

# LAW FOR WORKERS ON CANAL

### To Provide Proper Amusements and Enough of Them Actually Greatest Remaining Problem, Says Chief Engineer Goethals.

### Y. M. C. A. Halls and Clubs Take Men Out of Saloons—National Game Widely Popular—The Glorious Fourth in the Zone.

By FREDERIC J. HASKIN.  
(Copyright, 1908, by Frederic J. Haskin.)  
Washington, July 18.—"The principal drawback we are now experiencing in the building of the canal is the lack of rational amusements for the people." In these words Colonel Goethals, the chairman and chief engineer of the canal, summed up the situation with reference to the entertainment of the canal employees. He added that congress had been asked to provide additional club houses and funds for this purpose, but that it had seen fit to ignore the demand.

It does not take one long to discover the truth of the assertion of Colonel Goethals. At Cristobal, Gorgona, Empire and Culebra they have Y. M. C. A. clubhouses. Wherever these are, they have become the dominant factor in the social side of Isthmian life. They provide good, healthy entertainment for the people; yet to one American settlement that has a clubhouse, there are three that have none. In the towns where there are no clubhouses, the only thing the men can do is to go to the nearest saloon and drink and liquor. And this they usually do. In the four towns where the Y. M. C. A. clubhouses are located, the receipts fell off about 75 per cent within a short time after the clubhouses were opened. Before the clubhouses were built the saloons were the only general meeting place available. The Isthmian canal commission hotels had no lobbies, the officers were closed after business hours, and men being gregarious creatures and wanting to meet and talk, went to the saloons for drinking places. It made no difference that the beer was flat and cost 25 cents per bottle, or that the whiskey was bad and cost 10 cents for a good-sized tumbler of it. Neither did it make any difference that no chairs or tables were allowed, or that the cost of standing up half the night they would meet to talk matters over.

Strange Things at the Y. M. C. A.  
When the Y. M. C. A. rooms were opened, practical every man placed at their head. One would not think of card-playing and dancing at a Y. M. C. A. in the states, but here it is to be found in association homes on the isthmus. Bowling alleys, billiard-rooms, gymnasiums, and many other places for entertainment were established in the buildings. Bowling teams were organized, billiard and pool contests were held, gymnastic exercises, and other pleasant reading-rooms with a complete supply of leading newspapers and periodicals. In fact, the clubhouses were made more attractive than any other spot in the town.

The result has been the practical desertion of the saloons. The bowling alleys are busy every evening, and some of the most spirited contests ever witnessed may be seen on these alleys. There are a number of billiard rooms, and these are also very popular. The Y. M. C. A. town, and these usually settle their own little contests and then tackle the champions from the other towns. There is something doing every day in the course of a single month there are more than 10,000 games of billiards and pool played for money. That the clubhouses are appreciated is shown by the fact that the monthly income from them is not far from \$1,500. The membership in the association is nearly 1,000, or almost one-third of the force of Americans on the isthmus. They have camera, chess, checkers, bridge and music clubs.

Night Schools and Spanish.  
The night schools at the Y. M. C. A. are pretty well patronized by the new arrivals on the isthmus. One of these is a species of lazybug in that country which, after he has been there for a year, makes a man want to rest, and ever he is off duty. Going to night school becomes an intolerable bore. In the time spent so you find very few men in attendance who have been on the isthmus more than a year. The study of Spanish is the one thing which night school pupils do not give up. If they have mastered the subject, besides the satisfaction of being able to talk with native Panamanians and the Spaniards who are in the zone, there is hope of a reward. An employee can pass an examination in Spanish and stand a pretty good show of getting a promotion in the service. Besides the fellow who has got into the habit of carrying a course of study on the isthmus, with its ever-present shadow of a prize where he goes, there is some enthusiasm on the isthmus over basketball. Empire holds the South American championship in this popular sport. The isthmus is the national game on the isthmus as it is in the states, and some playing is seen on the isthmus at Cristobal, Empire and Ancón. Cuba and Empire are the strongest basketball towns, and there is a strong rivalry between them. When they play a championship series there is as much enthusiasm as you would see at a baseball game. The rivalry between the Athletics and the Cubans, and as for money, changing hands, they have the game at some beach to a standstill.

During the last dry season there was a big game between the teams, and some fellows put up every cent they had themselves and as much more as they could borrow from the Cubans. The game was borrowed from every fellow he had, and when the game was over he was such a winner that he took a six month vacation in the United States without pay. The classic sporting event of the isthmus however, is the semi-annual game between the baseball team and the "sewer-walkers." Every body turns out to see that.

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concerts, foot races, sack races, potato races, catching the greased pig and every other sort of sport that gamblers can conjure up for a Fourth of July. The Panama railroad ran free tables the whole day long and you could go from the Atlantic to the Pacific without money and without a cent after it was all over. Men who had taken part in some of the greatest Fourth of July celebrations in recent years in the States would tell you without hesitation that they had had one of the times of their lives. The day would never have been better at the isthmus where all of the youth and beauty of the isthmus gathered.

The Fourth of July fever even spread to the isthmus. The Barbadoians, the Martinicans, the Spaniards, the Italians and the Panamanians took fighting bull fighting and other Spanish sports were the popular diversions. Anyone who has seen a Fourth of July in the States will tell you that the spirit of patriotism is an infectious sentiment, and as when soldiers sing "Annie Laurie" each thinks of a different girl, so while all the 22 nationalities of the isthmus joined in the carnival of noise and fun, they each thought of a different girl beyond the seas.

And Everybody Dances.  
Dancing is one of the great pastimes of the Canal Zone. The influence of a tropical moon has never been south of Cancer. It calls men and women alike to the court of Terpsichore. Everybody dances. The thing starts with the little home affair, then comes the club house dance, and finally the fortnightly dance at the Tivoli. These Tivoli functions are the culminating social events of the isthmus, and nothing short of sickness can keep the socially minded from them. The Tivoli hotel cost in the neighborhood of a half million dollars and makes you think of the big hotels in the States. It was designed as the social headquarters of the isthmus, and like most things down here it is admirably suited to the purpose for which it was designed.

Good if You Can Make Good.  
Some writers who have visited the isthmus have complained of the social distinctions which are said to be based on the salaries of the different members of the force. But they have sadly overdrawn the picture. As a matter of fact there are fewer social distinctions here than anywhere else you may go. The right kind of man or woman is always in demand if he or she has any social qualifications which will eventually come from the pleasure of the occasion. They do not ask whether you are getting \$1000 or \$5000 a year. What they want to know is whether you are a social function and can do something to liven up a party. In looking over the list of guests invited to a social function you will see names that are signed to the payroll for \$1200 a year beside names that draw five times as much.

Best Rooms and Woman's Clubs.  
The members of the commission have now a pet dream. They hope some day soon to see a tea room or rest room for women in every one of the club houses in the zone. They claim that the women need social centers where they can gather for amusement and recreation as the men do, and where they can have a bit of interesting gossip over a social cup of tea. These tea rooms may eventually come from the women's clubs, which have already gone a long way toward giving a stability to the working force of the isthmus.

There is a club at every American settlement, and these are all members of the local Federation of Women's Clubs, which holds regular meetings at the Tivoli hotel. Literature and the live questions of canal life form the topics discussed at the meetings. Like their sister clubwomen in the States, the clubwomen of the canal zone are eliminating all social lines that have been built solely on a basis of monetary

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For particulars apply to the Danmoore. DAN J. MOORE, Prop.

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