
NEWS NARRATIVE

The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of The Public for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Tuesday, March 31, 1914.

Congressional Doings.

The bill repealing exemption of American coast-wise vessels from Panama tolls passed the House of Representatives on March 31 by a vote of 247 for to 161 against. [See current volume, page 274.]



A bill for leasing of Alaska coal lands was reported on March 24 by the Senate Public Lands Committee. After reserving a certain amount of land to be mined by the government it provides for leasing of unreserved lands in tracts of from 40 to 560 acres. Leases are to be made to the highest bidders. Railroads will only be allowed to acquire a sufficient supply for their own uses. Leases will be for indeterminate periods but subject to readjustment at the end of 20 years.



The House Judiciary Committee is considering the recommendations of the lobby investigation committee. On March 24, James A. Emery appeared before the committee and argued against censuring the conduct of himself and other officers of the National Association of Manufacturers. The attorney for Congressman McDermott, James Easby Smith, also appeared to protest against censure of his client. On the other hand, Congressman McDonald of Michigan, a member of the lobby investigating committee, has presented a minority report, urging expulsion of McDermott, and is vigorously pushing it. [See current volume, page 299.]



The National Voters' League in a statement issued on March 25 declared the House of Representatives to be controlled through an arrangement between Democratic floor leader Underwood and Republican floor leader Mann. Regarding them it says:

They do not often co-operate in legislation, but their organizations usually work together to prevent fundamental changes in the rules, to protect members of both parties, and to keep the present undemocratic parliamentary system intact.



Mexico and the United States.

General Villa completed his investment of Torreon on the 24th and from that day the reading

public has centered its attention on the most sanguinary battle of the war, if not in the history of Mexico. Both armies seem to be impressed with the fact that Torreon is the key to Mexico, and have fought with desperation. The temporary reverse of General Villa, after driving the Federals from Gomez Palacio, one of their outposts, caused a closing of the wires, so that nothing but rumors filtered through to the outside world during the following five days. The removal of the censorship lifts the curtain on a great scene of carnage, due to the desperation of attack and defense. General Villa is reported to be in possession of nearly the whole of the city, and to be still pressing the attack on the Federals, who are making a last stand in the main barracks. [See current volume, page 302.]



The losses on both sides are reported to be very heavy, that of the Federals being given at 2,500, and the Constitutionals 900 killed and wounded. Some reports give Villa's loss at 2,000. General Refugio Velasco, Federal commander, is thought to have no more than 3,000 able bodied men in action now. Large numbers of his troops are said to have deserted to General Villa's command. But the Constitutionalist General is said to be resorting to his old practice of executing officers and irregular troops who fall into his hands. The fact that press dispatches are now received from the front is taken to indicate the success of General Villa.



General Carranza reached Juarez after his 500 mile horseback ride, on the 29th, where he was received by the people with great demonstrations of delight. In the procession through the streets the American flag was carried beside the Mexican emblem. General Carranza declared that no act or contract of the Huerta government would be recognized should the Constitutionals succeed in capturing Mexico City. "Huerta is not President of Mexico," he said, "and none of his acts can be legal, and therefore none of them can be binding."



General Huerta, it is reported, has succeeded in raising \$33,000,000 in gold from Mexican bankers, who are making the loan on condition that he give up the idea of issuing irredeemable currency. This enables him to resume the payment of interest of the foreign debt, which was suspended on January 12. The banks take \$100,000,000 in bonds at 30 per cent of their face value. The bonds are secured by a pledge of 16 per cent of the customs. The 250 rifles consigned by the United States war department to the American embassy for the protection of American citizens in the event of disturbances in Mexico City, and which had been held at the Vera Cruz customs

house on General Huerta's orders, were released on the 24th.



English Politics.

Not in many years has the British government passed through such a crisis as that of the past week. The cabinet was embarrassed by the action of Colonel J. E. B. Seely, Secretary of State for War, who gave written assurances to General Gough and his mutinous officers that they would not be used against Ulster. Such a protest was raised by the Labor and Radical leaders and press that Colonel Seely was forced to resign on the 24th. Associated with him in responsibility were Field Marshal Sir John French, chief of the general staff, and Sir John Spencer Ewart, adjutant general. When Premier Asquith refused to accept Colonel Seely's resignation, Generals French and Ewart resigned. [See current volume, page 302.]



Premier Asquith demanded of General Gough the return of the document given him by Secretary Seely; and issued stringent orders governing the relations of the army to the government. General French and General Ewart declined to withdraw their resignations, and the Premier was compelled to accept the resignation of Colonel Seely. Then came a complete surprise in Parliament. Instead of naming another man as Secretary of State for war, Mr. Asquith assumed the office himself.



The assumption of the new office necessitates the resignation of Mr. Asquith as member of Parliament, and his standing for re-election by his constituency of East Fife. This is considered an adroit move on the Premier's part. For if his seat should be contested, he will have three weeks in which to adjust matters. So grave has been the issue between the people and the army, or rather between the people and the officers of the army, that Ulster and Irish Home Rule have been thrown into the background. Mr. Asquith's firm stand for civil government, and his assumption of the war portfolio, have aroused such enthusiasm among his followers that the trend of opinion is thought to be pronouncedly in his favor.



Japanese Politics.

The resignation of the cabinet on the 24th brings to a head the growing discontent with the home government that lately found expression in political riots. Clan government, the radicals claim, has received a severe blow in the disappearance of the Yamamoto cabinet. A statement by the government declared that the cabinet had resigned on account of the failure of the House of Representatives and the House of Peers to agree

on the budget. The opposition journals attribute the fall of the government to the naval scandal, which is undermining the discipline of the navy, and causing the Japanese blue jackets to regard their officers with contempt. The Emperor has ordered Viscount Keigo Kiyoura to form a new cabinet. [See current volume, page 303.]



Tax Reform News.

Barney Haughey, one of the members of the Board of Directors of the Colorado Singletax Association, and a tax expert of many years' experience, has been engaged to make a comparative assessment sheet for each taxpayer in Denver, which will show the actual amount of taxes paid for the year 1913 and the amount his taxes would have been under the Singletax, had that method of assessment and taxation been in use. After these comparative assessment rolls are finished, the information will be available to the general public, and any taxpayer, by applying to the association, will be able to learn in dollars and cents just what the saving will be.



The Industrial Tax Exemption Association of New Jersey is pushing the Hennesey-Fisk bill, now before the legislature, which provides for home rule in taxation for municipalities. A public hearing on this bill at the State House in Trenton was held on March 25.



Edward Polak, Register of Bronx Borough, New York City, has published a computation of the tax rate on land and improvements for the next five years under the proposed Herrick-Schaap bill, which provides for a ten per cent reduction each year of the tax rate on improvements until equal to half of the rate on land values. For the present year the assessed valuation of real estate, exclusive of franchises, is:

	Land.	Improvements.	Tax rate.
Manhattan	\$3,161,949,660	\$1,612,328,120	1.78
Bronx	336,116,060	253,280,895	1.77
Brooklyn	783,859,159	787,627,773	1.84
Queens	280,678,120	166,008,357	1.80
Richmond	40,249,108	36,687,873	1.80
Total value	\$4,602,852,107	\$2,855,932,618	
Total assessed valuation of land and im-			
provements		\$7,458,784,625.00	
The total budget for 1914 is.....			192,995,551.62

Mr. Polak figures that with the same budget the tax rate under the Herrick-Schaap bill for the next five years would be:

Manhattan:	On Land.	On Im-
		provements.
Tax rate for 1915.....	1.85	1.66½=90%
Tax rate for 1916.....	1.91	1.53 =80%
Tax rate for 1917.....	1.98	1.39 =70%
Tax rate for 1918.....	2.07	1.24 =60%
Tax rate for 1919.....	2.14	1.07 =50%