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## THE DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS

THE Speech from the Throne and the Debate on the address in reply, usually afford some key to the probable nature of legislation and trend of debate of the ensuing session of Parliament. Judged by the Speech, the session of 1914 will prove a lean one. Saving Redistribution, which is an obligation the constitution places on the Government and which should have been effected last year or the year before, the Government's programme promises little or nothing in the nature of vital or constructive legislation. A Bill consolidating the Railway Act and its amendments is promised, but consolidations are a poor substitute for new laws. Bills relating to the Civil Service and to Trust and Loan Companies are, with the exception of Bills providing for increased representations of the Western Provinces in the Senate, the only other Government measures promised. The significant feature, is that the really important problems of the country are wholly ignored so far as indication of any attempt to deal with them by legislation is concerned. The Speech makes mention of business being restricted by the financial stringency, but this restriction is referred to as "slight" and "temporary", and the "boundless resources" of Canada are set forth as the assurance of prosperity and success.

### The Two Points of View.

This reliance in the face of serious economic conditions on the "boundless resources" of Canada is at once a confession of incapacity and of extravagance on the Government's part. A country has the right to look to the Government not to its resources for assurances of progress and the means of furthering them. Dependence on resources means a policy of drift, and the sacrifice of future needs to present want of foresight and initiative.

For impotence and indifference so palpable, the Government was very rightly taken to task by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who, as Leader of the Opposition moved the following amendment to the address:

"We regret to have to represent to Your Royal Highness that in the gracious Speech with which you met Parliament, whilst it is admitted that business is in a depressed condition, yet there is no indication of any intention on the part of your advisers to take any steps towards relieving such a situation."

The debate served to further disclose the respective attitudes of the opposing parties in Parliament.

## The Liberal Attitude.

The attitude of the Liberal Party is best expressed in the words of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The Government must act. They cannot afford to remain inactive like flies on a wheel or, still like logs. The Government must not remain in power simply to enjoy the sweets of office and take no responsibility. As possible lines of action, Sir Wilfrid suggested the securing of wider markets, there was an offer by the United States which the Government should take advantage of without delay. Other possible action was to relieve the farming community of the burden of taxation; yet other was the removal of combines which exist with respect to commodities in the nature of food products and with respect to transportation on the Great Lakes. Sir Wilfrid pointed out that between the price paid to the consumer and that received by the producer there was a wide margin and stated that it was this margin which it should be the effort of the Government and Parliament to reach and cut down. Combines meant taxation of both producer and consumer. The restrictions imposed by the tariff were being used by the combines to promote their interests, and tariff revision in the interests of consumers and producers alike appeared to be necessary.

## The Conservative Attitude.

Premier Borden's attitude was characteristic of that of the Government from the start. It was a reliance on time rather than action to effect a change in conditions. Because Canada had survived periods of depression in the past, the Premier thought the country would come through all right again. Because the cost of living had increased elsewhere, and in the decade preceding his term of office, he saw no reason why the Government should attempt to deal with this condition. The Premier however went out of his way to make it appear that the trusts and combines were in no way responsible and that a change in the tariff, was the last remedy to be thought of.

The Minister of Finance was even more emphatic than the Prime Minister. "Optimism", Mr. White said, "is the only thing for Canada at the present time." He openly combated any change in Customs tariff which would further a policy of free food or of wider markets. "Increased production" he declared, was the solution of the high cost of living and the way to effect this was by "taking agricultural instruction to the farmer, teaching him as to his soils, as to his grains, as to his breeds of cattle."

In a word then, the Liberal attitude is one of action, involving a readjustment of the tariff, particularly as respects articles which constitute the necessities of existence, or, in other words, the food of the people, and securing for the farmer wider markets and relief from the taxation imposed upon him in the production of food products, a tariff which will suffice for revenue, rather than a tariff favoring monopoly and privilege. The Conservative attitude is one of inaction, of absence of anything in the nature of constructive legislation; in the stead of tariff revision or relief to the farmer in the form of wider markets or reduced cost of production, education as to soils, grains and breeds; as regards all else, the optimistic belief that Canada will come through all present and future ills on the strength of her boundless resources.