

Tariffs, Not slavery

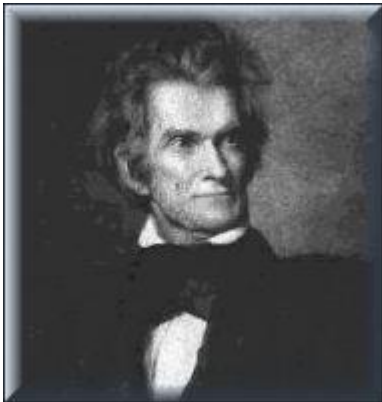
by: Jack McMillan, Ph.D.

Contrary to what is now taught, slavery was not the primary issue. Sorry, Julian, Jesse, and victims of public indoctrination everywhere, but here are the inconvenient facts.

The American educational system continues perpetuating a myth regarding the War for Southern Independence [often mistakenly called 'The Civil War,' a misnomer.] Teachers using government-mandated, Northern-produced texts inform students the conflict centered solely on slavery, with Abraham Lincoln 'The Great Emancipator' sending Union troops to 'make men free.' Nothing could be more untrue. We realize the wisdom in the adages that history-books are written by the victors and that truth is war's first casualty. Like other complex human activities, wars often have a number of underlying causes. In this article, I shall provide the reader with an overview of the primary *causi belli* of the War for Southern Independence, the issue of tariffs.

Far from being a mundane topic, taxation has been at the heart of the American political spirit. The original thirteen American colonies formally dissolved ties with the British Empire due to the issue of taxation without representation. Penned by that great Virginian Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration of Independence stands out as this nation's first Article of Secession. In it, the colonies' grievances are listed. Amongst the litany of injustices committed by King George III, Jefferson mentions 'For imposing Taxes upon us without our Consent.' This split over taxation is a recurring theme in American history.

The precursor to Southern secession in fact occurred 30 years before the hostilities of 1861-1865. In 1828 and again in 1832, Congress passed tariffs legislation benefitting northern mercantile interests but injuring the South's agricultural economy. Heavy protectionist tariffs gave northern manufacturers an advantage by



decreasing foreign competition, but forced the South to pay the bulk of federal taxes, as the South was a net exporter of raw goods and a net importer of manufactured products. These 'Tariffs of Abominations' led Senator John C. Calhoun to declare the law unjust and a convention was held in South Carolina to nullify the federal tariff law. President Andrew Jackson threatened to send troops to enforce the tariff, but eventually the Compromise of 1833 was reached and taxes were lowered over a four-year period. As Professor Charles Adams states in his book *For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization*, "...the South paid about three-quarters of all federal taxes, most of which were spent in the North."

Hon. Senator John C. Calhoun

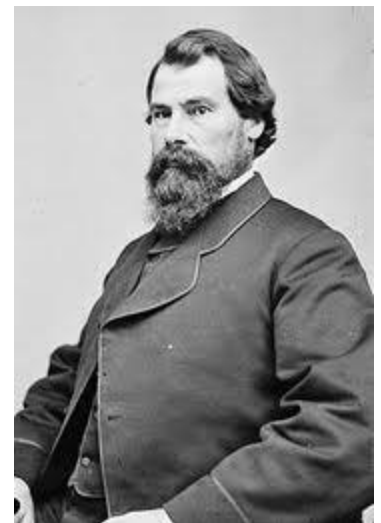
The election of 1860 was perhaps the most contentious in American history. The Democratic Party split, with the northern faction voting for Stephen Douglass and the southern faction for John Breckinridge. Additionally the Constitutional Unionist Party [the renamed Whig Party] ran John Bell as a candidate and carried three states [Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia.] Lincoln won with a mere 39% of the popular and not a single electoral vote from the South. As Salomon DeRothschild, a visitor to America at the time wrote, "This state of affairs could have continued ... if the two divisions, South and North, of the Democratic party had not split at the last electoral convention. Since each of them carried a different candidate, they surrendered power to a third thief, Lincoln, the Republican choice."

The secession of Southern States began with South Carolina, where tax issues had been at the forefront 30 years earlier. Contrary to what is now taught, slavery was not the primary issue. While it is unfortunate slavery existed, the blame cannot be placed solely on the South; slavery existed in the North as well [it is interesting to note Delaware, a Northern slave state, refused to ratify the 13th Amendment abolishing the institution.] Further, New England slavers from their homeports in Massachusetts and New York brought slaves to America in the first place.

With the election of Lincoln, the South realized northern manufacturers and bankers would have their puppet in the White House. Again Professor Adams states, "...Lincoln was supported in his bid for the presidency by the rich industrialists of the North. He was their man and he had long been their lawyer... No sooner had Congress assembled in 1861 than the high tariff was passed into law and signed by Lincoln. The Morrill Tariff, as it was called, was the highest tariff in U.S. history." Adams also notes, "Secession by the South was a reaction against Lincoln's high-tax policy. In 1861 the slave issue was not critical... The leaders of the South believed secession would attract trade to Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans, replacing Boston, New York, and Philadelphia as the chief trading ports of America, primarily because of low taxes." Note the Confederacy lowered taxes! To the charge often leveled that the newly formed Confederacy started the hostilities, Adams correctly points out "...with the import taxes, he [Lincoln] was threatening. Fort Sumter was at the entrance to the Charleston Harbor, filled with federal troops to support U.S. Customs officers. It wasn't too difficult for angry South Carolinians to fire the first shot." Again, Rothschild writing to his cousin in London in 1861 notes, "I'll come back later to the 'slavery' question, which was the first pretext for secession, but which was just a pretext and is now secondary. The true reason which impelled the Southern states to secede is the question of tariffs."

Lincoln's election guaranteed a return of past disastrous policies and forced the Southern States to secede. Writers of the day confirm this. In Great Britain, many intellectuals and political leaders saw Lincoln's War for exactly what it was - a dispute over taxation. Charles Dickens writes, "The Northern onslaught upon slavery was no more than a piece of specious humbug designed to conceal its desire for economic control of the Southern States." Dickens goes on to say "...Union means so many millions a year lost to the South; secession means the loss of the same millions to the North. The love of money is the root of this as of many other evils... The quarrel between the North and South is, as it stands, solely a fiscal quarrel." Let us quote a passage from the Northern British Review, Edinburgh, 1862, "...All Northern products are now protected: and the Morrill Tariff is a very masterpiece of folly and injustice. No wonder then that the citizens of the seceding States should feel for half a century they have sacrificed to enhance the powers and profits of the North; and should conclude, after much futile remonstrance, that only in secession could they hope to find redress."

I shall conclude this article with a passage written by John Reagan, Postmaster General of the Confederacy. "You are not content with the vast millions of tribute we pay you annually under the operation of our revenue laws, our navigation laws, your fishing bounties, and by making your people our manufacturers, our merchants, our shippers. You are not satisfied with the vast tribute we pay you to build up your great cities, your railroads, and your canals. You are not satisfied with the millions of tribute we have been paying you on account of the balance of exchange, which you hold against us. You are not satisfied that we of the South are almost reduced to the condition of overseers of northern capitalists. You are not satisfied with all this; but you must wage a relentless crusade against our rights."



<http://www.southernheritage411.com/truehistory.php?th=003>

Hon. John H. Reagan, Postmaster General