

THE WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND

By Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen

Authors of the "Washington Merry-Go-Round"
and "More Merry-Go-Round".

Washington. What makes politics so fascinating and exciting to its practitioners is that it is a never-ending bout of intrigue and chance. It is like an endless game of chess or checkers, a constant matching of wits and jockeying for position.

The secret but hot contest for party rank now going on among the handful of Republican senators who survived the recent election debacle and will sit in the new Congress is a perfect illustration of exactly this sort of thing.

Here is a small group of representatives of a party which has just experienced a shattering defeat. In the new Senate out of a membership of ninety-six they will number twenty-two, less than half the number required for a quorum. Except for the right to vote and speak their influence will be practically nil.

Even the title of minority floor leader will carry with it hardly more than honorary duties. Yet, there is underway today among the surviving Republicans a warm tussle for the post of assistant minority floor leader. Each of the half dozen anxious candidates is busily scrambling for support and pressing his personal and seniority claims to the empty dignity.

The explanation for this amusing and amazing spectacle goes deeper than the mere desire to win an empty title. The aspirants are all perfectly aware of the innocuousness of the position. Some of them, like Senator James Couzens, actually don't want the place.

The key to the mystery is prestige. To Washington assistant minority floor leader in the next administration will be a joke. But back home, in Ohio, Michigan, Oregon, Rhode Island, ~~the~~ Pennsylvania, or Maryland, it sounds imposing and sonorous.

The successful candidate will be able to point out to a critical constituency two years hence when he comes up for re-election that this is one more reason why he should be returned; that this lofty party position gives him a preferred position to further the interests of their state, whereas if they elect his opponent the latter will only be one of ninety-six senators.

If it sounds silly, it is nevertheless true. Smoot, Moses, Watson, and the late Senator Jones, all holding high committee and party places in the chamber, stressed this fact above all others in their recent unsuccessful election fights. That the strategy did not work this time, does not in anyway detract from its availability in the future, especially for senators like Fess, of Ohio, Vandenberg, of Michigan, and Reed, of Pennsylvania, who face hard sledding in 1934 when they must stand for re-election.

Men have been elected to the Senate, and even high office, on lesser claims than this, as these veterans politicians well know. And so they and others are scrambling for the hollow title with a zeal and energy worthy of greater deeds.

Particularly pitiful and tremulous are the claims being put forth by Senator Simeon D. Fess. He is frankly going about telling Senate friends that the assistant minority floor leadership is his sole remaining hope for re-election in 1934. It is a sad, sad come down for the little, thin school master who but a few months ago was the cocky and assertive Chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Simeon's deflation was as abrupt as it was thorough. Replaced by the larger and bulkier, but no less uninspiring Everett Sanders immediately after the Republican convention in Chicago, Fess immediately sank into the background. Neither the Republican National Committee nor the Ohio State committee took any interest in him further.

If there was a "forgotten man" in the presidential campaign it was certainly little Simeon. The Republican managers in Ohio determinedly kept him off the platform. Even when he, the life-long dry, announced his willingness to accept the fifty-fifty prohibition plank of the Republican platform they still refused to allow him to take the stump.

There is little doubt that if Fess had been up for re-election this year that Ohio, which manifested such an ever-

two years hence when he comes up for re-election are no less cheerless and gloomy. And so he is desperately clutching at straws in the hope that somehow and somehow he will be able to squeeze through.

The interesting thing about the situation, as regards his colleagues, is that they are quite unmoved by Fess' troubles. Some of them have flatly told him that he can not have the floor leadership.

Senator Couzens, although he does not come up for re-election until 1936, insists that his seniority claims precede those of Fess and that he does not intend having it said back in Michigan that he was passed over for "a more competent man".

Senator Vandenberg who faces almost as serious a re-election situation as Fess two years hence is junior to the latter in rank but is making a determined campaign for the floor command. The title means no less to him than it does to Fess in his re-election fight and in politics as in horse-trading it is every man for himself.

Actual decision on the issue is still months off. The new Republican party line-up will not be acted on until early next March, when the new Congress begins to assemble. But in the meanwhile each candidate is vigorously pressing his suit and trying to line up votes,——and furnishing his more fortunate colleagues a lot of fun and cloak-room stories as they watch his antics.

X.X.X.X.X

CONFIDENTIAL

Senator Couzens declares that in the closing weeks of the presidential campaign President Hoover telephoned him twice at his home in Detroit to get him to make a statement approving the \$80,000,000 R.F.C. loan to the Dawes bank in Chicago. Couzens prior to his departure from Washington at the close of the last session spent several days at the R.F.C. going over its loans to banks and railroads. He says that he went thoroughly into the Dawes loan and that it met with his approval.

The President, Couzens says, knew this and wanted him to make a public statement. Couzens declares that he told Hoover he would do so if "the Attorney General would give an opinion saying that he had a right to disclose the facts about the loan". Couzens says that Attorney General Mitchell would not render such an opinion, and that he thereupon informed the President that he could not make a statement.

Hoover's explanation of the Dawes loan in his St. Louis speech, Couzens contends, was in violation of the law which made all the early loans of the R.F.C. secret. He says that he intends calling this fact to the attention of the President.

X.X.X.X.X