Tuesday, December 20, 1927.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

I haven't in mind at the present time any particular action relative to the tax reduction bill. It is quite apparent that there was an effort, commendable in itself, to hasten the bill through the House, perhaps without any sufficient appreciation on the part of a good many members of the House just what the result would be of some of the provisions that were put into the bill. The Congress usually comes to a quite sensible conclusion about things when it has time to find out what the facts are and understands what the result of their actions is going to be, and I should expect that the hearings that will be held before the Committee of the Senate would develop the strong features and the weak features of the present bill and result in such amendments as are necessary to make it a bill that would be fairly in harmony with what the Treasury Department, under the guidance of Mr. Mellon, thinks is sound taxation policy.

President Little of the University of Michigan came in yesterday -- he is a member, I don't know but President, of what I understand is an association of Presidents of State Universities -- to tell me of the interest that they have in the development of education and their desire to cooperate with the National Government along that line, and especially to be helpful in adopting the carrying out of a sound policy on the part of the United States Government in the expenditure of money that it appropriates for research and investigation and experimentation. We are making quite large appropriations of that kind which go to the agricultural colleges, I think almost exclusively. In many of the States those colleges are a part of the State University. In some of the States they are separate institutions. In Massachusetts, for instance, we have no university, because the field was very early covered by institutions that
the State and local communities had contributed to in establishing, the first
one being Harvard, and all our agricultural colleges are separate institutions.

Question: Was he the head of Massachusetts Agricultural College at
one time?

President: No. President Butterfield of the Agricultural College in
Massachusetts was the President. So I told him I knew about the situation from
my experience in Massachusetts, in part, and that I would do what I could to co-
operate with him and see that the money that was appropriated by the U. S. Govern-
ment was put into places where it could be best expended, but that I thought
there would be a great deal of hesitancy on the part of Congress to make a division
of the money and have part of it go to universities that had a State Agricultural
College under them and part of it go to State Universities that did not have an
Agricultural College under them. I thought the Congress would probably be very
loath to divert any money that was going directly to agricultural colleges into
the use of many of the state universities, even though there might be quite a
strong reason for it by reason of state universities being better equipped in
some instances to carry on experimentations and investigations that it is proposed
to carry on under the money that Congress appropriates.

I know almost nothing about the attitude of the U. S. Chamber of Com-
merce relative to flood legislation. Sometimes the Chamber can be helpful, some-
times I haven't thought they were helpful. They might get some information
about that which would be of assistance to Congress. I suppose what they have
done is to ask the opinion of their constituent members relative to certain ques-
tions, I think as to how the expense should be met of building such works as are
necessary for flood control in the flooded region. I set out in my message my
opinion about that and the bill that was sent up and the report - I think it was
accompanied by a bill. The report anyway of the Engineers asked for a trifling contribution from the areas that were to be benefitted. I think they figured it out to be something like 50c per acre per year for 10 years. It was about 10% of the money that was expected to be expended in the region. No, it was 20% of the cost of the erection of the dikes and works of that kind. Of course, that was necessarily an arbitrary figure. The present policy has been for the locality to contribute 1/3. I thought that probably would be a rather difficult burden for them to meet and so I approved the recommendation of the Engineers that it be reduced to 1/5. Per acre it seemed to be rather a trifling amount, and there may be local conditions and so on that make it impractical. I don’t know about that. That would only be developed at a hearing by the Committee.

The plan of the Engineers as presented is a proposal of most extraordinary generosity that was ever made by the U. S. Government — to put in a system of flood control there at a cost that is about the amount that the Panama Canal cost.

As an engineering accomplishment, it is second in rank to anything that has ever been undertaken by the National Government. It is second only to the Panama Canal.

Question: Have you received any estimates of the cost that the states say they will have to expend on the lands that have to be condemned?

President: No, I haven’t. That is one of the things that necessarily will have to be taken into consideration. The Engineers did not think that would be very large. It was borne by the states and localities. If it has to be borne by the U. S. Government the lands will probably turn out to be quite valuable — so valuable that perhaps a tax of 50c an acre for 10 years would be considered quite an insignificant sum. But as I said in my message, we want to approach this in a broad and generous spirit and undertake this work, which is the greatest the United States has ever undertaken expect the Panama Canal, with a desire to
clean it up and as far as we can guarantee that region from any other such catastrophe as happened to them during this present year. Whether that means some small contribution or not is not a matter of great consequence, so far as the money is concerned. I thought the principle is quite important. It is especially for their benefit. They will have an interest in seeing that it is done properly and economically, if they make some small contribution to the cost.

I don't know of any special Christmas pardons that are likely to come along. There may be some that are up for consideration in the Department of Justice. I am issuing pardons all the time, so that so far as pardons are concerned every day is Christmas over here.

I don't know of any comment that I can make relative to the disaster to the S-4 submarine, other than the expression of extreme sorrow and regret that a disaster of that kind has occurred. I am receiving constant reports from the Department that they are doing everything that it is possible to do to rescue the men and raise the submarine. Efforts are almost entirely impeded by very severe weather. But everything that it is possible to do will be done.

I haven't any special plans that I know of for the observation of Christmas, other than those that are customary. I expect to go down and help light the Christmas tree. There will be carol singing at the White House by some musical organization that is connected with the Interstate Commerce Commission. They have a glee club or something of that kind. I don't know just what the name of it is. They will sing at the White House Christmas eve. As Christmas comes on Sunday, I don't know whether any religious institutions of the city will hold services on Monday or not. If there is a religious service at our church Monday morning, I shall probably attend. It is my usual practice.

Mr. Stimson recently appointed Governor General of the Philippines came
in this morning. He is conferring with the Insular Bureau of the War Dept. and the Secretary of War. He is going to meet with the Committees of the House and the Senate that have especial charge of legislation dealing with Philippine questions and he expects to start for the Philippines in the very near future. As I understood it, he had no new or changed or particular policies to announce. He will go out there to undertake to execute the organic law of the Islands and cooperate with the Philippine officers in doing what he can to provide a good government.

I mentioned the other day that any reports about what I was going to do when I finished being President were made entirely without consultation with me. I forgot to mention one report that is going around. I mention it now because I don't want to be accused of acquiring property under false pretenses. I am having sent to me quite a number of jackknives. I don't recall that I ever made any suggestion that after I finished my term of office I was going to engage in the occupation of whittling. I did some when I was a boy. I haven't applied myself to that for a good many years. I hesitate to spoil anything like a good newspaper story, but, as I say, I don't want to keep getting jackknives under false pretenses.