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It is a serious and difficult alternative, that which the British minister and the German emperor have thrust upon President Roosevelt.

If he accepts their offer to submit the Venezuelan question to his arbitration, he risks involving his country in complications which it is his duty to guard her against. If on the other hand, he declines their offer, then he becomes in a way apparently responsible for a wanton war that may be prosecuted to the extent of involving her in complications even more distressing than any that might result from his acceptance.

The choice is not a simple one. Unlike every other great question that has confronted Mr. Roosevelt since his accession to the presidency, and all that confronted his predecessor, it cannot be put to the test of the few great principles that have constituted our national ideals and our moral code. It presents purely a question of administrative expediency, upon which national ideals and moral concepts cast but little light. The dilemma is one of statecraft and diplomacy rather than one of patriotism and morality. For that reason a mistake will not be a crime, and Mr. Roosevelt, whichever way he may decide, will have a degree of sympathy that his strenuous career as an imperialist has not commanded.

There is no good reason for having forced this alternative upon Mr. Roosevelt. What the real motive may have been for refusing to go before The Hague tribunal, as Mr.

Roosevelt has requested the belligerent powers to do, it would be useless to speculate upon; but the reported reason, that The Hague tribunal has no power to enforce its decrees, is no reason at all. Arbitrators never have such power, or, if they happen to have it, they are not expected to use it. The Hague tribunal would have the same power to enforce its decree against Venezuela, should it decide against her, as to enforce it against Great Britain and Germany should it decide against them, namely, the power of the world's opinion. The primary object of international arbitration is not to enforce decrees. It is to settle disputes. When an award is made, the successful nation will find it no more difficult to enforce her claim which has now the sanction of an impartial tribunal as just, than she would have had to enforce it when its justice was disputed and in doubt; while the unsuccessful nation, if too weak or too fair to resist the award, has the satisfaction of knowing that she is not being bullied into submitting to injustice and indignity, but is acquiescing in the judgment of an independent tribunal.

Only a little reflection is necessary, therefore, to understand the absurdity of one of the objections to Mr. Roosevelt's becoming the arbitrator. It is argued that if he decides against Venezuela it will be incumbent upon the United States to enforce his award. Yet no one thinks of hinting that if he should decide against Germany and Great Britain it would be incumbent upon the United States to compel them to abide by that decision. True, it may be assumed that they would submit and therefore that no one would be needed to enforce an adverse award. But why jump to the conclusion that Venezuela would not do so if the award were against her?

She might not be able to pay a money indemnity out of hand; but if required to pay more than she were able, why infer that she would refuse to negotiate a fair settlement? It is to be feared that much of this talk about the necessity the United States would be under of enforcing a decision against Venezuela—which it is somewhat prematurely assumed President Roosevelt would make—is another indication of the restless spirit of American imperialism. The monopolists of this country are as hungry for South American territory as are those of Great Britain and Germany with "me too" Italy thrown in. They would be well pleased if Destiny were to take such a turn as to make it our pious Duty to civilize Venezuela out of her tempting lands.

An important step has been taken by the tariff reform committee of the New York Reform club, which has been almost quiescent for several years, though in the early 90's it did much excellent free trade work. It has decided to call a tariff conference at New York during the coming year to which "representative free trade men from various parts of the Union" are to be invited. One particularly encouraging thing about this matter is the honest boldness with which the term "free trade" is now used by the Reform club. Nothing is to be gained in any agitation vitalized by a principle, either by honest timidity or disingenuous evasion in declaring its purpose.

In the discussion which led up to the decision to call this tariff conference of free traders, ex-Congressman John DeWitt Warner placed the issue squarely as one between protection on the one hand and free trade on the other. That does not mean that in legislation the whole tariff must be at once abolished or nothing

be done; what it does mean is that reforms of the tariff, whether little or great, shall be made in the direction of free trade and upon free-trade principles. Any other tariff agitation is not worth the making. Protectionists are willing to reform the tariff in the direction of protection and upon protection principles. That is what they mean when they urge the reform of the tariff "by the friends of protection." And therein lies their strength. They secure the confidence and support of all protectionists; while those who propose to reform the tariff with due deference to protection and protection principles, yet as enemies of protection, antagonize protectionists and excite the distrust of free traders without awakening any enthusiasm among people who are neither the one nor the other but a little of both. What the anti-protection policy needs is to be made candidly affirmative in form as it is in substance. Some policies, though affirmative in substance, are necessarily negative in form. Circumstances make them so. The anti-imperialist policy is an example. But the free trade policy is distinctly affirmative and there is no valid excuse for endowing it with the weakness of the negative form. Let the compromisers be "anti-free traders" if they want to be; but let the men of principle, though they must needs compromise in legislation from time to time in order to make headway, keep their principles always in public sight. If they are free traders they will gain strength for their cause, even for the small advances in their cause, by honestly saying so.

Mr. Warner's spirit was expressed at this meeting also by Henry W. Lamb and Edward M. Shepard. Mr. Shepard had recently made a powerful free trade speech before the Free Trade league at Boston, of which Mr. Lamb is president, and on the later occasion he appears from the press reports to have spoken without timidity and with welcome definiteness. His declaration that "the de-

lay of the last Democratic administration in dealing with the tariff question was a lasting calamity," is as true as any words that ever fell from the lips of a public man. It embodies a condemnation of the Cleveland regime for which there was no legitimate excuse and can be no political forgiveness.

Mr. Shepard made one point regarding free trade which free trade advocates too often ignore, though it is of supreme importance. Saying that there had been three free trade periods in this country, all periods of prosperity, he referred to that from 1789 to 1812 as the first, and to the one which began with the tariff of 1846 as the second, and then for the third to the present day "when our foreign trade is dwarfed by our internal trade." "At this time," he went on, "our trade with all other lands is utterly insignificant when compared with our inter-State trade, the ratio being 16 or 18 to 1," and "no protectionist can fail to ascribe the enormous prosperity of the country to the free exchange of commodities in the United States."

It is true, if Mr. Shepard put the point exactly the way he is reported, that he made a play upon words in speaking of the present as a free trade era because there is free trade between the States. We have had free trade between the States since the foundation of the government. But even if this be word play it does not misrepresent or mislead. On the contrary, it emphasizes a fact so big and obtrusive that it would need no emphasis if the people had not been taught to forget that our system of free trade between the States is the greatest free trade experiment known in history. What Mr. Shepard evidently sought to do was to impress his hearers with what is absolutely true, the fact that our inter-State free trade is as it has always been the chief factor in producing all the national prosperity we now do or ever have enjoyed. His statement that its vol-

ume is from 16 to 18 times as great as our foreign trade is a conclusive answer to those who, boasting that we are prosperous, attribute our prosperity to the external protective system which affects only one-seventeenth of all our trade, and not to the internal free trade system which affects sixteen-seventeenths of it. This is one of the arguments which warn us of the folly of making disguised free trade fights against protection. An impressive argument when raised in support of free trade as a principle, it loses all its force when used in support of tariff tinkering policies.

Local politics in Cleveland are becoming active as the time approaches for the municipal election under the new charter. For many reasons this is likely to be the most important municipal election of the coming year. The street car interests all over the United States will in all probability combine their influence and pool their contributions to defeat Mayor Tom L. Johnson for reelection. It is understood that a regular assessment of American street car interests is being made by Mr. Hanna, and its collection vigorously pushed, upon the plea that the Cleveland fight is their fight. For if Johnson makes Cleveland a three-cent fare city the water will soon be squeezed out of all street railroad stock everywhere. The word has gone out, therefore, that Mayor Johnson must be—not may be, or ought to be, or can be—but must be defeated. Nothing will be left undone by the plutocratic interests of the country to accomplish the defeat of this man, even to the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars for corruption purposes. The clasping of hands by Hanna and McLean, the plutocratic Democrat, is also in contemplation. McLean has been admonished that now is his opportunity to get rid of Johnson and resume his place at the head of the Democratic party of Ohio; and he accordingly is adjusting things to organize a "fake" opposition to Johnson among the disgruntled and corrupt Democratic