

THE COST OF LIVING AND THE TARIFF.

THE Right Honorable Sir Wilfrid Laurier, speaking at Ormstown Que. on October 9th, set forth the views of Liberalism in respect to the Tariff and the cost of living in the words that follow. Similar declarations of policy have been made by the Liberal Leader in all his recent addresses.

"The Empire is not in danger. It requires no assistance from anybody. **Mr. Borden says that we must save the Empire, and I say to Mr. Borden, 'Leave the Empire to Mr. Asquith. He is fully capable of looking after it. Attend to affairs at home.'** That is not an Imperial question, but it is the question of greatest importance to the Canadian people at the present time. It is the economic condition of this country that needs attending to.

"The problem is a double one. At the bottom is the cost of living which is higher than it has ever been in the history of Canada. It has increased in England by seven per cent; in Canada it has increased fifty-one per cent. I do not pretend that the circumstances causing this rise are entirely under our control, but I do say that there are causes over which we have control.

"At the top is a surplus of fifty millions for the past fiscal year in the treasury of the Canadian Government. At the bottom is the high cost of living.

"There is a method of reducing the cost of living. Spend the fifty million dollars in the treasury in the interests of the people in cheapening the necessities of life.

"This condition of affairs must not last. We must revise the tariff. We are told that the tariff is our own, that it was the work of Mr. Fielding, and that it was passed in 1897. That is quite true but fur tariff is not for all eternity. It is not like the laws of the Medes and Persians. The tariff is our instrument which must be used to supply the Government with revenues—and after that to provide for the comfort and prosperity of the people.

"I am very well aware that the revision of the tariff is a very delicate operation. It is possible, however, to revise it without hurting any of the industries of the country. It was done in 1897. But the Government have not yet done anything. We say to them, 'If you do not care to do it, or think you are not able to do it, make way for better men. We have done it once and, we can do it again.'"

THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE CLOSURE.

AN Executive with an independent control of vast sums of public money is bad enough, but the Borden Government has gone even farther in its efforts to destroy the liberties which have been hitherto guaranteed to the people through a free parliament. It is difficult to believe that the curtailment of parliamentary debate by an offensive form of closure was not of set design, and intended to serve as a means of freeing the Government from criticism and responsibility to Parliament. The Closure, as introduced and arbitrarily forced through the House of Commons by

the Borden Government, is not an ordinary measure for restricting debate. It has been so framed as to perfect the machinery to be used for rendering the Executive independent of Parliament. As yet the Government has hesitated to use this arbitrary power except with respect to the \$35,000,000 contribution, but the instrument is there for use whenever it may be required. That it was not needed for the Naval Aid Bill, or to provide for a phantom emergency, was amply proven by the circumstance that when the Bill was so amended by the Senate as to delay its enactment, nothing further was done with the measure. Is it unreasonable under these circumstances to assume that the Naval Aid Bill was used as a means of placing the Government, under the guise of a patriotic purpose, in possession of the power of arbitrarily destroying freedom of debate and liberty of speech on the part of the people's representatives in parliament? When it is remembered that this instrument of tyranny can be applied at a moment's notice to any or every measure which the Ministry wishes to force through the Commons for any purpose whatever, and that it is applicable not less to the voting of supplies than to other measures, the extent of the possible usurpation of power aimed at by the Borden Government will be more fully understood.

WHY REDISTRIBUTION HAS BEEN WITHELD.

THAT the failure of the Government to introduce a Redistribution Bill at either of the last two sessions of Parliament was of deliberate design has been made abundantly apparent in the by-election just concluded in Chateaugay. There the electors were told that if a supporter of the Government were returned, the constituency would be kept intact under the Redistribution measure which is to be introduced. Incidentally, the electorate was given to understand that if a Government supporter were not returned the present constituency would disappear. No doubt, the same threat will be used with effect in other pending by-elections. It is the Government's constitutional duty to readjust the representation every ten years according to the population as shown by the decennial census. This redistribution should take place immediately upon the completion of the census in order that if at any moment it should be necessary or desirable to consult the people, as representative an expression of the popular will as possible may be obtained. The Census of 1911 afforded the data necessary for a redistribution at the last session of Parliament as well as at the session preceding. Why no redistribution was introduced at either of these sessions is now apparent. With the necessary legislation withheld, the Executive became possessed of so much more irresponsible power, and was independent of parliament in the use to which it could put this power in constituencies which might be opened. It is true that the exercise of this power involved an open defiance of constitutional obligation, and a disregard of public morals, but these are considerations of which the political machine takes no account, and it is with the perfecting of the political machinery that the Borden government has been mainly concerned since attaining office.