

# LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

By Harris Ellsworth, Member of Congress

The morning I reached Washington, D. C., shortly before the end of the year, I read in the newspapers about serious rifts in the ranks of Republican members of congress. Headlines told of battles over house of representatives leadership, and division over policy—notably over congressional re-organization law and the new rules for the operation of the house. Accordingly, I hastened to the "Hill" to get all of the latest dope and gossip. Upon talking with numerous members, I failed to find any serious battles in progress. The situation was about as I had observed it when I was here in November after the election.

There were several candidates for position of majority leader, but the races were in a competitive spirit of the good old American sort. I found almost no objection to the adoption of the new house rules which reduce the number of committees from 48 to 19.

And so it was on opening day. The house of representatives got off to a clean, and smooth start. As this is written, however, the senate is still struggling with the Bilbo problem.

Joseph W. Martin of Massachusetts was elected speaker by a vote of 244 to 182. You will note that these figures total 426, whereas the membership of the house is 435. Four members were absent due to illness or transportation difficulties. Neither Mr. Rayburn nor Mr. Martin voted, and Vito Marcantonio did not vote, since he is not a member of either major party. There are two vacancies in the house of representatives—Robert K. Henry of Wisconsin died shortly after he was elected, and John Sparkman of Alabama resigned upon being elected to the senate.

Speaker Martin is the 45th man to be speaker of the house of representatives. He is the first Republican to hold that office since 1930. Nicholas Longworth was the last Republican speaker. Joe Martin is genuinely liked and respected by the members on both sides of the aisle. He is a friendly man, shoots straight and hard, and is intolerant of tricks and pettiness. His handling of the gavel during his first day in the chair proved rather conclusively that he is well suited for the job, and that he will conduct the business of the house with fairness and dispatch.

Representative Charles A. Halleck of Indiana, elected majority leader of the house, is an unusually capable, dynamic and forceful young man. He is a successful lawyer (former district attorney). First elected to congress in January, 1935, Halleck has risen rapidly to his present position of leadership. Now in his early forties and spotlighted by his present job, it is quite possible for Halleck to be seriously mentioned for higher responsibilities. He is worth watching.

We fortunately had most excellent weather and driving conditions for our trip from Oregon

to Washington, D. C. When we started, the Willamette valley and other areas were flooded. It was raining, and it was reported to be snowing heavily on the Willamette pass. The outlook for a 3,000-mile trip by automobile in mid-winter (we left December 15) was not good. However, we headed south, and after visiting a few days in California, started east from Los Angeles. We travelled U. S. highway 66, to St. Louis, where we spent Christmas Eve, and thence to Washington via Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio. We had bright sunshine every day all the way—not a drop of rain or a flake of snow did we see. It seems we were between storms, just as the splendid weather bureau office at Roseburg told me we would be.

Numerous other members of congress who were trekking to Washington for the convening of the 80th congress were not so fortunate. I have talked with several, some from the southern states, who fought bad weather of all sorts on their trips. Some were compelled to leave their automobiles several hundred miles away and come in by train and plane. We have had considerable snow here in Washington the past several days.

The Constitution of the United States requires the President to: "From time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient" It has long been the custom for the president to make such a report immediately after the convening of the new congress.

President Truman made his report on Monday, Jan. 6. It aroused little or no comment on the part of the members. It was not a controversial message. Most of the recommendations are generally conceded, even by the Republican majority, to be matters upon which this congress should act. Controversy and difference of opinion will arise later when the specific details necessary to putting the principles into law are under discussion.

Just six months ago, President Truman vetoed the labor dispute act, generally known as the Case Bill. It was quite surprised, therefore, to hear him advocate and recommend the passage of every principle embodied in the Case bill except one minor section.

The Case bill provided: (1) Improved mediation and conciliation machinery; (2) It required all parties in collective bargaining contracts to faithfully adhere to their agreements; (3) It outlawed jurisdictional strikes; (4) It made secondary boycotts unlawful; and (5) It made awards arrived at by voluntary arbitration binding. All these principles were discussed and approved by President Truman in his message on Jan. 6. The two sections of the Case Bill which he did not discuss are: (1) The anti-racketeering section, which was passed by the Congress and approved by President Truman as a separ-

ate bill; and (2) The section barring supervisory employees from membership in unions. Apparently, the president has had a change of mind regarding the Case bill, and if the principles it contained are again passed by congress, he will sign the bill. I do not see how any other sion can be drawn from statements made in his me  
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