Preparing to return to Washington for the second session of the Sixtieth Congress, Norris expected to participate in a fight against the rules of the House of Representatives. He, of course, was eager to do battle, but he was saddened by the fact that William P. Hepburn of Iowa, a long-time opponent of the rules, would be ending his distinguished career with this short or lameduck session. Hepburn was one of four Republican incumbents, generally inimical to the House rules, who were defeated for re-election in 1908. Though the ranks of the insurgents would be increased as a result of the election, none had Hepburn's prestige and seniority and few had his general over-all ability.

As usual during a short session, Mrs. Norris and the children remained at home when Norris left for Washington on December 2. McCarl also remained in McCook to practice law and to manage affairs in the district. Norris again sought the services of Attorney Polk and hoped to hire a stenographer to handle his correspondence and possibly to serve as a receptionist in his office in the new House Office Building. During the Christmas holiday recess he intended to vacation on the Isle of Pines off the southern coast of Cuba. Norris expected to be busy during this short session, and the vacation would provide an opportunity to recover from the rigors of an arduous campaign.

However, no sooner had he arrived in Washington and unpacked his bags than he hurriedly made arrangements to return to McCook. His youngest child, Gertrude, had fallen ill and the doctor had diagnosed her illness as diphtheria. She was given antitoxin and put to bed. The family feared her heart might be affected. By returning to McCook and spending the period of quarantine with his family, he could help with the task of amusing two healthy girls while Mrs. Norris attended a convalescing one. On December 9, 1908, two days after the session started, he was granted an indefinite leave of absence.

Arriving home and entering quarantine, he found Gertrude well on the road to recovery. On December 21 the quarantine was lifted. For
the second time in less than two months the house was fumigated and almost everything had to be moved out and back. Though Gertrude’s case was a mild one, two periods of quarantine with less than a month’s interval between them must have been a trying experience for Mrs. Norris and the children. Norris decided to remain at home until after the Christmas holidays, canceling his plans for a trip to the Isle of Pines.4

Thus Norris was not on hand when, on the evening of December 11, 1908, a small band of insurgent Republicans gathered in the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee room for the purpose of planning a fight for more democratic procedure in the House of Representatives. Hepburn presided over the meeting and was authorized to choose a committee of five, with himself as chairman, to propose possible changes. It was suggested that the rule of recognition be revised, that the committees on Elections and Rules be made elective, and that membership on the latter committee be increased.5

Four days later, a resolution was proposed that a special committee report not later than February 1, 1909, any changes in the existing rules that might seem desirable. Though the resolution was not considered, the vote on the point of order not to consider it was 149 to 136, indicating the possibility that the insurgents and the Democrats by voting together might eventually control the House.6 However, until that day arrived, the insurgents would have to be satisfied with bringing their fight to the attention of the public by harassing the Speaker and condemning his arbitrary power.

In January when Congress reconvened Norris was present to lend aid and support to his fellow insurgents, banded together for the first time in their battle against the House rules. As a solution to the problem of making the House truly representative, the insurgent group accepted Norris’ plan for the Committee on Rules to be selected by the members on the basis of geographical groups and for the committee in turn to choose members of all the standing committees. Norris, Hepburn, John M. Nelson of Wisconsin, and others in the group agreed that a change of speakers or a change of political parties would not lessen the power of the Speaker. Only a change in the rules would remove the source of his power and solve the problem. Norris succinctly stated this position when he argued, “The rule that gives the Speaker power to appoint all the Standing committees of the House, which practically control all of the legislation of the House,” was the rule that was most obnoxious to those who thought that the Speaker had too much power.7

He conceded, of course, that rules were necessary and that most of
them served a useful purpose. He was opposed to unlimited debate in a body of almost four hundred members and he accepted without qualification the "Reed rules." However, notwithstanding the fact that most of the rules were the result of wisdom and experience, in "one or two particulars" they were not only wrong but vicious and ought to be changed. He mentioned the power of the Speaker to appoint all standing committees and noted his "most serious objection to the rules of the House." The most objectionable and vicious of all was the fact that there was "practically no provision within the rules themselves" for amendment or change except by the consent of the Speaker.

Here, as Norris and his fellow insurgents knew, was the core of their dilemma. Any resolution to change the rules would be referred to the Committee on Rules, of which the Speaker was chairman and dominant figure and chose or approved its membership. Once the members adopted at the beginning of a Congress the previous rules, Norris claimed, they "tied the hands of the House absolutely as far as any change" was concerned. They made it virtually impossible during the course of that particular Congress to amend the rules without the consent of the Speaker.

Knowing that a rules change would not be reported out of committee, Norris nevertheless proceeded to discuss his resolution which offered a solution that the insurgents believed would equitably solve the problem without undermining the political balance of the House by forcing insurgent Republicans into an uneasy alliance with the Democratic minority. His resolution called for a new committee on rules that would not only be representative of the entire membership but would also be subject to the will of the majority.

Representative James Mann of Illinois immediately perceived the weakest point in Norris' resolution when he noted that it gave the fifteen members of the committee the authority to delegate to a subcommittee of its members, not less than three in number, "the power to report special rules to the House of Representatives for the transaction of business." This subcommittee within limits would have all the authority of the full committee. Mann wanted to know why the power of the House, which Norris thought was being absorbed through the rules by the Speaker, would not likewise be absorbed by this subcommittee.

Norris replied that this would not occur because the committee provided for in the resolution derived its authority from and was responsible to the entire House rather than the Speaker. It was more likely, he believed, that fifteen members, elected by the geographical division prescribed in his resolution, would better represent the ideas
and purposes of the House than would the members of the Rules Committee chosen by the Speaker. But Mann did not see it that way. In one case fifteen members would confer power on a subcommittee of three, while under the prevailing rules, a majority of the dominant party, assembled in caucus, conferred power on the Speaker. Though Norris suggested the only possible answer to Mann’s question, his antagonist was not convinced of its validity. In his response Norris also made clear that he was not implying that Speaker Cannon usurped any authority or power. Indeed, throughout this long and sometimes bitter struggle, Norris always insisted, as did some of the other Republican insurgents, that he was opposed to the system and did not intend to cast aspersions on Cannon or anyone else. Finally Norris, apparently impressed by Mann’s criticism, stated that he held no brief for his plan. If another plan could achieve the same results he was willing to accept it, provided it was offered in good faith and not simply for the purpose of causing delay and confusion.  

However, Norris’ remarks did not comprise the major assault upon the rules during this session. This honor was reserved for Hepburn as his farewell address after twenty-two years of distinguished service in Congress. But before Hepburn delivered his speech the insurgents made some important decisions. On January 27, 1909, Hepburn announced their acceptance of Norris’ resolution and of another expedient designed to secure greater freedom in the consideration of measures.

This expedient proposed to set aside each Tuesday, except during the last six days of a session, when no business except that on the House Calendar and the Calendar of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union would be in order. On “Calendar Tuesday” all committees would be called in regular order and each committee could call up any bill on either calendar. Motions to adjourn, recess, or rise were not in order before 4:45 P.M. Furthermore, on Calendar Tuesday general debate on a measure in the Committee of the Whole could be closed at any time after the expiration of forty minutes. And, finally, proceedings under this rule, which if enacted would have markedly curtailed the power of the Speaker only one day a week, could be suspended for the day by a two-thirds vote.

On February 9, 1909, a resolution to amend the rules embodying these proposals was introduced by twenty-nine Republican members, including all of Nebraska’s Republican congressmen. The resolution (H.R. 551) was sent to the Committee on Rules for Cannon, its chairman, to consider. While none of the insurgents seriously expected anything except publicity to come from the resolution, few realized
the opportunity it presented the Speaker. By accepting the idea of Calendar Tuesday he could make a concession to his critics and, undoubtedly, split the ranks of the insurgents. Calendar Tuesday, of course, would not seriously damage the Speaker's power and would not in the least alter the rules of the House, the source of his power. Indeed some moderate insurgents, like Augustus P. Garner of Massachusetts, probably would have been amenable to fighting for only Calendar Tuesday.14

On February 18, 1909, Hepburn delivered the major speech of the session against the rules. It was entirely fitting that he should have done this. Though he was the leader of the Republican caucus and chairman of a powerful committee, Hepburn had been attacking the rules longer than any other person in Congress, long before the other insurgents were elected to the House of Representatives. A polished orator and a dangerous opponent in debate, Hepburn used his talents of biting satire, keen wit, and scathing ridicule to challenge the arbitrary power of the Speaker. In his speech Hepburn gave voice to the basic dilemma of the insurgents and predicted the fate of their resolution: "Oh, it is easy to get into the Committee on Rules, but by what hoist and by what petard would we get out of the Committee on Rules?" 15

Speaker Cannon must have been thankful and the insurgents sad that this speech was Hepburn's last as a member of Congress. Though the February resolution of the twenty-nine insurgents was never reported to the House, on March 1, 1909, within four days of the end of the Sixtieth Congress an amendment was presented and adopted calling for a "Calendar Wednesday" when no business but the calling of the committees would be in order. Cannon thus made the most of his opportunity to split the ranks of the insurgents by offering a mild concession as an amendment to the rules.

Norris was furious at Cannon's use of the resolution to harm the insurgent cause, and gave vent to his wrath:

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this proposed rule is the most useless, perhaps harmless, and worse than worthless proposition that has ever emanated, especially coming at this particular late day, from the Committee on Rules. It is, in my judgment, the most comical parliamentary joke that ever came down the legislative pike. In its application it is a homeopathic dose of nothingness.16

He argued that since the rule provided it should not be in effect during the last two weeks of Congress, the members of the House were at this late date placed in "the foolish and ridiculous position" of ac-
cepting a rule that would not have any effect in the Congress in which it was adopted. He called it "a sop to the people of the country to deceive them in their demand that this House shall modify its rules so that it shall be really a representative body instead of a one-man machine." 17

Periodically in the last years of the nineteenth century, isolated members of the House of Representatives had spoken against the rules but never in the past had the opposition assumed the proportions of an organized movement. Now, however, in the last months of Theodore Roosevelt's administration it was rapidly increasing and assuming national proportions. Speaker Cannon, colorful and gruff, quickly became in many newspapers and magazines and in the public mind an overbearing, bearded, cigar-smoking ruler who tyrannized the House of Representatives. While Republican insurgents in Congress and a plank in the Democratic platform of 1908 criticized the rules, many of the journalistic articles attacked the man. Thus the House rules and the Speaker by the end of 1908 became a subject of national attention, and "Cannonism" a system that insurgents sought to eradicate. Though Norris, as a result of his service in Congress, came to favor changes in the rules, he nevertheless maintained respect for Cannon and the position he held. Most citizens, however, were more concerned with the man than with the source of his power. 18 Meanwhile, pressed and harassed on all sides by members of his own party and by the Democratic opposition, by the press and by increasing public clamor, "Uncle Joe" began to utilize the tremendous power the rules gave him to fight and perhaps punish his antagonists. Indeed, he had not spoken to Norris since he introduced his resolution in May, 1908. 19

It should be noted at this point that during the Roosevelt administration, Speaker Cannon and the rules were never a major obstacle to the president in advancing his legislative program. Most of Roosevelt's difficulties were with the Senate, and, in most instances, the House quickly passed the bills the administration desired. Roosevelt, though he might not have liked or admired Cannon, worked well with him, consulted with him frequently, wrote him often, and listened to his advice about the tenor of opinion in the House of Representatives. In short, harmonious relations prevailed between the president and the Speaker throughout most of the Roosevelt administration. As a result, Norris saw nothing incongruous about supporting Roosevelt and admiring Cannon. But the ill will evident in the Sixtieth Congress carried over into the Taft administration, when the president, who did not like the Speaker, found it difficult to cooperate and work with him, partly because Taft exerted much less effort than his predecessor, and
partly because Cannon, now thoroughly aroused and angered, was much less inclined to cooperate.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus as the Sixtieth Congress came to an end, the fight against Cannonism had come out into the open and, of course, would be continued in the next Congress. Though this struggle was the most significant aspect of Norris’ service in the short session, he concerned himself with other matters as well. The most important of these was the tariff issue, since the incoming president had announced his intention of calling Congress into special session to revise it. Important, too, was the growing sentiment for a postal savings system, while many merchants were concerned lest a parcel post system be established. They claimed the establishment of such a system would enable the large mail-order firms to drive retail merchants in small towns out of business.\textsuperscript{21}

Norris pointed out that a parcel post system was already in existence and that those who favored it really desired the Post Office Department to carry larger packages at lower rates than the law provided. Believing that express company charges were exorbitant and unjust, he was inclined to favor a reduction in the postal laws so that rates would take into consideration not only size and weight, but distance as well. If this were done, retail merchants in small towns would not suffer unduly from mail-order competition, and both merchant and farmer would benefit from the competition thus forced upon the express companies.\textsuperscript{22}

Like many of his constituents, Norris was interested in the concept of a postal savings bank. A plank in the Republican platform of 1908 favored the enactment of such legislation. However, he did not intend to support any measure that would siphon funds from the area of deposit to a large city. He believed that deposits in a postal savings bank should not be granted special tax exemptions. In this respect, his views differed from the bill introduced by Senator Thomas H. Carter of Montana, a bill which granted postal savings bank deposits exemption from taxation and levy on execution.\textsuperscript{23}

While both a parcel post and a postal savings measure would be enacted during the Taft administration, it was the tariff that received immediate attention once the new administration got under way. Norris believed that the tariff ought to be removed from wood and all of its products, and that the rates on grain ought to be retained at their prevailing high level to protect farmers and millers from foreign, particularly Canadian, competition. He realized, however, that a new tariff law would have to be the result of compromise and would contain many items he would not favor.\textsuperscript{24}
But discussions of these issues were merely skirmishes for battles to come. The attack against the Speaker dominated the short session as far as the House of Representatives was concerned. Meanwhile most Republicans looked forward to Taft’s inauguration on March 4, 1909. While feelings were mixed, few if any were indifferent about the departure of Roosevelt from the White House. Most congressmen, whether Democratic or Republican, were unhappy about the prospect of foregoing their deserved vacations for the dubious privilege of remaining in Washington, possibly throughout the summer, to prepare a tariff which under any circumstance was bound to create acrimony and discord. Norris, in February, wrote to the president-elect requesting the special session at least a week later than the tentatively scheduled date of March 10, thereby allowing the western members of Congress to return home for a few days and still be back in time for the beginning of the session. Ordinarily, Norris knew, it did not make much difference if some members were not present at the start of a session, but the desire of the insurgents to challenge the rules made it necessary for all to be present at the outset when the fight would take place. Taft, though he did not acknowledge Norris’ letter, complied by calling the special session to convene on March 15.

Norris left Washington on March 4, before the new president took the oath of office. He was not sufficiently impressed with the grandeur of inauguration ceremonies to go out of his way to witness one. He was back in Washington shortly before Congress convened ready to participate in the rules fight.

Norris, of course, knew that a large majority of the Republican caucus favored Cannon’s re-election as Speaker. It would be impossible to defeat him, but the insurgents believed there was “a fair chance” of amending the rules at this time. And Norris intended to battle for reform “until the last ditch shall have been reached.” If beaten, he knew there would be no hope for favors and consideration during this Congress.

On March 15, as soon as the session started, parliamentary maneuvering began over adopting the rules of the previous session. Once these rules were adopted, virtually all hope of modifying them would be ended. Norris dramatically pointed up the issue, and incidentally noted that the new administration would be a far cry from the previous one:

Mr. Speaker, there will be no change in the rules that will be satisfactory or produce satisfactory results either to the House or to the country that does not take away from the Speaker the
right to serve on the Committee on Rules and the right to appoint all the standing committees of this House. . . . It is to be regretted, Mr. Speaker, that we were not left to settle this question without any outside influences. During the vacation Members of this House have been worked upon by the various departments of this Government, especially what are known as the "insurgent" part of the House; Senators, Cabinet members, and, I regret to say, the President, have all been working in behalf of the Speaker and his machine; so that we have had a combination of the Senate, the Cabinet, the Executive, and the "knights of the Iron Duke," all combined in an assault upon that little band of insurgents.28

Unfurling their banner, the insurgents were risking their political lives. Newspapers claimed that if defeated they would be punished by loss of important places on committees and by loss of executive patronage. Norris' response to this challenge was as follows:

If we are to be punished for standing for a principle which we believe to be right, then let the lash be unfurled. Do your worst. We will not be intimidated. We will not surrender. I would rather go down to my political grave with a clear conscience than ride in the chariot of victory, a congressional stool pigeon, the slave, the servant, and the vassal of any man, whether he be the owner and manager of a legislative menagerie or the ruler of a great nation.29

Lest he be pushed too far in opposition to the chief executive, Norris clarified his position by proclaiming his confidence in Taft. The real power in government, he said, was being exerted not by the president but by the "Iron Duke" who, "sitting upon his throne, crowned with the power given him by the rules, reaches out his mighty hand and forces even the Chief Executive to do his bidding." For Norris, at last, the struggle had degenerated to the level of personalities. He also predicted, "We insurgents may have the life crushed out of us by the machine, but the cause is right, and in the end it must prevail." 30

Despite insurgent opposition, the previous rules were modified to improve the functioning of the House while not hampering the Speaker's control of the Committee on Rules or his power to appoint standing committees. This modification, which received some Democratic support, was the result of an arrangement made by the Speaker with Democratic Representative John J. Fitzgerald and other Democratic members, whereby the Speaker promised to support a higher duty on
petroleum products in the impending tariff bill in return for enough Democratic votes to prevent the insurgents in alliance with Champ Clark from further amending the rules. The rules that were adopted, under this compact, provided for a unanimous consent calendar which eliminated the daily procession to the Speaker's office to obtain permission to consider bills meeting with general approval. Calendar Wednesday was strengthened by changing the requirement for setting it aside from a majority to a two-thirds vote, and finally a recommittal motion was permitted after the previous question had been moved on any bill. Such a motion was not in order before this.

Thus defeated, the lonely insurgents knew that before the special session was concluded they could expect the wrath of the Speaker to manifest itself in lowly committee assignments. They had supported amendments offered by Champ Clark to amend the rules, amendments that would have deprived the Speaker of most of his authority. But because of the defection of Democratic members these amendments were defeated. The only positive achievement they could discern was in the form of national press coverage which publicized their struggle to a large audience. Norris, for the first time, came to the attention of a national audience and many citizens, no doubt, admired his perspicacity in analyzing the issues and his courage in antagonizing the Speaker and possibly the president.

Incidentally, despite his attack on the Speaker's power and his campaign promise to vote against Cannon, Norris voted for him and received, at the same time, two votes for Speaker. By voting for Cannon, Norris could remain within the Republican organization and retain a vote and a voice to change the rules. If he disregarded the party caucus and voted against Cannon, Norris was aware that Cannon still would be re-elected and his own standing would become even more precarious. He had argued that if there was no possibility of defeating the Speaker the insurgents should vote for his re-election. Norris remained throughout this fight one of the more moderate insurgents who managed to separate growing hostility to Cannon from a primary desire to modify the rules.

Once the fight to amend the rules was lost the House settled down to the urgent business of the special session—preparing a new tariff law, though an undercurrent of hostility prevailed. A measure was introduced in the House by Sereno Payne on March 17, 1909. The bill, providing for generally lower rates, met with more approval than most observers had expected. The insurgents presented no organized opposition to it. Norris, believing that an unduly high tariff encouraged trusts and monopolies, favored some reduction, though the loss of tariff
revenue would have to be balanced either by increased taxation or
curtailment of expenditures. He preferred eliminating extravagant ap-
propriations, especially for the navy. He had voted against such app-
propriations since he had been in Congress, but "the country seemed to
demand the upbuilding of a big navy, and the President was very
enthusiastic in his demands for the same." Therefore he realized that
any reduction of rates would have to be balanced by increased tax-
ation. 36

Norris succeeded in adding a significant amendment to the tariff bill.
The subcommittee which prepared the measure unanimously placed
petroleum and petroleum products on the free list. At the insistence
of Speaker Cannon, the chairman called a meeting of the subcommittee
to reconsider this decision. After bitter debate, in which the Speaker
insisted that Republican members abide by party principles and prom-
ises, the committee by a partisan vote agreed to put a tariff of 25 per
cent on petroleum and petroleum products. 37

Before Norris was elected to Congress, the tariff on petroleum and
its products had figured in a congressional campaign in the Fifth Dis-
trict. Consequently, he was very much interested in this particular
portion of the tariff. The bill was considered under a special rule
which made it impossible to place an item, by means of amendment,
on the free list. Therefore, on April 7, 1909, Norris presented a motion
to reduce the 25 per cent duty on petroleum and its products to a
nominal 1 per cent. After some debate in which Speaker Cannon took
the floor to speak against it, Norris' motion prevailed, whereupon
Payne, sponsor of the measure in the House of Representatives, in-
formed the members that the duty as amended would not pay the
cost of collection. He requested unanimous consent that petroleum
and its products be placed on the free list. 38

Norris' action in reducing this important schedule of the tariff won
immediate approval from his constituents. McCarl wrote from McCook
that he had not been able to find a man, "Democrat or Republican or
indifferent," who was not pleased with his "victory on the oil proposi-
tion." Most newspapers were generous in their praise of Norris, whose
popularity was on the rise after the low point of the 1908 election. 39

One of the things that pleased Norris most with the tariff bill that
passed the House on April 9, 1909, was the fact that it followed a sug-
gestion in Taft's inaugural message and provided for an inheritance
tax as a means of balancing the loss of income from the generally low-
ered rates of the Payne bill. He had always favored an inheritance tax.
While in theory an income tax was generally conceded to be the most
equitable tax, as a matter of practice Norris thought it the most diffi-
cult to collect because it offered too many opportunities for evasion by dishonest citizens. On the other hand a graduated inheritance tax posed no such difficulty. Ideally it could be collected from the bequests received by the beneficiaries so that the larger the amount received, the larger the rate of taxation; however, the plank in the tariff measure merely taxed the sum left by the deceased. Despite this mild objection to the inheritance feature of the bill, Norris was delighted and was certain it would bring in considerable revenue.40

The debate on the tariff in the Senate was one of the notable events in the history of that distinguished body, lasting well on into the summer. The House, having passed the measure on April 9, had little important business to conduct until the Senate reached some agreement. Thus many House members, having little to do in the capital city, requested leaves of absence because of important business. Norris obtained such a leave on April 12, 1909,41 and chose to conduct his important business in the Panama Canal Zone. He returned to Washington on May 2 to find Senate debate raging, as a handful of Republican members subjected the tariff to what some of its supporters, no doubt, considered an agonizing reappraisal.42

On May 14, Norris decided to go home until the Senate debate was concluded. In McCook he relaxed with his family, kept abreast with his correspondence, and avoided all public commitments, including Fourth of July addresses, because of the need to return to Washington as soon as the Senate passed the tariff bill. By July 7 he was back in Washington and glad to be where the heat was less intense than it had been in Nebraska.43

By a vote of forty-five to thirty-four on July 8, the Senate passed its version of the tariff bill with ten Republican members, including both Nebraska senators, voting against it. The next day on the floor of the House, Norris followed the lead of La Follette by characterizing the bill as a revision upward. Norris argued that unless the upward revision of rates in many schedules was rejected, specifying particularly gloves and hosiery, the Republican party would not be true to its pledges. He quoted speeches by Taft to illustrate the party's pledge to reduce tariff schedules and suggested a resolution whereby the House would concur in those Senate amendments which reduced the tariff and would go into conference on the balance. Unless the members voted for this resolution, Norris warned they would not have another chance to discuss the bill. When it returned from conference committee, it would probably contain several hundred items. Members would not get a separate vote but would be required "to accept all or reject all."44
By adopting his proposition, the House could dispose of all Senate amendments where rates were reduced. In doing this, the members would have an opportunity to express themselves on every one of them. Whereas if the measure was sent immediately to conference committee the members would lose control over the bill, because the Speaker would choose conferees sympathetic to his high tariff views. However, as Norris no doubt expected, his proposal failed. It received insurgent support on the Republican side of the House.

The conference committee remained in session until early August trying to adjust all items where Senate and House measures provided for different rates. The president attempted to convince it of the necessity of reduced rates on gloves and hosiery, while also demanding free iron ore, coal, hides, oil, and a lower duty on lumber. Norris, remaining in Washington during these deliberations, feared the conferees would eliminate the inheritance tax provided in the House bill and substitute the Senate provision for a corporation tax. Since the president now advocated this latter proposal which, Norris thought, was prepared by the attorney general, he knew that a corporation rather than an inheritance tax would be included in the law ultimately enacted by Congress. He also knew that House members would vote for or against the bill with no chance to consider particular items.

At the end of July, by the narrow margin of 191–186, the House defeated a recommittal motion, with Norris and most insurgent members voting with the minority. On the final vote to accept the conference committee report, Norris and some of the moderate insurgents were included among the 195 members who voted in the affirmative. Prior to these votes six progressive Republican senators appeared on the House floor in an effort to convince members that the measure should be sent back to conference committee. Failing in their efforts, the senators continued their battle in the Senate chamber, but when the roll was called on August 5, 1909, the conference report carried by a vote of 47–31 with only six Republican senators voting against it. This time both Nebraska senators voted with the majority. Thus after bitter debate in both houses, but especially in the Senate, the Payne-Aldrich tariff bill was sent to President Taft for approval, which was quickly given on August 5, 1909, before the special session of the Sixty-first Congress formally adjourned.

In summing up his attitude toward the Payne-Aldrich tariff Norris said he fought the bill from start to finish in most of its essential features. However, he admitted the law had much in its favor. Though he had voted against many schedules and for every parliamentary proposition that would have kept the conference report in committee,
he still voted for the bill. He did this because the Payne-Aldrich tariff was "infinitely better than the Dingley law," since it was molded "on the right principle." It raised the tariff on luxuries and lowered it on necessities; 'not enough," he admitted, "but it was a step in the right direction." According to Norris, the true principle of a tariff was that it should represent the differences between the cost of production at home and abroad. The Payne-Aldrich tariff did not do this, but, Norris believed, it approached this goal much better than did the Dingley tariff.

On the day before the special session came to an end when the House was considering an "urgent deficiency bill," Norris spoke against an item which granted an automobile for the vice-president and the Speaker. It presented him with an opportunity for indirect and facetiously amusing criticism of the Speaker: "If we should buy this automobile for the Speaker and he should become adept and an expert in the management of it, as he undoubtedly would in a short time, his natural inclination to run over people when assisted by an automobile would make it dangerous for everybody in the community." However, it was the Speaker who had the final word at this time. On the last day of the session committee assignments for the regular session of the Sixty-first Congress were announced. Norris now fully felt Cannon's power when he found himself downgraded to membership on the insignificant committees on Coinage, Weights, and Measures, and on Private Land Claims, committees which he claimed were "dead and committees in name only." 50

Returning to Nebraska, Norris believed that many of his constituents sympathized with his position and resented the actions of the Speaker. He knew, too, that his ability to be of service to his constituents had been and would remain severely curtailed as long as Cannon was Speaker. However, his position and that of his fellow insurgents was not yet clarified because no one knew for certain whether Taft intended to continue the policies of his predecessor or whether he would move into the more conservative camp dominated by the able and powerful senator from Rhode Island, Nelson Aldrich. Norris therefore resolved to bring his case before his constituents, lest opponents take advantage of his weakened position. Thus, instead of a vacation for what remained of the summer, he sought a way to present his position to the public and, if possible, to increase his income.