March 11, 1924.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

Here is our old friend the report which is to the effect that I will make an important speech shortly. I haven't in mind making any speech in the immediate future. I think I have an invitation to speak to the Associated Press at New York. My recollection is that it comes about the middle of April. There is the usual Decoration Day speech that is made at Arlington, and I think I am invited to and probably shall be present (I expect to be present) at the opening of the D.A.R. Annual Convention. I think that is about the middle of April.

Have you accepted the Associated Press invitation, Mr. President?

Only tentatively. I told them I would do what I could about it. Those are the only engagements that I think of at the present time, though there might be something incidental around town like the dedication of the National Arts Building, or I think it is called the National Academy of Sciences. They have wanted me to come there.

What about the Monument, Mr. President?

Yes, when the stone is placed in the Monument representing the State of Arizona.

Anything definite on speeches in Indiana?

I haven't any invitation to go there.

Do you know the date of the Arizona stone laying?

It seems to me to be about the 15th of April. I am not sure.

I am not certain when Mr. Warren is going to Mexico, though he reported to me through Secretary Hughes that he would be ready to go in a few days, and that was some days ago. Perhaps that would indicate that he would go the latter part of this week. He has been confirmed by the Senate and is all ready to take up his duties. I don't know of any more developments in the Mexican situation. I know of no complaints that have come here. It isn't always easy to get reliable reports of just what may be going on in the country there. We get reports from Mexico City that present the view of the Mexican Government, and we get reports from around the border that represent the view of other people, I mean public newspaper reports. But so far as I know the situation down there is quiet and apparently hopeful.
Mr. Van Fleet came in this morning. I wanted to talk with him about the type of man to put on the Federal Trade Commission, whether he ought to be a business man or a farmer. He thought either one might be helpful, and that there might be some ways in which a farmer could be quite helpful in some of the questions that come up before the Commission, not only in solving the problems that the Commission has, but as a general assurance to those in agriculture that they are represented on the Board in their viewpoint, and that there is somebody there especially diligent seeking to protect their interests.

I have acted on a proposed pardon, I think, for the man named Rumely of New York. It is my recollection that I refused to grant it. It didn't seem to be a case for a pardon, though it is a very pitiable one. The serving of the sentence has not yet begun. There is a suggestion that there might be some executive clemency extended in the way of commutation of the sentence.

Do you understand, Mr. President, that the matter is still up?

It is always up, in the sense that it is possible to make an application for commutation or executive clemency.

I haven't set a meeting for the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission, though I expect to call a meeting of that Commission very shortly and Colonel Sherrill has prepared a bill that he thinks will meet the present situation if enacted, and the bill I have referred to General Lord. I expect to get his report as it very shortly. The suggestion has been made that a small appropriation be made for the current year to finish drafting such plans as the Commission may approve, in order that the work of building the bridge proper may be taken up right away. I am rather inclined to favor action in that direction, though I don't speak with any authority from the Committee.

Does this bill provide for the expenditure that you spoke about recently around $22,000,000?

I think this provides just for the building of the bridge and other expenditures for the incidental things, including the widening of B Street or an extension of it.

Mr. President, how much money is contemplated under Colonel Sherrill's bill?

Well, the bridge proper, it was my understanding, was to cost about
$5,000,000. The most expensive proposal in the plans that were laid before us called for an expenditure of some $22,000,000. That of course included very much more than the mere building of the bridge. It included all the approaches to the bridge and the proposal to extend B Street through to the Capitol. B Street is cut off in two sections, so in order to come from the Capitol on to B Street you have to come down to Pennsylvania Avenue. Under the plan there would be a parallel street running from the Capitol down to the approach of the bridge without coming into Pennsylvania avenue at all.

It has been suggested in relation to the public buildings that there is already sufficient law and I am having that investigated, so that all that is required at the present time is an appropriation. There is an appropriation impending, I think, in some of the appropriation bills. I presume it is in the one for the Treasury. I am not quite certain about the details of that.

I have spoken about Judge Van Fleet, have I not?

Yes, sir.

It is too soon to have any particular reaction on the agricultural situation as the result of the increased duty on wheat and wheat products. One of the duties on wheat products was lowered—that is the duty on feed. I think that would be especially for poultry and cattle. But on all other products it was increased. Of course the increase in the tariff doesn't go into effect until thirty days from the proclamation. I may say, however, that I have had many reports from those interested in agriculture approving of the action and saying that it certainly would be beneficial.

There is nothing especially new about the foot and mouth disease. That has been confined to three or four countries, perhaps not more than two or three, in California, where there is a strict quarantine on, and it is apparently under control. It is not spreading any at the present time, so far as reports would indicate that have come to me. I asked the Secretary of Agriculture about that Friday, and that was the report he made then.

I haven't ordered any special investigation relative to the charges made by Rear Admiral Plunkett. I don't know what those were. There were some newspaper reports, but oftentimes it turns out that reports made of statements of men in the Army and Navy do not turn out to be very accurate. I should want to get an accurate statement as to just what Rear Admiral Plunkett said. But I
saw enough of the substance of it so that I am going to call the attention of
Major Haynes and ask him to look into it and say if anything ought to be done along
the direction as indicated by the statement it was reported Rear Admiral Plunkett made.
I don't know whether that brought any real new information, other than reiteration
of what we all know, that in order to enforce the prohibitory law it is necessary to
have constant vigilance and constant activity. The report that the Attorney General
made the other day indicated that there was great vigilance and great activity in the
attempt to enforce the prohibitory law. A very large number of cases have been brought
to trial, an astonishing amount has been collected in fines, and the tremendous
number of convictions indicate an activity on the part of the Federal Government much
greater than what I had supposed existed. I hadn't supposed it to be anywhere near
so many cases. I know the Government was acting with vigilance, but I had no idea of
the number of convictions.

X  I am sending a special message to the Congress asking for a resolution makin
g effective a special reduction of income taxes by March 15th. That has just gone up.
One of the audience I see is going after it. That was the reason for my delay in
receiving the press today. I wanted to speak with some one on the 'phone at the
Capitol, and there is only one wire. All the rest have been put out of commission by
the storm. It took me some time to reach the person I wanted to communicate with.
I don't know that it will be possible to secure legislation at this time. It would
require unanimous consent, but I thought that such action would be so helpful that we
ought to ask to have unanimous consent, and if we can't secure it why we can't, that is
all. X

I haven't selected any Secretary of the Navy yet.

I haven't made any final determination about the appointment of Commissioners
in the District. I think at the last conference we had, I indicated the very
unanimous endorsement that had come from the many different organizations in Washing-
ton of the two City Commissioners. I inquired of them if they would be willing to
serve, if I should make up my mind to appoint them. Since then I have received a
number of communications, not exactly in the nature of charges, but in the nature of
protests that I thought perhaps I ought to clear up before I send the names up, and
for that reason I am obliged to take a little time to investigate the charges. I don't
think they really amount to anything. It would be very unusual that Commissioners
would be in office for three years without there being two opinions as to whether
they functioned properly. I know that, because I was Mayor of Northampton and
after I had given a very excellent administration for a year there was a division
of opinion as to whether I ought to be reelected.

I think that covers all the questions.

You may dwell with such emphasis as you want on the necessity of getting
the tax reduction. The arguments for that are stated in my message.