

The BUILDING OF THE PANAMA CANAL

By MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE W. GOETHALS
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VIII.—SOLVING
HUMAN PROBLEMS
IN ADMINISTRATION

Lobby of a Commission Club-House.

Editorial Note: In last week's installment of his own story of the building of the Panama Canal, General Goethals told of some of the administrative problems he was called upon from time to time to face because the human element in the canal zone was a difficult one to handle. He recounted some of the difficulties he had to overcome in housing the workers, and how the questions of quarters and furniture were a continual source of complaint. In this closing installment of his story, he tells of various other problems that were forced upon him by extraordinary human nature, and how he disposed of them.

TEXT to the questions of quarters and furniture, the wage scale was the source of more complaint than anything else.

A table prepared by direction of Mr. Shonta in 1906, comparing the wages paid in the various trades with the average wages paid in the United States in similar employments, showed that the increases were not uniform in amounts. The same was true also in regard to positions not belonging to the trades. Under the organization in effect prior to January 3, 1908, the heads of departments were largely responsible for the wages in their respective departments, and men were induced to transfer from one to another on promise of an increase, which not only caused dissatisfaction, but tended to disrupt the organization.

Much thought was given to the wages for the trades, and while some minor changes were made, where increases were possible, on the whole the wage scale was maintained, for to have decreased the pay of any craft would have caused trouble. It was deemed better policy to bear the burden of the complaints and hold the wages undisturbed until the end of the construction period, so far as the salaries attaching to other positions were concerned, a uniform scale was established on January 1, 1913; an attempt was made at that time to fix the pay to conform with the position and the responsibilities attached to it. Under a resolution of the commission, dated September 5, 1904, officers of the Army, Navy and Marine Hospital Corps, while serving on duty with the commission, were to receive an increase of 50 per cent of their service pay. This was not fair to the civilians and was resented. Effective September 15, 1908, I had this resolution revoked, and officers from the various services received the pay attached to the positions filled by them; if this were greater than the service pay the incumbents received the difference, otherwise they served without extra compensation.

When the law for the permanent organization was under consideration this question of the unbalanced wage scale was discussed, with the committees in Congress. I believed that service on the Isthmus merited an increase over the pay for similar employment in the United States, suggested that provision be made for this, and the law provides for an increase of 25 per cent. The result will be that as wages increase in the United States there will be a corresponding increase on the Canal, and vice versa.

A Disconnected Rodman.

A number of the tangles that needed unraveling were due to nothing more or less than the braggadocio of some of the men who claimed to be receiving greater pay or more privileges than they actually were and which others felt they should also enjoy.

An instance in point occurred as I was making my morning ride from Ancon to Culebra, the Sunday morning after I had assumed charge. The train was crowded and the vacant place beside me was taken by a man I didn't know, who regaled me with the fact that there were to be "great doings" the following week, for a party of New York capitalists were coming down on route to South America, where the construction of a continental railroad was to be undertaken, and engineers were to be taken from the Canal. He had received an offer of \$400 a month, but as this was no better than the pay he was receiving and as he had six weeks' leave with pay due him, he was holding out for \$500, and expected to get it. I had met, I thought, all the men drawing such salaries, and he certainly was not among them. We parted at Culebra.

The following morning I again met this companion of mine at the site of the Sosa-Corral dam, carrying an instrument. We passed the time of day and met again at the Corral Station. There was time, before the train left, for me to go to the hotel for some ice water, and he joined me after inquiring where I was going. At the hotel I found that the steward was a man who had served at West Point while I was there; the recognition was mutual, and he inquired what he could do for the Colonel.

My companion stared at me somewhat dazed, asked me who I was, and, on learning, exclaimed: "My God! And I was talking with you yesterday!" It appeared that he didn't want a drink, after all, as he left abruptly. I found that he was employed as a rodman at \$1000 a year. He left the service later to accept a more lucrative position in the States, and we parted good friends. That type of man is found everywhere and his "yarns" furnish cause for much merriment.

Of course, we also had with us the men whose services were not appreciated at the value placed by themselves; this class was hopeless, and the only advice that could be given was to try some other locality where such talents were in greater demand.

Bringing in the Y. M. C. A.

In the endeavor to make the Isthmus attractive and to secure a contented force, clubhouses were built by the Government and turned over to the Young Men's Christian Association management for operation. These clubhouses were constructed in the larger settlements and did much to accomplish the desired end. They were in course of construction when the third commission assumed control, but the Young Men's Christian Association had appointed a superintendent to have charge of their operation and management, and he was on the Isthmus.

The first one, which was at Culebra, was opened for activities in May, 1907, followed by those at Empire, Gorgona and Cristobal.

Each of these clubs was furnished with a library, supplied with a graphophone, billiard and pool tables, bowling alleys, checkers, chess, card tables, a lecture-room with piano, and a general lounging-room, where were magazines and daily and weekly papers from different sections of the United States. It had been decided, prior to my arrival, that dancing would be permitted, and clubs were formed for this purpose. This, I believe, was an innovation in Y. M. C. A. establishments, and it was an excellent one, for there seemed to be a greater desire for dancing in the zone than in the temperate zone, certainly so before the introduction of the modern dances.

Each clubhouse was in charge of a secretary, and later on to each one an assistant secretary was added to look after the athletic features. Various teams were organized to advance and encourage sports, such as bowling and basketball, and competition between the various clubhouses became very keen.

Prior to the opening of the first clubhouse I found that considerable feeling existed among the men against the Isthmus, for there was a large Catholic element in the force, and there was an idea extant that those of this faith would be excluded from membership through the exercise of religious ceremonies to which they could not conform. The affairs of the clubs were to be charge of an advisory board to be appointed by the chairman of the commission, and I appointed on this board a Catholic for the very purpose of overcoming this feeling. It was also arranged that Bible classes and other religious services usually held in the Y. M. C. A.'s in the United States would not be organized by the management, leaving such activities, should they develop, entirely to the membership.

There were other wrinkles that required smoothing out, but they were only such incidents as are liable to occur whenever there is a lack of tact on the part of the local management, and they were soon removed. The expense of these clubs was a greater drain on our appropriations than we anticipated originally, yet they were fully justified by the results secured.

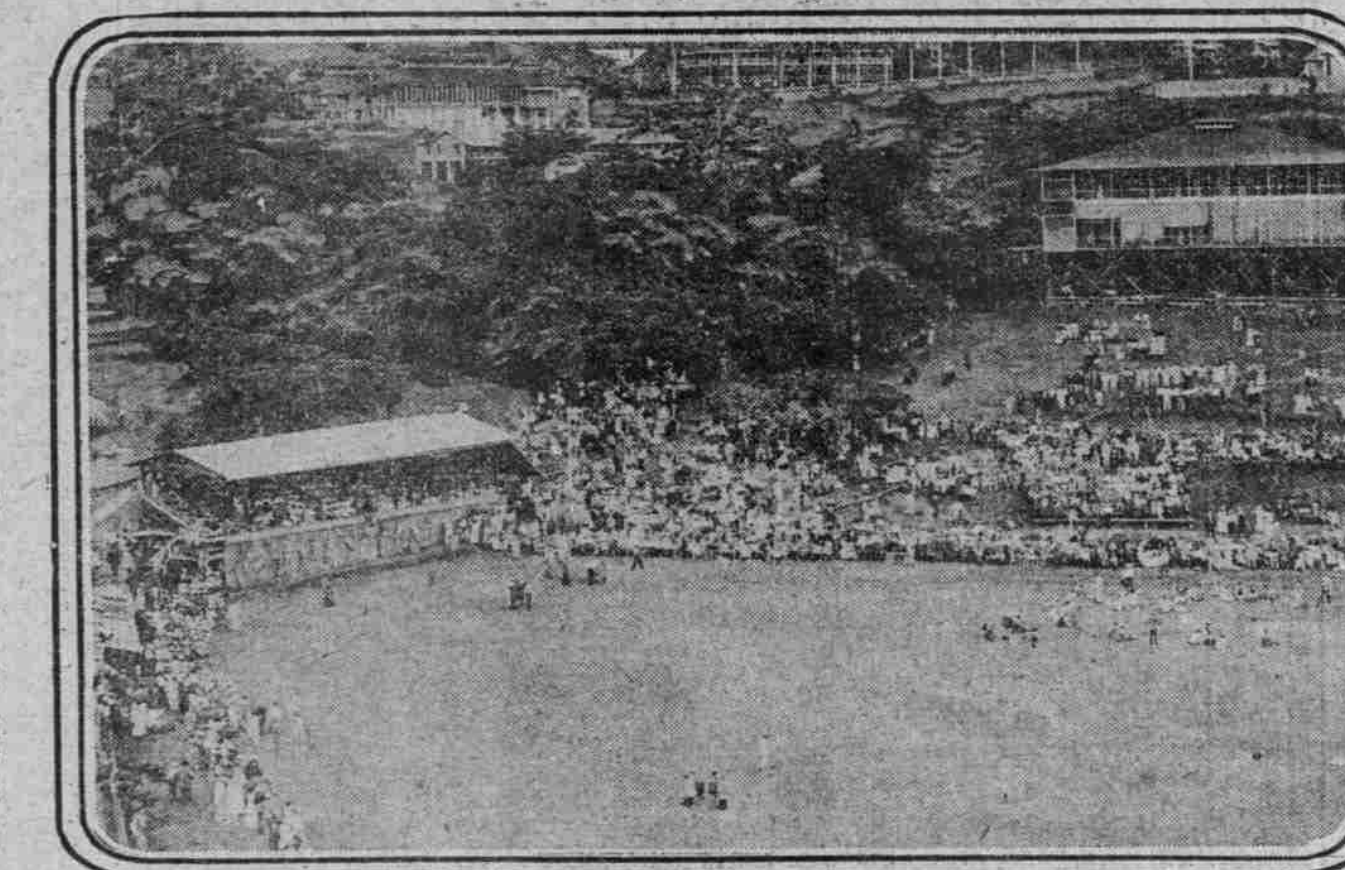
Amusements for the Force on Sundays.

The women and children were admitted, and the children between certain ages had the privileges of the clubs during hours which would not interfere with enjoyment in that way, and they were given to the women. The women liked to lounge in the lobbies of these buildings in the evenings. This proved attractive to the class sometimes scornfully designated as "pen-pushers," but I fear deterred numbers of the men who, in Isthmian nomenclature, were known as "rough-necks," from taking advantage of the attractions offered by the clubs.

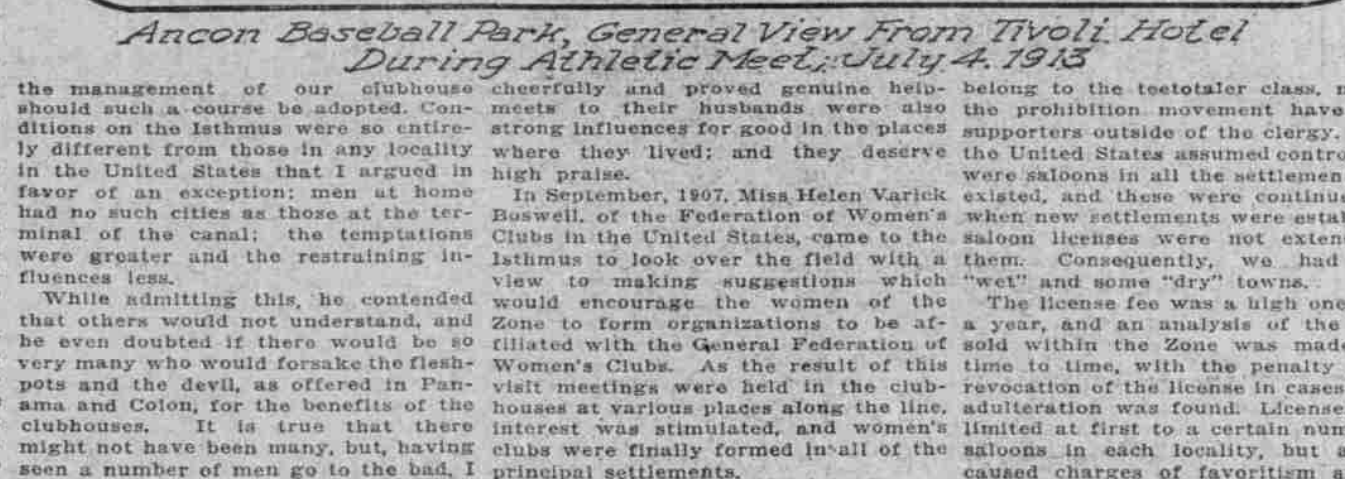
With all the good that the clubs accomplished I didn't feel that they went far enough.

Sunday was one of the days when some sort of amusement was required. The clubhouses on Sundays afforded diversion and recreation through their libraries, magazines and newspapers to those classes of employees who were given to reading, but the construction men—those in the ditch and on the locks and dams—were not so fortunate. They were prohibited on Sundays. Their only recourse, therefore, was to seek their pleasures in the terminal cities, Panama and Colon, where the saloons, shooting galleries and billiard and pool-rooms, and bowling alleys were open. I strongly favored the use of all the facilities of the clubhouses on Sunday, but I found a strong opposition to this on the part of the management, though a canvass of the force showed that a majority preferred such a course.

When the general secretary of the Y. M. C. A. visited the Isthmus, we discussed the situation, but I could make no headway with him; he felt that such a radical change in their policy would be the cause of just criticism and censure, and announced that the Y. M. C. A. would withdraw from



Social Hall in a Commission Club-House.



Ancon Baseball Park, General View From Tivoli Hotel During Athletic Meet, July 4, 1913.

the management of our clubhouse cheerfully and proved genuine help-meets to their husbands were also strong influences for good in the places where they lived; and they deserve high praise.

In September, 1907, Miss Helen Varick Boswell, of the Federation of Women's Clubs in the United States, came to the Isthmus to look over the field with a view to making suggestions which would encourage the women of the Zone to form organizations to be affiliated with the General Federation of Women's Clubs. As the result of this visit meetings were held in the clubhouses at various places along the line, interest was stimulated, and women's clubs were finally formed in all of the principal settlements.

These clubs, no doubt, did considerable good in bringing the women together, getting them acquainted, and in other ways. But with a population that shifted as ours did, not only from the Isthmus to the United States, but also from one station to another along the line of the canal, it was difficult for any formal organization of considerable membership to retain its solidarity.

With our employees drawn from all classes and every place—from every state in the Union and from the large cities as well as the rural communities—it is not surprising that there was some discord and instances in which husband and wife failed to pull together in double harness. In the United States such cases would be carried to a law court, but this was rarely done on the Isthmus; instead, the complaining persons came to my office, and after I had heard his or her case frequently her side a formal investigation would ensue, with statements from those directly interested, and from others who might know whether Mr. Smith was really abusive and cruel toward Mrs. Smith, and refused to purchase for her a proper amount of clothing, had come home intoxicated the previous Saturday night and broken the dishes, had been unduly attentive to Mrs. Jones—or whatever might be the moving cause of the complaint.

In some cases we were able to pour oil on the troubled waters so that the domestic ship sailed on smoothly thereafter. If this could not be done, the arrangement was made that was considered fair and best for all concerned. A lot of what amounted to alimony—agreed sums of money monthly—has been paid in the Zone without the intervention of a court of law. I fear that my decisions have not been uniformly wise, but the procedure has had advantages to the principals—they were not kept in suspense, but they were given a quick decision, and they had to pay no court costs or attorney's fees.

Gambling became a serious source of complaint from wives of employees who suffered the consequences, for rather large stakes were involved. It was difficult to break this up, but finally, by using the information obtained at these Sunday morning sessions and appealing to the players themselves, most of the games were stopped. From information received, the games in Panama City were apparently not "straight." Whether these reports were founded on facts or resulted from the losses sustained I was not able to determine; the stakes were high and the losses were the cause of much distress. Through President Taft pressure was brought to bear on the officials of the republic, but the apparent attempt to stop the games was not effectual.

The greatest part of the force did not belong to the teetotaler class, nor did the prohibition movement have many supporters outside of the clergy. When the United States assumed control there were saloons in all the settlements that existed, and these were continued, but when new settlements were established saloon licenses were not extended to them. Consequently, we had some "wet" and some "dry" towns.

The license fee was a high one, \$1000 a year, and an analysis of the liquor sold within the Zone was made from time to time, with the penalty of the revocation of the license in cases where adulteration was found. Licenses were limited at first to a certain number of saloons in each locality, but as this caused charges of favoritism and required discrimination, the number was unlimited, though care was exercised in their issue.

Strict Watch Over the Saloons.

The saloons were segregated, kept under the constant surveillance of the police and the hours for business prescribed and strictly enforced. Later regulations prohibited the use of chairs and tables in the barrooms, thus removing those comforts which might tend to loitering or conviviality.

Giving credit by the saloons to their patrons was discouraged through refusal by the authorities to render any assistance in the collection of bills. Again, all cases of alcoholism treated in the hospitals were reported and noted on the personal records, the men understanding that alcoholism was a cause for discharge from the service.

It is a curious fact, but the police records showed that there were more arrests for disorderly conduct due to liquor in the towns where liquor was not sold than in the others, and this was for the reason that in the former places the men would bring the liquor out from the terminal cities by the bottle and drink until the supply was exhausted, while in the latter, being obliged to start while they drank, there was not so much temptation to overindulgence, and the men, after they had satisfied their thirst, went to their homes or about their business.

The ministers employed by the Commission, and others, protested against the granting of licenses within the zone, and occasionally letters on the subject reached us from the United States. The work was of the earthy, and the men engaged on it were more of the sinning class than saints. We employed the ministers to look after the spiritual welfare of our people, and I suggested to them that they would make the men more saintly through their teachings and labors among them the saloons would disappear without the necessity of administrative action. So long as liquor was so easily purchasable in the terminal cities, I must confess that the saloons were kept in the zone, where our men could remain under the observation of our own people and where adulterated liquor could be bought.

When Las Cascadas was turned over for occupation to the Tenth Infantry the saloons in that community were closed, and later, after discussing the question with the Secretary of War, Mr. Henry L. Stimson, I agreed that at the expiration of the term of the licenses for 1912 the saloons at Empire, the nearest settlement, would be closed also, for they were too accessible to the enlisted men. I was very anxious to start a cantina for the benefit of the employees and the soldiers, but the

Typical Commission Club-House With Band-Stand, Formerly Concerts Were Given Here by the Canal Commission Band Composed of Employees

Necessary authority could not be obtained. The labor and time expended have been more than repaid by the results accomplished.

(THE END.)
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Passing of Pink Lemonade.

One of our life's cherished illusions fades! Now it is the pink lemonade, familiar to every one who has ever visited a circus or Coney Island, which is to go. And it may make its exit accompanied by the happy "hot dog" and green ice cream, for the board of health has just issued an ultimatum that 40 food inspectors are to watch over all the Summer resorts and recreation places within the greater city. They are to ban all coloring matter in soft drinks and bring foods, ice cream, candies and other delectable things up to the high standard of requirements for edibles maintained in the ordinary markets of trade. What Coney Island would be without its "Hot, hot! All hot!" and its tank of cerise beverages. It is impossible to think. Somebody is always taking the joy out of life. It will compensate a misguided and sentimental generation little that this is done in the name of sanitation, even of sanity. The appeal of these regulated, standardized dainties to the stomach may be enhanced, but what will become of the appeal to the eyes and the imagination? A new, properly educated generation may become reconciled to these new-fangled ways. The old one must mourn for the victory of science over sentiment.

Washington Gladden in the Atlantic.

One thing is undeniable. Knowledge of the Bible is far less general now than it was in the days of my childhood. That amazing familiarity with the sacred book with which John Richard Green credits the people of England in the days of the commonwealth has been almost entirely lost among the sons of the Puritans and the Scotch Irish in New England and in New York state. It was not universal, but it was general. The kind of tests by which college students and students in secondary schools are frequently, in these days, made to display an ignorance of the Bible which is astounding, could have been passed with credit by the majority of country boys and girls 60 or 70 years ago. But this thorough acquaintance of earlier generations with the Bible was not due to any considerable extent, to the public school. All that we learned about the Bible in school would be a very little to our store of religious knowledge. It was in our churches and our Sunday schools, but chiefly in our homes, that most of us learned what we knew about the Bible.

Italy's Entrance Into Conflict.

It is in the east that Italian entrance into the war is likely to have the greatest effect in the opening weeks. It should bring in all the Balkan states, if not at once, eventually. It does settle the fate of Turkey, it does insure the triumph of the allies in the Mediterranean. It will ultimately tell heavily against Austria, but only when German help begins to fail the Hapsburgs. German victory in the Carpathians is the price of Italian delay. Italy must now face the armies she permitted to destroy the army of the Kaiser's corps on the Danube. She may have to face them on the Po, she must accept the fact that for her even temporary defeat at German hands will result in atrocities and destruction far beyond that Belgian knew. All this must work for caution rather than Napoleonic methods at the outset.

Press Moulder of Public Opinion

IN 1824 we Americans overthrew the legislative caucus as a dominant power in politics, and left the field open for the party machine. Today we are overthrowing the party machine and leaving the field open to the newspaper press. And according as the press uses its new power for evil or for good will the results of the referendum and the direct primary, and other similar agencies of modern democracy be also evil or good.

The organization of public opinion by the newspapers instead of by the party managers has certain distinct and obvious advantages. In the first place it involves a more direct appeal to public opinion. A newspaper owes its power to the fact that its readers think as its editor wishes them to think. Their opinion may be right or wrong. This evidence presented to them may be complete or incomplete. But the opinion is in any case a real opinion, based on an examination of important evidence.

In the next place, this opinion is formed in the open. Instead of being formed by secret conferences, as was so often the case under old-fashioned party leadership. The newspaper makes its appeal in broad daylight. If the appeal is an unfair one, those who are arguing on the other side have at least a chance to see what is being said and done by their opponents and to try to prove that it is unfair. Government by newspapers is government by discussion. It is perhaps the only form of government by discussion which is practicable in a large community.

In the third place, the call which the newspaper makes upon its readers to do more necessarily takes the form of an appeal to their judgment rather than

to their selfishness. A party manager working under the old system is constantly occupied in pointing out to his followers how their personal interests would be advanced by some measure or some candidate. A newspaper or magazine that adopts this policy would soon find its influence confined within a limited circle. The general public would suspect, and rightly suspect, that a measure which one group of voters was urged to support on purely selfish grounds would be of doubtful benefit to the community as a whole. A journalist may himself often be led to support certain measures or certain candidates for reasons of self-interest. But his appeal to his readers for support must be based on broader grounds than this in order to be effective.

Such are the patent and obvious advantages of having the organization of popular opinion placed in the hands of the press. They are so fundamental in character that we are sometimes tempted to overlook the disadvantages and dangers with which this process is attended. The very fact that makes the appeal of the press an almost ideal agency in democratic government when rightly used correspondingly increases the perils when it is used wrongly. The power of an editor is a power to influence men's judgment. If he confines himself to legitimate methods of influence he realizes Bagehot's ideal of government by discussion. If he uses it wrongly, and leads his readers to act on imperfect information, he not only turns the action of the Government into wrong channels, but he effects the more permanent and disastrous harm of poisoning public opinion at its source.—North American Review.