

shown a taste for intellectual subjects. The character of the assemblage in this respect was marked.

To lay before such a gathering of eager and receptive minds, arguments or data of a kind that would be misleading, would be to do injury that might be grave and irreparable. A weighty responsibility rests upon the speakers upon such an occasion, and if they fail to properly discharge it, they become legitimate subjects of criticism. They are such in any case, for the reason that they invite the public to listen to and consider their views and arguments.

While much might be said in praise of the entertainment given to the audience who listened to the debate last evening, there were features connected with it which would have been difficult to eliminate from it, but which should be guarded against as far as possible, both by speakers and listeners. The speakers in the affirmative laid before the audience statistics, or alleged statistics, in support of free trade, which were obviously beyond the power of any human being to check, that is to sustain or refute by sound logic based upon sure premises, and the defenders of a protective tariff did the same thing. Among these statistics, for example, were figures which purported to represent the national wealth of this country at different periods prior to 1850. The champions of free trade had a lot of figures which went to show that the country prospered most under a low tariff, and the advocates of protection had a lot of figures covering the same periods of time, which went to show that the country prospered most under a protective tariff.

Now these figures were worthless. They were mostly fictitious. Prior to 1850, no method existed by which accurate statistics upon this subject were or could be collected or preserved, to enable any person to conclusively show the relation between national prosperity and the tariff. To tell, for example, the amount of our national wealth in the year 1820, with any degree of certainty, lies beyond the power of man. Figures that purport to represent it may be far too large or much too small. There exist no means of checking them. Hence a debater may make them what he pleases with the happy consciousness that so long as he remains within the bounds of reason, no human being can convict him of error.

If an investigator makes a bookworm of himself and searches through the literature of the subject from remote dates till now, he always finds the same conflict in figures and assertions, of arguments and statistics, and if he be both logical and conscientious he will reach the conclusion that the tariff problem must be solved by lines of argument having some other basis than the alleged statistics which writers and speakers upon the subject commonly use, for when such figures are not downright forgeries, they are almost always too incomplete to be of any value.

As an illustration of this point we reproduce figures relative to the sugar industry which one of the speakers presented: Total value of the product for the year 1887, \$242,000,000; total amount of wages paid for the labor producing that amount of sugar, \$4,000,000; amount of the tariff on that quantity of sugar if it were, imported at $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents per pound, \$46,000,000; amount which sugar manufacturers are enabled, because of the tariff, to "steal" from the sum they ought to pay for wages, \$42,000,000. These figures were laid before the audience on a blackboard, but few if any persons present could give them proper analysis or consideration at the time. Now they mean that the labor which produces \$242 worth of sugar is paid only \$4. This is preposterous; \$4 would not pay for the labor employed to haul the sugar cane from the field. From these figures it would appear that the manufacturers pay their employes \$4 while stealing \$42 from them! In other words, more than ten times as much is stolen from employes as is paid to them, and but for the iniquities of the tariff the employes in the sugar industry would receive ten times as high wages as they now do, without increasing the price at which sugar is sold to the public!

We refrain from further comment upon or analysis of these figures. In a dozen ways it can be shown that they have no necessary connection with or dependence upon each other, and that they are absurd and impossible. The mind of the speaker who put them forward was not trained to close and accurate reasoning, though he possesses superior intelligence, and made a concise and apparently strong argument in favor of free trade. He declared the figures were taken from the United States census, and was undoubtedly honest in the

enthusiasm with which he pointed out and denounced the wrongs of a protective tariff. But no such figures were ever contained in a government publication, and inquiry developed the explanation that those he gave were obtained from the *New York World*.

The object of this article is not to argue against free trade, for the fallacy of some of the figures and logic presented in support of protection could be quite easily exposed as the figures and deductions on the other side, above treated upon. Our purpose is rather to show the advisability of using in debate only such material as is known or can be shown to be true, while avoiding empty assertion, and data that are fictitious, or incapable of being either verified or refuted.

THE EXCESSIVE TAX QUESTION.

THE subject of the assessment of taxes under the new revenue law is of great moment. It will affect every property owner in the Territory. To some taxpayers it is of vital importance. If the fears now entertained as to the enormous increase of estimated land values shall be realized, quite a number of citizens who are not wealthy, but yet hold title to their homes, will have to dispose of their possessions and become tenants instead of having "a stake in the country." This would be a public calamity as well as a private hardship. It is to be hoped that the alarm which has become widespread will prove to have less ground than has been supposed.

The petition of Assessor Fox to the county court of this county which we publish in another column, should be carefully considered. The committee to whom it has been referred ought to weigh the subject well, and make such a report as will be fair to the assessor and his bondsmen, while upholding the law in relation to this matter.

We believe the county courts can do much to relieve public apprehension and prevent private distress. In the first place they can instruct the Assessor as to their views on "full cash valuation" of property. It ought not to be governed by inflated ideas of values promoted by a speculative "boom." Property has, no doubt, increased in value since the assessment of 1889. The Court can say what in their opinion is the percentage of increase in actual values. They ought to be willing to take some part of the responsibility which the law imposes.