

The Outlook

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WHAT WILL CONGRESS DO?

THE new Congress is indeed new. In the Senate one looks in vain for the familiar faces of Chamberlain, of Oregon; Thomas, of Colorado; Phelan, of California; and Hoke Smith, of Georgia. From the House Champ Clark has gone forever; the most striking additions to its membership are noted in ex-Senator Burton, of Ohio—one welcome instance where, due to the recent election, a veteran has not given place to a fledgeling—and Miss Alice Robertson, of Oklahoma, the one woman member.

The Sixty-seventh Congress convened on April 11. It differs in four respects from recent Congresses:

First, in its 96 Senators and 435 Representatives there is a Republican majority of 22 in the Senate and 170 in the House—a rather topheavy control.

Second, for the first time in some years Congress and the President belong to the same party.

Third, the President is the first Senator ever elected to that office, and therefore, it is assumed, has naturally more sympathy than his predecessors have had with the assertions by Congress of its own dignity in its relations with the Executive. There should, as a consequence, be greater co-ordination between the legislative and executive departments of our Government than has been lately the case.

Fourth, perhaps no Congress has ever come into being having to accept so large a legacy of vetoed or partially enacted measures from a preceding Congress. These include the Army and Navy appropriations, the Budget Bill, the Emergency Tariff and other farm relief legislation, the Immigration Reapportionment, and Separate Air Department Bills, the measures providing for Federal co-operation with the States in education, reforestation, and road-building as well as the resolutions looking towards a declaration of peace and towards international disarmament. Under an agreement reached near the close of the Sixty-sixth Congress, consideration of the Colombian Treaty takes precedence of all Senate business during the first week of the present session.

Of the new bills introduced, the one calling forth most comment appropriately deals with the chief subject before Congress—taxation reform. This the bill would accomplish by providing a one per cent tax on sales of all kinds. Such a tax would raise sufficient rev-

enue, it is estimated, to allow for the reduction of the normal income tax from four to two per cent; for a change in surtaxes so that they would not oppress people of moderate income; finally, for a repeal of the excess profits tax and a number of special excise taxes. Next in popular interest are the bills providing for daylight saving, for the reclassification of Government employees, for the refunding of tolls on vessels of the United States using the Panama Canal, for authorizing Cabinet members to sit as members of the Senate and House, and the proposal of a Constitutional amendment fixing January 1 as the date when Presidential and Congressional terms of office shall begin. Several investigations are expected to be ordered, the most important being an inquiry into the railway situation.

The Senate of the Sixty-seventh Congress was organized March 4; on that day it approved the Cabinet appointments and, after approving others, adjourned some days later. The House organized on April 11. Speaker Gillett was re-elected, receiving the full Republican vote. He has been an able Speaker. Incidentally, he has served continuously longer in the House than has any other member.

PRESIDENT HARDING'S FIRST MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

ONLY incomplete reports of President Harding's first Message to Congress are available as this issue of The Outlook goes to press. Extended comment at this time is therefore impossible. It is clear, however, that what he has termed "normalcy" is uppermost in his mind as the object to be obtained, not only in domestic conditions and in foreign relations, but also in the mind of the people.

Contrary to very general expectations, the President placed in the most emphatic position of his Message, not the foreign problems of the country, but its domestic situation.

He insists on the importance of keeping expenditure within income. He recognizes as the most dangerous phase of government to-day the growth of public indebtedness extending from the Nation at large to the smallest political subdivision. He thinks, however, that the needs of the Nation will call for receipts from taxation amounting during the fiscal year 1922-3 to at least four billion dollars. He urges a prompt re-

vision of the internal laws, including the repeal of the excess profits tax.

He urges the establishment of a Department of Public Welfare and discusses other domestic problems.

On foreign relations the President's Message deals with three important problems—the resumption of a state of peace in this country, the world association of nations, and disarmament. On these three subjects the three following sentences state tersely his position:

To establish the state of technical peace without further delay, I should approve a declaratory resolution by Congress to that effect, with the qualifications essential to protect all our rights.

In rejecting the League Covenant, we make no surrender of our hope and aim for an association to promote peace, in which we would most heartily join.

We are ready to co-operate with other nations to approximate disarmament, but merest prudence forbids that we disarm alone.

We reserve editorial discussion of President Harding's message for another issue of The Outlook.

GETTING AT THE ROOT OF THE EX-SERVICE MAN'S TROUBLES

A CREDIT mark can be chalked up for the Harding Administration because of the promptness with which it acted in its effort to untangle the confused affairs of our ex-service men. Promptly after his inauguration, President Harding appointed Brigadier-General Charles G. Dawes as chairman of a Committee for Disabled Soldiers. Other members of the Committee included Colonel F. W. Galbraith, National Commander of the American Legion; Thomas W. Miller, Alien Property Custodian; Colonel Milton J. Foreman; Mrs. Henry A. Rea, of Pittsburgh; and Miss Mabel Boardman, of Washington. This Committee has already reported to the President; and its recommendations, although we have seen only a summary of this report, appear to be very closely in accord with the recommendations of the Legion and the Joint Committee for Aid to Disabled Veterans, which The Outlook discussed in its issue of January 26.

The fundamental demand of the Dawes Committee, of the Joint Committee, and of the Legion, is for the centralization of authority over all the agencies engaged in caring for the veterans. The Dawes Committee, like the two non-

Governmental organizations, also recommends the decentralization of the War Risk Bureau in order that agencies may be established in various parts of the country which will permit the Bureau to go to the soldier rather than require the soldier to go to the Bureau. The Dawes Committee also asks for the establishment of a permanent and continuing hospital programme and the appropriation of sufficient funds for this purpose.

Now it should be the immediate effort of Congress to carry these fundamental recommendations into the promptest effect.

SAVE THE CENTERS

CONGRESS appropriated money for an army of 175,000 men. This cut in the size of the Army naturally meant a suspension of all recruiting activities. Doubtless almost all those who paid any attention at all to this announcement decided that the cut represented wise economy and passed on to the next item of interest. The fact that the cut may have been both wise and necessary, however, does not end the need for discussing the manner in which it was made.

The cessation of recruiting means that by June 30 of this year all Recruit Educational Centers established by the Army since the war will go out of existence. Readers of *The Outlook* know that these Recruit Educational Centers represent the greatest contribution which the Army has made towards helping the movement of Americanization, that they constitute one of the Army's chief justifications for existence as a peace-time institution.

These Centers have taken illiterate native-born Americans, non-English-speaking aliens, and turned them into disciplined, efficient soldiers and intelligently patriotic American citizens. These Centers have schooled men in American history and American ideals. They have been worth all they cost as educational institutions entirely aside from their value as military assets.

If the Army is to be permanently reduced to 175,000 men, the reduction should not be made at the cost of wiping these schools out of existence. If necessary, the Army should be authorized to enlist annually 10,000 illiterates and non-English-speaking men, and at the same time discharge a similar number of trained soldiers into a reserve. Ten thousand men a year would give the Army enough material to keep these schools in operation.

The Recruit Educational Centers are not only valuable as educational institutions for the training for citizenship, but they are a military asset of two-fold value. They are valuable not only because they draw upon a reservoir of

strength untouched prior to the war, but also because they are a constant stimulus and inspiration to the officers charged with their development and maintenance. There is little danger of



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a West Pointer, a member of the General Staff, and the officer largely responsible for the creation of the Recruit Educational Centers. He is also the creator of the Cadence System of Close Order Drill, which has been widely used with astonishing results in the training of raw troops

Prussianism among army officers who can conduct and comprehend the work of those schools.

PEONAGE AND MURDER

THE horror of the accounts of the murder of several Negroes—the number is placed as high as eleven—on a farm twenty miles from Covington, in Georgia, has attracted public attention to the general question of so-called “peonage” in the South. However bad the practice under the laws of Georgia and other Southern States may be, it need hardly be pointed out that atrocious wholesale murder is not one of the necessary results of peonage. It is true, however, if the facts are as stated by the public press, that the brutal and sickening murder of these Negroes had its inception in an effort on the part of the white men carrying on a farm under forced labor conditions to conceal from Federal agents illegal acts they had committed against these very peonage laws.

Strictly speaking, the word “peonage” means the “illegal holding of a man in personal bondage for debt.” Practically speaking, the peonage practiced in the South does not conform to this defini-

tion. It is a very common occurrence under the law for a Negro convicted in court of some offense to be bailed out or to have his fine paid by some white man who has no connection whatever with the charges against the Negro, on the undertaking that the Negro shall work out, as the phrase goes, the amount paid on his account. Theoretically, the Negro is a free agent; he need not accept the arrangement, and, if he does, he must give his written consent to it. Practically, however, the Negro has little choice; the only alternative is for him to serve out his sentence or await (if it is a bail case) trial under extremely disagreeable prison conditions.

In many cases the system may work without great injustice. This is likely to be so where the Negro in question is handed over to a farmer in the vicinity in which he lives and the whole affair is local. The United States District Attorney for the section in Georgia where this crime is alleged to have taken place is quoted as saying that on this farm “city Negroes from stockades were used,” but that also there have been many complaints about smaller farms. It is natural enough that where men are held in such semi-servitude disputes will arise between the employers, who have a tendency to claim that the Negro is shirking work and is not fairly living up to the agreement, and the Negroes, who claim that they are overworked, underfed, confined in stockades, and sometimes held under actual duress after (as they hold) they have worked out their freedom. The Governor of Georgia is quoted as saying: “After some communities in Georgia have driven away their farm labor and driven away their farm loans, they will have an opportunity to sit down and think over calmly whether it pays to deal justly with the Negro.”

One thing is perfectly evident. It is that if such laws are to exist it is the plain duty of the State or local community to keep a watchful eye on the manner in which this kind of “peonage” agreement is carried out. There should be a most thorough system of inspection of all farms and industries where Negroes are put out to labor in this fashion. There may be an open question as to the desirability or utter wrongness of the system, but whatever view is taken as to that, it is simple humanity to prevent abuses under the law and violations of the law. Such an occurrence as these cold-blooded murders ought not to be possible in any civilized community.

In the present instance the Georgia authorities acted swiftly. The white man accused of these crimes was brought promptly to trial. The jury brought in a verdict of guilty with a recommendation of mercy, which automatically requires a sentence of life imprisonment.