

not merely legislative work. It is, in the first and most important stage, executive work, the work of the Cabinet, particularly of the Minister of Finance. The Minister needs and should have the assistance of capable men. What they are to be called is not a matter of much consequence. It is the scope of their duties that is important. If men are to be chosen as assistants to the Minister in the collection of such information as he may desire, well and good. There is no magic in the title of Tariff Commission. In connection with the administration of the income and luxury taxes the Minister already has an official known as "Commissioner of Taxation," who is an officer of the Department of Finance, with no independent authority, and no responsibility except that which attaches to an official of the Department, for whose conduct the Minister of Finance is responsible in Parliament. If the Minister requires more officials of that kind, having precisely the same kind of authority and responsibility, by all means let him have them. He should have all the expert help that is available, and so long as it is clearly understood that they are Government officials, acting under his direction, for whom he is responsible to Parliament, nobody need care by what name they are called.

What is evident enough, however, is that most of the people who advocate the appointment of a Tariff Commission mean the creation of quite a different class of officials—men whose merit is to be that they are to be independent of the Government, they are to stand between the Government and the public, that they are to "take the tariff out of politics," and that they are to devise a tariff policy which the Government and Parliament are expected to swallow *holus bolus*. The existence of such a Tariff Commission would be a flagrant departure from the essential principles of responsible government. The present Minister of Finance is going about the work of tariff revision in what is, from his viewpoint, a very sensible and practical way. He is to hold inquiries at many points in the Dominion at which all parties concerned can make representations in a public way. With the information received in this and other ways, with the aid of any officials whose service he can obtain, he must accept the responsibility of preparing his tariff and submitting it to Parliament without the intervention of any other authority.

Building Theatres

Some people are expressing alarm over the fact that a very large percentage of the new building now going on in the Dominion of Canada consists of structures for the exhibition of moving pictures. We hesitate to say just what the percentage is, for it would require a more careful compilation of statistics than is at present available; but the most casual observation will show

that there are in process of erection, in almost every centre of population in this Dominion, from one to four large new theatres intended for the exhibition of moving pictures or of moving pictures combined with vaudeville. Since other varieties of building activity are comparatively quiet, it is obvious that the proportion of new amusement structures to new structures of other kinds, industrial, residential or commercial, is certainly an abnormal one.

It may be doubted whether there is any real reason for alarm in this situation. We are at present passing through a period of revolution in the habits of the masses of the population. Both the leisure time and the surplus wealth of the wage-earning classes have been increased in the last few years to an unprecedented extent, and it is not unnatural that a considerable part of both of these should be devoted to the more attractive forms of amusement. Coincident with this change in the situation of the wage-earning classes has come an invention by which it is possible to serve up at a very low price in any community of a few hundred population an entertainment of exactly the same quality in all respects as that which is served up to audiences gathered together in the greatest metropolitan cities of the world. Ten years ago, these wage-earners and their families, even if they had had much surplus time and surplus money to expend upon amusement, could not have attained to anything better than an inferior and colorless imitation of a London or New York stage performance. The same economic revolution, had it happened ten years ago, would doubtless have increased somewhat the attendance at the ordinary theatres. But it would certainly have increased it by nothing like the total number of attendances which have been achieved by the new form of artistic representation.

There is doubtless a saturation point in moving picture entertainment as in all other forms of business. It not infrequently happens that expansion is at its liveliest just before the saturation point is reached. But we may not reach it immediately. There is still in progress a steady movement of population towards the cities and away from the rural portions of the country, and as the average city dweller is assuredly good for three moving picture performances as against the rural dweller's one, this movement in itself represents a natural increase in the moving picture clientele.

The moving picture habit may be an extravagance, but it is a very moderate extravagance, compared with some others which are largely practised by the people of this country, nor do we fancy that it is one which is likely to be readily abandoned even in a period of relative industrial and commercial quietude. The films are doubtless by no means all that they might be in respect of their improving effect upon the intelligence or moral character of their beholders, but they are improving and will

continue to improve. Probably the worst thing about them is the astounding mechanical nature of their plots and episodes. In scarcely any other field of art is it so completely impossible to tell the work of any one artist from that of any other as is the case of film producers, and one is forced to the conclusion that individuality is swamped under the enormous burden of the mechanical processes and the weight of the organization. This will have to remedy itself in time. It is probable that the artistic regeneration of the film will first come from some European country rather than from the United States, which is at present the controlling force in movie production.

Justice at Thorold

The Mail and Empire of Toronto is impressed with the fact that "so far the authorities at Thorold have taken no action against the leaders of the mob that so nearly lynched McNeal," and enquiries whether they are so prominent and numerous that the police fear to proceed against them. Such an admission, adds the Toronto newspaper, would be as disgraceful to the police as the rioting was disgraceful to the rioters and to the whole province of Ontario; and it goes on to suggest that the Attorney-General of Ontario should enquire into the situation and insist that action be taken against the offenders.

The reminder is extremely timely. So far as the local authorities of Thorold are concerned, their quiescence is perhaps not difficult to understand. It is not unusual for the law-enforcing authorities of a small locality to find themselves unequal to dealing with a widespread outbreak of criminality; and nobody can censure them very greatly for such failure. But their failure throws the responsibility for the enforcement of law directly upon the higher authorities of the larger community of which they form a part, and not only upon the authorities, but upon the enlightened public of that larger community. The people of Thorold may be pardoned if they exhibit a shame-faced inclination to allow the whole affair to pass out of memory. The people of Ontario cannot plead any excuse for such an attitude.

The practice of lynching has in the past been pretty well confined, so far as the North American continent is concerned, to certain states of the American Union. The Thorold episode took place in a territory fairly close to the American border, and a territory in which foreign newspapers of a very sensational character are pretty extensively circulated. It is quite possible that the mob outbreak of a few weeks ago was largely the result of suggestion, instigation and leadership by aliens and not by Canadians. But wherever the responsibility may lie, the crime took place upon Canadian soil and was a crime against Canadian justice, and as such it must be dealt with.