

Jefferson Davis Posthumously Responds to Our Readers' Reactions

by David John Marotta and Megan Russell on June 27, 2013



We were surprised by some of the reactions to our recent article on protective tariffs as one of the primary causes of the Civil War. We have gotten both some of the most insulting and the most flattering responses.

We were setting out to write about the troubles caused by the “temporary” tariffs put in place by the founding fathers. One of the harms was helping to usher in the Civil War. We did not realize that this piece of history was such a polarizing issue.

Winston Churchill said, although many have repeated it, “History is written by the victors.” Although the Confederate President Jefferson Davis did not hear this quote, after the war ended he certainly knew its truth. After his troops surrendered, Jefferson Davis sat in a federal jail cell while his Northern rivals wrote the recent war’s history.

On February 22, 1866, Andrew Johnson, the new President of the (once again) United States, gave what is now called the [“Speech to the Citizens of](#)

[Washington.](#)” In his speech, he was doing three main things: celebrating George Washington’s birthday, dedicating the Washington Monument (which actually wouldn’t be completed until 1884 because of insufficient funds), and telling his version of the history of the Civil War. He said:

A motto inscribed on that stone sent here to be placed in that monument of freedom and in commemoration of Washington. I stand by that sentiment, and she is willing to stand by it. It was the sentiment enunciated by the immortal Andrew Jackson, “The Federal Union it must be preserved.” (Wild shouts of applause.) Were it possible to have the great man whose statue is now before me, and whose portrait is behind me in the Capitol, and whose sentiment is inscribed on the stone deposited in the monument were it possible to communicate with the illustrious dead, and he could be informed of or made to understand the working progress of faction, rebellion, and treason, the bones of the old man would stir in their coffin, and he would rise and shake off the habiliments of the tomb; he would extend that long arm and finger of his, and he would reiterate that glorious sentiment, “The Federal Union it must be preserved.” (Applause.) But we see and witness what has transpired since his day. **We remember what he did in 1833, when treason, treachery, and infidelity to the Government and Constitution of the United States then stalked forth. It was his power and influence that then crushed the treason in its infancy. It was then stopped; but only for a time the spirit continued.** There were men disaffected to the Government both North and South. We had peculiar institutions, of which some complained and to which others were attached. One portion of our countrymen advocated that institution in the South; another apposed it in the North; and it resulted in creating two extremes. The one in the South reached a point at which they were prepared to dissolve the Government of the United States, to secure and preserve their peculiar institution; and in what I may say on this occasion I want to be understood.

There was another portion of our countrymen who were opposed to this peculiar institution in the South, and who went to the extreme of being willing to break up the Government to get clear of it. (Applause.) I am talking to you to-day in the common phrase, and assume to be nothing but a citizen, and one who has been fighting for the Constitution and to preserve the Government. These two parties have been arrayed against each other; and I stand before you to-day, as I did in the Senate in 1860, in the presence of those who were making war on the Constitution, and who wanted to disrupt the Government, to denounce, as I then did in my place, those who

were so engaged, as traitors. I have never ceased to repeat, and so far as my efforts could go, to carry out, the sentiments I then uttered. (Cheers.) **I have already remarked that there were two parties, one for destroying the Government to preserve slavery, and the other to break up the Government to destroy slavery.** The objects to be accomplished were different, it is true, so far as slavery is concerned, but they agreed in one thing, and that was the breaking up of the Government. They agreed in the destruction of the Government, the precise thing which I have stood up to oppose. Whether the disunionists come from South Carolina or the North I stand now where I did then, to vindicate the Union of these States and the Constitution of the country. (Applause.)

In 1867, Jefferson Davis was released, after a bail of \$100,000 was met, and he traveled the world in search of work. Ten years later, the disillusioned former president settled down in the home of a wealthy but dying widow to write his version of the war's history. By 1881, he had finished writing his two volume account called The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government. And then in 1889 he completed A Short History of the Confederate States of America. Later that year, he died, hoping he had set the record straight.

His 1881 work, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, was intended to explain the real reason the South seceded. Our modern day back of the book describes the work well:

A decade after his release from federal prison, the 67-year-old Jefferson Davis—ex-president of the Confederacy, the “Southern Lincoln,” popularly regarded as a martyr to the Confederate cause—began work on his monumental *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*. Motivated partially by his deep-rooted antagonism toward his enemies (both the Northern victors and his Southern detractors), partially by his continuing obsession with the “cause,” and partially by his desperate pecuniary and physical condition, Davis devoted three years and extensive research to the writing of **what he termed “an historical sketch of the events which preceded and attended the struggle of the Southern states to maintain their existence and their rights as sovereign communities.”** The result was a perceptive two-volume chronicle, covering the birth, life, and death of the Confederacy, from the Missouri Compromise in 1820, through the tumultuous events of the Civil War, to the readmission of the Southern states

to the U.S. Congress in the late 1860s. As a result in 1881, Jefferson Davis published “The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government.”

In Part I, [Chapter X](#) of the book, which the title summarizes, “False Statements of the Grounds for Separation – Slavery not the Cause, but an Incident – The Southern People not ‘Propagandists’ of Slavery – Early Accord Among the States With Regard to African Servitude...”, Jefferson Davis directly addresses Johnson’s claim that the civil war was fought primarily over slavery. The only Confederate President writes:

Men differed in their views as to the abstract question of its [slavery’s] right or wrong, but for two generations after the Revolution there was no geographical line of demarcation for such differences. **The African slave trade was carried on almost exclusively by New England merchants and Northern ships.** Jefferson – a Southern man, the founder of the Democratic party, and the vindicator of state rights – was a consistent enemy to every form of slavery. **The Southern states took the lead in prohibiting the slave trade, and, as we have seen, one of them (Georgia) was the first state to incorporate such a prohibition in her organic Constitution.**

Eleven years after the agitation on the Missouri question, when the subject first took a sectional shape, the abolition of slavery was proposed and earnestly debated in the Virginia legislature, and its advocates were so near the accomplishment of their purpose, that a declaration in its favor was defeated by only a small majority, and that on the ground of expediency. At a still later period, **abolitionist lecturers and teachers were mobbed, assaulted, and threatened with tar and feathers in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and other states.** One of them (Lovejoy) was actually killed by a mob in Illinois as late as 1837.

These facts prove incontestably that the sectional hostility which exhibited itself in 1820, on the application of Missouri for admission into the Union, which again broke out on the proposition for the annexation of Texas in 1844, and which reappeared after the Mexican war, never again to be suppressed until its fell results had been fully accomplished [meaning the end of the Civil War], **was not the consequence of any difference on the abstract question of slavery. It was the offspring of sectional rivalry and political ambition. It would have manifested itself just as certainly if slavery had existed in all the states, or if there had not been a negro in America.** No such pretension was made in 1803 or 1811, when the

Louisiana purchase, and afterward the admission into the Union of the state of that name, elicited threats of disunion from the representatives of New England. The complaint was not of slavery, but of “the acquisition of more weight at the other extremity” of the Union. **It was not slavery that threatened a rupture in 1832, but the unjust and unequal operation of a protective tariff.**

It happened, however, on all these occasions, that the line of demarcation of sectional interests coincided exactly or very nearly with that dividing the states in which negro servitude existed from those in which it had been abolished.

Later on the same page, he adds:

The truth remains intact and incontrovertible, that the existence of African servitude was in no wise the cause of the conflict, but only an incident. **In the later controversies that arose, however, its effect in operating as a lever upon the passions, prejudices, or sympathies of mankind was so potent that it has been spread like a thick cloud over the whole horizon of historic truth.**

The rupture he’s referencing in 1832 is the threatened secession of South Carolina. He explains further in Part II “The Constitution,” [Chapter XIV](#) “The Necessity for Secession.” Davis explains:

At a critical and memorable period, that pure spirit, luminous intellect, and devoted adherent of the Constitution, **the great statesman of South Carolina, invoked this remedy of state interposition against the Tariff Act of 1828, which was deemed injurious and oppressive to his state.** No purpose was then declared to coerce the state, as such, but measures were taken to break the protective shield of her authority and enforce the laws of Congress upon her citizens, by compelling them to pay outside of her ports the duties on imports, which the state had declared unconstitutional and had forbidden to be collected in her ports.

There remained at that day enough of the spirit in which the Union had been founded – enough respect for the sovereignty of states and of regard for the limitations of the Constitution – to prevent a conflict of arms. **The compromise of 1833 was adopted, which South Carolina agreed to accept, the principle for which she contended being virtually conceded.**

The protectionism in the Tariff of 1832 and the Tariff of Abominations (1828) had been the last straw. South Carolina, fed up with the discrimination of protectionism, threatened secession. It was only the compromise of 1833 (also called the Tariff of 1833) which brought them back. The new tariff act was supposed gradually reduce the rates of tariffs. By 1842, the compromise was nearly successful with rates approaching 20%, the rate it was prior to 1832. The problem was the reduction was abandoned in 1842 when Congress passed The Black Tariff, which, among other things, doubled the average tariff rates to 40%.

In Part IV “The War”, [Chapter XIII](#) “Sources Whence Revenue was Derived”, he comments further on this controversy:

So the tariff act in 1828, known at the time as ‘the bill of abominations,’ was resisted by Southern representatives because it was the invasion of private rights in violation of the compact by which the states were united. In the last stage of the proceeding, after the friends of the bill had advocated it as a measure for protecting capital invested in manufacturers, **Drayton of South Carolina moved to amend the title so that it should read, ‘An act to increase the duties upon certain imports, for the purpose of increasing the profits of certain manufacturers,’ and stated his purpose for desiring to amend the title to be that, upon some case which would arise under the execution of the law, an appeal might be made to the Supreme Court of the United States, to test its constitutionality.** Those who had passed the bill refused to allow the opportunity to test the validity of a tax imposed of the protection of a particular industry. Though the debates showed clearly enough the purpose to be to impose duties for protection, the phraseology of the law presented it as enacted to raise revenue, and therefore the victims of the discrimination were deprived of an appeal to the tribunal instituted to hear and decide on the constitutionality of a law.

South Carolina, oppressed by onerous duties and stung by the injustice of a refusal to allow her the ordinary remedy against unconstitutional legislation, asserted the right, as a sovereign state, to nullify the law. This conflict between the authority of the United States and one of the states threatened for a time such disastrous consequences as to excite intense feeling in all who loved the Union as the fraternal federation of equal states. **Before an actual collision of arms occurred, Congress wisely adopted the compromise act of 1833.** By that the fact of protection remained, but the principle of duties for revenue was recognized by a sliding scale of

reduction, and it was hoped the question had been placed upon a basis that promised a permanent peace. **The party of protective duties, however, came into power about the close of the period** when the compromise measure had reached the result it proposed, **and the contest was renewed with little faith on the part of the the dominant party and with more than all of its former bitterness.** The cause of the departure from a sound principle of a tariff for revenue, which had prevailed during the first quarter of a century, and the adoption in 1816 of the rule imposing duties for protection, was stated by McDuffie to be that **politicians and capitalists had seized upon the subject and used it for their own purposes – the former for political advancement, the latter for their own pecuniary profit – and that the question had become one of partisan politics and sectional enrichment.** Contemporaneously with this theory of protective duties arose the policy of making appropriations from the common treasury for local improvements. **As the Southern representatives were mainly those who denied the constitutional power to make such expenditures, it naturally resulted that the mass of those appropriations were made for Northern works.** Now that direct taxes had in practice been so wholly abandoned as to be almost an obsolete idea, and now that the treasury was supplied by the collection of duties upon imports, two golden streams flowed steadily to enrich the Northern and manufacturing region by impoverishment of the Southern and agricultural section. In the train of wealth and demand for labor followed immigration and the more rapid increase of population in the capital Northern than in the Southern states. **I do not deny the existence of other causes, such as the fertile region of the Northwest, the better harbors, the greater amount of shipping of the Northeastern states, and the prejudice of Europeans against contact with the negro race; the causes I have first stated were, I think, the chief, and those only which are referable to the action of the general government.**

...discontent therefore was steadily accumulating, and, as stated in the beginning of this chapter, I think was due to class legislation in the form of protective duties and its consequences more than to any and all other causes combined.

The Union was lucky that force was not necessary and, even though they broke their promise, the compromise of 1833 quieted the dispute. However, less than thirty years later in December 1860, South Carolina was the first state to actually secede.

These ideas of Jefferson Davis seem to be the sentiment among many economists or civil war buffs. Regardless though, many others seem to not be willing even to concede the statement, “Protective tariffs were *one* of the primary causes of the Civil War.”

It is of course the case that slavery played a role in causing the Civil War as well. The South feared that slavery not being extended to the western states would mean that they would be more easily outvoted in the future. And they faulted the northern states for not upholding the Constitution and Supreme Court cases regarding slavery.

In Part I, [Chapter I](#) on Page 4, Jefferson Davis describes one of the confederacy’s main grievances involving slavery and laments what he believes to be the weakness of argument from which the North fueled their retelling. He writes:

Southern statesmen may perhaps have been too indifferent to this consideration – overlooking in their ardent pursuit of principles, the effects of phrases.

This is especially true with regard to that familiar but most fallacious expression, “the extension of slavery.” To the reader unfamiliar with the subject, or viewing it only on the surface, it would perhaps never occur that, as used in the great controversies respecting the territories of the United States, **it does not, never did, and never could, imply the addition of a single slave to the number already existing. The question was merely whether the slaveholder should be permitted to go, with his slaves, into territory (the common property of all) into which the non-slaveholder could go with *his* property of any sort.** There was no proposal or desire on the part of the Southern states to reopen the slave trade, which they had been foremost in suppressing, or to add to the number of slaves. It was a question of the distribution, or dispersion, of the slaves, rather than of the ‘extension of slavery.’ Removal is not extension. **Indeed, if emancipation was the end to be desired, the dispersion of the negroes over a wider area among additional territories, eventually to become states, in climates unfavorable to slave labor, instead of hindering, would have promoted this object by diminishing the difficulties in the way of ultimate emancipation.**

In other words, the discussion of the emancipation of slaves was continuing during the time that the Union was acquiring new territories. From 1836 – 1861, 10 new states were admitted to the Union. Thus, one of the debates of the day was over “the extension of slavery,” or could slaveholders bring their slaves with them into the new territories without forfeiting their rights of ownership.

The problem was that slaveholders had no way of extracting the capital they had invested into their slaves. Even if a slaveholder wanted to believe in the freedom of all people, it was a foolish business decision for him to just let all his slaves go free. That’s why in other European countries, the government compensated slaveholders, literally buying slaves out of slavery. That way, no one could have economic concerns holding them back from emancipation.

But if the extension of slavery was prohibited, slaveholders, with no way of getting the capital out and no way to move into the new territories, would have been essentially caged into their home states. They wouldn’t be able to partake in the benefit of the new states or territories and again the government would be discriminating against them.

However the turn of phrase is what Davis is lamenting. Supporting the “extension of slavery” sounds like you’re supporting bringing over more slaves, even though this turn of phrase “does not, never did, and never could” actually imply that. However, many who retell our history now do make it mean just that. It is almost certain that Lincoln and Johnson danced around such turns of phrase in order to spread the idea of the primary cause of the Civil War being slavery.

That slavery was a primary cause of secession is not in dispute. If you thought that we were somehow denying that slavery played any part in secession, please understand that we were not. Slavery played a role, especially the debate of the “extension of slavery,” how emancipation would work, and if it should yet happen at all.

South Carolina’s declaration of secession is mostly about slavery, for example. After establishing their historical justification for thinking of themselves as a free and independent state, they write:

On the 4th day of March next, this party will take possession of the Government. It has announced that the South shall be excluded from the common territory, that the judicial tribunals shall be made sectional, and that a war must be waged against slavery until it shall cease throughout the United States.

The guaranties of the Constitution will then no longer exist; the equal rights of the States will be lost. The slaveholding States will no longer have the power of self-government, or self-protection, and the Federal Government will have become their enemy.

They had clearly invested a lot into slavery, and, of course, rumblings of the sudden removal of slavery helped cause secession.

But protective tariffs were one of the primary causes of the war as well. At least that was the opinion of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States. And the position has sufficient historical evidence that it should not elicit personal slanders from one faction of our readership.

In Texas' statement of secession, they have a long list of accusations against the Union which reads:

For years past this abolition organization has been actively sowing the seeds of discord through the Union, and has rendered the federal congress the arena for spreading firebrands and hatred between the slave-holding and non-slave-holding States.

By consolidating their strength, they have placed the slave-holding States in a hopeless minority in the federal congress, and rendered representation of no avail in protecting Southern rights against their exactions and encroachments.

They have proclaimed, and at the ballot box sustained, the revolutionary doctrine that there is a 'higher law' than the constitution and laws of our Federal Union, and **virtually that they will disregard their oaths and trample upon our rights.**

They have for years past encouraged and sustained lawless organizations to steal our slaves and prevent their recapture, and have repeatedly murdered Southern citizens while lawfully seeking their rendition.

They have invaded Southern soil and murdered unoffending citizens, and through the press their leading men and a fanatical pulpit have bestowed praise upon the actors and assassins in these crimes, while the governors of several of their States have refused to deliver parties implicated and indicted for participation in such offenses, upon the legal demands of the States aggrieved.

They have, through the mails and hired emissaries, sent seditious pamphlets and papers among us to stir up servile insurrection and bring blood and carnage to our firesides.

They have sent hired emissaries among us to burn our towns and distribute arms and poison to our slaves for the same purpose.

They have impoverished the slave-holding States by unequal and partial legislation, thereby enriching themselves by draining our substance.

They have refused to vote appropriations for protecting Texas against ruthless savages, for the sole reason that she is a slave-holding State.

And, finally, by the combined sectional vote of the seventeen non-slave-holding States, they have elected as president and vice-president of the whole confederacy **two men whose chief claims to such high positions are their approval of these long continued wrongs, and their pledges to continue them to the final consummation of these schemes for the ruin of the slave-holding States.**

In view of these and many other facts, it is meet that our own views should be distinctly proclaimed.

Texas was largely upset by all the Northern exploitation. They group together the grievance of Northerners murdering slaves with Northerners gouging them with discriminating, protectionist legislation.

Also, Georgia's Declaration of Secession was written in part by Robert Toombs, who gave a long speech attacking the "infamous Morrill bill" a few years prior. The declaration laid out the primary causes of secession and included this large section citing the unfairness of protective tariffs:

The material prosperity of the North was greatly dependent on the Federal Government; that of the South not at all. In the first years of the Republic the

navigating, commercial, and manufacturing interests of the North began to seek profit and aggrandizement at the expense of the agricultural interests. Even the owners of fishing smacks sought and obtained bounties for pursuing their own business (which yet continue), and \$500,000 is now paid them annually out of the Treasury. The navigating interests begged for protection against foreign shipbuilders and against competition in the coasting trade. Congress granted both requests, and by prohibitory acts gave an absolute monopoly of this business to each of their interests, which they enjoy without diminution to this day. Not content with these great and unjust advantages, they have sought to throw the legitimate burden of their business as much as possible upon the public; they have succeeded in throwing the cost of light-houses, buoys, and the maintenance of their seamen upon the Treasury, and the Government now pays above \$2,000,000 annually for the support of these objects. These interests, in connection with the commercial and manufacturing classes, have also succeeded, by means of subventions to mail steamers and the reduction in postage, in relieving their business from the payment of about \$7,000,000 annually, throwing it upon the public Treasury under the name of postal deficiency. **The manufacturing interests entered into the same struggle early, and has clamored steadily for Government bounties and special favors. This interest was confined mainly to the Eastern and Middle non-slave-holding States.** Wielding these great States it held great power and influence, and its demands were in full proportion to its power. The manufacturers and miners wisely based their demands upon special facts and reasons rather than upon general principles, and thereby mollified much of the opposition of the opposing interest. **They pleaded in their favor the infancy of their business in this country, the scarcity of labor and capital, the hostile legislation of other countries toward them, the great necessity of their fabrics in the time of war, and the necessity of high duties to pay the debt incurred in our war for independence. These reasons prevailed, and they received for many years enormous bounties by the general acquiescence of the whole country.**

But when these reasons ceased they were no less clamorous for Government protection, but their clamors were less heeded— the country had put the principle of protection upon trial and condemned it. After having enjoyed protection to the extent of from 15 to 200 per cent. upon their entire business for above thirty years, the act of 1846 was passed [The Walker Tariff, which cut the rates of the Black Tariff]. It avoided sudden change, but the principle was settled, and free trade, low duties, and economy in public expenditures

was the verdict of the American people. The South and the Northwestern States sustained this policy [unlike the Northeastern states, currently talking about the new tariff which would become the Tariff of 1861]. There was but small hope of its reversal; upon the direct issue, none at all.

As a result of the historical documents, we did not think the statement, “One of the primary reasons the South seceded was over the issue of protective tariffs” would be so polarizing. For the sake of brevity and because we did not think the issue one of disagreement, we cited only a few sources in our article.

We cited in our article Vice President John Calhoun’s warning that if the tariff of 1828 was not repealed South Carolina would secede. We did cite that after the Panic of 1857 Congress began using that crisis to push for a new protective tariff act. But we did not describe how violently Southern Congressmen reacted to those two years of discussion other than to say it was met with “hostility.”

The frequent debates over high protective tariffs, especially in Lincoln’s candidacy, make it clear it was one of the primary causes of Southern secession. And the first thing the North did when the South had seceded was pass the tariff legislation, by then called the Morrill Tariff of 1861.

That the election of Abraham Lincoln was the trigger for Southern Secession is also not disputed. His leanings on both slavery and tariffs played a part in Southern worries. Therefore his own words help to clarify which of the two positions, slavery or tariffs, Southerners were most justified in being worried about.

On the issue of tariffs, Lincoln made statements such as these:

“[I cannot] tell the reason... [but high tariffs will] make everything the farmers [buy] cheaper.”

“I was an old Henry-Clay-Tariff Whig. In old times I made more speeches on that subject than any other. I have not since changed my views.”

“My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman’s dance. I am in favor of a national bank ... in favor of the internal improvements system and a high protective tariff.”

Against the idea of free trade, Lincoln added:

“[Free trade is a system whereby] some have labored, and others have, without labor, enjoyed a large portion of the fruits.... To secure to each laborer the whole product of his labor, or as nearly as possible, is a most worthy object of any good government.”

“[International trade] is demonstrably a dead loss of labor... labor being the true standard of value.”

“I... would continue (trade) where it is necessary, and discontinue it, where it is not. As instance: I would continue commerce so far as it is employed in bringing us coffee, and I would discontinue it so far as it is employed in bringing us cotton goods.”

On the other hand, on slavery Lincoln was much more conciliatory. His comments include:

“... when they [slaveowners] remind us of their constitutional rights, I acknowledge them, not grudgingly but fully and fairly; and I would give them any legislation for the claiming of their fugitives.”

[Regarding a proposed thirteenth Amendment guaranteeing slavery] “I have no objection to its [meaning slavery] being made express and irrevocable [meaning forever legal].”

Those who doubt that tariffs played any part in Southern secession have a difficult time at this point. They have to assume that despite Lincoln’s stated opinions about slavery the South assumed his assurances were lies. And they have to assume that despite Lincoln’s stated opinions about tariffs the South did not consider it an important issue.

A more honest reading of the history is that the South believed Lincoln on all his statements. They believed that the institution of slavery was, for the time being, secure in the states where it was currently in practice. In the North, the list of slave states included Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. These are also all Northern States that stayed with the Union during the Civil War.

Slavery wasn’t being immediately challenged. Once the South seceded, the North didn’t immediately abolish slavery across all of the Union. The South

was still concerned about the future of slavery, making it a factor for secession, but evidence suggests it wasn't the primary precipitating cause of war.

[Lincoln's First Inaugural Address](#) refers to a long campaign process by which Lincoln made his position on slavery abundantly clear:

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that—

I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.

Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations and had never recanted them; and more than this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:

Resolved, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.

I now reiterate these sentiments, and in doing so I only press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible that the property, peace, and security of no section are to be in any wise endangered by the now incoming Administration. I add, too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given will be cheerfully given to all the States when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause—as cheerfully to one section as to another.

In Lincoln's First Inaugural Address he is conciliatory in all things except the Morrill Tariff, which passed two days before his inauguration. Over this matter, and this matter alone, Lincoln says he will go to war. He says:

In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence, and there shall be none unless it be forced upon the national authority. **The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government and to collect the duties and imposts;** but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere.

While fears about the future of slavery or of slave states ultimately being outnumbered was one of the primary causes of Southern secession, it was not one of the primary causes of the War Between the States. However you view hostilities breaking out, slavery was not the primary cause. Lincoln was happy to let that peculiar institution continue so long as he could also continue to collect his tariffs.

To the suggestion by the Virginian Commissioners to abandon Fort Sumter Lincoln replied, "If I do that, what would become of my revenue? I might as well shut up housekeeping [federal spending] at once!"

And to the idea that he would not use force Lincoln replied, "But what am I to do in the meantime with those men at Montgomery [editing the Confederate Constitution]? Am I to let them go on... and open Charleston, etc., as ports of entry, with their ten-percent tariff. What, then, would become of my tariff?"

When Lincoln acted, he decided to blockade all the Southern Ports. In the [Proclamation](#) which established the blockade, he wrote:

Whereas an insurrection against the Government of the United States has broken out in the States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, and the laws of the United States for the collection of the revenue cannot be effectually executed therein conformably to that provision of the Constitution which requires duties to be uniform throughout the United States:

To the South, Lincoln's Inaugural Address was considered a declaration of war against the Southern States and the blockade was considered an act of

war. Taking Fort Sumter was simply removing a foreign power from their midst who had declared war and then acted on it.

We received many responses and replying to them all would take more time than we have. But a few of them are noteworthy enough to mention.

Several favorable readers said that too much is conceded in calling it “The Civil War.”

The war is called “The Civil War” in elementary history classes and is so ingrained that we did not think calling it “the War between the States” would be as productive to our main point. We had always thought that calling it “the war of Northern Aggression” was a Southern joke. But in studying the historians, we realized it was not a joke it was simply trying to maintain that States had the right to dissolve their affiliation with the Union and the Union did not have the right to force federal rule. If the right of secession existed then calling it “The Civil War” is incorrect. There is ample evidence that our founding fathers believed states had a right to secede, but that is a separate article.

In our article we set out to write about tariffs and protective tariffs as an unfavorable option for taxation. There is so much to cover in looking at the history of the civil war that we wanted to limit the article to the contributions of tariffs to the start of the war. As such we decided to call it “The Civil War.”

It is, however, a good reminder that names matter greatly and that names are selected by the victors in order to make their political points. It is easy to put words like “protection”, “affordable”, “rights”, or “reform” into a piece of legislation to mask the control it provides to those in power.

One reader said that the declarations of the seceding states never mention the word tariff but do mention slavery. He cited the very documents we have quoted above from Texas and Georgia. It is true that the word “tariff” does not appear, but that is the more modern nomenclature. Although the word “tariff” was known at the time even the Constitution uses the terms “duties, imposts and excises.” The declarations of secession cite “duties”, “trade” and “unequal and partial legislation” for the purpose of “public expenditures” which “enrich themselves by draining our substance.”

Finally, we got a letter from a history teacher of a local public high school. He wrote in order to tell us that what he's found contradicts everything stated in our article. After citing evidence of slavery as an issue in secession he went on to say, "To claim that the Southern states would secede over this issue [tariffs] is simply not true. ... Do you really think that young men would march off to their slaughter over the issue of tariffs? It defies comprehension."

At least we know why tariffs are not taught in the school system as a cause of the Civil War. Public High School teachers can't imagine anyone going to war over taxes. It defies their comprehension.

I'm not sure how a history teacher, who can't imagine anyone going to war over the issue of taxation, teaches history. [Taxes are one of the main reasons people go to war](#). From the [Magna Carta](#) to our own [American Revolution](#), taxes often trump other political concerns. Perhaps if they were subject to a 50% to 200% tariff they would understand better.

I suspect many today can't fathom going to war over anything. They themselves support a high rate of taxation in order to redistribute wealth from those who are productive to the causes they desire to be funded. And because they don't understand the harmful unintended consequences of these taxes they can't fathom anyone else believing economic freedom is worth fighting for.