It would simply allow for the movement of goods into this country in exchange for our largess to other nations for the money they owe us, and in exchange for our own products which other nations need to buy. It is hard to disabuse the mind of the idea that the pieces of paper that come into our country in exchange for exports are not wealth until exchanged for real goods produced by the creditor nation.

Tariffs and Reparations

The first world war resulted from the search for foreign markets for goods that should have been enjoyed by the producers in the home country. The second had its seeds in the demand on Germany for reparations, coincidental with creditor nations erecting tariff walls that made it impossible to pay these reparations with goods, and our own country refusing to accept German goods in exchange for much needed materials. And when a nation must import and cannot sell, its credit collapses and its currency loses its value. If free trade were universal all currencies would find their basic value and having found it would stay put and could easily be converted into a universal medium acceptable the world over, as the dollar is in our states. Free trade, making goods cheaper, also is the answer to our inflation problems.

If, in addition to free trade all travel restrictions were removed, all tendency to war would be eliminated. It is the only road to peace.

What is the alternative? As the world is now moving, with humanity trespassing in the workshop of the Creator for more deadly weapons, it is not clear but what the human race, or perhaps all living things, may be exterminated.

Freedom has been converted from a state of being to a force, the only force that can conquer in the battle for survival.

We are challenging Russia to reduce armaments. Suppose that instead of this we were to challenge her to open her markets to us without restrictions, to open the country to free travel, and in turn offer her the same advantage with us. She would probably decline. But what a magnificent gesture! If accepted a thousand Communist spies could not harm us. Probably a thousand Americans preaching freedom would not turn Russia from socialism. Retreat from socialism is very difficult. Getting into it is much easier, but with 60 percent of our population living in their own homes, it is folly of us to fear it.

This challenge would be very difficult for the Russian rulers to interpret as a warlike gesture and if accepted the idea would be emulated the world over. Civilization and humanity would have great opportunity for progress.

Cobden, in his day maligned because opposed to war, tied peace unconditionally to free trade and went to great exertion to convince not only his own but other governments of this. If our Constitution were abolished except the prohibition against a tariff between the states, we would still have a nation. If this provision were stricken out, our nation would fall apart.

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