

The Outlook

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The Congressional Harvest

A REFRACTORY and, in the main, futile Congress ended a nerve-racking session in a scene of disorder and general helplessness.

Essential measures for the orderly conduct of government failed. The country will suffer. It is said that numerous Senators and Representatives will receive from their constituents the opportunity of thinking it over in retirement. Heaven knows if this be true. It has seemed at times that the trait of incompetency and the knack of destruction are the qualifications that voters reward with seats in Congress.

Whoever may come back and whoever may be left at home, this fact stands: A Congress, defiant of the President and unable to work in harmony with itself, overturned in a mad hour a large part of what had been done through a turbulent six months. Men who had followed a particular object with the zeal of crusaders in a final flare of spiteful spirit wrecked their own hopes in common with those of the country.

Where lies the blame for the pitiable performance? Everywhere. No party, no faction, came out with clean skirts.

Those who call themselves Progressives imposed the Reclamation Bill as a "rider" upon the Deficiency Appropriation Bill, seeking to serve themselves by a reprehensible practice. The nominal majority agreed to this, and the bill, making money available for many important purposes, was to be passed in the last minutes with the "rider" intact.

Then Spencer, Republican, spent three hours talking the Oil Committee report to death—a good cause, it may be, but served in a thoroughly bad way. He sat down just in time for the Deficiency Bill, improper rider and all, to be passed before the gavel fell.

Pittman, Democrat, declared that the "rider" had been politically tinkered with to take benefits away from States with few electoral votes and give them to States with several electoral votes. And he undertook to talk away the time till the session ended.

Yet in the last minutes Pittman wa-

vered as friends besought him almost on their knees to accept the injury to his own people rather than inflict a greater one on the country.

At the very end it was Borah, the reputed level thinker, who holds himself somewhat aloof from every faction, who stood in front of the bill and said, "It shall not pass." There was no power in Congress strong enough to kill the rider and pass the bill in proper form.

Republican, Democrat, Progressive group, independent thinker—each with justification as he saw it—blocked the wheels of orderly procedure.

A single real leader of any political faith could have kept those wheels turning.

There was none.

We are fallen upon days of dearth in the halls of our Congress.

Left on the Threshing Floor

Now that Congress has laid down its flail and the yellow dust from its threshing floor is somewhat blown away, we may look to the fruits of the effort.

There is an amazingly large pile of chaff—inert, useless stuff that some dry day we shall have to make a bonfire of.

Here is a pitiable small heap of grain, and only a little of that is sound.

All around is a confusion of crumpled straw, unthreshed and trodden into the muck.

For good or for evil, Congress did these things:

Passed a Bonus Bill over the veto of the President.

Passed a Tax Law which the President, pointing out objections, approved.

Passed an Immigration Law which the President signed in genuine approval except for one provision, written in hot haste of resentment at an implied threat.

Submitted to the States for approval an amendment to the Constitution of the United States conferring upon Congress the power to prevent the exploitation of children in industry.

Passed a bill liberalizing the law for the relief of disabled World War veterans.

Passed a bill prohibiting the discharge of oil into coastal waters.

Created the Upper Mississippi Wild Life and Fish Refuge.

Prohibited the importation of crude opium for the manufacture of heroin.

Provided for the withdrawal of lands for the protection of antelope, other game animals, and birds.

Provided for the equipment of Shipping Board vessels with oil-burners.

Passed the requisite appropriation bills, with the exception of the Deficiency Bill.

These are the things completed. The list of those left in various stages of incompleteness is long, almost, as time. Those of the largest importance follow:

It is doubtful whether the Bonus Law, for which Senators and Representatives paid so high a price, can be put into early effect because the appropriation for it was in the slaughtered Deficiency Bill.

The Reclamation Reform Bill, carrying the gist of the report of Secretary Work's fact-finding commission, failed of passage and was the immediate cause of the general muss in which the Deficiency Bill died.

The bill providing for the construction of eight new cruisers for the purpose of bringing the Navy up to treaty ratio was not passed.

The bill to strengthen the Coast Guard for fighting rum-runners was passed, but no money was made available for it.

Absolutely nothing was done toward farmer relief. The McNary-Haugen Bill failed of passage and hastily prepared expedients in its place lacked time, even if a majority could have been mustered for them.

The proposed amendment to the Esch-Cummins Law, which would have provided for the freight-rate reduction demanded by farmers, was not acted upon.

The Howell-Barkley Bill abolishing the Railroad Labor Board went over.

Action on Muscle Shoals was postponed, and made the unfinished business for an early day of the December session.

No action was taken upon the Harding-Hughes-Coolidge World Court proposal.

The Postal Employees' Increased Salary Bill, which the President so promptly

and so justly vetoed, was not acted upon again.

Three Headless Parties

THUS ended a session of Congress unlike, in many respects, any that we have known before. It strained the nerves of the American people as, perhaps, no other Congress even in the great crises of the Nation's history ever did.

Yet as the Nation takes stock of itself it will find that it has not been ruined by this most radical of Congresses. This Congress was a barking dog. It constantly threatened a great deal of harm—and performed some part of it. Withal, it made its contribution, small but none the less real, to the future well-being of the country.

It was fearsome because it was not understood. It was in effect a three-party Congress. And those who called themselves Progressives, some Democrats and some Republicans, but all wearing the cloak loosely, were "jacks wild." Here was a cohesive group, but nobody knew exactly where it would turn up and it kept both old parties in hot water. Here was a situation the like of which we had hardly seen before in our history, and, accustomed as we were to two-party government, it frightened more than it injured us.

Another tradition, equally old and even more firmly fixed in the public mind, was overturned. The Senate heretofore has been the conservative branch of Congress. The House might be swept by hysteria, but the Senate could be depended upon to remain sober. All of that this time was reversed. If the House was a whirlwind, the Senate was a tornado. Fortunately the House did sometimes apply the brakes when the Senate was running wild.

Still another alarming feature was the absence of trusted leadership. Not one man in either house stood out as a real leader. What was left of the old Republican leadership had become, apparently, impotent. The Democrats, no better off for material, were not under the same necessity of developing legislative leadership and were willing to let the Republicans stew in their own broth. Among the malcontents, self-named Progressives, every man was an incipient leader who led, when opportunity offered, in his own wild way toward the goal of his own zeal.

All of this considered, we should, perhaps, be thankful for the little good we got out of it.

In a large way, the good is comprised in a single law—the Immigration Bill. Even that is defective, but none the less a legislative achievement. It marks a turning-point in American civilization. It proves rather conclusively that the American people will not be dominated by a coalition of alien groups and blocs, that America will remain American.

A single large achievement of worthy character seems a small total, but, in the light of Congressional history, the admission must be made that we hardly have the hope of more than that from any particular session.

From Lions to Lambs

THE investigating committees, after months of "uproaring the universal peace," ended the session tamely, though they played their part in the final wild act.

Only one of them, that which investigated the Veterans' Bureau, wrote results upon the statute-books. It brought about a law which should provide better treatment for World War veterans.

Chairman Brookhart, of the Daugherty Committee, took a nap at the switch. When he woke up, the opportunity had passed for getting consent to continue hearings through the recess.

The Oil Committee submitted a report signed only by the Democratic and Insurgent members. It was moderate in tone and, had Spencer not thought it worth three hours of talk at a critical time, could have done little harm, approved or rejected.

This report, drafted by Senator Walsh, showed a solicitude for avoiding injustice not foreshadowed by the immoderate methods of the Committee when the investigation was at the height of its fury. If a like spirit had been shown throughout, the public could have had no quarrel with the investigation.

Edwin Denby, who resigned under pressure after this Committee began its investigations, was absolved from having had "any part whatever" in the negotiations leading up to the oil leases. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt received the same sort of exoneration.

The Committee "found no facts of sufficient importance to report" in support of the rumor that public officials speculated in stocks of the Sinclair and Doheny companies.

No evidence was found, said the report, to show a conspiracy between representatives of the oil interests and others

at the Republican National Convention of 1920.

In short, the Committee reported that it believed a single individual in Government service had been guilty of wrongdoing. The transactions between Fall and Doheny, the report said, were "in the last degree reprehensible," and Sinclair's questionable dealings with Fall were recited. Some recommendations were made for safeguarding the Oil Reserves in future.

The five regular Republican members of the Committee did not sign the report. They said that they would state their reasons later. There may be very real objections to the portion of the report which declares that the Executive Order by which President Harding transferred the Oil Reserves from the Navy to the Interior was illegal. This appears to the layman a point which would require determination, not by a committee of the Senate, but by the courts.

The Voice from the White House

IN all this compounding of good and bad, how stands the score as between the Congress and the President?

Three times the President found it necessary to exercise the veto, always in the interest of economy.

His veto of the Bursum Pension Bill was sustained.

His veto of the Bonus Bill was overturned, with votes to spare in both houses.

The veto was exercised the third time on the bill which provided increases of salary for practically all employees of the Post Office Department. It would have cost the Government about \$70,000,000 a year, and no provision was made in the bill for raising the money.

"Extravagance must stop," wrote the President, and sent the bill back unsigned. This act was done on the last day but one of the session, and in the general confusion no action was taken in either house. It will never be known whether or not Congress intended to override the President on that bill. Between now and December many Senators and Representatives will change their minds. The action taken then may not be that action that would have been taken on the fringe of June.

Yet the action of the President showed a straight-hitting quality which, unless we much mistake the temper of the American people, will be admired. Here was a measure backed by some of the