

Looking In on Congress From the House Gallery

THE STORY OF A BILL

By CONGRESSMAN GUY U. HARDY

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About the easiest thing in the world for a member of congress to do is to introduce a bill.

All one needs to do is to write the bill out on a piece of paper and put it in the basket on the clerk's desk. Then it has been introduced.

Many bills are introduced, but few are passed. In the last congress 10,179 bills and 559 joint and concurrent resolutions were introduced in the house and 5,052 bills and 994 joint and concurrent resolutions in the senate.

Out of all of these, 63 public resolutions and 521 bills passed and became laws of the land. The record for the greatest number of bills introduced was made in the Sixty-first congress, when 34,383 bills and resolutions were introduced in the house alone, out of which 810 became law.

When the clerk gets hold of the bill he refers it to the appropriate committee. And there it may rest in peaceful slumber forever more, or it may be heard from again if enough pressure is exerted in its favor.

Out here a good friend of mine suggested once that he didn't like this committee system. He thought that each member should give individual consideration to every bill introduced. He said it was a good idea.

No one can read the bills, so he kept up with all bills introduced.

Most committees get bills referred to them that can be given intelligent consideration. So, naturally, the bills which have the greatest support in the country get first consideration. Congress gives first consideration to the appropriation and revenue bills. These and some other bills of nationwide importance come along automatically.

Hearings on Bills.
When a committee decides to give consideration to a bill, if it concerns many people or interests, hearings are held. That is, people interested are invited to come in and tell the committee why they think the bill should or should not become a law.

Remembering these hearings are quite valuable affairs. Some of the several weeks and hundreds of people come from all over the country in order to be heard on the bill. The tariff bill hearing brought experts and prominent representatives of every line of industry to Washington.

The appropriations committee has 35 members, the ways and means 21 members and other important committees have 21 members each. The members sit around a long table and the witness addresses them. The witness must know what he is talking about. If he would make a good impression, any member may interrupt him at any time with any question, and before he gets through the committee is likely to find out all he knows and soon he doesn't know about his subject. The hearings are open to the public.

An official reporter takes down everything that is said, and later the hearings are printed in paper-bound book form. Some of these hearings, like that on the tariff, for instance, run into thousands of pages. They bring out a vast amount of useful information, and one of the printed hearings are practically textbooks on the subject discussed. The printed hearings are given to all members, so that they may become posted on any proposed legislation. Others who are interested may, at times, get copies.

After the hearings are closed the committee holds executive sessions and discusses the bill. It may decide not to report it out. This practically kills a bill. It may decide on some or many amendments to the bill, or it may rewrite the bill in another form, or it may report it out as it was introduced.

When the bill is reported out it goes on the calendar. There are several kinds of calendars, operating for different classes of bills under different rules.

Debating the Measure.
The big bills come up in the committee of the whole house on the state of the Union. Debate is usually two or four hours, though any amount of time may be agreed upon. Sometimes 12 or 14 hours has been agreed on. The time is equally divided between the majority and minority sides. The greatest fairness as to division and distribution of time always prevails. The time is parceled out by the chairman of the committee in charge on the majority side and the ranking minority members on the other side.

The bill is first read. Then comes the debate. Sometimes members must stick to the subject under discussion, and sometimes they are permitted to talk about anything under the sun. Here is where campaign speeches sometimes get in.

After the hours for general debate have been used up the bill is read again, by sections for amendments. This is termed "reading the bill under the five-minute rule," as no member may talk more than five minutes, except by unanimous consent. No member can get the floor except to advocate or oppose an amendment. Members do often make a motion "to strike out the last word" or "last two words," etc., in order to get the floor for five minutes.

Many amendments are offered and

usually some are adopted. On one bill over 300 amendments were offered. Often amendments are offered in order to weaken the bill and help to defeat it. Amendments not supported by the committee have hard sledding and few are passed. Occasionally amendments are offered by members merely to enable them to make a speech that may please constituents. Interested, it has been estimated that only about five per cent of the amendments offered on the floor are adopted.

When the bill is read through for amendments, which is the second reading, the committee of the whole votes on recommending its passage. If this is favorable the committee then "rises" and the speaker takes the chair and calls the house to order.

The chairman of the committee of the whole reports the proceedings to the speaker. Then the bill comes up for third reading. It is read by title only and voted on without further remarks or debate.

Fixed Up in Conference.

If it is passed, the bill is sent to the senate and has the same process to go through. It may be passed, it may be rejected, it may be amended. This is the end of the bill. If the house and the senate do not agree on the bill, it is sent to a conference. A committee made up of a few members from each house, the ranking members on the committee that reported the bill, consider all points, endeavor to compromise differences, and when they agree, their report goes back to both houses and is usually adopted. Once in awhile the bill is sent back to conference several times before one of the houses is satisfied.

Many a proud father of proposed legislation does not recognize his fond offspring when it is finally passed by both houses and is ready to be sent over for the President's signature.

There are several other ways of getting bills up in the house. Those pertaining to affairs and persons, and of course, having some up under "unimportant matters." On occasion the father of the bill has good reason to be on the anxious seat, for a single member may "object" and prevent the consideration of the bill. Very seldom does a member object out of spite or on account of personal enmity. But there are a few dozen who make a specialty of studying these bills and stand ready to see that they are properly amended or objected to. And many an innocent looking little bill is choked to death on unanimous consent day.

Some bills come up under a special rule. The rules committee presents a resolution providing a special rule for consideration of a bill. The bonus bill, for instance, came up under a special rule. Four hours were allowed for debate and then the bill came up for vote without allowing any amendments to be offered. You had to take the bill the way it was or not at all. The object, of course, was to prevent unreasonable and harmful amendments being offered or adopted. Men often vote for an amendment and then vote against the bill.

Some think that a curb should perhaps be put on the introduction of so many bills, but that is hardly possible. Who would be competent to censor? Of course the greatest freedom in this respect must prevail. Let the congress and the country decide which are worthy and needful. As a matter of fact when you come to think about it, the wonder is that many more bills are not introduced, for practically every man and at most every woman in the country has in his or her system the idea of some new law or laws that in his or her opinion ought to be enacted. Many of these ideas of proposed new legislation find their way in the shape of bills to the basket on the clerk's desk in the house of representatives or in the senate. Many start there, but very few wind up at the White House seeking the President's signature.

Buncombe in Congress.

When the Missouri compromise bill was up for final passage in the house of representatives in 1820, Henry Clay was pressing for a vote. A member from North Carolina had been begging for a little time. Mr. Clay tried diligently to put him off, there was no time to yield, the big bill should come up for a vote.

"But," retorted the indignant member, who had a speech in his system and wanted to get it out, "I must make a speech for Buncombe."

Thus, a hundred and two years ago, a new word was coined in a most unexpected manner, and it has come on down the century, growing in significance as it has been abbreviated.

Buncombe, buncombe, buncombe—they all mean the same, and the meaning has not changed in the 102 years.

Woman Heads Engineers.

The list of the engineering forces of the Chinese state railroads is a woman.

NEW AUTOMOBILE LICENSES WILL SOON BE REQUIRED

Application blanks for 1923 licenses have been mailed by the Secretary of State to all motor vehicle owners in Oregon, so as to permit them to apply to and receive such licenses before January 1, 1923. Motor vehicle owners will avoid much trouble, annoyance and unnecessary delay by promptly applying for their 1923 licenses upon receipt of the application blanks. Deferring applying for licenses until about the first of the year will congest the work of the Secretary of State's office and may result in the arrest of the car owners by traffic officers for failure to have the 1923 license on their cars after January 1st next. License plates for 1923 will have a dark blue background and white figures and letters.

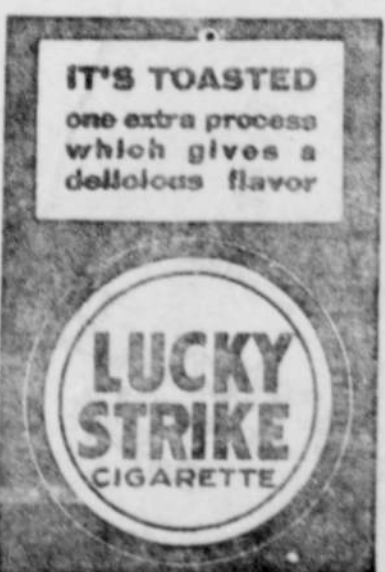
Legion Women's New Head-dress



Thelma Sims, of Longport, Ore., wearing the new head-dress of the women's American Legion Auxiliary as adopted at the New Orleans convention.



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ARMISTICE DAY

CELEBRATION

Under the auspices of

The American Legion

Parade by Company "K"
led by the K. P. Band
at 10:30 A. M.

Speaking at the City Hall
at 11:00 A. M.

Foot. Ball Game between
T. H. S. and Co. "K"
2:00 P. M.

Smoker with Four Fast
Bouts at the City Hall
8:30 P. M.

Big Dance at the K. P.
Hall in the Evening

All Legion Men and Their Friends are
Invited to participate in this celebration

Tillamook, Nov. 11th