

The Commoner.

LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

Washington, D. C., Dec. 31.—Serious trouble is brewing for the senate republicans. During the months of January and February they will have to solve several knotty problems. A short session of congress is more or less worrying to any party in power. This short one, however, promises to be specially vexatious to the leaders of the "grand old party."

The case of Senator Reed Smoot, of Utah, will have to be finally settled. It has been hanging fire so long that people had begun to doubt whether it ever would be reached. The privileges and elections committee of which the cautious Mr. Burrows, of Michigan, is chairman, decided, as is well known, that if their report is sustained the Mormon apostle will have to vacate his seat. Mr. Burrows has already made his speech on the subject.

Mr. Hopkins of Illinois, Mr. Beveridge of Indiana, and other republican senators are billed to defend Mr. Smoot and to demand that he shall not even be unseated. Quite a number of senators, notably Mr. Bailey of Texas, contend that if Smoot is guilty he should be expelled. That could not be done unless two-thirds of the members of the upper branch of congress were to vote in the affirmative.

The senate republicans were afraid to meet this question fairly and squarely before the last congressional elections were held. They were uncertain as to the vote on the Smoot case in the senate, and are at this writing equally as uncertain. If by chance Smoot had won during the last session the managers of the republican campaign feared they would lose a number of congressional districts. A thousand or more organizations of influence have demanded for three years that Smoot should be ousted. If he had been turned out last session the republicans evidently calculated that possibly the Mormon sympathizers, through revenge, might swing enough votes to turn over probably three congressional districts in the west to the democrats. As they could not peep in the box of the future the republicans last fall were exceedingly scary lest the democrats should slip up on them and capture the house of representatives. It has happened in the past that the result even in a single district enabled one or the other of the parties to organize the house.

The committee over which Mr. Burrows presides, regardless of the fact that the Smoot case, by dragging its weary length along cost the government an enormous sum of money, made a lopsided sort of report they hoped would not get their party into trouble during the recent political campaign. In effect they said to the voters who demand that Smoot should be sent back to his constituents: "See what we have done. We want the seat vacated in order that the people of Utah may have another chance to pass upon the question." For the benefit of the Mormons the republican senators fixed up a scheme to hold out hope to the people of that religious faith that while a report said a seat ought to be vacated it did not necessarily mean that a majority would so decide on the final test.

Senator Smoot's friends do not think he will be unseated. If he is they say he will be sent back to Washington as soon as the proper state papers can be made out.

That Brownsville affair down in Texas is un-

doubtedly the most harassing thing that has happened for the republicans in many a moon. During the Christmas holiday season there has been a lot of worryment among the republican leaders as to who shall be put forward to cross lances with the fiery Senator Foraker of Ohio, who stoutly maintains that President Roosevelt had no constitutional right to remove from the service of the army the three negro companies of the Twenty-fifth infantry. Of course Senator Lodge will plunge into the discussion. He always does if any man on either side of the senate chamber brings forward a proposition antagonistic to the present head of the nation. Last year Senator Foraker was in poor health. Indeed, he looked so badly and seemed so languid as compared with his former self that most people feared that his time on this earth would be short. The friends of the Senator are glad to note that he has picked up amazingly in the physical sense, and his old-time vigor has returned. He is undoubtedly primed for the fight. Mr. Lodge is an able man, but pretty much on the classical order. Those who have listened attentively to the discussions in the senate for a number of years and are competent to judge know that Mr. Lodge is no match for Mr. Foraker in a "rough and tumble" debate. Metaphorically speaking the Ohio senator would "eat him up."

The consensus of opinion here is that this Brownsville business would never have made such an issue in the senate but for the fact that certain aspiring republican politicians think it is an opportune time to cultivate the negro vote in some of the northern and western states. During the discussion on the Foraker and Penrose resolutions calling for the reasons why these negro soldiers were dismissed without honor, Senator Scott of West Virginia, put in his oar. Most readers may not have realized the significance of his remarks even if they had perused them carefully. Mr. Scott is a republican and is a member of the upper branch of congress chiefly by reason of the fact that the negro vote of his state en masse stands by his party. When Mr. Scott dipped into the discussion he almost tearfully reminded senators and the gallery auditors that black soldiers did some lively fighting in Cuba, in the vicinity of San Juan hill, and that but for their bravery the present occupant of the White House might not even be in the land of the living, etc. What amuses intelligent observers in the capital city is that no matter how brave the negro troops might have been in Cuba, in the Philippines or elsewhere during the Spanish-American war, that has nothing to do with the pending case. Of course, every one with the sense of a jack rabbit knows perfectly well that Senator Scott was simply talking for "home consumption." West Virginia today, any student of political changes knows quite well, would be safely in the democratic column but for the solid negro support given the republican party at the elections. Thousands and thousands of negroes began to flock to the state when the development of the west Virginia coal, iron and oil fields commenced in earnest. And, if all reports be true, they were voted in herds by the republican manipulators long before they had a legal right to march up to the polls. No system of registration was in vogue either. And it is charged and pretty generally believed that lots of repeating was done by voting the negroes many times in the counties

bordering upon old Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Mr. Scott, of course, is looking out for his party in West Virginia, which could not maintain its ascendancy if it did not receive the support of the negroes. And that fact is apt to be brought out by the democrats if he gets mixed up again with the discussion at a time when the big guns are being fired off. Everybody knows that if the discharged companies had been composed solely of white men not a republican would now be raising a rumpus about the action of the President.

A perplexing question at this writing in the republican ranks is as to who will really defend the president—that is, will it be Knox, Spooner or some other shining light recognized to have legal ability and supposed to be fully competent to argue the points at issue with the pugnacious Mr. Foraker, looked upon as the man likely to have the indorsement of the Ohio delegation for the presidency in 1908.

From what can be learned the democrats will be divided on this question, though the great majority will side with the president. Senator Carmack is billed for a speech in which he will insist that the negro troops ought to have been dismissed. Senator Morgan is also expected to have something to say on the subject. The latter came out recently in an interview in which he indicated that he might be found standing up oratorically for the president in this matter.

So far as the senate is concerned the Philippine tariff bill is still hanging in the air. This is a measure the administration people are anxious to have disposed of at the earliest possible moment. It, however, is pigeon-holed, and in a committee, too, of which Senator Lodge is chairman. Its fate will depend probably upon the log-rolling schemes that are to be worked towards the close of the session. The agents of the beet sugar interests of this country are as busy as beavers trying to keep the bill where it is. They are confident, from all accounts, that they will come out ahead. But this log-rolling business works wonders at time, especially when there is a big river and harbor bill to be put through and various other matters that republican members are deeply interested in.

The chances of the passage of the ship subsidy bill are slim. It will be recalled that the senate passed it early last session. It has struck snags in the house, and this is depressing for General Grosvevor of Ohio, chairman of the committee having the matter in hand, and who is soon to retire from public life. The trouble is that Speaker Cannon, Mr. Watson of Indiana, the "whip of the house," Mr. Minor of Wisconsin, and others do not like the sort of legislation started by the senate. And it is recalled that in his annual message to congress President Roosevelt did not give space to the ship subsidy proposition. The greater part of his remarks under that head related to the necessity of building up a ship service with South American countries. This was not pleasing to the men interested in the European steamship companies, but it is no secret in Washington that the waters having been muddied the controlling spirits out on the Pacific slope in the steamship lines are not weeping over the fact that there is a poor show for the passage of a bill that was, as they claim, intended to cut them practically out of the benefits that are proposed to be distributed, and to help only the Atlantic service. ALFRED J. STOFER.

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