

## KANSAS CONGRESSMEN DURING THE HARDING-COOLEDGE ERA

by

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On April 11, 1921 the First Session of the Sixty-Seventh Congress was called to order. Taking their oaths of office on that day were eight congressmen from the State of Kansas. Without exception these eight individuals were to play prominent roles in national affairs during the administrations of Presidents Warren G. Harding (1921-1923) and Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929). Each of these gentlemen was to wield considerable influence in the halls of Congress within the eventful eight year period from 1921 to 1929.

Among the Kansans participating in the opening ceremonies on April 11 were Representatives Homer Hoch of Marion, Hays B. White of Mankato, and James G. Strong of Blue Rapids. Serving on important standing committees of the House, Hoch, White, and Strong were to be associated with major legislation.

Hoch, an attorney by profession, was a member of Congress between 1919 and 1933. Assigned to the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, he chose to become a specialist in transportation questions. Hoch's most significant legislative contribution was the Hoch-Smith Resolution of 1924, a measure which directed the federal government to require uniform freight rates in all parts of the nation.<sup>1</sup> The Kansan also was to be conspicuously involved in the deliberations culminating in the Coal Commission Act,<sup>2</sup> the Air Commerce Act,<sup>3</sup> and the Railway Labor Act.<sup>4</sup>

White, who had served his political apprenticeship in both Houses of the Kansas Legislature, was Chairman of the Committee on the Election of President, Vice President, and Representatives in Congress from 1923 to 1929. For several years he was the leading House advocate of the proposed Twentieth ("Lame Duck") Amendment to the Constitution.<sup>5</sup> Also a senior member of the Committee on Public Lands, White was one of the congressmen vested with the responsibility of prodding the Coolidge Administration to cancel the infamous Teapot Dome oil leases.<sup>6</sup>

Strong, a former prosecuting attorney of Marshall County, was elected by his constituents to seven consecutive terms in the House. From 1925 to 1929 he was Chairman of the Committee on War Claims. Moreover, Strong was a veteran member of the Committee on Banking and Currency, on which panel he successfully urged favorable consideration of the Lenroot-Strong Resolution, creating a special commission to investigate the financial plight of American agriculture,<sup>7</sup> and the Intermediate Credit Act, designed to facilitate loans for crop financing by liberalizing the use of short-term agricultural paper.<sup>8</sup>

Two other Kansans who were in the House of Representatives in April 1921 were Jasper N. Tincher of Medicine Lodge and Philip P. Campbell of Pittsburg. Representing constituencies at opposite ends of the state, Tincher was a comparative newcomer to politics, while Campbell was one of the senior

members of Congress. Both gentlemen, however, definitely qualified as congressional activists during the early nineteen-twenties.

Tincher in April 1921 was beginning his second term in the House. The thirty-two counties in Tincher's district, located in the southwest quadrant of Kansas, constituted one of the most thoroughly agrarian areas in the United States. Accordingly, it was understandable that he served on the Committee on Agriculture. In 1922 Tincher co-authored the Grain Futures (Capper-Tincher) Act, a measure which gave the Secretary of Agriculture regulatory authority over dealers in wheat and other types of grains.<sup>9</sup> During the subsequent five years Tincher, reminding his colleagues of the reality of steadily declining farm prices, repeatedly demanded that the federal government take the initiative in alleviating the distress plaguing the American farmer.<sup>10</sup>

At the time of his retirement from public life in 1923 Campbell was outranked in seniority by only nine of the four hundred and thirty-five members of the House.<sup>11</sup> Between 1921 and 1923 Campbell was Chairman of the powerful Committee on Rules, in which position he undertook the burdensome task of screening the hundreds of bills and resolutions reported by the various other standing committees of the House. During the Sixty-Seventh Congress he expedited the floor consideration of virtually all the priority items. Among the measures which Campbell persuaded his colleagues to schedule for debate were the Budget and Accounting Act, the Emergency Immigration Act, the Maternity and Infancy Care (Sheppard-Towner) Act, the Tariff (Fordney-McCumber) Act of 1922, and the joint resolution officially terminating World War I.<sup>12</sup>

The three most renowned Kansans serving in Congress from 1921 to 1929 were Representative Daniel R. Anthony, Jr. of Leavenworth and Senators Arthur Capper and Charles Curtis of Topeka. Anthony, Capper, and Curtis, who spent an aggregate total of ninety years on Capitol Hill, certainly rank as three of the most illustrious public servants from Kansas during the entire twentieth century.

Anthony, editor of the Leavenworth Daily Times, was to establish a record among Kansans for continuous longevity in the House.<sup>13</sup> Between 1921 and 1928 he was the ranking Republican on the prestigious Committee on Appropriations and Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee for the Department of War. While presiding over his subcommittee, Anthony was to author the annual bills to fund the expenditures of the United States Army.<sup>14</sup> In May 1928 Anthony was designated Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, thus experiencing a fitting climax to his long career.

Capper, prior to entering the Senate in 1919, had completed two terms as Governor of Kansas. Destined to remain three decades on Capitol Hill, he was Chairman of the Committee on Claims, 1923-1925, and the Committee on the District of Columbia, 1925-1929. As a member of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Capper emerged as an articulate leader of the bipartisan congressional farm bloc. He co-authored the Cooperative Marketing (Capper-Volstead) Act<sup>15</sup> and the

Agricultural Extension (Capper-Ketcham) Act,<sup>16</sup> and, working in close liaison with Congressman Tincher, was jointly responsible for the Grain Futures Act.<sup>17</sup> Although a Republican, Capper indicated his keen displeasure with the farm policies of the Coolidge Administration by casting his vote for the Farm Relief (McNary-Haugen) Bill of 1927<sup>18</sup> and aligned himself with the senators striving to override Coolidge's veto of a revised version of the same bill in 1928.<sup>19</sup> An outspoken advocate of hydroelectric development, he also found it necessary to disagree with the President over the wisdom of the Muscle Shoals (Tennessee Valley) Bill.<sup>20</sup> Indeed during the period between 1921 and 1929 Capper frequently dissented from the policies espoused by Republican Chief Executives.<sup>21</sup>

Curtis, Capper's Senate colleague from 1921 to 1929, had initially been elected to the House of Representatives in 1892. Altogether Curtis was to spend thirty-four years in Congress. He was Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, 1921-1923, and the Committee on Rules, 1923-1929. In addition to occupying these two chairmanships Curtis had the distinction of being the only senator of either party serving on both the Committees on Finance and Appropriations. The Kansan was Assistant Majority Leader (Whip) between 1921 and 1924, and in the latter year was elevated to the post of Majority Leader.<sup>22</sup> During his four years and three months as the official spokesman for the Republican Party in the Senate, Curtis was to have the satisfaction of overseeing the enactment of numerous bills into law. Among these well-known statutes were the Air Mail Contract (Kelly) Act, the Revenue Act of 1926, the Radio Act, the Merchant Marine (Jones-White) Act, the Mississippi River Flood Control (Jones-Reid) Act, the Boulder Dam Act, and the Prohibition Enforcement Act.<sup>23</sup> In June 1928 Curtis won the Republican nomination for Vice-President of the United States and in November of the same year was elected to that office.<sup>24</sup>

The eight Kansans who served in Congress between 1921 and 1929 compiled admirable records of public service. These gentlemen were deeply involved in shaping much of the major legislation pending before the House and Senate during the Harding-Coolidge era. Although Kansas contained less than two percent of the population of the United States, it produced a disproportionate number of the nation's congressional leaders from 1921 to 1929.

## NOTES

1. House of Representatives, Hearings on Railroad Rate Structure Survey, April 3-14, 1924; House of Representatives, Report Number 735, May 13, 1924; United States Congress, Congressional Record (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1924), LXV, 1071, 8497, 11018-11025, 11218-11220, 11245-11246; The Statutes at Large of the United States of America, 1923-1925 (Washington: 1925), XLIII, 801-802.
2. House Report 1245, September 19, 1922; Congressional Record, LXII, 11700-11701, 13020, 13028; Statutes at Large, XLII, 1023-1025; Post, Washington, D.C., August 24, 1922, p. 1.
3. House Report 572, March 17, 1926; Congressional Record, LXVII, 474, 5818, 7328-7329; Statutes at Large, XLIV, 568-576.
4. House Report 328, February 19, 1926; Congressional Record, LXVII, 4199, 4296, 4506, 4515, 4570-4572, 4654, 4666, 4700, 4711-4712, 4728; Statutes at Large, XLIV, 577-587; A.R. Ellingwood, "Railway Labor Act of 1926," Journal of Political Economy, February 1928, pp. 53-82.
5. House Report 211, February 19, 1924; House Report 311, February 17, 1926; House Report 333, January 20, 1928; Congressional Record, LXV, 346, 2801; LXVII, 3828, 4198, 6309-6314; LXIX, 4199-4200, 4210, 4426-4427, 4429; Charles Leedham, Our Changing Constitution (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1964), pp. 190-198; Post, Washington, D.C., February 26, 1926, p. 4; March 10, 1928, p. 2; Evening Star, Washington, D.C., February 15, 1926, pp. 1, 2; March 10, 1928, pp. 1, 2.
6. Congressional Record, LXV, 1547, 1567, 1812-1813; Statutes at Large, XLIII, 5-6.
7. United States Senate, S.Con.Res. 4-That a joint commission is hereby created, to be known as the Joint Commission on Agricultural Inquiry, which shall consist of five Senators to be appointed by the President of the Senate, and five Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker, May 12, 1921; Congressional Record, LXI, 2208-2209.
8. House Report 1712, February 24, 1923; Congressional Record, LXIV, 4585, 4887-4888, 5012-5013, 5522-5523; Statutes at Large, XLII, 1454-1482; G.C. Henderson, "The Agricultural Credits Act of 1923," Quarterly Journal of Economics, May 1923, pp. 518-522; Victor N. Valgren, "The Agricultural Credits Act of 1923," American Economic Review, September 1923, pp. 442-460.
9. Hearings on Grain Futures, June 7-12, 1922; House Report 1095, June 13, 1922; Congressional Record, LXII, 7987, 8689, 9404-9450, 9508-0509, 12720-12725; Statutes at Large, XLII, 998-1003; G.O. Virtue, "Legislation for the Farmers: Packers and Grain Exchanges," Quarterly Journal of Economics, August 1923, pp. 687-704.

10. House Report 994, April 27, 1926; House Report 1790, January 18, 1927; Congressional Record, LXV, 7735, 9019, 9049, 9053-9054, 9209-9229, 9451-9456, 9930-9955, 10019-10058; LXVII, 8260, 8337, 8699, 8714, 8848, 8859-8871, 8923-8930, 8937-8955, 8981-8988, 9106-9117, 9174-9177, 9396, 9402-9406, 9463-9477, 9649-9663; LXVIII, 3461-3464, 3540, 3624, 3696, 3709-3710, 3864, 3882-3883, 4063, 4081-4085, 4926.
11. United States Congress, Congressional Directory, 1923 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1923), pp. 161-171.
12. House Report 39, May 3, 1921; House Report 65, May 13, 1921; House Report 106, June 11, 1921; House Report 484, November 18, 1921; House Report 1178, August 22, 1922; Statutes at Large, XLIII, 5-6, 20-27, 105-107, 224-226, 858-990.
13. Anthony was the first Kansan ever elected to eleven consecutive terms in the House. His longevity record of twenty-one years, nine months, and twelve days was finally surpassed by Representative Clifford R. Hope of Garden City on December 17, 1948. Lawrence F. Kennedy (comp.), Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 520-521, 1138-1139.
14. House Report 20, April 26, 1921; House Report 791, March 13, 1922; House Report 1397, January 12, 1923; House Report 298, March 13, 1924; House Report 1071, January 2, 1925; House Report 197, February 4, 1926; Congressional Record, LXI, 766-778, 805-832, 866-894, 1131-1143, 1210-1239, 1261-1281, 2714-2739; LXII, 3863-3887, 3987-3997, 4026-4061, 4100-4116, 4194-4220, 4266-4301, 4508-4530, 4564-4586, 4626-4669, 4733-4734, 9275-9290, 9328-9355; LXIV, 1684, 1689, 1822-1865, 1897-1918, 1950-1976, 2013-2042, 3425-3427, 4115-4129, 4195-4210; LXV, 4731-4772, 4954-4989, 3020-5049, 5082-5115, 5168-5193, 5201-5213, 9872-9884, 10552-10554; LXVI, 1145-1189, 1391-1425, 1475-1499, 1551-1562, 2880, 3010-3018; LXVII, 3629-3659, 3712-3740, 3805-3825, 3901-3921, 3924-3957, 4087-4090, 6599, 6970-6977; Statutes at Large, XLII, 68-103, 716-766, 1377-1427; XLIII, 477-520, 892-935; XLIV, 254-296.
15. United States Senate, Report Number 236, July 27, 1921; Congressional Record, LXI, 4332; LXII, 2057-2061, 2275-2276; Statutes at Large, XLII, 388-389; James H. Shideler, Farm Crisis, 1919-1923 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), pp. 169-170.
16. Senate Report 75, January 13, 1928; Congressional Record, LXIX, 6380, 6506-6508, 6843; Statutes at Large, XLV, 711-712.
17. Senate Report 871, August 23, 1922; Congressional Record, LXII, 11665.
18. Senate Report 1304, January 24, 1927; Congressional Record, LXVIII, 3518, 4771-4776; Post, Washington, D.C., February 12, 1927, pp. 1, 13.

19. Senate Report 509, March 8, 1928; Congressional Record, LXIX, 6160-6161, 8805-8810, 9524-9527, 9873-9880; John D. Black, "The McNary-Haugen Movement," American Economic Review, September 1928, pp. 405-427; Darwin N. Kelley, "The McNary-Haugen Bills, 1924-1928," Agricultural History, October 1940, pp. 170-180; Post, Washington, D.C., April 13, 1928, pp. 1, 3; May 17, 1928, p. 1; May 26, 1928, pp. 1, 5.

20. Senate Report 228, February 3, 1928; Congressional Record, LXIX, 4635, 9842, 10103; Preston J. Hubbard, Origins of the TVA; The Muscle Shoals Controversy, 1920-1932 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1961), pp. 217-236; Post, Washington, D.C., May 26, 1928, pp. 1, 8.

21. Homer E. Socolofsky, Arthur Capper (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1962), pp. 147-162.

22. Because of the death of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge on November 9, 1924, the office of the Majority Leader became vacant. Curtis was unanimously chosen to succeed Lodge at a caucus of Republican senators on November 28, 1924. Post, Washington, D.C., November 29, 1924, pp. 1, 4; Evening Star, Washington, D.C., November 28, 1924, pp. 1, 2.

23. Statutes at Large, XLIII, 805-806; XLIV, 9-131, 1162-1174; XLV, 534-539, 689-698, 1057-1066, 1446.

24. Curtis was nominated by the Republican National Convention on June 15, 1928 and was elected Vice-President on November 6, 1928. Richard C. Bain and Judith H. Parris, Convention Decisions and Voting Records (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1973), p. 231; James C. Malin, "Charles Curtis," Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Two (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 136-137; Svend Petersen, A Statistical History of the American Presidential Elections (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 89-90; Robert Sobel (ed.), Biographical Directory of the United States Executive Branch, 1774-1977 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 80.