March 7, 1924.

Remarks by the President to Newspaper Men.

Here is an inquiry about the appointment of Commissioners for the District of Columbia, and wanting to know whether I propose to wait for information from various citizen organizations in the District. I think I am already pretty well advised by their opinions. I have here endorsements of Mr. Rudolph and Mr. Custer by the Dairy Farm Citizens Association, Congress Heights Citizens Association, the Southwest Civic Association, Dupont Circle Citizens Association, West End Citizens Association, Garfield Citizens Association, South Washington Citizens Association, and the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, the Washington Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Trade, Federated Citizens Association, and the Thomas Circle Citizens Association. I think there is also an endorsement by the Republican Organization of the District, and I am not certain about the Democratic organization.

Mr. President, are you approaching a decision on that matter?

I think so, very soon. There are several other names suggested, but these men have practically a unanimous endorsement. The different associations and political organizations, quite naturally I would refer to for an opinion.

Will they probably be reappointed, Mr. President?

I wouldn't assume too much about appointments until they are made. I got caught once or twice by thinking I had an appointment all settled when I was Mayor or Governor, and announced it, and then found out there were reasons why it couldn't be done. It is embarrassing.

When do you think you will make them, Mr. President?

I think very soon. I think their term of office runs out sometime next week. I think early in the week I shall submit their names.

Here is an inquiry about the duty on wheat. I don't know just what can be done about that. I have submitted the report to the Treasury Dept. to draw up a proper proclamation, if one is warranted by the report, in order that it may be done by the experts of the Treasury Department under whose jurisdiction, of course, the collection of revenue comes. I don't know just what they will find or just when they will find it. I think though that that ought to be returned to me within two or three days. Here is another inquiry about the Mexican Claims
Commission. I think that the Convention has been ratified and sent up here, but the proclamation so far as I recall has not come to me. That would be the next step necessary to make the proclamation; and after that is made then I could make the appointments.

Here is an inquiry about a joint resolution for a reduction of 25% in the tax on 1923 incomes as a separate measure. I have seen that referred to in the news dispatches. I don't think I could be said to be advocating it, nor on the other hand am I opposing it. I do feel it would be very desirable if we could get that resolution adopted before the 15th of March, in order that it might apply to the first payment as well as the others. That would be my general reaction about it, but there may be some reasons why that wouldn't make any difference, although that is the particular point about it that occurs to me. I think the first tax payments are due the 15th of March, and if this 25% were to be deducted from them, it would result in an easing up of the necessary amounts of credits that have to be transferred. I haven't decided on a successor to Secretary Denby. I should think that if I should decide I could send the name to the Senate any time before his resignation becomes effective, which is next week sometime.

Did the newspaper men make any suggestions, Mr. President, or give you any aid?

Well, I think some of them have been suggestive. I haven't got quite as many as I expected. Perhaps it isn't so easy as it may have appeared to pick out the right kind of a man.

Here is a statement about an international conference on Europe's economic situation, and suggesting that it might follow the report of the Dawes' Committee on reparations, and inquiring whether I care to say whether the U. S. would participate in such a conference, should it take place.

That is a very hypothetical question, and I don't believe I could give a hypothetical answer to it. All I can say is that we have repeatedly refused to participate in a conference of that kind. I don't know of any reason up to the present time for a change in our attitude in that direction.

Here is another inquiry that wants to know when the Dept. of Justice will begin presentation of evidence relating to charges disclosed by the Chicago Grand Jury. Of course I have no information about that, nor have I any information about the nature of the charges, other than what is in the paper. I do not even know...
whether the Department of Justice feels that it has sufficient evidence to warrant a presentation of that evidence to the Grand Jury. All I can say is if they have evidence nor, or if their investigation discloses to them evidence, I assume they will make a presentation right away. I have suggested to the Department that they proceed expeditiously for the purpose of securing action. Here is this rumor that some members of Congress were involved, which was very distressing to the House. They are entitled to have the matter cleared up at once. If the Department had evidence that could be presented to the Grand Jury, and if there was sufficient to warrant an indictment, it would be reported and everyone would know who was involved. If it wasn't sufficient to secure an indictment, why that fact should be made known and everybody would be cleared. Whatever evidence they had as a result of the Chicago investigation, I assumed that they would proceed with it at once. That is, I don't know. My only suggestion was that they be as expeditiously as possible about it.

Here is an inquiry about the evidence of Ira Bennett. I think I have seen him here once or twice. I can't give any recollection about his conversation with me, or mine with him. It is in my mind that he came in to say how-do-you-do. I don't recall any conference with him since this matter became acute. But it may be that he came in during a conference and stopped after the conference to say how-do-you-do to me. I don't recall very much about it.

Will you say anything about the telegram that you sent with reference to Mr. Prescott to Mr. McLean? I noticed the statement given out yesterday, but it isn't quite clear.

No, that was an inquiry that I made. I sent it to Mr. McLean because it was sent, as you perhaps notice from the date of it, at 9.30 or so in the evening. If I had been over here and my office force were here, I could have found out best. Mr. Slemp left. But I didn't know just what time Mr. Slemp was going and I didn't have his address. I knew that Mr. McLean was a resident there each winter and well known, and so I made the inquiry of him, and also for the purpose of shortening up the telegram. I remembered that Mr. McLean had said to me one time that if you ever want to know anything about District matters, Mr. Prescott would be a good man to talk with. That was the occasion of that telegram.

That had reference to the expiration of the terms of the two District Commissioners, didn't it?

No, not that especially. Just district matters. I wasn't very much
acquainted with the men in the District who knew of District matters, and as he was
inquired who I could ask about District matters. I recollected that he said Mr.
Prescott was Republican City Chairman here. I tried to get Mr. Prescott one time,
but he was out of town. So I made that inquiry of Mr. McLean. Does that make if
the matter plain?