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## A Tariff Commission

The proposed Ministerial inquiry into the Customs tariff is spoken of by many as the work of a "Tariff Commission." In reality there is no such Commission. The Minister of Finance with the assistance of such colleagues as may find it convenient to be present at the meetings is to attend at the appointed places and hear all who wish to make representations.

The Tariff Commission advocated by many people is quite a different thing, and most of those who desire it have no regard for the kind of inquiry that the Minister of Finance is about to hold. In their view there should be a permanent body of experts, to be known as the Tariff Commission, who should have a large part in the work of making the tariff—just how large a part may be a debateable point. In the beginning, the advocates of such a Commission undoubtedly contemplated the appointment of a body to whom the whole tariff question would be submitted for consideration and decision. A great merit claimed for this proposal was that it would "take the tariff out of politics." A merit that was, in the minds of many good citizens who had not studied the matter closely enough to fully see what such a scheme involved. Discussion of the subject has since shown many of these people that taking the tariff, or almost any other part of public business, "out of politics" means the taking away of public affairs from the control of the people's representatives, a course entirely at variance with our much praised principles of responsible government.

That the customs tariff, one of the largest instruments of taxation, must be devised by responsible Ministers, subject to control by the people's Parliament, is now more generally understood. But the notion of a permanent Tariff Commission remains in the mind of some folk, who try to bring it into harmony with the principles of responsible government.

The Montreal Gazette, in a recent issue, quoted approvingly a passage from an article in our columns in which we endeavoured to define the purposes and power of the United States Tariff Commission. The Democratic candidate for Vice-President, Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, had spoken of the

American tariff as having been "taken out of politics" by the appointment of the Tariff Commission. Commenting on this statement we pointed that Mr. Roosevelt had failed to appreciate the true character of the American Tariff Commission. The creation of the Commission, we said, had not taken the tariff out of politics, but had merely provided for the collection of information, which the members of Congress may apply as they please. The Gazette recognizes this as a correct statement of the objects of the American Commission, and proceeds to argue that there should be a similar body in Canada.

Let us further point out that the methods of tariff making in the United States and in Canada are so different that we can hardly learn much from the experience of our neighbors in that matter. There are vital differences in principle between the systems of the two countries. Our American friends claim to have the largest measure of democracy in their system of government. Perhaps they have: But they have not our system of responsible government, or anything quite like it. The American constitution distinctly separates the executive and legislative functions. The Cabinet Ministers of the United States have no seats in either branch of Congress. The British system, which we follow in Canada, regards a blending of the executive and legislative functions as necessary and highly beneficial. The United States Secretary of the Treasury, who is the American Minister of Finance, does not guide and direct the enactment of tariff laws. He can express his mind, if he likes, and so can any other American citizen. But he is absolutely powerless in the matter. The tariff is made by Committees of the two branches of Congress. The chairmen of these committees have much influence in the framing of the tariff, and the name of the chairman of the House of Representatives' Committee is usually identified with the tariff as adopted. Hence we speak of the "McKinley tariff," referring to the tariff framed by the Republican party when Mr. McKinley (afterwards President) was chairman of the House Committee, and the "Underwood tariff," for which Mr. Underwood (who has since gone to the Senate) was chiefly responsible under Democratic rule.

In Canada, the framing of the tariff is