

# The Public

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## EDITORIAL

### The Cuban Revolution.

It is interesting to observe the attitude of a certain class of Americans toward the disturbances in Cuba. They point to them as convincing evidence of the incapacity of Cubans for self-government. Such persons—those who are sincere, not those who are eager for any excuse for grabbing Cuba—only prove their ignorance not only of the history of democratic government in the world at large, but also of the history of its establishment in their own country. These disturbances are usual and natural phenomena in

any country which has recently been governed arbitrarily. That our own country was no exception to the rule is proved by Shay's rebellion and the whiskey war.

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### Labor and Peace.

The Central Labor Union of Boston deserves the highest possible commendation for its resolutions of the 19th protesting against President Roosevelt's plans for celebrating Labor Day with a naval demonstration. This labor union "enters its emphatic protest," read the resolutions, "against the selection of Labor Day for a so-called naval demonstration." The reason for the protest is as vigorous as the protest is inspiring. This great labor union declares it to be in exceedingly bad taste "to select a day devoted to the celebration of the pursuits of peace for a display advertising the latest improved methods for killing our fellow human beings." Accordingly, the Boston Central Labor Union has asked President Roosevelt to consider whether, "if it be necessary to have a naval review," it may not be held on some other day than Labor Day. Mr. Roosevelt's delight in warlike displays, and his belief in keeping the peace by going to war, may lead him to turn a deaf ear to the protest of Boston's peace-loving workmen; but he could honor himself no better than by acceding to their request.

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### Simplified Spelling.

A pitiful display of ignorance has been exhibited by the newspapers of two continents over President Roosevelt's order to the public printing office to follow the simplified spelling (p. 514) in printing Executive documents. They have apparently turned loose the silliest of their silly season staffs to poke cheap fun at the President's sensible order in support of the Simplified Spelling Board's serious and useful suggestions. One might suppose that English spelling was to be joshillingsized over night by White House decree. Nor has this been the work alone of frivolous reporters. Distinguished educators, with equal disregard of the facts, though without even the oil of cheap humor to cut the acid of their ignorant comments, have joined in the preposterous hue and cry. For preposterous it is. The Simplified Spelling Board has proposed no innovations, as

may be readily learned at the expense of a two cent stamp by addressing it at No. 1 Madison Avenue, New York. What it has done has been to select 300 common words that are now spelled by good literary authority in two ways, and urge the public to adopt the simpler way of the two. The Board assumes to exercise no authority. Yet its personnel ought to secure for it the courtesy it asks, namely, that criticisms of its suggestions be made after and not before the critic has read its publications or otherwise acquired correct information. Composed of scholars and educators, of men of letters and men of affairs, and of specialists in linguistic science, including the editors of the three chief American dictionaries as well as the editors of the three chief dictionaries published in Great Britain, its recommendations are not only reasonable but as authoritative as any question of spelling can be. In addition, the Board recommends no revolution but only a choice of spellings between two established forms. The prejudice of illogical literates against a phonetic system is at least understandable; but how are we to explain this avalanche of summer wit which has been launched against the use, for instance, of the authorized and simple form "labor" in preference to the authorized but absurd form "labour"?

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#### Land Exploitation in Panama.

Poultney Bigelow makes an interesting exposure of a significant kind of graft in which American officials indulge at Panama. In the September number of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine, he asserts that "many of the canal officials own lots on this pestiferous island"—the island of Colon, about a mile square,—“and consequently have a pecuniary interest in congesting population here, so that rents may rise.” They are aided in this by Mr. Roosevelt's administration, which “permits no road from Colon out to the healthful hills” immediately at hand. As a result, the population of Colon is congested, and the land of the island has made its owners richer both in higher site values and higher rents.

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#### The Incidence of Taxation.

“Taxes must come out of product,” is the sagacious editorial remark of a daily newspaper not a thousand miles from Chicago, in answer to a correspondent who proposes to exempt capital from taxation. And “since taxes must come out of product,” it proceeds, “they are pretty sure to affect the supply of capital,” meaning, of course, to diminish it. But that isn't true—not necessari-

ly. Take, for example, a coal deposit with its working apparatus, each having a salable value. If you tax the value of the apparatus, the tax will indeed come out of product; but out of that share of the product which rewards the beneficent uses of capital. Hence, it will tend to discourage such uses of capital, and therefore tend to diminish the supply. But if you tax the value of the natural deposit, the result will be reversed. While this tax also will come out of product, it will come out of that share of the product which rewards the maleficent forestalling of natural coal deposits. Hence it will tend to discourage such forestalling, and therefore tend, not to diminish the supply of capital, but to make cheaper and consequently easier the application of capital to the working of deposits of coal.

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#### Subsidized Newspapers.

Winston Churchill, who is making an independent campaign for governor of New Hampshire against the domination of the Boston and Maine Railroad, finds that his candidacy is denied publicity by the newspapers of the State. He attributes this, rightly no doubt, to the fact that 70 out of 75 of the newspapers of New Hampshire are subsidized by the railroad combine. This combine really rules the State, and what it orders in politics goes, with newspapers as well as with politicians and its other employes. Here is the most important of all reasons for public ownership and operation of railroads. Good or bad service? cheap or dear service? These are secondary considerations. The primary and all-controlling consideration is the fact that great public service corporations will not and cannot content themselves with rendering service. They are born of corrupt politics, they live in and by corrupt politics, and they must and they do control every agency of politics, from school trustee to governor, from beer saloon to newspaper. The spoils of mere public employment which is held up as a scare crow to prevent public ownership and operation of railroads, is as a gnat to a crocodile in comparison with the spoils of all kinds which railroad corporations utilize for their private ends.

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#### Genuine Democrats for Congress.

Three democratic Democrats are in regular nomination for Congress in Chicago. They are Charles L. Young, of the 10th District, James T. McDermott of the 4th District, and Frank J. Buchanan, of the seventh. These men represent