November 23, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men

An inquiry as to whether aliens will be admitted at New York in excess of national quotas, and whether any arrangements have been made for such purpose. No general arrangements about it. A permanent lawyer came to see me yesterday about a portland, I think, of some seven hundred that wanted to come in. Some are quite distressing cases. I took the matter up with the Labor Department and they tell me that in a case of that kind they try to take care of all cases of distress - those that you might call worthy cases; but when they are able bodied men or people that don't appeal in any way to the sympathy or charitable instincts, why they have to be returned.

Here is an announcement that advices have just been received from Germany stating that the Reichstag has failed to give Stresemann a vote of confidence, and that Stresemann and his entire Cabinet have quit, leaving the government in a complete state of collapse. I haven't any official information about that. I should imagine that if that was the case, that a new government would be formed the same as in any other country. Of course our own country, and all the other countries of the civilized world would view a collapse of Germany with a great deal of concern.

An inquiry about the Sterling-Talbot bill. I haven't any exact information about that. I know about it in a general way. I never came to any final conclusion about it.

An inquiry about the proposed reorganization of the Executive Departments and whether the administration favors a single Department of Education, or a Department of Education and Public Welfare. The plan contemplates a Department of Education and Public Welfare. The public welfare has to do with the prisoners. It also includes the Veterans Bureau, and quite a number of activities of that kind.

Mr. President, is that the name of the Department, as you express it?

Yes. Education and Welfare.

An inquiry about the proposed plan of Representative Hadden for a solution of the Muscle Shoals problem. Mr. Hadden has consulted me about it once or twice, and it is my understanding that he and I are working in harmony on it. It is very important that our country should secure the opportunity to produce nitrates, at a low price, both on account of their need for national defense and especially on account of their need in agriculture. And if that can be worked out at Muscle Shoals, it will
a matter of the very greatest importance from both of those angles. We are trying to see if that is not possible. I think the present price at which nitrates are imported, most of them I believe are Chilean nitrates, is considerably lower than nitrate can be produced from power, either steam or water power. Now that means there would have to be a considerable amount of experimentation in order to be able to produce cheap nitrates. It would require a considerable capital outlay probably to have that worked out.

An inquiry also about my intention to visit Columbus, Ohio, to confer with friends of President Harding. I haven't any such plan at the present time. Very likely that may refer to some work that is being done out there by the Harding Memorial Association.

No letters have come to me, so far as I have noticed, from the agricultural papers relative to taxation.

An inquiry about a proposal for the Alien Property Custodian to use the $187,000,000 now on deposit with the Treasury as a fund for the revival of trade between the United States, Germany and other Central European states. So far as I know that doesn't seem very feasible. The only thing we could accomplish by that would be through the use of credit or capital, and I don't know that the Government ought to use credit and capital in that way in competition with our financial institutions. I should want to think that over before approving it, and so far as I know credit is not sought for in foreign trade at the present time. I may be mistaken about it, but that is my impression, which I have gained from talking with Mr. Meyer of the War Finance Corporation. He has passed two or three months abroad for the express purpose of seeing whether the War Finance Corporation could help finance experts, especially of agricultural products, and he wasn't able to work up any business in that way.

An inquiry about extending the coastwise laws to the Philippines. I haven't my present intention of doing that. Something might come up in the future that would make it seem desirable, but according to my understanding there are very grave doubts as to its propriety, in the State Department. I had at one time a very long report about it. I didn't examine the report in great detail, so I am not able to give the details of it, but the conclusion was that it was of very doubtful propriety, on account of its apparent violation of treaties we had with other countries.
An inquiry also about my message. I want to reserve the right to discuss all subjects in my message. If you will just keep that in mind, it will help you for the next ten days.

An inquiry as to how far in advance my message will be delivered to the press. I am sure that it will be four or five days in advance of its delivery, perhaps six or seven.

An inquiry about the visit of Senator Cummins. He came in to talk about railroad legislation. He is, as you know, at work preparing a bill. We are trying to see whether it will be possible for us to agree. I have no doubt that it will.

Can you give us any idea as to the approximate length of your message at this time, Mr. President?

I am trying to make it as short as I can. I am glad you asked me about that. It will be in the nature of recommendations for legislation, explicit recommendations, rather than long arguments and dispositions on subjects. Very likely my recommendations may be sound enough, but some people might question my reasons. I am not trying to limit the editorial writers.

Have you decided yet to go up in person?

I am not certain about that.

An inquiry about a telegram from the Carded Woolen Manufacturing Ass'n. of Boston for relief of what they consider unjust rates on wool and mohair in the present tariff law. That telegram, I think, has been referred to the Tariff Commission in order that they might advise me what action should be taken. But this general action is taken on all complaints that come on suggestions about changes in the schedule. They are referred to the Tariff Commission, investigated carefully, and anything that on investigation shows that it is worthy of the technical investigation, which means the giving of public notice and so on, will be considered in that way. It doesn't make any difference what schedule it may relate to. Whatever may be necessary in the way of changes under the flexible provisions of the tariff law will be considered and put into effect. That doesn't mean that we want to rewrite the tariff every day, but it has been in effect for a couple of years, things are more or less settled, and in the course of time it requires investigation and it can be changed, if necessary.
An inquiry about a building program for post offices. I don't want to approve at this time any general building program. As I suggested to you some time ago, there is probably a necessity for the beginning of a building program of public buildings here in Washington, but for a general building program, I am not prepared at the present time.

An inquiry about Ambassadors Harvey and Child. Ambassador Harvey, of course, will retire whenever his successor is appointed, confirmed, and qualified; and Ambassador Child I don't think has any plan about retiring. He expects to return and remain indefinitely. I do understand in a general way that he wants to retire before very long. But this is entirely indefinite.

No recommendations have been received from the Department of Justice relative to a pardon for Comptroller Craig of New York.

I have already referred to the conference with Senator Cummins.

I have already told you when I thought my message would be ready for the press. This brings me back to where I began.

Mr. President, can you tell us anything about the Cabinet?

The Cabinet meeting was very short this morning, and about all that we took up was immigration questions. I am very glad you spoke to me about that because I was asked yesterday, or rather I inquired of a lawyer that was here, who told me that people came to America on boats with passports, and when they got the passports thought, of course, that gave them the right of entry. I said that was a matter that ought to be remedied if it were so. I inquired of the State Department this morning, and they say every individual that gets a passport signs a statement that he or she understands that it does not in any way entitle them to entrance into any port of our country. The passport is merely a statement by the State Department that, so far as the State Department is concerned, they have no objection to the entrance of that person. It doesn't have any jurisdiction over the Labor Department, nor, of course, over our immigration laws. They do sign, in every case where a passport is granted, a statement that they understand that, and know the significance of it. It is explained to them as carefully as it can be. But many times people come with passports that have been issued in South Africa, and so on, London or Paris, and it isn't possible for all of these different clients to keep in touch with each other and know just what the quota may be for any specific country at any specific time. So that some of the countries of Europe, who have
nations that are spread all over the world and come back to Europe with their passports, and sail from there to here, are subject to that condition without any blame attaching to the different consuls that issue the passports.

Mr. President, about Muscle Shoals, would it be possible for the Government to run it at a profit in case it has to operate it?

I don't know. Most everything we do operate we operate at a loss. It would very likely be operated at a loss, as we are now doing. The fixation of nitrates and securing of them in large quantities is a matter of such public importance that the Government would be justified in doing work of that kind the same as it is justified in building a highway or paying out money for reforestation, or opening up railroads and harbors, because it is a matter of very great public importance.