

Opposition to Filipino Independence Is Lead By Secretary of War

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 29.—Secretary of War Weeks today appeared in person, accompanied by General McIntyre, Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, before the House Committee conducting hearings on the various resolutions for Philippine independence.

The Secretary of War declared that precipitate action must be avoided in this matter. The question is whether the United States can withdraw and justify itself and its conscience before the world.

"The United States is entitled to a good name and reputation in its action in the Philippines," said Mr. Weeks. The Secretary went on to talk of the great freedom the Filipinos were enjoying under the American flag. "We cannot lightly relieve ourselves of our obligation to the Filipino people and of our international reputation and credit."

Mr. Weeks laid great emphasis on the proximity of Manila to the British, Japanese, French and Chinese interests and ports.

Big American Investments.

The total American investments in the Islands can be divided along the following lines, said the Secretary of War: \$70,000,000 in government bonds held in this country and tax exempt from all Federal, State and municipal laws. (2) about \$25,000,000 in railroad interests; (3) about one and a half million dollars in telegraph and telephone interests and (4) about fifteen million dollars on other interests. There is invested extensively British, Chinese, and Spanish capital in the Philippines. The problem of immediate independence is so vitally interlocked with the material welfare of the whole Filipino people that the question arises, said the Secretary of War, "whether sufficient, mature consideration has been given to the matter by the Filipino nation." He said further: "The present demand for complete, immediate independence is not expressive of the best interests and the wishes of the Filipino people."

There can be no greater temptation to the nearby overcrowded people than the present situation under which there exist vast tracts of uncultivated lands. "It is my opinion that the greatest need of the Filipino people today is capital to develop their natural resources."

Wants Support For Wood.

The Secretary of War made a strong plea for the development of a "disposition on the part of the Filipino leaders to obey the law and co-operate with the Governor General Wood." He contended repeatedly that the Philippines would suffer great economic loss thru their being declared independent. The Filipinos have not yet succeeded establishing complete national regional unity and in exploiting their great resources and placing their goods on the world market was the contention of Weeks.

Weeks laid considerable emphasis on the alleged illegal manner in which the Philippine legislature was supposed to have handled the native government's gold reserve when money was invested in the development of sugar and oil centrals.

Schaffer For Filipinos.

At this point Congressman Schaffer of Wisconsin asked the Secretary of War, whether it was not a fact the American Governor General was there at the time the gold reserve was handled in this fashion and that therefore he should be held at least as much responsible as any one else. Weeks replied that he was not sure about the law and that he would have to look it up before answering the question. Then Congressman Schaffer protested against this matter being introduced into the record. The Congressman went on to declare that the control of the vast land domain by the government, spoke rather well for the ability of the Filipino people to govern themselves. "It is better for them to hold on to this land than give it away to the big corporations as those headed by Doheny and Sinclair," said Mr. Schaffer. This remark brought a smile from General McIntyre. Weeks replied very feebly by saying that he used this point merely as an argument about the Island's great resources being a tremendous temptation to the adjoining countries. Weeks was forced to admit that the three political parties of the Philippine Islands were all for independence but he deplored the failure of the native leaders to co-operate with General Wood.

Demands Protection For Capitalist Investors.

In the course of the questioning of him by several members of the committee, Secretary of War Weeks disclosed the real basis of the American imperialist designs on the Philippines. He declared very frankly: "Before giving the Philippines independence, some provisions should be laid down to make the bonds, \$70,000,000, held by American investors, as safe as they were when they were issued. When these bonds were issued it was assumed by the investors that they were safe. We should guarantee their continued safety now as they were at the time they were taken up by the investors." The Secretary of War admitted, however, that this point of view involves merely a moral obligation rather than a legal one. General McIntyre agreed that the ruling of Attorney Generals to date have been also that this was more of a moral obligation on the part of the Government than a legal point of view.

Japanese Scare Hovers Over Sessions.

Here the committee was given somewhat of a scare. The Japanese bugaboo was injected and it was handled very cleverly and with deadly effect. First of all, Congressman Ward inquired in a sort of half-suppressed manner, whether it was not

a fact that if a Japanese army had invaded the Philippines, an American force would be sent to drive the Japanese out. Congressman Ward prefaced his remarks with a very guarded statement that he was not sure whether this, the committee hearing sessions, was the proper place where the Japanese question should be discussed. It may be all a matter of jingoism, but it is in the American mind and we ought to consider this somewhere.

When Congressman Knutson of Minnesota, pressed further the point of the danger of Japanese aggression, the members of the committee became rather wary and demanded that all these questions should be stricken from the record and handled in executive session.

Want People Kept Ignorant.

Committee Chairman Fairfield of Indiana, came to the rescue of his perturbed colleagues by making a fervid plea that the newspaper men who have a high "moral sense" should not disclose any portion of this debate and keep it entirely out of the records. The committee members were apparently greatly disturbed by the likelihood of the people seeing thru the Japanese bugaboo that has continually been raised to prejudice and confuse the whole Philippine independence issue.

"Capital Too Timid."

Weeks made a plea that capital was "too timid" to invest in the Islands as long as conditions were as unstable as they are today. This caused Congressman Schaffer to ask: "When in the name of goodness will capital feel safe enough to invest, since we are always being told that this uncertainty of capital is a strong argument against independence?" Weeks questioned he could not answer this question, tho he was of the opinion that two or four years was an insufficient period for American capitalists to get the necessary sense of security to inspire their investing their capital in the Islands. Weeks definitely opposed the extension of native governmental control in the Philippines, as for instance, the election by the Filipinos of the Governor General instead of the present system of appointment by the President of the United States. The Secretary of War said he could see no other way in which the American government could retain its present control of the Islands.

Roxhas Replies.

Speaker Roxhas, representing the Filipino Independence Mission, then made a very effective reply to the Secretary of War. Speaker Roxhas showed that the Philippine government never appropriated any money for the investments in the sugar and oil centrals as had been stated by Weeks. Mr. Roxhas showed that the Head of the Philippine National Bank had merely lent some money of his own accord and that he was now serving time in jail for this act. He went on to show that the Philippine government has today more than thirty million dollars of its national gold reserve in powerful American banks chosen by Governor General Wood. Mr. Roxhas very ably pointed out that the financial slump which hit the Philippine Islands was not due to the incompetence of the Philippines to administer their national economy but rose from the world wide economic depression which hit the world at the close of the War. The transactions entered into by the Philippine National Bank were perfectly good, legitimate transactions at the time they were consummated, declared Speaker Roxhas. "The sugar centrals are today paying every cent of interest every year. The Philippine currency is today at par and often at a premium. This is the condition, at this time, when we are asking our independence. This shows very clearly that our government is able to maintain peace and order. Our government is supported and elected by the people and is meeting all its international obligations. Under the present status we have reached the maximum of economic development. Secretary Weeks admits himself that the present uncertainty is harmful to the extension of investments of capital.

"We are a people who have fought several wars for our national independence and freedom. For three years we have waged a hopeless war again the United States for our independence. We are a people that can make mature and deliberate decisions. We have given great thought to this important question of our national independence. We have no fear of the dissensions in our country spoken of by the Secretary of War Weeks. We no longer demand any sacrifices, monetary or any other, by the United States in our behalf. The Jones Law did not lay down any provisions or conditions as to our economic indebtedness or the degree of perfection to be attained by us economically before getting our freedom. If we are to accept the condition of the currency as the criterion of the worthiness of national independence and recognition, then only England and the United States would be independent today." These were the concluding remarks of Speaker Roxhas.

At least another session will be held on Philippine independence. The outlook for a favorable committee report is good.