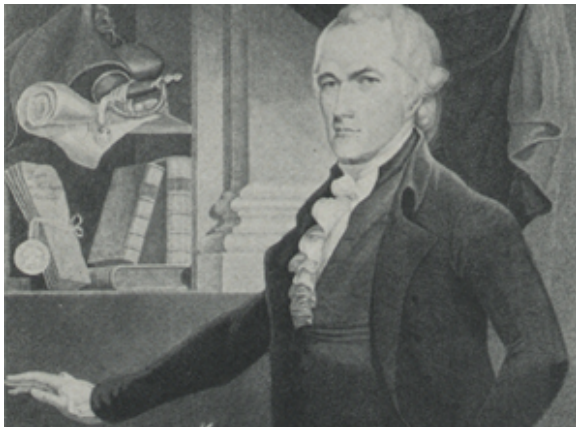


Hamilton's Report on Manufactures: More Relevant Than Ever

By Nancy Spannaus

Dec. 5, 2018—Today's anniversary of Alexander Hamilton's most important report, the *Report on Manufactures*, comes at a particularly ironic time in our country's history. On the one hand, the last year has seen a relative increase in real manufacturing jobs (allegedly the most since the mid-1990s), and a lot of public attention to the need to support manufacturing workers in the United States. On the other hand, the dominant dynamic of the U.S. economy and the Federal government continues to be driven by Wall Street, which has so far made any improvement in real productivity and the standard of living an illusion.



Alexander Hamilton at the Treasury

The solution should be to finally implement the principles embodied in Hamilton's 1791 Report.

Congress never adopted the *Report on Manufactures* as such, although it did implement many of the specific tariff proposals which the Secretary of the Treasury made. But

Hamilton's report had an enormous positive impact on our history as a nation. Its prescriptions for government promotion of the productivity of labor through technological progress; credit for industry, agriculture, and commerce through the government-supported Bank of the United State; and investment in infrastructure, were taken up by the John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt administrations, with tremendous success.

This blog has devoted a huge amount of attention to these periods where Hamilton's American System was ascendant. These were the periods of growth which built our nation into an engine for economic and human progress for which we are justly proud. Yet today, we as a nation have by and large abandoned the principles of the American System, with a resulting devastation of not only our infrastructure and productivity, but also of huge portions of our population now suffering from diseases of despair.

So, my message today is to urge my fellow citizens to study and learn. Read about the American System [principles](#) put forward in the Report on Manufactures; read about the [four periods](#) of U.S. history where they were most thoroughly put into effect. Then look at the [proposal](#) for a National Infrastructure Bank based on Hamilton's principles which is now garnering support in political and union circles around the country, with the aim of finally getting a Congressman to take action.

And if you are really ambitious, go to the [Report on Manufactures](#) itself. It's well worth the effort.