

Even under that interpretation of the situation, I take it that there is some great political object in view in the desire of a great number of the members of the House to have a downward revision of the tariff.

—or unless some assertion were made in the address to which the opposition found it impossible to assent.

And just while I am referring to this authority I should like to point out that amendments to the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne have been moved and been accepted by the government.

On January 16, 1840, the Duke of Wellington moved an amendment to the Lords' Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne wherein Her Majesty's approaching marriage with Prince Albert was announced, for the insertion of the word "Protestant" before the name of the Prince. Having shown that it was in conformity with precedent, the amendment was agreed to, notwithstanding the opposition of the Prime Minister. But the success of this amendment was attended with no political consequences, though the matter gave rise to much discussion, both in and out of Parliament.

I would next refer the House to a very much more modern authority, Anson's Law and Custom of the Constitution. In Volume I on page 67 I read:

To this Address—

The Address we are now discussing—

—amendments may be moved, and thus the general policy of the government, as indicated by the Speech from the Throne, is brought under discussion.

This thought is more fully developed in another modern authority The Procedure of the House of Commons by Redlich, with an introduction by Sir Courtney Ilbert, who was one of the Clerks of the House of Commons at Westminster. At page 59 I read:

The King's Speech gives in broad outline the legislative programme of the session, comments upon the position of foreign affairs and the state of the Crown Colonies, and, in a special paragraph, of nearly invariable form, addressed to the Commons only, it promises an early submission of the estimates for the wants of the coming year. The course of the deliberations of Parliament is thus indicated, and they begin regularly with a debate upon the Speech and the Address in reply thereto. The general political character of the King's speech leads to the result

12 m. that the course of the debate upon it is untrammelled as to subject matter, a circumstance to which the modern adoption of the principle that general debates should be as much as possible avoided has given great importance. General criticism of the government from all imaginable points of view, demands for redress of grievances, the statement of aspirations and proposals of all kinds, are rendered possible. The whole policy of the country, domestic and foreign, is open to discussion. The form of procedure adopted is that, immediately upon the speech being communicated to the House by the Speaker, a motion for an Address in reply is proposed, by some member chosen beforehand, generally some young member on the government side, and seconded by another. Formerly the Address in reply followed closely the wording of the Speech, but in recent years it has become usual to frame it as a brief expression of the thanks of the House.

The further debate is carried on in the strict formal manner characteristic of English parliamentary procedure. Any body of political opinion represented in the House, any member who wishes thus early in the session to influence the Government's legislative programme at any point, or to call the attention of ministers or the public to any question, brings up what is desired in the form of an amendment to the address, proposing the addition of some words having reference to the question.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully submit that those are precisely the circumstances which confront us to-night. I take it that when this book of Todd's was written, some fifty years ago—the author's note to the introduction is dated Ottawa, February, 1869—it was considered proper even at that time for the government to accept an amendment. Surely when this custom has developed into the holding of a general debate and the making of proposals of all sorts, the government is not precluded from taking any of these suggestions which they may deem best and making them their own. That leads me to the conclusion that those of us who think it is proper to introduce this resolution at this time are not only following what, it seems to me, is indicated by common sense, but also is sanctioned by the best modern constitutional practice.

Why is it wiser to introduce this resolution now rather than during the budget debate? It would seem to me, and I submit it with a considerable degree of confidence, that the budget is reached as a rule somewhat late in the session and represents generally the final decision of the government as to the manner in which it proposes to raise money for the use of the state, and that when that moment has arrived it would require a considerable amount of grace and forbearance on the part of the government, after all their plans had been laid and arrangements made for the raising of money for national purposes, to revise their plans and accept suggestions coming from another quarter. Therefore it does seem to me that this is the time when we can hope by respectful representations to influence the government in taking the view of the matter which a number of men in this House do take.

I am very anxious that this should be done, for two reasons. First, because I think it is of primary necessity in the interests of the whole country that there should be a downward revision of the tariff. At this late hour I am not going into the reasons which lead me to that conclusion. They are precisely the same reasons which have led the Liberal party since 1878 to hold that lower tariffs were in the interest of Canada; the same reasons which led the Liberal party in the great con-