

America Versus Britain: On Economics

There is nothing more crucial for policy-makers today to understand than the difference between American System economics, and the economics of the British Empire. Henry C. Carey, Abraham Lincoln's key economic advisor, put it most succinctly in his 1851 pamphlet, *The Harmony of Interests—Agricultural, Manufacturing & Commercial* (1851):

“Two systems are before the world; the one looks to increasing the proportion of persons and of capital engaged in trade and transportation, and therefore to diminishing the proportion engaged in producing commodities with which to trade, with *necessarily* diminished return to the labour of all; while the other looks to increasing the proportion engaged in the work of production, and diminishing that engaged in trade and transportation, with increased return to all, giving to the labourer good wages, and to the owner of capital goods profits. One looks to increasing the quantity of raw materials to be exported, and diminishing the inducements to the import of men, thus impoverishing both farmer and planter by throwing on them the burden of freight; while the other looks to increasing the import of men, and diminishing the export of raw materials, thereby enriching both planter and farmer by relieving them from the payment of freight. One looks to giving the *products* of millions of acres of land and of the labour of millions of men for the *services* of hundreds of thousands of distant men; the other to bringing the distant men to consume on the land the products of the land, exchanging day's labour for day's labour. One looks to compelling the farmers and planters of the Union to continue their contributions for the support of the fleets and the armies, the paupers, the nobles, and the sovereigns of Europe; the other to enabling

ourselves to apply the same means to the moral and intellectual improvement of the sovereigns of America. One looks to the continuance of that *bastard* freedom of trade which denies the principle of protection, yet doles it out as revenue duties; the other to extending the area of *legitimate* free trade by the establishment of perfect protection, followed by the annexation of individuals and communities, and ultimately by the abolition of custom-houses. One looks to exporting men to occupy desert tracts, the sovereignty of which is obtained by aid of diplomacy or war; importing men by millions for their occupation. One looks to the *centralization* of wealth and power in a great commercial city that shall rival the great cities of modern times, which have been and are being supported by aid of contributions which have exhausted every nation subjected to them; the other to *concentration*, by aid of which a market shall be made upon the land for the products of the land, and the farmer and planter be enriched. One looks to increasing the necessity for commerce; the other to increasing the power to maintain it. One looks to underworking the Hindoo, and sinking the rest of the world to his level; the other to raising the standard of man throughout the world to our level. One looks to pauperism, ignorance, depopulation, and barbarism; the other to increasing wealth, comfort, intelligence, combination of action, and civilization. One looks toward universal war; the other toward universal peace. One is the English system; the other we may be proud to call the American system, for it is the only one ever devised the tendency of which was that of *elevating* while *equalizing* the condition of man throughout the world.

“*Such* is the true *mission* of the people of these United States....”