

credit problem; Dr. Stephen P. Duggan, of the Institute of International Relations, on contrasts in Latin American civilization; Professor Bernadotte E. Schmitt, of the University of Chicago, on the peace treaties and the map of Europe; and Professor George H. Blakeslee, of Clark University, on Sino-Japanese relations in eastern Asia.

**The Democratic Joint Policy Committee.**<sup>1</sup> The employment by the Democrats of a "joint policy committee" during the current session of Congress represents a departure from recent party practice, if not a distinct innovation in party organization and control; and accordingly the functioning of this committee constituted one of the interesting developments during the first months of the session. When the Seventy-second Congress convened on December 7, 1931, the Democrats were actually in control of the House of Representatives, while in the Senate the Republicans still retained a paper majority of one member. The close division<sup>2</sup> between the two major parties, the considerable responsibility of the Democratic party for legislation during this session, and the widespread economic distress in the country caused the Democrats particularly to desire harmony and unity of action. With a view to attaining this end, certain leaders suggested the appointment of a joint policy committee, to be made up of members drawn from both houses. The proposal met with opposition among party leaders in the House of Representatives, especially from Speaker Garner and his supporters. Nevertheless, those favoring such a committee, led by Representative Crisp of Georgia, were finally successful in securing its approval by the caucus. In the Senate, hostility apparently did not manifest itself, and favorable action was taken on the proposal of Senator Harrison of Mississippi that ten Democratic senators be appointed as a committee, which, when acting with a similar committee from the House of Representatives, would constitute the Joint Policy Committee.

Pursuant to instructions of the party conferees in the Senate and House, Senator Robinson and Speaker Garner announced, on December 7, the names of twenty Democrats<sup>3</sup> who were to serve on the committee. The high positions and prominence of these men in the party organization

<sup>1</sup> Information for this note was obtained in part from personal interviews with members of the House of Representatives and of the Senate.

<sup>2</sup> *United States Daily*, December 7, 1931. The membership of the lower house, as then unofficially announced, consisted of 219 Democrats, 214 Republicans, one Farmer-Labor, and one vacancy; in the upper house, 47 Democrats, 48 Republicans, and one Farmer-Labor.

<sup>3</sup> The members of the committee from the House are: Garner, Rainey, Byrns, Cullen, Crisp, Bankhead, Taylor, Drewry, Sandlin, and Greenwood; from the Senate, Robinson, Walsh (Montana), Harrison, Pittman, Walsh (Massachusetts), Glass, Bulkley, Barkley, Wagner, and Hull.

would presumably lend weight to any recommendations that the joint committee might offer. Six of the representatives and five of the senators come from southern states, enabling the South on a joint ballot to outvote members from any other section or sections. Such a division, it was believed, would hardly occur; and if it did, no intimation of its nature would likely be allowed to reach the newspapers.

The Joint Policy Committee functions as a unit. Neither the members from the House nor those from the Senate, acting as a group or individually, are subject to the direction of the committee in their activities in their respective houses. The committee meets on call of Speaker Garner, who presides over its deliberations. No rules of procedure are laid down; discussions are entirely informal; and decisions are reached by agreement. By agreement of the members, only Speaker Garner and Senator Robinson are to give out information concerning the committee's activities and conclusions.

Various statements designed to explain the functions of the committee have appeared in the press. The explanation offered by Speaker Garner is possibly the most lucid<sup>4</sup>: "The only object of the joint committee is to try to coördinate the work of the majority in the House and the minority in the Senate. It is unofficial and advisory only. It is for the purpose of our people in the House and in the Senate to talk over legislative measures and coördinate and harmonize legislative policies, which is good strategy." In suggesting to the caucus of Senate Democrats the appointment of the committee, Senator Harrison urged it as a means whereby the Democrats could present a "united front" to the country. A further comment on its purpose, offered in connection with discussions of tax problems, is found in a statement published in the *New York Times*<sup>5</sup>: "The view was expressed by Democratic members that the Policy Committee would go on record in such a way as to impress upon the country that the party would act conservatively and pave the way to avoid controversy and delay which would further disturb business."

These statements indicate, either explicitly or implicitly, that the committee is designed to harmonize the divergent views of party leaders by providing an opportunity for free interchange of arguments and for the interplay of conciliatory tactics before a measure is brought up for discussion in the halls of Congress. Such a procedure was conceived not only to lessen the probability of unfortunate expressions by party leaders of wide diversity of opinion in the houses, but to expedite legislation through simultaneous consideration in both branches of the primary features of essential measures, and through the effect of the recommendations of the committee on individual party members. Although there is

<sup>4</sup> *United States Daily*, December 30, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Times*, January 4, 1932.

no avowed way, other than through the press, by which the conclusions of the committee are transmitted to individual Democrats, there is no question that the views held in common by party leaders of so great prominence, regardless of the manner in which they were received, would ordinarily carry strongly persuasive, if not determinate, weight. In short, the Joint Policy Committee, convened quickly and conveniently, constitutes in effect a caucus of party leaders, although it lacks the element of coercion which is associated with the party caucus. The committee meets in secret, discusses problems confronting the party, formulates a policy, and subsequently purports to follow the course agreed upon.

The committee early held two meetings, which were reported in the press.<sup>6</sup> In the first one, on December 15, 1931, such subjects as the moratorium, government expenditures, taxation, and the tariff were discussed. Conclusions were given out in a statement prepared jointly by Speaker Garner and Senator Robinson.<sup>7</sup> Announcement that all problems referred to in the statement were discussed in a most friendly manner has, however, been to a certain extent discounted.<sup>8</sup>

The Committee was called together a second time by Speaker Garner on January 4, 1932, primarily for the purpose of considering the tariff bill which had been drafted during the Christmas holidays. In the course of the meeting, agreement was reached on two bills, one of which sought to revise the administrative features of the Hawley-Smoot tariff act and the other to provide for reciprocal reduction of tariff rates. Conclusions again were embodied in a joint statement released to the press.<sup>9</sup>

From the meager information obtainable, no definite appraisal of the committee's achievements can be made. It would appear, however, that wherever an opinion has been advanced, there has been inclination to question the success and value of its work.<sup>10</sup>

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**Exchange of Official Publications Between Germany and the United States.**<sup>1</sup> A constantly increasing interest in American universities in the study of the new German government emphasizes the importance of the

<sup>6</sup> *Baltimore Evening Sun*, March 2, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> *United States Daily*, December 16, 1931.

<sup>8</sup> Frank R. Kent, "Tax Difficulties," *Baltimore Sun*, December 18, 1931.

<sup>9</sup> *Baltimore Evening Sun*, January 6, 1932.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, January 6, 1932; *Baltimore Sun*, January 8, 1932; *Baltimore Evening Sun*, February 29, 1932.

<sup>1</sup> A review of the subject of the international exchange of government publications between the United States and other countries, including the texts of the conventions of 1886 providing for such exchange, is printed in the *Report of the Librarian of Congress* for 1926, pp. 72-84.