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History 1700

**Reading Response 1**

I chose to do my reading response on Alexander Hamilton’s report to Congress on the subject of Manufactures. In this record Hamilton is speaking to congress about the benefits of switching focus from Agriculture to Manufactures. Before starting off its important to note that Manufactures aren’t huge warehouses like we think of today, but rather they were much smaller and run out of peoples houses.

Hamilton starts out noting that the cultivation of the earth, or farming in todays words, was the primary source of national supply. The is where he is acknowledges that even though he is about to argue against the act of agriculture, that it is still very important. He credits it as being the “immediate and chief source of subsistence to man” which is clearly very important seeing as we need food to live.

After this Hamilton starts his argument for Manufactures. One of the first arguments he makes is the fact that agriculture, and the land that it uses, is not very consistent. Farming can’t be done during the winter which is really inconvenient for farmers that rely on their crop as a source of income. Some land is very bad for agriculture, and even the most talented person won't have any luck farming on it while an average farmer might get a really good plot of land and be very successful. He counters this by pointing out that Manufactures not only are very consistent, but they can be operated year round.

He continues to make another argument that Manufactures are superior to agriculture because a variety of people can operate them day or night. This drastically opens up a whole new work force because before that men were the ones that did the majority of the Agricultural work. Hamilton says “This is the employment of persons who would otherwise be idle…” and continues to list people that typically would not or could not work such as women, children, or people who suffer from “infirmity of body.” This is similar to disability employment in our present day. There are numerous organizations that offer important jobs that need to be done for people with disabilities that can’t do other work.

Hamilton argues that people will flock from Europe to “pursue their own trades or professions” because of the freedom they would have in America. He lists “better price for their fabrics or their labor”, exemptions from taxes and burdens from the old world, and religious toleration as reasons why America is the perfect place for Manufactures. He then notes that it is in the interest of the United States to encourage people to emigrate. This is a little different than it is today. Although it is possible to emigrate and become a United States citizen, it is a long and tedious process. Back then they were trying to make the United States seem as attractive as they could so it could expand westward. So its safe to say that things have changed since Hamilton’s time.

Hamilton finishes off talking about how Manufactures can help America. He says that “a country which is both manufacturing and agriculture will be more lucrative and prosperous than that of a country which is, merely agricultural.” It’s hard to argue with him against this one. A country that does two things will be much more successful than a country that chooses to only focus on one thing. He says that Manufactures will essentially bring the North and South closer together by providing a way for them to benefit each other. While the south focuses on agriculture, the north can focus on manufacturing. This way they can trade with each other and in theory become closer together.

Alexander Hamilton was a very smart man and I think he was very successful in promoting the use of Manufactures. He gave agriculture credit for being important, but still was able to argue for the benefits of Manufactures.