

RULED BY POLITICS

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS FIGHT OVER SETTLEMENT OF BIG PROBLEMS.

LEGISLATION IS HAMPERED

Bill for Government Ownership of Merchant Marine, Materially Changed, May Be Passed—Plans for Raising Revenue Still Undecided.

By GEORGE CLINTON.

Washington, Politics and legislation are moving together through the halls of congress, standing very slow feet, metaphorically speaking at any rate, for a fight. Heat, rancor, and old friends' enmity and old-time animosity, and the stand-by, contentment and abuse, still are present.

Here is a program of the things which the members of both parties will wrangle over before the winter is done, or now are wrangling over, as the case may be:

National defense. New taxation measures. The government ownership of merchant marine.

Independence for the Philippines. The seaman's law and attempts to change or repeal it.

Child labor. The appropriations.

Prohibition of woman suffrage amendments to the constitution. Prohibition for the District of Columbia.

The Colombian and Haitian treaties. Some of these things, as it will be seen, already are up for discussion.

These are the main national defenses in the future, and it has been gaining interest and acrimony from the fact that both on the Democratic and Republican sides there is to be found a considerable number of staunch opponents of anything like preparedness.

The bill giving definite promise of independence to the Philippine islands at a certain date already has been discussed at considerable length in the senate and to some extent in the house. It will cause more discussion and many hours of debate heated by friction before it finally is disposed of.

The pronouncement of the Republicans in New York that it is the sense of the party that it would be an injustice to the Philippines, and also a cowardly act on the part of the United States, to turn them loose to care for themselves at too early a date, has made the island question figure more largely in the public eye than otherwise would have been the case.

Shipping Bill Much Changed. The bill providing for the government ownership of the merchant marine will be debated at great length. Already some murmurs and some applause concerning it are being heard in the two houses of congress. It will be remembered that last year a merchant marine bill was passed by the house of representatives, but met its fate in the senate, where it was talked to death. The measure this year is in a much changed form. It provides an appropriation of about \$50,000,000 for the building or purchase of ships to be owned, of course, by the government, but to be leased to private parties.

One of the chief objections entered by the opponents of the shipping bill of last year was that under its terms the government could and probably would be obliged to take over the merchant vessels belonging to a belligerent European power and which then were and still are tied up in American harbors, not being able to get to sea for fear of capture.

Last year there was denial from government quarters that it was the intention of purchasing these ships. Many men hold that it would be an unneutral act for the United States to buy the vessels. Under the provisions of the bill this year the purchase of such ships still might be possible, but it is not clear what the government's intention, if the measure goes through, to spend virtually all the money in the building of merchant vessels which can be used in time of war as fleet auxiliaries.

The ruling majority in the house of representatives at present does not know what form of revenue raising measure it will report for adoption. Even while things are still in doubt as to the extent of the preparedness program which will be adopted, it virtually is known that something will be done and that the army and navy expenses of the government largely will be increased. Therefore it will be necessary to raise money to pay the bills.

Immigration Bill Again. New immigration bills containing a clause which, if enacted into law, will prevent the landing on these shores of foreigners who cannot read have been introduced into house and senate. The senate measure is fathered by Senator Ellison D. Smith of South Carolina, and the house measure by Representative John L. Burnett of Alabama.

This bill unquestionably will pass the senate and almost unquestionably will pass the house of representatives. The question therefore is whether or not President Wilson again will veto the measure. Last year the bill went through both houses with big majorities back of it, but the house, after a hard fight, refused to pass the bill over the veto of the president, the measure being defeated by a vote of two-thirds majority by only a small margin.

When this immigration measure comes up for debate there will be lively hours in both houses. The American Federation of Labor strongly supports the measure, voting its boldest.

The House of Representatives will be out from this country a horde of aliens who are willing to work for what the labor representatives call un-American pay and to work also under un-American conditions.

South and New England Combine. Judging from the signs in the case virtually the entire southern representation in the two houses is in favor of keeping the literacy test in the immigration law, and this means that at most all the southern representatives will vote favorably on the bill and later, if the president vetoes it, will vote in favor of over-riding the veto.

There is a very considerable contingent of northern Democrats standing in opposition to the literacy clause. Some of the Democrats from the middle West and the far West, however, are in favor of it.

In this contest there is represented a somewhat curious spectacle of a combination between a good many representatives from New England and nearly all the representatives from the South. It is not often in legislation that New England and the southern states stand shoulder to shoulder on a measure of high national moment, and few New Englanders, however, and these of old American stock, are opposed to the literacy test. They stand on the ground that such a test is counter to the spirit of American institutions and counter to the teachings of the early Americans.

It is generally believed in Washington that Mr. Wilson again will veto the immigration bill, provided it is passed by the house of representatives. There is every reason to think that it will be passed. The question, therefore, arises as to whether or not house and senate can muster enough votes to pass the measure over the president's "I forbid."

Slow With Navy Measure. The house committee on naval affairs is going ahead with great deliberation with its work of recommending the warship building program for the future. It is, of course, urged that its deliberations in action is due to its desire to make the report worth while. Some of the advocates of preparedness, however, charge that the committee is simply killing time and that the hope of many of its members is that it will not be obliged to report an ambitious navy program as was contemplated in the first instance.

The navy, of course, is recognized as the first line of defense of the United States. It is a truism that if our navy is equal to any offensive which can be launched at us from abroad, our coasts will be secure from invasion. It is not, however, expected that congress will authorize the construction of a navy which would be able to stand off the greatest navy now in existence, namely, that of England, but the friends of preparedness expect, if they do not fully hope, that the building program will be long enough and strong enough to put the American navy into second place among the world's fleets.

Secretary of the Navy Daniels has recommended to congress what is known as a "five-year building program." For the first time, it is said in the report of the secretary of the navy, a plan is submitted which not only covers the necessities of the immediate future, but also extends to a period of five years. The secretary says in submitting his report, "planning today what we will begin tomorrow in order to have it completed in the future is the essence of all true preparedness."

What Daniels' Plan Means. There are many members of congress who do not agree with the secretary of the navy in his proposal to spread out the building program over a series of years. These opponents of the secretary's plan say that building on a great scale should begin instantly because, if they put it off, they will need big ships, big guns and plenty of them, and they may come quickly and like a thief in the night.

The secretary's program as submitted to congress is given in detail of ships of all kinds, of ammunition, reserves, and of other vessels. The total cost of expenditure for five years, if the plan is carried out, will be \$502,482,214.

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Battleships, second line ..... 25  
Armored cruisers ..... 17  
Scout cruisers ..... 13  
Cruisers, first class ..... 5  
Cruisers, second class ..... 3  
Cruisers, third class ..... 10  
Destroyers ..... 108  
Fast submarines ..... 10  
Coast submarines ..... 17  
Monitors ..... 6  
Gunboats ..... 6  
Supply ships ..... 4  
Fuel ships ..... 15  
Transports ..... 4  
Tenders to transport vessels ..... 3  
Special types ..... 8  
Ammunition ships ..... 2

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Forty Persons Are Poisoned. San Francisco, March 2.—More than thirty guests, all Methodist ministers and their wives, were made seriously ill after they had partaken of food which is alleged to have been poisoned, served at a banquet here.

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BRITISH MAKE GAINS

POSITIONS LOST AT VPRES RECAPTURED WITH PART OF GERMAN FRONT.

SECOND FRENCH FORT RAZED?

Amsterdam Dispatch Says That Vaux Has Been Destroyed by Teutons—Kaiser's Forces Renew Attacks North of Verdun.

London, March 4.—The British official statement issued here on Thursday on the fighting in the western zone says:

"We recaptured the trenches at the bluff of the Ypres-Comblain canal, which we lost February 14, and also captured a small salient in the German line."

The capture of 800 yards of British positions southeast of Ypres, after heavy artillery bombardments, was claimed in the German official statement of February 15, which added that a majority of the defenders of the British trenches were killed.

The French war office reported the capture of a German attack against Fresnes in the afternoon, costing credit on an official report from Berlin that Fresnes has been captured by the Teutons.

An Amsterdam dispatch to the Central News says that Fort Vaux, five miles north of Ypres, has been destroyed by heavy mortar, according to unconfirmed German reports, but that the Germans cannot approach the fort, as the French have brought heavy artillery to bear on the approaches.

Paris, March 4.—German attacks of great violence, both artillery and infantry, have been resumed north of Verdun. The official statement issued by the French war office on Thursday says furious infantry assaults have been repulsed by French troops, whose fire decimated the ranks of the enemy."

Berlin (via wireless), March 4.—That German in her Verdun drive had taken 170 square kilometers (approximately 100 square miles) of positions held by the French, or more than four times as much as the French gained in the entire Champagne offensive, was stated in a correspondent's summary from the west front, officially made public here.

The official statement adds that these gains were made with tactics "which evaded the possibility of great human losses," and that by "collaboration of all arms and an advance consisting of a series of human tidal waves" all the gains were obtained "with losses which were comparatively insignificant."

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A LITTLE COMFORT FOR THE OLD MAN

TWO KILLED BY BLAST 900 PERISH ON LINER

MANY OTHERS HURT IN ST. LOUIS SEWER EXPLOSION.

Dynamite Destroys Thirty Houses, and Windows Were Broken for Fifteen Blocks.

St. Louis, March 1.—At least two persons are known to have been killed and twenty-eight injured, seven of them seriously, when five cases of dynamite stored at Maplewood for sewer construction work exploded on Monday. Maplewood is a suburb of St. Louis, a city of 5,000 people, adjoining St. Louis on the southwest.

Approximately thirty houses, most of them frame, were demolished by the explosion, and many other houses were damaged. Windows were broken for fifteen blocks.

Searching parties explored the ruins for more bodies, which it was feared had been buried in the wreckage.

The powder house in which the dynamite was stored belonged to the Coynote Construction company, which is building a sewer in Maplewood to connect with St. Louis sewer.

First reports were that the explosion had resulted in an appalling loss of life and that 100 had been injured. All available ambulances and patrol wagons in St. Louis and four fire companies were rushed to Maplewood.

The cause of the explosion is not known. A hole sixty feet in diameter and fifteen feet deep was torn in the ground by the blast, which was heard several miles away.

NO ORDERS TO SINK DIVERS

Lord Cecil of England Says Merchantmen Were Not Directed to Attack Submarines.

London, March 2.—On the eve of the date set by Germany for the beginning of her new submarine campaign against armed merchant vessels, Lord Cecil of England, war minister, issued a statement giving the British view of the status of such merchantmen. This statement, which is in answer to queries whether merchantmen have been instructed to take the offensive against submarines, says:

"The British view has always been that defensively armed merchantmen must not fire on submarines or any other warships, except in self-defense.

"The Germans have twisted a passage in a document taken from a transport which they sank into meaning that merchant vessels have instructions to take the offensive. This is not so.

"The passage in question, which lays down a maximum distance beyond which merchant ships are advised not to fire, must be read in conjunction with another passage which makes it perfectly clear that merchant vessels must not attack unless a submarine shows unmistakably hostile intentions."

WILSON ASKS EARLY ACTION

Chief Executive Writes to House Committee Urging Vote on Warning Resolution.

Washington, March 2.—With Germany inaugurating her new program of sinking all armed merchant ships without warning, ignoring the desire of the United States for a postponement of the "umpirage," President Wilson on Tuesday put the matter of American rights at sea up to congress.

In a letter to Representative Poy, ranking member of the house committee in the absence of Chairman Henry, the president urged a "early vote on the resolution proposing to warn Americans not to sail on armed merchantmen, pointing out that reports of a difference of opinion in congress is being made use of in foreign capitals in a disasteful manner.

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