January 6, 1925.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Correspondents.

Here is a suggestion about a bill that has been introduced authorizing Cabinet members and other departmental heads to participate in debates on the floor of the House and Senate. I haven't any mature judgment about that. I should say it would depend mostly on whether the House and Senate wanted to have Cabinet members come on the floor, or department heads, and debate questions. It is a step, of course, toward the parliamentary form of government. That is a form of government that is well recognized and of course of great maturity on account of the policy of the English speaking people. Our own notion has been to keep somewhat separate the executive department and the legislative department. That can't be done in its entirety, but that is the policy that has been laid down in this country. There are a great many good points about it. Department heads and Cabinet members of course are constantly before the committees of the House and Senate, which gives them access to the members of the Congress and gives the Congress access to all the information that they have. Now, whether it would be expected that they would go on the floor and take positions in opposition to the reports of committees or not, I do not know. Many questions would come up, of course, in case the executive branch was of one party and Congress of another party, and there would be a very interesting situation. Whether, then, the Congress would want to invite the representatives of the opposition party to come on the floor, I can't tell. These are just offhand thoughts that come to me. It is an interesting subject, but I can't give an offhand opinion of it that is of any value. My attitude towards it is my general attitude toward all legislation. When a proposal of this kind is made it becomes the business of the committee to which it is referred to consider it and hear the evidence, and try to decide in accordance with the evidence and their own judgment about it. That is an opportunity that I don't have a chance to participate in much at this time. I am so constantly employed otherwise that I don't have a chance to call in people of various and divergent views and get the benefit of their information, so that I have to take a short at these things somewhat on the wing. If the Congress wanted to do this, I don't see any reason why I should oppose it. On the other hand, if the Congress made up their mind that it was something in which they did not want to engage, I shouldn't have the slightest disposition to advocate it.
There is nothing I can say in relation to a new arms conference. It has no relationship, so far as I can see, to any discussion about our debts. It is held up at the present time, as I have already indicated, on account of the proposal that is pending to have a conference on that subject under the patronage of the League of Nations.

Senator Reed and Senator Pepper came in this morning to talk about possible appointments in the future, in case that vacancies might occur. They had nothing to suggest about any pending vacancy.

I haven't chosen anyone to be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

I should not take up the matter of the Child Labor Amendment to the Constitution with the Governors. That is a matter on which I explained my opinion in my speech of acceptance, and I think there is some reference to it in our party platform. I am still in harmony with my speech of acceptance and so far as I know also with my party platform. But I realize that this is not a matter that comes under the jurisdiction of the President. It is a matter in the decision of the Congress and then in the decision of the state legislatures. Nor does it come for under the jurisdiction of Governors, so that the President of the United States and the Governors of the different states to sit down and discuss a question over which they had no jurisdiction I should think would be somewhat of a barren operation.

Mr. President, do you expect to appoint an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture before the 4th of March?

Well, I had thought that I might, if I found someone that might be available to become Secretary of Agriculture. He might go in as an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture during this pending vacancy, in order to have an opportunity to inform himself about the needs of the Department.

I haven't had a chance to examine the report of the special committee on shipping needs. I want to talk with some of the members of that committee. Both reports have now been made, one in relation to keeping our shipping going, keeping it built up so that it will not deteriorate, and the other in relation to coordination between our shipments on land and our shipments on sea. I have received both those reports. One I have let be taken by Senator Jones, the Chairman of that committee. I think the other is being examined by the Shipping Board. But I am not so certain on that. They were represented on the
Committee. I don't know as there is any need of that. It was on my desk yesterday and someone wanted to see it, and I think Mr. Blemm took it for that purpose.

Mr. President, could you differentiate between the report Senator Jones has and the other one?

Well, I think he has the one dealing with coordination between land shipments and sea shipments.

Now, I have one or two inquiries about the rent legislation. There again I am under that difficulty that I mentioned a few minutes ago, of not being able to inform myself about all the facts or listen to all the arguments of those that have made investigations and are therefore able to give me the benefit of their mature judgment. What I am trying to do, as I have explained, is to protect especially the Government employees of the District from charges of rent that are not warranted by the investment. That is a matter of a good deal of difficulty under our Constitution, and I don't know whether it can be adequately done. I asked Mr. Whaley to come in and see me, on account of the constant complaints that had been made to their office about increases in rents and allegations that real estate here was being covered up with trusts far in excess of the value of the real estate or far in excess of the cost, and probably in excess of its reproduction value. I wanted that investigated. Now, that is about all the President can do - is to direct an investigation of alleged grievances that are brought to him.

My first application was to Mr. Whaley. He thought he could prepare a bill that would remedy the situation. I told him to prepare it. He has done so. I haven't examined the bill with care enough so that I would know it meets the situation, or whether it is constitutional in all its provisions, but I have done what I would naturally do - submit it to the Chairman of the House Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Committee. I wasn't able to tell them that I submitted it as a recommendation, but I submitted it for their consideration, and I indicated in my letter that it was an important subject. I expected that, having the bill before them they would then hold hearings and get information that would warrant some kind of a conclusion on their part and report it to the House and Senate and there let it be debated and determined. This is a kind of legislation
that I approach with a great deal of hesitancy. We have got so many regulatory
laws already that in general I feel that we would be just as well off if we didn’t
have any more. I want to give people all the freedom of action that is possible
for them to have, but when it is obvious that the freedom of action is abused, why
of course someone is going to come along and take that freedom of action away.
That follows inevitably and certainly, and can’t be prevented. Oftentimes, as a
result, many people that are entirely innocent of any wrongdoing or wrong inten-
tions are injured as a result. It is probable that some of our railroads could
have been better off, if we hadn’t had so much railroad legislation. But the
genral condition warranted it, and apparently it was necessary to impose it.
Now, it is probable that a large number of owners of real estate in the District
that has been built for the purpose of rental are conducting their business in a
perfectly legitimate way, and it will be a hardship to put them under regulation.
But if there are abuses, there is no other way in which remedy can be applied,
and we shall have to adopt something of that kind. I feel that a good deal can
be done by real estate men and the banks and loan associations, if they will take
hold of this situation themselves and apply the remedy to it that I think they
can apply. That isn’t always a pleasant operation, to go and tell someone he
is doing something wrong and to stop, and it isn’t a pleasant operation for the
President to suggest to the Congress that people are engaged in wrong practices
and it ought to be stopped by legislation. I am not making any criticism of the
banks in general, or the real estate interests here, for not being able to apply
that remedy. I think perhaps they can help, if they will, through their organ-
ization. It may be that something can be worked out that way. Now, I have only
one desire here, which has been constant and uniform, and that is to find out what
the real abuses are and apply any reasonable remedy, in order that the Government
of the United States may use these square miles that have been
especially dedicated to its use to maintain an organization with reasonable economic
conditions to perform the business of the Government. I don’t know about this
bill. It may be a good bill and it may not be a good bill. That will be
developed by the hearings, and by the facts and arguments. I am having a survey
made of real estate conditions here to find out what vacancies there are. A
great many times the law of supply and demand will take care of a situation. As
I remarked to someone yesterday, if you are living in a house and the landlord comes in and says the first of next month the rent is going to be increased 100%, you are not helped very much by being told that all over the city there are a great many vacant houses. You can't fairly be called upon to make that increased payment for the privilege of living in the house in which you are. I have no doubt that a great many people desire to live in a particular locality, sometimes it may be in the fashionable locality, rather than in some other part of the city. I think I have indicated to you fairly well what I have in mind and what I am trying to do, and I hope that out of our activities we may be able to remedy such evils as exist.

There haven't been any decisions about the Judges in the District of Columbia.

I don't think that the appointment of Attorney General Stone to the Supreme Bench will cause any delay in the selection of Federal judges either here in the District or New York, Ohio, or North Carolina. I conferred with him this morning. He is working on all those cases and making investigations that I think will enable him to let me have a decision within a short time. It takes some time to get them confirmed by the Senate, and he undoubtedly will want to stay in his office for some days in order to clear up some things of that kind.

Mr. President, do you expect to name any successor to Mr. Stone very soon?

I expect to name one just as soon as I can make a choice of someone. I think, very soon.

There has been no decision about judges other than those which have been sent in.

These other questions seem to be duplicates or triplicates of those that I have already discussed.