

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

Washington, D. C., Jan. 29.—The ship subsidy bill is dragging along slowly in the senate. The indications are it will probably not be brought to a vote inside of two months. The house committee on merchant marine and fisheries has not even considered the scheme in any of its phases this session. General Grosvenor, of Ohio, chairman of that committee, says that it will not be taken up until after the senate acts. That's an easy way for the Buckeye statesman to avoid discussing some of the obstacles in the way of the proposition at the south end of the capitol. The republicans of the house committee are not united. Divisions existed in the last congress as to how far the government should go in voting financial assistance to private concerns engaged in ship-building and the transportation business by water. Some of the congressmen from out in the northwest have views on this question decidedly antagonistic to the eastern idea. All this session General Grosvenor has been trying to have the differences settled. The outlook is not encouraging. Speaker Cannon does not enthuse over the proposition to vote millions in the shape of subsidies. The presiding officer of the house has not taken an open stand yet against the project, but his apparent lack of interest indicates clearly that if the republicans on the merchant marine and fisheries committee fail to agree upon a plan he will not be disappointed. General Grosvenor talks as if his best chance to legislate on the subject will be to coax the majority of the house committee into the support of the senate bill in the event it is passed by that body in the next two or three months. Evidently it is his main reliance.

The title of the bill the republican members of the senate commerce committee have patched up this time is a high sounding one. It promises the most wonderful results and reads like this: "To promote the national defense, to create a force of naval volunteers, to establish American ocean mail lines to foreign markets, to promote commerce, and to provide revenue from tonnage." The majority report in favor of subsidies is a bulky document. With the collection of data bearing on shipping, information relating to foreign countries and the argument advanced by the senators signing it the paper makes 112 closely printed pages. Mr. Frye, of Maine, is chairman of the senate committee. His leading side-partner this session in the management of the measure, is Mr. Gallinger, of New Hampshire. During his lifetime Mr. Hanna, of Ohio, identified himself with the movement to tap the United States treasury heavily for the benefit of the ship-builders and ship-owners. Indeed, Mr. Hanna rather overshadowed Mr. Frye in a matter that has been a hobby with the Maine man for fifteen or twenty years. The other republican members of the commerce committee are Elkins, of West Virginia; Nelson, of Minnesota; Penrose, of Pennsylvania; Depew, of New York; Perkins, of California; Alger, of Michigan; Hopkins, of Illinois; Ankeny, of Washington, and Crane of Massachusetts. The democrats have only six members of the committee—Berry, of Arkansas; Martin, of Virginia; Clay, of Georgia; Mallory, of Florida; Foster, of Louisiana, and Stone, of Missouri.

The republicans have practically adopted the recommendations of the merchant marine commission appointed by President Roosevelt to investigate the question of rendering government aid to the shipping industry. Mr. Gallinger was a member of that commission. The claim is advanced by the commission that the chief support which the shipping bill and the entire inquiry of the commission have received and are receiving has not come from ship-owners or ship-builders, or even from the people of the states adjacent to the ocean. It is contended also that the most remarkable indorsements which have been given to the measure have come from merchants and

manufacturers interested in the export trade and producers of the great interior. They cite that not only the National Board of Trade and the National Bankers' Association, in annual session last fall at Washington, but the National Association of Manufacturers, who assembled at Atlanta, Ga., and the American Cotton Growers' Association, at Knoxville, Tenn., have specially commended the shipping bill of the commission and called in the strongest terms for its enactment. A point on which the friends of the scheme dwell with emphasis is that so long as nine-tenths of the sea trade of the United States is conveyed by foreign ships a large part of the \$200,000,000 required every year for the transportation of our mails, freights and passengers goes to build up the naval reserve of foreign nations, our rivals and possible enemies, and thereby to prevent the development of an adequate naval reserve in the United States. This is characterized by the commission and indorsed by the republican majority of the senate commerce committee as "a policy of extreme folly and wastefulness, of which we had a vivid example in the war with Spain, when the great German steamships companies, which have grown rich out of American trade, deliberately took fast ships from their New York service and transferred them to our foe to 'burn, sink and destroy' the commerce of the American people." As a bait to the unwary the republicans behind the ship subsidy insist that the new scheme they have concocted will bring revenue to the government. Realizing that the word "subsidy" is not popular with the masses they have substituted a new one. They call it now "subvention."

Mr. Mallory, of Florida, wrote the views of the minority members of the committee. In a nutshell the democratic contention is that the scheme in its new form is a thinly disguised gift of the public money to private parties to enable them to conduct their private business. The democrats says that this is "unwarranted by any grant of power that congress possesses, involves an inexcusable wrong to the taxpayers of the country, and if consummated will establish a most conspicuous and deplorable precedent for future class legislation." The democrats are yet to make a number of speeches on the bill. They expect to prove that all the talk about building up a strong naval reserve for the United States and increasing the number of ships owned outright by American citizens and manned by crews that will be loyal to the United States, is the veriest nonsense. The main benefit to be derived from "subvention," the new name for "subsidy," will be enjoyed by a combination of shrewd capitalists, interested in shipping in this country, and who will be aided by experienced lobbyists. The republicans have such a large majority in the senate that sooner or later they will be able to pass the bill. The only thing that may cause them to halt in the program is the fear that the democrats will bring out facts in connection with this piece of legislation likely to prove damaging to republican prospects in the coming congressional elections. Even if the senate rams the scheme through it does not signify that the house managers will permit it to come to a vote over that way this session. Mr. Gorman, of Maryland, who keeps such a close eye on events in the senate, rather thinks that the republicans will eventually force a vote on the subsidy proposition. The democrats realize that it would be useless to hold out. They will simply content themselves with showing up the bad features of the proposition and let the record go to the country.

As he expresses it himself Senator Tillman has the irons in the fire for two more speeches in the near future. One will deal directly with the Panama canal situation. Early in the session it will be recalled that the South Carolina senator made some pertinent and interesting remarks on that subject that were sent broadcast over the United States and which made quite an impression. That speech was on the spur of the moment. Mr. Tillman was, without preparation or studied effort drawn into the discussion. Since then the senate committee on interoceanic canals has been carrying on a searching investigation. That investigation will continue for two months in all probability. Mr. Tillman is on his own

account getting together what he considers many strong facts. His former attacks have brought him many letters and suggestions that have enabled him to procure information that possibly could not otherwise have been obtained. His next effort, therefore, may be looked for with interest, as he expects to be well fortified with information that will render it dangerous for the republicans to engage him in joint debate unless they are provided with arguments not supposed to be in their possession. The republicans fully understand that Mr. Tillman is a hard man to handle at any time, and the chances are they will be slow in locking horns with him since he has had so much time to post himself on the subject. Senator Tillman believes there is a way to smoke the national banks out and discover to what extent they were compelled to make political contributions to the campaigns of 1896 and 1900. That is the other iron he has in the fire, and he thinks that it is getting quite hot. It is his purpose to introduce a different resolution. He has one resolution pending along this line. He thinks, however, that it is not far-reaching enough. He will endeavor to shape the new one so that the republican bosses of the senate will be bound to recognize the purpose for which it is introduced. The South Carolinian asserts that he is getting hold of facts which, if properly looked into, will set the people of the country to thinking. With the great power they have Mr. Tillman is aware that the senate republicans can smother investigations. However, they can not prevent democrats from trying to get the truth before the public, and no matter what they do his speeches will be made with the view of acquainting the people with the situation.

As the time approaches for the opening of the campaign the democrats are more and more impressed with the necessity for a strong organization to conduct the battle for control of the next national house of representatives. The

republicans have been in power so long that it is impossible to secure a fair or open investigation of anything calculated to expose scandals that are believed to exist in many of the government departments. Under this administration a few postoffice department rascals have been brought to trial and given light sentences in penitentiaries. Congress did practically nothing to bring these fellows to justice. It was the primary work of the newspapers. But even in the face of the exposures by the press the late Postmaster General Payne, of Wisconsin, ridiculed the whole performance, and not until public sentiment became thoroughly aroused would he admit for a moment that anything could be wrong in his department. Payne has been in his grave for nearly two years, and men indicted before his demise have not yet been tried. And this in the face of the fact that in addition to the regular law officers and inspector forces of both the treasury and the postoffice departments the administration engaged special counsel to assist the government in the prosecutions. Before becoming secretary of the navy Colonel Charles J. Bonaparte, of Baltimore, was one of the high priced lawyers engaged specially by the administration to prosecute the department thieves.

Nobody connected with the department of agriculture has been punished because of his connection with the crookedness over there in connection with the leakage of the cotton reports. The penitentiary doors ought to be open now for at least a couple of fellows who were promptly discharged because they stood in with the reckless speculators and gave away secrets that should have been guarded in the interest of men producing cotton and those engaged in the manufacture of goods from the fleecy staple.

If the democrats are successful in a majority of the districts at the November election the new house to be elected then will be able to stir up things at Washington. Of course, it will not be to the interest of the republican administration to have congress meet in extra session in 1907. Anything but that. But the sixtieth congress would have to come together as provided by the constitution on the first Monday in December, 1907. Between that date and the opening of the presidential campaign the next year wonders could be accomplished in forcing investigations that the republicans will not now permit.

ALFRED J. STOFER.

Democrats Will Make Vigorous Fight

High Sounding Title for Subsidy

And Now They Call It "Subvention"

Tillman Has Irons in the Fire

Ready for the Congressional Campaign