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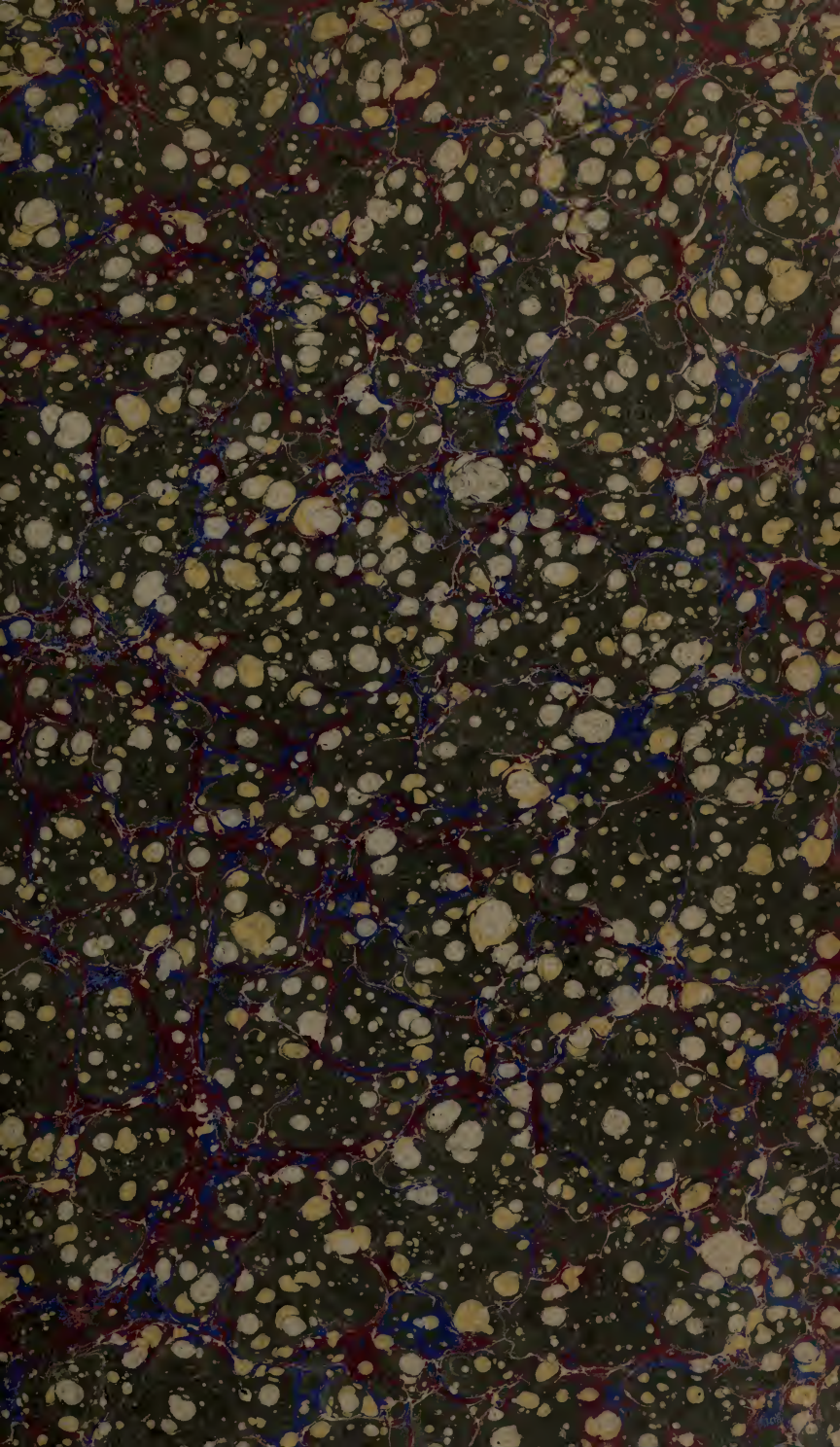
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SPEECH

OF

HON. LEVI MAISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

THURSDAY, MAY 17, 1888.

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WASHINGTON.

1888.





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OF  
HON. LEVI MAISH,  
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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
*Thursday, May 17, 1888.*

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The House being in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the bill (H. R. 9051) to reduce taxation and simplify the laws in relation to the collection of the revenue—

Mr. MAISH said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: One point at least in this controversy has not been disputed. All are agreed that the country is profoundly stirred on the question of the proposed tariff reduction.

Never in the history of this country, excepting perhaps the slavery question, has a civil policy aroused such intense interest.

It is a question that is confined to no locality, but everywhere the people are to-day wholly absorbed in the contemplation of this great problem. Why is it that so profound an interest is taken in this question? Are the minds of a great people aroused to such a degree by merely trifling and transitory causes?

Deep-seated and substantial abuses alone could produce the state of feeling that now exists in the country.

The conviction among a large majority of the Ameri-

can people that our present system of Federal taxation is fraught with injustice, inequalities, and cruel wrongs is the foundation for the situation now witnessed in the Republic. This conviction commenced more than a score of years ago, and year by year has been steadily growing and extending. It will not stop until the question is settled.

To satisfy the public demand for a correction of the alleged evils of taxation convention after convention of both parties, national and State, has made the most explicit and emphatic declarations that our tax system should be modified and reduced to the requirements of the Government.

At a time like this it is the duty of every Representative to take his stand. This is my apology for participating in the discussion that has already been so protracted.

When the Representatives of the Fiftieth Congress assembled here in December last they were not ignorant of the great concern of the American people upon this question, and when the President sent his message to Congress he did not overestimate the importance of the subject when he devoted it exclusively to a discussion of the tariff and urging upon us the necessity of immediate action.

The Constitution wisely charges upon the President the duty of giving to Congress from time to time information of the state of the Union, and to recommend to its consideration such measures as he shall deem necessary and expedient. It was in pursuance of this constitutional obligation that the President called our attention to the anomalous condition of the Treasury, and recommended the measures suggested in his message.

Repeated attention had been called to this subject, and as repeatedly did the Congress adjourn without remedying a great public evil.

Owing to conflicting interests in large part, combined with a lamentable apathy to the interests of the country, the legislative branch of the Government has hitherto utterly failed to perform its duty.

The President, recognizing the imminent danger of the situation and the almost certain crisis that a continuation of the evil would invite, in a most pointed and vigorous manner again directed the attention of Congress to



the subject and recommended a policy of reduction which in my judgment is most wise and patriotic.

The country has heard the alarm which the President has sounded, and the people's Representatives can no longer dodge the responsibility which he has so emphatically thrust upon them. There is no room for misapprehending the situation.

The evil that confronts us is an enormous surplus in the Treasury. Few have been bold enough to deny that this is an evil that demands a prompt and efficient remedy. Besides withholding from circulation a vast sum of money sorely needed by the people to transact their business, it invites a lavish expenditure of money, it stimulates schemes without number for its dissipation, and it is the parent cause of all kinds of jobbery and corruption. This surplus is the result of unwise legislation, for which the Republican party is responsible. After discharging a large part of the public debt, for which the present tariff laws afforded abundant means, and funding the remainder so that it could not be paid until after the expiration of many years, they allowed the revenue laws to stand unchanged, so that a rapid accumulation of a surplus in the Treasury was inevitable.

The only alternative thus far left to the administration to release to the people a portion of these accumulated taxes was to go into the open market and purchase undue bonds at such prices as their holders choose to demand, the Government having to pay as much as 26 per cent. on these transactions. Perhaps this was a part of the statesmanship of the Republican party, which seemed in its past history to be peculiarly friendly to holders of the country's bonds.

Lacking the wisdom themselves to form a wise fiscal policy, the Republicans have, up to this time, been mainly employed in obstructing every effort that has been made by the Democratic party to correct the blundering statesmanship of the Republican party.

The administration is entitled to great credit for making the effort to check this surplus.

Another course which would have been more in conformity with the practice of the Republican party, would have been to continue the laws and dissipate this sum by extravagant and useless appropriations under the "general welfare clause" of the Constitution—which,

like charity has covered such a multitude of political sins.

The surplus, we are informed, has already reached the enormous sum of \$140,000,000, and this will continue to grow at the rate of \$60,000,000 annually if the influx is not checked by legislation.

The President very clearly indicated how this reduction should be consummated. His views upon this subject were clearly presented in his message, and scarcely less clearly were they presented by him in a speech delivered at Newark, N. J., before his election.

The country therefore understood his views upon this subject when he assumed the duties of his office, and they knew that he would at all events do what he could to redeem his own pledges and the pledges of his party.

The gist of his plan of reduction is set forth in his message, as follows:

The taxation of luxuries presents no feature of hardship, but the necessities of life, used and consumed by all the people, the duty upon which adds to the cost of living in every home, should be greatly cheapened.

This is a statement so clear, so plain, and so self-evident that it leaves no room for cavil or misconception. It is replete with wise statesmanship and the noblest humanity. It is a policy upon which this Congress should have united irrespective of party. If carried out in accordance with his recommendations it would endanger no vested interest. It would jeopardize no industry. It does not threaten the manufacturing interests of the country, but, on the other hand, points out a sure, direct, and simple remedy for an existing danger, and at the same time promises a blessing to the household of every laboring man in the country.

In full accord with the views of the President, the Committee on Ways and Means of this House reported a measure which is so moderate, so reasonable, and so just in all its provisions that it can readily be accepted by all the friends of true tariff reform.

This measure has in reality been but little discussed by the Republican members of this House. They have employed their time in endeavoring to show that the policy of the Democratic party is that of free trade, and having set up this man of straw, they proceeded, with

wonderful unanimity, to knock him down again by discussing the advantages of protection.

It can be easily shown that this bill affords as ample protection to our manufacturing industries as any law that has been distinctly enacted for the purpose in the history of the country.

In the multiplicity of protection ideas that have been advanced on the other side, one idea more conspicuous than the rest seemed to pervade the whole discussion, and that was that the tariff should be reformed by them in the interest of protection. This, I submit, does not promise a speedy relief to the country, for the people will not soon again, in my judgment, intrust them with power. They had the opportunity for many years to redeem the pledges they had made to the people, but they either lacked the disposition or the wisdom to do it.

It seems to me that a party that claims the privilege from the American people to reform the revenue laws of the country should have, at a crisis like this, presented to Congress some tangible plan of what they would do if they had the power.

For a month they have been discussing the questions of protection and free trade, and the country knows no more about the intentions of the Republican party to-day than it did in the last Presidential campaign.

It is evident that they have been unable to reconcile the greedy interests which they represent.

If now they are unable to formulate a plan of tariff reduction, their ability to do so when clothed with power would be infinitely more perplexing. In plain terms, they have demonstrated to the country their utter inability to grapple with the subject. The country must understand by this time that if it depended upon the action of the Republican party the tariff laws would remain as they now are, yielding a constantly increasing surplus, which would be disposed of by wasteful and excessive appropriations; and if this method would prove ineffectual, that then it would be distributed among the States as proposed by the last Presidential candidate of the party. The course of the party in this House fully warrants this conclusion, but we are not driven to circumstantial evidence alone. Some members of the party have had the candor to avow the policy I have suggested. Mr. Andrew Carnegie, in an article in the March number

of the North American Review, in speaking of the surplus, used the following language:

Never was there a situation in which the Earl of Aberdeen's advice is more appropriate than now. In regard to taxation, after his cabinet had discussed the various means of solving a supposed problem, which, like the surplus, had only an imaginary existence, he asked "Why could we not let it alone?" and that proved the true solution of the difficulty. It is so now with us. Why can not we let it alone?

The surplus, he declares, has only an "imaginary existence," and we are asked why this myth can not be let alone. He is one of the principal beneficiaries of the present tariff, and also a prominent and influential Republican. He doubtless reflects the views of his class, and they would dictate the policy of their party in the future as they have done in the past.

The effort of the Republicans to show that they are *par excellence* the friends of the laboring classes will always remain one of the memorable features of this debate. In their desperate endeavor to maintain monopoly, in all the insolence of its power, they have the temerity to pose before the country as the champions of labor. The position is an impossible one. James Parton, in a recent article in the Forum, correctly stated the position of the two parties. He says:

In all legitimate human strife the real antagonists are interest and principle, or, in truer words, the supposed interest of a part and the real interest of the whole.

The Republican party has honestly and boldly taken in charge the supposed interest of a class, leaving to its antagonist the conquering forces of principle, which is the interest of all.

But actions speak louder than words. Let us examine the conduct of the Republican party towards the workmen of this country.

In 1864 the Republican party enacted the following law:

That all contracts that shall be made by emigrants to the United States in foreign countries in conformity with the regulations that may be established by the commissioners of emigration, whereby emigrants shall pledge the wages of their labor for a term not exceeding twelve months to repay the expenses of their emigration, shall be held to be valid in law, and may be enforced in the courts of the United States or of the several States and Territories, and such advances, if so stipulated in the contract and the contract be recorded in the recorder's office in the county where the emigrant shall settle shall operate as a lien upon any land thereafter acquired

by the emigrant, whether under the homestead law where the title is consummated, or on property otherwise acquired, until liquidated by the emigrant; but nothing herein contained shall be deemed to authorize any contract contravening the Constitution of the United States, or creating in any way the relation of slavery or servitude.

This remarkable statute authorized the importation of foreign pauper labor under a contract providing that the wages of the emigrant shall belong to the party with whom he made the contract for a period of twelve months, and the strong arm of the courts of the United States could be invoked to enforce its stipulations. It authorized a lien to be put upon any land that the emigrant might acquire, and having thus put the badge of servitude upon him, we are coolly asked to hold that nothing in this contract shall be taken or deemed as creating "in any way the relation of slavery or servitude." The concluding paragraph of this statute betrays the guilt of its framers. What relation does the contract create if it does not create that of slavery and servitude? The only difference between the slavery thus sanctioned by the Republican party and that which was overthrown by the late war is that this was limited to a period of twelve months and the yoke was put upon white men.

This consuming solicitude of the Republican party for the workingman found its fruit in my own State in the enactment of laws hardly less odious than the one just cited. On February 27, 1865, was enacted the following law, which, on April 11, 1866, was followed by the annexed supplement:

1. Any corporation owning or using a railroad in this State may apply to the governor to commission such persons as the said corporation may designate to act as policemen for said corporation.

2. The governor upon such application may appoint such persons or as many of them as he may deem proper to be such policemen, and shall issue to such person or persons so appointed a commission to act as such policemen.

3. The provisions of the act of February 27, 1865, entitled "An act empowering railroad corporations to employ police force, be, and the same are hereby extended to embrace all corporations, firms, or individuals, leasing or being in possession of any colliery, furnace, or rolling mill within the Commonwealth.

It is superfluous to comment upon these statutes. Their object is self-evident. The laborers of my State have not merited this tyrannical legislation. The effects of these statutes is to place into the hands of private individuals

the highest power of the Commonwealth, to be exercised at their will and pleasure. Was ever absolute power placed in the hands of one man that he did not use it to oppress his fellow-man? Pennsylvania does not afford an exception. Can any one doubt that their purpose was to give to employers the power to subjugate their employés?

In conformity with the professed anxiety for the American laborer, the Republicans have affected to be greatly exercised over the effect that the pending bill would have upon his condition, contending that it would bring him upon an equality with the pauper labor of Europe. This contention is based upon the idea that tariff raises wages, and that consequently a reduction of the tariff would lower his wages. In the first place, this proposition is wholly untenable, as has been repeatedly shown in this debate. In this country many of the industries that enjoy the highest protection pay the lowest wages, and many that are not protected at all pay higher wages than those that are.

But if the position of the Republicans were true it would show the hollowness of Republican professions.

The total number of people engaged in agricultural pursuits in the United States over the age of ten years in 1880 was 7,670,493, whilst the number over the same age at the same time engaged in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining pursuits was 3,837,112. The value of the agricultural products exported for that year was \$685,867,737, which was 83.24 per cent. of the total domestic exports.

In 1887 there was a slight decrease, the value being \$523,073,774, as against \$136,735,105 manufacturing products exported, the agricultural products being 74.41 per cent. of the entire domestic exports for 1887. This enormous surplus of the productions of our farmers was sold at the prices paid in the European market, where it was brought in competition with like productions of Austria, Hungary, Russia, and the degraded races of Egypt and India. If, therefore, the position of the Republican party is correct, then by far the largest and best portion of our workmen have been pauperized by competition with the pauper labor of the Old World.

This, however, has not pauperized the farmer, but, as I will presently show, it has been the inimical policy of the

Republican party that has greatly crippled him, and, if persisted in, it will eventually place him upon the degraded level of the down-trodden laborer of the Old World.

Agriculture is the first and best pursuit of man; all other industries depend upon it and its prosperity. The farmers are pre-eminently the class of our citizens who should at all times have had our first and highest considerations. The normal condition of our country is that of agriculture.

This teeming globe presents no other country so highly favored by all the natural advantages of climate, soil, and navigable rivers, supplemented by unsurpassed artificial improvements.

Our farmers are mainly American citizens. Their pursuits are ennobling, and their homes afford the highest development of the domestic virtues. Here may be found the true nursery of religion and patriotism. The farmer is the bulwark of our country, and when he falls it will be found, like Samson and the temple, that the Republic will be lying in ruins around him.

Now, let us examine what the effect of protection has been upon this meritorious class of our citizens. The statistics are calculated to startle even the most ardent protectionist, for even he is not so short-sighted as deliberately to compass the ruin of his best and almost only customer.

The following table shows the quantity and value of wheat exported from this country from 1879 to December 6, 1887:

Years.	Bushels.	Values.
1879-'80.....	153,252,795	\$190,546,305
1880-'81.....	150,565,477	167,698,485
1881-'82.....	95,271,802	112,929,718
1882-'83.....	106,385,828	119,879,341
1883-'84.....	70,349,012	75,026,678
1884-'85.....	84,653,714	72,933,097
1885-'86.....	57,759,209	50,262,715
1887 (to December 6).....	43,604,883	36,775,228

These official figures show that from 1879 to December 6, 1887, there was a falling off in the exportations of wheat of 95,433,586 bushels, representing a value of \$140,283,906.

I claim that this was the direct result of our policy of

non-intercourse. We can not hope to sell if we do not buy. Our foreign customers will gradually grow fewer as our purchases from them grow less. But what will our poor farmers do with their redundant crops? As has already been shown, they exceed by many millions of bushels the demand for home consumption. There can be but one result, and that, as the figures just quoted incontrovertibly show, is rapidly being realized. Agriculture is slowly but surely retrograding. It will ultimately be limited to the home demand for the farmer's products, and then he will be reduced to the condition that will make him the sport of the monopolist. How descriptive, then, would be these lines:

Here landless laborers, hopeless toil, to strive,  
To taste no portion of the sweets they hive.

If further proof of the destructive influence of our tariff policy were needed, the tables I shall presently present will, I am sure, stagger the most obdurate protectionist.

Our farmers once had the control of the wheat market of the world. There was a ready demand for all the products we could produce; but when we entered upon the policy of attempting to sell without purchasing in return, the governments of the Old World were forced to open up new grain fields to supply their demands. England penetrated her India possessions with thousands of miles of railroads and laid under tribute the lands and labor of that distant country, to take the place of our productions. Now how has this enterprise flourished? The following table shows that as our exportations decreased those of British India steadily increased:

Years.	Bushels.	Values.
1879-'80.....	4, 109, 495	\$5, 396, 491
1880-'81.....	13, 896, 168	15, 592, 105
1881-'82.....	37, 078, 571	41, 871, 765
1882-'83.....	26, 402, 893	29, 534, 467
1883-'84.....	39, 118, 791	43, 202, 651
1884-'85.....	29, 550, 741	30, 703, 430
1885-'86.....	39, 312, 969	38, 943, 436

Here we have an exhibit that illustrates the supreme folly of our policy of isolation. This rival which we have ourselves set up we can never remove. The best that can be done now is to give our farmer a fair chance, and



not hold him back whilst his competitor is calmly pre-occupying the field, throwing up the trenches, and making himself impregnable.

How has this policy affected the agricultural industries of my own State? It can be stated in a few words and in a manner that can not be misunderstood.

In 1870 her farm lands were valued at \$1,043,481,582; in 1880 they were valued at \$975,689,410. Thus in ten years the farmers of my State have lost \$67,792,172 in the decline of their property.

In 1870 there were produced in my State 19,462,405 bushels of wheat; in 1887 there were produced only 11,165,850 bushels, showing a falling off in seventeen years of 8,007,117. Doubtless the next census will show a continuous decline in the value of real estate and the production of wheat, so that the loss in these two items of the Pennsylvania farmers may fairly be estimated at \$100,000,000 in seventeen years.

In 1880 there were engaged in Pennsylvania in agricultural pursuits 301,112 people over the age of ten years, and in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining pursuits 528,277, whilst the amount of capital invested in manufactures in the same year was \$474,499,993, as against \$975,689,410 invested in farm lands. No account is taken of cattle, horses, or agricultural implements, as there is not of the value of the materials of the manufacturers. Now, even in my State, so highly favored by protection, it is shown that there is a class of our people that have suffered almost calamitous injuries by the invidious system of tariff taxation, and by reason of its enormous vested interests it is entitled to fair play, which as one of its representatives I here demand.

The Republican party, the more effectually, it would seem, to destroy agricultural ascendancy and promote the power of monopoly in this country, early entered upon the policy of giving away our public domain. Monopoly could not long flourish in the midst of a vast and prosperous agricultural country such as ours was destined to be.

After enabling the great railway corporations to draw from the Treasury about \$180,000,000 in solid cash, that party bestowed on them 296,000,000 acres of land, exceeding in area the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut,

New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, and Indiana, which constitutes a little more than one-tenth of the entire area of the whole United States, exclusive of Alaska. It has given away to four of these favored corporations more territory than is embraced in all of the British islands. The Northern Pacific, that Colossus of Rhodes striding the continent, alone has received more land than is contained in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

By this means the Republican party has fastened upon the people the most arrogant monopolies of the country, who, by their exorbitant demands upon the farmers, absorb nearly all the profits our protective system has left them. It has deprived millions of our people of the opportunity to secure homes upon the fertile lands of the far West. The public domain thus robbed from the people, whose birthright it was, has largely fallen into the hands of alien owners, and to-day vast areas are held in fee-simple among the aristocracy of England. By means of the wealth thus accumulated by the gratuity of the Government these gigantic monopolies are in large part enabled to dominate the States through which they run by securing the election of their favorites to office, and thus they have usurped the legitimate powers of government.

A favorite argument of the Republican party in support of the policy of protection is that under the present tariff system the country has enjoyed an amazing prosperity. To assert it, however, is not to prove it. It can not be denied that our country has rapidly grown in wealth. She has outstripped that of any other country; but how can it be shown that we would not have been more prosperous if the protective policy had not prevailed? As we have not lived under a modified system of our tariff laws, such as is proposed by this measure, that question can never be answered.

The country has been prosperous in spite of unwise legislation, but it would have been more prosperous had our restrictive laws allowed an equal expansion of the agricultural resources of the country.

Had the farmers of the country had an equal chance they would have drawn enormous wealth from other countries of the world, and in which even the other industries of our country would have largely participated. I

stand here not to speak against the manufacturing industries of my State. They are amply provided for in this bill. It is my belief that they will be immensely benefited by its passage, and at the same time the agricultural industries will be lifted out of the "slough of despond" into which they have been plunged by unwise legislation and started upon a career of great prosperity. Under the existing condition of affairs a policy of free trade is simply impossible. The Democratic party does not intend to strike down the props which have for so many years sustained the manufacturing industries of the country. In my judgment they would have consulted their best interests, looking not exclusively to present benefits but also to the advantages of future permanent policy, had they given this measure their support.

Nature has recently given to them an advantage far outstripping the fallacious dependence of protection. The natural gas which flows spontaneously to their furnaces and furnishes them the best and cheapest fuel in the world makes them masters of the situation. Nature has here furnished them a protection secure against foreign competition and foreign pauper labor.

A careful examination of the Mills bill shows that it is extremely moderate, and drawn not only in the interest of the consumers but very materially in the interest of the manufacturers.

The tariff commission appointed in 1882 to revise the tariff was undoubtedly right when it said that—

Excessive duties are positively injurious to the interests which they are supposed to benefit. They encourage the investment of capital in manufacturing enterprises by rash and unskilled speculators, to be followed by disaster to the adventurers and their employés, and a plethora of commodities, which deranges the operation of skilled and prudent enterprise.

The members of this commission were all protectionists but one, and their opinion was not, therefore, biased against protection. Experience, however, has abundantly sustained the views quoted from their report.

I maintain, therefore, that the modification of the tariff laws proposed in the pending bill will redound to the great benefit of the manufacturing industries of the country as well as those of all others, besides remedying the evil for which purpose it was presented.

The Democratic party occupying the power in two of the co-ordinate branches of the Government, will not fail in its duty. The Executive has already done his in no uncertain way.

As the Sun,  
Ere it is risen, sometimes paints its image  
In the atmosphere; so often do the spirits  
Of great events stride on before the events,  
And in to-day already walks to-morrow.





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