

## Wilson Follows Plan Begun by Washington

Wallace T. Hughes, writing to the Chicago Record-Herald, says: President Wilson's plan in addressing congress was foreshadowed by his writings in 1897, when he was pursuing the quite distinguished but less conspicuous calling of professor of jurisprudence and politics at Princeton university.

In his work on "The State," he expressed himself quite freely upon the habit of presidents in sending messages to congress instead of addressing that body in person, and one might have read between the lines that if ever the time came when the college professor was president he would revert to the earliest practice and, Washingtonlike and kinglike, appear before the national assembly and speak in behalf of his ideas in a sort of "address from the throne."

On page 378 of the volume mentioned he wrote as follows:

"The sovereign (British) is not a member of the cabinet, because George I. could not speak English. Until the accession of George I. the king always attended cabinet councils. George did not do so, because he could not either understand or be understood in the discussions of the ministers. Since his time, therefore, the sovereign has not sat with the cabinet.

"A similar example of the interesting ease with which men of our race establish and observe precedents is to be found in the practice on the part of presidents of the United States of sending written messages to congress.

"Washington and John Adams addressed congress in person on public affairs; but Jefferson, the third president, was not an easy speaker, and preferred to send a written message; subsequent presidents followed his example as of course. Hence a sacred rule of constitutional action!"

With less irony and more philosophy he on page 546 gave the following summary of his theory of greater co-operation between the president and congress:

"Washington and John Adams interpreted this clause to mean that they might address congress in person, as the sovereign in England may do; and their annual communications to congress were spoken addresses. But Jefferson, the third president, being an ineffective speaker, this habit was discontinued and the fashion of written messages was inaugurated and firmly established.

"Possibly, had the president not so closed the matter against new adjustments, this clause of the constitution might legitimately have been made the foundation for a much more habitual and informal and yet at the same time much more public and responsible interchange of opinion between the executive and congress. Having been interpreted, however, to exclude the president from any but the most formal and ineffectual utterance of advice, our federal executive and legislature have been shut off from co-operation and mutual confidence to an extent to which no other modern system furnishes a parallel.

"In all other modern governments the heads of the administrative departments are given the right to sit in the legislative body and to take part in its proceedings. The legislature and executive are thus associated in such a way that the ministers of state can lead the houses without being misunderstood—in such a way that the two parts of the government which should be most closely co-ordinated, the part, namely, by which the laws are made and the part by which the laws are executed, may be kept in close harmony and intimate co-operation, with the result of giving coherence to the action of the one and energy to the action of the other."

In delivering a message to congress oratorically, he took advantage of the opportunity to try out what years ago he ventured to champion, so it was not an impulse, but a very deliberate action along what apparently had become a profound conviction of presidential duty.

Somewhere recently a writer on Woodrow Wilson's favorite books mentioned Walter Bagehot's very able and charming treatise on "The English Constitution" as one of the preferred bits of reading in the president's library. It may be easily imagined that that work, published many years ago, contributed its influence toward bringing President Wilson to his present action.

In that work Bagehot contrasts the American

way of complete separation of legislative and executive with the British governmental form. In his view "the efficient secret" of the English constitution lies in the close union, the nearly complete fusion of the legislative and executive powers, the connecting link being the cabinet which, in short, is a committee of the legislative body selected to be the executive body, with a member of the parliament serving as its head in the role of prime minister.

Wrote Bagehot: "This fusion of the legislative and executive functions may, to those who have not much considered it, seem but a dry and small matter to be the latent essence and effectual secret of the English constitution; but we can only judge of its real importance by looking at a few of its principal effects, and contrasting it very shortly with its great competitor, which seems likely, unless care be taken, to outstrip it in the progress of the world.

"That competitor is the presidential system. The characteristic of it is that the president is elected from the people by one process and the house of representatives by another.

"The independence of the legislative and executive powers is the specific quality of presidential government, just as their fusion and combination is the precise principle of cabinet government.

"First, compare the two in quiet times: The essence of a civilized age is, that administration requires the continued aid of legislation. One principal and necessary kind of legislation is taxation. The expense of civilized government is constantly varying. It must vary if the government does its duty.

"The miscellaneous estimates of the English government contain an inevitable medley of changing items. Education, prison discipline, art, science, civil contingencies of a hundred kinds, require more money one year and less another. The expense of defense—the naval and military estimates—vary still more as the danger of attack seems more or less imminent, as the means of retarding such danger become more or less costly.

"If the persons who have to do the work are not the same as those who have to make the laws there will be controversy between the two sets of persons.

"The tax-imposers are sure to quarrel with the tax-requirers.

"The executive is crippled by not getting the laws it needs, and the legislature is spoiled by having to act without responsibility—the executive becomes unfit for its name since it can not execute what it decides on; the legislature is demoralized by liberty, by taking decisions of which others (and not itself) will suffer the effects.

"In America so much has this difficulty been felt that a semi-connection has grown up between the legislature and the executive. When the secretary of the treasury of the federal government wants a tax he consults upon it with the chairman of the financial committee of congress.

"He can not go down to congress himself and propose what he wants; he can only write a letter and send it. But he tries to get a chairman of the finance committee who likes his tax; through that chairman he tries to persuade the committee to recommend such tax; by that committee he tries to induce the house to adopt that tax.

"But such a chain of communications is liable to continual interruptions; it may suffice for a single tax on a fortunate occasion, but will scarcely pass a complicated budget—we do not say in a war or a rebellion—we are now comparing the cabinet system and the presidential system in quiet times—but in times of financial difficulty.

"Two clever men never exactly agreed about a budget.

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"The division weakens the whole aggregate force of government—the entire imperial power; and therefore it weakens both its halves. The

executive is weakened in a very plain way.

"In England a strong cabinet can obtain the concurrence of the legislature in all acts which facilitate its administration; it is itself, so to speak, the legislature. But a president may be hampered by the parliament, and is likely to be hampered.

"The natural tendency of the members of every legislature is to make themselves conspicuous. They wish to gratify an ambition laudable or blamable; they wish to promote the measures they think best for the public welfare; they wish to make their will felt in great affairs. All these mixed motives urge them to oppose the executive. They are embodying the purposes of others if they aid; they are advancing their own opinions if they defeat; they are first if they vanquish; they are auxiliaries if they support. . . . The presidential government, by its nature, divides political life into two halves, an executive half and a legislative half, and by so dividing it makes neither half worth a man's having—worth his making it a continuous career—worthy to absorb, as cabinet government absorbs, his whole soul.

"The statesmen from whom a nation chooses under a presidential system are much inferior to those from whom it chooses under a cabinet system, while the selecting apparatus is also far less discerning.

"All these differences are more important at critical periods, because government itself is more important. A formed public opinion, a respectable, able and disciplined legislature, a well-chosen executive, a parliament and an administration not thwarting each other, but co-operating with each other, are of greater consequence when great affairs are in progress than when small affairs are in progress."

Mr. Wilson's innovation is, therefore, an innovation only to our modern American eyes. He not only is returning to the original American practice of the original president, which Americans are not now accustomed to, but he is undertaking a fusion of the legislative and executive more nearly approaching that of the British, to which the English are, of course, wholly accustomed.

While the American governmental theory is one of complete separation of the three great branches, it is probable that the degree of co-operation contemplated by the president is not so great as to prove harmful or, in fact, to prove otherwise than beneficial.

### THE FRIEND WHO UNDERSTANDS

Laurie J. Quinby is writing many fine things these days for the Omaha Chancellor. Under the headline, "The Friend Who Understands," Mr. Quinby writes:

Every desire for commendation, for an approving word, or glance or nod, is a confession of weakness. Yet so long as we are clothed in mortal flesh, we shall manifest some form of weakness, and this is a weakness that does no harm.

In every walk of life there are heroic souls who struggle and aspire, alone, unappreciated, unattended, for whom there is never a word of recognition or encouragement. Is it strange that sometimes these grow bitter?

There are others whose whole lives are spent in fond hopes of being of some valuable service to mankind. In quiet, modest and unpretentious ways, they work their ideals, only to pass on unhonored and unsung, until at last the world that has been waiting for the service they sought to render awakes to a realization of that service. Is it strange that in their lonely lives, such as these can hug to their heart of hearts the dear friend who does see and know and understand? Were it not for these, the lives of such would be barren indeed, so far as any personal comfort may concern them.

No one who ever performed a worthy deed, did so in the hope of any form of reward. Had he expected it, that expectation had proved him unworthy of it. Yet there can be no harm in a wider cultivation in the world of that spirit of appreciation which sometimes we see in the mellow tints of the eye of an understanding friend, who extends a sympathetic hand, or who in tender speech utters a hopeful word. The world is too prone to await the success of the innovator before it reaches out to him a helping hand. It is heroic to succeed in one's ideals, so let him who does succeed have just honor, but the most heroic soul is he who strives unassisted and unencouraged, who knows not the plaudits of admiring crowds and who has not even a crust upon which to feed. When these know the devotion of an understanding friend, their cup of gratitude runneth over.