HOW THE GOVERNMENT CARED FOR HER EMPLOYEES

THE "LABOR QUESTION" ANSWERED

The money of the Panamanians is all in coin, or hard money, for no paper is used. By an arrangement with our government their standard coin, the *peso*, is recognized as half a dollar of our money. To distinguish between the skilled workers and the common laborers in the Zone the former were called "gold employees" and the latter "silver employees." All the Americans and other skilled workers were paid in American money, which is known as "gold," and the laborers from other nations were paid in Panamanian money, which is known as "silver."

More than forty nationalities were represented by the forty-five thousand persons living in the Canal Zone as employees. The Americans numbered about one sixth of the
population, they being the doctors, nurses, teachers, electricians, mechanics, masons, engineers, and the heads of all supervisory work.

The colored laborer was most common, a great number coming from Jamaica and the other West Indies. The best service was rendered by the European laborers who came chiefly from Spain and Italy. It is said one Spaniard could do the work of two Jamaicans. Every nation in the world was represented in some capacity. It was commonly said: "In the Canal Zone you can stand on a corner and see the world go by."

Because of the great variety of names and nations and the fact that a large number
could neither read nor write their names, every employee was provided with a brass check, for identification, which he was required to present before he could draw his pay. The pay car went across the Isthmus once a month, taking three days for the trip, and the bank at Empire sometimes handled three million dollars a month. Out of the $375,000,000 paid for the Canal, $150,000,000 was paid for labor.

After the first two years of the occupation of the Zone the problem of providing food and merchandise for the employees was worked out in this manner: Everything was furnished by the government through a commissary department, whose headquarters were at Cristobal. The government had a laundry, a bakery which put out many thousands of loaves of bread a day, an ice-cream plant, an ice factory, cold-storage accommodations, and all sorts of merchandise. No cash sales were made at the commissary, but books of coupons containing from five to ten dollars'
worth of slips, each equivalent to from one to twenty-five cents, were issued to employees.

The cost of these books was deducted from the employee's salary, and the slips were torn off and used as money by the commissary department, somewhat as we use books of ice tickets here.

Very early in the morning a special train with refrigerator cars left Cristobal with fresh supplies for all the towns along the line. Commissary wagons were waiting in each
town ready to carry the produce to the purchaser, who had ordered it the day before. Almost every luxury common in the United States was provided by the department. The meals served at the hotels were very much like those served in the United States, and, it is said, cost less.

In 1905 the Commission advertised free quarters to both married and single men. Aside from the rent, fuel and distilled water were also furnished free. Ice was delivered
and garbage was removed without charge. The houses were furnished, except for bed-

ding and other personal belongings. This included electric lights and telephones, when they were needed for the man's work. These generous measures were taken to encourage home life in the Zone, because in the early days the men stayed so short a time on account of homesickness. A married man, under these conditions, could live as cheaply
as a single man, and when he had his family with him and was saving more money than he could in the States he was likely to be contented. At the best, however, the life was hard on the women who came, and those who were brave enough to conquer their longing for home and encourage their husbands in their work deserve much credit.

The houses built by the government were painted wooden structures, without plaster. On the outside they were all colored alike, a light drab, while the interiors were likely to be white or green. Some were single dwellings; others housed two, and some four, families. Quarters were assigned according to the size of the man's salary. Only thin clothing is used the year around in Panama, which allowed a great saving of expense in dress. The men often wore white duck for dress. Panama hats were not worn so commonly as one might think, for most Panama hats are not made in Panama, but in Colombia and Ecuador.
A street in Colon. Here are to be found the residences built by the government for the officers of the Isthmian Canal Commission
The first public school was established in Panama in 1906. In 1912 there were forty-six white teachers and twenty-eight colored teachers in as many buildings. The sixteen hundred pupils and the teachers represented thirty-six different states. More than this, there were twenty-one different nationalities enrolled. The books and other material used were furnished free to the pupils, as was the transportation over the railroad to the high schools at Gatun and Ancon.

In the early days, before the commissary furnished the comforts of living in the Zone, a representative of the Y.M.C.A., Mr. A. Bruce Minear, was sent to the Isthmus to study the needs of the employees in the way of clean amusements. By mingling with the men, sharing their hardships, and gaining their confidence, he patiently worked to create a demand for the wholesome, manly recreations furnished by the Association.

Club houses were built by the government, under the direction of this organization,
which furnished gymnasiums, libraries, club rooms for literary and social gatherings, and

facilities for bowling, billiards, baseball, and other clean sports. Ice-cream parlors were a popular feature, and the club rooms were rented for dancing. It is impossible to say just how much this work did toward curing the homesickness and unrest in the Zone,
A game of baseball at Culebra, Canal Zone, where it is as popular as in New York or San Francisco.
but it is certain that it played a very important part in the building of the Canal. One official declared it did more than any other one department. The lonely man with a long evening on his hands found entertainment always waiting at the club rooms, whereas, before, he had no place to go but the saloon. Following this beginning of social life, church clubs, women's clubs, and lodges were organized. The government built Commission chapels and furnished chaplains, and in every way the life in the United States was duplicated as far as possible for the colony of people living far away from their friends and the opportunities for education and culture.

None of the employees had more than a ten-hour day and many worked only eight hours. There were two-hour intermissions at noon. Aside from free quarters, the men had first-class board cheaper than they could get it in the United States, and free medical advice and hospital care were furnished to
those who were ill. They had nine holidays on full pay, and an annual vacation of forty-
two days on salary. The Americans obtained reduced steamer rates to and from the United States.

In 1908, to further induce the men to stay until the Canal should be finished, a ton of copper, bronze, and tin, which was taken from old French locomotives and excavators, was shipped to the Philadelphia mint, where it was made into medals. These are about the size of a silver dollar, with a picture of Roosevelt on one side and on the other the picture of a ship sailing through Culebra Cut.
The city of Panama as it looks to-day from Ancon Hill
At the completion of the Canal about six thousand of these were due the employees who had earned them by working two years in the Zone. Those who had been there six years were honored by becoming members of the Society of the Chagres, which, it is said, will rank with the Grand Army of the Republic and some of the other national societies.

An attempt was made to survey roads for wagons through the Zone, with some notion of settling it when the Canal was finished, but so much of it is mountainous that there is little inducement to the Americans to try agriculture, and it was not thought desirable to settle the Zone with foreign colonists, because in case of war they might not be loyal to our flag.

So the towns along the route were abandoned. Gorgona and Empire removed parts of their repair shops to Balboa, and the site of Gorgona is now under the waters of Gatun Lake. Houses at other points were knocked
down and rebuilt at Gatun and Pedro Miguel, where they were needed to house the men who will operate the lights and the locks of the Canal. Cristobal and Balboa, at the entrances to the Canal, are the principal cities, and soldiers police the Zone, which is now a military reservation.
The city of Panama, which is nearly two hundred and fifty years old, has a population of fifty thousand. It is the capital of the republic and the distributing center for the Isthmus. The name means "plenty of fish." Spanish customs still prevail among the aristocracy. The business is largely in the hands of Chinese and Japanese. The men dabble in politics. The children of the well-to-do are sent abroad to be educated.
Spanish architecture is found in the houses of the natives. The dwellings have red-tiled roofs and are made of stone overlaid with colored stucco. The houses are built around a court, with the stairs leading to the second stories on the outside of the house. The people of the better class usually live in the second story. The Americans have greatly improved the city, with paved streets, water
pipes, and sewers. The Panamanians were shrewd enough to know that by giving up their stone basins and some other customs they were adding to the value of their property, so they submitted to the new ideas with good grace.

There is a magnificent Catholic cathedral in the heart of the city, surrounded by the bishop’s palace and by business blocks. Panama has a national theater where grand opera has a season once a year. There is streetcar service now, but many of the tourists are still taken over the city in the victoria carriages for ten cents a ride.

One of the customs of Panama is the Sunday lottery. Tickets are sold all through the week, and every Sunday afternoon there is a drawing. The grand prize is seventy-five hundred dollars in silver, and the lucky winner has to have a cart to take so large an amount of money home.

The great celebration of the year is Independence Day, November 3, 4, and 5. For
three days business is at a standstill and festivities rule. A queen is elected by popular vote

In Panama City there are many street vendors offering curious and interesting articles for sale

and receives the homage of all. The people dance in the parks all night, and masquerade in picturesque costumes.

Already the higher social and business circles of Panama are adopting English, and the youth look to the United States as the land of their dreams. The Spanish Catholics are largely responsible for the Spanish
language and customs that prevail along the entire west coast of South and Central America. That religion is the religion of the people. In time, it is believed, the English language will be in equal use.
LEADERS IN THE PROJECT
THE MEN TO WHOM WE OWE THE PANAMA CANAL

The greater part of the work of building the Canal was done during the administrations of Roosevelt and Taft. Taft, as Secretary of War, visited the Isthmus several times and arranged many diplomatic questions. Roosevelt was heart and soul in the enterprise from the beginning, and was much admired by the employees on the Zone.

When he visited the Canal at one time a large flag was hung across Culebra Cut in his honor bearing the words: "We are here to help." With his love for the rough life, Roosevelt enjoyed personally visiting every part of the construction and the excavation work. He shook hands with the employees and stood in line at their mess tents. When troubles arose on the Isthmus he sent Secretary Taft or a commission of
engineers to make a prompt investigation, and as fast as the forms of government would permit he removed all obstacles at Washington that stood in the way of the work.
Although the reports of the greater number of engineers that Roosevelt had sent to determine the best kind of a canal to build stood in favor of the sea-level type, both Roosevelt and Taft used all of their influence to further the lock plan. It was because of this that a small majority was obtained in Congress in favor of the lock type. Later, Roosevelt stood out stoutly against the plan of letting out the work by contract instead of having it all under government control. Both these decisions proved to be most wise and of untold aid in the progress of the Canal.

When Roosevelt found that the first Commission of seven men was too slow in acting, he organized a new Commission and appointed a committee for action, the majority of which lived in the Canal Zone. When this proved unsatisfactory he chose an army officer as chairman of the I. C. C. with all other officers subordinate to him, and put him in complete control of all matters in the Canal
Ex-president Taft and party inspecting work in the Canal Zone
Zone so that nothing should stand in the way of the prompt measures and quick decisions necessary to carry on the work as fast as possible. Taft was equally valuable in preserving pleasant relations with the Panamanian government and in settling money troubles and other affairs of state.

John F. Wallace was the first chief engineer appointed by President Roosevelt. In 1904, with Governor Davis and Colonel Gorgas, he went to the Isthmus, where he found only a narrow path through the jungle marked by the railroad, which was aptly described as "just two streaks of rust and a right of way." He found over seven hundred men at work with hand tools in Culebra Cut. His headquarters were at Panama in a building that once belonged to the French director-general.

Wallace repaired the railroad and rescued from the jungle fifty-eight locomotives and nine hundred and eighty dump cars that belonged to the French. But being a man
of large vision he soon saw that the tools then in use would never accomplish the work before him, so he at once gave an order for nine immense steam shovels.