August 28, 1923.

Remarks by the President to Newspaper Correspondents.

I have an inquiry as to when Mr. Harvey expects to return to London. I think he has engaged passage for the 8th day of September. He is returning to New York, or his place in New Jersey, either this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

Reports from Mexico City that the U. S. has already recognized the Obregon Government. I do not understand that there has as yet been a formal recognition, but that the matter is waiting the exchange of the usual formal notes. Just what the detail of that is you get at the State Department.

An inquiry about the coal situation. That resolves itself, in a way, into the simple elements of the action by the National Government and the action by the State Government. I think there are one or two decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court that the mining of coal and the bringing of it out of the ground to the top is what you might call a purely state function. It is intra-state and not interstate. It is commerce within the state and not commerce between the states. What we have been trying to do is to bring to bear every possible pressure that we could on the situation without undertaking to make a determination of what ought to be done by the different parties; use such authority as the United States has, and supplement that by such authority as the State of Pennsylvania has, which, of course, is more intimate, as it has complete jurisdiction over the property and over the people. The United States jurisdiction is more of an indirect nature. I think up to the present time that good progress is being made. I heartily approve of the action that the Governor is taking up there. I think he is entitled to public commendation for the cooperation that he is bringing to bear together with the United States authorities, and I see no reason to change my expressed hope that it would be possible to reach an adjustment.

An inquiry about the appropriations for the Navy. Nothing definite has been decided on in that. The Budget Bureau is working on the appropriations for all the Departments. Generally speaking, it is the duty, of course, of the President to bring to bear such authority as he can in support of the execution of the Budget. If the budget plan and policy isn't supported heartily and effectively by the President, there isn't any hope of its being an effective instrument for the cutting down of national expenses and the administration of
the business of the nation in accordance with business principles. That doesn't mean that in every instance the President is going to say the Budget Commissioner is right and every Department is wrong. It means that we ought to look with greatest sympathy on the suggestions and recommendations of the Budget Commissioner, which, when they go to Congress, are, as I understand it, the recommendations of the President; and secure every possible cooperation between the Budget Commissioner and the different departments, adjusting their differences as well as that can possibly be done, and all that is being done at the present time with the recommendations of any Department is to look toward an adjustment between that department and what the Budget Commissioner may, with the information that he has at hand, think he ought to recommend.

An inquiry as to whether I have submitted the plan of the Shipping Board to the Attorney General. That hasn't been done. I am asking the Shipping Board to work out more in detail just what their proposals are, so that we may see what the plan is that is to be in effect, what the present plan is costing, and what we should expect to save by any variation of the present plan. When those details are on hand, of course, if there is any question of the legality of it, we will take it up with the Department of Justice.

An inquiry about the flexible provisions of the tariff law. A study is being made by the Tariff Commission into conditions, and all that I can say about that at the present time is that I should want to exercise very great caution in making any changes in the different schedules. If it appears that there is a schedule that is greatly out of proportion, too high or too low, on the recommend- nation of the Tariff Board that that is so, I should be inclined to take some action, but it is much more important to the country that they should feel that we are in a position of stability; to take and figure it today on what they can do tomorrow, rather than that they should be upset by the suggestion that there are going to be a lot of changes and say: "We can't make any commitments or engage in our usual activities because what we plan today may be upset by the Government tomorrow."

An inquiry about the attitude of the Administration toward Mexico. Of course, it has been indicated that it is one of friendly cooperation, and, so far
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as I know, no change in attitude excepting that which naturally comes, perhaps more from a desire for friendly cooperation and because of the return of the Commissioners and of their bringing back of what apparently is going to be a satisfactory plan of cooperation and removing any question that may have ran in the minds of the administration or of the public as to the ability to reach a reasonable agreement.

There is no change that I know of in the Cuban situation.

An inquiry about whether it would be helpful for the press to discuss the policy of the U. S. for the purpose of the abolition of war. I think that candid discussion of any question is always helpful. That is the great service that you perform, of reasonable and candid discussion. X You all have in mind that Mr. Sok has pending a proposal to give an award of $100,000 to the person who can successfully propose some plan of this kind. It happened that I was near his place in Maine early in July. He came to call on me at the hotel. I was attending a conference of Governors and I had an opportunity to go over to his house and spent a few minutes one afternoon with him. He went over somewhat of his plan and the main desire of it, the main element of it at least, was a public discussion of these questions, in order that the public might better be informed as to what our foreign relations really meant, their dependence on it, the effect that friendly or unfriendly relations have on their personal economic condition. He thought that if that could be thoroughly understood by the people of the United States, it would be of great public benefit, and with that in mind, I think that the discussion in the public press along lines of that kind will also be productive of a great deal of public benefit.

An inquiry whether Secretary Hughes’ visit to Montreal has any special significance. It has none, other than that which would occur to each one of you, or a desire on the part of the U. S., in accordance with the action of President Harding in stopping at Vancouver and accepting the hospitality of that beautiful and enterprising city, making a speech there that was received with a great deal of enthusiasm, of giving evidence from time to time of our friendly feeling toward the people of Canada. X You will see the speech that he is to deliver, I think it is already before you, and whatever significance that may lie in his visit there other than that, you will see from a reading of what it has to say.
An inquiry about a reduction in taxation. Nothing can be said about that at the present time. I don't want you to feel that I am adopting a policy of concealing anything from you or doing anything other than to be perfectly frank about every question I can discuss with you. Of course, I shall have to deliver a message to Congress later. It would be rather inconsiderate of them if, before going up there, I should take occasion from time to time to make a public declaration of what the nature of my message will be. They are entitled, of course, to the first public expression of what I want to lay before them and suggest what their action ought to be on account of the state of the Union. So I am not going to say much at any time about what I am going to advise Congress to do. Of course, it is never proper, or hardly ever proper, for an executive to run out and say that I am going to force this bill through or I am going to veto that bill. Let us wait and see what develops. Very likely if it is a wise bill the Congress will act favorably without force or coercion from anybody, and if it is an unwise bill, my experience has been, both in the state and in the nation, that the legislative body will refuse to pass it. It isn't necessary to resort to severe suggestions from the Executive.

I haven't any present plan for resuming cabinet meetings. Some of the Secretaries are still away. Secretary Hughes won't return until the 5th or 6th, or perhaps 7th. I can't give the exact date. It is about a week after the first of September. And I don't know of any contemplated Cabinet meetings until after Labor Day.

I don't know of any petition from the Western Tariff Association. Perhaps one has come to the Commission, or here. If it has, I haven't seen it.

On the Agricultural credit situation. I have had a conference with Mr. Ryer which was exceedingly reassuring. As you know the Government undertook to furnish, through the War Finance Corporation, a large amount of credit running into three or four hundred million dollars, of course without expense to the Government. Now the reassuring thing about that is, it was extended, of course, through the loan banks, the reassuring thing is that its obligations are being liquidated. They are being paid up and very material reduction has already been made. There is far much less call for credit in that direction than there was a short time ago. I also had a conference with, I think, the entire Farm Loan Board, and they told me that they had about $25,000,000 of money on hand that was ready to be extended in loans by both their own and through the various agencies by which they work, there is some call for it, but
not the call that there was a short time ago.

An inquiry about a building program. That, in a way, is for Congress to act on. Not anything in the way of a radical program, I think, would be contemplated at the present time. There are some public buildings here in the city that the Government needs the use of right away. Such as may be necessary in the case of any exigency, Congress will take up and, no doubt, dispose of favorably.

Inquiry about an invitation to the Johnson Morgan Memorial exercises at Durham, N. C. Like all other invitations this was a peculiarly attractive one, but I had to give a negative answer. I want to be here to take up the details of this office, to work them out with the different Departments, in order that I may prepare myself as quickly as possible to carry them on to the best of my ability. Now I wouldn't be able to do that if I accepted invitations taking me away from Washington. It seems to me that what the country most needs now is stability and confidence and reassurance, and in a knowledge that things are going on smoothly and as well as can be hoped, and that they can build on the present foundation with an assurance that there isn't going to be any violent change in it or recession from it. For that reason I don't want to stir up a lot of political speculation. That can wait. I don't want to limit you in serving your constituents acceptably and interestingly, but there are certain limits that are always to be observed. There are many fine men in the service of the U.S. Remember, if you can, that they are entitled to credit. They are entitled to my confidence and require support. Don't suggest, if you can avoid it, without you knowing it an absolute fact, that I am going to change or displace them with somebody else. That may come some time or other, but you owe a little to the men that are trying to cooperate with us in carrying on the Government, to see that their work has proper public appreciation, and the assurance that it is properly appreciated by me.