CUBAN SECRETS OUT

Taft Publishes Correspondence with President.

INTERVENTION UNAVOIDABLE

Secretary of War and Assistant Had Thankless Task on Hands When They Went to Island—Revolutionists Exhausted Patience of Emissary—President Ordered Action.

With extraordinary freedom Secretary of War Taft reproduces in his annual report practically all the correspondence on the American intervention in Cuba from the time he and Assistant Secretary of State Bacon went to Havana as the American peace commissioners until their return to Washington, following the establishment of the provisional government of Cuba, first with Mr. Taft as governor, and then with Charles E. Magoon in that position. Besides the report of Mr. Taft and Mr. Bacon to the President, all the telegrams and letters between Havana and Oyster Bay, with the exception of a few sentences, in which expression of opinion as to persons and things was given in such a way as to make it unwise and imprudent to publish them at this time, in view of the delicacy of the position of this government in Cuba, are made public in the report, and they form a most complete chronological history of events in Cuba.

The attitude of every one, from President Roosevelt and his peace commissioners down to unimportant members of the political factions, appear somewhere in the correspondence, and Mr. Taft unreservedly makes public all of his impressions and opinions of the Cuban situation as it developed while he was in Havana. The facts as set forth make it apparent that the peace commission had a thankless task on its hands.

Some of the telegrams which were sent back and forth between Havana and Oyster Bay are rather picturesque.

One of First Cables to President.

In one dispatch, after telling of the failure to effect a compromise, and evidently with his patience and good humor about exhausted, Mr. Taft cabled the President at Oyster Bay:

"In a characteristic way, however, Palma and the Moderates will now take away their dolls and not play."

Secretary Taft's efforts in Cuba to bring about an end to an impossible situation culminated on September 28, when he cabled the President that it was hopeless to continue the negotations and that a provisional government should be at once established. He vigorously urged this course upon President Roosevelt, who at first was averse to it, coming, as it did, from Palma, who tried to force the situation upon the United States, and finally the President, who was then off Provincetown with the Atlantic fleet watching the target practice, sent this message:

"All right; land forces and issue proclamation as suggested, in my name, but if possible emphasize the fact that you are landing only at Palma's request and because there is no government left, so that it is imperative to establish one, and to land forces to protect life and property.

"Also tell them that the government you form is only provisional and temporary until the Cubans can form one for themselves.

"I suppose you will get the insurgents to disperse by telling them you will carry out substantially the agreement to which they once before assented." (The agreement to which the President refers was made by Zayas, leader of the Liberals, who said if a provisional government were established the insurgents would lay down their arms.)

Shivered at Consequences.

In one of his messages to Secretary Taft the President said that, in his opinion, it seemed at least doubtful, under the Platt amendment, whether the resignation of the regular government would not amount to substituting the insurrectionary party as the government de facto. To this Secretary Taft replied:

"The even remote possibility suggested in your telegram of last night, that under any possible hypothesis the Platt amendment may require the present insurrectionary force to be treated as a government de facto, makes me shiver at the consequences." Then follows Secretary Taft's opinion of the insurrectos as a force: "It is not a government with any of its characteristics, but only an undisciplined horde of men under partisan leaders."

One of President Roosevelt's first directions to Secretary Taft was to institute investigations to see what Americans, if any, were furnishing funds to the revolutionists. Secretary Taft made this investigation and found there were practically no contributions from Americans, except in small sums from the Isle of Pines, where there is a large American colony.

Taft and Bacon Found Chaos.

When Secretary Taft and Mr. Bacon arrived in Havana they found a most chaotic state of affairs. The revolutionary forces had surrounded Havana, and the city was at their mercy. President Palma had announced his irrevocable determination to resign, and the government had practically already fallen. The situation was made worse by the temporizing and selfishness of the various party leaders, both Moderate and Liberal, and one after another suggestions of compromises, coming not only from Americans, but from the opposed political factions themselves, failed, and the establishment of the provisional government was the only recourse.

Secretary Taft's investigations showed very clearly that the elections were illegal, and that the registration of voters, which began in the first days of October, under control of the Moderates, resulted in a total of 432,000 voters in the island, whereas by no possibility could the total number of voters exceed 300,000, and as many of the Liberals, realizing that their candidates had no chance, did not register, the fraud involved amounted to an increase of 150,000 names.

Clean Elections Impossible.

A unique explanation of this immense fraud was given to Secretary Taft by Gen. Freyre Andrade, who said that it was impossible to hold an election in Cuba without fraud, and that the officers of registration, "when they heard that the Liberals were not going to register or vote, merely out of a spirit of mischief, had increased the registration list in this generous manner."

The President repeatedly urged upon Secretary Taft to avoid the use of the word "intervention," and to impress upon the Cubans that the American occupation was but temporary, and that the troops would be withdrawn when a stable government for the island had been established. Mr. Taft and Mr. Bacon made every effort to induce President Palma to remain in office, but that executive refused to do so. The Moderates were most anxious that the United States should intervene, but they wanted it to appear that the intervention was not due to their attitude.

They desired to thrust the whole responsibility upon the United States. The situation became very critical about September 25, and on that date President Roosevelt sent a cablegram through Secretary Taft to President Palma, urging him to continue in office.

Palma Urged to Retain Office.

In this telegram he said to Palma:

"It is evident that under existing circumstances the government, executive and legislative, as now constituted, cannot stand by itself, and that to attempt to maintain it merely means disaster and perhaps ruin for Cuba. Under you for four years Cuba has been an independent republic. I adjure you, for the sake of your own fair fame, not to conduct yourself so that the responsibility, if such there be, for the death of the republic can be put at your door. I pray that you will act so that it will appear that you, at least, have sacrificed yourself for your country, and that when you leave office, you leave your country still free. You are then not responsible, if further disasters should unhappily overtake Cuba. You will have done your part as a gentleman and a patriot, if you act in this matter on the suggestion of Mr. Taft, and I most urgently beg you to do so."

Later, on the same day, the President sent a message to Mr. Taft in which he said that if the United States were forced to intervene because of the obstinacy of Palma and the Moderates, it would not be well worth considering whether the intervention should be aimed at Palma and his party—"that is, whether we should not notify them that we will take possession of the ports, establish a temporary government, and notify the insurgents that if they will at once lay down arms we will agree to a new election and to the other condition on which we have already agreed with them."

President's Plea Unavailing.

The President's appeal to President Palma to continue in office was without avail, and on the same day the telegram was delivered to the Cuban executive Secretary Taft was informed that Palma, the Vice President, all the cabinet, and all the Congressmen in the Moderate party would resign, leaving nothing of the government. Secretary Taft telegraphed the President that there was nothing to do but establish a provisional government. A plan for the settlement of the difficulties by arbitration was ruined by the information that the leaders of the Moderate party had decided to "scuttle," to use Secretary Taft's own characterization of what they were about to do.

On September 26 the President sent a long telegram to Secretary Taft. In it he said:

"It is undoubtedly a very evil thing that the revolutionists should be encouraged and the dreadful example afforded the island of success in remedying wrongs by violence and treason to the government.

"If the Palma government had shown any real capacity for self-defense and ability to sustain itself, and a sincere purpose to remedy the wrongs of which your telegrams show that they have been guilty, I should have been inclined to stand by them, no matter to what extent, including armed intervention, but as things actually are we do not have the chance of following any such course. * * * They absolutely decline either to endeavor to remedy the wrongs they have done, or to so much as lift a hand in their own defense, or make an effort to secure the stability of their government or the overthrow of the insurrectionists.

Would Give Them Another Chance.

"I do not have much hope that, with the example before them of such success in an insurrection, the people who grow discontented with the new government will refrain from insurrection and disturbance some time in the future, but there is a slight chance, and, in my opinion, we should give them this chance. Then, if the new government sooner or later falls to pieces under the stress of another insurrection, not only will our duty be clearer, but the conception by our people and by the people of other nations of our duty will be clearer, and we will have removed all chances of any honest people thinking that we have failed to do our best to establish peace and order in the island without depriving it of its independence."

On September 27 the situation became still more critical. Senor Zayas, of the Liberals, attempted to reach an agreement with the Moderates for the election of a provisional president. This plan later fell through.

Taft Gave Up All Hope.

In a letter to the President, dated September 28, Secretary Taft explains the situation as hopeless. He said:

"It looks to-day as if intervention would come to-night or to-morrow morning. I know how much you deplore this, but there is really no way out of it. The truth is that the two sides want it now, the Liberals because they can earn their victory in the holding of new elections, and the Moderates because of the elections have to be held, they want them held under the auspices of the United States, and because the Moderates are in favor of annexation generally. But neither party is willing to take the responsibility of saying so out loud."

Then came the actual necessity for intervention. The Liberals agreed that if a provisional government were established by the United States, the insurgents would lay down their arms and abide by the new form of government. In a dispatch to the President, which was sent by mail on September 28, Secretary Taft reviewed the entire situation showing the impossibility of the situation. He states without qualification that President Palma, after agreeing to mediation for the settlement of the troubles, withdrew from his position when the cruiser Denver was sent to Havana in response to his appeal to the government in Washington.

A tentative plan for mediation was prepared and presented to President Palma and his aid asked. The Cuban executive, however, declined to adhere to the plan and announced his intention to resign. Up to this time President Roosevelt ignored Palma's original suggestion for the establishment of the provisional government.

President Ordered Proclamation.

On the same day Secretary Taft telegraphed a form of proclamation for the establishment of the provisional government. Later Mr. Taft received in Havana the order of the President directing him to land forces and issue the proclamation.

When it became clear that the Cuban Congress would not elect a successor to Palma at its meeting on the evening of September 28, President Palma, through Secretary Taft, telegraphed the President at Oyster Bay that it was absolutely essential to his peace of mind that he deliver the national funds, amounting to $18,625,539, to a responsible person. He also pointed out the necessity of disbanding the militia, which was being maintained at an enormous daily cost. Secretary Taft surrounded the treasury with marines for the protection of the funds.

Fraud Order Appeals Bill Privileged.

A resolution was passed by the House of Representatives yesterday, on motion by Mr. Crumpacker, of Indiana, giving a privilege status to the bill allowing appeals from "fraud orders" issued by the Post-office Department.

Heretofore the courts have held that the action of the department officials was final. Under the resolution the bill may be taken up at any time.

MESSAGE ON PANAMA CANAL

CONTINUED FROM NINTH PAGE.

ing. There was a piano in the room, which I was informed was used for the music on these occasions. My meal was excellent, and two newspaper correspondents who had been on the isthmus several days informed me that it was precisely like the meals they had been getting elsewhere at other government hotels. One of the employes was a cousin of one of the Secret Service men who was with me, and he stated that the meals had always been good, but that after a time he grew tired of them because they seemed so much alike.

No Cause for Complaint About Food.

I came to the conclusion that, speaking generally, there was no warrant for complaint about the food. Doubtless it grows monotonous after awhile. Any man accustomed to handling large masses of men knows that some of them, even though otherwise very good men, are sure to grumble about something, and usually about their food. Schoolboys, college boys, and boarders in boarding houses make similar complaints; so do soldiers and sailors. On this very trip, on one of the war ships, a seaman came to complain to the second watch officer about the quality of the cocoa at the seamen's mess, saying that it was not sweet enough; it was pointed out to him that there was sugar on the table and he could always put it in, to which he responded that that was the cook's business and not his! I think that the complaint as to the food on the isthmus has but little more foundation than that of the sailor in question. Moreover, I was given to understand that one real cause of complaint was that at the government hotels no liquor is served, and some of the drinking men, therefore, refused to go to them. The number of men using the government hotels is steadily increasing.

Chinese and Other Labor.

Of the nineteen or twenty thousand day laborers employed on the canal, a few hundred are Spaniards. These do excellent work. Their foreman told me that they did twice as well as the West India laborers. They keep healthy and no difficulty is experienced with them in any way. Some Italian laborers are also employed in connection with the drilling. As might be expected, with labor as high priced as at present in the United States, it has not so far proved practicable to get any ordinary laborers from the United States. The American wage-workers on the isthmus are the highly paid skilled mechanics of the types mentioned previously. A steady effort is being made to secure Italians, and especially to procure more Spaniards, because of the very satisfactory results that have come from their employment; and their numbers will be increased as far as possible. It has not proved possible, however, to get them in anything like the numbers needed for the work, and from present appearances we shall in the main have to rely, for the ordinary unskilled work, partly upon colored laborers from the West Indies, partly upon Chinese labor. It certainly ought to be unnecessary to point out that the American workingman in the United States has no concern whatever in the question as to whether the rough work on the isthmus, which is performed by aliens in any event, is done by aliens from one country with a black skin or by aliens from another country with a yellow skin. Our business is to dig the canal as efficiently and as quickly as possible; provided always that nothing is done that is inhumane to any laborers, and nothing that interferes with the wages of or lowers the standard of living of our own workmen. Having in view this principle, I have arranged to try several thousand Chinese laborers. This is desirable both because we must try to find out what laborers are most efficient, and, furthermore, because we should not leave ourselves at the mercy of any one type of foreign labor. At present the great bulk of the unskilled labor on the isthmus is done by West India negroes, chiefly from Jamaica, Barbados, and the other English possessions. One of the governors of the lands in question has shown an unfriendly disposition to our work, and has thrown obstacles in the way of our getting the labor needed; and it is highly undesirable to give any outsiders the impression, however ill-founded, that they are indispensable and can dictate terms to us.

Negro Laborers and their Quarter.

The West India laborers are fairly, but only fairly, satisfactory. Some of the men do very well, indeed; the better class, who are to be found as foremen, as skilled mechanics, as policemen, are good men; and many of the ordinary day laborers are also good. But thousands of those who are brought over under contract (at our expense) go off into the jungle to live, or loaf around Colon, or work so badly after the first three or four days as to cause a serious diminution of the amount of labor performed on Friday and Saturday of each week. I questioned many of these Jamaica laborers as to the conditions of their work and what, if any, changes they wished. I received many complaints from them, but as regards most of these complaints they themselves contradicted one another. In all cases where the complaint was as to their treatment by any individual it proved, on examination, that this individual was himself a West India man of color, either a policeman, a storekeeper, or an assistant storekeeper. Doubtless there must be many complaints against Americans; but those to whom I spoke did not happen to make any such complaint to me. There was no complaint of the housing; I saw but one set of quarters for colored laborers, which I thought poor, and this was in an old French house. The barracks for unmarried men are roomy, well ventilated, and clean, with canvas bunks for each man, and a kind of false attic at the top, where the trunks and other belongings of the different men are kept. The clothes are hung on clotheslines, nothing being allowed to be kept on the floor. In each of these big rooms there were tables and lamps, and usually a few books or papers, and in almost every room there was a Bible, the books being the property of the laborers themselves. The cleanliness of the quarters is secured by daily inspection. The quarters for the married negro laborers were good. They were neatly kept, and in almost every case the men living in them, whose wives or daughters did the cooking for them, were far better satisfied and of a higher grade than the ordinary bachelor negroes. Not only were the quarters in which these negro laborers were living much superior to those in which I am informed they live at home, but they were much superior to the huts to be seen in the jungles of Panama itself, beside the railroad tracks, in which the lower class of native Panamans live, as well as the negro workmen when they leave the employ of the canal and go into the jungles. A single glance at the two sets of buildings is enough to show the great superiority in point of comfort, cleanliness, and healthfulness of the government houses as compared with the native houses.

Negroes Do Their Own Cooking.

The negroes generally do their own cooking, the bachelors cooking in sheds provided by the government, and using their own pots. In the different camps there was a wide variation in the character of these cooking sheds. In some, where the camps were completed, the kitchen or cooking sheds, as well as the bathrooms and water-closets, were all in excellent trim, while there were board sidewalks leading from building to building. In other camps the kitchens or cook sheds had not been floored, and the sidewalks had not been put down, while in one camp the bath houses were not yet up. In each case, however, every effort was being made to hurry on the construction, and I do not believe that the delays had been greater than were inevitable in such work. The laborers are accustomed to do their own cooking; but there was much complaint, especially among the bachelors, as to the quantity, and some as to the quality, of the food they got from the commissary department, especially as regards yams. On the other hand, the married men and their wives, and the more advanced among the bachelors, almost invariably expressed themselves as entirely satisfied with their treatment at the commissary stores; except that they stated that they generally could not get yams there, and had to purchase them outside. The chief complaint was that the prices were too high. It is unavoidable that the prices should be higher than in their own homes, and after careful investigation I came to the conclusion that the chief trouble lay in the fact that the yams, plantains, and the like are rather perishable food, and are very bulky compared to the amount of nourishment they contain, so that it is costly to import them in large quantities and difficult to keep them. Nevertheless, I felt that an effort should be made to secure them a more ample supply of their favorite food, and so directed; and I believe that ultimately the government must itself feed them. I am having this matter looked into.

The superintendent having immediate charge of one gang of men at the Colon reservoir stated that he endeavored to get them to substitute beans and other nourishing food for the stringy, watery yams, because the men keep their strength and health better on the more nourishing food. Inasmuch, however, as they are accustomed to yams it is difficult to get them to eat the more strengthening food, and some time elapses before they grow accustomed to it. At this reservoir there has been a curious experience. It is off in the jungle by itself at the end of a couple of miles of a little toy railroad. In order to get the laborers there, they were given free food (and, of course, free lodgings); and yet it proved difficult to keep them, because they wished to be where they could reach the dramshop and places of amusement.

I was struck by the superior comfort and respectability of the lives of the married men. It would, in my opinion, be a most admirable thing if a much larger number of the men had their wives, for with their advent all complaints about the food and cooking are almost sure to cease.

I had an interview with Mr. Mallet, the British consul, to find out if there was any just cause for complaint as to the treatment of the West India negroes. He informed me most emphatically that there was not, and authorized me to give his statement publicity. He said that not only was the condition of the laborers far better than had been the case under the old French company, but that year by year the condition was improving under our own regime. He stated that complaints were continually brought to him, and that he always investigated them; and that for the last six months he had failed to find a single complaint of a serious nature that contained any justification whatever.

One of the greatest needs at present is to provide amusements both for the white and the black. The Young Men's Christian Association is trying to do good work and should be in every way encouraged. But the government should do the main work. I have specifically called the attention of the commission to this matter, and something has been accomplished already. Anything done for the welfare of the men adds to their efficiency and money devoted to that purpose is therefore properly to be considered as spent in building the canal. It is imperatively necessary to provide ample recreation and amusement if the men are to be kept well and healthy. I call the special attention of Congress to this need.

This gathering, distributing, and caring for the great force of laborers is one of the giant features of the work. That friction will from time to time occur in connection therewith is inevitable. The astonishing thing is that the work has been performed so well and that the machinery runs so smoothly. From my own experience I am able to say that more care had been exercised in housing, feeding, and generally paying heed to the needs of the skilled mechanics and ordinary laborers in the work on this canal than is the case in the construction of new railroads or in any other similar private or public work in the United States proper; and it is the testimony of all people competent to speak that on no other similar work anywhere in the tropics—indeed, as far as I know, anywhere else—has there been such forethought and such success achieved in providing for the needs of the men who do the work.

I have now dealt with the hygienic conditions which make it possible to employ a great force of laborers, and with the task of gathering, housing, and feeding these laborers. There remains to consider the actual work which has to be done; the work because of which these laborers are gathered together—the work of constructing the canal. This is under the direct control of the chief engineer, Mr. Stevens, who has already shown admirable results, and whom we can safely trust to achieve similar results in the future.

Our people found on the isthmus a certain amount of old French material and equipment which could be used. Some of it, in addition, could be sold as scrap iron. Some could be used for furnishing the foundation for filling in. For much no possible use could be devised that would not cost more than it would bring in.

Work of Construction.

The work is now going on with a vigor and efficiency pleasant to witness. The three big problems of the canal are the La Boca dams, the Gatun dam, and the Culebra cut. The Culebra cut must be made, anyhow, but, of course, changes as to the dams, or at least as to the locks adjacent to the dams, may still occur. The La Boca dams offer no particular problem, the bottom material being so good that there is a practical certainty not merely as to what can be achieved, but as to the time of achievement. The Gatun dam offers the most serious problem which we have to solve; and yet, the ablest men on the isthmus believe that this problem is certain of solution along the lines proposed; although, of course, it necessitates great toil energy, and intelligence, and although equally, of course, there will be some little risk in connection with the work. If the huge earth dam now contemplated is thrown across from one foothill to the other we will have what is practically a low, broad, mountain ridge behind which will rise the inland lake. This artificial mountain will probably show less seepage, that is, will have greater restraining capacity than the average natural mountain range. The exact locality of the locks at this dam—as at the other dams—is now being determined. In April next Secretary Taft, with three of the ablest engineers of the country—Messrs. Noble, Stearns, and Ripley—will visit the isthmus, and the three engineers will make the final and conclusive examinations as to the exact site for each lock. Meanwhile the work is going ahead without a break.

The Culebra cut does not offer such great risks; that is, the damage liable to occur from occasional land slips will not represent what may be called major disasters. The work will merely call for intelligence, perseverance, and executive capacity. It is, however, the work upon which most labor will have to be spent. The dams will be composed of the earth taken out of the cut and very possibly the building of the locks and dams will taken even longer than the cutting in Culebra itself.

In Culebra Cut.

The main work is now being done in the Culebra cut. It was striking and impressive to see the huge steam shovels in full play, the dumping trains carrying away the rock and earth they dislodged. The implements of French excavating machinery, which often stand a little way from the line of work, though of excellent construction, look like the veriest toys when compared with these new steam shovels, just as the French dumping cars seem like toy cars when compared with the long trains of huge cars, dumped by steam plows, which are now in use. This represents the enormous advance that has been made in machinery during the past quarter of a century. No doubt a quarter of a century hence this new machinery, of which we are now so proud, will similarly seem out of date, but it is certainly serving its purpose well now. The old French cars had to be entirely discarded. We still have in use a few of the more modern, but not most modern cars, which hold but twelve yards of earth. They can be employed on certain lines with sharp curves. But the recent cars hold from twenty-five to thirty yards apiece, and instead of the old clumsy methods of unloading them, a steam plow is drawn from end to end of the whole vestibuled train, thus immensely economizing labor. In the rainy season the steam shovels can do but little in dirt, but they work steadily in rock, and in the harder ground. There were some twenty-five at work during the time I was on the isthmus, and their tremendous power and efficiency were most impressive.

New Records for Excavation.

As soon as the type of canal was decided this work began in good earnest. The rainy season will shortly be over and then there will be an immense increase in the amount taken out; but even during the last three months, in the rainy season, steady progress is shown by the figures: In August, 242,000 cubic yards; in September, 291,000 cubic yards, and in October, 325,000 cubic yards. In October new records were established for the output of individual shovels as well as for the tonnage haul of individual locomotives. I hope to see the growth of a healthy spirit of emulation between the different shovel and locomotive crews, just such a spirit as has grown on our battle ships between the different gun crews in matters of marksmanship. Passing through the cut the amount of new work can be seen at a glance. In one place the entire side of a hill had been taken out recently by twenty-seven tons of dynamite, which were exploded at one blast. At another place I was given a Presidential salute of twenty-one charges of dynamite. On the top notch of the Culebra cut the prism is now as wide as it will be; all told, the canal bed at this point has now been sunk about 290 feet below what it originally was. It will have to be sunk about 130 feet farther. Throughout the cut the drilling, blasting, shoveling, and hauling are going on with constantly increasing energy, the huge shovels being pressed up, as if they were mountain howitzers, into the most unlikely looking places, where they eat their way into the hillsides.

Railway Improvements.

The most advanced methods not only in construction, but in railroad management, have been applied in the zone, with corresponding economies in time and cost. This has been shown in the handling of the tonnage from ships into cars, and from cars into ships on the Panama Railroad, where, thanks largely to the efficiency of General Manager Bierd, the saving in time and cost has been noteworthy. My examination tended to show that some of the departments had (doubtless necessarily) become overdeveloped, and could now be reduced or subordinated without impairment of efficiency and with a saving of cost. The chairman of the commission, Mr. Shonts, has all matters of this kind constantly in view, and is now reorganizing the government of the zone, so as to make the form of administration both more flexible and less expensive, subordinating everything to direct efficiency with a view to the work of the Canal Commission. From time to time changes of this kind will undoubtedly have to be made, for it must be remembered that in this giant work of construction it is continually necessary to develop departments or bureaus, which are vital for the time being, but which soon become useless; just as it will be continually necessary to put up buildings, and even to erect towns, which in ten years will once more give place to jungle, or will then be at the bottom of the great lakes at the ends of the canal.

Critics and Doubting Thomases.

It is not only natural, but inevitable, that a work as gigantic as this which has been undertaken on the isthmus should arouse every species of hostility and criticism. The conditions are so new and so trying, and the work so vast, that it would be absolutely out of the question that mistakes should not be made. Checks will occur. Unforeseen difficulties will arise. From time to time semingly well-settled plans will have to be changed. At present 25,000 men are engaged on the task. After a while the number will be doubled. In such a multitude it is inevitable that there should be here and there a scoundrel. Very many of the poorer class of laborers lack the mental development to protect themselves against either the rascality of others or their own folly, and it is not possible for human wisdom to devise a plan by which they can invariably be protected. In a place which has been for ages a by-word for unhealthfulness, and with so large a congregation of strangers suddenly put down and set to hard work, there will now and then be outbreaks of disease. There will now and then be shortcomings in administration; there will be unlooked-for accidents to delay the excavation of the cut or the building of the dams and locks. Each such incident will be entirely natural, and, even though serious, no one of them will mean more than a little extra delay or trouble. Yet each, when discovered by sensation mongers and retailed to timid folk of little faith, will serve as an excuse for the belief that the whole work is being badly managed. Experiments will continually be tried in housing, in hygiene, in street repairing, in dredging, and in digging earth and rock. Now and then an experiment will be a failure; and among those who hear of it, a certain proportion of doubting Thomases will at once believe that the whole work is a failure. Doubtless here and there some minor rascality will be uncovered; but as to this, I have to say that after the most painstaking inquiry I have been unable to find a single reputable person who had so much as heard of any serious accusations affecting the honesty of the commission or of any responsible officer under it. I append a letter dealing with the most serious charge, that of the ownership of lots in Colon; the charge was not advanced by a reputable man, and is utterly baseless. It is not too much to say that the whole atmosphere of the commission breathes honesty as it breathes efficiency and energy. Above all, the work has been kept absolutely clear of politics. I have never heard even a suggestion of spoils politics in connection with it.

I have investigated every complaint brought to me for which there seemed to be any shadow of foundation. In two or three cases, all of which I have indicated in the course of this message, I came to the conclusion that there was foundation for the complaint, and that the methods of the commission in the respect complained of could be bettered. In the other instances the complaints proved absolutely baseless, save in two or three instances where they referred to mistakes which the commission had already itself found out and corrected.

Slanderers and Libelers.

So much for honest criticism. There remains an immense amount of as reckless slander as has ever been published. Where the slanderers are of foreign origin I have no concern with them. Where they are Americans, I feel for them the heartiest contempt and indignation; because, in a spirit of wanton dishonesty and malice, they are trying to interfere with, and hamper the execution of, the greatest work of the kind ever attempted, and are seeking to bring to naught the efforts of their countrymen to put to the credit of America one of the giant feats of the ages. The outrageous accusations of these slanderers constitute a gross libel upon a body of public servants who, for trained intelligence, expert ability, high character, and devotion to duty, have never been excelled anywhere. There is not a man among those directing the work on the isthmus who has obtained his position on any other basis than merit alone, and not one who has used his position in any way for his own personal or pecuniary advantage.

Plan to Build by Contract.

After most careful consideration we have decided to let out most of the work by contract, if we can come to satisfactory terms with the contractors. The whole work is of a kind suited to the peculiar genius of our people; and our people have developed the type of contractor best fitted to grapple with it. It is of course much better to do the work in large part by contract than to do it all by the government, provided it is possible on the one hand to secure to the contractor a sufficient remuneration to make it worth while for responsible contractors of the best kind to undertake the work; and provided on the other hand it can be done on terms which will not give an excessive profit to the contractor at the expense of the government. After much consideration the plan already promulgated by the Secretary of War was adopted. This plan in its essential features was drafted, after careful and thorough study and consideration, by the chief engineer, Mr. Stevens, who, while in the employment of Mr. Hill, the president of the Great Northern Railroad, had personal experience of this very type of contract. Mr. Stevens then submitted the plan to the chairman of the commission, Mr. Shonts, who went carefully over it with Mr. Rogers, the legal adviser of the commission, to see that all legal difficulties were met. He then submitted copies of the plan to both Secretary Taft and myself. Secretary Taft submitted it to some of the best counsel at the New York bar, and afterward I went over it very carefully with Mr. Taft and Mr. Shonts, and we laid the plan in its general features before Mr. Root. My conclusion is that it combines the maximum of advantage with the minimum of disadvantage. Under it a premium will be put upon the speedy and economical construction of the canal, and a penalty imposed on delay and waste. The plan as promulgated is tentative; doubtless it will have to be changed in some respects before we can come to a satisfactory agreement with responsible contractors—perhaps even after the bids have been received; and of course, it is possible that we cannot come to an agreement, in which case the government will do the work itself. Meanwhile the work on the isthmus is progressing steadily and without any let-up.

A Single Commissioner Desired.

A seven-headed commission is of course a clumsy executive instrument. We should have but one commissioner, with such heads of departments and other officers under him as we may find necessary. We should be expressly permitted to employ the best engineers in the country as consulting engineers.

I accompany this paper with a map showing substantially what the canal will be like when it is finished. When the Culebra cut has been made and the dams built (if they are built as at present proposed) there will then be at both the Pacific and Atlantic ends of the canal, two great fresh-water lakes, connected by a broad channel running at the bottom of a ravine, across the backbone of the Western Hemisphere. Those best informed believe that the work will be completed in about eight years; but it is never safe to prophesy about such a work as this, especially in the tropics.

I am informed that representatives of the commercial clubs of four cities—Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis—the membership of which includes most of the leading business men of those cities, expect to visit the isthmus for the purpose of examining the work of construction of the canal. I am glad to hear it, and I shall direct that every facility be given them to see all that is to be seen in the work which the government is doing. Such interest as a visit like this would indicate will have a good effect upon the men who are doing the work, on one hand, while on the other hand it will offer as witnesses of the exact conditions men whose experience as business men and whose impartiality will make the result of their observations of value to the country as a whole.

Confident of Ultimate Success.

Of the success of the enterprise I am as well convinced as one can be of any enterprise that is human. It is a stupendous work upon which our fellow-countrymen are engaged down there on the isthmus, and while we should hold them to a strict accountability for the way in which they perform it, we should yet recognize with frank generosity the epic nature of the task on which they are engaged and its world-wide importance. They are doing something which will redound immeasurably to the credit of America, which will benefit all the world, and which will last for ages to come. Under Mr. Shonts and Mr. Stevens and Dr. Gorgas, this work has started with every omen of good fortune. They and their worthy associates, from the highest to the lowest, are entitled to the same credit that we would give to the picked men of a victorious army; for this conquest of peace will, in its great and far-reaching effect, stand as among the very greatest conquests, whether of peace or of war, which have ever been won by any of the people of mankind. A badge is to be given to every American citizen who for a specified time has taken part in this work; for participation in it will hereafter be held to reflect honor upon the man participating just as it reflects honor upon a soldier to have belonged to a mighty army in a great war for righteousness. Our fellow-countrymen on the isthmus are working for our interest and for the national renown in the same spirit and with the same efficiency that the men of the army and navy work in time of war. It behooves us in our turn to do all we can to hold up their hands and to aid them in every way to bring their great work to a triumphant conclusion.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

The White House, Dec. 17, 1906.

FAVORS COAL LAND LEASES.

Commissioner Clark Supports Recommendation Against Sales.

Interstate Commerce Commissioner Clark was before the House Committee on Public Lands yesterday and made a statement in support of the recommendation in the President's message that coal lands upon the public domain should be leased instead of sold.

He ascribed the high price of fuel in Utah and Colorado to the fact that the coal lands in those States had passed absolutely into the hands of private owners.

Safeguards for Traveling Public.

Representative Hardwick, of Georgia, yesterday introduced a bill requiring the installation of the block system on all railroads and the licensing of all railroad telegraphers as a further safeguard to the traveling public.

ASKS LAND REFORMS

President in Message to Congress Scores Laws.

MANY ARE TOO OPEN TO FRAUD

Desert Timber and Stone Acts Particularly Criticised—Would Have Treasury Advance $3,000,000 to Develop National Forests—Favors Leasing Coal and Timber Tracts.

The message of President Roosevelt to Congress urging reforms in the land laws of the country deals with a variety of subjects in the terse, characteristic style with which the President goes to a subject that requires prizing up at the roots.

"The timber and stone act," is the way the message opens, "has demonstrated conclusively that its effect is to turn over the public timber lands to great corporations. It has done enormous harm, it is no longer needed, and it should be repealed."

Other salient features are as follows:

Condemns Desert Land Act.

"The desert land act results so frequently in fraud and so comparatively seldom in making homes on the land that it demands radical amendment. That provision which permits assignment before patent should be repealed, and the entryman should be required to live for not less than two years at home on the land before patent issues. Otherwise, the desert land law will continue to assist speculators and other large holders to get control of land and water on the public domain by indefensible means.

"The commutation clause of the homestead act serves, in a majority of cases, to defeat the purpose of the homestead act itself, which is to facilitate settlement and create homes. Actual—not constructive—living at home on the land for three years should be required before commutation, unless it should appear wiser to repeal the commutation clause altogether.

Land Frauds Give Concern.

"I am gravely concerned at the extremely unsatisfactory condition of the public land laws and at the prevalence of fraud under their present provisions. For much of this fraud the present laws are chiefly responsible. There is but one way by which the fraudulent acquisition of these lands can be definitely stopped, and therefore I have directed the Secretary of the Interior to allow no patent to be issued to public land under any law until by an examination on the ground actual compliance with that law has been found to exist. For this purpose an increase of special agents in the General Land Office is urgently required.

"The present coal law, limiting the individual entry to 160 acres puts a premium on fraud by making it impossible to develop certain types of coal fields and yet comply with the law. My own belief is that there should be provision for leasing coal, oil, and gas rights under proper restrictions.

Revision of Right of Way Laws.

"Many of the existing laws affecting rights of way and privileges on public lands and reservations are illogical and unfair. I urge the revision and re-enactment of those laws in one comprehensive act, providing that the regulations and the charge now in force in many cases may be extended to all, to the end that unregulated and monopolistic control of great natural resources may not be acquired or misused for private ends.

"The boundaries of the national forest reserves unavoidably included certain valuable timber lands not owned by the government. For more than two years negotiations with the land grant railroads have been in progress, looking toward an arrangement by which the forest on railroad lands within national forest reserves may be preserved by the removal of the present crop of timber under rules prescribed by the Forest Service, and its perpetuation may be asured by the transfer of the land to the government without cost.

"It is possible that legislation will be required to authorize this or a similar arrangement with the railroads and other owners. If so, I recommend that it be enacted.

Money Needed to Develop Forests.

"The money value of the national forests now reserved for the use and benefit of the people exceeds considerably the sum of one thousand millions of dollars. The stumpage value of the standing timber approaches seven hundred million dollars, and, together with the range and timber lands, the water for irrigation and power, and the subsidiary values, reaches an amount equal to that of the national property now under the immediate control of the army and navy together. But this vast domain is withheld from serving the nation as freely and fully as it might by the lack of capital to develop it.

"I recommend that the Secretary of the Treasury be authorized to advance to the Forest Service, upon the security of the standing timber, an amount, say, $3,000,000, sufficient to provide a reasonable working capital for the national forests, to bear interest, and to be repaid in annual installments in ten years."

Should Purchase Indian Lands.

The President recommends the transfer of the national parks now under the charge of the Secretary of the Interior to the Secretary of Agriculture.

"Within or adjoining national forests," says the message, "are considerable areas of Indian lands of more value under forest than for any other purpose. It would aid greatly in putting these lands to their best use if the power to create national forests by proclamation were extended to cover them. The Indians should be paid the full value of any land thus taken for public purposes, from the proceeds of the lands themselves.

Changes Urged in Fence Laws.

"I recommend that a bill be enacted which will provide for government control of the public range through the Department of Agriculture, which alone is equipped for that work. Such a bill should insure to each locality rules for grazing specially adapted to its needs and should authorize the collection of a reasonable grazing fee.

"Much of the public land can only be used to advantage for grazing when fenced. Reasonable fencing, which promotes the use of the range, and yet interferes neither with the settlement nor with other range rights, would be thoroughly desirable, if it were legal. Yet the law forbids it, and the law must and will be enforced; I will see to it that the illegal fences are removed, unless Congress, at the present session, takes steps to legalize proper fencing by government control of the range."

Title to Mineral Lands.

Senator Hansbrough has introduced a bill reserving to the government the title to all coal, lignite, petroleum, and natural gas deposits within the public domain, but providing for the opening of the public lands containing such deposits to settlement and entry under the public land laws.