

U.S. VOTERS FAVOR ISLAND-DEBT SWAP

Growing Majority Approve Exchange With England as Means of 'Getting Something for Money We Never Will Collect.'

By DR. GEORGE GALLUP
Director, American Institute of Public Opinion

PRINCETON, N. J., Dec. 13.—The American public would be satisfied to write off the British World War debt in exchange for islands or territory in the area of the Panama Canal. This fact emerges from a nation-wide study of public opinion just completed by the Institute.

The majority take the attitude that the debt will probably never be paid and hence "we might as well get something for our money." In fact, the idea of exchanging debts for islands has gained greatly in public favor in the last year.

When a bill was introduced in Congress a little over a year ago to provide for such an exchange, a sizable majority of voters favored the idea. Today the number is overwhemling.

88 Per Cent Approve

In all the different areas of the country people of voting age were asked to give their views on the following question:

"If England offers to pay its World War debt to the United States by giving us islands and land near the Panama Canal, would you approve our accepting this offer?"

Those expressing an opinion voted as follows:

Yes 88%

No 12%

One voter in every 10 was undecided or without an opinion.

In November, 1939, the Institute conducted a survey on the same issue, with the following result:

"Would you be willing to see the United States trade the war debts which the English owe us for some islands near the Panama Canal."

November 1939

Yes 66%

No 34%

One person in seven (15 per cent) had no opinion at that time.

Practical Reasons Given

The question whether British possessions in the Caribbean area—Jamaica, Trinidad, British Honduras, the Bahamas and other places—would be actually worth the more than \$4,000,000,000 of British World War debt is a question which only experts could decide. What today's study indicates is simply that the public would accept the principle of settling the British war debt in this manner.

Besides believing that "we might as well get something for our money," the majority who favor the exchange declare the British possessions around the Panama Canal would be "valuable for American defense."

Curiously enough, virtually no one in the survey brought up the objection to the proposal which some Britons have advanced—that it would be undemocratic and had parity to "sell like pawns" the populations of the British possessions.

The chief objections raised by American voters are that the war debts should be paid in cash alone, and second, that the United States has enough territory now to defend.

Some Typical Views

Here are some typical attitudes expressed by voters in the study:

McKeesport, Pa., bus driver: "Anything to get the debt paid."

Grey Bull, Wyo., bookkeeper: "We may get no other pay on the debt and we need those bases around the Canal."

Schenectady, N. Y., charwoman: "If we don't take them now, Hitler may get them later on. Who knows?"

Indianapolis investment banker: "This is a good way to get the debt question settled technically. Then we could go ahead and give Britain financial help if they need it."

Mountain Home, Idaho, farmer's wife: "We could colonize those places and then strengthen our defenses."

Pine Hill, N. Y., law student: "We should give England any money she wants but not accept burdens in return."

O. S. PARTY TUESDAY

Brookside Chapter 481, O. S. S., will have a Christmas party along with their regular meeting at 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Brookside Masonic Temple, Tenth and Gray Sts.

Mrs. Faye E. Hite is worthy matron and Allen T. Disbrough, worthy patron.

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