

**ECONOMIC  
SOPHISMS.  
[NEW YORK]**

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Economic Sophisms. [New York] by Frederic Bastiat

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**FREDERIC BASTIAT**

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# ECONOMIC SOPHISMS

by

Frederic Bastiat

*Translated from the French and Edited by*  
**ARTHUR GODDARD**



*Antonio M. Saravia*  
Guatemala, 1985

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*This volume is dedicated to the memory of*

**LOREN BARKER MILLER**

in whose endeavors in behalf of human freedom while he was directing governmental research in Newark, Kansas City, and Detroit, Frédéric Bastiat was an inspiration and a challenge, both in the finding of better answers to immediate problems and in the influencing of many keen young minds to a new dedication to integrity and leadership in public affairs.

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## Preface to the English-Language Edition

Ever since the advent of representative government placed the ultimate power to direct the administration of public affairs in the hands of the people, the primary instrument by which the few have managed to plunder the many has been the sophistry that persuades the victims that they are being robbed for their own benefit. The public has been despoiled of a great part of its wealth and has been induced to give up more and more of its freedom of choice because it is unable to detect the error in the delusive sophisms by which protectionist demagogues, national socialists, and proponents of government planning exploit its gullibility and its ignorance of economics.

It was with the aim of exposing the most influential and widespread of these economic fallacies that Bastiat began, in 1844, to contribute to the *Journal des économistes* the brilliant succession of essays that comprise the present volume. The first series appeared in book form in 1845; and the second series, three years later. Increasingly in the years that have elapsed since their first publication, these essays have come to be recognized as among the most cogent and persuasive refutations of the major fallacies of protectionism—fallacies that are still with us today and that will continue to crop up as long as the public remains uninstructed: “The introduction of machinery means fewer jobs”; “Protective tariffs keep domestic wages high”; “We need laws to equalize the conditions of production”; “Imports must be restricted to restore the balance of trade”; “High prices mean a high standard of liv-

ing"; "There are no economic laws or absolute principles"; "We need colonies to provide markets for the products of our industry"; "Free trade places us at the mercy of our enemies in case of war"; etc., etc. The great lesson which all these essays teach, in one form or another, is the necessity of always looking at economic questions from the point of view of the consumer, rather than that of the producer.

What gives this work its unique quality and places it among the classics of economic literature is not only the logical rigor with which each fallacy is demolished, but the highly original and striking way in which the author uses wit, irony, satire, dialogue, and apologue to reduce erroneous ideas to patent absurdity, as, for example, in his famous and often separately translated petition of the candlemakers for protection against the competition of the sun.

In preparing the present translation, I have had the opportunity of consulting, and have occasionally availed myself of the wording, of an earlier, unpublished version, as well as of some explanatory notes, produced by a different translator, to whom I should have been glad to give here the credit due him had he not stipulated that his name not be mentioned. The present version is based on a careful comparison with the French texts—*Œuvres complètes*, ed. by P. Paillotet (Paris: Guillaumin et Cie., 1854-64), vols. IV and V, and *Mélanges d'économie politique* (Brussels: Meline, Cans, et Cie., 1851), I, 1-232. I have sought to make the wording and style of this translation conform, so far as possible, to the terminology used in the two other works of Bastiat, *Selected Essays on Political Economy* and *Economic Harmonies*, also newly translated for this series, and to the usage customary in books on economics written in the English language. At the same time, every effort has been made to assist the reader to understand the topical and other allusions of the French text by the addition of translator's notes, wherever it has been at all possible to provide them. So labeled, these have been enclosed in brackets and placed, for convenience, at the bottom of the pages where the items to which they make reference appear. The notes of the French editor, likewise en-

closed in brackets, appear at the back of the book, where they are labeled merely "Editor," together with Bastiat's own notes, which stand without brackets or label. Where the French editor has indicated a cross reference to an essay included in the volume of selected essays being published in this series, or to a chapter or passage in *Economic Harmonies*, the original reference to the French edition has been replaced by one directing the reader to the English translation.

ARTHUR GODDARD