

Friday, November 25, 1927.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

I have given some thought to the suggestion for the outlawry of war. Any treaties made on that subject are somewhat difficult under our Constitution. Those difficulties were quite clearly set out some months ago by Dr. David Jayne Hill in an article that was, I think, in the Saturday Evening Post. I don't know that they are insuperable, but they are certainly very great, because our Constitution places the authority for a declaration of war in the Congress. Of course, that makes it quite obvious that any treaty that might be made would not take away from Congress the power to declare war. Such a treaty, however, would amount to a declaration of a policy that might be helpful in promoting a sentiment for peace. I don't know that we regard our own country any differently than other people regard theirs. I suppose that most of our people would say that this is a peaceful country as indicated by the very infrequent occasions in which it has resorted to war, emphasized by the many treaties that we have for arbitration, the moderate size of our Army, and considering all our conditions the very moderate size of our Navy, and our general indisposition to interfere in the affairs of other countries. Still, if there is more that could be said that would indicate a desire for honorable peace, it might be desirable to say it. I do not think it is likely that anything of that nature could be well dealt with in a conference. It would have to be taken up by individual nations.

(The President was asked if he had seen a certain proposal for putting an embargo on arms against aggressor countries).

The President: Well, I have seen some reference to that. I haven't given that study enough either to come to a definite conclusion about it. It would depend very much upon the form, the details that it might take; also it would depend on what it was to be applied to. If it was to apply merely to arms and ammunition it would be taken differently in this country, than if it meant to be carried to the extent of non-intercourse, which would practically mean that we would join any other country that started a blockade

on some foreign power. Whether that might involve us in an act of hostility would be something that would need to be explored. And then of course the question of what is aggression has always been one that is very difficult to determine. It is thought, I believe, that they have some formula now to the effect that it is to be the nation that refuses to arbitrate. That, I assume, would have to be modified some, because it has always been understood there were some questions of national honor and integrity that no nation ought to be called on to arbitrate or, at least, should not be held up to criticism because it refused to arbitrate such a question. I am not undertaking to go into any details or discussion, but merely indicating some of the questions that would have to be disposed of in order to come to a definite conclusion. There isn't any short cut to peace. There is no short cut to any other salvation. I think we are advised it has to be worked out with fear and trembling. I don't believe there is any way in which you can escape from that conclusion and that condition.

I am not certain whether I shall go on the Mayflower tomorrow or not.

I haven't made any decision about the appointment of a successor to Admiral Bullard. I put him on there at the time of his appointment, especially with the thought of having him the chairman. I haven't thought of the other members of the Commission. It may be that some one of them would better be designated as chairman. It may be that the new man that goes on may quite naturally take up the position of chairman.

I don't know just what Senator Capper has in mind to propose. I imagine that the effect of it would be a general suggestion or statement on the part of the Congress that they were in favor of outlawing war, hoping that some negotiations might be entered into for that purpose.

I have several times proposed to the Congress that I should be pleased to have established a Department of Education and Relief, I think it was, that would take under one management all the different elements of the Government engaged in that kind of work with a seat in the Cabinet. If you want to know just what my ideas have been on that, glance back at some of my previous messages to the Congress. I also referred to it in an

address I made on the 4th day of July, 1924.

I don't know of anything I can say about the proposal of the United States Chamber of Commerce to have tax reduction of \$400,000,000. I think I saw in one of the headlines that it was accompanied with the suggestion that this Government could run, even if it had a deficit, which of course must have been made without any knowledge of the budget act. If the Chamber of Commerce will point out where savings can be made to warrant any such tax reduction as that, why then I will be glad to discuss it with them. So far as I know, they are not making any suggestion of any kind about saving in any part of the United States Government. On the contrary their runners are going from Department to Department, asking that the costs of the Government be very greatly increased and the taxes greatly diminished. If there could be a more absurd proposal about that, government finances, I don't know what it could be.

Nothing has developed relative to the bituminous coal situation. The Secretary of Labor is looking into that to see what possibly can be done to compose it and mediate it and secure some adjustment. Of course, the main difficulty there is an entirely economic one. I rather think that the consumption of coal is decreasing a little. Due to improvements of machinery and the use of steam boilers, it doesn't take so much coal as it formerly did for operation. There is a great deal of oil being burned. A very considerable amount of course of water power, hydro-electric, is taking the place of coal. There is a large production of coal in our Southern area, where wages are not nearly so high and then there has been a great deal of increase in the machinery for the production of coal, so that the same number of men produce more. And all those things together have brought about a situation where it is possible to secure coal on the market at a lower price than it can be produced for and pay the rate of wages that have been paid. Now, that is a situation that ought to be held as one for which the miners or the operators are the blame. It simply developed as a change in our economic conditions. It is quite obvious that there are too many men in the coal mining business

and too many mines. Some of the mines will have to be closed and probably some of the men in the mining business will have to seek employment in some other industry. Now, that is the situation. If the Government can do anything to help relieve it, why, of course, they will gladly do it. But it is very difficult to see what can be done. The industry is going through a period of readjustment, and when industry goes through that kind of a period of course it is always one of a great deal of difficulty for both the owners and the employees. It means a loss to the owners and a loss of employment also for the wage earners in the industry. That seems to be the trouble with the coal industry.

Query: When you say, of course anything will be done if it can, do you mean that you are calling a conference?

President: Not necessarily. I don't know that that will be any good. I mean we will investigate any proposal that is made and devise any plans we can that will seem to be helpful. I said a moment ago I didn't know what could be done, and I haven't any definite proposal or any definite plan, especially as I am leaving that to the suggestion of the Secretary of Labor. I merely outlined some of the difficulties of which he is well aware, and he is undertaking to see if he can find any solution.