

PREFACE

THIS "tract for the times" makes no claim to economic originality. It is written less in the terms economists use than in the language of a journalist seeking to inform men and women of the underlying evils of our iniquitous tariff system, correctly denounced many years ago as "inefficient, incompetent and dishonest," and why it must be done away with after due consideration for workers and capitalists in those hybrid economic growths which assert that they cannot live without government aid. Freedom in importing and exporting can in the long run no more be compromised than freedom of press, or speech, or thought, or religion, or assembly. Open the door even a crack and at once more seekers after government pap endeavor to force their way in, demanding, with some justice, that if others are privileged they shall be also.

A second vital purpose in writing this book has been an ardent desire to support to the fullest degree the American Government in its almost complete reversal of our tariff policies beginning with the reciprocal trade treaties. That it has gone as far as it has in demanding that all the nations reduce their tariffs, visible and invisible, and abolish all tariff barriers, would not have seemed remotely possible ten years ago. It is one of the most extraordinary political somersaults in American history, all the more because it is not the result of injecting the tariff issue into a political campaign, or of a deliberate vote in Congress. The reason for it is that at last those in charge of the Government have been com-

pelled by the great depression and the greatest of wars to see that a reversal of our high tariff policy toward lower duties has become essential to the progress and the industrial life of both the United States and the whole embattled world. If this volume can make even a slight contribution to the Government's case in the impending battle royal in Congress and with other high tariff nations it will surely have justified itself.

It is a long and ugly chapter in our history here unfolded. Even to one familiar with it all his life, the wonder grows that so able, enterprising and intelligent a people as the Americans have been so readily deluded for many generations. It seems beyond belief that a nation, now the most powerful on earth, has so long feared the competition of States, some largely without natural resources and others wholly without intelligent and adaptable labor and the mechanical equipment of our industry, and that it has trembled lest it be ruined by masses of underpaid, underfed, half-slave foreign workers overseas. Some day a real history of the wholesale robbery and corruption of the tariff era will yet be written by a competent pen. It is much needed.

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