

The Tariff Idea

More than a century ago, Frederic Bastiat, a French economist and an ardent opponent of protectionism, drew on Daniel Defoe's immortal classic, *Robinson Crusoe*, to illustrate the evils of trade restrictions:

"You remember how Robinson Crusoe managed to make a plank when he had no saw."

"Yes; he felled a tree, and then, cutting the trunk right and left with his hatchet, he reduced it to the thickness of a board."

"And that cost him much labour?"

"Fifteen whole days' work."

"And what did he live on during that time?"

"He had provisions."

"What happened to the hatchet?"

"It was blunted by the work."

"Yes; but you perhaps do not know this: that at the moment when Robinson was beginning the work he perceived a plank thrown by the tide upon the seashore."

"Happy accident! He of course ran to appropriate it?"