

## A GREAT STATISTICAL INVESTIGATION.

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THE Senate of the United States on March 3, 1891, authorized and directed its Committee on Finance to ascertain in every practicable way, and to report from time to time to the Senate, the effect of tariff laws upon the imports and exports, the growth, development, production, and prices of agricultural and manufactured articles at home and abroad ; and upon wages, domestic and foreign. The full Committee on Finance consists of Senators Morrill of Vermont, Sherman of Ohio, Jones of Nevada, Allison of Iowa, Aldrich of Rhode Island, Hiscock of New York, Voorhees of Indiana, McPherson of New Jersey, Harris of Tennessee, Vance of North Carolina, and Carlisle of Kentucky. To carry out the instructions of the Senate, a sub-committee, consisting of Senators Aldrich (chairman), Allison of Iowa, Hiscock of New York, Harris of Tennessee, and Carlisle of Kentucky, was selected. Immediately on the adjournment of Congress the sub-committee took up the questions committed to it. The expense of the investigation ordered was to be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate. Contrary to the popular idea, this contingent fund, instead of being an inexhaustible fund, is only \$25,000, from which the expenses of various committees, for whatever purposes they may be acting, and under various resolutions, must be paid.

The vastness of the duties assigned under the resolution referred to was such that the committee could not organize the independent machinery adequate to the proper carrying-out of the instructions of the Senate. There must be special agents, experts, and a considerable clerical force, in order to make even a beginning in the proposed investigation. The officers of the Department of Labor had for some time been paving the way for an

investigation covering wages and prices through a long period of years, and they would have undertaken the collection of the statistics necessary for the work the present year. The Finance Committee, after due consideration of the difficulties in the way of carrying out the provision of the Senate resolution, suggested that the Department of Labor coöperate with its sub-committee in a portion of the work assigned to it. This would enable the two forces to carry on, with the combined means at their disposal, and on an adequate basis, some of the various lines of inquiry indicated by the Senate resolution; the result being that the Senate committee would be able to do much more than it could alone, and the Department of Labor would have the coöperation of the Senate Committee, while the results of the investigation would be as much at the disposal of the department as of the committee, and would be used in the ways that the wisdom of each might indicate. So the Department of Labor was intrusted with the collection of statistics desired by the committee in certain directions, while experts in various other directions were employed directly by the committee.

The necessity for such an investigation as that directed by the Senate is apparent. The great debates in Congress and by the press and in the political campaigns, commencing with that upon the Tariff Bill of 1883, which became the act of March 3, 1883, have bristled with statistics. No speaker in or out of Congress, and no writer, seemed to feel that he was in any adequate measure approaching the leading elements of the tariff discussion unless he introduced more or less of tabular statements to back up the theories propounded. The frantic appeals to all statistical offices for tables showing the prices of commodities through a series of years and in different countries, the rates of wages paid in various industries and at different periods, and the cost of production, were generally met with the statement that Congress had not yet provided for the collection of the statistics demanded.

To be sure, Congress had undertaken to meet the great want relative to the cost of production, the cost of living, wages, and the efficiency of labor in great industries at the present time, in the act approved June 13, 1888, to establish a Department of Labor, wherein it was provided that the Commissioner of Labor should ascertain, at as early a date as possible, the cost of producing articles at the time dutiable in the United States in lead-

ing countries where such articles are produced, by fully specified units of production and under a classification showing the different elements of cost or approximate cost of such articles of production, including the wages paid in such industries, the hours employed, and the comparative cost and the kind of living. This provision of law was immediately carried out by the Commissioner of Labor, and the results on the lines indicated, so far as iron and steel and the cognate industries of ore, coal, coke, and limestone are concerned, have been laid before Congress, while the facts relating to textiles and glass will early in the coming session be transmitted to the President. These facts, supplying one of the great missing links in all debates on the tariff, which have been so freely called for by speakers and writers, will constitute two large volumes, and will answer to a certain extent the necessities of the case; but statistics on wages and prices covering a long period of years, made in such a way that one can ascertain the fluctuations on the same article or in the same occupation, have been wanting.

There have been, it is true, specific and fugitive reports from time to time, emanating from different offices. In the report of the Secretary of the Treasury for 1849 there are to be found most valuable tables relating to prices, and so in the finance report of 1863, from the Secretary of the Treasury, are to be found quite elaborate tables showing prices of commodities, while the report of the Director of the Mint for the calendar year 1884 added much to the value of statistics of prices by some extended tables. Various reports from different State bureaus of labor have been used in the debates, but all these reports have been too circumscribed in their extent to offer sufficient lines of figures for a comprehensive study of wages and prices. Mr. Joseph D. Weeks, in the XXth volume of the reports on the Tenth Census, covered an exceedingly wide field relative to wages, cost of living, etc., and this report has been used most freely in the great discussions; but it was not the policy of the officers of the Tenth Census to permit any classification or tabulated statement, so that one wishing to use the valuable data of the report was obliged to pick out here and there specific things, from which a fairly connected statement could be made. In the report of the writer on the factory system, which constituted part of Volume II. of the reports on the Tenth Census, there is considerable valuable

information relating to wages in textile factories in the country, not only of the present time, but of the past. But all these different statistical volumes, as I have said, offered only fugitive and fragmentary data, for in no case had a complete compilation been made.

Having provided for the statistics relating to cost of production, the efficiency of labor, etc., through the Department of Labor, the Senate felt that a much broader inquiry should be entered upon. So the Finance Committee, under the resolution which has been mentioned, has undertaken to direct the collection of what may justly be called "missing data." The plan of the committee and the scope of its work offer matters of great interest to a wide class of people—to Senators and Representatives, who are called upon to decide in matters of tariff legislation and in the discussion of bills relating to the currency; to speakers, who are undertaking to show the people the truth as they understand it on the two great sides of these questions; to writers, who are considering the same important themes, and also those relating to the social and material welfare of the people, irrespective of legislation on questions of tariff and finance; to reformers, who have solutions to offer for the multitudinous problems arising under what may be called "the labor question," and, in fact, the whole line of economic questions. It will be seen that any plan must be comprehensive, and that any investigation under a comprehensive plan must be minute and searching. The first desire of the committee was, therefore, to so project its work that it could make a unanimous report as to facts. Could this be done, discussion would be simplified. The committee could not, of course, be expected to make a unanimous report, in all cases, relative to causes or results, but it could, perhaps, by judicious work, be able to agree on the facts themselves; and it is a matter of great congratulation that in all the discussions upon methods, upon lines of inquiry, and upon the practical details of the investigation, the members of the sub-committee have worked with complete harmony. Not a thing has been done that has not been the result of unanimous agreement.

The first effort of the committee was to secure the collection of data relative to retail prices in fairly representative centres, meaning by the latter term cities, industrial centres, and country towns; and it determined to collect the prices of the commodities

that enter into the consumption of the people in seventy places, and for each month from the 1st of June, 1889, to the 1st of September, 1891, inclusive. The articles included in the inquiry were selected by the committee with the view of representing fairly all articles which enter, either directly or indirectly, into the expense of living. For instance, in addition to articles of food and clothing entering directly into the cost of living, they have selected articles of hardware, building materials, etc., which affect, through the cost of building, the cost of rent. In making this list 221 articles were selected. Experts in all directions were consulted as to designations, the effort being to secure such articles and designations of articles as would allow continuous quotations, both as to kind and quality; and while it was not expected that each article designated would be found in each locality selected, it was expected, and the result has satisfied the expectation, that prices would be obtained for *an* article for the whole period which should have a continuous quality.

The field work for this inquiry, comprehending retail prices of articles for the period named and the wages paid in general occupations such as carpentering, masonry, blacksmithing, etc., and the leading factory occupations, or occupations found in great productive works, has been completed. While this incidental work of the committee was going on, it had under consideration the more vital question of the course of prices at wholesale, or, more accurately, the net prices of agents or the prices at first hands of the leading articles of consumption for a long period of years, the period from 1840 to 1891 having been settled upon. Great obstacles at once presented themselves in the collection of the required data in this respect. It was necessary to select articles which could be recognized through this long period, and so manufacturers, wholesale dealers, and experts were called into consultation by the committee. The designation of articles on which quotations are to be secured for a long period is not a simple matter. For instance, a "shovel" in the Eastern States is a "spade" in the Western States, and *vice versa*; what is meant by this is that the tool called a "shovel," being a short-handled implement, with a square blade and an open place for the hand at the end of the handle, is in the Eastern States called a "shovel," while in many Western localities a long-handled, heart-shaped implement is called a "shovel." This

simply illustrates the difficulty of designating articles by a term which should be recognized throughout the country and throughout the period settled upon; but, after many sittings and much consultation with experts, the committee finally decided upon a very comprehensive list for wholesale prices, and it then selected experts in the great lines, such as the textiles, iron and steel, paints and chemicals, and a few others, to whom was committed the duty of collecting the statistics. These experts are the best-known men in their various lines, and in this feature alone is shown the wisdom of the committee; it has brought into sympathy with it, and into enthusiastic coöperation, men in the great lines of production and trade. Articles not committed to special experts have been committed to the Department of Labor; so that, with the special agents of the department working along with the experts selected by the sub-committee, there is a force engaged in the collection of prices such as has not before been utilized.

The prices at which farmers sell their leading products—that is, the prices received by the farmer at his farm—constitute a very essential feature of the inquiry relative to prices, and especially when such prices are brought into comparison with the wholesale prices of such articles in the great markets.

Not content with securing prices in this country alone, the committee is seeking, for the short period already named, the retail prices in Great Britain, and it has also undertaken the collection of prices at which the leading articles of import are sold in foreign countries.

Another great branch of the inquiry, and one which was contemplated by the Senate resolution of March 3 last, relates to the wages paid in leading occupations in the great industries of the country, and to salaries in some employments, like those of salesmen and teachers, this inquiry covering also the long period from 1840 to 1891. It would be foolish to attempt to collect on any great scale the rates of wages in occupations and subdivisions of occupations as they are known in the manufacturing industries of to-day. The obstacles in the way of the collection of accurate wage statistics are sufficiently great without burdening the duty with a very great number of subdivided occupations. The introduction of machinery has caused many changes in the designations of occupations and employments. Piece-work, time-work, the carrying-on of special features of production through the employ-

ment of what are known as "teams" or "gangs," and many other features of modern production, almost discourage any effort at the collection of wage statistics; but the committee has wisely concluded to ascertain the rates of wages in the general trades and in leading occupations in the great productive industries, hoping thereby to determine, on specific and representative things, the course of the rates of wages and the fluctuations therein. Of course the hours of labor, and the proportional weight of the occupations for which wages will be secured to the whole body of employees in a given establishment, constitute important features of inquiry.

The matters referred to are those of original inquiry from first hands. In addition to these, the committee is collecting from the quartermaster-general's bureau of the War Department the prices paid by the government, on well-known standards, for clothing from 1840 to the present time; from the bureau of the commissary-general the prices paid for articles of food; from the surgeon-general's office the prices paid for drugs, etc., and from the bureau of clothing and provisions of the Navy Department the prices paid by that department for clothing and provisions. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs will furnish, for such period as he is able, the prices which have been paid under his direction for the articles contemplated by law for the Indian service.

The Department of Agriculture has consented to take charge of an important part of the investigation, and will furnish, from original sources and collected data, statistics as to wages of farm labor in all portions of the country, and the prices received for the great farm products for half a century. Great houses, trade associations, and others are coöperating most thoroughly with the committee in connection with these great departments of the government.

In addition to all these sources of information, the committee will gather from all reputable reports of the different States of this country and of the United States Government, and from foreign countries, all legitimate statistics relating to prices and wages. It will be seen at once that the results of such a comprehensive inquiry cannot be other than exceedingly valuable, and, properly classified, arranged, and analyzed, will furnish a body of facts on which there can be little or no debate. All these



data will be examined in the light of the influence of the introduction of new devices and processes in manufacture wherever invention has led to a change in conditions ; the introduction of new industries and the time of their introduction, and the demands which led to their establishment being considered in their correlative importance.

After the facts are collected the difficult work of the committee in endeavoring to determine what influence tariff legislation has had upon the results will commence ; but it will first ascertain the facts accurately and impartially. It will not deal with the averages in the ordinary way of trade reports on prices in the first instance, but it will utilize the great collections, which are exceedingly valuable in themselves, which have been published from time to time by trade journals. In fact, no source which offers any valuable results will be ignored.

The prices of articles of food, independent of wages paid for labor, would not lead to any very conclusive deductions relative to the cost of living or the consuming power of the people ; but, taking both into account, the compensation which labor receives for its efforts and the expense which it must incur for the leading articles of consumption must show, with the other consideration which the committee is giving the subject, the relative conditions of the majority of our population at different periods. Whether and to what extent these conditions have been affected by the tariff legislation since 1840 is a question of philosophical deduction, on which honest men may divide.

It is of the utmost importance at the present time, with the great interest which all people have in economic questions, that the relative comparison of prices of staple commodities and of the earning capacity of the great masses of the population in this and other countries at various dates should be made ; but before such comparison can be made there must be the widest collection of data. The committee thoroughly understands the obstacles and difficulties in the way of making such comparisons. It has clearly understood that prices will vary in the same city on several points ; that the customs of establishments differ ; that large dealers sell on a small margin, and that small dealers, who supply the poorest classes in the community, sell on a large margin ; that qualities of goods enter into the whole question, and that differences in make produce incongruities and uncertainties



in all directions. All these matters are fully understood and have been fully considered, and every effort has been made to overcome the resulting obstacles.

Much misapprehension has existed in the public mind relative to this great statistical investigation by the Senate Finance Committee ; but the public can rest assured that the chief aim of the committee is to secure absolutely impartial results and let the consequences take care of themselves. On this basis its members are, as already remarked, working with entire unanimity, and with every prospect of being able to make a unanimous report so far as the facts are concerned. They have had the benefit of the suggestions of all classes of people, of experts on both sides of the great tariff question, of men interested in the financial legislation of the country, and of those who are studying most philosophically, and with the highest patriotism, measures for the improvement of the condition of the people, and who are making efforts to secure the people's highest prosperity.

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## IS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT DEGRADING?

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IS THERE anything degrading in corporal punishment? There is said to be a feeling that such is the case in America, and there are painful signs of the growth of such an opinion in England. On what does it rest?—on a principle for which authority can be claimed? or upon the results of experience? If it rests upon a principle, that principle must have found expression in some book whose claim to attention and obedience is generally admitted, or else must rest upon that universal sense of the fitting and the right, which is thus eloquently described by Hooker: \*  
“The general and perpetual voice of man is as the sentence of God himself. For what all men have at all times learned, Nature herself must needs have taught, and, God being the author of Nature, her voice is but his instrument. By her from him we receive whatsoever in such wise we learn.” Before appealing to our own experience, or the well-authenticated experience of others, it will be well to examine what these two great authorities have to say on the subject.

There is no book which is so universally accepted as an authority on all moral questions as the Bible; and the question of punishment, and the best kind of punishment, is essentially a moral question. I take for granted that all sensible persons, Christian or otherwise, will admit that there are in every child born into the world tendencies to evil that need rooting out, and inclinations towards good that need planting or nurturing. I will therefore first examine what this authority, which Christian people will recognize to be such, has to say on the subject, and then I will turn to that general voice of mankind to which those

\*“Ecclesiastical Polity,” I., VIII., 3.