

Democracy and Treaties

By HOMER LEA

An opportune chapter from a remarkable book, "The Valour of Ignorance," written some years ago, and published in New York in 1909. Its author is an officer in the United States army, and the volume is dedicated to the Hon. Elihu Root. The object was to prove that the United States would ultimately have to fight for her existence. This particular chapter is interesting, in view of the Panama Canal dispute.

IN consideration of the relationship that popular control of government bears to the causes of war, the character of the populace is more or less immaterial; the essential point to be considered is the degree of control the populace has over the central government. As the populace becomes more absolute in the control of governmental affairs, the chances of war increase accordingly; and to the degree that it is racially heterogeneous the probabilities of international strife are augmented. . . .

The success of negotiations between nations, as among individuals, is in proportion to the number of negotiators, interests and prejudices involved. When the government of a country is the government of the masses, the number of negotiators is increased to the whole nation, and involves not only their mediocrity, but unending self-interests and prejudices. It was this perversion of government that confirmed John Hay in the belief that this Republic would not again be able to make an important treaty.

By treaties international affairs are governed, and inability to make such stipulations is only another way of stating the impossibility of observing treaties already made. Of the failure on the part of the United States to observe the rights and privileges due other nations we have had many and melancholy instances.

THE mind of a nation in dispute is its mob-mind, credulous and savage. It is primitive, hence brutal. It is feminine, hence without reason. It is instinctive to the degree of an animal, and is cognizant only of its own impulses and desires. It is full of hates and frivolities.

While the mind of an individual is more or less constructive, the mob-mind is intelligent only in devastation. Reason roams sullenly in the dim labyrinths of its brain: a Minotaur to whom the world ever and endlessly yields up its tribute; seven Youths that are Empires; seven Maidens that are Progress. Mob-minds can be active only in a destructive sense. As the sum total of the collective efforts of man under individual direction constitutes the upbuilding of a nation, so the sum total of their collective acts uncontrolled is marked by ruin. Whenever the mob-mind rules, mankind shudders. Its voice is the evil banshee of nations.

TO the divine rights of majorities should be added the will of constituents—a condition that aborts nationalism and benumbs where it would rule. In Republics every office down to the pettiest of magistrates is supposedly subject to the approval of the populace. But in actuality politicians are subservient to it only in its wrath, hence they abet a popular demand for war, instead of opposing it. The will of constituents has resulted in a continual struggle to localize the efforts of government by the paramount interest of sectional legislation. Whatever may be the foreign policy of the national

government, that policy must be sacrificed if it interferes with their self-interests.

As the government of a nation passes under popular control, its energies and progress are more and more consumed in the contention of internal affairs, while the nation as a whole drifts along among scyllas and shoals innumerable. It is in this drifting that the tempests of war are encountered.

A nation to withstand the tides and storms of erosive time must progress internationally; its internal affairs made subordinate to its foreign policy, and controlled to conform with its needs and vicissitudes. In Republics, however, the reverse of these conditions exists, so that the nation as a derelict drifts along toward the Great Port whither others have also drifted, a port without shores or tempests.

WHEN the inhabitants of one nation are prejudiced against the people and institutions of others, they designate this prejudice patriotism; but when such foreign antipathy is not brought in active use this kind of patriotism hibernates, and the nation gives itself over to sectional prejudices, which are strong or weak in proportion to the strength or weakness of the central government. When the national government becomes subordinate to delegates representing the will of constituencies, then the nation becomes more or less coherent. The will of constituencies, or the mob-minds of them, has three salient characteristics: it is selfish, with a selfishness that never rises above the flattest mediocrity; improvident, with an improvidence of children; inflammable as timber, its conflagrations are war; its embers rebellions; while over the cinders, over the ash and slag of its going out, other nations pass or flare up.

As the government of a nation passes under the control of the populace, it passes to a certain degree, beyond the pale of peaceful association with other nations. It enters into a condition of arrogant unrest, an isolation, insolent and impatient as to the rights of others. Out of these demeanors come wars.

PEACEFUL international relationship not only demands the highest intelligence and justice on the part of arbitrators, but a complete subjection by the people to their decision. When, however, governments are under popular control, this condition is reversed; the negotiators become only the representatives of the real arbitrators, the populace; mediocre is intelligence, violent and quick in temper, submissive to none but themselves. Should the negotiator acting for them yield in any degree their most extreme demands, he would at once be cast aside.

It was this phase of popular control that led the late Secretary of State to make the sombre prophecy that never again could this Republic, under its present form of government conclude an import-

ant treaty. In other words, this nation's future is to be rather of war than of peace. Since it has reached that point wherein it is impossible for it to make treaties with other powers, it has fallen to that degree of incoherence that it will violate treaties already in force. The reply to such violation is battle.

The difficulty of making treaties, or respecting those already made, increases with the increase of popular control over the conduct of national government.

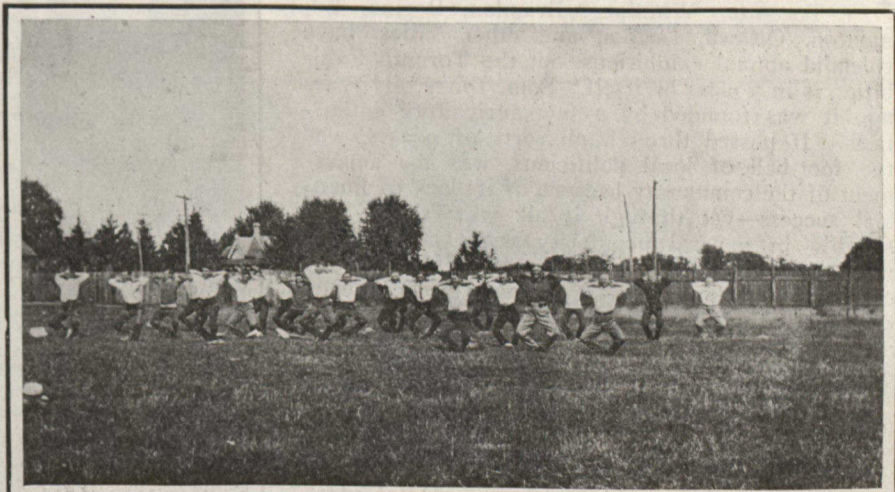
In this Republic almost every phase of international relationship in which are concerned the rights and privileges of foreign nations, is indifferently regarded or directly violated with legislative acts, by powerful political sections or classes whenever it is to their interests or appeals to their passions.

THE political history of the United States betrays the difficulties not only of inaugurating, but continuing, just and friendly relations with foreign nations; while its diplomatic records lay bare the inability of the national government to constrain sectional or class legislation, though contrary to the stipulations of existing treaties. This arbitrary indifference to international obligations, and their increasing violation by sections and classes, cannot be attributed to ignorance. The unlettered savage, hidden away amid the wild thickets of the world, has been known to keep his unrecorded obligations inviolate from generation to generation. There were no laws to bind him but the law of the torrent before his wigwam, the law of the winds overhead, the law of the illimitable forests about him; yet out of this he evolved the very spirit of human obligation that this great Republic is coming to know not of. Its disregard for such pacts is not only increasing, but its violations are, in many instances, unworthy of the nation's potential greatness.

The violation of treaties, and the increasing incapacity to maintain friendly relationship with foreign countries have their origin in the popular control of the national government; (1) by the political power of sections and classes; (2) by the subordination of legislators to the will of these sections and classes, or to such corporate interests as may control their election. As foreign nations are without votes or lobbyists, their demands are of little or no importance to the average politician. This subservience of politicians to the will of their constituencies makes possible anti-foreign legislation. Yet, on the other hand, this subservience is a natural but unreasonable outgrowth of governmental control by the populace, and as it is augmented the subservience of politicians will increase, and will be followed by a concomitant increase in legislative acts originating in prejudice and arrogance or utter contempt for the rights of other nationalities.

In a government where the spoils of office belong to the political victor, the consular service has been relegated to rewarding the cheaper class of politicians for their past services. This policy of placing transitory ignorance in positions where wide range of knowledge and long training is necessary will become more apparent as the world grows smaller, and the Republic's relationship to foreign countries becomes more intimate and complex. As the internal growth of all nations forces them to external expansion, and their national needs and ambitions come in vital conflict with those of the United States, the dangers of international war—as precipitated by the ignorance of the politician diplomat—become apparent.

A Summer Course in Military Science for Teachers



Last week The Canadian Courier published an article describing the military training of school teachers at a Manitoba camp. This week we add two pictures of a group of teachers taking similar instruction at the Wolseley Barracks, London. They followed the pedagogical maxim of "Learn to do by doing."