

## WAYS AND MEANS—THE TARIFF.

The House in Committee of Ways and Means.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: Would the hon. Minister of Finance tell the committee, as we reach each item, wherein the changes have been made and what effect they will have on the revenue?

Mr. WHITE: On item 21—Cocoa paste or 'liquor' and chocolate paste or 'liquor', sweetened, in blocks or cakes not less than two pounds in weight—there is an increase of half a cent per pound. The increased revenue will be the small sum of \$2,393. This tariff is not for the purpose of raising a revenue, but is what is called a consequential change by reason of the increase in the duty upon sugar. Sugar enters as a raw material into cocoa paste or liquor and chocolate paste or liquor, and in the resolution it is necessary to make this consequential change.

Mr. MACDONALD: I would like to say a word with regard to the manner in which this legislation is being presented to the House. Neither the Government nor any hon. gentleman opposite can complain as to the attitude of the Opposition in regard to matters submitted for the consideration of Parliament; but we on this side of the House think that, before we are asked to consider and vote for measures submitted to us, the Government should, at least, give us the opportunity of reading the legislation which is proposed. There is no reason why this House should not give as mature consideration at this period in our history to the unique and exceptional legislation that is submitted to it as it would to ordinary legislation in an ordinary session. We are not doing so, but when legislation is submitted we at least ought to know what we are legislating about. I make that criticism with regard to Bills which have been presented to-day and which we are expected to pass without ever having read them.

With regard to the item which the minister says is a consequential item relating to sugar, I would say, not in any captious way, but from the feeling that the duty on sugar will of necessity affect the homes of the poor to a very great degree, that, while I give to the minister the fullest possible consideration, in view of the haste which necessarily compelled the Government to summon Parliament to consider its

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

measures, I feel that there are many other avenues from which revenue might be derived which would bear less heavily upon the homes of the poor people of this country than this particular item and the consequential items which follow. I see no reason why we should not have an extra postage tax in this country. If we had resorted for the time being to the exceptional imposition of an extra stamp upon all letters mailed in this country, we would have been able to raise a very substantial revenue; and it appears to me that one object which ought to actuate every one of us, whether in power or in Opposition, during this session, is to avoid as far as possible doing anything which will increase the burden of the plain people of this country in this exceptional period of our history. Every one knows that, during the three or four months previous to the declaration of war, there existed in the industrial establishments of this country a most marked depression, one which had its effect on the capacity of the wage-earner and the mechanic to make expenditures for himself and his family. In the homes of a great many artisans and industrial people the money that had been saved in previous months and years of active employment melted away. I am speaking not in any obstructionist spirit. Realizing to the full the necessity of immediate action, we on this side of the House take the position that the Government must assume responsibility for the proposals which they make to Parliament at this juncture; but, notwithstanding that, I think, if the Minister of Finance had had more time for consideration, he might have discovered some other item than sugar, and the consequential items attached to it, as a source from which a revenue might be raised at the present time.

Mr. WHITE: I do not rise to take exception to what my hon. friend has said, and I desire to assure him that I appreciate the spirit in which his suggestions are put forward. So far as giving the House information as to measures which may be laid before it is concerned, there are no two opinions. The circumstances of this session have been exceptional, and it has been the desire of both sides to pass into law the legislation proposed by the Government as quickly as possible consistently with reasonable consideration.

So far as my tariff proposals are concerned, there has been no departure, so far as I know, from the usual course. I presented my Budget speech yesterday; all the measures proposed appeared in