

Only Farmers? Pension Everybody

Secretary Wallace, judging from recent farm paper comment on crop control legislation, has won popular acceptance for the theory so often presented as a defense for a farm subsidy, that the farmer ought to have some sort of special aid or bounty to offset his loss from our protective tariff. No doubt this view appeals to persons who mentally lump all farmers into one class that supposedly gets no benefit from the tariff and all non-farmers into another class called manufacturers, all of whom supposedly profit greatly from the tariff.

But suppose—mirabile dictu—that Congress should start to abolish the tariff. Would the farmers unanimously applaud, on the ground that they had always been “the goats”? Would the sugar cane producers of Louisiana and the sugar beet producers of Idaho and Michigan and Utah and Colorado let out a shout of joy? Would the producers of peanuts send lobbyists to Washington to hasten the removal of duties from peanuts? Would the wool growers send a delegation to request haste in removing the duty on raw wool? Or would a large number of the farmers decide that, after all, they “need” the tariff system they

have, in effect, voted for, lo, these many years?

But let's admit the contention that certain groups of manufacturers have profited at the expense of the farmers. What then? Every informed person knows that the United States manufactures goods that it can sell successfully in foreign countries in competition with goods made all over the world, and that those Americans who manufacture such goods, if no domestic monopoly is established, do not gain by the tariff and are as much robbed by it as any farmer. And similarly with many of our miners, railroad workers and others.

How much does it help the situation, assuming that the C's, D's, E's and F's are being robbed (i.e., taxed) for the benefit of the A's and B's, to proceed to rob (tax) not alone the A's and B's but also the C's, D's and E's so as to recompense the F's for what has been taken from them? If farmers, carpenters, cotton textile

workers, railroad workers and coal miners are all being taxed to enrich sugar producers and manufacturers of woolen cloth, how much good does it do to tax the carpenters and coal miners some more in order to reimburse the farmers?

Or shall we pick out all the classes that are injured by the tariff—*not* just certain groups of farmers—and give them all a bounty at the expense of those who now profit? Shall we thus try to establish a society based frankly on privilege, in which each person is taxed to provide a subsidy for each other person and in which the thoughts and efforts and political activities of each are devoted to the getting of more subsidies from the rest? If this is not our present ideal, how far do we fall short of it?

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