

Our Obedient Congress

By LUDWIG LORE

The war session of the Sixty-fifth Congress deserves the good rating it received from the President down to the cheapest politician. For never before did an American parliament so obediently swallow so many bitter pills as did this War Congress.

It is a remarkable fact that this Congress, before war was declared on April 4th and 5th by the Senate and the House of Representatives, was by no means united. A straw vote taken by a leading New York newspaper among members of both houses of Congress on April 2nd and published on April 3rd, indicated such a strong opposition to the final alignment of the United States with the belligerent powers of Europe, that a majority vote in both branches of the Federal Parliament seemed almost impossible. And yet the incredible happened and war was declared with overwhelming majorities. In the Senate this action was taken with 86 against 6, in the House with 373 against 70 votes.

Once the deciding step had been taken, it was only logical that the means necessary to carry out the decision should be granted to the executive branch of the Government. But the enthusiasm, the unheard-of magnanimity with which it was done plainly showed how effectively the whip in the hand of the power that be must have worked behind the scenes. A few figures will give an idea of the immense amounts appropriated for war purposes during those fateful six months of the special session.

The first appropriation was the deficiency act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1917, which failed of enactment in the previous Congress. It carried \$163,841,400.52 as compared with \$57,034,118.94 in the previous year's bill, and \$11,399,025.69 the year before. An amendment which was written into the bill in the Senate was responsible for an increase of one hundred million dollars. It reads: "For the national security and defense, and for each and every purpose connected therewith, to be expended at the discretion of the President, and to be immediately available and to remain available until December thirty-first, 1917, \$100,000,000." Furthermore the bill provides that the Presi-

dent need render no account for the expenditure of this fund of one hundred million dollars that he may "expend it at his discretion." It is more than rumored that the treasuries of such noble war propaganda agencies as the "Alliance for Labor and Democracy" are fed from this source.

Next in order was the first big bond issue authorized on April 14 and 17 by the House and Senate with 389 and 84 votes, respectively, in other words, by a unanimous vote of all members present. This act authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, with the approval of the President, to borrow on the credit of the United States an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000,000 for the purpose of meeting expenditures authorized for the national security and defense and other public purposes. Besides this the act authorized the Secretary of the Treasury for the more effectual prosecution of the war to purchase, at par, from foreign Governments then engaged in war with the enemies of the United States, their obligations hereafter issued and appropriated for this purpose \$3,000,000,000 or so much of this amount as might be necessary. In addition the Secretary was authorized to borrow from time to time such sums as in his judgment might be necessary and to issue certificates of indebtedness at no less than par, bearing interest not to exceed 3½ per cent. The sum of such certificates was at no time to exceed \$2,000,000,000.

The regular Army appropriation act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1918, passed in the House and Senate on April 4 and 3 with a viva voce vote—i. e., without opposition—carried \$273,046,322.50 as compared with \$267,596,530.10 for the fiscal year ending in June 1917, and \$101,959,195.85 for the year ending in the previous June, showing that the "regular" expenditures for the military establishment had increased almost threefold during the last two years. This same bill authorized the President to take into the immediate possession of the United States any vessel within its jurisdiction owned in whole or in part by a corporation, citizen, or subject of any nation with which the United States might be at war, or under register of such a nation.

The first big war appropriation was passed in the House on May 2 with 362 yeas and 1 nay—that of Mr. Meyer London—and in the Senate on May 19 by a viva voce vote. This act carried an