February 29, 1924.

Remarks by the President to Newspaper Men.

Here is a local inquiry as to whether I will take part in dedicating a soldiers' memorial at Lackawana, N. Y. by broadcasting an address at that time. I think there is an invitation of that kind in the office, but it is very doubtful if I can respond to it favorably, though it's under consideration.

Here is another inquiry about a telegram from John Major to E. B. McLean relative to the installation of a private wire between the Washington Post and Cincinnati Inquirer at Palm Beach that would give easy and quick access to the White House. I don't know anything about that other than this inquiry, so that I don't think I can give you any information about it. I imagine that it was the usual newspaper phrase for quick action or easy access to the sources of information in Washington. Sometimes they call it the White House and sometimes they call it the Capital. I judge it meant an institution rather than a personality, though anybody has easy and quick access to me, as my Secretaries can testify, from the large number of people that I see every day.

Here is an inquiry too about the appropriations pending in Congress for increases in postal pay. Those I think would come under the requests for appropriations that I was discussing in the last White House conference. Now, substantially all of these requests for appropriations have a basis of justice in them. Many of them I would rejoice to be able to support and approve, as I would rejoice to increase the resources of any class of our citizens, but it is a question of what we did appropriate and how much money we have, and how best to distribute it to carry on the public service, and what economy requires. This I know is going to be carefully investigated in order to see if there are any inequalities in the postal pay which, after careful study, may be adjusted. But this is a sample of one of the large demands. I think I am well within the figures when I say that this is estimated - all of these bills - to cost from $125,000,000 to $150,000,000 a year. It would add very materially, you see, to the present cost of the administration of the Post Office, which I believe is now about $600,000,000. This would be an addition of about 25%, if all of those bills should be enacted. It is a question of what the country can afford, in many of those things.
2.

I understand that the Tariff Commission is going to report very shortly their examination and investigation into the cost of the production of wheat in the United States and abroad, and it is my understanding that it will show that there appears warrant for increasing the tariff on wheat and wheat products. If such is the case, I should expect to take prompt action.

Here is an interesting suggestion. A news story in the Washington Star this afternoon hints at some drastic and mysterious action which the President proposes to take within the next few months. Would it be consistent to ask if the Chief Executive has in contemplation any radical departure from his present policies? I don't think any radical departures now occur to me. While I don't want to disagree with so good an authority as the Washington Star- I haven't the report before me, it is a report of a report and sometimes there is a variance in those things - I think you would be warranted in prophesying, if any of you want to prophesy, that I have at present no expectation of any drastic and mysterious action. I think it is rather foreign to me to have drastic and mysterious action. I suppose that is why this is new. It is somewhat different from what I have been doing and perhaps \# from what you gentlemen have led the public to expect of me.

Here is another inquiry about the addition of special counsel in certain phases of the oil lease investigation. A very short bill came down two or three days ago that authorized me to appoint special counsel to investigate a lease that has been made, I think by the State of California, of school lands. I understand that these lands were set off by the United States Government to California as school lands and were then leased by the State to some of the oil producers. Such information as I have from the Department of Interior indicates that that subject has been considered by the Department after arguments by counsel in the past, and decided. But I do not understand that that would prevent another investigation and another decision, and for that purpose I am proposing to find someone who has special training and experience in land titles of this nature, in order that the case may be carefully investigated and appropriate action taken.

Can you identify that as Section 36?

36 I think, as I recall it.

Mr. President, there are two 36's; No. 1 and 2.

I can't tell about that. It is the one referred to in the resolution that
was passed and sent down to me. This is a different case than the other two cases. It is a question, as I understand it, purely of a land title. I assume by that it is very largely a question of law. I imagine there is very little disagreement about the facts, though it might be that the decision would turn on the fact of whether at the time these conveyances were made it was known, or there was reasonable cause to suppose, that these were mineral lands. I don't know just when the other procedure by the special counsel will be begun. It is of more importance that it should be begun right than that it should be begun in haste. Mr. Roberts is a man especially experienced in court procedure, and Mr. Pomerene is a man of training and experience, a sound lawyer, and I am sure that they are moving as expeditiously as possible. There is a large amount of testimony that undoubtedly has to be gone over by them, and there is the question of setting up their case on paper, so that they can't exactly be hurried. But action will be immediate.

I haven't any official information about the Mexican situation that amounts to anything. So far as I have any information, it indicates that President Obregón is at present successful. I don't know whether the revolt is entirely stamped out. I do not suppose it is. We don't have sources of information that would give either the Department of State or the public an exact picture of what is going on all over the Republic of Mexico, but it may be significant that we are not at present receiving any official complaints of disorders wherever any of our American citizens seem to be interested.

I understand that the ratification of the special claims Commission, or the agreement for the selection of special Claims Commissioners is on the way here. I think it has not yet been received. I don't know just what action has to be taken. It may be require a matter of declaration, or publication, or something of that kind in order that it may be finally completed, but nothing can be done about the appointment of Claims Commissioners until that is received. As soon as that is done we shall undertake to appoint Commissioners.

Here is an inquiry that is the first information that comes to me about a resolution adopted by the Senate asking for income tax returns of Doheny, Sinclair and Fall, and the Sinclair and Doheny Companies. I don't know anything about that, nor whether the law gives me any authority to take any action in relation to it.
I have spoken about the Tariff Commission report.

Mr. L. W. Baldwin the President of the Missouri Pacific Railroad came in to call on me this morning, as I understood, to pay his respects to the office. My conversation with him consisted of inquiring about the business situation along the territory through which the lines of his railroad pass. He told me it appeared to be good and gave promise of being good for some time to come.

I have caused inquiry to be made of the Shipping Board about the recent increase by the North Atlantic Shipping Conference in ocean rates on provisions. These increases are small, I think 10¢ a hundred or something of that kind. The only information I have about it is that the shipping companies thought they were losing money on that kind of freight and are seeking by these slight increases to make the carrying of freight pay for itself. If anything can be done to assist the exportation of food products, agricultural products, of course I shall be only too anxious to see that it is done. Nothing has been done yet about an Undersecretary of State. Nothing would be done until my appointment of the present Undersecretary as Ambassador is ratified by the Senate. I have been making some inquiries to get a member for the Federal Trade Commission, and some inquiries about a new Secretary of the Navy, but no decision has yet been reached.

That seems to cover the inquiries for the day.