October 26, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

An inquiry about the Cabinet session. We took up this morning the matter of reorganization of the Departments. It is a plan of this kind (holding up the plan) that I presume the press has seen, which was prepared some time ago, telling what the activities of each Department are at the present time, and what it is proposed to remove from each Department and what it is proposed to give to each Department. We went over that in some detail, but didn't finish it, as it is a matter of considerable time. I wanted to go over it in detail with the Cabinet, because we have never done that. I think President Harding went over it that way with them, but it wasn't when I was present, and I never had been over it carefully with them.

Was Mr. Brown at the meeting, Mr. President?

No, he was not.

Is he coming to any future meeting?

I intend to have him come in before the Cabinet some time. This is known as the Brown plan. It is the plan that was expeditiously presented to the members of the Committee that represented Congress. Mr. Brown is the member that specially represented the President. I have been over it more or less with Mr. Brown, and expect to have him come in and take it up with the Cabinet, before we finally determine all the details. But we did go over it hastily, taking up those things about which there didn't need to be any discussion, and we will take it up at a later time, discussing the remaining part of it at that time.

Haven't you said, Mr. President, that you generally give your approval to this plan?

Yes.

Have you said whether that contemplated the amalgamation of the War and Navy Department, and that you approve of it?

I am not entirely convinced about that, but, so far as I have made up my mind, I should hesitate to approve that. I think that is so large a project, that if it is ever put into operation, it would better go through as a separate proposition, rather than to link it up with the general proposal of reorganization. There was a time, when the Government was first formed, that both the War Department and Navy Department were under a Secretary of War, there not being much Navy at that
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time, and later there was a Secretary of War and Secretary of Navy, and this has been the case, I think, for about 125 years, the change coming I believe in 1795 or 1796. That has been the established method of procedure for so long, that there is probably a rather deep-seated conviction in the minds of the people, and in those that have to do with the two Departments. While there is a great deal of logical reason to say that the matter of public defense should be under one Department, yet our Government is not always exactly logical in its procedure. It grows up and has a historical, as well as a logical background. It is institutional and oftentimes we get better results by observing that and working accordingly.

Was the matter of an assistant to the President taken up?

That is not included. I have several very valuable assistants that I keep here in the office all of the time, and they are efficient.

Will you say whether the matter of the proposition of the British in regard to the settlement of reparations was taken up?

No. I think it was spoken of informally by Secretary Hughes - relating substantially what was in the morning papers. There was no discussion of it.

He simply told us of the various developments that have arisen.

May I ask, Mr. President, how many Executive Departments, there would be under the plan, as it now stands?

I think there are 10 members of the Cabinet, aren't there? Well, the plan as it stands contemplates the consolidation of the War and Navy Departments, and then the addition of a Department of Education and Welfare, so it would leave it the same. If the War and Navy were not to be consolidated, then it would be providing for an addition. Of course, my mind is not made up, and the mind of the Cabinet is not made up about the consolidation, but I should think it would be very improbable that we should want to ask Congress to consider that as a part of this particular plan.

An inquiry about appointments of an Ambassador at London and at Rome. There isn't anything that is finished in that. So that I can't make any statement about it at the present time.

Did you know that the afternoon papers announce that Mr. Kellogg has evidently been selected?

His name has been under consideration, but there has been no final determination, so that the matter is not in a condition where any final announcement can be made.
An inquiry about the Colorado River Pact ratification, and the Diamond Creek project. I haven't much of any direct knowledge about that. It came to my attention during the past year that Secretary Hoover was in the Colorado region undertaking to work out and secure the ratification of an agreement between the several states, which would provide for the development of the Colorado River and also for the protection of the Imperial Valley against flood and inundations. I think all of the states ratified that except Arizona. I have had conflicting reports about it, some telling me that the people of Arizona are willing to ratify it, but that the present Government of Arizona has not been willing to do it. Here has been a general expression, I think, that has come to me, that Arizona will probably ratify, and in that case we can proceed with this development.

An inquiry about a conference with W. A. Harriman. That was, for the most part, personal. I mean by having happened to meet him. He came in as many men do, who are in Washington, to pay their respects. The only matter that we touched upon, and that very briefly, was the matter of shipping, I inquiring of him how the lines that he is interested in are getting on, and he inquiring of me about the U. S. shipping, each of us hoping that the other would be successful, and asking information of each other, I not being able to give him much information about how to succeed, nor was he able to give me very much information.

Mr. President, how about the report that he desires to purchase some ships for his line?

He didn't indicate anything of that kind to me.

As to whether I intend to call men in various industries for conference, I, not generally speaking. It would be hardly necessary for me to make any general effort in that direction, for the reason that men of that kind come to Washington frequently and come into my office, and in that way I am able to get a very general idea of what they are thinking of, and what they think the needs of the country are, and what can be done. I almost always inquire what is it that the Government can do that would make your enterprise any more successful, and oftentimes in that way I get what I think are very valuable suggestions. Sometimes there are things that they want the Government to refrain from doing.

Mr. President, can you tell us anything more about Mr. Kellogg?

I can't tell you whether or not Mr. Kellogg has been selected.
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An inquiry also about George E. Marsas, President, Armour Grain Company.

The Secretary of Agriculture was conferring yesterday with some of the grain men - I don't recall their names. I think there were three or four of them. And he brought them up here. We didn't have any particular discussion about grain matters. I understood, though, that they were conferring with the Secretary of Agriculture, or, perhaps, I should say, he with them, as to whether it would be possible for the Government, from such knowledge as they might have, technical or otherwise, to assist in the marketing of grain abroad. Now, I have several times indicated, and am very glad to reiterate at any time, that I should favor the Government assisting, in any financial way that it can, on a business basis, of marketing grain abroad.

The suggestion has been made that there may be a necessity to purchase some grain to be marketed in Germany. It is possible that something of that kind can be done. I don't want to commit myself or the Government to any unsound business enterprise of that kind, but, on the other hand, I don't want to be understood by that as saying that I do not favor a charitable effort of that kind, should developments make that necessary. You will recall that Congress made a direct appropriation of $20,000,000, the year before last, or last year, to buy corn to send to Russia. It may be that it will develop that it is desirable to buy some wheat, as a matter of charity, to send to Germany during the coming winter. We all hope that nothing of that kind will occur, and that they will be able to take care of themselves. But, should the occasion arise, we would, of course, undertake the proposition, I am sure. Should that happen, I would be glad to see the Government cooperate.

An inquiry as to whether this proposal could be carried out by the War Finance Corporation under its powers at the present time. I think it has powers at the present time to engage in financing a legitimate and sound business enterprise for the export of grain. Of course, it hasn't any powers to engage in anything like charity, and I shouldn't want to have it engaged in any unsound business enterprise.

An inquiry as to the probable reaction to the course of events precipitated by the President's recent statement to the press, with respect to America's willingness to assist Europe in her difficulties. I don't know as my judgment about that would be worth any more than that of yourselves. So far as I have observed, there has been a favorable reaction.

The British referred in their note to the suggestion of the President, Mr. President.
I think that, perhaps, is evidence that my statement, that the reaction was favorable, is correct.

An inquiry as to what will be the next step toward the disentangling of Europe's affairs. That depends, of course, upon what results from the action now being taken. If the proposal is accepted, I should say the next step would be the securing of the representatives of the different Governments, and their meeting in conference. Whether the American experts will be nominated by the Administration, or whether the choice will rest with the Reparations Commission as its own initiative, depends, of course, upon what answer may be made by the various Governments that are concerned.

Whether France will accept a scaling down of reparations. Of course, that is a matter that has not been considered. That will be for France to determine herself. As I understand the proposal, it is to secure information in an advisory capacity. The reparations commission would use this conference in order to secure the opinion of experts, and then to advise their governments as to what could be done.

Another inquiry about some charges that have been made. I won't give the name of the person. About all I could say about that would be this. That it isn't for the President to go out into the public, or before the public through the press, and assume that, because someone has been charged with a crime, the crime has therefore been committed, or that the person is guilty. To take that course would mean, perhaps, that he might be deprived of a fair and impartial trial. Nor is it for the President to presume that when charges are made that the person is innocent. He ought to pursue the ordinary and business-like course, which seems to me that the position of an executive warrants - of seeing that those charges are investigated by the proper authorities. If it were in Massachusetts, the matter would be brought to the attention of the District Attorney of the jurisdiction in which the crime was committed, in order that he might lay those charges before a Grand Jury, or in order that he might make his complaint. The process here, and in all other jurisdictions, is similar, and I think you may take it for granted it will be the case here. I don't mean by that, from desultory reading newspapers on my part, that that course will be pursued. Of course, I can't run out and inform the public about that always, because oftentimes that would be to defeat the very end of the investigation. If public notice were given that wrong doings were to be investigated, the power of securing the proper evidence might be lost.
Juries are especially provided, in order that investigations may be carried on secretly, not to disclose the evidence, and, therefore, render void and useless the efforts made, and, on the other hand, are spread on the public records, if the implications that were made against a person, on investigation by Grand Jury, do not seem to be warranted.

An inquiry about some pneumatic tubes. I haven't any direction information about that, other than a general knowledge that they are being investigated. They are under consideration. There have been requests for the installation of pneumatic tube service in several cities. I think some have already been resumed in the City of New York and others. It is under consideration, and I don't think that, at the present time, any final determination has been reached.

An inquiry also about a revision of the Statutes. I think there was a bill before the House last year and that came up to the Senate, that is along the line of revising the Statutes. It takes up a great deal of time to make a revision like that, and necessitates a great deal of consideration and assistance of experts. I understand that the Senate didn't have the opportunity to give the bill consideration, and, therefore, it didn't reach final enactment. From what I know, I should think it was very desirable that those Statutes that haven't been revised, I think it has been a matter of quite a good many years, some forty, ought to be revised and brought up-to-date for the use of the administration of justice, the convenience of the Government, and of the people, in order that they may easily see and comprehend what the laws are, what the requirements are, and what can be done to secure their execution.