

In a previous article in *The Public* (p. 942) I endeavored to emphasize the strength of the insurgent movement in the middle West, and to point out that, for various causes, it includes the vast majority of the Republican rank and file. These people are keenly alive to what is going on in national politics—more so than the people of any other section of the Union. To a great extent the press of this section is with them, fighting their battles and enlightening them as to the true significance of what is occurring daily at the nation's capital. They are not easily deceived. That they retain undiminished confidence in Roosevelt may argue, to some people, that the task of blinding their eyes is not an impossible one; but the fact is nevertheless true that they have not been deceived in Mr. Taft's intentions and alliances for a single moment since he was inaugurated.

Nothing short of a complete reversal of Mr. Taft's policies and a complete, open and public severance of his alliance with the machine element of his party, represented by Cannon and Aldrich, can win the middle West back to him. As matters stand now these people are awaiting with impatience the time when he can be supplanted with another. "The return from Elba" looms large in their imagination. The rank and file of the insurgents—probably not their leaders—hope that Roosevelt will be a candidate against Taft for the nomination in 1912. They cherish no resentment toward him for Taft's conduct. They feel that he, like themselves, bought a gold brick; and they ask nothing better than an opportunity to demonstrate at the polls their trust in him.

If Roosevelt is not a candidate the insurgents will find another one. They may have several. Beyond all peradventure the middle Western States in the next Republican national convention will cast their votes against the incumbent. If he should be nominated despite them, a political cataclysm may be expected. Once under way political revolutions move swiftly; and this insurgent movement, as Mr. Taft will ultimately learn to his sorrow, is terribly in earnest.

D. K. L.

NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article, on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

Week ending Tuesday, December 7, 1909.

Congress.

The first regular session of the 61st Congress (p. 778) assembled on the 6th. And on the 7th the President's message was read.

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The Nicaraguan Situation.

Secretary Knox has taken a step with reference

to Nicaragua (p. 1163) which is reported from Washington to have won him, from the South American representatives there, the title of "Dictator and Lord High Executioner of Latin-America." This is due to the extraordinary document with which he has suspended diplomatic relations with Nicaragua. In transmitting passports on the 1st to Felipe Rodriguez, the Nicaraguan charge d'affaires, he wrote a long explanatory letter. From this letter one may gather the reasons for the warlike attitude of the Administration. Alluding to an international understanding made in 1907 between Central American republics to refrain from invasion of one another and to submit difficulties to arbitration instead of warfare, Secretary Knox's letter charges President Zelaya of Nicaragua with bad faith. It charges him also with overthrowing republican institutions except in name. Appeals to the United States have been made, the letter continues, by a majority of the Central American Republics, and now a great body of the Nicaraguan people appeal through revolution. It further charges that President Zelaya has killed two Americans who were officers in the revolutionary service, complains that the American Consulate at the Nicaraguan capital is menaced, and announces that—

from every point of view it has evidently become difficult for the United States further to delay more active response to the appeals so long made to its duty to its citizens, to its dignity, to Central America and to civilization. The government of the United States is convinced that the revolution represents the ideals and the will of a majority of the Nicaraguan people more faithfully than does the government of President Zelaya, and that its peaceable control is well-nigh as extensive as that hitherto so sternly attempted by the government at Managua. There is now added the fact, as officially reported from more than one quarter, that there are already indications of a rising in the western provinces in favor of a presidential candidate intimately associated with the old regime. In this it is easy to see new elements tending toward a condition of anarchy which leaves, at a given time, no definite responsible source to which the government of the United States could look for reparation for the killing of Messrs. Cannon and Groce, or, indeed, for the protection which must be assured American citizens and American interests in Nicaragua.

For these reasons diplomatic relations are severed by President Taft through Secretary Knox, but the Nicaraguan representative is assured of access to Secretary Knox in these terms:

Although your diplomatic quality is terminated, I shall be happy to receive you, as I shall be happy to receive the representative of the revolution, each as the unofficial channel of communication between the government of the United States and the de facto authorities to whom I look for the protection of American interests pending the establishment in Nicaragua of a government with which the United States can maintain diplomatic relations.

When Congress met on the 6th, Congressman Sulzer (Democrat) of New York introduced resolutions declaring it to be the duty of the United States to demand the arrest and punishment of President Zelaya for murdering Cannon and Groce, to exact an apology and damages, to use the army and navy as far as necessary, and to establish in Nicaragua a responsible government republican in form.

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President Zelaya was reported on the 4th from the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, to have asked the United States to send an investigating commission to Nicaragua, promising that he would resign if it should report against his administration.

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General Railroad Strike Imminent.

A railroad switchmen's strike, beginning in the Northwest last week, may be the forerunner of a general railroad strike, which is predicted in railroad circles, for a 10 per cent increase of wages to meet the increased cost of living. The switchmen's strike now in progress is for an increase of 6 cents an hour, and double pay for work during meal hours, holidays and Sundays. Large numbers of strike breakers have been contracted for by the railroads and shipped to the seat of the strike. The railroad officials report that the supply appears to be ample.

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The British Elections.

When the House of Lords had vetoed the land tax Budget on the 30th (p. 1160), the Prime Minister called a cabinet meeting which convened on the 1st. Immediately afterwards the House of Commons met and the Prime Minister gave formal notice that on the following day he would offer this resolution:

That the action of the House of Lords in refusing to enact into law the financial provisions made by this House for the year is a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of the privileges of the House of Commons.

The sitting of the Commons on the 2nd, when this resolution came up, was exciting but brief. Mr. Asquith supported his resolution in what the dispatches describe as a speech in which he surpassed himself. He fortified his position with quotations from a speech of a year ago by the Tory leader, Mr. Balfour, in which Mr. Balfour had said: "It is the House of Commons, not the House of Lords, which settles uncontrolled our financial system. If the House of Lords could touch the money bills the whole executive machinery of the country would be brought to a standstill." After quoting other authorities to the same effect, Mr. Asquith closed his speech by saying:

We are living under a system of false balances

and loaded dice. When democracy voted for a Liberal government the dormant second chamber awoke from its slumbers and nullified the work of the House of Commons. We shall ask the House by this vote, and we shall ask the constituencies at the earliest possible moment, to declare that the organ, the voice of the free people of this country, is to be found in the accredited representatives of the nation.

Mr. Balfour in reply said he hoped the instances when the Lords would refer such a question as this Budget to the country would be most rare, but he hoped also that the Lords would never abandon the essential point of the controversy, which was whether the Lords in declaring that the constituencies should be consulted had gone beyond the functions which ought to be left to the second chamber, however rarely they might deem it proper to exercise them. No response was made in behalf of the Irish party, the Parliamentary members of which had for reasons peculiar to Irish politics, refrained from participating in the discussion and the vote. But Arthur Henderson, M. P., spoke for the Labor party, declaring that the continuance of the second chamber as constituted at present is absurd and logically indefensible; that the Lords, no longer content with their long record of obstruction and mutilation and destruction of legislation through which they had defrauded the people of many fruits of self-government, had become emboldened sufficiently to try their hand at usurpation of the rights of the House of Commons in regard to matters of finance. All the power that the Labor party possessed, he added, would be used to assist in securing an emphatic verdict from the country in the sense of the resolution presented by the Prime Minister. The vote for Mr. Asquith's resolution, quoted above, was 349 to 134.

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Meanwhile the National Liberal Federation had issued a manifesto concentrating the attention of the country upon the usurpation of the House of Lords. "If the present action of the Peers is not repudiated swiftly by the people," it says, "the rights and privileges won so dearly by our forefathers in the great struggles for freedom are all surrendered." The manifesto declares the Peers' power of veto must be restricted so that the last word on all legislation will rest with the House of Commons; that otherwise no Liberal ministry can again assume the responsibilities of office. "In the fight forced upon us," the manifesto continues, "the electors will have to decide whether they wish to govern themselves or be governed at second hand by a few hundred hereditary Peers, who have thrown the Constitution into the melting pot in order to shift the burden of taxation from wealth, land and liquor to food and the necessities of life."