

From a speech delivered by William McKinley, October 4th, 1892, in American Hall in Boston, Mass.

“This year we have two great questions. The contention of the Republican party is for the industries and the labor and the prosperity of the country. The second contention of the Republican party is for an honest currency with which to measure the exchanges of the people... The contention of the Democratic party is for free trade and for a debased, worthless currency.

...We are opposed to British political economy. We not only fight for our industries and our labor, that they may be prosperous and well paid, but we insist that when they have earned their money they shall be paid in a dollar worth one hundred cents. When a workingman gives ten hours a day to his employer – a full ten hours – he is entitled to be paid in a dollar worth full one hundred cents. Free trade shaves down his labor first, and then scales down his pay by rewarding him in a worthless and depreciated State [rather than National] currency.

[The Democrats say] that protection is unconstitutional... Protection unconstitutional? I know of but one constitution which it violates and that is the constitution of the Confederate States! It is in direct violation of *that* instrument. But we are not operating under it. That instrument went down before the resistless armies of Grant and Sherman and Sheridan, and the Constitution of Washington and Lincoln was sustained. And that is the Constitution under which we are operating today – the Constitution of Washington and of Lincoln and of Grant.

Unconstitutional? ... They do not seem to know that the man who made the first Protective Tariff law we ever had, in 1789 – the men who made the first Protective Tariff law – made the Constitution of the United States. James Madison, a member of the Constitutional Convention, and who afterward became President of the United State, reported that bill to Congress. It passed the House of Representatives, composed as that body was largely of members of the Constitutional Convention; it passed that body unanimously, and passed the Senate of the United States by a vote of five to one, and in that body were a large number of men who made the Constitution itself. And that Protective Tariff law was finally signed by George Washington, the President of the United States.

That is not all. I have always liked the fathers, for they had a blunt, plain way of saying what they meant. They put into that first Protective law what has never appeared in a Protective Tariff law since. They put into the preamble of that law exactly what they meant. What did they say? They said, ‘We levy these duties to raise money to pay the debts of the government; to provide money for the expenses of the United States, and to encourage and protect manufactures in the United States.’...

Protective tariffs are not only constitutional, but in our own experience they have proved wholesome to the great body of the American people. No nation in the world has done so well as ours; not one. Match it if you can under any circumstances the world over. We are the youngest nation on the face of the earth, and yet we have reached the first rank in mining, in manufacture, and in agriculture of all the nations the wide world over...

Ah! But they say, if you had not a Protective Tariff things would be a little cheaper. Well, whether a thing is cheap or whether it is dear depends upon what we can earn by our daily labor. Free trade cheapens the product by cheapening the producer. Protection cheapens the product by elevating the producer. Under free trade the trader is the master and the producer the slave. Protection is but the law of self-preservation, of self-development, of securing the highest and best destiny of the race of man!”