

The President's Message On The Negro Troops

Replying to the resolution introduced by Senator Foraker President Roosevelt sent to the senate a message dealing with his action in dismissing the negro troops. Accompanying the message was a large amount of testimony together with a statement made by Secretary Taft. Secretary Taft says that he has examined the "new evidence" and finds nothing to change the situation.

In his message President Roosevelt deals very frankly with the discharge of the troops. He cites various reports made to him. Among them one from General A. B. Nettleton, to whom he refers as "an ex-union soldier, a consistent friend of the colored man throughout his life, a life-long republican, a citizen of Illinois, and assistant secretary of the treasury under President Harrison." In the president's opinion these reports and the testimony show clearly that the crimes were committed by members of the discharged troop. He says that General Nettleton reports that one cottage where a children's party had just broken up was "riddled by United States bullets, fired by United States troops, from United States Springfield rifles at close range, with the purpose of killing or maiming the inmates, including the parents and children who were still in the well-lighted house, and whose escape from death under such circumstances was astonishing."

The president says: "In short, the evidence proves conclusively that a number of soldiers engaged in a deliberate and concerted attack, as cold blooded as it was cowardly; the purpose being to terrorize the community, and to kill or injure men, women and children in their homes and beds or on the streets, and this at an hour of the night when concerted or effective resistance or defense was out of the question, and when detection by identification of the criminals in the United States uniform was well-nigh impossible. So much for the original crime. A blacker never stained the annals of our army. It has been supplemented by another, only less black, in the shape of a successful conspiracy of silence for the purpose of shielding those who took part in the original conspiracy of murder. These soldiers were not school boys on a frolic. They were full grown men, in the uniform of the United States army, armed with deadly weapons, sworn to uphold the laws of the United States, and under every obligation of oath and honor not merely to refrain from criminality, but with the sturdiest rigor to hunt down criminality; and the crime they committed or connived at was murder."

He also says: "The effort to confute this testimony so far has consisted in the assertion or implication that the townspeople shot one another in order to discredit the soldiers—an absurdity too gross to need discussion, and unsupported by a shred of evidence. There is no question as to the murder and the attempted murders; there is no question that some of the soldiers were guilty thereof; there is no question that many of their comrades privy to the deed have combined to shelter the criminals from justice. These comrades of the

murderers, by their own action, have rendered it necessary either to leave all the men, including the murderers, in the army, or to turn them all out; and under such circumstances there was no alternative, for the usefulness of the army would be at an end were we to permit such an outrage to be committed with impunity."

The president says he made every effort to persuade those innocent of murder among the soldiers to separate themselves from the guilty by helping to bring them to justice, and they were repeatedly warned but they refused to profit by the warning. He says he has no apology to make for what he did and will follow the same course under similar circumstances. He points out that the dismissal of the troops is no punishment and he regrets his inability to inflict proper punishment upon the soldiers guilty of these outrageous offenses.

The president points out that there are "plenty of precedents for the action taken," and he cites a large number of them.

He concludes his message in this way:

"So much for the military side of the case. But I wish to say something additional, from the standpoint of the race question. In my message at the opening of the congress I discussed the matter of lynching. In it I gave utterance to the abhorrence which all decent citizens should feel for the deeds of the men (in almost all cases white men) who take part in lynchings, and at the same time I condemned, as all decent men of any color should condemn, the action of those colored men who actively or passively shield the colored criminal from the law. In the case of these companies we had to deal with men who in the first place were guilty of what was practically the worst possible form of lynching—for a lynching is in its essence lawless and murderous vengeance taken by an armed mob for real or fancied wrong—and who in the second place covered up the crime of lynching by standing with a vicious solidarity to protect the criminals."

"It is of the utmost importance to all our people that we shall deal with each man on his merits as a man, and not deal with him merely as a member of a given race; that we shall judge each man by his conduct and not his color. This is important for the white man, and it is far more important for the colored man. More evil and sinister counsel never was given to colored men by those advisers, whether black or white, who, by apology and condonation, encouraged conduct such as that of the three companies in question. If the colored men elect to stand by criminals of their own race, because they are of their own race, they assuredly lay up for themselves the most dreadful day of reckoning. Every farsighted friend of the colored race in its efforts to strive onward and upward, should teach first, as the most important lesson, alike to the white man and the black, the duty of treating the individual man strictly on his worth as he shows it. Any conduct by colored people which tends to substitute for this rule the rule of standing by and shielding an evil doer because he is a member of their race, means the inevitable degradation of the colored race. It may and probably does mean damage to the white race, but it means ruin to the black race."

Throughout my term of service in the presidency I have acted on the principles thus advocated. In the north as in the south I have appointed colored men of high character to office, utterly disregarding the pro-

tests of those who would have kept them out of office because they were colored men. So far as was in my power, I have sought to secure for the colored people all their rights under the law. I have done all I could to secure them equal school training when young, equal opportunity to earn their livelihood, and achieve their happiness when old. I have striven to break up peonage; I have upheld the hands of those who, like Judge Jones and Judge Speer, have warred against this peonage, because I would hold myself unfit to be president if I did not feel the same revolt at wrong done a colored man as I feel at wrong done a white man. I have condemned in unstinted terms the crime of lynching perpetrated by white men, and I should take instant advantage of any opportunity where-by I could bring to justice a mob of lynchers. In precisely the same spirit I have now acted with reference to these colored men who have been guilty of a black and dastardly crime. In one policy, as in the other, I do not claim as a favor, but I challenge as a right, the support of every citizen of this country, whatever his color, provided only he has in him the spirit of genuine and far-sighted patriotism."

"THEODORE ROOSEVELT."

MESSAGE ON THE JAPANESE

In transmitting to congress Secretary Metcalf's report on the Japanese at San Francisco, President Roosevelt said:

"To the Senate and House of Representatives: I enclose herewith for your information the final report made to me personally by Secretary Metcalf on the situation affecting the Japanese in San Francisco. The report deals with three matters of controversy—first, the exclusion of the Japanese children from the San Francisco school; second, the boycotting of Japanese restaurants, and, third, acts of violence committed against the Japanese. As to the first matter, I call your especial attention to the very small number of Japanese children who attend school, to the testimony as to the brightness, cleanliness, and good behavior of these Japanese children in the schools, and to the fact that, owing to their being scattered throughout the city, the requirement for them all to go to one special school is impossible of fulfillment and means that they can not have school facilities. Let me point out further that there would be no objection whatever to excluding from the schools any Japanese on the score of age. It is obviously not desirable that young men should go to school with children. The only point is the exclusion of the children themselves. The number of Japanese children attending the public schools in San Francisco was very small. The government has already directed that suit be brought to test, the constitutionality of the act in question; but my very earnest hope is that such suit will not be necessary, and that as a matter of comity the citizens of San Francisco will refuse to deprive these young Japanese children of education and will permit them to go to the schools. The question as to the violence against the Japanese is most admirably put by Secretary Metcalf, and I have nothing to add to his statement. I am entirely confident that, as Secretary Metcalf says, the overwhelming sentiment of the state of California is for law and order and for the protection of the Japanese in their persons and property. Both the chief of police and the acting mayor of San Francisco assured Secretary Metcalf that everything possible would be done to protect the Japanese in the city. I authorized and directed Secretary Metcalf to state that if there was failure to protect persons and property, then the entire power of the federal govern-

ment within the limits of the constitution would be used promptly and vigorously to enforce the observance of our treaty, the supreme law of the land, which treaty guaranteed to Japanese residents everywhere in the union full and perfect protection for their persons and property; and to this end everything in my power would be done and all the forces of the United States, both civil and military, which I could lawfully employ, would be employed. I call especial attention to the concluding sentence of Secretary Metcalf's report of November 26, 1906.

"THEODORE ROOSEVELT."

The conclusion of Secretary Metcalf's report was as follows:

"If, therefore, the police power of San Francisco is not sufficient to meet the situation and guard and protect Japanese residents in San Francisco, to whom under our treaty with Japan we guarantee 'full and perfect protection for their persons and property,' then it seems to me it is clearly the duty of the federal government to afford such protection. All considerations which may move a nation, every consideration of duty in the preservation of our treaty obligations, every consideration prompted by fifty years or more of close friendship with the empire of Japan, would unite in demanding, it seems to me, of the United States government and all its people, the fullest protection and the highest consideration for the subjects of Japan."

THE BEVERIDGE BILL

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