

MESSAGE ON CONSERVATION AND LABOR

President Taft Reviews the Work and Approves the Recommendations of the Interior Department.

For Leasing of Coal Lands and Government Ownership of Railroads in Alaska—Advocates Federal Control of Water Power Sites—Favors International Commission on the High Cost of Living—Proposes a Commission to Investigate Industrial Disputes and Kindred Matters Affecting Labor.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

There is no branch of the federal jurisdiction which calls more imperatively for immediate legislation than that which concerns the public domain and especially the part of that domain which is in Alaska. The report of the secretary of the interior, which is transmitted herewith, and the report to him of the governor of Alaska set out the public need in this regard with great force and in satisfactory detail.

The progress under the reclamation act has made clear the defects of its limitations which should be remedied. The rules governing the acquisition of homesteads of land that is not arid or semiarid are not well adapted to the perfecting of title to land made arable by government reclamation work.

I concur with the secretary of the interior in his recommendation that, after entry is made upon land being reclaimed, actual occupation as a homestead of the same be not required until two years after entry, but that cultivation of the same shall be required and that the present provision under which the land is to be paid for in ten annual installments shall be so modified as to allow a patent to issue for the land at the end of five years' cultivation and three years' occupation, with a reservation of a government lien for the amount of the unpaid purchase money. This leniency to the reclamation homesteader will relieve him from occupation at a time when the condition of the land makes it most burdensome and difficult and at the end of five years will furnish him with a title upon which he can borrow money and continue the improvement of his holding.

I also concur in the recommendation of the secretary of the interior that all of our public domain should be classified and that each class should be disposed of or administered in the manner most appropriate to that particular class.

The chief change, however, which ought to be made and which I have already recommended in previous messages and communications to congress is that by which government coal land and phosphate and other mineral lands containing nonmetalliferous minerals shall be leased by the government, with restrictions as to size and time, resembling those which now obtain throughout the country between the owners in fee and the lessees who work the mines and in leases like those which have been most successful in Australia, New Zealand and Nova Scotia. The showing made by investigations into the successful working of the leasing system leaves no doubt as to its wisdom and practical utility. Requirements as to the working of the mine during the term may be so framed as to prevent any holding of large mining properties merely for speculation, while the royalties may be made sufficiently low not unduly to increase the cost of the coal mined and at the same time sufficient to furnish a reasonable income for the use of the public in the community where the mining goes on. In Alaska there is no reason why a substantial income should not thus be raised for such public works as may be deemed necessary or useful.

There is no difference between the reasons which call for the application of the leasing system to the coal lands still retained by the government in the United States proper and those which exist in Alaska.

There are now in Alaska only two well known high grade coal fields of large extent, the Bering river coal field and the Matanuska coal field. The Bering river coal field, while it has varying qualities of coal from the bituminous to the anthracite, is very much lessened in value and usefulness by the grinding effect to which in geological ages past the coal measures have been subjected, so that the coal does not lie or cannot be mined in large lumps. It must be taken out in almost a powdered condition. The same difficulty does not appear to the same extent in the Matanuska coal fields. The Bering river coal fields are only twenty-five miles from the coast. They are within easy distance of an existing railroad built by the Morgan-Guggenheim interests and may also be reached through Controller bay by the construction of other and competing railroads.

Controller bay is not a good harbor, but could probably be made practical with the expenditure of considerable money. The railroad of the Morgan-Guggenheim interests, running from

Cordova, could be made a coal carrying road for the Bering river fields by the construction of a branch to those fields not exceeding fifty or sixty miles. It is practicable, and if the coal measures were to be opened up doubtless the branch would be built. In the present condition of things there is no motive to build the road, because there is no title or opportunity to open and mine the coal.

The Matanuska coal fields are a longer distance from the coast. They are from 150 to 200 miles from the harbor of Seward, on Resurrection bay. This is one of the finest harbors in the world, and a reservation has been made there for the use of the navy of the United States. A road constructed from Seward to the Matanuska coal fields would form part of a system reaching from the coast into the heart of Alaska and open the great interior valleys of the Yukon and the Tanana, which have agricultural as well as great mineral possibilities.

The Alaska Central road has been constructed some seventy-one miles of the distance from Seward north to the Matanuska coal fields, but the construction beyond this has been discouraged, first, by the fact that there has been no policy adopted of opening up the coal lands upon which investors could depend and, second, because there seems to be a lack of financial backing of those engaged in the enterprise. The secretary of the interior has ascertained that the bondholders, who are the real owners of the road, are willing to sell to the government, and he recommends the purchase of the existing road, such reconstruction as may be necessary, its continuance to the Matanuska coal fields and thence into the valleys of the Yukon and the Tanana. It would be a great trunk line and would be an opening up of Alaska by government capital.

I am not in favor of government ownership where the same certainty and efficiency of service can be had by private enterprise, but I think the conditions presented in Alaska are of such a character as to warrant the government, for the purpose of encouraging the development of that vast and remarkable territory, to build and own a trunk line railroad, which it can lease on terms which may be varied and changed to meet the growing prosperity and development of the territory.

There is nothing in the history of the United States which affords such just reason for criticism as the failure of the federal government to extend the benefit of its fostering care to the territory of Alaska. There was a time, of course, when Alaska was regarded as so far removed into the Arctic ocean as to make any development of it practically impossible, but for years the facts have been known to those who have been responsible for its government, and every one who has given the subject the slightest consideration has been aware of the wonderful possibilities in its growth and development if only capital were invested there and a good government put over it. I think the United States owes it, therefore, to Alaska and to the people who have gone there to take an exceptional step and to build a railroad that shall open the treasures of Alaska to the Pacific and to the people who live along that ocean on our western coast. The construction of a railroad and ownership of the fee do not necessitate government operation. Pursuant, however, to the recommendation of the secretary of the interior, I suggest to congress the wisdom of providing that the president may appoint a commission of competent persons, including two army engineers, to examine and report upon the available routes for a railroad from Seward to the Matanuska coal fields and into the Tanana and Yukon valleys, with an estimate of the value of the existing partially constructed railroad and of the cost of continuing the railroad to the proper points in the valleys named. This proposal is further justified by the need that the navy of the United States has for a secure coaling base in the north Pacific. The commission ought to make a full report also as to the character of the coal fields at Matanuska and the problem of furnishing coal from that source for mercantile purposes after reserving for government mining a sufficient quantity for the navy.

I have already recommended to congress the establishment of a form of commission government for Alaska. The territory is too extended, its needs are too varied and its distance from Washington too remote to enable congress to keep up with its necessities in the matter of legislation of a local character.

The governor of Alaska in his report, which accompanies that of the secretary of the interior, points out certain laws that ought to be adopted and emphasizes what I have said as to the immediate need for a government of much wider powers than now exists there if it can be said to have any government at all.

I do not stop to dwell upon the lack of provision for the health of the inhabitants and the absence or inadequacy of laws, the mere statement of which shows their crying need. I only press upon congress the imperative necessity for taking action not only to permit the beginning of the development of Alaska and the opening of her resources, but to provide laws which shall give to those who come under their jurisdiction decent protection.

Lower Colorado River.
There is transmitted herewith a letter from the secretary of the interior setting out the work done under joint resolution approved June 25, 1910, authorizing the expenditure of \$1,000,000 or so much thereof as might be necessary, to be expended by the president for the purpose of protecting lands and

property in the Imperial valley and elsewhere along the Colorado river in Arizona. The money was expended and the protective works erected, but the disturbances in Mexico so delayed the work and the floods in the Colorado river were so extensive that a part of the works have been carried away, and the need for further action and expenditure of money exists. I do not make a definite recommendation at present, for the reason that the plan to be adopted for the betterment of conditions near the mouth of the Colorado river proves to be so dependent upon a free and full agreement between the government of Mexico and the government of the United States as to joint expenditure and joint use that it is unwise to move until we obtain some agreement with that government which will enable us to submit to congress a larger plan better adapted to the exigencies presented than the one adopted. It is essential that we act promptly, and through the state department, the matter is being pressed upon the attention of the Mexican government. Meantime a report of the engineer in charge, together with a subsequent report upon his work by a body of experts appointed by the secretary of the interior, together with an offer by the Southern Pacific railroad to do the work at a certain price with a guaranty for a year, and a comment upon this offer by Brigadier General Marshall, late chief of engineers, United States army, and now consulting engineer of the reclamation service, are all herewith transmitted.

Water Power Sites.
In previous communications to congress I have pointed out two methods by which the water power sites on nonnavigable streams may be controlled as between the state and the national government. It has seemed wise that the control should be concentrated in one government or the other as the active participant in supervising its use by private enterprise. In most cases where the government owns what are called water power sites along nonnavigable streams, which are really riparian lots, without which the power in the stream cannot be used, we have a situation as to ownership that may be described as follows: The federal government has land without which the power in the stream cannot be transmitted into electricity and applied at a distance, while it is claimed that the state under the law of waters as it prevails in many of our western states controls the use of the water and gives the beneficial use to the first and continuous user. In order to secure proper care by the state governments over these sources of power it has been proposed that the government shall deed the water power site to the state on condition that the site and all the plant upon it shall revert to the government unless the state parts with the site only by a lease, the terms of which it enforces and which requires a reevaluation of the rental every ten years, the full term to last not more than fifty years. A failure of the state to make and enforce such leases would enable the government by an action of forfeiture to recover the power sites and all plants that might be erected thereon, and this power of penalizing those who succeed to the control would furnish a motive to compel the observance of the policy of the government.

The secretary of the interior has suggested another method by which the water power site shall be leased directly by the government to those who exercise a public franchise under provisions imposing a rental for the water power to create a fund to be expended by the general government for the improvement of the stream and the benefit of the local community where the power site is, and permitting the state to regulate the rates at which the converted power is sold. The latter method suggested by the secretary is a more direct method for federal control, and in view of the probable union and systematic organization and welding together of the power derived from water within a radius of 200 or 400 miles. I think it better that the power of control should remain in the national government than that it should be turned over to the states. Under such a system the federal government would have such direct supervision of the whole matter that any honest administration could easily prevent the abuses which a monopoly of absolute ownership in private persons or companies would make possible.

Bureau of National Parks.
I earnestly recommend the establishment of a bureau of national parks. Such legislation is essential to the proper management of those wondrous manifestations of nature, so startling and so beautiful that every one recognizes the obligations of the government to preserve them for the edification and recreation of the people. The Yellowstone park, the Yosemite, the Grand canyon of the Colorado, the Glacier National park and the Mount Rainier National park and others furnish appropriate instances. In only one case have we made anything like adequate preparation for the use of a park by the public. That case is the Yellowstone National park. Every consideration of patriotism and the love of nature and of beauty and of art requires us to expend money enough to bring all these natural wonders within easy reach of our people. The first step in that direction is the establishment of a responsible bureau which shall take upon itself the burden of supervising the parks and of making recommendations as to the best method of improving their accessibility and usefulness.

International Commission on the Cost of Living.
There has been a strong movement among economists, business men and others interested in economic investigation to secure the appointment of an

international commission to look into the cause for the high prices of the necessities of life. There is no doubt but that a commission could be appointed of such unprejudiced and impartial persons, experts in investigation of economic facts, that a great deal of very valuable light could be shed upon the reasons for the high prices that have so distressed the people of the world and information given upon which action might be taken to reduce the cost of living. The very satisfactory report of the railway stock and bonds commission indicates how useful an investigation of this kind can be when undertaken by men who have had adequate experience in economic inquiries and a levelheadedness and judgment correctly to apply sound principles to the facts found.

For some years past the high and steadily increasing cost of living has been a matter of such grave public interest that I deem it of great public interest that an international conference be proposed at this time for the purpose of preparing plans, to be submitted to the various governments, for an international inquiry into the high cost of living, its extent, causes, effects and possible remedies. I therefore recommend that to enable the president to invite foreign governments to such a conference, to be held at Washington or elsewhere, the congress provide an appropriation, not to exceed \$20,000, to defray the expenses of preparation and of participation by the United States.

The numerous investigations on the subject, official or other, already made in various countries (such as Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States) have themselves strongly demonstrated the need of further study of worldwide scope. Those who have conducted these investigations have found that the phenomenon of rising prices is almost, if not quite, general throughout the world, but they are baffled in the attempt to trace the causes by the impossibility of making any accurate international comparisons. This is because, in spite of the number of investigations already made, we are still without adequate data and because as yet no two countries estimate their price levels on the same basis or by the same methods.

As already indicated, a preliminary conference itself would entail a comparatively small expense, and most of the subsequent investigations for which it would prepare the way could be carried out by existing bureaus in this and other governments as part of their regular work and would require little, if any, additional appropriations for such bureaus.

Commission on Industrial Relations.
The extraordinary growth of industry in the past two decades and its revolutionary changes have raised new and vital questions as to the relations between employers and wage earners which have become matters of pressing public concern. These questions have been somewhat obscured by the profound changes in the relations between competing producers and producers as a class and consumers—in other words, by the changes which, among other results, have given rise to what is commonly called the trust problem. The large scale production characteristic of modern industry, however, involves the one set of relations no less than the other. Any interruption to the normal and peaceful relations between employer and wage earner involves public discomfort and in many cases public disaster. Such interruptions become, therefore, quite as much a matter of public concern as restraint of trade or monopoly.

Industrial relations concern the public for a double reason. We are directly interested in the maintenance of peaceful and stable industrial conditions for the sake of our own comfort and well being, but society is equally interested in its sovereign civic capacity in seeing that our institutions are effectively maintaining justice and fair dealing between any classes of citizens whose economic interests may seem to clash. Railway strikes on such a scale as has recently been witnessed in France and in England, a strike of coal mine workers such as we have more than once witnessed in this country and such a wholesale relinquishing of a public service as that of the street cleaners recently in New York illustrate the serious danger to public well being and the inadequacy of the existing social machinery either to prevent such occurrences or to adjust them on any equitable and permanent basis after they have arisen.

In spite of the frequency with which we are exposed to these dangers and in spite of the absence of provision for dealing with them we continue to assume with easy going confidence that in each new case somehow or other the parties to the dispute will find some solution which will be agreeable to themselves and consistent with the public interest. We all see the grave objections to strikes and lockouts, however necessary they may be in extreme cases, and we are ready to criticize the more extreme phases of the industrial conflict, such as boycotts and blacklists, but we leave the situation such that industrial disputes lead inevitably to a state of industrial war in which these are the only weapons left to the two combatants. No more clumsy or expensive method of determining the rate of wages and the hours and conditions of labor could well be devised. The successful operation of the Erdman act as between interstate railroads and their employees shows how much good can be done by proper legislation.

At the moment when the disconcerting and dangers incident to industrial strife are actually felt by the public there is usually an outcry for the establishment of some tribunal for the immediate set-

tlement of the particular dispute, but what is needed is some system, devised by patient and deliberate study in advance, that will meet these constantly occurring and clearly foreseeable emergencies, not a makeshift to tide over an existing crisis. Not during the rain-storm, but in fair weather, should the leaking roof be examined and repaired.

The magnitude and complexity of modern industrial disputes have put upon some of our statutes and our present mechanism for adjusting such differences—where we can be said to have any mechanism at all—a strain they were never intended to bear and for which they are unequalled. What is urgently needed today is a re-examination of our laws bearing upon the relations of employer and employee and a careful and discriminating scrutiny of the various plans which are being tried in several of our own states and in other countries. This would seem to be the first natural step in bringing about an adjustment of these relations better suited to the newer conditions of industry.

Numerous special investigations, official and unofficial, have revealed conditions in more than one industry which have immediately been recognized on all sides as entirely out of harmony with accepted American standards. It is probable that to a great extent the remedies for these conditions, so far as the remedies involve legislation, lie in the field of state action. But such a comprehensive inquiry as is necessary to furnish a basis for intelligent action must be undertaken on national initiative and must be nation wide in its scope. In view of the results that have followed the activities of the federal government in education, in agriculture and in other fields which do not lie primarily within the field of federal legislation there can be no serious argument against the propriety or the wisdom of an inquiry by the federal government into the general conditions of labor in the United States, notwithstanding the fact that some of the remedies will lie with the separate states or even entirely outside the sphere of governmental activity in the hands of private individuals and of voluntary agencies. One legitimate object of such an official investigation and report is to enlighten and inform public opinion, which of itself will often induce or compel the reform of unjust conditions or the abatement of unreasonable demands.

The special investigations that have been made of recent industrial conditions, whether private or official, have been fragmentary, incomplete and at best only partially representative or typical. Their lessons, nevertheless, are important, and until something comprehensive and adequate is available they serve a useful purpose, and they will necessarily continue to be made. But unquestionably the time is now ripe for a searching inquiry into the subject of industrial relations which shall be official, authoritative, balanced and well rounded, such as only the federal government can successfully undertake. The present widespread interest in the subject makes this an opportune time for an investigation, which in any event cannot long be postponed. It should be nonpartisan, comprehensive, thorough, patient and courageous.

There is already available much information on certain aspects of the subject in the reports of the federal and state bureaus of labor and in other official and unofficial publications. One essential part of the proposed inquiry would naturally be to assemble, digest and interpret this information so far as it bears upon our present industrial conditions. In addition to this the commission should inquire into the general conditions of labor in our principal industries, into the existing relations between employers and employees in those industries, into the various methods which have been tried for maintaining mutually satisfactory relations between employees and employers and for avoiding or adjusting trade disputes, and into the scope, methods and resources of federal and state bureaus of labor and the methods by which they might more adequately meet the responsibilities which through the work of the commission above recommended would be more clearly brought to light and defined.

Misbranding Imported Goods.

My attention has been called to the injustice which is done in this country by the sale of articles in the trade purporting to be made in Ireland, when they are not so made, and it is suggested that the justice of the enactment of a law which, so far as the jurisdiction of the federal government can go, would prevent a continuance of this misrepresentation to the public and fraud upon those who are entitled to use the statement in the sale of their goods. I think it to be greatly in the interest of fair dealing, which ought always to be encouraged by law, for congress to enact a law making it a misdemeanor punishable by fine or imprisonment to use the mails or to put into interstate commerce any articles of merchandise which bear upon their face a statement that they have been manufactured in some particular country when the fact is otherwise.

Building for Public Archives.

I cannot close this message without inviting the attention of congress again to the necessity for the erection of a building to contain the public archives. The unsatisfactory distribution of records, the lack of any proper index or guide to their contents, is well known to those familiar with the needs of the government in this capital. The land has been purchased, and nothing remains now but the erection of a proper building. I transmit a letter written by Professor J. Franklin Jameson, director of the department of historical

research of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, in which he speaks upon this subject as a member of a committee appointed by the executive council of the American Historical association to bring the matter to the attention of the president and congress.
WM. H. TAFT.
The White House, Feb. 2, 1912.

LITERARY FREAKS.

Curious Styles of Composition That Amused Old Time Writers.

With many writers, especially in older times, various curious styles of composition were much in vogue. One author, for example, would compose verses with some particular letter omitted from every stanza. Other would write in such a way that the line read the same backward and forward, and still others made anagrams. It was fashionable at one time to write verses in fantastic shapes.

The form of a bottle, a glass or a fan was imitated, and this was done by lengthening or shortening the lines as required, though with sad detriment to the verse. Where the design was a bottle a number of short lines would go to form the neck; gradually lengthening, the shoulder would be formed and then the body.

There were also verses arranged in the form of a pair of gloves, a pair of spectacles, etc. Specimens of this kind of literary frivolity are to be found in French, Spanish and English books of the sixteenth century.

Both in China and Japan such literary feats are held in great esteem even at the present day. In the latter country the poet not infrequently arranges his verses in the shape of a man's head, thus perhaps giving a facial outline of the subject of his verse and though the Chinese may not make so nice a choice, choosing perhaps a cow or other animal for the design they display greater ingenuity.

Among the most curious of all literary freaks are the lipogrammatic works composed by the old Greeks. In works in which one letter of the alphabet is omitted. The "Odyssey" of Tryphiodorus is composed in this way. He had no alpha in his first book, no beta in his second, and so on with the subsequent letters one after another.

This "Odyssey" was an imitation of the lipogrammatic "Iliad" of Nestor. There was an ode by Pindar where from he had purposely omitted the letter sigma. This intemperance became a literary fad, encouraged even by those who, it might be thought, would be the first to oppose such literary trifling. In Latin there is a work by Fulgentius divided into twenty-three chapters according to the order of the twenty-three letters of the Latin alphabet. From A to O are still extant. The first chapter is without A, the second without B, and so on.

The Persians also appear to have been given to this freakish work. There is a story to the effect that a poet read to the celebrated Jamil, gazel of his own composition which Jamil did not like.

The writer contended that it was a very curious sonnet, for the letter all was not to be found in any one of the words. To this Jamil very appropriately remarked:

"You can do a better thing yet—take away all the letters from the word you have written."—New York Herald.

Hats in Elizabeth's Time.

The oldest material used for hats is felt, which was in use at the time of the Conquest, while in the Canterbury Tales a merchant is spoken of as wearing "a flaunders beaver hatte." Ladies probably did not begin to wear hats until about the tenth century, if so early, and then it was the lofty head-dress draped with some material which it must have been most trying to keep on even indoors and quite impossible to wear in a wind. According to the "Anatomy of Abuses," written in Queen Elizabeth's time, ladies' hats were very nearly as perplexing then as they are today. "The fashions be rare and strange, so is the stuff whereof the hats be made divers also; for some are of silk, some of velvet, some of taffette and some of wool, and which is more curious, some of a certain kind of fine hairs, these they call beaver hattes, of XX, XXX or XL shilling price, fetched from beyond the seas from whence a great sort of other variety do come besides." In the reign of Henry VIII, hats assumed a "greater richness and beauty," but in the time of the first James they became even more ornate, jewels of price and occasionally small mirrors being used in their adornment.—London Spectator.

Tomb of Omar Khayyam.

Omar Khayyam's tomb at Nishapur is in one wing of the mosque erected in memory of the Moslem saint Imam zadah Mohammed Mahruk. Although the poet's prophecy concerning his tomb—that it would be in a place where the north wind would scatter roses over it—is not literally true, the garden of the mosque is so rich in roses as almost "to make one in love with death." There is no inscription upon the tomb, a simple case made of brick and cement, to tell the story, or even the name, of its occupant, although it is well known to be Omar's grave. "Vandal scribblers," Professor Jackson, who lately visited the spot, says, "have desecrated it with random scrawls and have also scratched their names upon the brown mortar of the adjoining walls, disclosing the white cement underneath. A stick of wood, a stone and some fragments of shards profaned the top of the sarcophagus when we saw it. There was nothing else. It is to be regretted that some of Omar's admirers in the accident do not provide a suitable inscription on the spot to show the renown he enjoys in the west."—Argos.