

**GOVERNMENT OF
THE CANAL ZONE**

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Government of the Canal Zone by George W. Goethals

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GEORGE W. GOETHALS

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THE CANAL ZONE**



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Former Administration Building, Ancon. Now
Court Building and general office for Army

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OF THE CANAL ZONE**

BY

GEORGE W. GOETHALS, U. S. A.
Governor of the Canal Zone

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I

The building of the Panama Canal has been written and talked about as one of the great feats of engineering, and the sanitary work by which yellow fever was banished from the Isthmus has received equal recognition. Little or nothing has been said or heard of the other coordinate branches, such as the housing and feeding of the force; the purchasing, receiving and issuing of construction supplies; the recruiting of labor, both skilled and unskilled; or the controlling of the Zone and preserving order within its limits; yet each was very necessary and important to the

attainment of the end, for the failure of any one would have crippled and delayed the completion of the canal.

The construction of the canal involved the solution of no new engineering problems—simply the application of known principles and methods which experience had shown would give satisfactory results, for the very magnitude of the work precluded trying out anything new or experimental. The task was a formidable one, therefore, because of its size, rather than because of engineering difficulties that were overcome. So, too, in regard to sanitation. With Sir Ronald Ross' discovery of the cause of malaria, which led him to adopt means for its reduction and eradication in Egypt and India, and with Reed, Lazear and Carroll proving the theory that yellow fever is transmitted by the mosquito, and formulating rules which freed Cuba from the ravages of that dread

disease, there remained but the application of the methods followed elsewhere to secure similar results on the Isthmus with respect to these two diseases. The work in Panama developed nothing new. The housing and feeding of the force presented old problems in a new form, made more difficult, however, because of the great numbers employed and the distance from the home markets; similarly with the supply of materials so that construction might proceed unhampered. The reputation of Panama as a pesthole made the recruiting of labor a difficult undertaking, and the difficulty was increased by opposition through edicts and legislation on the part of various Governments both in Europe and the West Indies. But a novel problem in government was presented by the necessity of ruling and preserving order within the Canal Zone. While some experience had been gained in the insular

possessions, a new situation existed which had to be solved, and after various changes there was evolved a form of government which was unique, differing from any established methods of administration.

About a year ago the press announced that a civil government was to be given to the Canal Zone, from which it was assumed that something different from what had existed previously was to be established, and when an army officer was appointed Governor it seemed to be considered a cause for regret that the military was selected in lieu of the civil rule; consequently, a confusion of ideas followed—if there were any ideas on the subject—as to what is the actual status of affairs. An attempt will be made to clear up the situation by outlining the course of civil administration of the Zone through its various changes to the form of government that finally resulted and which was continued