WHAT CONGRESS HAS DONE AND WHAT IT HAS FAILED TO DO

Panama Canal Treaty Ratified and Cuban Reciprocity Enacted.

Supply Bills Passed, But Legislative Measures Neglected.

Members Who Have Come Into Prominence. Political Issues.

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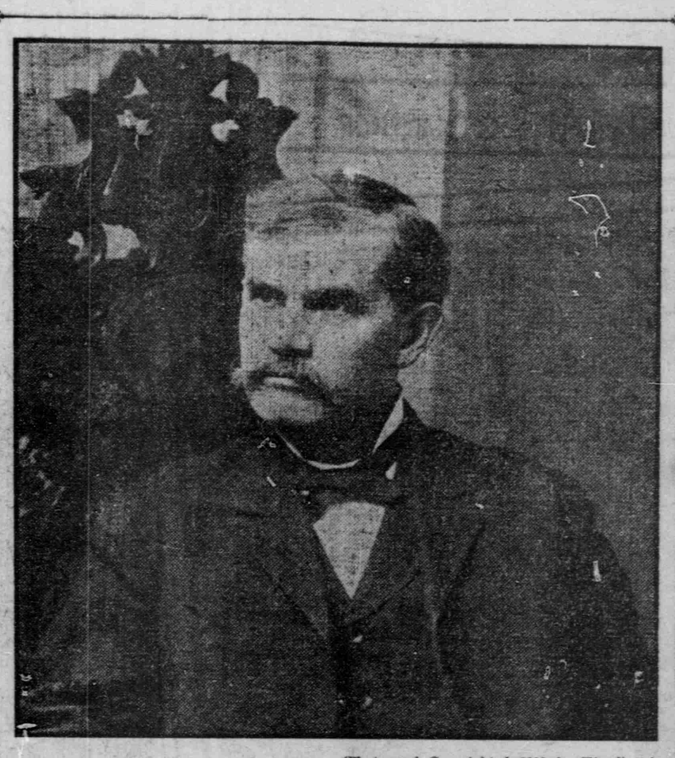
Representative JESSE OVERSTREET of Indiana.
Chairman of the Committee on Postoffices and Post Roads, whose partisan duty it was to prevent a Postoffice Department investigation.



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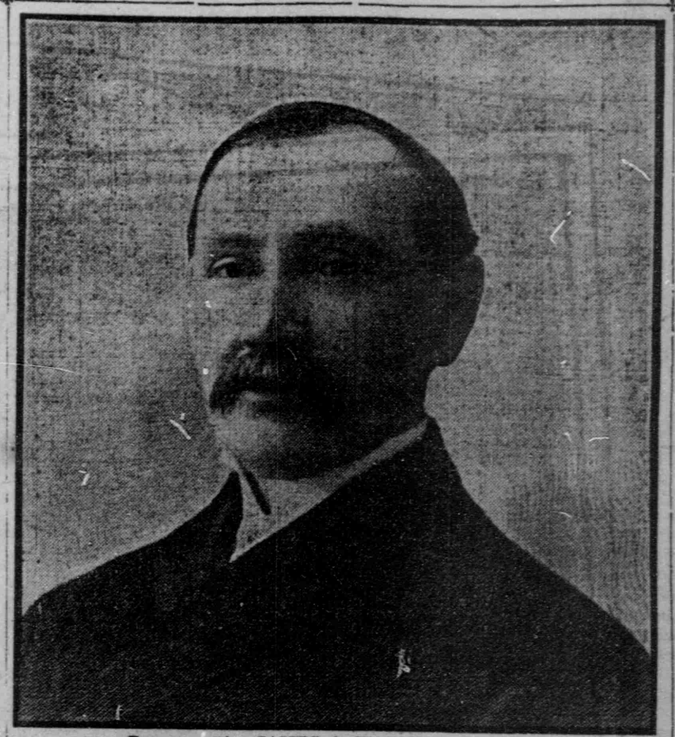
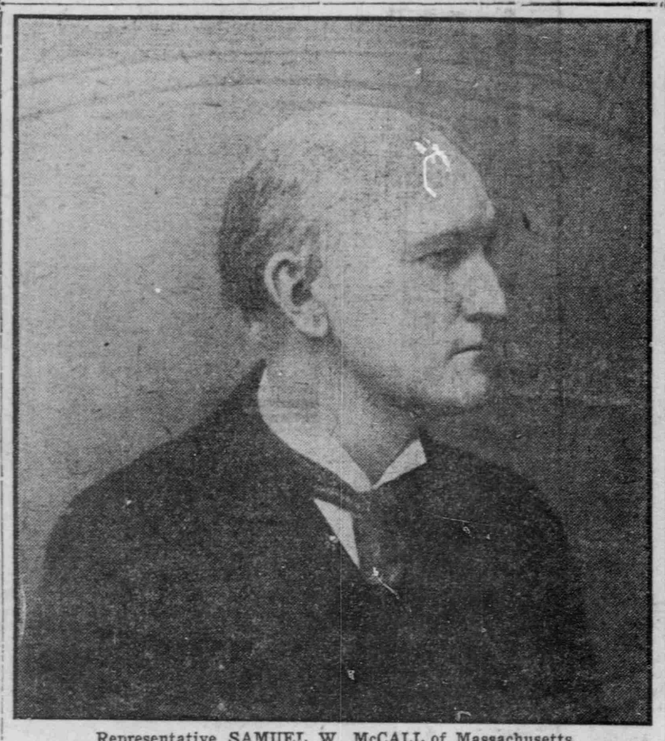
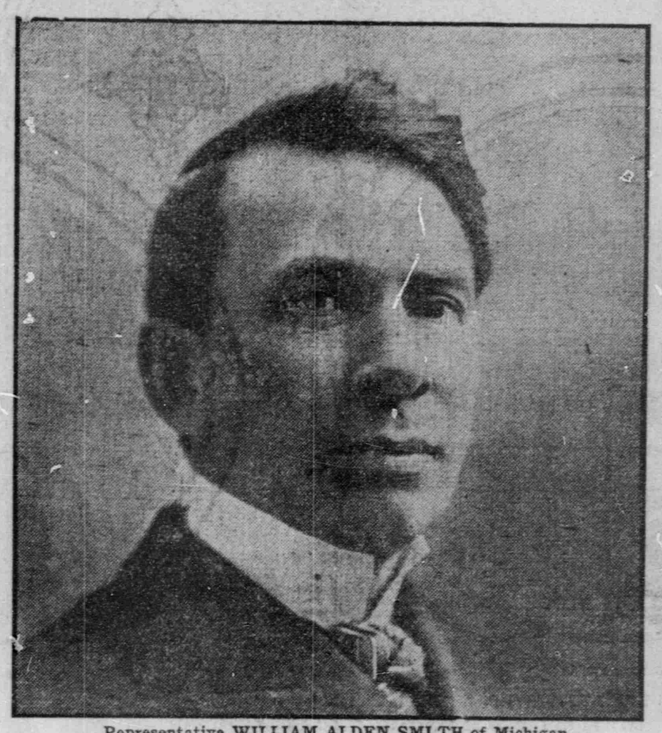
Representative JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS of Mississippi.
Leader of the minority who would be Speaker Cannon's successor if the Democrats should carry the House.



Representative JAMES A. HEMENWAY of Indiana,
Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, and as such the "Watchdog" of the Treasury, who says Congress has done a good job of great housekeeping.



Representative SAMUEL W. McCALL of Massachusetts,
An anti-imperialist Republican who was chairman of the House Committee which investigated Mr. Bristow's "Charges Concerning Members."



Representative WILLIAM ALDEN SMITH of Michigan,
Who put the Spanish army in Cuba to rout with an umbrella, and made a speech in the House nominating Speaker Cannon for the Presidency.

Representative WILLIAM BOURKE COCKRAN of New York.
Whose return to the House is warmly welcomed by the Democrats. He has made three notable speeches and engaged in a hot controversy with Dalzell

WHAT has Congress done?

To this question the answer from Democratic sources is, "Nothing, except spend money."

That is a partisan and somewhat unfair and brutal way of epitomizing the result of the labors of the Fifty-eighth Congress. Nevertheless, every Republican will admit that it is substantially true, but he will express it in milder, more explanatory and qualifying language so as not to convey the idea to the voters and taxpayers that Congress has been extravagant and reckless in the expenditure of public moneys. As a matter of fact, Congress has done little else, with two or three important exceptions, than pass the general supply bills for the maintenance of the Government, but it has done this and adjourned the long session earlier than any other Congress has adjourned in eighty-six years. Not since the Fifteenth Congress has the national legislative body wound up its business in the long session so early in the year as April 28. The Fifteenth Congress adjourned its long session on April 20, and the average length of the long sessions has been up to July 6.

The Purpose of Republicans.

In fact, it was the purpose of the Republican majority when Congress assembled in November to dispose of the routine business, pass the appropriation bills, and go home as soon as possible without finally acting upon general legislative matters. This it has succeeded in doing. No doubt the object in determining to avoid legislative measures was largely political, but however that may be, the session of the Fifty-eighth Congress which has just closed will stand out pre-eminently as a business session. Whether it is adjudged to have been reckless and extravagant or careful and economical depends largely upon the partisan standpoint from which its appropriations are viewed. The figures speak for themselves, and show that the sum of $781,575,000 in round numbers has been authorized to be expended under the various departments of the Government during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1904, and ending June 30, 1905.

Democrats point to the fact that this is a much larger sum than was appropriated for a corresponding period by the last Democratic Congress, and in answer the Republicans point to the further fact that since the last Democratic Congress the country has grown, in many respects grown enormously, and that notwithstanding this large sum in the aggregate it is nevertheless upon a per capita basis a smaller expenditure than is authorized by most of the civilized nations of the earth.

Issues Between Two Parties.

Much of this money is to be paid out for the maintenance and upbuilding of the naval establishment and for the army, while very little is for domestic internal improvements such as the construction of public buildings and the improvements of rivers and harbors, and therein lies the issue between the two political parties upon the questions of extravagance and economy. Notwithstanding the large appropriations, the sum is within the estimated receipts from revenues during the same period of time. But in this there is another issue raised; it is that greater economy would enable the curtailment of revenue—that is, the reduction of taxation, which means the reduction of the tariff, and at this point is reached what may very likely be the paramount issue of the campaign which is just now coming on, and because of which the legislators were anxious to get back to their homes, their districts, and their constituents.

Congress has passed the usual supply bills, but aside from these what it has had an opportunity to do, or what it was asked to do and has neglected or failed to do, stands out more conspicuously than what it has actually done. There have been introduced in the House approximately 15,800 bills and resolutions, and about one-third as many in the Senate. Eighty-five per cent of these probably are bills of a private character, pension measures, claim bills and the like.

Public and Private Measures.

Of these approximately 1,500 private measures, about 190 public bills, and about thirty public resolutions have become laws, and of these public measures a considerable majority are only of a quasi public character. The most of them have been bills to enable railroad companies to construct bridges across navigable rivers, measures affecting the Territories and the District of Columbia. Yet Congress has enacted some important and far-reaching legislation. It was called together in extra session on November 9, and with the exception of the holiday recess was in session until last Thursday, or altogether about five and one-half months. Congress was summoned to meet in extraordinary session by the President in order to enact reciprocity with the new republic of Cuba. Because Congress did meet nearly four weeks before the time according to law it would have been required to meet, it was enabled to conclude its work and adjourn earlier than usual. The extraordinary session afforded the House, where the appropriation bills originate, an opportunity to organize and get in shape to work by the time the regular session opened.

The first thing which Congress did was to enact the Cuban reciprocity law, and that act stands out as one of the most important performances of the session.

What Congress Has Done.

But of still further reaching effect was the ratification by the Senate of the treaty with the new republic of Panama by which the United States was enabled to purchase the property of the French Canal Company for the purpose of completing the construction of the great waterway which is to connect the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans across the Isthmus of Panama. Following that action in the ratification of the treaty, in its closing hours, Congress passed an act to provide for the government of the canal zone by practically vesting all powers of administration over it in the hands of the President. These two things, the enactment of Cuban reciprocity and the ratification of the Isthmian Canal treaty, will be written down as the great work of the Fifty-eighth Congress, despite its failures in other respects.

Among the other measures which Congress has passed and which are of some national importance are these:

A bill to extend the coastwise laws of the United States to the trade between the mainland and the Philippine Islands, to become effective July 1, 1906.

A bill to require that all government supplies shipped to the Philippines shall be carried in American bottoms.

A bill providing for the appointment of a commission consisting of members of the Senate and House to inquire into the condition of American merchant marine and report to Congress recommendations for its development.

A bill authorizing a loan of $4,600,000 to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

A bill appropriating $450,000 for a Government exhibit at the Lewis and Clarke Exposition to be held in Portland, Ore., next year.

A resolution inviting the Interparliamentary Union for International Arbitration to hold its next conference in the city of St. Louis next September, and appropriating $50,000 for the entertainment of the delegates.

An emergency bill appropriating $3,000,000 for river and harbor improvements.

Here the list stops short and falls to minor measures affecting local interests, but not of broad general character.

What Congress Has Not Done.

Here are some of the things which Congress was asked to do and which it failed to do:

It has firmly refused to pass any tariff legislation;

It has failed to enact any labor legislation;

It has failed to pass a Statehood bill;

It has failed to pass a service pension bill;

It has failed to pass any anti-trust legislation;

It has failed to grant any relief to the Philippines in the way of amending the Philippine government act;

It has failed to grant Porto Rico a Delegate in Congress, or to pay any attention to the island;

It has failed to grant Alaska a Delegate in Congress;

It has practically paid no attention to Hawaii;

It has failed to pass a bill to provide for voluntary arbitration of disputes between capital and labor;

It has failed to pass the convict labor bill;

It has failed to pass a pure food bill;

It has failed to pass a bill to provide for new public buildings;

It has failed to pass a river and harbor improvement bill, except the emergency measure carrying $3,000,000;

It has failed to pass a clean money bill;

It has failed to pass the anti-tobacco coupon bill;

It has failed to pass any civil service measure, or bill looking toward the retirement of superannuated clerks, although measures of this character were considered at length by the Committee on Reform in the Civil Service, of the House.

District Not Badly Treated.

It has failed to pass any currency legislation;

It has failed to pass a bill granting police jurisdiction over liquor in original packages to the authorities of the State into which it is shipped;

It has failed to order an investigation of the Postoffice Department;

It has failed to dispose of the impeachment charges against Judge Charles Swayne, of the northern district of Florida;

The Senate has failed to dispose of the charges against Senator Reed Smoot of Utah.

As regards the District of Columbia, it has not fared badly at the hands of Congress at this session. While a number of measures which were greatly desired to be passed have been enacted, and the District was well treated in the appropriation bill, still, a number of important legislative measures were left unacted upon. Among these are the crosstown street railroad bill; the bill to amend the personal tax law, although that bill did pass the House; the bill to amend the corporation law; the bill to reorganize the District militia, and a number of others.

House Has Asserted Its Rights.

In what has been done, the House has taken a more conspicuous part in shaping legislation than it has for many years heretofore. This has been very largely due to the efforts of Speaker Cannon. For years he has insisted that the House should stand more firmly for its rights, and refuse to be overridden by the Senate and kow-tow to the upper body. In his position as Speaker, he has been able to strongly enforce his views in more ways than one, and whereas, heretofore the House has been accustomed to bowing to the will of the Senate, the Senate at this session has frequently been obliged to accept the decision of the House. In this connection might be mentioned the stand which the House took on river and harbor legislation, and legislation for the government of the Panama Canal zone. In appropriation matters also, the House has more firmly than before stood its ground.

In fact, public attention has been focused more strongly upon the House this session than for many years prior, not only because of the personality of the Speaker, but because of the character of legislation to which it has given attention both on the floor and in committees.

The House has passed the bill providing for the admission to the Union of the Territories of Oklahoma, Indian Territory, New Mexico, and Arizona, the first two as one State under the name of Oklahoma, and the last two as one State under the name of Arizona. The Senate has not considered the measure.

Bills Considered in Committees.

The House has passed the bill giving authority to the Philippine government to issue bonds for public improvements and to the municipalities to issue bonds for school and other purposes. The Senate has done nothing with the measure.

The House has passed the bill to enable the Territory of Alaska to send a Delegate to Congress. The Senate has not acted upon the measure.

The House Committee on Labor has given extensive consideration to the eight-hour labor bill, and finally disposed of it by turning the whole subject over to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor for investigation and report. The same committee has considered a bill to provide for voluntary arbitration of disputes between capital and labor, but did not act upon it.

The House Committee on the Judiciary has given lengthy consideration to the anti-injunction bill, but postponed action upon it until December. The same committee considered and reported in favor of the impeachment of Judge Swayne, but the House referred the matter without action back to the same committee for further hearings. The same committee also spent much time upon the so-called Hepburn-Dolliver liquor bill, and reported it favorably to the House, but the House failed to act upon it.

The Committee on Ways and Means considered and then voted not to report the bill, which was opposed by the tobacco trust, to prohibit the placing of prize coupons and tags in tobacco and cigarette packages.

Personality of the Speaker.

In view of the negative course which Congress has pursued there has not been great opportunity afforded for individual members of the House, or at least any considerable number of them, to shine. Attention has quite naturally been chiefly directed, so far as the personnel of the membership is concerned, to two men, who, by reason of the conspicuous positions which they occupied have had more to do and more to say than the others. These are the Speaker and Representative John Sharp Williams, the minority leader.

For more than a quarter of a century "Uncle Joe" Cannon served in the House, and for the major portion of that time was one of its most important, most useful, most diligent, and hard-working members. At last he attained his long-cherished ambition and was elected its Speaker. As such, despite his long years of service, he has not displayed the qualities of a parliamentarian, in the sense that his predecessors, Reed and Crisp, were parliamentarians, but far greater than that he has displayed attributes of character and of strong personality which will cause his administration of the office to go down in history as one of the most successful in the long line of Speakers who have presided over the deliberations of the House. Probably no Speaker was more greatly beloved by members on both sides of the chamber than "Uncle Joe," and certain it is that none has presided with greater fairness, with less partisan bias, and less political partiality than he. No other Speaker ever accorded the minority greater rights and privileges, and of this every Democrat is duly appreciative, and none more so than his political antagonist and opponent for the Speakership, the leader of the minority, the Hon. John Sharp Williams.

The Rise of Mr. Williams.

The session which has just closed has brought Mr. Williams to the front. For ten years he has been a member of the House, and while from time to time during that service up to the present Congress he figured in the debates, and now and then in a parliamentary tangle, he had no opportunity to display such qualities of leadership as he has had during the past five months, and it goes without saying that he has taken advantage of the chance afforded him. Under his command there has been demonstrated what a united minority can accomplish, both as a positive and a negative force, when led by a man of brains, activity, integrity, attention to to business, and conscientious devotion to duty. In learning, in debate, in knowledge of parliamentary practice—in fact, in all the qualifications necessary for leadership—there is not a man who holds title to a seat in the House who excels the Hon. John Sharp Williams, and it is because of this fact that the minority has amounted to more in the Fifty-eight Congress than ever before. He has held his party associates together upon all questions, and while he has been extremely aggressive, his aggression has left no bitterness of feeling against him upon the majority side of the chamber.

Two Hoosiers Become Prominent.

Two Indiana men have come into prominence during the session. One is the Hon. James A. Hemenway, chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, and the other is the Hon. Jesse Overstreet, chairman of the Committee on Postoffices and Post Roads. When Mr. Cannon, who had been chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, was elevated to the Speakership, the ranking member of that committee was Representative Harry Bingham of Pennsylvania, the "father of the House." Mr. Hemenway was left the second member. Mr. Bingham, in order to avoid the responsibilities of the position, however, readily abdicated his right to the chairmanship in favor of the Indiana member. In this Congress, which has been preeminently an appropriation Congress, Mr. Hemenway has played a most important part, and he has played it well. He has exhibited qualities which showed plainly that no mistake was made in selecting him for the exalted post which he has occupied. The chairman of the Committee on Appropriations is rightfully regarded as the hardest worked man in the House. Mr. Hemenway has shown capacity to perform his duties faithfully and well.

The Postoffice Scandals.

In view of the scandals in the Postoffice Department and the pressure which was brought for a postoffice investigation, the task assigned to Representative Overstreet, at the head of the Committee on Postoffices and Post Roads, was indeed a difficult one. To carry out the determination of his party to prevent a general investigation of the department, and to smooth matters over and yet do nothing which would appear as if the Republicans wished to cover up anything, the whole burden fell upon Mr. Overstreet. Under the tremendous pressure brought to bear and as a result of the appearance of the so-called Bristow "Charges Concerning Members," Mr. Overstreet came near falling down, as almost any other man in his position would have done. He nevertheless stood his ground, fought a hard fight, the hardest which took place upon the floor of the House, and finally brought the members of his own party into line and to his support, and was able to carry out the plan of his party.

Pressure for an Investigation.

It was anticipated from the start that the Democrats would find opportunity to refer to the postoffice scandals. It came to them by way of a resolution introduced by Representative Hay of Virginia calling for the information upon which Mr. Bristow in his report to the President upon the postoffice investigation made certain charges against members of Congress in connection with the rental of buildings for postoffices and the matter of increased clerk hire at various offices, and also the matter of leases. This resolution went to Mr. Overstreet's committee, and after some weeks resulted in bringing before the House the much-discussed Bristow report of "Charges Concerning Members."

For a week after that report came in to the House, there was merry war, or war which was, perhaps, not merry, at least, not so to Chairman Overstreet. Members of his own party demanded an investigation in no uncertain terms, and joined with their political opponents in denunciation of certain Postoffice Department officials. Mr. Overstreet stood firm, and finally won his point—that there should be no investigation, at least none which should go beyond an investigation of the connection of members of Congress with the Postoffice Department. This brought out the McCall resolution, which provided for the appointment of a committee of seven to investigate Mr. Bristow's charges. As the chairman of that committee Mr. McCall took a prominent part in smoothing matters over. In the preceding Congress he took a strong position in opposition to his party upon the Philippine question, but this session the prominent part which he took was in the postoffice matter, in which he acted more as an arbitrator than as a belligerent.

The Speech Nominating Mr. Cannon.

It was, too, while the postoffice debate was in progress that another Republican member leaped conspicuously into the public eye. In a ringing speech, denouncing bureaucracy, Representative William Alden Smith, of Michigan, nominated Cannon for the Presidency, and half-unconsciously created a great furore of excitement. Always able and always eloquent, he awoke the next morning to find himself famous, and that he had started a boom, which, for the moment, must have caused a certain Presidential aspirant some uneasiness, and had it not been voluntarily punctured, might have caused some trouble.

The latest incident which served to center attention upon Congress occurred only a week ago, and is known as the Cockran-Dalzell controversy. The details of it are still fresh in the public mind. It was immediately preceded by the appearance within the arena of debate of a young Democrat from North Carolina, Representative Claude Kitchin, who in a spirited attack upon the President displayed both brilliancy and humor which aroused and nettled the defenders of the Administration on the majority side. His contribution was the beginning of the great oratorical display which marked the closing week of the session.

The Cockran-Dalzell Episode.

Representative William Bourke Cockran was a member of Congress ten years ago and won an international reputation as an orator. As Mr. Dalzell expressed it in his reply, Mr. Cockran was then a Tammanyite; he became an anti-Tammanyite, and as such ceased to be a member of Congress; again he became a Tammanyite and again he became a member of Congress.

He signalized his return to Congress three weeks ago by a notable speech deploring the decadence of the power and influence of the House; he emphasized his reappearance within the halls of Congress still more strongly by an anti-tariff speech, during the course of which the controversy with Mr. Dalzell began. Mr. Cockran is a valuable acquisition to the minority side, for it is universally conceded that the majority has no one who can cope with him as an orator; no one who can equal him in eloquence; no one who can successfully attack him in debate. The last debate of the session was that between Mr. Littlefield of Maine and Mr. Williams of Maine, and that, too, was a notable discussion, both being heavyweights in the arena of political discussion.