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EDITORIAL

## CONGRESSIONAL GLEANINGS—THE PANAMA CANAL AND ITS NEUTRALITY.

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**R**EPRESENTATIVE J. WARREN KEIFER of Ohio brought up in the House a concurrent resolution the effect of which was to open the whole Panama Canal Question. The resolution itself proceeded from the theory that the Canal would be speedily completed, hence the time had come to provide for its safety. The plan is to neutralize the Canal by means of an international treaty comprising the leading nations of the world who would undertake to guarantee the neutrality of the waterway in peace and in war. The facts rehearsed by the proposition are facts that it will be well to know and remember. Much of what is going on in the economic world generally is otherwise unclear.

The Canal scheme was cradled by a fraud upon the Nation. It never would have done to tell the whole truth of what the schemers had up their sleeves. So it happened that the original cost at which the undertaking was placed was \$139,000,000. This expanded,—so did the orations run and the inspired press opinions intended to create a public opinion,—the “monumental undertaking” would be ready, and would thereby cause untold wealth to flow into the coffers of “our people,” besides placing the United States in a strategic position to “lick the world”; more stately Jingo said: “Defy the Navies of the world.” “Patriotism” played its full share in the cheat, and scored one more for the historic definition of the word. In the meantime rafts of political officials, from Roosevelt and Taft down, who, in matters mechanical, could not tell their knees from their elbows, have traveled to the Zone and “reported” back their “approval”; labor fakirs, from Moffett of the Bricklayers’ Union down to Rand School adepts, were sent to inspect and returned to fill magazine articles with—pictures; and all the time the tom-tom was beaten.

About eight years had elapsed since the first move in this direction when

Representative Keifer spoke last May. And what is the present status? In point of time, the completion of the Canal is indefinitely postponed; in point of expenditure, the original maximum estimate of \$139,000,000 has been more than doubled: Representative Keifer admitted \$400,000,000 as a minimum, while others in Congress talked of \$500,000,000; in point of engineering, none except the officials who have to speak as instructed, are fatuous enough to approve of the “lock” system: all others, and who know what they are talking about, are clear upon the futility of the “locks,” they know that the plan, even if “completed,” will be completed only to break down, and that the scheme is merely to make a show of completing something; finally, as to the political significance of the Canal, and the power it was to impart to the United States, the Keifer plan of neutralization is a complete, a sorry, and an immediate back-down.

Representative Gardner of Michigan threw in the hypothesis, which, significantly enough, he declared was “not a mere hypothesis,” of the United States getting into a war with an Oriental power; of our fleet having met with defeat in Oriental waters; of the victorious fleet appearing at the entrance of the Panama Canal, a canal, he added, built by our own Government and largely for military purposes; of that fleet enjoying free transportation under the American flag and protection to this side of the Atlantic, as that fleet would assuredly have to enjoy if the Canal was neutralized; and finally of such a fleet, thus transported and protected by the United States, thereupon appearing, for instance, off New York or Boston. Such an eventuality Representative Keifer was forced to admit the neutralization plan of the Canal would expose the country to, and, still more significantly, he added that the only alternative to such an eventuality would be the fortifying of the Canal, and that that “would be still more disastrous”!

And there is where the country “is at” in the matter of {the} Panama Canal—so far.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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