

(February 11, 1915.)

## The Monroe Doctrine

BY HON. WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT.\*

AT a special luncheon of the Canadian Club, held on the 11th February, Hon. Mr. Taft said:

*Mr. President, Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. Chief Justice, and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club of Toronto*—"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," (laughter) but I haven't any responsibility now—I can be a fool if I choose. (Laughter.) Until you have tried it you don't know the pleasure. (Renewed laughter.)

I retain with the liveliest sense of gratitude the cordial reception that I had at the hands of your Club last year, and I could not resist, therefore, the invitation which you sent me to speak again, because it indicated that if I tried your patience you were an enduring people. (Laughter.)

I value the compliment highly of the presence of this distinguished company, of your Lieutenant-Governor, your Chief Justice, and all the gentlemen whose presence here indicates that in this room is the essence of the best of Toronto. I know you won't object to that. (Laughter.) You perhaps will admit it. (Continued laughter.)

Nor am I afraid of the intimation of your Chairman that refers to my love of speech. I agree that Mr. Bryan and I probably have the long distance record in the country. But once I come into the country of your Mr. Justice Riddell and Boanerges Macdonald, I feel that I am in an atmosphere that is entirely homelike. (Roars of laughter.)

I am very grateful to the President of Toronto University for giving me a professional opportunity of coming here, to enjoy again the warm hospitality of this Capital of Ontario, (hear, hear) in the days of the century of peace that divides us and unites us. Certainly it is an occasion for profound gratitude. (Hear, hear.)

It is not that we have not had our differences. If everything had always been smooth, the precedent would not be so

\* Hon. Mr. Taft's second visit to Toronto enhanced the reputation he won on his first visit as a speaker and publicist. Certain questions with respect to the Monroe Doctrine, which had arisen just prior to Mr. Taft's visit to Toronto, made his address on this subject particularly timely and interesting.

valuable. Many times there has been a strain. You cannot expect people to live so close without having strains from time to time. But that hundred years of peace has demonstrated that war between us, and that anything that can't be settled by arbitration or judicial settlement, is impossible. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

You didn't like it, England didn't like it, when we had the Geneva arbitration; but you took your medicine, paid your fifteen million dollars like good sports,—and we have had difficulty in distributing it since. (Laughter.)

Then we went into arbitration about the fisheries, and you got five million dollars out of us, and we paid it; we didn't like it, but we paid it. That's what arbitration means; that's what the spirit of arbitration means. You must not go into arbitration with the feeling that you are bound to win and won't abide by it if you don't. In other words, no arbitration is worth anything unless both sides are able to stand defeat. (Hear, hear.)

Now, I am to talk about the Monroe policy. That is ours, not yours; it is nobody's but the United States'. That is the first proposition. When you get that into your heads, you can understand what the doctrine of Monroe was. What followed from that, the corollaries, you understand of course, need elaboration. But that is the first principle with regard to the Monroe Doctrine, and as I trace its history I hope to show you what has followed from that feature of the policy.

First I want to say something with reference to the war. You are strained in your heart strings; you have had awakened a spirit of patriotism in you, a spirit of self-sacrifice, and you are in a tense state of feeling; and therefore it is to be expected that your attitude in looking at many questions is different from the attitude of the United States, which is not involved in this war. The irritations that naturally follow from that difference in situation we understand and bear with. We must look on it as natural, but we must not have anything to break or seriously fracture the bond which that hundred years of peace has made permanent between us. (Applause.)

You knew when you invited me that I was an American, a citizen of the United States, and that we have a President of the United States selected by the people. I am loyal to that President, and get behind him in his foreign policy,—and you would not have any opinion of me if I wouldn't. (Hear, hear.) You see I am just clearing the decks. (Laughter.)

Over ninety years have gone since President Monroe sent his message to the Congress of the United States. The Holy Alliance of Russia, Prussia, France and Austria, with Spain in the outskirts, were looking with very anxious eyes at the spread of republican doctrine, the doctrine of popular government, in South America and Central America by revolutions against Spain. At first, Castlereagh, in England, rather seemed to sympathize with Metternich and the Holy Alliance. Then Canning came in, and he didn't sympathize at all. He urged upon Rush, our Minister to London, that England and America should issue a statement of policy protesting against concerted action by the Holy Alliance to help Spain in her struggle to recover her revolted and revolting colonies. Finally John Quincy Adams, who had had a great deal of experience, and was a very able man,—subsequently one of our one-term Presidents (laughter)—I want to defend that class (renewed laughter)—who was the Secretary of State under President Monroe, and John C. Calhoun, Secretary for War, also a great man, discussed in the Cabinet what should be done. Adams, Monroe, and indeed Calhoun, resolved that there could be no joint action with England on this subject, because the policy they wished to declare was to be the policy of the United States, and ought not to have any contractual character. That I regard as a very important circumstance in the initiation of that policy.

The declaration of the policy in the President's message was of two parts: first, a declaration to the world against any effort on the part of European Governments to force their political system upon any people of this hemisphere, or to oppress it; and that such action would be deemed inimical to the United States; second, that the subjection or colonization by any European Government of any part of the two continents in this hemisphere would also be regarded as inimical to the United States. The first part grew out of the attitude of the Holy Alliance toward the revolt of the colonies of Spain. The second was directed to certain claims which Russia was then making to a right to colonize the northwest Pacific coast of North America claims conflicting with claims of the United States. Our theory was that every part of the two continents had been occupied or taken possession of and belonged to some Government and therefore the colonization of land belonging to some one else was inimical to the United States. Of course the declaration excepted from its application any effort of Spain to recover her lost colonies, or the continued exercise of government by any European countries over colonies they then had.

The language was drafted by Adams, prompted by Canning, and acquiesced in afterwards by him, though he had desired it as a joint declaration. What it means can only be determined by its result in action of the United States, and from the declarations of her statesmen who have interpreted and repeated it.

One of the first instances—I have not time to go over them all—is the rejection by Mr. Webster, under President Tyler, of the proposed joint agreement with England and France as to the disposition of Cuba, should Spain give it up. He said the United States did not object to the retention of Cuba by Spain, but could not consent to the disposal of it to any other power.

Again, Yucatan had revolted from Mexico, and the leaders of the revolt suggested to President Polk their willingness to deliver over Yucatan to the United States for a reasonable pecuniary consideration, (laughter) and then intimated, in order to make the inducement a little greater, that if the United States did not take it, they would go on and offer it to France, Spain or England. To which President Polk answered, that not only would the United States not take it, but the United States could not consent to its transfer to any other country, because she would regard it as "inimical to our peace and safety."

Again, General Grant formulated the same corollary of the Doctrine in respect to the West Indies.

Finally, when Mexico hadn't paid its debts to France, Louis Napoleon, during our Civil War, sent an army over to that country. Mr. Seward inquired what France intended doing with an army there. The answer was that France was not there for any ulterior purpose, but that Mexico hadn't paid its debts, and this expedition was merely to collect the debts and punish the people for wrongs done to French citizens. France stayed there some time. Then Maximilian and the House of Hapsburg got mixed up in it. The Civil War was over. The President sent Sheridan with a large force to mass along the Mexican border, and then invited France to withdraw, and she did. The course of events was quite significant. I repeat them. When France protested that it was not an effort for colonization or to force her government on Mexico, the United States made no further objection. Then when in spite of this statement an empire was established, the United States objected, and France withdrew.

Then came what some of you recollect who are as old as I am—the Venezuelan business. President Cleveland and Mr. Olney thought they discovered a deep-laid scheme on the part of Great Britain in the guise of a boundary dispute to sequester much territory belonging to Venezuela. It contained, I think, gold mines. England declined for a time to arbitrate. President Cleveland thought that he saw something sinister, and he and Secretary Olney wrote some things that we now regard in the category of things we would rather have left unsaid. In the first place, when you look back at it, it is comforting that we got through as we did! Lord Salisbury had a sense of humor, and dealt with us patiently, and in the end it worked itself out all right. But when you consider that England had her navy and we had just one modern gun on many—I don't know how many—thousand miles of coast,—well, gentlemen, you can see we play poker in our country. (Laughter.)

In the letter of Mr. Olney he said the United States was practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat was law upon the subjects upon which it exercised its interposition. We don't claim that this is an accurate statement of the Monroe Doctrine.

Other instances, perhaps, have occurred in which the Monroe Doctrine has been asserted. But the student of history and international politics should be careful to look into it and see whether the action of the United States as taken is based on that Monroe Doctrine or on something else, some other circumstances that makes another principle apply.

We have had in the Monroe Doctrine European acquiescence. Canning suggested it and approved of it when announced. Other statesmen of England in office have approved of it. Other countries, perhaps not formally, have acquiesced in it. There has been a great deal of criticism of it in the newspaper press, perhaps officially inspired.—I don't understand official inspiration of the press, but they do have such a thing.—(Laughter.) But on the whole it has been always asserted by the United States and has actually been acquiesced in, whether formally or not. It is not claimed by the United States that it is a principle of international law. It is not claimed that anybody is bound by agreement to observe it. Only the United States has asserted that policy as necessary to its interests.

Now the principle as asserted, is only a corollary of the principle laid down by Washington in his farewell address with regard to entangling alliances with European Govern-

ments. These Washington enjoined upon us to avoid. If European countries were allowed to come here and embroil themselves in controversies on this side of the water, we would be drawn into the maelstrom of European politics. Hence the Monroe Doctrine clearly saves us from entangling connections with European issues.

I have the conviction that the Monroe Doctrine has made for peace in the world. (Hear, hear.) It has enabled the American republics to enjoy independence; it has not enabled them to keep peace with each other, or to keep peace in their midst, but it has kept out of this hemisphere the influence of that land hunger and that growing desire for political colonization of European Governments that would not have made ultimately for the peace and content of this hemisphere. (Applause.)

Now, I quite agree that the revolutions and instabilities of American republics are something one must complain of and should deplore. We have to learn as we go on that people are not all of them fit to enjoy the benefits of popular government. (Hear, hear.) It takes a people that is trained to self-restraint to be able to carry on popular government. Unless a people understands, and the majority respects the rights of the minority, popular government is impossible, because lack of restraint makes a continual succession of revolutions. The party defeated in an election gets rifles and takes to the woods. The proposition always in such a country is that when a man is defeated in an election or in a battle, he loses his head. That view of the game of politics has got to be eliminated from a country before it can really understand and enjoy the benefits from popular government. They are receiving some lessons on this subject down there. It's a long way—(laughter)—to peace!

Now the South American countries, who have struggled through the disease of revolution, and do represent stability of government, the Argentine Republic, Brazil and Chile, are said to object to the Monroe Doctrine. They say it puts them in a state of tutelage, and gives the United States a suzerainty over them; that they are able to take care of themselves. Well, if they had any necessary relation to the Monroe Doctrine if it was a matter of contrast with them, or acquiescence by them, it would perhaps be proper for them to object. I mean if the United States had not exercised the Monroe Doctrine in its own interests, there might be reason for their objection. Moreover, the countries, Brazil, the Argentine and Chile, are not necessarily within its operation at all.

There are two reasons for this. The first is, because they are so remote, that interference with them would but little affect the interests of the United States. The second, because they are able to look after themselves. Daniel Webster, in 1826, when this Monroe Doctrine was new, pointed out, that it affected only the interest of the United States, that if an attack were made on Chile or Buenos Ayres, those countries being so remote, the United States might well conclude that she need only protest; whereas if a hostile force landed on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, then the United States was directly affected and must forcibly interfere. Latin-Americans are a sensitive, high-strung people, and they are prone to undue excitement. The Castilian is a beautiful language, in which one can write accusations and not seem to be impolite. (Laughter.) So they spend their time in their papers in writing attacks on the United States as an ogre, bent on the further acquisition of land, and attribute to her all sorts of motives.

They entertain and express the deepest suspicion of our Cuban policy. Now I think our record in Cuba is one to be proud of. (Hear, hear, and applause.) We went in, but before we went in, passed a self-denying ordinance, that we would not permanently take over the country, and we didn't. We helped them organize a government of their own, left the Island to them, and withdrew. Then after three years they had a revolution. We went in and composed the revolution, brought about order, held an election, installed a new President, and moved out again. I hope we won't have to go in again, but if we do, we will go in and do our best and move out again. (Hear, hear.)

We have a number of our own people, and their voice is entitled to weight, who say that the Monroe Doctrine is an obsolete shibboleth. But let us suppose that we formally abandoned the policy, and announced it to the world. There is a revolution—well, not every minute, south of our boundary, but certainly one every year. Every revolution, every disturbance of the peace, every failure to meet debts, would involve some European country, and if not at present otherwise engaged, they would probably go in there and acquire a foothold. A policy that for ninety years has been acquiesced in without the firing of a shot, is a policy that acquires a weight which is valuable to the peace of the world, and one that we should not give up, although at times we may find ourselves in pursuing it in some embarrassing situations.

There are peace men among us who regret the Monroe Doctrine because in its last analysis it must be asserted and pursued by force. That is true, but in maintaining it for ninety years we have not fired a shot. We should not be peace at any price now. I claim to be a peace man,—but there are degrees of peace men, I find. Some men believe in a perfect supineness, trusting the world to become perfect over night; others believe we should treat human nature internationally as we do human nature in domestic governments. The very essence of the error of Socialism is in the assumption that if you create by law perfect equality, everybody will be perfect and the State will go on perfectly because made up of just men made perfect by the assumption. Well, you can preach that, but you can't practise it. So with respect to peace, I have done my part, as I hope, to help peace along. (Applause.) But that is no reason why we should not face facts, should not know that nations do injustice, should not recognize that there is human nature in Governments; that there is even more human nature in the sense of less moral restraint, in Governments than in the average individual; that masses of men have less conscience than individuals. We must use common sense and a sense of proportion in such matters. That is the difference between the crank and the optimist: the optimist believes in progress, but he knows that the progress of the world comes step by step. He knows you must struggle against the weaknesses of individuals, because society is made up of individuals, and that it is a slow process; therefore while he has ideals, he does not expect to realize them in his lifetime. He almost comes to believe that slow progress is the only real progress. The crank has ideals, not necessarily any higher than those of the optimist, but he must have his ideals realized next morning for breakfast, or he loses all interest in the thing altogether. (Applause.)

Now, there is a second great limitation with reference to the Monroe Doctrine. The first one, as I have said, is that it is the policy of the United States, not contractual with any power, and the sole question in its enforcement is how much it affects the United States' interests. The second great limitation is that it does not contemplate interference with the right of any European Government to carry on war with an American Government under the rules of international law. We have no defensive alliance with any American Government. We do not object to war against a neighbor when it does not mean the forcing of a government on a people or

the acquisition of territory. This appeared in our attitude toward France in regard to Mexico in the sixties. And in the matter of Chile, when Spain was carrying on war, and the question was asked whether the United States would intervene, Mr. Seward answered that our policy did not require us to intervene; that we had not any defensive alliance with Chile. All we insisted on was that they should not force a government on Chile or take any of her territory. Mr. Roosevelt said in some of his messages that the Monroe Doctrine did not involve our objection to armed measures on the part of European Governments to collect their debts. When England, Germany and Italy were assembled to bombard Caracas, he mediated between the parties to that trouble, but not on the ground of the Monroe Doctrine, but on the ground that we were interested in a neighborly way in helping all parties to come to terms.

In the present war, a question has arisen, whether if an expedition were sent against Canada, which is furnishing troops for the war, by Austria, Germany and Turkey, who are belligerents against her, this would be a violation of the Monroe Doctrine, and something against which that Doctrine would require us to protest. It would not be contrary to the Monroe Doctrine as announced. Their carrying on war here would not be a breach of our Monroe Doctrine if we received the assurance that they did not contemplate any permanent occupation or appropriation of territory, or the forcing of their government on Canada. That is all the Monroe Doctrine implies. If it is extended, it must be a new doctrine. I am looking to precedents as Mr. Chief Justice here would. I was once an alleged lawyer, a judge. (Laughter.) Following precedents, I venture this statement with reference to the application of the Monroe Doctrine to Canada in the present war.

Now, I have talked a good deal longer than I ought; there are more things I would like to say. (Cries of "Go on!") Of course we have had a great deal of colonization on this hemisphere by immigrants from European countries. Some have felt danger that these colonies would bring over the Governments from the other side. I don't share that feeling. May I say this? The colonists like and entertain a love for their native country, and indulge that sentiment by fervent expression; but when it comes to inviting its political control, that is another thing. (Hear, hear.) I don't regard such colonies as threatening the Monroe Doctrine at all. The pervading atmosphere of freedom in this hemisphere, even if it encour-

ages revolutions, has the advantage of making people oppose political restraints by governments across the sea.

Now, there is one other subject I want to touch on before I sit down: A misconstruction of the Monroe Doctrine grows out of some action of our Government with reference to Central America and the West Indian countries. We conceived, at least we laid down that principle in the Cuban business, that we were interested in our neighbors, and that these might so act with reference to law and order and the protection of property as to become an international nuisance; if so, it was only a question of time and endurance before we must intervene if the neighborhood was to continue a healthy one to live in, and not to produce a chaos of disorder. That's the case with Cuba, but I hope it will not be so with Mexico. For it is something with Mexico like the case of the man with an invalid wife—it's a rather cruel story—who said to a friend, "I wish my wife would get well, or ——— something!" (Laughter.)

Now, with respect to Nicaragua, Santo Domingo, and Honduras, they have gone on through various revolutionary experiences succeeding one another, issuing bonds to European Governments, selling them at large discounts, probably for a number of years. Finally the creditors have come forward to collect the debts. There isn't any money to do this. Now they are attempting to readjust these debts. The European creditors are willing to scale down the debt, but they say, "Suppose we compromise: scale the debt down to fifteen per cent., how do we know that we are going to get the fifteen per cent.?"

The United States has been anxious to help all these countries. In Santo Domingo we did: we appointed agents who collected the money and deposited part of the money in a New York bank, and the rest was paid to the Santo Domingo Government to meet its regular expenditures. We deposited forty-five per cent. as interest and sinking fund, and turned over fifty-five per cent. to the Government to pay its ordinary expenses. The result was that we accumulated hundreds of thousands of dollars as a sinking fund, and we turned over to Santo Domingo fifty-five per cent. of the money collected, which was largely in excess of any money they had had theretofore for running the government. In these revolutionary Governments, the first thing the head of a new revolt does when he gets a uniform and a sword is to repair to the Custom House and sequester the proceeds of the revenue. If the United States appoints an officer to collect that revenue, and

protects him a revolution is not profitable, and the revolutionists have to go to the agony of spirit of doing a little work. (Laughter.) That was the way we helped Santo Domingo.

We tried to help Nicaragua and Honduras but the Senate objected. Our Executive consented to treaties with those countries, but not under the Monroe Doctrine, but to help them out as distressed neighbors. Our interest was not because of European interference, but mainly in the effort to help to their feet struggling people who were suffering in a land of plenty because of those successive revolutions. (Hear, hear.) There was no honest labor done, because anyone who worked ran the risk of laboring in the fields in order to furnish food for the professional revolutionists.

Many who talk about the Monroe Doctrine do not understand it because they have not gone into the history of that policy. I have endeavored to explain it and have tested your patience in so doing.

I thank you sincerely for the compliment of listening to me, and for the opportunity of giving expression before this great meeting of the Canadian Club to my profound admiration for the Canadian nation. I have lived in Canada in the summer time for thirteen years out of twenty-two. I have an intense interest in your development, profound confidence in the great future of your Dominion, and great admiration for the policy of the Mother Country in lightening the bonds that unite you to the Empire, so far as the control of your destiny and your political government is concerned, with the result that as those reins are lightened, the bond between mother and daughter grows stronger. (Long applause.)

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