

priated for by law. The Treasury Department therefore appealed to President Taft for an opinion on this point also. The President replied, holding that the intention of Congress in passing the Corporation Tax feature was to make the returns accessible to the public; he regrets the oversight of Congress to provide specially for this; and he recommends that Congress now appropriate the sum of \$50,000 for this specific purpose, especially as all of last summer's appropriation is necessary for use outside the District of Columbia.



**WILL CONGRESS ACT?** What will Congress do? Very many critics declare that it will do nothing, and thus give corresponding gratification to the host of small manufacturers and corporation managers who have protested against revealing their reports and returns and trade secrets to their rivals, because in that event the greater corporations would crush the smaller. Until the present condition is rectified, therefore, the reports and returns from corporations will be treated merely as internal revenue returns. They will be accessible only to the corporations and their attorneys, or to persons authorized by the President or the Secretary of the Treasury. In other words, any person other than the taxpayer making the return, or his duly appointed agent or attorney, who desires to see it, may make application to the Secretary of the Treasury, who, in his discretion, will, on proper showing of cause, approve the request. Thus approved, it is to be presented to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, who will permit the return in question to be seen by the applicant on such conditions as may be imposed by the head of the Treasury Department. Quite aside from the desire to please the host of small corporation managers, however, it is possible that Congress is now not unwilling to postpone the actual operation of the publicity feature until the Supreme Court has an opportunity to pass upon the law's constitutionality; half a dozen cases are already pending before the courts, and within a few weeks should come up for argument. But whether Congress acts or does not

act, the attention of the country has now been called to a forgotten law, and people are inquiring how often that act has been evaded in carrying out other laws. In our judgment, there are plausible and perhaps quite adequate reasons why the private affairs of private corporations should not be open to the inspection of the public, and so of their competitors. But we agree with Mr. Wickersham that it would be a distinct advantage to the public and to all honestly managed corporations whose stock is sold in the open market to have so much of their financial affairs open to the public as would enable the public to form some approximate estimate of the value of their stock.



**WHAT OF ALASKA?** That something must be done to establish more orderly, stable, and civilized conditions in Alaska, as well as to make impossible the wasteful exploitation and monopolization of its enormous natural wealth, everybody must concede. What shall it be? There is now before Congress a bill in charge of Senator Beveridge, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, which embodies one constructive proposal. It represents the views of the President on the problem. By his long experience as the administrative head of the Philippines, Mr. Taft is exceptionally equipped to understand problems of government under what may be called colonial conditions, and to frame a definite plan for dealing with such problems. Mr. Taft's plan is that of a commission form of government. On another page in this issue of *The Outlook* Mr. Atherton Brownell describes those conditions in Alaska which have made the commission form of government seem particularly adapted to Alaska's needs. Readers of Mr. Brownell's article will find there a strong and persuasive statement of the facts which render any form of self-government by the people of Alaska as a whole difficult, if not virtually impossible. It has been pointed out in the course of the discussion over this bill, and particularly by Senator Borah, that this plan is an adaptation of the Philippine form of government to a community, or rather a vast region, in which Philippine conditions do not obtain. Men like Senator Borah

also feel that this plan does not provide that measure of self-government which such communities of Americans as are to be found in Alaska ought to exercise. It is also stated that since such a region, richly endowed with undeveloped wealth and sparsely populated, attracts men in control of great aggregations of capital who are too often unscrupulous in the exercise of the power their wealth brings them, and who almost invariably act contrary to the public interest unless they are vigorously controlled by a strong government, there is danger that the welfare of those people of Alaska who are living there, and expect to remain, will be submerged in the interest of the great exploiters of wealth. It is further said that a commission appointed by the President is more likely to be impressed with the importance of encouraging vast capitalistic enterprises than with the welfare of the people whom these capitalistic projects have drawn to the Territory. These people, it is said, moreover, are Americans, accustomed to modes of self-government in the communities in which they have been born and bred, and are not to be regarded as untutored and dependent people. Scattered though these people are in various parts of Alaska, they are grouped together in communities, and are therefore not to be regarded as isolated individuals. Mr. Brownell's appreciation of what corporate enterprise has been able to do in Alaska is hardly an answer to the queries of those who inquire, What about the welfare of these American communities in Alaska?

#### LEGISLATION FOR ALASKA

Details of such a bill as is now before Congress should be determined by experts and close students, and cannot possibly be settled in the public press; but there are principles which we believe such a bill ought to embody, and which can be ignored only at the risk of future trouble and possible disaster. First, direct legislation for the Alaskan population should be yielded by Congress to other hands. It is no reflection upon Congress to say that it is not so constituted as to be fitted to act as the legislature of such a remote and extensive region as Alaska. If there is danger, under the best circumstances, that vast special inter-

ests shall have undue weight in the government of such a district, that danger is greatly increased when the government of the district is in the hands of a cumbersome body without special knowledge of the needs of the district and with no responsibility toward its people. Second, there should be some kind of Federal control exercised under the authority of Congress by a commission chosen by the President. Third, there should be some means created by which the Americans in Alaska could express their wishes and present their case in any issue, and also could exercise a watch upon the actions of the commission, and appeal to the Nation in case of necessity. Whether this could be done by enabling them to have representatives on the commission, or whether it should be done by the formation of a separate legislative branch, we are not prepared to say; but that these Americans in Alaska should not only have some measure of local self-government, but also some influence in or at least upon a Territorial government, we most emphatically believe. Fourth, until there develops in Alaska a community acceptable as a sovereign State, the delegate from Alaska to Congress should not have a vote in Congress. There is no reason why Alaska should have any more share in the government of the United States at large than other Territories. Fifth, control of the natural resources of Alaska should not be so committed to any commission as to pass beyond the power of Congress. Whatever authority the commission may be granted for the conservation of such resources, it should not be extended so as to include authority unqualifiedly to dispose of those resources. Not merely the people of Alaska, but also the people of the whole United States, are interested in the development of this wealth, and should retain their right to control it.

#### BUYERS AND SELLERS OF LAWS

From the trial of a single legislator charged with selling his vote and influence for cash the investigation before the New York Senate bids fair to grow into a revelation of widespread corrupt practices in the Legislature. Last week The Outlook told of the charges made by Senator