

YUCATAN ACTS UNDER POLICY OF SOCIALISM

Government Participates in Sisal Hemp Industry and Runs Railroads

SOCIAL REVOLUTION OUSTS FEUDAL RULE

'Cultural Evenings' Arranged by Political League in 'House of the People'

SPECIAL TO THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
MERIDA, Yucatan—Yucatan is one of the few truly socialistic states in the world.

Its Government not only rules in a political sense, but it runs its own business as well. Instead of charging taxes on industries for its own support, it takes a proportion of the income from some of the powerful industries of which it has control, among which is henequen, or sisal hemp.

This unity of business and political power makes the state one of the strongest of the Mexican union. It is important economically to the rest of Mexico. In spite of being one of the smaller states and located at the tip of a hard, rocky peninsula almost bare of earth, its efficient organization makes it one of the first contributors to the national budget.

Sometimes when the rest of Mexico has been torn with revolutions, and Yucatan has gone ahead working and paying its contributions, it has complained of giving much and getting little from the national government. It has been called the goose of the golden egg.

Under the revolutionary government of General Alvarado in 1915 the henequen growers of Yucatan, who were then disorganized and considered themselves the victims of organized foreign trusts, were formed into a co-operative society. Today the society sells to the world as a unit and gets good prices for the growers. Under the law the governor of the state is the president of the "Co-operativa."

One and one-half cents a pound is deducted from the selling price of the henequen for the working fund of the co-operative society, which is the bank of the planter, and another half of a cent is deducted on which to run the State Government.

Another large business enterprise run by the Yucatan Government is the railroads. Although some of the bonds are held by English capital, as a result of a loan made in 1910, the State Government has 51 per cent of the stock.

• The Socialistic League of the Southwest, the only political party in Yu-

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Amid Yucatan's 'Green Gold'



Scene in Henequen Field Near Motul. Yucatan Has a World Monopoly of This Useful Product Whose Chief Rival Is Manila Hemp.

running water in Yucatan, in the form of rivers and springs, since all the rain immediately penetrates the porous limestone crust that is so barely sprinkled with earth, the Yucatanian, rich or poor, takes his daily bath. In the country at 4 or 5 o'clock every morning, one is awakened by the slush, slush of water outside of the thatched palm hut where one sleeps in his hammock, as the women wash all the clothing the family possesses.

At almost any spot in Yucatan where a well is sunk water is struck and it is generally believed that the rocky crust is over an underground lake or series of rivers. Windmills from Chicago dot the Yucatan landscape in country or city, and the wind from the sea is always busily working the wheels. Where there are no windmills, there are the old-fashioned wells, with a bucket on a rope.

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Yucatan, is made up of "leagues of resistance," the first of which was founded by Felipe Carrillo in 1917. These leagues now rule the state. In the average Yucatan village the president of the league is more of a power than the "presidente municipal" or mayor.

Henequen Chief Product

Yucatan's chief product and chief support is its "green gold," or henequen. The United States is the chief buyer, for it takes 90 per cent of all the state produces. Yucatan has a world monopoly of the product, and no other country or state has been able to break it. Manila hemp is its only rival, but in another sense it is merely its complement, for the two have different qualities and fill different needs. Henequen goes into sacks and rope with which the American farmer wraps and ties his produce.

Before the social revolution that destroyed Mexico's feudal economic organization at the end of the Diaz régime, a dozen or so rich "henequeneros" ruled Yucatan. They lived in truly feudal splendor. Their beautiful homes in Mérida were palatial, and their haciendas in the country as well. Their children went to school in Europe, and in Yucatan they formed "clans." They intermarried according to strict social demarcations, and today the first families of Yucatan are all cousins.

The Maya Indians and mestizos were the truly down-trodden working class. They were attached to the various haciendas, and could not leave at will. The owner had complete control over them, if not under the letter of the law, under the system as it worked out. They were kept in debt and dependent. In most cases they were mistreated and overworked, although some "hacendados" considered the peon as a human being. But these were fewer, and it was dangerous to give the Indian too many rights and liberties.

Carrillo translated the free constitution of Mexico, formulated by Benito Juárez in 1857, into the Maya language for the benefit of the Indian who did not speak Spanish. This told them of the rights which they did not know existed.

"Cultural Evenings" Held

Carrillo's purpose in organizing the league was that the clubs should have political power by their organization of the working class into a solid front, but they were also to have a social and educational program, which, unusually enough among political clubs, has actually worked.

"Cultural evenings" are the thing in Yucatan villages and towns, where at certain times in the week programs

are held that are combinations of education and diversion. The "liga" is the important spot in the village.

Every Monday night, as regularly as clockwork, the central league in Mérida has an extensive program, at which the leading thinkers and workers in various fields give talks and lectures, at which local talent in music and art donate numbers. They have their meetings in a beautiful, large, new building, "The House of the People." The theater of the building, roofed, but open to the tropical out-of-doors at the sides, is always filled, and generally to overflowing.

When programs are especially interesting the overflow congregates on the streets outside and the speeches and music are transmitted by loud-speaker. Sometimes these are in Maya, the native Indian language of the State, which almost every Yucatanian knows, even the first families.

Uphold Polite Traditions

The attendance during the evenings at the functions of the league is even more feminine than masculine, if there be a predominance of either sex. The modern Yucatanian flapper sits next to the "mestiza" in her starched white huipil embroidered in Maya fashion at the neck and hem, as they always have been. Among the rows of feet are bare ones, sandaled ones, and others with modern shoes. But whatever they wear, the Yucatanian is always clean.

When Columbus on his fourth trip to the New World, skirted the coast of Yucatan, he wrote back to the King of Spain, that a canoe-load of Indians came out to greet his ship. They were very clean, according to his description, and very polite. This they still are today.

Although there is not a drop of