

Excerpts from South Carolina's Exposition and Protest

Ghost-written by Vice-President John C. Calhoun,
at the time attributed to a Mr. X

1. . . . [The Federal] Government is one of specific powers, and it can rightfully exercise only the powers expressly granted, and those that may be "necessary and proper" to carry them into effect; all others being reserved expressly to the States, or to the people. It results necessarily, that those who claim to exercise a power under the Constitution, are bound to shew [sic], that it is expressly granted, or that it is necessary and proper, as a means to some of the granted powers. The advocates of the Tariff have offered no such proof. It is true, that the third [sic; eighth] section of the first article of the Constitution of the United States authorizes Congress to lay and collect an impost duty, but it is granted as a tax power, for the sole purpose of revenue; a power in its nature essentially different from that of imposing protective or prohibitory duties. . . . The Constitution grants to Congress the power of imposing a duty on imports for revenue; which power is abused by being converted into an instrument for rearing up the industry of one section of the country on the ruins of another. The violation then consists in using a power, granted for one object, to advance another, and that by the sacrifice of the original object. . . .

2. . . . The maxim that the consumers pay, strictly applies to us. We are mere consumers, and destitute of all means of transferring the burden from ourselves to others. We may be assured, that the large amount paid into the Treasury, under the duties on imports, is really derived from the labor of some portion of our citizens. The government has no mines. Some one must bear the burden of its support. This unequal lot is ours. We are the serffs [sic] of the system, out of whose labor is raised, not only the money that is paid into the Treasury, but the funds out of which are drawn the rich reward of the manufacturer and his associates in interest. Their encouragement is our discouragement. The duty on imports which is mainly paid out of our labour gives them the means of selling to us at a higher price, while we cannot, to compensate the loss, dispose of our products at the least advance. It is then not a subject of wonder, when properly understood, that one section of country though blessed by a kind Providence with a genial sun and prolific soil, from which spring the richest products, should languish in poverty and sink into decay; while the rest of the Union though less fortunate in natural advantages is flourishing in prosperity beyond example...

3. We cultivate certain great staples for the supply of the general market of the world; and they manufacture almost exclusively for the home market. Their object in the Tariff is to keep down foreign competition, in order to obtain a monopoly of the domestic market. The effect on us is to compel us to purchase at a higher price, both what we purchase from them and from others, without receiving a corresponding increase of price for what we sell. The price, at which we can afford to cultivate, must depend on the price at which we receive our supplies. The lower the latter, the lower we may dispose of our products with profit; and in the same degree our capacity of meeting competition

is increased; on the contrary, the higher the price of our supplies, the less the profit at the same price, and the less consequently the capacity for meeting competition. . . . The case then, fairly stated between us and the manufacturing States, is, that the Tariff gives them a prohibition against foreign competition in our own market, in the sale of their goods, and deprives us of the benefit of a competition of purchasers for our raw material. They who say, that they cannot compete with foreigners at their own doors without an advantage of nearly fifty per cent., expect us to meet them abroad, under a disadvantage equal to their encouragement. But the oppression, great as it is to us, will not stop at this point. The trade between us and Europe, has heretofore been a mutual exchange of products. Under the existing duties, the consumption of European fabrics must in a great measure cease in our country, and the trade must become, on their part a cash transaction. But he must be ignorant of the principals of commerce, and the policy of Europe, particularly England, who does not see, that it is impossible to carry on a trade of such vast extent on any other basis but that of mutual exchange of products; and if it were not impossible, such a trade would not long be tolerated. We already see indications of the commencement of a commercial warfare, the termination of which cannot be conjectured, though our fate may easily be. The last remains of our great and once flourishing agriculture must be annihilated in the conflict. In the first instance we will be thrown on the home market, which cannot consume a fourth of our products; and instead of supplying the world, as we should with a free trade, we shall be compelled to abandon the cultivation of three-fourths of what we now raise, and receive for the residue, whatever the manufacturers, (who will then have their policy consummated, by the entire possession of their market, both exports and imports,) may choose to give. Forced with an immense sacrifice of capital to abandon our ancient and favourite pursuit, to which our soil, climate, habits and peculiar labor are adapted, we should be compelled without experience or skill, and with a population untried in such pursuits, to attempt to become the rivals instead of the customers of the manufacturing States. The result is not doubtful. If they, by superior capital and skill, should keep down successful competition on our part, we should be doomed to toil at our unprofitable agriculture, selling at the prices, which a single and limited market might give. But on the other hand, if our necessity should triumph over their capital and skill, if, instead of raw cotton, we should ship to the manufacturing States, cotton yarn, and cotton goods, the thoughtful must see, that it would immediately bring about a state of things, which could not long continue. Those who now make war on our gains would then make it on our labour. They would not tolerate, that those, who now cultivate our plantations and furnish them with the material and market for the products of their arts, should, by becoming their rivals, take bread out of the mouths of their wives and children. The committee will not pursue this painful subject, but as they clearly see, that the system if not arrested, must bring the country to this hazardous extremity, neither prudence nor patriotism would permit them to pass it by, without giving warning of an event so full of danger. . . .

4. No government based on the naked principle, that the majority ought to govern, however true the maxim in its proper sense and under proper restrictions, ever preserved its liberty, even for a single generation. The history of all has been the same, injustice, violence and anarchy, succeeded by the government of one, or a few, under which the people seek refuge, from the more oppressive despotism of the majority. Those

governments only, which provide checks, which limit and restrain within proper bounds the power of the majority, have had a prolonged existence, and been distinguished for virtue, power and happiness. Constitutional government, and the government of the majority, are utterly incompatible, it being the sole purpose of a constitution to impose limitations and checks upon the majority. An unchecked majority, is a despotism--and government is free, and will be permanent in proportion to the number, complexity and efficiency of the checks, by which its powers are controlled. . . .

5. With these views the committee are solemnly of impression if the system be persevered in, after due forbearance on the part of the State, that it will be her sacred duty to interpose her veto; a duty to herself, to the Union, to present, and to future generations, and to the cause of liberty over the world, to arrest the progress of a power, which, if not arrested, must in its consequences, corrupt the public morals, and destroy the liberty of the country.

6. To avert these calamities, to restore the Constitution to its original purity, and to allay the differences which have been unhappily produced between various States, and between the States and General Government, we solemnly appeal to the justice and good feeling of those States heretofore opposed to us; and earnestly invoke the council and cooperation of those States, similarly situated with our own. Not doubting their good will and support; and sustained by a deep sense of the righteousness of its cause--the committee trusts that under Divine Providence the exertions of the State will be crowned with success.

1A. According to this Exposition, those who claim to exercise a power under the Constitution must show one of what two things?

1B. The Exposition admits that the power of levying tariffs is granted to Congress, but for what purpose only?

2A. What group (or section of the country) would end up paying taxes to the government (in the form of these tariffs)?

2B. What group (or section of the country) would end up getting subsidies from the government?

3A. The price at which the Southern farmers can afford to cultivate, depends on what?

3B. The higher the price for their supplies, the less... (finish the sentence)

3C. The Exposition claimed that already, what was seen indications of what (between America and Europe)?

3D. America consumed only what fraction of the Southern agricultural production?

3E. If the tariff on European products continued, what would happen to the exports to Europe (of Southern agricultural products)?

4A. Which type of government did the Exposition feel would be best in the long run: majority rule, or a system of checks and balances?

4B. What was incompatible with government of the majority?