

Gigantic Task Faced By the Democrats

These Are Sad Days for New Ways and Means Committee—With a Republican President and Senate, Can the House Force Through a Measure to Supplant the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Bill?—They Must Do in a Short Time What the Republicans Took a Year at.

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 11.—These are sad days for the new democratic ways and means committee.

All that they have to do within the next two months is to change the entire system of tariff framing, grant hearings to all interested parties—that is, constructively speaking—raise the protective tariff wall, build a careful revenue—only structure in its place, "bone" up on the dreary piles of statistics of imports, manufacturers, cost of labor, and transportation, and, finally, nurse into being a successor to the Payne-Aldrich law.

What the republican ways and means committee of the past congress took practically a year to accomplish, they must condense into the next few months. They are handicapped by a republican administration in charge of the executive departments, and by knowledge of the lack of a majority in the senate. There is the task not only of turning out a series of tariff bills revising the Payne-Aldrich measure—which President Taft said was the best yet enacted—but the Herculean job of trying to jam those bills through a republican senate and, probably, past a veto by a republican president.

Leaders on both sides who have viewed the situation are tonight unanimous in their belief that the extra session will not come to a close until the latter part of October. Ex-Speaker Cannon, it is known, has made all preparations to remain in Washington until November.

The coming session is expected to set a new record. The extra session of 1909 lasted 144 days. That of 1841, the record for extra sessions to date, covered 166 days. There is every prospect that the session of 1911 will occupy 200.

Fortunately for the ways and means committee, a democratic caucus has already determined in favor of a schedule by schedule revision of the Payne law. This means that the democratic tariff framers can concentrate their energies. They can take up one schedule at a time, grant hearings, figure out statistics, and get a bill through, before being forced to turn their attention to some other schedule.

That system will delay final amassment and repeal of the Payne law. It is believed, however, that it will have a less drastic effect on the industrial world than a brand new tariff law. Business interests will have time to get used to a gradual process of tariff changes.

It was pointed out by students of history that the Payne law will have the shortest life of any of the great customs measures since the foundation of the government. No other one was superseded for at least four years.

Incidentally, the Underwood tariff law, as the completed democratic

measure will probably be known, will be the first democratic tariff since August 24, 1890, when the Wilson-Gorman law passed. It was not until 1897 that this measure was superseded by the Dingley bill, a republican product.

The woolen schedule has been subject to more denunciation than any of the other divisions of the Payne bill. Because it affects every man who wears a suit in which there is a thread of wool, it has aroused national antagonism.

As a means of forcing at least one of their schedules by schedule revisions through the republican senate, and by President Taft, the democrats have already planned to tack on to one of their tariff bills the president's Canadian reciprocity agreement. They will then depend upon President Taft's enthusiastic desire for reciprocity to win his favor for the schedule to which the agreement is attached.

Not only his approval as President is expected to follow the passing of the reciprocity measure, but his influence with the republican members of the upper house is looked forward to by the democrats. They think that Taft will use his influence to further any measure within reason which assures reciprocity.

The reciprocity arrangement, however, will probably be held up by the democratic house until they put a few other tariff propositions before the senate and the president. The leaders believe that in reciprocity they have a lever which should give them a great advantage in pushing through a number of tariff laws framed on democratic doctrines. In order to do this, they propose to tell president Taft that if he will agree to certain democratic tariff revisions, they will pass his reciprocity arrangement.

President Taft's aid is also expected by the democrats in the revision of the wool schedule. Taft, in all his defense of the Payne-Aldrich tariff law, has constantly admitted that the wool schedule really needs revision, and he will be called upon to show whether he thinks the time has come for that revision.

All in all, the democrats are preparing some rather interesting things for both President Taft and the republican senate in the extra session. They hope to widen the breach between the Old Guard in the senate and the Back-to-the-People republicans on the tariff question and in many other ways to embarrass the republican leaders.

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(Mail Tribune of February 4, 1911)

Corvallis, February 3.—President Kerr of the Oregon Agricultural College estimates in his biennial report, just being printed, that the farm crops of the Willamette Valley can be increased from 25 to 240 per cent by irrigation.

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