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THE PANAMA CANAL LAW.

With the choice between a veto and approval put squarely before him, President Taft has signed the Panama Canal Bill, shielding himself behind the excuse that "it is absolutely necessary to have the bill passed at this session." It is true he attempts to meet the international objections, which have been raised, by a memorandum attached to the bill, but his defence in no way saves the national reputation. "It might have been written," as the London Mail aptly expresses it, "by a pettifogging solicitor rather than by the chief of a great Republic."

From an international standpoint, the objection taken is against the discrimination in favor of United States coastwise shipping, which is allowed passage through the Canal free of tolls. This feature is a direct violation of the Hay-Pauncefote treaty with Great Britain under which the Canal was constructed. It was only by obtaining the consent of Great Britain to this treaty that the previous agreement which prevented the building of the Transatlantic Canal as a United States public work was abrogated. A provision in Article III of the Hay-Pauncefote treaty distinctly stipulates that there shall be no discrimination against any nation in respect of the conditions or charges of traffic or otherwise. If Great Britain carries the matter before the Hague Tribunal the position of the United States would be untenable. To avoid this contingency the supporters of the bill contend that this disputed point is a "domestic question," and not subject to international adjudication—a defence too palpably weak to be worth consideration.

The obvious resort of other nations will be sharp measures of retaliation. Indications to that end have been very general. A notable contribution on this point comes from Germany. Count Reventlow, an authority on international and naval law, is quoted as follows:

The Hay-Pauncefote treaty was signed by only two Powers, but economically it affects the shipping interests of all nations. Great Britain may therefore be regarded as in a certain sense holding the mandate from all these nations.

In the tolls question the United States is not seeking to protect any justifiable interests or national safety but simply and solely to satisfy its greed by grasping an advantage over other Maritime Powers. On this point there is a solidarity of interests among these nations. It is for them to consider whether they shall not take reprisals which will convince the United States that its policy of unequal treatment of the Maritime interests is bad business.

For Germany, particularly, this matter affords new and striking proof of the fact that especially in its dealings with the United States it must maintain, with as sharp measures as may be necessary, Bismarck's principle of never seeking to get political advantages by conceding economic favors. It is not only desirable, but necessary, that the German Government leave the United States in no doubt as to its firmness of purpose to enforce these principles in all cases.

There are several other features of the bill to which strong objection is taken in the United States. One is a provision that no steamships owned by a United States railroad shall enter the Canal, while ships owned by railroads of other nations may go through on payment of tolls. Another provision closes the Canal to ships owned by corporations violating the Sherman anti-trust law. An answer to the question who is to decide when a ship laden with merchandise applies for entrance to the Canal whether it is, or is not, owned by a corporation, which has or has not violated the Sherman anti-trust law, is left to the imagination.

The New York Sun in a brief but scathing summary thus defines the situation: "President Taft's sincere and disinterested friends will regret both his approval of the Panama Canal Bill and the memorandum in which he defends that act. The opportunity to blunder existed. The President embraced it. The Sun's opinion of this mishap measure has been adequately set forth. It is unnecessary to repeat of the law what was said of the bill. What foreign and domestic complications, political and economic, the enactment will precipitate the incidents that have accompanied its passage sufficiently indicate. The United States will have ample cause to regret this exploit of its Legislature and its Executive."

TO INVESTIGATE STEAM TRAWLING.

Reference has been made in these columns to the probability that the United States would have an official investigation of otter trawling, an industry which is viewed with no friendly eye by Canadian fishermen. It is satisfactory to note that during the last week Congress has in session a bill passed the House of Representatives authorizing the appropriation of \$5,000 by the United States Fish Commission to examine the question of permanent injuries to the fisheries by the otter trawl gear. An amendment to the same purpose had already been reported by the Senate Committee on Fisheries, so much definite and valuable information on this question is now assured.

Opposition to the steam trawling industry is growing in unexpected quarters. Recent action by the Japanese Government is a case in point. Four or five years ago the Government were doing everything in their power to stimulate the buying, building and operating of steam trawlers, even to inducing British skippers to come to Japan. It is now reported that it has been found necessary to restrict the fishing of the trawlers to certain waters, and that the Japanese are a prey to doubts whether this method of treating the fishing grounds is wisdom in the long run at all. The Dominion Government are opposed to steam trawling on the ground that the methods employed are wasteful and inflict great injury on the fishing industry. Restrictions have been introduced, but it has been found impossible to prohibit operations outside the three-mile limit, as other nations which have large fleets of trawlers would not co-operate.

Great Britain, for example, carries on an extensive industry with steam trawlers. Only a few days ago the Canada sailed from Grimsby, England, for the British Columbian fisheries, "as the pioneer craft of a fleet of seventy steam trawlers which is ultimately to operate in the Pacific." Hitherto, fishing in the Pacific has been largely in the hands of the Japanese, who, enjoying a Government subsidy, have made great progress during the past decade, progress which has lately been recognized as of a dubious sort.

Discussing the scope of the impending investigation

by the United States Fish Commission, the Boston Transcript points out that it will probably be no very brief affair, for the field is practically as wide as the northern hemisphere fisheries, Atlantic and Pacific, from Equator to drift ice. "If it can be proved," says the Transcript, "that the otter trawl does not waste and kill the young fish, and does not impair the fishing grounds by destroying the shell-fish bait on the bottom, then the fisheries must and will conform as to a new method of plying their industry. But if it is as destructive of the very elements which make the fisheries annually fruitful, as by report and evidence it appears to be, then it were the grossest folly to allow private greed to exploit and ruin what has been for two centuries, and should remain, a rich and unfailing source of food supply, and a cheap and nutritious food—the meat of the poor. Everything now rests with the investigation. And the fishermen are well satisfied to abide the issue."

MR. LLOYD GEORGE.

Mr. David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, occupies a peculiar position in British politics, and there is much speculation in the Old Country as to his future career. He has a strong liking for new policies and on more than one occasion during the last session, much to the satisfaction of the Opposition, Mr. Asquith either repudiated or threw cold water on these schemes. Shortly before the House of Commons adjourned, the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave his blessing to a new land policy proposed by two private members, and associated himself with the inquiry which those gentlemen were undertaking. On interrogation the Prime Minister coldly dismissed this action as unofficial.

Speaking during the London dock strike, Mr. Lloyd George announced that the Government intended to propose legislation dealing with industrial disputes. He made use of the following spirited phrases: "There must necessarily be legislation, the sanction of some legislation which can be enforced. . . . It will be necessary to deal with the whole problem in the immediate future." This was naturally taken to mean that a bill would be introduced forthwith, but Mr. Asquith coldly announced that nothing could be done before next session. In other words, Mr. Lloyd George proposes, and the Prime Minister disposes.

There have been reports circulated to the effect that Mr. Lloyd George was finding his position in the Cabinet intolerable, and that he might seize an appropriate opportunity to relinquish his portfolio. Not much credence is given to these rumors. Disputes may occur but those who know Mr. Lloyd George are said to be confident that he will stay in the Cabinet and "fight it out."

There are, however, indications in the Old Country that the trend of Ministerial opinion is running against him. The new land policy finds its critics in every rank of the Liberal party. On top of it all Mr. Churchill emerges with a new naval policy, which supporters of the Government declare is winning appreciation in the constituencies. As matters stand, Mr. Lloyd George is discredited by the Nationalist and Labor parties; he is suspected by the moderate Liberals; and he is privately criticized by most Ministerialists because of his arrogant and hopeless attitude towards the doctors regarding the Insurance Act. In spite of all this, Mr. Lloyd George is not likely to retire. He does not belong to the school of hyper-sensitive politicians.

OWNERSHIP OF RAILWAYS.

Statistics recently compiled show that of the 628,611 miles of railways in the world, 450,659 miles, or 70.5 per cent., are owned by private companies and 187,952 miles, or 29.5 per cent., are owned by governments. In some countries, as in Holland and Austria, certain lines are owned by the government but operated by companies, so that the percentage of those operated by the government is less than the ownership figures would indicate.

In Great Britain and in the United States there are yet no State lines; in Germany there are 24,548 miles of State lines and 3,364 miles of private lines; in France 25,120 miles are owned by companies and 5,499 miles by the Government. Spain has no State lines, neither have China, Greece, Turkey in Europe, Central America and a number of South American States. Canada has 23,356 miles of private and 1,715 miles of Government lines. Australasia has 1,234 miles of private and 17,995 miles of State lines. Mexico has no State lines normally, since private interests built and operate the railways, but the State has acquired a controlling interest in the stock of the companies.

These figures, as The Railway Age Gazette says, show that private ownership is still overwhelmingly the railway policy of the world. Public ownership of railways is not nearly so loudly advocated now as ten years ago.

Current Comment

Drop Politics.
(Toronto Daily News.)

That small section of the Liberal press which is trying to raise party feeling over the issue will only hurt itself and its party. The News has abundant evidence that all over the Dominion parties are ready to join their conservative fellow-citizens in supporting the Government's proposal to add something worth while and that quickly to the Empire's defences at sea. Mr. Borden has been let into the secrets of the British Admiralty. Amongst Canadians he and his colleagues alone know how serious the danger of attack is, and how best we can assist in maintaining perhaps peace, but at any rate the Empire's and our own safety. Surely in this instance there are imperative and incontrovertible reasons why all Canada should get together behind the Prime Minister for the time being and his naval policy.

An Estimate of Germany.
(New York Sun.)

It is announced that the Germans have determined to get to work at once to prepare for the next Olympic games. They are going to send an expert over to investigate our training methods and they are going to get a Government subsidy. These are excellent ideas. But we suspect that the adoption of American training methods may present some formidable difficulties. The allowance of beer for an American athlete is alarmingly small, and that of Rhine wine equally so. But when a German really makes up his mind to a thing, there you are. Only it takes him so long to do it. That is why the preparations are beginning right now.

Athletic Christianity.
(Kansas City Journal.)

The Rev. Mr. Gregg of Oakley leads a strenuous life. Last week he had three appointments to 125 miles of the Prairie Dog, and the creek was so high that all of the bridges were taken out. The reverend gentleman is a good swimmer and the mere matter of a flood didn't bother him at all. He strapped his clothes on his back and swam across, then dressed and went ahead about his clerical duties.

Effect of Bad Faith.
(Calgary Herald.)

The glaring bad faith of the United States in the Panama Canal affair has killed reciprocity for ever. Canadians will be more than ever set against basing their business ventures on any agreement with a country that will break a treaty without notice when it sees any material advantage in so doing.

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ONE GREAT RESULT OF MR. BORDEN'S VISIT TO BRITAIN

Dominion's Right to Share in
Council of Empire if They
Contribute to Defence—Accepted by Statesmen.

Quebec, Aug. 27.—In the opinion of Hon. C. J. Doherty, Minister of Justice, who has just returned from England the visit of Premier Borden to that country has had one result that is of paramount importance to the citizens of Canada and also to those of the other self-governing Dominions of the Empire.

This is the unqualified admission by leading statesmen of both parties in the United Kingdom of the principle that if the Dominions are to share in Imperial defence, they must likewise be admitted to participate in the control of Imperial foreign policy and must have a voice in the councils of the Empire.

Hon. Mr. Doherty admitted that the problem of such representation was likely to be complicated in the extreme, and would no doubt take long and careful study to solve. But it was by no means impossible of solution. "Of one thing you may rest assured," he said, "Mr. Borden will do nothing to lower Canadian prestige or to sacrifice Canadian autonomy."

With regard to the burning question of the navy, Mr. Doherty would say but little as he considered that this should be left to the Canadian Premier himself who leaves England on the 20th of this month. The Canadian ministers had been through a most strenuous trip and had been received everywhere with an unbounded and almost overwhelming hospitality.

Much Naval Information Gleaned.

They had gone over to consult with the Admiralty and had gained much of the information that would be considered by the Canadian government as a whole in the very near future. The conclusions reached and the policy adopted after such consideration would doubtless be made known without unnecessary delay.

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