

F. G. HILLMAN

MAIL AND GENERAL SUPPLIES

231 Pope Street

New Bedford, Mass. November 9, 1937.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 East Nineteenth St.,
New York, N. Y.;

My Dear Miss Tarbell:

Having read that you are writing your remembrances I wish to congratulate you and those who may be so fortunate as to have the privilege and pleasure of reading them when published.

Noting also, that you are represented as believing that most of our domestic ills result from a high protective tariff, I wish to relate a recollection of my own and then ask just one question, if I may.

The recollection is this: some years ago, I was connected with a Boston leather concern, which, in addition to buying large quantities of domestic hides, also imported in considerable quantities, extra heavy hides from Europe, known as Swiss hides. The hides of the highlands of and adjacent to Switzerland being much heavier than those of this country or the Argentine. At the time I have in mind there was a tariff of 15 per cent ad valorem on hides entering the United States, and, in time, there began to be expressed much dissatisfaction because, it was said, the duty was solely for the benefit of the wealthy packers of Chicago and the middle west, and this did not appear to be denied. It was also claimed that if the tariff on hides were to be removed, our people could purchase shoes at lower cost.

As so events moved with due procedure toward the removal of the tariff, and after a time, the president of the Boston leather concern said to the treasurer, "Well, it looks as though Congress was about ready to remove the duty on hides; guess we might as well get our order started by cable for as many Swiss hides as we can carry, before the duty goes off." "Yes," replied the treasurer, "I thought if you didn't speak of it today I would to you." So they cabled their order to Europe.

I have related this incident to others and they usually interrupt at this point to ask; "Why didn't they wait until the tariff had been removed?" The answer is because they knew that by reason of our innocence, or ignorance, or lack of business acumen, or whatever it may be called, so many in this country would do that way that a shortage would be created, and the foreign dealers, being wise in their generation, would not only advance their prices to equalize them with the amount of the tariff reduction, but would doubtless go as far beyond that as they felt that the short market would stand; which they did. And the Boston concern made \$10,000.00 or so by ordering before the tariff was taken off.

*Outstanding
to Mr. G. L. Hillman
on Tarbell*

The only difference made to this country was that instead of the 15% going into the treasury of the United States it went into the pockets of the European dealers, - simply transferred from our treasury to them. And our people did not buy their shoes at any less prices.

Now for the question: Suppose that Japan, which is far and away the largest buyer of American cotton, should buy even more, and that we should take down our tariff, and they, by paying their workers around 23 cents per ~~hour~~ long day, as compared with our paying around 33 cents per hour, should put all our cotton manufacturing concerns out of business, and the operatives out of employment, how would that decrease our economic ills?

Yours respectfully,

F. G. Hillman

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