

November 20, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Members of the Press.

+ I notice some of the representatives of the press take advantage of an opportunity to sit down. Any of you that wants can have my chair.

+ Mr. President does that go for anybody but newspaper men?

+ No.

I have here an inquiry about the Army and Navy game. My record of attendance of Army and Navy games since coming to Washington up to date has been perfect. I have been each year. I very much regret that I can't go this year. Perhaps the example that I am following makes it a little easier to remain at home. I recall that President Harding was not able to go either to Baltimore, or the year before to New York. I expect Mr. Slemp will be able to go, and trust that he may in part represent me. I have no doubt that the press will be present.

An inquiry about the twelve mile treaty with Great Britain. I wonder why the press is so interested in that. We haven't had any draft of the treaty, and no formal and official communication about it. We understand from unofficial communications that it is under way and we expect to receive it almost any time. Of course as soon as it is received, the Secretary of State's office will examine it and submit to to me, and in the usual course it would be submitted by me for ratification. But at present we have only had the unofficial rumors as to just what its provisions are, and as to just when it is likely to be consummated.

+ Another inquiry about trips in the near future. The members of the press here seem determined to get me out of town, if not to New York some other place. I haven't any present intention of leaving Washington. Very likely when Congress gets here I shall be even more busy than I am now, and perhaps in the course of a month or two I might like to get a way for a little while. But I haven't the slightest plan now. You know I remarked to you once before that I saw a great many rumors that President Harding was going to to to a great many places, usually accompanied in the same issue of the newspaper with the statement that he cancelled it. I don't want to prevent you from having all the news you can, but I would rather it would be of a little different nature from that. It is rather ineffectual to start on a trip and have to cancel it.

An inquiry about the reorganization plan. That is before the Joint Committee of the Senate and House. It was submitted to them by President Harding during his administration, and is still there ready for their action. In order that I



might inform myself and find out just what the Cabinet thought about it we went over it two or three times and had Mr. Brown come in.

Mr. President, does that mean that the Cabinet is unanimous in approving it, or that it will come back for further consideration?

No, I don't think it would come back. It will go in the report of the Committee to Congress. I read you the statement by President Harding in his letter of submission, and that statement is exactly in accordance with the present facts.

Have you any other changes in mind besides the reference to the Army and Navy you outlined some time ago, Mr. President? Not any other definite change that I could say was in my mind now. The plan is before the Committee and of course we know the Committee will give hearings on it. If the Cabinet and myself should undertake to make a cast iron agreement on a large problem of this kind, of course things would develop at the hearings that probably would cause us to change our minds. So we came to a substantial agreement and we thought we would leave it there.

+ It is understood that Representative LaGuardia of New York telegraphed protesting against the handling of some immigrants at New York, charging that Secretary of Davis let them in one day and had to exclude them on another day.

↓ That hadn't come to my attention until this inquiry was made, because in the usual routine of the office a telegram of that kind would be referred to Secretary Davis in order to get information on which to formulate a specific reply. That was done in this case. Very likely this refers to immigrants that came in on the first day of the month, when there were a great many coming over here. I had a conference with Secretary Davis about the general situation, and he concluded that on account of the great press he ought to be as lenient as possible, and I think he carried out that policy. If they were excluded at that time, it was because beyond this he felt he had no authority of law, in conscience or in humanity, to let them in.

+ An inquiry about a pardon for a German spy. That has never come to my attention. If it did, I should try to deal justly with it, as I should with any other request for a pardon. I wouldn't feel quite so sympathetic about it. But if there was a good reason for executive clemency, of course it would be extended. I should doubt very much the suggestion here, that the War Department has made a recommendation. I doubt very much if that would be made unless ~~there~~ it was a case of disease or something of that kind, or the finding of new evidence, but it is



perhaps not profitable to speculate on something of which you have no very great knowledge. I notice the name is Lowderwicz. It doesn't look so German as some other names I have seen.

An inquiry about the reaction of the country to Secretary Mellon's tax problem, in the letters and communications that have come here. You who observe the press more carefully than I do have seen the comment there. It will be interesting to see what kind of comment comes in from the farm people. The larger metropolitan papers, of course, we have seen. But those papers that are published not more than once a week have not all come in yet. It will be interesting to see what comment they make.

An inquiry about Major General Wood coming home. I am sure that any report that he is to return to this country is without any authenticity. He is administering his office over there under some difficulties, but I think with large satisfaction, and, of course, with the entire support of the administration here. So far as any knowledge has come to me that is the status.

An inquiry about clemency for Comptroller Craig of New York, sentenced to serve sixty days for contempt of court. No application of that kind has been received, that I know of, and it is my opinion that if the sentence is for contempt of court there wouldn't be any power in the executive to extend clemency. Cases of that kind are within the power of the court. That was the rule I know under which we always proceeded in Massachusetts, and I imagine that is the rule that applies in all courts. Contempt of court is contempt of the authority of the judge. It is not a violation of a statute. I don't think the pardon power extends to that at all. I never observed it did in any jurisdiction.

+ There was an interesting discussion in the Cabinet this morning, as to whether something ought not to be done to insure the reaching their proper destination of charitable contributions. It isn't a new question, and it isn't very easy to deal with, but unfortunately contributions are solicited, and it is found that the overhead expenses eat up a large proportion of the money that is received. So that contributions in very small proportion only reach the objects for which they were intended. The suggestion was made that there ought to be some central agency, or that the Government ought to exercise some kind of supervision, or that those who are proposing to promote a charitable organization of that kind ought to file some notice and make some report. Very many of those organizations give no report to any one. While



the Congress wouldn't have any authority to legislate for anything outside of the District legislation which comes under the particular jurisdiction of Congress, it would have jurisdiction over the mails, but these solicitations are not made so much through the mail. The question was whether some law of that kind ought not to be passed. There is a real evil that exists there, but it is somewhat difficult to know what can be done to afford the proper remedy.

Mr. President, was there any decision to the discussion this morning?

No, the matter was up for consideration. Nobody seemed to have any real definite answer to it.

Any likelihood of trying the law out in the District?

↓ I don't know. It was felt that something ought to be done. Of course the larger givers maintain special organizations so that whenever they are asked for any large sum, they make inquiry through an organization that they maintain and find out right away whether the object is worthy. But the small givers have nothing of that kind. They really ought to be protected - those who give the money and those to whom it is given, and there ought not to be any abuse of charitable impulses.