August 21, 1923.

Remarks by the President to Newspaper Correspondents.

I have a number of interesting inquiries here and one of the first is relative to the reports of observers returning from Europe, whether they point to the necessity of any change in the American attitude toward European affairs. So far as I get any information from them, it doesn't point to the necessity of any change. Those returning confirm the wisdom of the attitude that has been maintained since I have known about things in Washington. They realize the difficulties over there, perhaps more acutely by reason of immediate contact with them than we can here, and I think they can see that there isn't anything that American can do at the present time other than proceed with the course that it has mapped out.

An inquiry about Mexico. A report has been made by the two Commissioners, Mr. Warren and Mr. Payne. That is in the hands of the State Dept. being digested and considered. When that work is finished a report will undoubtedly be sent to me with recommendations as to what attitude ought to be adopted toward the provisions of the report and the recommendations that are in it. After that has been determined, should it then be possible to resume relationship with Mexico, I think the procedure would be the appointment of a Charge de Affaires. Some time later the question would be taken up of the appointment of an Ambassador to represent Mexico and, of course, the reception of an Ambassador here to represent Mexico. Now I don't want to be asked about the details. Those you get more properly from the State Dept. Nor, do I know just when they will have finished their study of the report and their digest of it, so that they will bring their recommendations to me. But I think very shortly.

An inquiry about the U. S. Chamber of Commerce. Representatives of that body came in yesterday and more in the way, I thought, of paying their respects than of a desire to promote any particular policies at the present time. They assured me of their hearty desire to cooperate and, of course, in return I assured them of my desire to listen to any reports or any proposals they might have and render any possible assistance in promoting business welfare in the U. S., because if that is going on happily and well there is very little chance of unemployment, very little chance of any distress among those that first feel the pinch of distress in times of depression.
An inquiry about when we intend to move into the White House. We are going to get in as soon as we can. It is possible that we can come over this afternoon. We would like to go in quietly, not without observing the befitting dignity of moving into the White House, but with as little ostentation as possible, on account of the circumstances, of course with which you are familiar, that surround our taking up our residence there.

An inquiry about the flexible provisions of the Tariff Act, and the establishment of a Tariff Adjustment Board. No settled policy has been adopted in that respect. Of course, the Tariff Commission has a large file of information that it would be impossible for any other board to collect for a long time. They have policies and customs and traditions there that are exceedingly helpful to them in getting any information that is necessary in presenting it to the President for his action. I should doubt very much if we could expedite matters at all by a Tariff Adjustment Board. But, as I say, I haven't any mature policy in that respect, but so far as I have given it my thought, I can see a great many objections to it.

I have already spoken about Mr. Warren's report and Judge Payne's report, - the fact that I couldn't give you any of the details of that, as it is in the State Department.

An inquiry about the Cuban situation. That is as it was when I received the representatives of the press last week. General Crowder is here and I don't know of anything more fitting that we could do in recognition of the disinterested work of an efficient public servant than to say a word about his accomplishments in Cuba, during the time that he's represented our Government there. He's gained the confidence and the support of the Cuban people. He was of great assistance to them in reorganizing the Government, always acting in the capacity of a friend, and never acting in the capacity of one that was trying to force something on the Cuban people that wasn't for their benefit. I think there is in Cuba, as I indicated the other day, a very great mass of public sentiment that appreciates the work that he did, and the people of our own country ought to appreciate it and, I think voices a universal desire for him, when he has had the rest that he is entitled to, to return and continue his good work.
An inquiry about the shipping policy. No change in the personnel there is contemplated at the present time, so far as I know, and no suggestion has come to me. I don't know whether anyone's time is expiring, so that it is going to be necessary to fill a vacancy. If there is any case of that kind, my first thought would be to retain the person that is now holding the position.

An inquiry about the legality of creating subsidy corporations for the operation of Government owned fleet. That is a question that had occurred to me and no final decision could be made upon it as a policy without taking, probably, the opinion of the Attorney General, though I think that the counsel of the Shipping Board is thoroughly convinced they have the right within the provisions of law to inaugurate that plan. The Shipping Board has not been advised to put in force its new operating plan, but it's under consideration.

It is probable that some committee may be appointed outside of just personnel of the Shipping Board. Of course, it would be represented by its Chairman, and I may want to consult with the Treasurer and the Secretary of Commerce, the Chairman of the Committee that has it in charge in the House and the Chairman of the Committee in the Senate and, perhaps, one or two others, relative to the feasibility of the proposed plan.

There was one matter I had in mind not covered by a question. That is the reappointment of Mrs. John Jacob Rogers, the wife of the Congressman from Massachusetts, whom many of you know has spent all of her time in Washington for years, I think, working among the soldiers in the hospitals. Whenever I have made a visit to Walter Reed Hospital, there I find Mrs. Rogers dressed as a nurse helping to take care of the boys out there. It was her regular occupation.

That so impressed the President that he made her a special appointment as his representative to go about from hospital to hospital all over the U. S., conferring with the men there, finding out if there was anything that the Government could do for their relief, and trying to extend the personal touch of the U. S. Government towards those who are suffering from disabilities incurred in the country's service. It has been a great pleasure to me to reappoint her and ask her to continue the work that she so efficiently begun.

No final action has yet been taken concerning the calling of a Governors' conference relative to the enforcement of the prohibitory laws. It has been my expectation that there would be such a conference. Immediately on my return to Washington Mr. Haynes called on me and said that he had been here all
summer (this is more or less confidential); that he had a considerable degree of fever and wanted to go away and rest up. He had no serious illness that I could learn of, but felt that he needed rest, so I haven't had the opportunity to confer with him and find out just what questions he has that we could submit to a gathering of Governors, or just in what way we could propose to them that they could assist. When he returns, I shall take that up with him and see what can be done.

The question that is presented here, "Is it your intention that the Government shall operate directly the shipping fleet?" I think the answer to that is, "No, that isn't contemplated." There has been a proposal for a little change in operation, but it can't hardly be said to be a direct operation.

An inquiry about the attitude towards the release of so-called political prisoners. I should be very sorry to see the U.S. holding anyone in confinement on account of any opinion that that person might hold. It is a fundamental tenet of our institutions that people have a right to believe what they want to believe and hold such opinions as they want to hold without having to answer to any one for their private opinion. On the other hand, when persons holding opinions, whatever they may be, undertake to go out and influence others to commit acts that are contrary to the law of the land, they then, of course, they come within the purview of the law of inciting riot or advising the commission of crime, or conspiracy, well recognized criminal actions not at all related to the holding of ideas. When that has been the case, and especially in time of war when there has been any overt act against the administration of the Government, then people who engage in that activity become fit subjects for punishment. I recognize that we have allowed their punishment for some time and I shall do everything I can to extend a reasonable clemency on the part of the Government.

I think I have covered the situation as it exists. I think I had here an inquiry about the coal situation which I must have overlooked. There are no developments on that in Washington. The conference is going on in Atlantic City hopefully, I think. At any rate, I shall entertain that opinion until it is clearly demonstrated that some other opinion ought to be held. But I realize that there is a real desire on the part of the miners and operators to get to-
gather and continue the mining of coal, and with that desire in their minds, I feel pretty confident that there is some common ground for a meeting place that will relieve the situation.

(Here a question was put by a newspaper representative that I couldn't hear. It was about the direct operation of the shipping fleet by the Government).

I do not understand that the plan proposes what you would call a form of direct operation - but not technically direct operation. It would be indirect. That plan has already been tried, as you know, and it hasn't been entirely satisfactory. They are looking around for something that holds out some hope that we may be relieved from the enormous expenditures that we are now making.