

News from Ottawa

Continued from Page 4

on a better footing is one that will have I believe, the generous support of the House.

The Tariff Commission

Two strenuous days were given over in the early part of the week to the bill to create a permanent tariff commission. One long day was spent on the section of the bill providing for the appointment of the commissioners and another on the clause dealing with their duties. Broadly speaking, the chief objection of the opposition to the bill was that the kind of a commission provided for is not such as will commend itself to the majority of Canadians and that the real object of the measure is to revise the tariff upward instead of downward. They claimed that it would be better either to name a really independent commission with wide powers or else a purely statistical bureau made up of regular departmental employees to collect and tabulate information. The commission proposed, it was argued, was neither one thing nor the other. Objection was taken to the clause of the bill setting forth that the commissioners would act "under the direction" of the minister of finance. The acceptance of the opposition proposal to strike out these words would have widened the powers of the commission, but it was rejected on a standing vote in committee of 76 to 40. Another amendment, which like the one just mentioned, was proposed by Mr. Hugh Guthrie would have made the commissioners report directly to Parliament instead of to the minister, but this was defeated on the same vote. Still another Guthrie amendment called for the complete deletion of the clause empowering the commission to inquire into trusts and mergers. The Liberal contention was that this evil could best be investigated by judges under the present Customs Act. It was suggested that this act could be widened and provision made for the appointment of a general counsel whose duties it would be to inquire into the trusts. It was also pointed out that the Combines Act is an excellent measure under which to act. The bill, it was urged, provided a third means of inquiry and not an altogether desirable one because the commissioners were certain to be in sympathy with the protectionist view.

Dr. Schaffner's Views

Dr. Schaffner, Conservative member for Souris, made a speech which was marked by much independence of spirit. He said that the personnel of the commission was the all important thing, and he proposed to do his best to see that it included a representative of the great agricultural interests. Dr. Schaffner frankly stated that if as much could be read into the bill as Mr. H. B. Ames, Conservative, Montreal, had read into it he would oppose it. He would likewise be against it if it contained all the Liberals thought it contained. He thought that both Mr. Ames and the opposition members were wrong and that the measure would work out quite satisfactorily. It would be found, he believed, to be the best piece of legislation placed on the statute books since the creation of the railway commission.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who did not speak on the second reading of the bill, was

heard from at some length. Quite naturally he selected the paragraph in H. B. Ames' speech quoted in last week's letter, in which the Montreal protectionist frankly declared that the commission must be composed of men in sympathy with the views of the administration. The opposition leader coupled this declaration with the assertion of Hon. W. T. White that he was a moderate protectionist, and made the deduction that the commission was designed to create a so-called moderate tariff which would in reality be immoderate protection. There was no other conclusion, he said, to be drawn from the declarations of the minister of finance and Mr. Ames, who in tariff matters, was apparently to be the master of the administration. It was quite apparent, Sir Wilfrid declared, that the free trade and revenue tariff advocates would not be considered by the commission.

Mr. White denied that there was any truth in the allegations made in regard to the real intention of the bill. It was designed, he said, purely for the purpose of obtaining information. The opposition was raising a lot of bogeys in which there was absolutely nothing. He predicted that when the tariff commission is in action the country will unite in praising this legislation.

Mr. Cockshutt's Remarks

W. F. Cockshutt made a contribution to the debate in the course of which he took a couple of flings at the farmers, which will probably not be appreciated by the tillers of the soil who buy the implements the member for Brantford is interested in manufacturing. "The hon. gentlemen," he said, "have just told us that the farmer cannot be protected. Let me refer him to the pages of the Ottawa papers of last week which quoted potatoes at \$2.50 per bag. Is not that a fit subject to be investigated by the tariff commission. What is the cost of the production of potatoes in Canada? Is it anything like \$2.50 per bag? I take the ground that we are going to be a united people from end to end, a people who will give and take, and this cry of mergers, combines and so on is not going to go down long with the people of Canada. The people of Canada are being well served by the manufacturers and the workmen, and with all this howl about the farmer we have not heard one single word in the debate about the interests of the working men. They are struggling just as hard as the farmers. They have just as much right to live, and I believe that when the people of Canada look this question over they will tell these men that they are wrong."

Mr. Cockshutt frankly admitted that the free trade sentiment of the country would not get any representation on the tariff board. He said that Mr. Guthrie had shed big tears because no room could be found on the commission for a free trader. "Certainly not; my view is that a man who goes on a board to handle tariffs must be a man who believes that tariffs should be handled."

Labor Man's Reply

Mr. Cockshutt's appeal for the workingmen of the Dominion did not, apparently, appeal very strongly to Mr. Verville, the Labor-Liberal member for Maisonneuve division of Montreal, probably the largest industrial constituency in the Dominion. He said that it was the first time he had ever heard a manufacturer member of the House proclaim himself a friend of the working people. They were not satisfied. The reciprocity agreement would have done more to curb the trusts than any measure yet proposed. He believed that if it were today submitted as a referendum, seventy-five per cent. of the people would vote for it. Mr. Verville then came to the defence of the farmers. If prices were high it was not because the tillers of the soil received the money. "Does the farmer," he said "derive any benefit from the butter which he sells at twenty-five cents and which retails at forty cents, or for the eggs which he sells at fifteen cents and which are retailed at forty cents? Where is the profit of the farmer in that? What about the third party in that case, the man who is responsible for the enhanced price? We don't seem to touch him at all."

The Steel Bounties

The big interests and all their friends seem to be so satisfied that there is going to be a renewal of the bounties on steel that the matter has almost ceased to cause any speculation. If Hon. W. T. White does not announce a renewal of the bounties, or some of them, on budget

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