Friday, January 7, 1927.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

Several questions have been submitted relative to Nicaragua and some telegrams have come to me making inquiries about it from different publications. Of course I can't very well send to different publications throughout the country statements for use in their press. Those publications that are not represented here at the White House conferences will have to rely very largely on reports from these conferences for such information as they may need. Here is one inquiring as to the reasons for landing marines on the cost of Nicaragua. I think that has already been made as plain as I could make it, that it was for the purpose of protecting American life and property and the rights of the American Government within that territory. Another one, "What interests have we in the so-called neutral zones established in that country by the United States." There have been several neutral zones established in Nicaragua, I think principally by agreement between the different factions. The reason was because they were inhabited by American citizens and within their location is American property, so that if fighting or warfare took place in that locality it would probably result in injury to American citizens and American property. Another here inquiring on what principle of international relationship have we acted. Why, it is the generally recognized principle of the duty of the American Government to protect its citizens and their rights when they have gone lawfully into a foreign country and are abiding there in observance of the local laws.
2.
I wouldn't care to give out the names of Americans that have asked for protection. That might result in injury to them, if their names are disclosed.

Press: Are there very many?

President: I don't know how many. I know of several that have been received. I don't have in mind the names myself and I wouldn't think it was proper to give them out if I did have them.

I do not think I have any specific information as to the relationship of Mexico to the present situation in Nicaragua other than what has already been published.

Press: What have you in mind in regard to the published reports?

President: Well, I don't know that I can state that accurately and if I could I hardly think I would want to state it at all. I haven't given specific and careful attention to published reports of that kind and I haven't them clearly enough in mind so that I could state them, but as I have observed them the impression that was made on my mind was that they were, very broadly speaking, in harmony with information that has come to me from other sources. I happen to have here a paragraph from some instructions that were issued to Minister Foster, at Mexico, on the 12th of August 1878 by the then Secretary of State William M. Evarts, and they express the policy of the United States so clearly that perhaps it might be helpful to the conference if I read them. It is quite short. It has since been known as the Evarts doctrine.
"The first duty of government is to protect life and property. This is a paramount obligation. For this governments are instituted, and governments neglecting or failing to perform it become worse than useless. This duty the Government of the United States had determined to perform to the extent of its power toward its citizens on the border. It is not solicitous, it never has been, about the methods or ways in which that protection shall be accomplished, whether by formal treaty stipulations or by formal conventions, whether by the action of judicial tribunals or that of military force. Protection in fact to American lives and property is the sole point upon which the United States are tenacious."

That sums up the general policy that the Government is attempting to pursue so well that I thought it might be helpful if the conference had it in mind.

Press: Could we have a copy of that?

President: I haven't any copies of it. I should be very glad to let any one have this copy I have. I don't know whether you have access to any documents that would give it to you or not. Now, I think the conference is by this time fairly well informed about our Nicaraguan policy. I have stated it quite a good many times. We have sent forces there to protect our interests and Admiral Latimer has general authority to take such action as he may think is necessary from time to time to accomplish that purpose. It has been the policy of our Government, worked out by Secretary Hughes as an example, in getting the Central American representatives up here to make treaties to discourage revolutions. Revolutions have been one of the peculiar drawbacks of that locality. I don't speak of that in any critical way or desire at all to criticize those countries, but that is the fact, that revolutions have retarded their progress. We wanted to do
what we could to be helpful in getting them to adopt a policy that would dis-
courage revolution. Whenever one breaks out we find ourselves in the same
position that we are in relation to Nicaragua. Our people, property, and
our rights are in jeopardy and it necessitates our sending forces for their
protection. We wanted to use our good offices and extend our assistance to
help those people to establish stable governments. As an example of what we
have been willing to do you will recall our recent assistance to General
Obregon when he was President of Mexico threatened with revolution. He ap-
plied to this Government for its moral support, for arms and supplies, which
were sold to him to help him in the situation in which he found himself.
We did that because we wanted it understood that when we have recognized a
government our recognition ought to be considered of some value. It wasn't
a mere empty gesture, but it meant that this Government considered that the
government it had recognized was one that was doing the best it could, was
undertaking to maintain its international obligations, protect the rights
of Americans and the rights of other people that found themselves within
its jurisdiction, and while it was doing that under our recognition we
wanted to give it what aid and assistance we could. Well, acting in ac-
cordance with the treaties that were negotiated here some of the Central
American countries and our country recognized the Diaz government in Mexico,
thought it was the government in authority because we considered it had come
into authority in a constitutional manner. We can't always inquire as to
the source of authority that a government has, but after we find it a de facto government that is able to exercise its authority and jurisdiction over the country that it represents and fulfills the other requirements, then we recognize it. We recognized the Diaz Government, and having recognized it we are taking the same position toward it that we took toward the Obregon government in Mexico. I wasn't following the details of the negotiations at that time, but it was my understanding then that there was a kind of a general conference at which it was understood and agreed that Diaz would come into power under a constitutional method and was duly chosen first designate, which means Acting President, and the therefore was entitled to/recognition of the other countries and we recognized him.

Press: Have the Central American countries recognized him?

President: I think the Central American countries have not recognized him, but the others have acting in accordance with the terms of their treaty. I have never given enough thought and study to the plan of financing campaigns. It has been suggested quite a number of times and I think in some states there is something of that nature, especially where they apply the referendum quite extensively. The government itself undertakes to provide literature and sends it out to the registered voter on pending questions. I think it also undertakes to send out to them information relative to candidates. I don't know whether that would be practicable in all cases. I see this question relates to financing the major political parties. I can see that minority parties would feel that
that would be quite to their prejudice and whether it would be possible through any method of that kind to have campaigns conducted without voluntary contributions I couldn't say without making more study of it than I have had.

I don't know just what we shall do about taking up negotiations with Canada for the construction of a St. Lawrence shipway. I have sent the report that has been made by the engineers up to the Congress for its information. Perhaps the Congress will wish to indicate whether they wish negotiations proposed. Of course, nothing of that kind is necessary and we can take up negotiations with another power on the voluntary motion of the Executive at any time without any suggestion from the Congress.

I have been invited to speak at Buffalo at the dedication of the new International Bridge which is being erected between the city of Buffalo and the Canadian shore, the expectation being that such dedication may occur some time early in the Fall or late in the Summer. Of course I can't tell so far ahead whether it will be possible for me to go up there or not. I recognize the importance of the occasion and the epoch-making event of the opening of an international bridge of that kind. Also it will be time for the celebration of the peaceful relations that have for such a long time existed between Canada and the United States, which makes it all the more an interesting event.

To go back to the Nicaraguan situation, I understood that there was no doubt that arms had gone from Mexico, I don't mean from the Mexican
Government, but that arms had been shipped from Mexico to Nicaragua. I do not think that this Government has been in communication with Mexico in relation to that. When the Diaz government was recognized and an embargo on arms was placed by this Government, and I think by the Central American Governments, against the shipment of arms into Nicaragua. I believe that Mexico was approached by the United States with an inquiry as to whether Mexico would put on an embargo. I understand that they did not put on an embargo. I think that is probably the extent of any communication that has been made by this Government to Mexico relative to the shipment of arms.