

THE SELECTION OF COMMITTEES

It has been determined that the committees of the national house of representatives shall be selected by caucus instead of by the speaker, and the details of this plan are now being worked out. There are several rules which cannot be ignored without danger. First, each party must choose its own members. In no other way can honest and effective representation of both parties be secured.

In view of the fact that there is a feeling between the standpatters and insurgents it would be wise to allow the insurgents to decide whether they will take their chances in a republican caucus or be treated as a separate body. If they desire to be recognized as a separate body they should be given recognition according to their numbers and importance.

Second, No matter who are on the committee to select members of the various committees the report should be SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT BY CAUCUS. No committee should be allowed to appoint WITHOUT APPEAL. That would be but little better than apportionment by the speaker. The committees represent the house and therefore the house should have the final decision—each party deciding in caucus on its members. The chances are that the reports would be accepted and the appointments approved, but the right of appeal silences criticism. If any committee made appointments without appeal the result would be the creation of enmities which would greatly embarrass the work of the year. If every dissatisfied member is free to take his complaint before the caucus the committees will become what they ought to be, the agents of the house.

Third, Champ Clark, being the choice for speaker, should be chairman of the committee on committees and the other members should be relieved of embarrassment by having their committee position selected for them by the caucus BEFORE they begin the work of selecting committees. It has been suggested that the members of the ways and means committee do the selecting. This may be wise. As this is the most important committee and is made up of the leaders of the house, the work of selecting the other committees (subject to ratification) might properly be entrusted to this committee. It may, however, be thought best to associate with them the chairmen of a few of the other important committees.

Fourth, SENIORITY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO GOVERN IN THE SELECTION OF THE COMMITTEES. It must be remembered that the democratic members of the various committees have been selected by a republican speaker. If he has consulted any democrat it has been only the leader of the minority. In filling the committees the committee on committees should feel free to select the men, old or new, who reflect the wishes of the house. This is more important than the gratification of any man's ambition. It is absurd to say that the democrats are under obligation to put protectionist democrats on the ways and means committee to frame a tariff reform bill just because a republican speaker put them on to prevent tariff reform. The committees represent the house and they should voice the wishes of the house.

There are other rules to be observed but these are the most important.

THE DENVER PLATFORM

Last week The Commoner reproduced the Denver platform plank on Cannonism; this week it calls attention to the plank on the tariff:

"We welcome the belated promise of tariff reform now offered by the republican party in tardy recognition of the righteousness of the democratic position on this question. But the people cannot safely entrust the execution of this important work to a party which is so deeply obligated to the highly protected interests as is the republican party. We call attention to the significant fact that the promised relief is postponed until after the coming election—an election to succeed in which the republican party must have that same support from the beneficiaries of the high protective tariff as it has always heretofore received from them; and to the further fact that during years of uninterrupted power no action whatever has been taken by the republican congress to correct the admittedly existing tariff iniquities.

"We favor immediate revision of the tariff by the reduction of import duties. Articles entering into competition with trust controlled products should be placed upon the free list, and material reductions should be made in the tariff upon the necessities of life and especially

upon articles competing with such American manufactures as are sold abroad more cheaply than at home, and a gradual reduction should be made in such other schedules as may be necessary to restore the tariff to a revenue basis.

"Existing duties have given to the manufacturers of paper a shelter behind which they have organized combinations to raise the price of pulp and of paper, thus imposing a tax upon the spread of knowledge. We demand the immediate repeal of the tariff on wood pulp, print paper, lumber, timber and logs and that these articles be placed upon the free list."

The two years that have elapsed since 1908 have vindicated the prophecy contained in the first paragraph, namely, that "the people cannot safely entrust the execution of this important work to a party which is so deeply obligated to the highly protected interests as is the republican party." The platform makes six demands:

First, Immediate REDUCTION on some things.

Second, GRADUAL reduction on other things.

Third, A REVENUE BASIS as the ultimate end.

Fourth, Articles entering into competition with trust controlled articles shall be put on the free list.

Fifth, Material reduction SHALL BE MADE in tariff on necessities, especially those sold abroad more cheaply than at home.

Sixth, Certain specific additions to the free list, namely, wood pulp, print paper, lumber, timber and logs.

In the house of representatives the democrats tried to carry out this platform and there is no doubt that in the new congress the house will be all right—let us hope that the new senators may improve the tone of the senate democracy.

GOOD FOR OWEN

Senator Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma has fought his way into the hearts of the American people. They are indeed greatly indebted to him for the faithful and capable work he has done for direct legislation and they will not be slow in thanking him for taking the lead in the fight against Lorimer of Illinois. Senator Owen's speech was a clear cut presentation of evidence which indicates Mr. Lorimer's unworthiness to hold a seat in the United States senate. While republican leaders sought to out-jockey Senator Owen for the honors in beginning the Lorimer fight it is well understood that the credit for this good rule is largely due to the Oklahoma senator and for this as for other patriotic efforts Oklahomans have the right to feel proud of their junior senator.

AN OKLAHOMA FAKE

Oklahoma City, Okla., December 16, 1910.—To the Associated Press: It has been called to our attention that your news service circulated the statement from Oklahoma City that during the sitting of the legislature Hon. W. J. Bryan's picture had been turned to the wall, covered with maps, or otherwise discredited.

We simply desire to say that that statement was utterly false. The picture of Hon. W. J. Bryan has at all times during this sitting of the legislature adorned the walls of both the house and the senate rooms; that to our personal knowledge the statement that Governor Haskell was instrumental in excluding the picture or desired to have it excluded is equally false. It is known by ourselves and everybody around the legislature that Governor Haskell is a personal friend of Hon. W. J. Bryan and that he has at no time indicated any desire to have the picture removed.

The map incident in the hall of the house of representatives is vouched for by the undersigned speaker with the statement that perhaps for a period of one hour when a large map of Oklahoma City and vicinity was being displayed at the conference on definite capitol location this map was hung on the front wall and being very large covered all the pictures at that end of the hall, including the picture of the governor as well as that of Mr. Bryan. This was merely a temporary exhibition of the map for the time stated.

Respectfully,

J. ELMEN THOMAS,

President Pro. Tem of the Senate.

W. B. ANTHONY,

Speaker of House of Representatives.

WHO WILL ANSWER?

Now, what protectionist democrat will undertake to answer the free raw material speech of Congressman Smith of Texas? Don't all speak at once.

DEMOCRATS REVERSE THEMSELVES

Many democrats throughout the country were greatly disappointed when a majority of the house democrats reversed themselves January 9 and sustained Speaker Cannon on the very proposition wherein they had formally condemned him. A Washington correspondent for the Philadelphia North American tells the story in this way:

The democrats gave to Speaker Cannon his hour of triumph in the house today. Badly battered in the three days' storm that swept the house last March and tore from him much of the power that had been his, the speaker "came back" in a way that brought a grim smile of satisfaction to his rugged countenance because of the defeat of his ancient enemies, the "insurgents."

Today the speaker was sustained by an overwhelming majority of the regulars and the democrats on a ruling which was identical with the one he made last March, when the house angrily overruled his decision through a combination of insurgent republicans and democrats.

Today, on the eve of their return to power, the democrats voted almost solidly to sustain the ruling of the chair. The insurgents—twenty-seven of them—stood by their guns and fought the speaker bravely. But, robbed of democratic support, their battle was a losing one from the start.

It was the first big political maneuver of the present session of congress, and the regular republicans were elated over the results. They taunted the democrats unceasingly for their change of front. The house was in its gayest mood, and during the three hours that the fight lasted there was an almost continuous gale of laughter.

Taunted for his inconsistency, Representative Fitzgerald, of New York, one of the democratic leaders in the rules fight, retorted that for the sake of consistency he didn't propose to be foolish.

When Champ Clark, of Missouri, slated to succeed Speaker Cannon, voted to sustain the chair today on the same point of order which furnished the basis for the successful insurgent campaign of last March, the republicans broke into storms of applause.

Representative Underwood, of Alabama, said: "We voted to overrule the speaker because we thought the time had come for a revolution and for a majority of the house to express its will. At that time there was reason to believe the rules committee was attempting to obstruct legislation. No such condition exists today, and, consequently, there will be no revolution."

"Then when you voted to overrule the speaker you admit you engaged in an unlawful enterprise," snapped Representative Mann, of Illinois. "It was not unlawful; it was necessary," interjected Mr. Fitzgerald.

The "insurgents" refused to be downcast by their defeat. Twenty-six democrats voted with them against the speaker, and they claim that these "insurgent democrats" will be their allies in all future fights.

"Poppycock," said Champ Clark, when told of this. "Every man voted as he pleased. That was my advice to them."

Representative Sims, of Tennessee, a democrat, declared that he was amazed at the statements of some of the leaders on his own side that they knew the speaker was right last March but had voted against him.

"I am one of the ignorant who believed that the speaker was wrong then and that he is wrong now. And I would rather be ignorantly honest than knowingly dishonest," he declared.

Representative Hardy, of Texas, took Mr. Sims to task for employing such harsh language. He said the whole truth was that Mr. Sims didn't believe in false pretense, and neither did he.

It was on the point as to whether or not a proposed amendment to the rules, offered from the floor, constituted a question of high constitutional privilege that the storm broke. It was precisely this question that called out the "revolution" of last March.

Speaker Cannon ruled the Norris resolution out of order. Today Representative Fuller, of Illinois, offered a resolution amending the rule relating to the discharge of committees from the consideration of bills. A point of order was raised against it, and the speaker, declaring he would ignore the precedent set by the house last March, when it overruled his ruling in the Norris case, held that the Fuller resolution was not privileged.

An appeal from the chair was immediately taken. It was taken by a regular republican.