

# THROUGH A MONOCLE

## TARIFF COMMISSION AND THE PEOPLE

NOW that Mr. Borden is committed to the early creation of a Tariff Commission, students of the constructive side of public life are giving the matter serious consideration. Dr. Morley Wickett offered us an expert's opinion on the subject in a recent number of the *Courier*; and the Editor presented the more vivid journalistic view of its work, its proper personnel—and its limitations. It is a subject in which every citizen should be interested and should seek to be informed; for a Tariff Commission—if it be worth its postage stamps—will affect the business relations of every one of us. Those who do not feel its operations on their earning side, will on their spending side.

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THERE is one thing respecting it which cannot be too firmly said; and that is—to quote your own statement, Mr. Editor—that “the responsibility for all changes will remain with the government of the day.” There is real danger that a mistaken notion may get abroad, and so diminish the popularity of the proposal, to the effect that a Tariff Commission would remove the making of the tariff from the reach of the plain people. It would be composed—these misled observers might imagine—of three “little tin gods” who would sit up aloft, and decide in their own sweet wisdom just how much duty should be levied on this or how little on that. Now, of course, the power to control the tariff can never be taken from the people. No Tariff Commission plan would stand a halfchance of survival which did not make an honest effort to increase and not decrease the influence of the people on the tariff.

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THIS will be accomplished by the right kind of a Tariff Commission in several ways. Under the old system, the tariff was made by the politicians. A committee of politicians saw the people—and then the “Interests” saw them—and they weighed this influence against that; and they heard a great deal from “party workers” who told them that they must do thus and so “to save the party”; and they relied for expert advice upon men who relied upon them for their jobs; and the marvel is that the net result of this mixed boiling and thumping was half so good. That it was so good proves beyond contradiction that the politicians who did the work possessed far more public spirit and a much profounder knowledge of fiscal matters than they were commonly given credit for. We have

had a deal of honest service from the men who have made our various tariffs; and it has been rendered under the greatest difficulties. The temptation to take “the easy road” and to think chiefly of party gain, must at times have been tremendous; and by no means the smallest part of it was due to the fact that few of their fellow countrymen pretended to think that they did anything else.

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HOWEVER, it must be plain that this old system of “storm and stress” was by no means guaranteed to give the plain people what they wanted. It was much better devised to cheat them out of the results of any victory they might win at the polls. And, just at this point, the Tariff Commissioners should be able to help the people get their way. They will be public servants, first, last and all the time, if they are properly selected. They will feel it their first duty to find out just what effect any particular “rate” will have, and let the people know what they have discovered. The people, as a rule, vote for principles and not for particulars. They want certain things done or let alone, by the tariff; but they do not always even imagine that they know for certain just what rate of duty on each article is required to accomplish this. So it is not hard for the politicians, if they try, to fool the people. But the Commission should render this impossible by making it plain just what duties will be necessary to produce the effect the people desire. That is, when the people vote against “mergering”—let us say—the Tariff Commission should immediately prepare a report on the relations of all suspected sections of the tariff toward this operation.

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CLEARLY this implies a Tariff Commission big enough to be seen over the heads of the politicians. If the Government merely want a new staff of clerks to tabulate tariff statistics and take orders from the Ministers and their “masters,” they have a right to get them; but they have no right to label them Commissioners. Our Tariff Commission must be composed of men who would bulk large in Parliament, and who would not hesitate for a moment to resign their positions if they felt that they were being used as decoys to lull the people into a sense of false security. They will not be given the power to legislate any more than they will be empowered to cast the ballots of the people at a general election; but they should be able to pretty effectively control legislation in obedience to the popular mandate, and they ought to be free

to advise the people with facts, figures and effect when they go up to cast their ballots.

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AT the present time, in this country, our tariff policy is pretty well fixed. We are in favour of moderate protection, high enough to guard all legitimate and profitable native industries but not so high as to encourage “Trusts” or any other exploitation of the consumer. The workingman's interests in protection is to get a job and not pay too much for his living. Now so long as we are agreed upon this policy, the Tariff Commission ought to be able to just about make the tariff; though, as we have said, the final responsibility must always remain with the Government. The Tariff Commissioners will be closer to the facts than anybody else, except possibly the manufacturer immediately concerned; and no Government would ever propose to—publicly—let him make the tariff. So the Commissioners, when they give evidence, should be able to back it up so cogently with reasons that it would take a very daring Government to set it wholly aside. This should greatly limit the power of the party worker and the interested manufacturer for mischief. We should not—as at present—have our tariff schedules juggled into shape in a dark room when no one can tell quite why they come out as they do; but we should have so much light on the operation that, if a politician handed a little favour to a friend, the kind act would be quite obvious to the whole appreciative people.

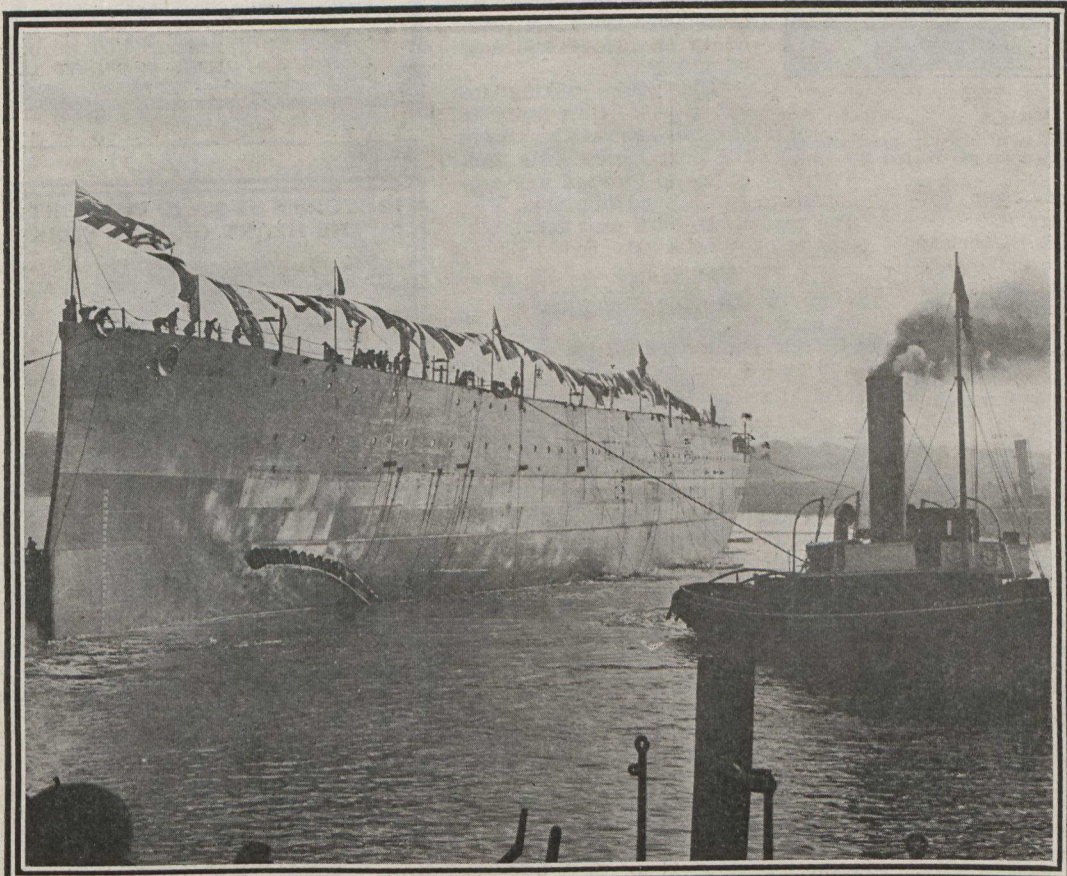
THE MONOCLE MAN.

## Reduce Naval Programme.

THAT it is time for the United States to reduce its annual expenditure for the construction of new warships is the belief of the *Springfield Republican*.

“President Taft,” says that paper, “is on record as believing that after the opening of the Panama Canal, which will enable our ships to pass rapidly from one ocean to the other, instead of tracing the long course around the Horn which the “Oregon” was forced to take on her historic voyage in 1898, the authorization of one battleship a year will be sufficient. This would mean an annual saving of approximately \$12,000,000, and the devotion of that sum to safeguarding the public health, to education, or even the leaving of it in the pockets of the taxpayers would be a larger benefit to the nation. . . . The time for reducing the naval programme is now. The needs of the country will be amply served if the coming Congress authorizes but one big vessel. President Taft will strengthen his stand for peace and his position in the eyes of those who are supporting his arbitration policy if he limits to one new battleship the recommendation for the increase in the navy which he will make to Congress.”

## FIRST COLONIAL DREADNOUGHT



Those interested in Canada's naval question will appreciate this proof that Australia's battleship-cruiser has already been launched at the shipyard of John Brown & Co., Clydebank, Scotland.



Sir George and Lady Reid after the launching. Sir George is Australia's High Commissioner in London.