

**THE TARIFF; A REVIEW OF
THE TARIFF LEGISLATION
OF THE UNITED STATES
FROM 1812 TO 1896**

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The tariff; a review of the tariff legislation of the United States from 1812 to 1896 by William McKinley

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WILLIAM MCKINLEY

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The Tariff

A Review of the Tariff Legislation of the
United States from 1812 to 1896

By
William McKinley



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

The essay presented in this volume was written by the late William McKinley in the spring of 1896, a few weeks before his nomination for the first term of his presidency. It was prepared for use in connection with a reprint that was then in course of publication of the Writings of Henry Clay. The adherents of the protective policy have, as a rule, referred to Henry Clay as the founder of the protective system in the United States, and it is the case that the Tariff of 1824, which was framed under Clay's personal direction, was the beginning of the series of tariffs which had for their purpose consideration of protection of American producers as well as to some extent the requirements of the national treasury.

The protective system as it exists to-day, having been accepted, during the greater number of years since the war, by a majority of the voters of the country as the national policy best suited in their judgment for the nation's industrial requirements, may very properly be connected with the name of William McKinley.

The bill bearing McKinley's name, which was enacted in 1890, is the basis of the tariff that is in force in 1904. It was the case that Mr. McKinley, as chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means in the House, not only gave to the act his name, but gave to the preparation of the schedules months of arduous toil. He was himself a thorough and conscientious believer in the principles of

protection and in the contention that the needs of our country could best be furthered, and could in fact only be properly furthered, by a system of high tariff taxation.

The Dingley Tariff Act, which is the law now in force, was enacted under Mr. McKinley's presidency and represented the policy of his administration and the personal beliefs of its head. The Dingley Tariff Bill stands for the high-tide of the protective system.

If there be value in the theories of the protectionists, and if it be possible to add to the wealth of the country by creating under the authority of the government obstacles to foreign commerce and barriers to the introduction of foreign productions, the Dingley Tariff Act ought to insure for the citizens of the United States, an enduring measure of prosperity.

This was the full belief of President McKinley, although it is the case that, during both his presidential terms, and particularly during the last year of his life, he expressed himself as strongly in favor of bringing about, by means of reciprocity treaties, some modification in the protective system and a lowering of the barriers which stood in the way of trade with certain countries, provided that these countries would extend reciprocal concessions on the productions of the United States.

The essay presents a comprehensive survey of the history of protection in the United States and of the grounds on which successive generations of American statesmen have been prepared to confirm and to extend the system. It constitutes, therefore, a valuable addition to the economic history of the country, and also to our political history, which has been so largely based upon, and interwoven with, economic conditions.

This essay, taken in connection with the speech on reciprocity treaties which was the last utterance of President McKinley, constitutes also a valuable expression of his methods of thought and of his understanding of the purposes and the results of the protection creed of the Republican Party.

The volume should, therefore, be found of special interest during the present year, when the Republican Party is again presenting for the approval of American voters a platform which provides for the maintenance of the protective measures of McKinley and Dingley. It is on this ground that the publishers have thought it in order to make separate publication of the essay in convenient form for ready reference and for general distribution.

NEW YORK, April 10, 1904.



CHAPTER I.

THE TARIFF IN THE DAYS OF HENRY CLAY AND SINCE

HENRY CLAY was conspicuously and always a protectionist. As the acquaintance or friend of many of the founders of the Government, and of their immediate successors in office, he learned from them his early lessons in political economy and statesmanship, and profited by their illustrious example. Born in Virginia in 1777, he had revered Washington with the ardor of youth; had become the clerk and protégé of the learned and venerable Chancellor Wythe; and was inspired to his first oratorical efforts by the splendid eloquence of Patrick Henry. Agreeing with the doctrines of Adams and Hamilton, he yet espoused the cause of Jefferson and entered Congress in 1806, during his second term as President. Intimately associated with that great statesman, he participated with Madison, Monroe, and the younger Adams in the administration of the Government, and for forty years earnestly advocated the great principles for which they in common contended.

As Speaker of the House of Representatives he supported the several protective tariff laws—five in number—enacted from July 1, 1812, to February 5, 1816, which enabled the Government to successfully defray the extraordinary expenses of our second war with England. These laws increased the entire list of duties one hundred per cent.; doubled the rates, and placed a