

H. Taft, Elihu Root, J. Pierpont Morgan, Douglas Robinson and William Nelson Cromwell, in connection with the purchase by the United States of the French ownership of the Panama Canal.

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In justification of this proceeding the Department of Justice published a statement on the 17th in which it was explained that—

The courts of the District of Columbia exercise without dispute the common law jurisdiction possessed by the courts of Maryland prior to its concession. Libel always has been a crime in Maryland, and prosecutions for it have occurred from its earliest history as a colony down to the last year. . . . In the District of Columbia there have been no less than twenty-one criminal prosecutions for libel within the last ten years. . . . In the month of December, 1908, the attention of the United States Attorney for the District was called to the articles in the New York World and the Indianapolis News, alleging in substance that the money paid by the United States for the Panama Canal had been received by an American syndicate, which, profiting by private information as to the government's intention, had purchased, at an enormous discount, the rights of the French owners of the canal, and thus realized profits from this scandalous transaction. Several persons were mentioned by name as connected with it; some being public officials and others private citizens. A careful inquiry having satisfied the proper officers that there was no foundation for these charges, the United States Attorney, with the approval of the Attorney General, submitted the evidence to the grand jury of the District of Columbia; and that body after a prolonged and thorough investigation, has returned indictments against several individuals and a certain corporation for criminal libel in publishing the articles in question.

These articles were written and printed without the limits of the District, but published by circulation and distribution within the national capital.

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Proceedings were immediately taken by the government for the extradition from their homes to the District of Columbia of the defendants charged in the indictment, bench warrants for their arrest being issued on the 17th by the court at Washington.

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Referring to this proceeding the Indianapolis News of the 17th said:

The owners of the News will contest extradition to the District of Columbia for trial on the ground that if any offense was committed it was committed in Indianapolis, the place of publication of the News. The World made a statement in which it said:

This prosecution, if it succeed, will place every newspaper in the country which circulates at Washington—and there are few of importance which do not circulate there—completely at the mercy of an autocratic, vainglorious President who is willing to prostitute his authority for the gratification of his personal malice. Few newspapers make large profits. Most of

them could be ruined financially by the legal expense of defending themselves hundreds of miles from the place of publication and against the tremendous resources of the United States government. Under this procedure there is hardly an American newspaper proprietor who would not be liable to criminal indictment in Washington if his newspaper printed something offensive to the President. . . . These libel proceedings have no other object than to enable Mr. Roosevelt to employ the machinery of the United States government to satisfy his personal desire for revenge. . . . Mr. Roosevelt is an episode. The World is an institution.

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The Isthmian Canal

President Roosevelt transmitted to Congress on the 17th a report upon the Isthmian Canal (Vol. xi, p. 919; xii, 121), made by engineers who recently inspected the work in the company of Mr. Taft, the President-elect. The report is an unqualified recommendation of the work that has been done, and of that which is proposed. Unstinted praise of the dams, the locks, and every other structure is given. As the Gatun earth dam had been the central point of controversy, the engineers making the report gave it, under instructions from Mr. Taft, as they say, "first consideration in the light of all new evidence," and satisfied themselves that "there will be no dangerous or objectionable seepage through the materials under the base of the dam." Nor do they consider the materials "so soft as to be liable to be pushed aside by the weight of the proposed dam so as to cause dangerous settlement." They "are also satisfied that the materials available and which it is proposed to use are suitable and can be readily placed to form a tight, stable and permanent dam." The engineers report furthermore that they "do not find any occasion for changing the type of canal that has been adopted;" and that "a change to sea level plan at the present time would add greatly to the cost and time of construction, without compensating advantages, either in capacity of the canal or in safety of navigation and hence would be a public misfortune." Their estimate of the complete cost of the canal is \$360,000,000; and they say it is incorrect to state that the original estimate of cost was \$140,000,000, as this did not include "sanitation and zone government." They add: "We see no reason why the canal should not be completed, as estimated by the chief engineer, by January 1, 1915; in fact, it seems that an earlier completion is probable if all goes well." Considering the cost and time of construction of a sea level canal as compared with the lock type, they hold that "most of the factors which have operated to increase the cost of the lock canal would operate with similar effect to increase the cost of the sea level canal, and at the present time there are additional factors of even greater importance to be considered as affecting the time of comple-

tion and cost of a sea level canal." In his message transmitting this report to Congress, President Roosevelt announced that "any attack on the type of dam now is merely an attack on the policy of building any canal at all." He added that "the only criticism which can be directed against the work is that it sometimes has been almost an excess of caution in providing against possible trouble."

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The British "Suffragette" Movement.

At the reopening of Parliament on the 16th an attempt was made by "suffragettes" (vol. xi, p. 877; xii, p. 55) to attract public attention by the use of an airship. An eighty foot airship hired for the occasion and manned by Percival Spencer, the aeronaut, Miss Muriel Matters, one of the heroines of the grill incident in the House of Commons, being the passenger, went up at Hendon coincident with the opening of Parliament and headed toward London. It was decorated with flags, and Miss Matters was plentifully supplied with handbills. It was her intention to pass over Westminster and distribute suffragist literature to the crowds attracted by the reassembling of Parliament. The feeble motor on the balloon, however, was not able to cope with the adverse winds and the airship never got within sight of the House of Commons. After an erratic flight it descended at Croydon.

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On the following day, the 17th, the branch of "suffragettes" known as the Women's Freedom League, held a large public meeting which adopted resolutions to continue the militant propaganda for suffrage. Mrs. Despard was delegated to carry the resolutions to Premier Asquith on the 18th, forty members in the audience volunteering to form an escort. Mrs. Despard, Countess Russell and Miss Matters, the heroine of the airship trip of the day before, were among the speakers.

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When Mrs. Despard and her escort tried on the 18th to present the resolution to Mr. Asquith they were balked by the police. They first attempted to march in procession, but their line being broken by the police, they mingled with a crowd of the curious and sauntered singly toward Downing street. The police, however, had completely blocked all entrances to the thoroughfare and twenty-four of the more militant who tried to break through the lines were arrested, charged with interfering with the police. For a time there was a scene of great disorder, women time and again throwing themselves against the double line of police, only to be forced back, or, if they were unusually persistent, to be handed over to constables, who marched them off to the police station amid cheers, hoots and hisses from the throng. The police finally cleared the

street and the women who were not arrested returned to their hall, where they were addressed by leaders. The women taken into custody were later arraigned in a police court. They refused to pay the fines imposed and all were sent to prison for terms varying from a fortnight to a month.

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When the session of Parliament was well under way on the 18th, a contingent led by Mrs. Despard attempted to gain access to the Premier, but the police barred the way. The women refused to budge, insisting upon their right to enter the building. No serious disturbance occurred. But Mrs. Despard and several of the others were placed under arrest. On the 19th, sixteen of these were tried in the Bow street police court. Ten were sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from one month to six weeks, after having refused to give security for their good behavior for six months. Two gave the required sureties and the other four were discharged. Mrs. Despard and several of the others secured an adjournment.

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British Government in India.

Following the suppression of the nationalist congress in India by the British authorities (p. 129) comes news by mail of a suppression of Indian associations. On the 5th of January the following order was issued:

Whereas, The Governor-General in Council is of opinion that the associations described in the schedule hereto annexed constitute a menace to the public peace, in the exercise of the power conferred by Sec. 16 of the Indian criminal law amendment act, 1908, the Governor-General in Council hereby declares the said associations to be unlawful.

The schedule is as follows:

The Anusllan Samiti,—an association whose headquarters are at Dacca; the Swadeshi Bandhab Samiti,—an association whose headquarters are at Barisal; the Brati Samiti,—an association whose headquarters are at Faridpur; the Surhid Samiti,—an association whose headquarters are at Mymansing; the Sadhana Samiti,—an association whose headquarters are at Mymansing.

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Of this proceeding, Taraknath Das (p. 128), an Indian student at Norwich University, Northfield, Vt., writes:

The associations were not given any chance to defend themselves, and the government took no pains to prove that they are really a menace to the public peace. The members of these associations are educated young men of nationalist ideas. The associations are devoted to the promotion of self culture, dutifulness, fellow feeling and devotion to mother country. Their definite program is (1) to revive and introduce healthful athletics for the improvement of the physical condition of the people;