

**FALLACIES OF PROTECTION:  
BEING THE  
SOPHISMES ECONOMIQUES  
OF FREDERIC BASTIAT**

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Fallacies of Protection: Being the Sophismes Economiques of Frederic Bastiat by Frederic Bastiat & Patrick James Stirling

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**FREDERIC BASTIAT & PATRICK JAMES STIRLING**

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# Fallacies of Protection

BEING THE

*SOPHISMES ECONOMIQUES*

OF

FREDERIC BASTIAT

TRANSLATED FROM THE FIFTH EDITION OF THE FRENCH

BY

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WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

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MCMIX

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I AM very glad that the Cobden Club is reissuing, in a popular shape, an English translation of Bastiat's *Sophismes Economiques*. The cardinal doctrines of Free Trade have never been more cogently presented or more brilliantly illustrated. The Sophisms, which Bastiat so ruthlessly exposed, will always have a certain vogue so long as there are people who think confusedly. It is the fashion in some quarters now-a-days—a very convenient fashion—to treat the economics of the Cobdenite era as obsolete. There is no writer or thinker of that time whose reasoning and conclusions are less dependent upon local and transient conditions than are those of Bastiat. The *Economic Sophisms* are no more out of date than the *Wealth of Nations*.

H. H. ASQUITH.

May, 1909.

THE opening paragraphs of Chapter XII. and the concluding chapter of the first series of the *Sophisms*, and Chapters I., II., XI., and XII. of the second series, not being directly relevant to the subject of Protection, have not been included in this reprint of Dr. Stirling's translation of the *Sophismes Economiques*.

A few slight alterations have been made; and the notes in square brackets have been added. The remaining notes, except where otherwise stated, are those of the author.

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## FALLACIES OF PROTECTION

(*Sophismes Economiques*)

### FIRST SERIES<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

My design in this little volume is to refute some of the arguments which are urged against the Freedom of Trade.

I do not propose to engage in a contest with the protectionists; but rather to instil a principle into the minds of those who hesitate because they sincerely doubt.

I am not one of those who say that Protection is founded on men's interests. I am of opinion rather that it is founded on errors, or, if you will, upon *incomplete truths*. Too many people fear liberty, to permit us to conclude that their apprehensions are not sincerely felt.

It is perhaps aiming too high, but my wish is, I confess, that this little work should become, as it were, the *Manual* of those whose business it is to pronounce between the two principles. Where men have not been long accustomed and familiarised to the doctrine of liberty, the fallacies of protection, in one shape or another, are constantly coming back upon them. In order to disabuse them of such errors when they recur, a long process of analysis becomes necessary; and everyone has not the time required for such a process—legislators less than others. This is my reason for endeavouring to present the analysis and its results cut and dry.

<sup>1</sup> The first series of the *Sophismes Economiques* appeared in the end of 1845; the second series in 1848.—FRENCH EDITOR.

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But it may be asked: Are the benefits of liberty so hidden as to be discovered only by Economists by profession?

We must confess that our adversaries have a marked advantage over us in the discussion. In very few words they can announce a half-truth; and in order to demonstrate that it is *incomplete*, we are obliged to have recourse to long and dry dissertations.

This arises from the nature of things. Protection concentrates on one point the good which it produces, while the evils which it inflicts are spread over the masses. The one is visible to the naked eye; the other only to the eye of the mind.<sup>1</sup> In the case of liberty, it is just the reverse.

In the treatment of almost all economic questions we find it to be so.

You say: Here is a machine which has turned thirty workmen into the street.

Or: Here is a spendthrift who encourages every branch of industry.

Or: The conquest of Algeria has doubled the trade of Marseilles.

Or: The budget secures subsistence for a hundred thousand families.

You are understood at once and by all. Your propositions are in themselves clear, simple, and true. What are your deductions from them?

Machinery is an evil.

Luxury, conquests, and heavy taxation are productive of good.

And your theory has all the more success that you are in a situation to support it by a reference to undoubted facts.

On our side, we must decline to confine our attention

<sup>1</sup> See also Bastiat's *What is seen and what is not seen*, written in 1850. Collected Works, vol. v., p. 336, French edition. [A translation has been published by the Cobden Club.]