

SENATE IS DIVIDED ON OVERMAN BILL

Measure Giving President
Broad Powers Subject of
Lively Debates on Floor.

CUMMINGS ATTACKS BILL

Iowa Senator Says If Powers Are
Granted It Will Be Influential
Step Toward Destroying Union.
Limitation Is Suggested.

WASHINGTON, April 2.—The Senate today began debate on the Overman bill, giving the President broad powers to co-ordinate and reorganize Government war-making agencies, with a determined contest in prospect.

Opponents of the bill planned to offer many amendments limiting what they term autocratic authority proposed in the measure. Senator Overman and other Administration leaders, with the support of some Republicans, were prepared to put the bill through as drawn by the Administration.

In the first speech on the bill, Senator Cummings, of Maryland, Republican, declared that "grave administrative defects" have become apparent since the strain of war has made itself felt.

Sensors Clash on Bill.

Lines of the controversy were sharply drawn, almost at the outset of the debate, in a lively clash between Senator Overman and Senator Cummings, of Iowa. When Senator Cummings said the President, under the bill, could take away or transfer all powers and functions of the Interstate Commerce Commission, Federal Reserve Board, Federal Trade Commission and similar agencies.

Sensor Overman asked if Senator Cummings would be willing to abolish such agencies if it is necessary to win the war. The Iowa Senator replied affirmatively, but added:

"But I believe it is not necessary and if the powers are granted it would be an influential step toward destroying the union."

"The Senator says 'I distrust my commander in chief and have no confidence in what he would do,' " Senator Overman replied.

Cummings Retorts Sharply.

"I hope the Senator will not press me too far or too closely about my confidence in the President," Senator Cummings retorted sharply. "I have utmost confidence in his good intentions, but I would not grant such great powers to any President or any other man of any party."

The Iowa Senator said he was ready specifically to limit the President's authority to certain Government departments.

"The President has been criticized for using red tape in the departments," Senator Overman said. "He wants to cut the tape, so let us give him the scissors."

Sensor Jones, of Washington, asked whether there is a provision stipulating that the measure shall remain in force for a year after the war. The Judiciary Committee, the North Carolina Senator replied, insisted on some limitation and the 12 months' period was agreed to. Friends of the bill, he said, are not insisting that the provision remain in the measure.

Other Countries Cited.

To the contention that the bill should limit the President's actions to specific reorganizations, Senator Overman declared that both Great Britain and France have conferred greater powers on their premiers than this country has on the President. Greater co-ordination is needed particularly, he said, in the preparation of appropriation estimates and Government work against espionage. He declared the general plan outlined in the bill had been endorsed by President Taft and Charles E. Hughes, and added:

"We have appropriated \$23,000,000,000 during the last 12 months without a co-ordinated financial policy. A strong financial policy is necessary. There ought to be a co-ordinating body to scrutinize appropriations."

Sensor Gallinger, Republican leader, asked if it were not true that most of the commissions referred to as needing reorganization were not created by the President. Senator Overman replied that even though that were true, the authority to co-ordinate them was necessary, and that in addition to the special war agencies the bureau of standards and even the Civil Service Commission were among the departments in which changes were needed.

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