

November 9, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men

One of the news services wants to know if I have received any communication from the French Embassy today. I haven't received any communication from them. So that answers the first one, "whether it will be possible to divulge the nature of the communication."

"The French Ambassador is seeing Secretary Hughes this afternoon. Are you aware yet as to the nature of their communication?" No. I think he is to see him at 4:00 o'clock.

An inquiry as to whether I have any comment on the Marine Congress recommendations that the Shipping Board be abolished, and the fleet turned over to the Department of Commerce. I don't know the reasons that might have been given for that at the present time. We seem to need all the talent that we can get for the operation of the fleet. Should it become finally and fully organized, and running smoothly, it might then be possible to turn it over to ~~the~~ some one of the Departments, and not operate it as a separate and independent bureau. I don't see, just at the present time, that we could get any benefit from turning it over to the Department of Commerce, though it is, of course, an arm of that Department, and that was one of the reasons why I thought of calling in the Secretary of Commerce, as well as the Secretary of the Treasury, to advise me about the plan that the Shipping Board had.

+ I have here a hypothetical question about the debts that are due to us from abroad. There is no change in the situation, and really no comment that I can make about it. Congress, as you know, has passed the law and established a Commission, and laid down the terms on which it is authorized to settle. There is no development along that line at the present time, of which I am aware.

+ A statement that Lieutenant Heffernon of the Navy suggests that if a stadium is to be built in Washington it should be a double deck affair, capable of seating 30,000 people, and wanting to know if I would express an opinion on that. I don't know that I can express any opinion that would be very valuable.⁺ I am not exactly an expert on athletic affairs. It occurs to me offhand, that the ball field has a very large stadium that can be used on almost any possible occasion. It would be a very fine thing, of course, to encourage athletics, and some time it might be well to consider the building of a stadium in the National Capital. I don't know of any project of that kind that is under contemplation at present.

An inquiry also about the immigration law. I have no doubt that the incoming Congress will extend the law, which expires on June 30th next. Just what provisions will be adopted, of course, I can't tell. It is perfectly apparent I think, however, that we shall have very careful restriction of immigration.

An inquiry about a visit of Adolph Lewisohn. He and another gentleman came in this morning to pay their respects. I had known of his name for a long time, as a very prominent man. I don't recall that I ever happened to meet him. He was a great friend, I know, of former Governor McCall of Mass., which formed a sort of middle ground of meeting between Mr. Lewisohn and myself. I was Lieutenant Governor for three years when Mr. McCall was Governor. Governor McCall has just passed away within a week, so we were speaking especially of him.. Then a short time ago, some one came to get me to address a letter to Mr. Lewisohn, in relation to the encouragement of thrift, which he was connected with in some way with an organization that wanted to promote the encouragement of thrift, and I wrote him the letter. He came in also to express his thanks for the help he thought I had been.

T A statement that there is emanating from Paris today a report to the effect that Premier Poincaré will insist upon reparations from Germany to the full capacity of Germany to pay, and wanting to know if I have any sort of statement to make relative to the American position. No, our position is stated fully in the note. If it means our position relative to the restrictions, and more especially that restriction which provides that the experts be limited to an inquiry into the present capacity - actual I think is the word that is used by the French in that connection - I think that I am safe in saying that if ~~there~~^{it} is to be limited to merely present capacity of Germany to pay, that that would be such a limitation as would make an inquiry useless and futile. There wouldn't be any use for calling together the experts of four or five nations of the earth. That would be something almost that could be done by any ordinary auditor. A limitation of that kind would seem to make the inquiry useless, and I don't see any reason why we could expect to be of any help by participating in it.

There is a report that the French propose the inquiry to take in the capacity of Germany to pay for six years - up to 1930. Have you heard of that, Mr. President?

Yes, I had heard of such a report, and up to 1930 would include what I have had to say. It would be such a short time that I don't see any reason to expect that in that short time Germany could reestablish its industrial organization and its production to such an extent that payments could be made which would amount to very much. They could hardly begin, in so short a time, to meet the reparations.

An inquiry about Mr. Brown's coming to the Cabinet. He came to discuss the plan of reorganization and to answer such questions as the members of the Cabinet might want to make of him. I think perhaps I can best answer one or two of the questions that have been asked in relation to the reorganization by reading a sentence or two from a letter sent by President Harding on the 13th of February last, to Mr. Brown, the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Reorganization. Mr. Brown represents the President, and there is in addition to that a Congressional Committee of three Senators and three Representatives, Mr. Smoot being the Chairman. "I hand you herewith a chart which exhibits in detail the present organization of the Government Departments. The changes are suggested after numerous conferences and consultations with various heads of the Government Departments. The changes, with few exceptions, notably that of coordinating all the agencies of defence, have been sanctioned by the Cabinet. That is the changes, with few exceptions, notably the plan to coordinate the War and Navy Departments. In a few instances, which I believe are of minor importance, the plan has not been followed to the letter, in order to avoid questions which might jeopardize reorganization as a whole." That was a statement submitted by President Harding and there has been no change in the position.

An inquiry whether Mr. Geissler, Minister to Guatemala submitted his resignation to the President. There was no submission of his resignation which differed in any respect from the submission of several resignations that came to me when I first became President. I regarded it as a formal matter, and at once instructed Mr. Geissler that I very much desired him to continue in the service, and expressed my gratification to him at the good conduct of his office. This perhaps ought not to be published, but I think he had an idea that if he had a letter of that kind from me it might indicate to the people among whom he

represents this country, that he not only was there with the approval of President Harding, but he was also there with my full approval.

An inquiry as to when the final Budget estimates will come and their approximate total. I suppose that it will reach me within a very few days. Perhaps within a week. I am not exactly sure about that, and the indications are that we can bring the total within the figures which were given by President Harding at the last conference of the business heads of the various Departments, which was held in June, I think, just before he was starting on his trip. At that time he strongly hoped that ~~it~~ there could be a reduction of \$126,000,000 in the Budget of this year, in order to bring the ordinary expenditures of the Government within \$1,700,000,000, exclusive of the Post Office and exclusive of the amount that is required to take care of the debt,--the interest on the debt and the annual amount that is set aside for the cancellation of and redemption of the debt.

I have also here an inquiry about what plans will be adopted, assuming that we are able to negotiate and get ratified the twelve mile limit treaty with Great Britain. So far as I know, no change is contemplated about that in relation to American ships. It is stated that they were prohibited from carrying liquor outside the three mile limit by Executive Order. I haven't any expectation of changing that order, and of course they were prohibited by the decision of the Supreme Court from bringing liquor within the three mile limit.

An inquiry also about the suggestions of Mr. Meyer and Mr. Mondell as to a reduction in taxes and its effect on the agricultural situation. I think their suggestions speak for themselves, and I don't know as I could comment on them in a way to add anything to them.

There is no change relative to the ^epneumatic tubes. There is some investigation on that. I have already spoken about the Budget. That, I think, exhausts the inquiries of the day.