

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

Washington, D. C., Dec. 26.—The democrats have every reason to be proud of the record made for the party during the few days that congress remained in session before taking the usual holiday recess. If nothing else had been accomplished they would have satisfaction enough in realizing that a compact, earnest, and industrious minority in both branches of the national legislature early in the session by their aggressive and enlightening speeches caused a powerful majority, at first disposed to resort to sledgehammer tactics, to cut down the Panama emergency appropriation \$5,500,000. In bringing about this saving there was not the slightest intention on the part of the democrats to in any way retard the progress of the canal. But they simply as representatives of the taxpayers of the country would not submit to the proposition to rush through a measure that the republicans were forced to admit had not been properly investigated, and which called for the expenditure of millions of the people's money without any guarantee that the greater part of the large sum originally asked for would be economically applied on the isthmus.

As is well known this measure was first brought forward in the house of representatives,

That Canal Appropriation

where all appropriation bills under our constitution are supposed to originate. With their overwhelming majority and with the pugnacious Col.

"Pete" Hepburn, of Iowa, in charge of the Panama matter, it seemed as if the republicans had determined in advance to brush aside the democrats as though a minority no longer had any rights in the United States congress. But the democrats entered the fight with a courage and perseverance that was most admirable. To the gallery visitors it might have seemed as if a David was going out to meet a Goliath, and perhaps they, like the Philistines of old may have laughed at the nery minority, but for all practical purposes what the democrats achieved equalled in a certain sense the ending of the combat between David and Goliath. The democrats not only prevented an unnecessary extravagance; they not only compelled the republicans to confess to the public that they were wrong in their methods, that they were voting away millions without knowing how and where it would be spent, but they virtually extracted a promise that not again during this congress would such another attempt be made. The democratic speeches in reality caused an insurrection over on the republican side. Mr. Hepburn and the republican managers generally feared an uprising in their own ranks, for quite a number of republicans served notice that the democratic exposures were too severe for them to satisfactorily explain to their constituents.

The house republicans, after this lesson, will not be apt to rush through another appropriation bill this session without the fullest investigation. The

They Must Give the Details

senate republicans heeded the warning, and although Speaker Cannon and his lieutenants

in the house fretted and complained over the delay at that end of the building the senate made a careful investigation and took its time in reaching a vote on the proposition.

The democrats are throwing no obstacles in the way of the Panama canal. They are making no captious or partisan opposition in supplying the necessary money for this mighty and expensive undertaking. Some whose private belief is strong that the Panama route is an impossible one and that eventually this government will have to fall back on Nicaragua, would not let their private opinions influence them. They are willing to give President Roosevelt, and all the eminent engineers and others he has designated to carry on the work, the fairest trial imaginable; but they do insist that something tangible must be brought out before the people's money is poured into the isthmus by the millions and the information withheld as to how it is to be spent.

During the week preceding the date of the

holiday recess the house managers permitted a wide latitude of debate. Ostensibly the subject under discussion was that portion of President Roosevelt's annual message relating to the

Debate on the Insurance Question

regulation of insurance. A great many speeches were delivered—more by democrats than republicans. Not many of the republicans recognized talked long about insurance. They preferred other topics. Several of the best reasoners on the democratic side in view of the fact that the supreme court has rendered a decision to the effect that insurance can not be regarded properly as interstate business hesitate to commit themselves fully, holding rather that perhaps it would be better to refer the question to the judiciary committee for careful investigation, with instructions to make a report to the house later in the session. Others contend stoutly that where companies do business in various states it is interstate business and can not be regarded in any other light.

Speaker Cannon fairly beamed with delight because it suited his purpose and that of his republican associates on the rules committee to allow so much time for speech-making. The speaker is bending all his energy to so shape things that an early adjournment can be brought about. He feels that the more speeches are made at the beginning of the session the fewer requests for time will be made later on. And it was a noteworthy fact that during the discussion the republicans were wonderfully accommodating in permitting the democrats to get the floor. It might have been that the republicans in addition to getting the speeches out of the way wished to get an idea as to the tactics of their opponents on the railroad rate question.

At this writing it is uncertain as to which branch of congress will take the initiative in the railroad rate problem. At the short session of the last congress it will be remembered that the house passed what was known as the Esch-

Railroad Rate Problem

Townsend bill. The senate refused to accept it, and congress came to its constitutional end with the matter hanging in the air so far as the senate was concerned. That august body, however, did delegate power to the committee over which Mr. Elkins presides to hold sessions last spring, and the hearings continued for several weeks, with the understanding and belief that by the time this congress assembled the senate interstate and foreign commerce committee would have a bill perfected. But the republicans of the committee were divided when they obtained authority to pursue the investigation, and they are still divided. Worse than that they are almost at their wits' ends to determine how to get together on a proposition that will satisfy the country, please the president, and at the same time please the railroads.

In this congress a new senator has been placed on the interstate and foreign commerce committee—Mr. Crane, of Massachusetts. Opinions differ as to where he really stands on the all-absorbing question. Senator Crane takes the place of Senator Millard of Nebraska, transferred to the chairmanship of the inter-oceanic canals committee. He has been heralded as a friend of the president on the theory that his colleague, Mr. Lodge, is such a boon companion of the chief executive. On the other hand the claim is freely made that as Senator Crane comes from New England he must be classed as a "conservative" with regard to railroad legislation. Messrs. Elkins, Aldrich, Kean and Foraker are credited with having had him assigned to the committee, for it is a recognized fact that the republicans are uncertain as to their ability to unite in one report, and in order to avoid, if possible, two republican reports the majority of the majority hope to use Mr. Crane to settle their differences and prevent several of their men from either voting with the democrats or submitting the third report.

As regards the railroad rate question the

house democrats are waiting to see what the republicans of that body will do. Several democratic bills on the subject have been prepared. In the speeches delivered so far this session a

It is a Democratic Measure

number of democrats have made it plain that if the republicans do not meet the expectations of President Roosevelt, and there is a prospect of still further befogging the situation, they will insist that a democratic measure be brought into the house as a minority report. Mr. Clayton, of Alabama, in his address to the house pointed out in forcible language that the democratic platforms of 1896 and 1900 and again in 1904 unequivocally declared for the regulation of railroad rates. He has contended that during the first ten years of the operations of the present interstate commerce law the railroads were not guilty of such gross discriminations. But he declares that after the supreme court decided the commission had not sufficient power to enforce rates the railroads have been unfair to shippers, resulting in the present movement for stringent legislation. The republicans in their national platforms have been silent on the subject. They did not have a word to say on the subject, not even in the platform on which Mr. Roosevelt was elected in 1904, and it was not until his message was sent to congress at the beginning of the short session of the last congress that the republicans were disposed to make even a faint effort in the direction of legislation recommended by the president.

In view of the record and the undisputed facts that have been brought to light since the present

Republicans Are Artful Dodgers

congress assembled the democrats have vehemently asserted in the discussions that their out-spoken declarations and nothing else are really responsible for the partial awakening at last on the part of the republicans. They charge that the republicans had to be driven to action, and that now they are striving to concoct some scheme by which a law will be put on the statute books that may turn out to have neither "teeth nor claws" unless the democrats uphold the president in the demands made by him in his message.

The ultra protectionists of the republican party are as determined as ever that there shall be no appreciable revision of the tariff during this congress, but they will not be able to prevent a discussion of the burdens that the people complain of in many sections of the United States. The Philippine bill will furnish an opportunity for well directed attacks against the prevailing system, and if the house managers are not disposed to grant sufficient time the democrats and "insurgent" republicans of the senate can present their views without fear of the gag rule. The house republicans do not want the light shed on the iniquities of the Dingley law, nor do they, if they can help it, care to have too much said about the retaliatory measures being taken by Germany and France to exclude American goods from those countries on account of the high duties levied against the products of the nations mentioned.

It seems a small matter, and yet the agents of the tobacco and sugar trusts are so active this winter that they are actually accused of opposing the efforts of the American citizens in the Isle of Pines to induce congress and the state

The Tobacco and Sugar Trusts

department to investigate and determine whether that island belongs to Cuba or to the United States. Mr. Edward F. Ryan, the duly accredited delegate from the island who seeks to be recognized as a representative on the floor of the house and accorded the same rights as those enjoyed by the commissioner from Porto Rico and the delegate from Hawaii, and several other Americans sent here from the Isle of Pines, say that they have encountered at almost every turn the power of the tobacco trust. The island has a

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