

1828 - 1832

PROTECTIVE TARIFFS

Tariffs had been used by the United States since 1789 but the rate was low. Since 1816, the United States used tariffs to protect American industry against foreign competition. Protective tariffs formed the foundation of economic policy of the United States until President Andrew Jackson was elected in 1824. The first tariff passed was moderately low, but it progressively rose each year until 1828, with what became known as the Tariff of Abominations. The tariff raised duties to between 30 to-50% on certain raw materials, which protected the Mid-Atlantic and Western states but left Southern states with its cotton and tobacco industry unprotected. Foreign markets retaliated to the new tariff by blocking the sale of American cotton, the South's chief export. This action caused economic issues in the South. South Carolinian John C. Calhoun and Vice President of Andrew Jackson wrote and anonymously published a pamphlet titled "*Exposition and Protest*" which criticized the tariff and laid the foundation for the theory of nullification.

An exchange on the Senate floor between South Carolina Senator Robert Hayne and Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster in January 1830 rekindled the debate. Hayne argued that state sovereignty permitted the nullification of federal rulings when those rulings infringed on states' rights, going so far as to make the argument for secession in order to preserve state and personal liberty. Webster responded with "liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable". Webster and other unionists believed that people, not states made up the union. Nullification promoted secession which in turn would destroy the union; the sole defender of liberty. Thus, to preserve liberty, you must preserve the union. Nullifiers did not believe in this connection between union and liberty but believed that it was the states which protected individual freedoms from an overreaching federal government. Congress passed the tariff of 1832 that lowered rates of the 1828 tariff. It did not satisfy the South Carolinians who had made veil threats of secession since 1828.