

It is proposed to make the amendment as read by the Chairman.

Section agreed to.

Bill reported.

SUPPLY—RECIPROCITY

AMENDMENT MOVED BY HON. MR.
FIELDING

Hon. Sir Henry Drayton (Minister of Finance) moved that the House go again into Committee of Supply.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Shelburne and Queen's): Mr. Speaker, I desire to move an amendment to the motion which has just been moved by the Minister of Finance. Before I present that amendment, and before I state its chief purpose, may I be permitted very briefly to refer to the question of the manner in which amendments of this character should be treated. On a previous occasion, under somewhat similar circumstances, when an amendment was proposed on the motion to go into Committee of Supply several of the ministers took very strong ground that any amendment to such a motion is necessarily a non-confidence motion—I think I am correct in stating that the Prime Minister (Mr. Meighen), the Minister of Justice (Mr. Doherty), and the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir George Foster) all presented that view very strongly. I desire to remind the House that as I view it—and I think I shall be able to support my view by authority—hon. gentlemen who take that view have a mistaken conception of our parliamentary rules and of the practice of this House. Within my own experience as Minister of Finance I can recall two occasions when—having made motions for Supply just as the Minister of Finance now makes this motion to-day—I was met by amendments which the Government of the day accepted and which were adopted with the support of the Government. Going further back, there is a notable occasion when an amendment to Supply was moved by Hon. Edward Blake. Sir John Macdonald promptly accepted the amendment and it was adopted by the House with the Government's support. Therefore the contention of the ministers to whom I have referred that a motion of this nature is necessarily a motion of non-confidence is entirely unwarranted. A motion of this character becomes a motion of non-confidence when the Government see fit to treat it as such, but it is not necessarily a motion of non-confidence. On that point I am content to cite these cases in support of the position which I advanced in the previous debate.

[Mr. Guthrie.]

It has always been to me a matter of profound regret that in the year 1911 a question of a commercial character, an economic question, was made a matter of party controversy—that for the first time in the history of our country reciprocity became a matter of party conflict. Occasionally to-day we find references made in the House, or in the press, to the political side of that controversy, and I suppose it is unavoidable that in days to come similar references will be made. Well, Sir, they will not be made by me to-day, for I desire to present the question to the House as entirely a commercial question, without the slightest regard to the political contests of the past, and with the single desire that the House shall do what I think may be helpful in meeting a rather grave condition which has arisen to-day through the prospects of tariff legislation at Washington.

Soon after the defeat of reciprocity in Canada in the year 1911 a change of Government took place in the United States. The historic commercial policies of the two parties in the United States are well-known. The Republican party is historically a protectionist party: The Democratic party is historically, I will not say a free trade party but a low tariff party—a moderate tariff party. At the time the reciprocity agreement was negotiated the Republican party was in power, but after a few months a change of administration was brought about. The Democratic party, the party of low tariff, came into power at the elections of November 1912, and in the session of Congress held in the early part of 1913 the Democratic administration—in conformity with its historic policy—made changes in the tariff in the direction of either freedom of exchange or tariff reduction. Some of the very things which some of us thought were important to Canada in the reciprocity agreement came to us by the voluntary action of the Democratic party. Some of the things which the reciprocity agreement proposed to put on the free list were made free by the voluntary action of the Democratic Government. Now, so long as that condition continued there was perhaps little reason for Canada to find fault or to be disturbed. The Democratic policy—although not all that we could desire—came nearer to the aims of Canada, and so long as that party remained in power there was a fair probability that our commercial relations would not be of a straitened character. That happy condition—and I use the word "happy" in relation to the commerce between the two