

### Speech by Titus Salt to the Wine Duties Committee

#### Context

This speech was delivered by Titus Salt in 1856 (3 years after Salts Mill opened). Titus speaks about the effects of duties (taxes) on the wine trade. Titus was not a good speaker and it is a long speech. You will likely want to skim read most of this source to pick out the most important points!

**Provenance** – Newspaper Extract from the *Bradford Observer*, Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1856.

**Author** – Unknown reporter but reported as direct copy of Titus' own words.

#### Source

*“The Council of the Chamber of Commerce for Bradford and the worsted district have repeatedly urged government to carry out the principles of free trade, and have not hesitated to apply those principles to the question of wine duties, which must in a great measure have the tendency of preventing that free interchange of commodities between nation and nation which it is the great object of modern legislation to promote.*

*They have demanded that even where reciprocity was not granted to us, we at least ought not to be debarred by laws of our own making from the enjoyment of comforts denied to us by climate or other circumstances.*

*Entertaining these views, the Council have invariably supported the entire abolition, or at least the material reduction of those duties, and they are of opinion that the objections raised by government on account of the revenue ought not to prevent the agitation of this question until it shall have been carried. England, which hardly felt the one hundred millions spent upon the late war, will surely find no difficulty in replacing a revenue which can only be collected at the incalculable cost of a restricted intercourse with many nations, but principally with our most respected, our most powerful, and our most wealthy neighbour.*

*It is impossible correctly to estimate the loss of trade which the high duties on wine have occasioned to the district represented by the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, but the reasons, commercial, political, and sanitary, for reducing them to the lowest possible limits, say one shilling per gallon, have been so often and so ably stated by the Chairman (Mr. Oliveira), that but for a circumstance which has recently arisen, the Chamber would have confined themselves to the expression of their conviction that this alteration ought to be made irrespective of reciprocity, and to the assurance that any step taken for the promotion of this object will always command their most hearty co-operation. The circumstances referred to are the introduction into the Legislative Chamber of the French of a law proposing the substitution of protective duties for the present strictly prohibitive system, and its subsequent withdrawal for the present session.*

*Although there may be no necessary connection between this intended change in the French law and our own wine duties, the Council of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce believe that it would, if carried, have had the most beneficial effects upon the trade of both nations, and must have led to an immediate revision of our own tariff.*

*The untoward issue of this bill can only be ascribed to the mistaken views still entertained by many French manufacturers with respect to the effects which foreign competition, however restricted, might have upon their trade. The law, as originally framed, contained a scale of duties which would have shut out the majority of foreign fabrics as effectually as they now are by the existing prohibition; and in the case of the few exemptions from this rule, the most ample protection was provided for the competing French interests. Notwithstanding that they are on principle opposed to every protection for themselves, the Council cannot but acknowledge that the intended change would have been a step of immense importance and in the right direction; nor were they astonished to learn that it has excited alarm and provoked opposition. The Council believe that a short account of the effects which a much more sweeping measure has had upon the trade of the district represented by them might prove acceptable, and would show to the opponents of the intended change that their interests cannot possibly be injured by the importation of our worsted goods, but that, on the contrary, they themselves are the parties most likely to be benefitted by it.*

*A majority of the manufacturers of Yorkshire have always supported free trade measures, although many predicted nothing but ruin from the unrestricted competition with the productions of a country where labour is so much cheaper, and the most exaggerated fears were entertained for the safety of our staple trade.*

*The result has in an unexpected degree vindicated the soundness of the views entertained by the majority; and so far from suffering from free trade, it will only be necessary to point to the fact, that the population of the borough of Bradford has increased 56 per cent in the decennial period from 1811 to 1851, or from 66,718 to 103,786, as the most convincing proof of an almost unprecedented progress in prosperity. The whole district has in almost an equal degree increased in wealth and population, the wages of the working classes have been repeatedly raised, and the worsted trade has received a development beyond the hopes of the most sanguine.*

*The great and sweeping alteration made in 1846 allowed the importation into this country of woollen and worsted goods free from any duty. Those who still preferred dresses of unmixed wool bought the superior production of the French, which our manufacturers could not equal either as regards intrinsic worth or price.*

*No longer leaning upon protection but in perfect reliance upon the resources of their own ingenuity and*

*skill in the application of the resources at their command, the Yorkshire manufacturers continued to improve their machinery in all its branches; the dyers called science in aid of practice, and thus a great variety of articles were successively produced which combined great beauty and usefulness with remarkably low prices. These qualities fitted them for the use of the working and middle classes, not only in this but in every country where our goods are admitted upon reasonable terms, and a demand was created which surpassed every former experience. The consumption soon pressed upon the production of the raw material, and the whole world had to be ransacked to supply the ever growing demands of our machinery; and it is an undeniable fact that the most remarkable extension of our trade has been contemporaneous with its being thrown open to the most unrestricted foreign competition. We now buy our merinos from the French, and are desirous of selling them our orleans, lustres, or moreens, and shall be equally willing to buy these or similar articles from our neighbours as soon as they shall be able to produce them cheaper than we can do, or as soon as they shall have improved them by superior taste or skill in designing, without any fear on our part of being even then retarded in our hitherto prosperous career.*

*Bradford has thus a claim to be heard as a witness in favour of the of carrying out the principles of free trade, and its Chamber of Commerce have the right to state as their conviction that as the event has proved the fears of the manufacturers of this district to have been without foundation, those of the French wonted manufacturers are even less justified, because at present every actual competition between the two trades has long ceased to exist. This fact was fully proved by the report presented to the Bradford Chamber of Commerce by the Deputation sent to Paris, in 1855, for the purpose of investigating the actual condition of the worsted trade in France as compared to our own, from which it appears that the French produce, from their own in combination with Colonial wools, goods which, by their intrinsic beauty of texture and dye, leave every competition hopelessly in the rear. The prices these goods are sold at are such that we have long since abandoned their manufacture; and the Deputation, unable to find out the causes of this undeniable superiority, were obliged to ascribe it to the well-known truth that a trade once established in a certain locality cannot be carried on with the same success at another place, though the latter may, to all appearances, possess even superior advantages.*

*The merinos and de laines, together with some mixed fabrics, as shown in the Paris Exhibition of 1855, or displayed in the shops of Paris, meet the demand of the wealthier classes of society, not only in France but throughout the world. The middle and working classes are precluded by the prices from the comforts of cheap and warm clothing, such as the worsted manufacturers of Yorkshire produce, and which are pre-eminently fitted to meet their requirements. These classes have, however, shown their appreciation of our goods by the eagerness with which they tried to secure the pieces exhibited, and by the anxiety shown by the shopkeepers, naturally the best judges of the wants of the people, to buy those shown at the Exhibition. In fact, there is good authority for stating that the Orleans and lustres shown by our manufacturers and merchants excited a degree of attention which can only be explained by the supposition that they were felt to supply a want which the French manufacturer has not the means of*

satisfying.

*The article called Orleans, and which, after alpaca lustres, attracted the greatest demand, can only be produced from English wools, no others possessing the same length of staple combined with brightness, strength, and softness, and our machinery being constructed with a view to bring out these peculiar qualities to the best advantage, we possess for this article the same natural and artificial facilities which appear to be the privilege of the French for their production of merinos. But there are many other articles for the manufacture of which we can claim no other advantages than great experience and superior machinery, which would also meet with a ready sale amongst a vast class of the French people left as yet unsupplied by their own manufacturers with equally cheap, useful, and at the same time ornamental winter clothing.*

*Their introduction ought not to encounter any opposition on the part of the French manufacturers, for if the importation of these goods were allowed, the demand thus created would soon stimulate the manufacturers of France to produce if not exactly the same, at all events similar goods — a new class of industry would arise, they learning from us in the beginning and teaching us afterwards, and increased wealth and prosperity to both would be the result of this industrial rivalry.*

*That this is not a mere speculative supposition has been proved by the experience of Germany and Belgium, where new mills for the production of mixed worsted goods are daily rising into existence in order to supply the demand first created by the permitted introduction of our fabrics. Not only do these goods compete with us in their own markets where they are protected by duties, but our merchants begin to meet them in every neutral as well as in their home market, and impress upon the manufacturers the necessity of untiring attention to improvements in machinery and to the application of superior taste and skill to the production of fancy goods, in order to maintain the position as yet occupied by them in the markets of the world.”*