

Friday, December 31, 1926.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

I don't know of any developments in the Mexican situation that haven't already been made public.

I am not advised concerning what plans the Treasury Department may have for denaturing alcohol other than the reports that have been given out by Secretary Mellon.

Nothing more has developed in Nicaragua, so far as I know, that the press has not already had.

I never knew of any preliminary movement on the part of this Government to reestablish diplomatic relations with Russia. I saw a report of that kind in the press. I judged it was without foundation. Of course, our diplomatic relations suffer somewhat, I suppose all countries do, from volunteer activities of people without any authority. We have a great deal of that in Europe. There are a great many Americans that go over there that undertake to say and do things that do not represent the position of the American Government and I think oftentimes result in misleading foreign people and foreign governments. I don't have Russia particularly in mind, but all the governments of Europe. That is something over which we have very little control, but something that happens right along. The organization of the American Government is quite different from that of Europe, which probably results in European governments and certainly European people oftentimes being misled. Our diplomatic relations are entirely in the hands of the

Executive Department. In European countries where they have a parliamentary form of government those relations are carried on by some member of the parliament. And there is often a misunderstanding too about the power and authority of the President to make any final and binding obligation on the part of this Government, though it is a Presidential and Executive function entirely to recognize a foreign government. Of course, an ambassador or minister is not appointed without the approval of the Senate, but a country can be recognized by the President. That doesn't require any Senatorial action. There isn't anything that our Congress can do, for instance, as I understand it, about the recognition of a foreign country. They only come in when the question comes as to the choice of a representative that is to be sent abroad and the fixing of his salary, etc. This leads me to the thought which I have expressed once or twice before - expressed it somewhat in the short address I made at the laying of the cornerstone of the new Press Club Building - of the helpfulness that the American press could be to our foreign relations and especially the advantage that our Government can secure from correct representation of its position in the press and an American attitude on the part of the press. We are charged with the conduct of our foreign relations, speaking now of the Executive Department, doing what we can to protect the lives and property of our people in a foreign country and to take such action as we think is best suited to that and always having in mind that we want to maintain our friendly relations, but at the same time that we wish to protect the lives and property of

American citizens. Now, I think foreign countries in that regard are quite often misled by things they read in the press of our own country. They get an idea that the country is not united on a policy of that kind and of course that isn't the case. The country is united on the pursuit of that policy and wants to see it carried out, but because there may be some criticism of the method that is assumed after being adopted it leads foreign governments to suppose that the people of our own country are not giving their approval to the efforts of the Government to do what I think every one in this country wants done in the way of protecting our own interests. Our press, of course, is thoroughly American, interested in the extension of American commerce, in the building up of a system of international law and the observance of the customs of international relationship that make that possible, not only for the protection of our own interests but for the maintenance of peace and good will among all the peoples of the earth, which can best be done of course by careful and strict observance of international law and custom. The rule in that case is the same as it is in our domestic relations. We know what the laws are and if we undertake to live in accordance with them the rights of all others are adequately safeguarded and protected. If we do not observe the laws and requirements, why then you run into a chaotic condition where nobody knows whether his rights are going to be respected and to be protected by society or not. So I feel it is quite important that the attitude of the press should make plain that

it supports the American Government to do what it can along the lines I have suggested and supports all governments in their attitude to live in accordance with international law, to observe international customs and maintain the highest standards of international relationships.

The main thing I have seen in relation to the volume of Christmas trade is the statement that has been given out by Postmaster General New. I think that has gone to all the press for release to the morning papers. I assume that all of you have it. It says that in the first 25 days of December there were 1000 carloads of mail in excess of all previous records and when you take into consideration that the record was broken in 1925, to have it go a thousand carloads in excess this year is a good deal of an indication of what has been going on. I don't need to review this, I am sure, because it will come to all of you. That is the main item that has come to me that I could respond with in relation to this question of the volume of Christmas trade this year.

The Congress will reassemble Monday to take up matters of appropriation. I think I indicated some time ago that there were apparently a great many plans under way requiring large expenditures of money. Plans of that kind keep coming in to me. So far as I have been able to discover, they do not seem to get very favorable response from the Congress. The work of making the Army and Navy appropriations is going on. I was never able to understand why that was always attended with so much comment and apparently a considerable amount of discussion and debate in the Congress.

We make our appropriations for the other departments with very little public comment and very little debate and very little disagreement, but the Army and Navy appropriations seem to fall into that condition each year. I have made very liberal recommendations for both the Army and Navy because I want to see the Army and the Navy maintained in a creditable condition. Last year I was especially anxious to get our aviation program under way. That is a comparatively new field, so I felt warranted in calling together a body of experts of one kind or another ^{for} ~~xxx~~ the House and Senate to lay out a program. It was done. That program is being carried out. This year in my message, in my general message, I made recommendation that the Congress should study the matter of aviation, submarines and cruisers, which they are doing. There seems to be some confusion that has arisen because there hasn't been a careful differentiation made between my budget message and my general message. Of course, my budget message was to tell the Congress what I recommended should be done in the way of appropriations which had already been authorized by law. My general message is my recommendation to Congress as to what new policies and new laws ought to be enacted. So in my budget message I recommended what expenditures I thought ought to be made. I spoke to the Congress heretofore about cruisers. We are appropriating money this year for the going on with the building of 5 new cruisers and in my general message, why, then, we take up in that what should be done for authorizing the building of additional cruisers.