

GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

The Seeds of War

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Part 6

He would indeed be a fool who, thinking to increase his body's health, binds tight his limbs with ligatures. Were such a man to walk the streets his neighbors out of kindness and pity would call a doctor and have him examined for fear that he would do himself mischief. Yet what is a selfevident truth in nature, namely, that each member is dependent upon its fellows and the whole, and the whole upon each member, is soon forgotten when man considers his own creation, society.

For as the muscle must have blood and the blood must have food and as without the muscle-effort the food may not be procured, so we find in society that to get what a man needs he must give in exchange what he wants least, and that only as this exchange or trade is facilitated, as a man is encouraged to exchange and trade what he wants least for what he wants most, only by this method may man prosper.

What difference does it make whether I give up what I want least to a man in Philadelphia or Antwerp or Hong Kong so long as I get what I want most by my exchange?

How can a foreigner do me mischief when the trade is to my advantage? It is to my interest to get what I want, and if a Swiss makes the watch, the cheese, or the chocolate, that I want in preference to what I have, why should the State deprive me of that right of exchange, by placing prohibitive barriers in my way? I certainly will not willingly exchange to my disadvantage, but why should the State, my State, thwart a deal when it is to my advantage?

Before the war we exchanged American automobiles for Persian rugs. Why? Well, the Persians felt that they were getting a good thing, a better bargain, by giving their rugs in exchange for American cars, and we in turn felt that as they made better rugs it would be to our advantage to exchange our cars with which we were surfeited for rugs with which they were amply supplied. As they had many rugs they would sell them cheaply, as we had millions of cars we also would sell cheaply. But then what happened?

Our domestic rug interests demanded protection from those terrible Persians who flooded our rug market. Accordingly our legislators, whose hearing is acute when lobbies whisper, determined "to protect American labor" that would be so foolish as to waste their money in the purchase of a Persian rug, and the American labor who is employed in the domestic rug market, and, so accordingly a heavy protective tariff was imposed upon the rugs. Heavy? Well only 45 per cent. A Persian rug that would sell in our store for \$100, would now sell for \$145.

When the Persian rug was boosted, thanks to our tariff from one hundred to one hundred and forty-five dollars it simply meant that no longer could American labor buy a Persian rug, it also meant that the domestic market, having no outside competition, could raise the price of the domestic rug, thus making even an American rug hard to get.

Thus far the tariff did not help the American labor by reducing the cost of living, for it raised the cost of an article which labor wanted. But let us examine further. By raising the tariff on rugs we lessened the number of American buyers for Persian rugs and accordingly there are that many less rugs sold, and Persia, which is an outlet for American automobiles or typewriters, or electric motors or a thousand other articles has been reduced that much in purchasing power, and has that much less to exchange for our autos.

Thus by our tariff on Persian rugs we have diminished the demand for our automobiles and accordingly put that many more men out of work. But this is not the whole picture. For it is quite natural that if we impose a tariff upon Persian rugs the Persian government will impose a tariff against what we export and they import. Once again the vicious cycle is set in motion and thus we find from one small tariff on rugs that was requested by selfish interests, we have injured the entire American public by raising the cost of living, that we have reduced employment for American workers in widely different occupations and we have planted the seeds of ECONOMIC WAR between nations.

Several years ago the American auto industry demanded a heavy tariff on European cars,—especially the Fiat, and Hispanno-Suiza that were made in Italy. It was not that these European cars were inferior merchandise, they were among the finest in the world, but our American car industry needed protection. What was the result? The Italian government promptly retaliated with an equally heavy tariff on our motor cars, and this hurt us because while we had been importing but a few hundred of their cars we had been exporting thousands of our cars. When this happened our motor industry cried out that they had been badly treated, but they maintained our tariff against the Italian cars so the Italians held their tariff against our cars. Eventually the motor industry found that to escape the tariff it would be necessary to go to those foreign countries and open factories manufacturing the machines over there, and selling them to the foreigners. This is precisely what they did, but trade had ceased, and while it might be a General Motors or a Ford name they were not American cars, built by American labor

and satisfying in trade American needs.

The Isotta-Franchini car had four wheel brakes and a straight eight engine in 1914 and the Delage had four wheel hydraulic brakes but a short time later, yet our tariff kept American motorists from using these great advantages and safety factors, and accordingly enabled our motor industry to lag ten to fifteen years behind in automobile design.

Streamlined cars, more advanced than anything we in this country have seen, were standard design in Europe more than twenty years ago, but our tariff barriers have done their share to retard the advancement of ideas and the progression of machinery that would in very truth save us in the cost of living and add to our refinement of life.

And by this stifling ideas and designs, whether in the cut of a ladies dress or the balance of a Diesel engine, our domestic industries, by eliminating this one more competitor, have been able to raise price on the public and crush those within our nation who would compete.

In the human organism we find that the blood carries the food to the tissues and in return the tissues exercise their power that the organism may survive.

Obstructions of ligatures cause damage, and as in the human organism so in human society, that which conflicts with trade, with exchange, with the rendering of service conflicts with the wellbeing of all men.

If work in itself is desirable and the goal of human thought then we never need have division of labor and trade, but if work is a means to an end, a method by which what is desired may be secured with less effort, then tariffs, or social ligatures, call them what you will, are injuries, and are injustices to the body politic and must be discarded before they destroy the nation.