

THE LORDS' VETO AGAIN

The Dyestuffs Act, passed in 1920 for a period of ten years, was due to lapse in 1930. The Government proposed to confirm that arrangement by omitting the Dyestuffs Act from the annual Expiring Laws Continuation Bill. In the Committee Stage on 4th December, a Tory amendment proposed that the Act be continued for another five years. That was defeated by 255 votes to 225, after a debate in which the most convincing speeches against the import prohibition were those made by Sir Herbert Samuel and Mr T. Shaw, the Minister for War. Sir John Simon (Liberal) pleaded for delay and continuance of the Act, pending a "properly conducted inquiry." He voted with the Conservatives. The Bill went to the House of Lords on 15th December which threw it back at the House of Commons, amended to provide that the Dyestuffs Act be continued for twelve months.

This House of Lords challenge, which meant either the loss of the Expiring Laws Bill and the repeal of the legislation it contained (including the Rent Restriction Acts) or the continuation of the Protectionist Dyestuffs Act, was answered by the House of Commons on 17th December. The motion to disagree with the Lords Amendments was carried by the narrow majority of six votes, and in this debate Mr T. Shaw again distinguished himself in the proof he gave of the harm the Dyestuffs Act has done and is doing to the cotton and woollen trades—protection and prohibition is in force injuring the textile trades which employ 750,000 people to give a close monopoly to an industry that employs 7,000.

A feature in this controversy has been the remarkable manifesto "Why the Dyestuffs Act Should Lapse" appearing in the Press on 16th December and signed by prominent representatives of the textile trades, including dyers, calico printers, spinners, manufacturers and exporters of coloured goods.

Well to be noted is also the fact that in this clash with the House of Lords (defying the Commons and true to its concern for privileged interests) eighteen Liberal Members and one Labour Member voted reactionary on the 17th December. They nearly brought about the downfall of the Government. These Liberals were Sir Robert Hutchison, Sir W. Edge, Mr E. D. Simon, Mr J. de Rothschild, Mr Pybus, Mr P. M. Oliver, Mr Hore-Belisha, Mr D. M. Cowan, Major Dudgeon, Sir R. Aske, Mr Clement Davies, the Rev. R. Kedward, Colonel England, Mr George Lambert, Mr Macpherson, Major Owen, Mr Haydn Jones, and Mr Ramsay. The Labour Member was Major Church. Seven Labour Members abstained. They were Mr E. F. Wise, Mr Oliver Baldwin, Mr Wallhead, Miss Jennie Lee, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Mr Strachey, and Mr Horrabin.

On 19th December the Bill returned again from the Lords, who had insisted on their amendment which the House of Commons accepted under protest and in a mood of indignation that tells for more realism in politics than has been evident for the past number of years.

The Radical note was struck by Mr Leif Jones (Liberal) and his home-thrusts were received with prolonged Labour cheers:—

"The Government have yielded to the pressure of the other House. This House has made a shameful conquest of itself in response to pressure from wealthy corporations outside. . . . The atmosphere of the House has not been very pleasant. The interests have triumphed. It has been a sorrowful and shameful spectacle. All who value the integrity of Parliament will be warned. But what has happened

may be sanctified if the House and the country realize the danger that lies in front of it and save Parliament from being exposed to the powerful and unholy forces that will be let loose upon us if ever we are called on to frame a Protective tariff."

Mr S. J. Parry (Labour) said:—

"We have been taught a very valuable lesson—that outside this House there is a great combine whose directors come to this House and go to the other House who have the power to make this House obey its will." It was regrettable, he said, that a question of Protection should have led to such log-rolling as had taken place within the last two or three weeks.

Next month we hope to report some part of these debates.

Parliament adjourned on 19th December and will resume on 20th January, and politics take on a livelier aspect. The victory of the House of Lords over representative Government, the laying bare of the malign influences that are working for the overthrow of Free Trade are salutary lessons that will not be lost on the constituencies.

A. W. M.

"RETALIATION"

Some European Examples

Addressing a non-Party meeting in Manchester yesterday (*Manchester Guardian*, 3rd December) on "Retaliation in Operation," Mr Robert McDougall based his argument for Free Trade on the reports of the tariff wars between certain European States presented to Parliament in 1904. By means of charts he showed that in each case trade dropped while the war was threatened. There was a heavy loss while it continued, and at the end of the war trade slowly recovered.

The tariff war between Germany and Russia lasted only seven and a half months, but the suffering and loss caused by it were reported to be very considerable. In addition to economic losses, there was ample proof that the war was regarded as likely to lead to a state of things dangerous to the peace of Europe.

Between France and Switzerland the tariff war lasted two years seven and a half months, and the decline in French exports to Switzerland in three years amounted to nearly 45 per cent; the decline in Swiss exports to France was nearly 35 per cent. The joint loss of France and Italy during their tariff war, which was longer than that of the other countries, was £120,000,000, and in ten years Italian goods for France fell to the extent of 57 per cent.

These practical experiences gave the lie to the Protectionists, who held that we had only to threaten tariffs and other people would take theirs off.

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In describing the meeting a Manchester correspondent writes: "The Press report was a very incomplete one of a most excellent address."

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