

# The Commoner.

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## The Balance Sheet

The special session of congress has adjourned. Its record is made up and upon that record the country will form its judgment as to the party's capacity for constructive legislation. That judgment ought to be favorable, for, on the whole, the democrats have acquitted themselves well.

The country should not expect perfection. Governments are administered by frail human beings and allowance must be made for their weaknesses. The democrats have made a far better record than the republicans have made in any recent congress and it is by comparison that they should be judged.

First—The democrats elected Champ Clark speaker. He is a great improvement over Speaker Cannon.

Second—The democrats changed the rules of the house so as to take from the speaker the appointment of committees. The substitution of selection by caucus, each party selecting its quota, is a step in advance.

Third—The house began its legislative program by passing the resolution submitting the amendment providing for election of United States senators by direct vote. This is an epoch-making reform. Reference will be made later to conference actions on this measure.

Fourth—The house passed a bill requiring the publication, before the election, of the names of contributors to national campaign funds. This is an important measure and carries out the last democratic national platform. This measure was broadened and improved in the senate and the president has signed it. This is a distinct victory for the party. Mr. Taft emphatically opposed the idea in the last campaign.

Fifth—The democrats kept faith with the president and almost unanimously supported the reciprocity agreement. While it was not wholly acceptable to democrats they regarded it as a step in the direction of tariff reduction and were justified in supporting it.

Sixth—The wool bill, vetoed by the president, would have given the people a large measure of relief. It would have given more relief had it become a law in the form in which it passed the house. It would have been still more satisfactory had it been framed on the basis of free wool.

Seventh—The farmers' free list was a very meritorious measure. The president's reasons for vetoing it were lamentably weak. The farmers ought to remember that in this matter the president deliberately surrendered them to the greed of the protected interests and cast in his lot with those who furnished his campaign fund.

The cotton reduction bill was good and the senate amendments made it better. The president's veto of this measure will furnish further evidence of his subserviency to the exploiting class. No real relief is to be hoped for from him.

The house deserves credit for the way it dealt with the question of statehood for Arizona and New Mexico. The first resolution PERMITTED Arizona to vote out the recall of judges and permitted New Mexico to change her constitution so as to make it more easily amendable. When the president vetoed this, congress wisely changed the resolution to compel the elimination of the recall of judges (the provision can be reinstated by the state) and thus secured statehood for both territories.

Now, having stated the creditable things done by the democratic house, let us look at the few mistakes made:

First—It was a mistake to make Mr. Underwood chairman of the committee on ways and means. He is not a thorough-going tariff reformer and his environment is against progressive democracy. The party had a right to expect that a positive and aggressive opponent of the whole protective policy would be placed at the head of the ways and means committee. The mistake has already cost the party dearly. It has led to a surrender of the democratic doctrine of free wool and to the surrender to the senate of the honor of introducing the bill reducing the tariff on iron and steel—a humiliation that the other members of the committee ought to feel.

The second mistake of the session has already been mentioned—the putting of a tariff on wool. The tariff on wool is the keystone of the protectionist arch and those who do not know it have yet to learn the A B C of the tariff question. Every speaker on the tariff will be confronted by the tariff on wool if he attempts to attack the PRINCIPLE of protection, and he must criticize congress, or, if he defends congress, he must do so at the expense of party principle. The mistake can be corrected at the regular session by a new measure making free wool the basis of the reduction, but this is not likely so long as Mr. Underwood's influence is paramount in the committee.

The third mistake was in allowing the session to adjourn without the submission of the amendment for the election of United States senators by direct vote. The democrats naturally desire to win a partisan victory in connection with the amendment but when the senate objected (quite as naturally desiring a partisan victory also) the house should have sought an agreement by eliminating the partisan issue. The people want the direct election of senators and are much less concerned than the politicians about the partisan issue that now divides the two houses on the subject. The house will err fatally if it allows the regular session to pass without submitting this important constitutional amendment.

The fourth mistake was in not passing an anti-trust bill. The decision of the supreme court in the Standard Oil and tobacco cases so impaired the present anti-trust law that additional legislation is imperatively necessary. This subject ought to have been taken up at once. It causes uneasiness among the rank and file of the party to see so many democratic leaders in Washington apparently indifferent to the appalling depredations of the trusts. The regular session will doubtless take up this subject and the party will be greatly disappointed if the house fails to propose some radical measure for the relief of the public.

The fifth mistake made by the house was in permitting a secret caucus to control legislation. Representatives of the people must act in the open. Caucuses should be public, at least the decisions arrived at should be a matter of record—and there is no reason why the proceedings should not be reported. There are signs of a change in this respect and it is to be hoped that democrats will remove this serious cause of criticism by abolishing the secret caucus.

Here is the balance sheet and it makes a most excellent showing for one session. May the next session be even better.

### HARMON FALLING BEHIND

From the poll of democratic senators and members of congress made by the Chicago Tribune at the close of congress (it will be found on another page) it is evident that Governor Harmon is falling behind in the race for the presidential nomination. According to the poll the Ohio governor has nine friends among the democrats of the senate, Senator Pomerene from Ohio, two from Maryland, two from West Virginia, one from North Carolina, one from Kentucky, one from Louisiana and one from Texas. The one from Kentucky is Senator Paynter who gives place to Ollie James; the one from Texas is evidently Senator Bailey. Not a progressive in the senate is for Governor Harmon, except the senator from his own state. In the house

Governor Harmon has forty-three friends—sixteen, more than two-thirds of them, coming from Ohio. Outside of Ohio New York furnishes eight, South Carolina four, Texas three and Georgia, New Jersey and Mississippi two each. Arkansas, Louisiana, Maryland and West Virginia furnish four more, one each. It will be seen that Governor Harmon has no votes in the close states, except in his own state—unless New York is counted a close state.

Champ Clark, on the contrary, has fifty votes outside of his own state and they come from twenty-one states. Governor Wilson has forty-five, from sixteen states. Ex-Governor Folk has thirteen votes from Missouri and Governor Marshall fourteen votes from Indiana.

This showing indicates that Governor Har-

mon is practically out of the race. Clark, Wilson, Folk and Marshall all represent progressive democracy and the four together have a total of 122 to 52 for Harmon. It must be remembered, too, that Governor Harmon is stronger with the politicians at Washington than among the rank and file of the party. Some of the Clark strength may be credited to personal friendship. The seventy-five non-committals in the senate and house can be counted as largely against Harmon, for, as he stands out pre-eminently as the representative of the reactionary element of the party, the seventy-five non-committal democrats would be for him if they favored a reactionary policy. If Governor Harmon withdraws from the race it will become a friendly contest between progressives.