

POLICIES AND POLITICS

The Time to Reduce the Tariff is Now.

NO. 5.

"Politics are not a drama where scenes follow one another after a methodical plan, where the actors exchange forms of speech settled beforehand. Politics are a conflict of which chance seems to be modifying the whole course."—Sorel.

The evidence taken by the Federal Commission last spring and summer startled Canada by its revelations. It was proven that flour milling companies, meat packing companies, cloth and cotton companies and many others had rolled up huge profits during the war years. Other concerns proved that they had declared small dividends, but it was on much diluted stock. Forty years of the National Policy had made many factories so solid that they took full advantage, by combination, of the high protective duty. Many prices were just low enough to prevent much foreign importation; thereby the manufacturer realized a large profit. People see that manufacturers do not now need the high protective tariff imposed since 1880, and demand a revision. The laborer, the mechanic and others are wide awake now to the fact that the workers have been receiving too small a share, and employers too large a share, of the value of the product. This has lent much strength to the cry for reduced cost of living.

"Opportunity is laid on the back of her head." If Sir Robert Borden and his cabinet seize the opportunity before she slips by, he will be doing simple justice to the mechanic and the soldier who have aided so much to success in 1918. Advance in wages is not nearly equal to advance in cost of living. Profits in many lines of business have been enormous. The fixing of prices on wheat, sugar, cheese, bread, etc., will not go far to remedy the evil. Why, then, not reduce the tariff about 5 per cent. or ten per

cent. on clothes, footwear, etc., and make a larger reduction on some lines of food?

CURIOUS TARIFF FEATURES.

What benefit to have a duty on coal oil? Canada does not produce enough to last the country one week. The duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents per gallon affords no aid to our oilwells. The duty collected, \$33,000 in 1917, is largely paid by working people. Why keep it on? Makes coal oil free and oil goes down 2 to 3 cents a gallon.

Cheese and Butter are needed foods. The total duty collected in 1917, \$61,800; in 1918, \$27,300. The rate of duty from the United States is: Cheese 3c., butter 4c. per lb. We buy almost none from the United States, yet the 3c. and 4c. duty per lb. help the middlemen to a larger profit. Why not make them both free? It would tend to keep the price of butter and cheese two to three cents lower than now quoted.

Lard. Duty, 2c. per lb. In 1917 the duty collected was \$50,600. In 1918, \$28,000. This has only assisted the meat packers to obtain larger profits. Why not remove the duty, and prices would be lower? All these necessities, butter, cheese, lard and coal oil, gave a total revenue of \$351,000 in 1918. The graduated income tax on excess profits of the meat packers or other large concerns should make this \$351,000 duty look very small.

Soaps.—The duty on common laundry soaps is \$1.00 per hundred pounds; from France and the United States plus $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. From Great Britain 65c. per 100 lbs. Other soaps, $32\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. from United States and France; $22\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. from Great Britain.

In 1918 the duty collected was \$282,000. Could we not afford to reduce this soap duty about one-half? The larger imports would keep up the revenue and keep down the present high prices.

Boots, Shoes, etc. Duty 30 per cent. from United States, $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. from France, 20 per cent. from Great Britain. Total duty collected in 1917, \$1,023,000; in 1918, \$113,800.

In the consumers' interest these rates could be lowered 10 per cent. More United States and French stuff