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PROTECTION, POLITICS, AND PENNSYLVANIA

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This address comes to you by popular request. I hasten to add, however, that that request was not motivated by any special hope of hearing a brilliant disquisition on some transcendent moment in history, but arose only from an insistence on the tradition that a retiring president “give” a paper. I attempted to resist on the basis that a Civil War program should be about the Civil War. But, since I must follow precedence, I am glad that my three years ended in this pleasant town with these pleasant people on this quiet battlefield of long ago.

Here in Gettysburg I feel more deeply the Civil War than in any other place in the nation. It seems hardly possible that on these peaceful fields men and boys of such good hearts and such good souls should have so ruthlessly slaughtered each other, but I bow my very spirit to them at the places where they fell. Not because they fought a war and one won and one lost, but because both fought only for an idea, an ideal. Neither wanted anything from the other—no land, no riches; right or wrong, he fought for what he thought was right. Before I leave Gettysburg I always go out past the stone figures frozen forever at the charge along the ridges, on Little Round Top, at Culp’s Hill, and elsewhere, and on at last to the Peace Monument, preferably after the tourists have gone to sleep, and stand there and hope with all my being that we shall see that light in our hearts forever.

I always remember too that over the earth in familiar places and also in those faraway lands with strange sounding names thousands of Americans—children of those who fought here, fight-

*Given in a slightly shorter form, this paper was the presidential address delivered by Dr. Barnes at the luncheon meeting on October 12, 1963, at the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association at Gettysburg. Dr. Barnes is professor of history at Temple University. He recently edited Naval Surgeon, the diaries of Samuel P. Boyer, kept while serving in the Civil War and in the Asiatic Fleet during the Japanese revolt of 1868-1869, published by the Indiana University Press.
ing there together—rest always in a land they never knew. I have never seen their graves, except those of which the poet wrote: “In Flanders’ fields the poppies blow between the crosses, row on row.” That was a long time ago. The crosses now spread round the world. And I hope that we may say of all of them for always: they fought only for an idea, an ideal; they wanted nothing from those unfamiliar people, no land, no riches; right or wrong, they fought only for what they thought was right.

I am glad that we have not really refought the battle of Gettysburg. I am glad too that it was decided not to carry out that suggestion, rumored jokingly in the planning stage of the celebration, to reenact the burning of Chambersburg. The Civil War Centennial celebration seems to be flagging. There has arisen, I suspect, a little of that feeling that came deep from the heart of Commander S. P. Lee on the blockade fleet in the Sounds of North Carolina in 1863, when he wrote his wife: When will this weary war be over? That is in part why I decided to talk to you about some of the developments that were from the war but not especially a part of it. Those things that, though they may not have been engendered by the quarrel between the North and South, were in large measure shaped by that conflict. And certainly that much-neglected but fascinating period between 1865 and 1900 was profoundly molded by forces that inherited much of their meaning from those four years of fighting.

Those three and a half decades between 1865 and 1900 were marked by astounding accomplishments and also by unbelievably complex complications and contradictions. There were bound to be contradictions in a nation that grew so rapidly as did the United States in these years after the Civil War. The very rate of growth is

1 The complexities, apparent everywhere, were perhaps most obvious in the political field. Among the most evident of the contradictions were the facts that the Negro had lost his slavery but had not gained his freedom; that the Jeffersonians had been driven from political power but in the late eighties and early nineties mounted the greatest socio-economic-agrarian revolution ever seen before the New Deal; that the individualism of the Southern planters that had been put down was soon to come up again as the “rugged” individualism of the industrialists; that a party that had been moral at heart and humanitarian in purpose became transformed into an organization that centered its thoughts on “business is business”; and that a party that had been not only broken to pieces but tarred also with the brush of treason crawled painfully back together and fought for human rights, though its members who had held Negroes in slavery still refused them the rights for which they themselves were willing to fight.
evidence of the fact that they were for the most part only incidental. The war, however tragic, did hurry developments in the nation—economic, social, and human. To me the greatest of all were the longings which the war awoke in the hearts of common Americans—not philosophic as Jefferson's, not political as Jackson's, but a human force that challenged privilege, that brought hopes of being something, that stirred dreams of a "better tomorrow" even for the most humble.²

Few have stopped to note the significance of this force that burgeoned with the Civil War. That is perhaps mostly because of the breath-taking accomplishments of a small group of industrialists and because of the fact that a few of that group gained such bulging fortunes as to be called the "Robber Barons." But the development was profoundly important. Democracy (with a small d) gained respectability; it ceased to be a representation of crudity, it no longer was forwarded by men in leathern shirts, traditionally described by the gentry as "not overly clean." Jefferson's democracy of the mind had been scoffed at by the practical; Jackson's democracy of the vote had been scorned by the better born. But the upheaval of those years between 1861 and 1865 stirred in the hearts of the common people a deep determination that all should share in the wealth of the nation—not necessarily in money but in simple goods, in schools, in the products of inventive minds, and even in dreams. And well it was, for they were not only people with human hopes; they were, in a world that thought only of production, the consumers upon which the continued growth of the machine tomorrow would rest. They would buy its goods.

Ironically enough, one group that should have been deeply concerned with the strivings that stirred in the years after the war found only limited expression of its dreams. The laborers—

² A New York farmer who lived close enough to the years to have gathered their implications expressed it for the agrarian when he wrote recently: "... free men on their own land, with crossroads hamlets... so that the sound of the church bell may float across the fields of a summer morning... there will be lovers walking under the moonlight and children saying their lessons... A land... more fat and fertile with the passing years... where... there will be evolved an economy which will give to farmers more culture and leisure than I have known in my time." See Jared van Wagenen, Jr., Days of My Years: The Autobiography of a York State Farmer (Cooperstown: New York State Historical Association, 1962).
the urban poor—engulfed in industrialism, reminded daily of the fact that their bread and butter came from the pounding wheels that they tended, had few to voice their hopes. The workingmen in some of the great economic activities that had taken on at least more than local importance did in the years between 1877 and 1894 lead violent protests against wage reductions, against long hours, against working conditions—as at Cumberland in Maryland, Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, the McCormick Harvester Works in Chicago, the steel mills in Homestead in western Pennsylvania, and in the “model village” of Pullman, near Chicago. But on the whole their votes were cast on promises of “a full dinner pail.” Never in the years between the Civil War and the turn of the century did the laborer in the basic industrial sections join the political battle for the “better life” that some had dreamed.

When Lee had surrendered at Appomattox few doubted that one of the primary tasks ahead was building a physical nation. We had reached that point. In the Revolution we had decided that the nation would be American, not British; in the administrations of Washington and Jefferson and Jackson in particular we had created a great forum on the nature of the government and had fought out the question bitterly, if not finally; in the romantic years of the 1840’s and 1850’s we had had a social and literary and moral spree; and we answered at Gettysburg and a hundred other battlefields the question of the perpetuity of the government.

An industrial age lay open and inviting before us. The foundations had been built; though widely scattered, there were ample natural resources; there was, temporarily at least, an abundance of money; there was a flood of labor ready to rush in from the farms and over the Atlantic from Europe; and the agrarian opponents of industrialism were helpless in the South and relatively so in the West.

Easy and uncomplicated as the task seemed, however, it was far from easy. There were many perplexing problems. One of them was political direction. Could the builders of the Republican party build factories and railroads and great corporate and financial structures? Could Garrison and Phillips and Sumner and Stevens and their abolitionist friends turn to machines and outpouring goods? Could the Democratic party be rehabilitated? Could a new
party or parties be built? Could clear policies be established to which the members of either party would adhere? Nobody was sure.

There was a Republican party, but it was not certain as to what stand it wanted to take on any of the questions welling up for an answer. It was, in fact, groping with one hand for the future while holding firmly to Reconstruction with the other—even the groping hand clung tightly to a bloody shirt, which it waved most heartily when danger threatened.

There was in reality no Democratic party as it had once been known. There was a Southern group, but it was stamped with a label of treason. There was a Northern group, but it was an alien group to most of the old doctrines—and the name Copperhead had not been wholly forgotten. There was a Western group, but faced with a "New Frontier" it was straggling about, which some of you might say sounds familiar.

It was the controversy that turned around the tariff question that eventually brought unity to the two parties. But even though the policies of each were reasonably stabilized, the personnel remained fluid throughout the period; few political leaders in fact were ever during the time free from the danger of having their own words thrown in their faces. Some explain this instability by saying it was merely a logical and easily discernible division that had come between rural and urban people, the industrial East against the agrarian West and South. Later developments are more easily understood, however, if one admits that the fundamental divisive factor was the attitude of the individual toward the dream of a better tomorrow for the common American that in the years after the Civil War grew into a powerful force. William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan, for instance, were both born in the farm lands of the Middle West—were both Westerners—yet they divided both on the tariff and on the silver issues. Laborers should have been with the West and the South had they taken sides, but they lived in the East and the North.

Strangely enough the first great postwar battle over the tariff was almost solely a Democratic battle, and, stranger still, its real seat was in Pennsylvania. Here in the Keystone State raged the fight that eventually brought a remarkable rehabilitation and re-unity to the Democratic organization that a score of years before
had fallen asunder in then far off Charleston. Strange too was the fact that this interparty battle between Democrats over tariff which gave that party a reasonably common course should also have united the Republicans, given them a stable policy, and made of them staunch defenders of protection.\(^3\)

There had been protection before, but that prevailing in 1865 was almost wholly accidental. As the cost of the Civil War rose—and the expenditures those four years were almost three times the cost of government, including our wars and our land buying, from the inauguration of Washington to the secession of South Carolina—as those costs mounted the Treasury Department finally struck out with excise levies on everything in sight. Manufacturers, willing to produce needed goods but fearful of competition, demanded tariffs to protect them, though the Alabama and other Confederate raiders threatened to drive merchant ships from the sea. Every time the domestic taxes were raised on industrial products the tariff was increased accordingly. And so it was that the protective rates—some of them very high—had really been unplanned products of an emergency; there had, relatively speaking, been no argument, no heated debate, no public forum, and even no political tricks, as in 1828.

Most people expected the war measures and institutions—the army, the navy, the greenbacks, the excise taxes, the tariffs—to disappear quickly when the fighting ceased, and, in fact, the emergency direct taxes were largely repealed; but tariffs remained. Maybe, as some suggest, they were in part forgotten. Actually the tax system, like Topsy, had just growed up, and many things were crying for repeal. Significant in directing the

course of events was the fact that in spite of Presidential and Congressional worrying over the national debt and the cost of government it was soon obvious that either the internal revenue taxes or the tariffs could provide all needed funds. The problem then was a choice between removing internal revenue taxes or reducing the protective tariffs. On the surface it was as simple as that—but there was nothing simple about it.

Businessmen, pleading for the retirement of the greenbacks as a measure of honesty, set up a hue and cry against the reformers who would reduce the tariffs. On the other hand, the farmers and the poor in general, except for the factory laborer, wanted to reduce the tariff levies but keep the paper money that had been issued to meet an emergency but which had brought to the poor some prosperity.

The most pointed criticism of protection was that it gave to the few and took from the many. The basic defense of the system was that it brought prosperity to everybody: the manufacturer, the laborer, the farmer, the nation. I am not concerned with defending or condemning either statement, but as I read the record of the people of these years I confess I cannot avoid the uneasy feeling that never did a few mislead the many for such a long time.

That does not mean that I am necessarily in disagreement with those of you who are protectionists; I am primarily concerned with the question did certain economic ambitions (measured in profits) and certain political hopes (measured in success at the polls) unite to hold back a powerful human force to which the Civil War had given great impetus—and did that in itself in the 1870's, '80's, and '90's engender radical action rather than moderate argument on the part of the protesters concerning tariffs and money and railroads and all the other economic and social ills the people were heir to? And did the nation, in fact, prosper in spite of rather than because of the protection that was practiced these years? And it is protection as it was practiced that I am concerned with. Protection, for instance, that was not needed, that enabled some producers to profit excessively, that closed the ports to incoming goods that the small supply at home might be used advantageously (such as nickel that poured riches into the pockets of a Philadelphian or wool that took from all wearers for the benefit of a few sheep growers in Ohio), and that could probably
function only so long as the nation sent out primarily raw materials such as wheat and cotton.

Protection in a limited measure was good American doctrine. There were in the Democratic party, so far as I know, no free traders—and that label was not only a misnomer but it was used for purely political gains. The protection of infant industries brought no basic objections; the objections were to the fact that no infant ever grew up.

The Democrats even in their most powerful days always promised, illogically enough, that no radical changes would be made. Still the protectionists charged the reformers with wanting to remove all the duties—then, like the woman losing her argument, they wept—bitter were the tears. James G. Blaine in Paris cried over the rural outlook: “Without protection the great cities would shrivel and die and with their demise would go the farmers’ market.” McKinley too joined the mourners: “Breadlines will form in the cities, unshorn flocks will feed upon the hills, prosperity will die.”

When the tears were all cried out somebody, stirred by the surplus in the Treasury, always suggested that the excise taxes on tobacco and whiskey be reduced or removed altogether. Said the Plumed Knight: “Watch, if you please, the number of men at work on the farm, in the coal mine, along the railroad, in the iron foundry, or in any calling, and you will find 95 in 100 chewing while they work.” He was a deft lancer, James G. Blaine, but there was merit in the New York editor’s suggestion that a free “chaw o’ terbacker” might not be as helpful as cheaper clothes.

And so the battle surged back and forth in Congress and over the nation, centered around, as I believe, the rising hopes of human beings, but wrapped completely in politics, whose greatest goal was political victory.

The stump and the press were the fighting instruments of the protectionists—and dollars made them effective. The funds available for any particular crusade were in effect limitless. The American Iron and Steel Association, the National Association of Wool Manufacturers, the American Tin-Plate Association, the National Protective League, and a host of others could marshal a powerful and effective force.

* See Barnes, Carlisle, p. 127.
The tariff reformers, on the other hand, were limited in their resources, even though there were such men as William L. Scott of Erie in their ranks. There were a few organizations—the best known of which was perhaps the National Tariff Reform League—but however low your opinion of their Democratic economic thought, I think most of you will agree that their assets were more intellectual than financial. Moreover, the effective press of the protectionists had tarred them as well as their party with the brush of treason—not only the treason that had been put down by the war but treason still: traitors to the hopes of a prosperous America with smokestacks belching their indexes of pounding machines, with laborers trudging eagerly to work with full dinner pails under their arms, and children skipping happily into classrooms—and John Bull standing afar bitterly thwarted.

It was perhaps fortunate for the Republicans that they did not have to initiate the protectionist battle. The panic of 1873, as panics often do, had swept the party in power from office. Michael C. Kerr of Indiana was elected speaker of the Forty-third Congress by the Democrats in December, 1875. Kerr having died, the industrial wing of the Democratic groups elected Samuel Jackson Randall of Philadelphia to succeed him in December, 1876. Sam Randall had been a Whig, but in 1856 he had turned to a fellow-Pennsylvanian and given his vote to James Buchanan, Democrat. In 1861 he fought for three months with the First Troop of Philadelphia. As congressman-elect and as Captain Randall he commanded a company here at the battle of Gettysburg and was promoted to provost marshal. In December, 1863, he took his seat in the Thirty-eighth Congress and served until his death from cancer an early Sunday morning in April, 1890.

The anti-British theme was played on heavily both in the tariff and in the silver controversies; stinging editorials and biting cartoons appeared regularly. On November 30, 1883, James F. Cunningham of Cunningham and Company, National Detective Agency of Washington, D.C., wrote Samuel J. Randall: "Possibly you are not aware of the fact of Mr. Carlisle being the candidate of the British Legation, and English men calling themselves American citizens most of whom never have, or shall, take out naturalization papers. The intriguers some four months ago concluded to have put forward Mr. Carlisle for Speaker, and in the event of his success to have the naming of the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations and a few others on the same committee, who should play into the hands of the conspirators, in the event matters should be brought up before Congress in relations to Irish affairs." Randall papers, University of Pennsylvania Library.
Even yet there is no fair measurement of Samuel J. Randall. No one doubted his material honesty; even his bitterest enemies admitted that. If there were doubters, his death in limited financial circumstances in the midst of wealth should have convinced them. He had courage and ambition, but he lacked vision; he had ideas, but he lacked flexibility; he had loyalty, but it was mostly to himself. He was a small mercantilist—and remained so all his life. It would be an error, however, to doubt his power, though much of the time it was a negative one. He died very much alone—the little army of Democrats he had led in the House deserted him and the Republicans no longer needed him.

Randall was convinced that the welfare of the nation depended upon protection of every producing unit, regardless of its nature or situation. He firmly believed that the laborers and the farmers of the South and West as well as of the North were with him. He deceived himself; his own papers clearly reveal that fact. Basically his supporters in every section were politicians and small businessmen of one type or another. It is probable that his labor following was not large, even in Pennsylvania; not more than three of the eighteen-member Randall Club of Towanda, for instance, could possibly have been workmen. The mass of Western Democrats supported Randall only until a more sympathetic candidate was politically available. The South supported him because of his defense of the section during Reconstruction. Testimony on that point is extensive and voluble.6

6 See especially the Randall papers during the campaign for the Speakership nomination in 1883. Randall opposed the Civil Rights Bill and the Enforcement Act in January and February, 1875, wrote F. H. Bushu of Raleigh, North Carolina, on November 1, 1883, “and the leader in that magnificent conflict will never lose his hold upon their [the Southerners’] gratitude.” A few weeks later came a letter from four citizens of Fayetteville, Tennessee: “We have not forgotten and I trust never shall the noble efforts made by you in behalf of an oppressed and persecuted people on the floor of the Congress of the United States.” On November 29 B. F. Bond of the Old Dominion wrote the Philadelphian: “The people of Virginia and of the South can never forget the brave and chivalrous stand you took in their defense on the infamous ‘Force Bill,’ and the ‘Civil Rights Bill,’ when we had few friends in the North to fight our battles. We recognize the fact that you stood in the deadly breach at a time when we were threatened with woes unnumbered, and that by your consummate skill in parliamentary tactics you killed the Force Bill and gave the Civil Rights Bill ‘a black eye, from which it never entirely recovered.’” “In the dark days of Reconstruction,” proclaimed an editor (unidentified clipping, Randall papers), “when a pall hung over the Southland, and desolation and ruin appeared to be the inevitable portion of her people, there was one man who breathed
The district from which Randall drew his votes sprawled along the Schuylkill River—a seeming Democratic enclave engulfed in Republican territory. Let us look at some of the other congressmen who went to Washington with Randall during his 14 terms in the House of Representatives. William D. (Pig Iron) Kelley, Republican, preceded Randall by one Congress, and died three months and four days before him—serving almost thirty years. Charles O’Neill, Republican, served in all but one of the fourteen Congresses with Randall and was elected twice more—almost thirty years. Alfred C. Hamer, Republican, served in nine Congresses with Randall and five after his death—a total of twenty-eight years. Henry H. Bingham, Republican, served in six Congresses with Randall and eleven afterward—a then astounding record of thirty-three years and nineteen days.

Leonard Myers, Republican, served in six Congresses during Randall’s years in the House. Three other Republicans served a total of about seven years. In fact, during Randall’s twenty-eight years of service Philadelphia had a total Republican representation of 101 man years and ten months and twenty-six days. The Democrats during that time had a total representation of thirty years, one month and four days. Of those thirty years, one month, and four days, Randall served twenty-seven years and nine days. Between the opening of the Thirty-eighth Congress on December 7, 1863, and the closing of the Fifty-first Congress on March 2, 1891, the city—besides Randall—sent to the House of Representatives three Democrats, who served roughly a total of three years, one month, and four days.7

One can hardly escape the conclusion that Randall was a “kept politician”—even though admitting that he was one of the gifted mistresses of history. His party members for the most part were less careful in their choice of words and not so kind in their the storm and boldly stood up in defense of the crushed and helpless section.”

Randall was confused during the Speakership campaign as to the protection the South wanted. The Southerners wanted protection from the former slaves. Their letters illuminate that point. A moderate one, written in 1887, sums up in mild wording the thinking of many people in the section: “There is one thing with us paramount to all things else,” wrote Waddy Thompson, editor of Tuskegee, Alabama, “that is ‘White Supremacy’. . . . Your great ability and influence at this time will save the party, and save the South from the terrible blight of Negro domination. . . .”

judgments. Their least offensive title was "Ali Baba and His Forty Thieves." But Sam Randall in the beginning years of Democratic rehabilitation after the war led in Congress the largest fragment of the broken party. He set its policies insofar as one can say that either party had established policies, particularly on the tariff. His determination to maintain protection and to remove excise taxes from tobacco, reduce them on whiskey, and even abolish the whole of the internal tax structure soon drew from the politically reviving South and the rapidly expanding West a deep-seated protest. By the beginning eighties that protest had matured. The national elections of 1882 marked not only the rehabilitation of the Democratic party but also the return of its agrarian element to dominance.

That dominance, however, was not easily achieved. There were many divergent views in the party, particularly concerning the tariff. Even a combination of the Southern and Western Democrats could not effect desired reforms without the help of the Northern Democrats. But in the Northern group there were two powerful figures whose aid, though essential, was still an open question. One of them was Samuel J. Randall, whose chief interest was in preserving protection and in abolishing the excise taxes. The other was Grover Cleveland, whose chief concern was honesty, decency, and stability in government. Randall's was an inflexible mind. Cleveland was stubborn, but he had at times an amazing ability to convert himself in spite of himself. As he joined the Southern and Western groups of his party and threatened to overthrow the Randall element, the Republican protectionists had to marshal their forces and either overwhelm dissenting elements or drive them from their ranks.

The efforts to unite the three Democratic groups in the fight for tariff reform were dramatic but slaughterous in nature. The real battle began in the summer of 1883 over the selection of a candidate for the Speakership in the Democratic caucus that would meet in December. The borderland, popularly regarded as the South, presented John G. Carlisle of Kentucky—the Kentucky that years before had sent Henry Clay to talk fascinatingly of protection and to whom the people of Pottsville here in Pennsylvania erected a massive statue overlooking their coalfields from which, they believed, the Great Compromiser had sought to beat
off competition. The West offered William M. Springer. In New York two candidates appeared: Fernando Wood, with his gold spectacles on a long gold chain, who had sought to take his city at the mouth of the Hudson out of the Union in 1861 that it might trade with both sections, and S. S. Cox, called "Sunset" in the House, ebullient humorist who had written a book on Why We Laugh. There was no question from the beginning that Philadelphia's lone Democrat, Sam Randall, would be a candidate.

Actually there were only two candidates: Randall and Carlisle. Actually there were only two issues: tariff reform or continued or even higher protection.

Carlisle was in comparison with Randall a freshman in politics. His was an agrarian background, but he deserted the farm early—as a young boy he had walked timidly and fearfully down the fifteen miles of dusty road to Covington to take an examination and, though he himself had completed only the eighth grade, soon began to teach in the city schools. He took no part in the Civil War other than to rejoice occasionally when news came that the Confederate forces had won a big victory. He studied law, entered state politics, and in 1876 took the oath of office as congressman from the Covington district. One of the most brilliant native minds of the nation, he left a no more permanent imprint on our records than did Randall. His deep human sympathies and his logic were always in conflict. He spoke out in clarity for the common man and the hopes that stirred his heart these years—though he later fought for the gold standard. He joined Roger Q. Mills in condemning hearings at which only the industrialists or their lobbyists appeared; the greasy mechanic, the soil-stained farmer, and the tired laborer, he said, never presented themselves. His deep respect for democratic rights was a poor fighting instrument in the age of Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Goulds. It often paralyzed his efforts to beat down privilege.  

The speakership battle between Carlisle and Randall was as exciting—and as basic—as any national campaign. The contest was less personal than political. If Randall lost, the rehabilitation of the party was confirmed. If Randall lost, the decision was clear that the Democrats had challenged the supremacy of the business interests in the country. If Randall lost, the hopes of the party

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8 See Barnes, Carlisle.
for winning the Presidency in 1884 were, said many, also lost. But nothing was more obvious than the fact that if Carlisle were the victor the Democrats were pledged to tariff reform and perhaps to a general legislative program supporting the new spirit of material rights to all through control, directly or indirectly, of the forces and institutions that made for inequities. The issue of industrialism versus agrarianism had been joined. And so the late days of November, 1883, brought a horde of Democrats into Washington. They deployed their forces around the headquarters of their favorite candidates for the Speakership nomination and talked much of their victory when the caucus should meet early in December. Carlisle's Kentuckians were there, mustered effectively by partially paralyzed and partially blind Marse Henry Watterson, whose pen could cut like a rapier. Joe Blackburn, fellow Kentuckian, was there too, but he was looking for higher office. Springer was there from neighboring Illinois, but his followers from the corn fields might easily be converted. Fernando Wood had given up, but Sunset Cox brought a perpetual levity to the lowering clouds.

It was Sam Randall's headquarters that exuded confidence. An aura of victory spread from the rooms. Hundreds of letters poured in to build more hopes. Money moved out to challenge any takers. Philadelphia was still the heart of the tariff controversy and, temporarily, a goodly part of it had moved to Washington. The capital city, wrote an observer, looked like Chestnut Street. Randall had devoted friends, a host of them. He forgot, however, that in the North, particularly in Pennsylvania, they were industrialists and powerful industrialists at that—and "Pig Iron" Kelley and Joseph Wharton and the great protectionist organizations were no longer assets in a Democratic contest.

Randall also failed to note that his advocates throughout the

9 The great hopes of the Randall followers in the Speakership contest were that the voters would vote for the Philadelphian because they wanted to be on the winning side and because they did not want to lose the election of 1884. J. B. Gordon, President, International Railroad and Steamship Co. of Florida, wrote from New York on November 23: "... I do not believe the Democratic party can win a victory in the next Presidential contest unless it can hold the confidence and command the support of the business public." A few days later W. W. H. Davis expressed his fears to Randall: "If Carlisle shall attempt to carry out the programme of the men who nominated him, we might as well 'hang our harps on the willow' in 1884." See Randall papers for further expression.
farm lands were the commercial and business minority. Moreover, he did not fully sense the fact that though the South was grateful to him for assistance in days of Reconstruction, cotton and protection were alien to each other. The chief difficulty was that Randall refused to see the straws that told the way the wind was really blowing. A St. Louis editor had put it clearly early in the campaign. “If it be in accord with the interests of Democrats that they should placate Republicans then Mr. Randall is the man to elect speaker; he is the Republican favorite. But if the Democratic policy is to be something different from Republican policy and a thoroughly representative Democrat is to be placed in the speaker’s chair, Mr. Carlisle is the man.” A Texan had sent a warning: “Judge Reagan comes regularly to town. He lives about two miles from the village, and southern like he sits at the door of some grocery or saloon, whittles his pine chip, spits his tobacco juice at every crack in the road within reach and talks politics with his friends and neighbors. We all like the Judge here. At home in Texas he is, of course, a good deal more of a ‘Confederate’ than in Washington, but then ‘he knows his world’ and has to talk rather broadly against ‘Federal tyranny’ in his district. We Northern Republicans down here excuse him for it—because that is the course necessary here. Now all this is introductory to what I started out to write you—which is this: I am afraid the Judge will not support you for Speaker. He wants to do so I believe. He likes you personally, and besides he wants to be on the winning side and he thinks you are there. Then he wants his old place on the Commerce Committee. But this Carlisle business is being worked up lively here and the old Confederate shirt, which you Democrats won’t believe in, but which is the most potent political factor south of Mason and Dixon’s line, is being shook out for the Kentucky statesman. You must take the Judge in hand—and you must do it soon.”

Before the vote was half through in the Democratic caucus it was clear that Carlisle had won. With the announcement, the Rebel Yell that had curdled the blood in many an attack resounded

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[2] Editorial of November 2, 1883, St. Louis Republican, clipping in Randall papers.

through the chamber, and, I might add, the party heard its echoes many years. Randall thanked his friends for their support and pleaded for party unity—which he would do most to disturb—and he and his sorrowing followers departed. "The betting gentry who staked heavy sums on Randall's nomination," wrote an editor the next day, "are about the only persons nursing bitterness over the outcome. The crowd of Philadelphia outsiders left for home last night and the New Yorkers departed today. These eastern gentlemen have had their eyes opened somewhat and have now a better appreciation of the political power of the West and the South and the great political forces operating in those sections."

The victory was not sectional, the editor continued, for the states that voted for Carlisle sent roughly 1,350,000 to the Union army, while those that voted for Randall sent only above 875,000. "Mr. Carlisle," the editor flatly declared, "represents the Democratic sentiment of the whole country and of the North and West as fully as he does the South." It was, he admitted, "too bad that right in the capital under the dome of liberty the "old Rebel yell" was heard and worse yet that so many who helped swell it had, some twenty years ago, kept step to the music of the Union. . . ."

The basic question that had been answered was whether the Democratic party should become once more a party. It had—and it was, as the editor said, not a Southern party. It was indeed a remarkable rehabilitation.

There are those who advance the thesis that the defeat of Sam Randall for the Speakership in December, 1883, ended the power of the Philadelphian. Nothing, I think, could be farther from the truth. Randall had, it is true, been Speaker of the House for more than two full sessions, but he had headed a minority segment that for various reasons happened to have gathered a majority position. He was largely directed by—if he was not the pawn of—

"The gloom of the Randall Democrats is obvious in the Randall papers. Philadelphians were particularly depressed. "I have seen very sick and demoralized Democrats in my time," wrote Harry A. Chester on December 4, "but never anything in this city to equal the present depression." William McMullen of the Select Council had written the day before: "... my heart is broke and I do not care what becomes of the country I am done with politics let them that gave that Rebel yell when they herd [sic] you were defeated run the country. . . ." Over in Pittsburgh G. Bilderbock of S. Ewart and Co., wrote: "The Democracy here are sick and discouraged and the Reps. correspondingly jubilant. 'Ichabod' is written above our door and we are left without hope."
the course of events. Before December, 1883, he had been able only to move with the course of government; after that so far as the Democratic party and the progress of politics in Congress were involved, he held in his hand absolute power to block not only the will of the House of Representatives and his party but perhaps of the people as well.

Few will I believe dispute the fact that the primary issue before the Congress in the decade of the eighties was the tariff. The Republican party, though forced by the Democratic attack not only to unify its divergent elements but also to adopt an aggressive policy of protection, lacked power to defeat Democratic ambitions. And those ambitions found aggressive expression as Carlisle and William R. Morrison and Roger Q. Mills and William M. Springer and William L. Wilson and a host of other individuals struck telling blows against the bulwarks of protection. Day after day they beat away at the points that the tariff, which had merely grown up during the war without long-range planning, increased the price of the goods that the poor used, created trusts and monopolies, provided a wall behind which industrialists could hide their inefficient plants and obsolete machines and still profit, and inflicted upon the farmer and the workingman burdensome taxes that not only filled the treasury of the United States to overflowing but also the pockets of a favored few. And even the people, with the sole exception of one Congress, sent election after election between 1875 and 1895 a Democratic majority to the House of Representatives.

But not a single reduction was made in the tariff in the decade of the eighties. It was Randall and his men who struck down every proposal to lessen the duties. These followers—a handful of Pennsylvanians, a handful of New Yorkers, two or three men from New Jersey, a few wool growers from Ohio, three or four sugar producers from Louisiana, a few lone figures from various small iron and coal regions and one individual from far-off California—dropped away one by one, but the Philadelphian died still a friend of the protectionists and still a power in the Democratic Congress. There were those who bitterly condemned him, remembering perhaps that Cleveland, little interested in the beginning, had boldly shifted his position and in December, 1887, had delivered a biting message on the state of the Union to Con-
gress devoted solely to tariff reform. But, sadly enough for Democratic hopes, Randall’s death did not end obstructionists in the party. Except for an abortive Wilson-Gorman tariff, successful reductions came only with the Underwood-Simmons bill of 1913. Even that was nullified by a war that, bolstered by another war, eventually brought the whole protective system tumbling painfully on our heads. Many are prone now to confuse our present problem with the practices that I am discussing today.

It was a dramatic fight that was waged in the nation over the tariff in the years after the Civil War. Since protection came actually as an emergency measure and needed only to be maintained, it was tied chiefly to politics, and politics so far as protection was concerned was largely Pennsylvanian—from that fact I derived my somewhat awkward though alliterative title: Protection, Politics, and Pennsylvania. My thesis that tariff reform received basically its impetus from a new spirit of equality or democracy that welled up during the Civil War is less clear.

Randall to the end of his life stuck doggedly to his course in spite of all the pressure the party could build up. In the draft of a letter (which was probably sent in a shorter form) of January 6, 1888, he wrote Henry W. Grady of Atlanta, one of the builders of the “New South”: “If I entertained before the least doubt of the justice and impregnability of our position on economic questions, it would be dispelled by what I have seen and heard since; and so far from Mr. Cleveland having added to his reputation for calmness and wisdom in the management of public affairs he has by hasty, abrupt, peremptory, autocratic manner toward a coordinate branch of the Government, and the assumption of dictation as to taxation toward the House of Representatives which has the sole power under the Constitution of originating such legislation, he has gone far to weakening confidence in him.” It has been established to a certainty, he argued, “that the Internal Revenue System is contrary in time of peace to the principles and precedents of our people and government.” “...I shall for one,” he declared, “stand as firmly as I can in favor of giving our own industrial and commercial interests the protection and encouragement which they have the right to expect at our hands, and which it would be the madness of folly on our part to deny to them. . . .” Capital and labor, he continued—with some questionable premises—“are entitled to equal protection and encouragement, and when one is favored at the expense of the other conflict must ensue. We must see to it that labor at home shall be kept prosperous, free, happy,—the promotion of peaceful and educated Christian communities, and not the degraded and pauperized wretches who for ages have been the sure forerunners of empire and war and blood and misery.” He concluded with the confident: “Our victory is assured. Already the ‘boasters’ have become supplicants; they ask for compromise and help from those they defiantly proposed to discipline and scourge. The mighty have fallen. We rule the situation, and all we have to do is to know it and be true to our knowledge and our opportunities, and our joy and pride will be all the greater when the final triumph does crown our efforts. Let us be up and doing for it is yet day and to falter now or to hang back would be a blunder and a crime.”
Economic scholars point out that when the guns had been silenced a great expansionist movement spread over the nation that carried our wheat and corn fields westward across the wide Missouri, that pushed the Cotton Kingdom around the Gulf, and that created north of the Rio Grande a Cattle Kingdom. It is a simple lesson that follows: there piled up in the fields more food and cotton than we could use and there grew up on the plains more meat than we could eat, and the people, resisting the simple law of supply and demand, turned to legislative panaceas. It might make the lesson seem less simple and even less erudite if I pointed out to you that that surplus was perhaps no surplus at all. In the cities that dotted the nation thousands and thousands of people—honest people, willing to work—were hungry; the workman’s daily prayer was “Give me this day my daily bread.” Thousands and thousands lived in miserable slums and dressed in miserable rags. Their consuming potential was as great as the existing producing ability.

We heeded too little perhaps the cry of the ordinary American. We listened too much to the charge of indolence and ignorance and people wanting something for nothing. There were injustices in protection, even the Republican party admitted that, certainly a Republican President. There were injustices in the monetary system, in the transportation system, in the granary system. We did have a Credit Mobilier, we did have gold corners, we did have speculation and peculation—and the nation suffered from them all.

No one would be foolish enough to advise any lessening in our economic caution. No one would be so stupid as to desert the logic that experience has built up over the years, but it could be that if we tuned our ears more keenly to the great swell of human demands we might escape costly and tragic things—I need only to ask you to look at the nation today, North and South. Though some refuse to see it, the men and women in the eighties and nineties who poured out to the Populist picnics and listened to the orators speak the grievances from their own hearts and the millions who joined the silver crusade under Bryan—the boy they called him—and scared some within an inch of their lives were motivated by exactly the same reasons that had led them to attack protection: they thought they were asking for simple
justice, nothing more. They were not looking for free goods in tariff reform, nor for free money in their silver demands. Had the gifted spent more time planning and less time condemning they might have solved some of the obviously existing problems without the tragedy that ensued before solutions were achieved, often along the basic ideas that the protesters were suggesting. The gifted, in fact, seem prone to miss ideas completely when they are presented by the unlettered and to laugh at methods. In the nineties a scholar wrote that in a generation the idea that money could be manipulated to blunt the ups and downs of the economic world would be known only to the antiquarian; if I understand the Federal Reserve system today he was woefully wrong. In the 1930's a poor doctor who had lost his little savings in the "Great Depression" suggested that everyone over sixty-five be paid fifty dollars every Thursday. We laughed uproariously at him and said the method proposed would not work. One could scarcely expect it to. We pay monthly today, I believe; I shall know shortly.

I am sure the point I have sought to make has seemed vague and ephemeral and not within the compass of approval by a Harvard Business School professor. I am sure too that some of you, being Pennsylvanians, have resisted some of the comments about protection. It was not my intention to attack anything. I only wanted to point out if I could the fact that human hopes even of the most unlettered are powerful forces in history—which many, including the Harvard Business School professor, have sometimes missed. I think that the Civil War, whatever its bloodshed, whatever its failures or its accomplishments, stirred as few events in the nation have the yearnings of the common man to be a part of the society in which he lived—to share in its wealth, its progress, and its government. That four years of conflict may have done for the people of the United States what the years of fighting did for the people of the world in the Second World War. We may expect the world conflicts to be even more bitter. It may be that the economist, the financier, the humanist, the intellectual, the statesman should listen to the pleas that well up from the soil and the poorer streets and translate the ideas into workable things, heed human forces, and turn what at the time may seem impossible into the wisdom of the future. The untrained
cannot be expected to present workable plans, but ideas are no monopoly of scholars.

I want to end, as I began, here on the battlefield of Gettysburg. One sunny November day in 1863, a gaunt man stood among the graves and spoke a few simple words that even yet echo in the hearts of men. They were not wholly true, those words—especially the powerful last fifteen. Lincoln himself had not freed the slaves he could have freed. He could have said without violence to his thoughts—and I suspect with an even more accurate portrayal of them—that out of these tragic years and because of these honored dead that rest here forever the hope of government “of the people, by the people, for the people” shall spread throughout the earth.