

January 2, 1925.

Remarks by the President at the Newspaper Conference.

I presume this inquiry refers to what I understand is the Assistant District Attorney of New Jersey. I knew that there was some difficulty in that office. I didn't know just what the particulars were. I knew that the Attorney General was about to take some action, which I think he has taken today, relative to either a District Attorney or an Assistant District Attorney up there, named Van Riper. His reasons I think are set out in some detail in a communication that he sent up there, so that anyone can get them from reading his letter.

I haven't any comment to make on Senator Robinson's resolution. I thought that Senator Smoot or someone had already introduced a resolution calling for an investigation of the investigation made by the Tariff Commission into the different costs between production of sugar in this country and production of sugar abroad. I judged Senator Robinson's resolution was something of the same nature.

I haven't received any further reports from the Committee that is studying the shipping problem. One report came in, which I have given to Mr. Jones, Senator Jones, Chairman of that Committee in the Senate, in order that he might look at it, but the other report has not come in.

I haven't received any text or outline of the French Government's note. I wouldn't want to assume that there was one, suggesting terms of settlement of the French debt to the United States, and including a proposal for a ten year moratorium. I don't want to be ungracious enough to say that I told you so, but so far as any information has come to me it seems to bear out the supposition that I made either at the last or the next to the last conference that Mr. Clementele hadn't made any definite statements that undertook to bind the French Government, suggesting that the suggestion was made about that they wouldn't do anything about their debt. So far as suggestions have come to me from an authoritative source, they are to the effect that that wasn't at all intended by him. I think I did suggest at the last session that I doubted very much if responsible officials of the French Government were making any suggestions of repudiation, and that while some individual might make some

statement that squinted in that direction, we ought not to impute that to the French Government or the French people any more than we would impute some improper proposal to our Government or our people, that apparently was biased by some public official over here. I am very glad to be able to report that that is apparently the case. Mr. Clementele seemed to indicate that his report was improperly reported and that there were things in it that indicated a desire on his part to pay what the French owe the United States, and not at all a desire to repudiate.

There has been some intimation that Commissioner Potter might retire from the Interstate Commerce Commission. I hope to be able to have him stay on for a while, but he is very anxious, I know, to return to private business.

Mr. President, one question on the debt. Do you mind our asking whether the Cabinet has any real knowledge of the mission in this country of the members of the Bank of England?

No. I am quite certain that he is not here on any matter in connection with our Government. Whether he is here in relation to some matter that might affect his own Government, I do not know. He frequently comes over here, much more frequently than the public realizes, I suppose for the purpose of transacting a banking business. This time I believe he was seen on board a boat by some diligent representative of the press, so that his presence here was reported. But he hasn't come, I am certain, to transact any business with our Government.

There is nothing I can say this morning in relation to the call on me of Lord Cecil. It was that ordinary call of courtesy that is made by foreigners when they come to town, I suppose to satisfy a mutual desire to see what kind of people each of us may be, mutual curiosity perhaps in order that he might see what I looked like and that I might see what he looked like. We chatted about various things that I chat about here in the newspaper conferences. Nothing new developed. I usually inquire, and did of him, if the situation was clearing up in Europe, if there was a prospect of stability. He thought there was. That is as we long know over here. He wanted to know if I could give him any message, and I told him I didn't know of anything other than that he might say I was pleased with the friendly relations that

exist between this country and his country. That is rather barren, I am afraid, of news, but there wasn't much of any news in the call.

I don't know anything about the outlook for the bill extending the life of the District Rent Commission. I know there are difficulties in rents here in this town, and I am especially desirous of preventing those difficulties if I can <sup>be-</sup> cause they touch intimately the life of the Government employees. One of the members of the Commission I sent for, and asked him if he could suggest any remedy, and he thought he might draw a bill. He has drawn a bill, and I sent that to the House Chairman and the Senate Chairman, with the request that they submit it to their Committees for their consideration. I did that because it is impossible to get any action of a legislative committee unless some bill is submitted to them for their consideration. When the bill is submitted they make such changes in it, after hearings, as they think might be desired. I don't know much in detail about the rent situation in the District. I am having some studies made. It is already reported that I have undertaken to make a census of the vacant rents here. I don't know how much that would mean. I suppose an apartment would be listed as vacant when it might not be in a really habitable condition. But I think we can get some information from that. It may be necessary to make quite an extended study of the financial and economic condition here in the District in relation to its housing and in relation to the effect it has on the welfare of the people that live here. This is a district especially set apart for the transaction of the business of the United States Government, and I want to maintain conditions here such that the people who come here for the purpose of transacting that business can live in comfortable circumstances at a moderate cost. I don't expect that people that build are going to go on building them without making a profit, but on the other hand, and this is a phrase I have used very frequently, "I don't want conditions to develop here under which the employees of the United States Government are going to be exploited." It is necessary that they live here in the District. They haven't any choice about it, and the Government must have them here to transact its business. If their cost of living is advanced that is going to make a demand, which will be justified, for an increase in wages. That will mean another increase in the cost of living, another general increase over the country for a demand for higher wages. I think it would be better to proceed with moderate

profits all around and to do what I can to prevent any unreasonable charges being made for rents. I don't know what can be done. It is a very difficult question. It is difficult to handle. A person has his choice as to whether he will erect a tenement apartment, and after he has erected it he has his choice as to what rent he will charge for it. Of course the Constitution protects the property of persons from being taken away from them without due process of law. As I remarked to someone the other day, "I want to protect not only the person who has property and his real estate, but I would like to protect also the pay of the employee and not have that taken away from him without due process of law." I think we can work out something that will be reasonably fair and equitable.

I haven't reached any final decision about the appointment of a local Chairman for the inaugural ceremonies. Mr. Galliher has been suggested to me. That seems a very acceptable suggestion. I rather expect that I shall expect him to take that place.

I can't give any statement that would be of any value about the resolution of Senator Borah for an international conference. Such comment as I have seen about it and the report of its scope seem to indicate to me that it is rather broader than what would be likely to be practical and under which we would be likely to get any results that were worth while. I think the best chance for getting an international conference that will secure practical results for us is to have it as limited in scope as we can, rather than to undertake to broaden it out in a great many fields that will cause endless discussion and entangle one question with another, so that we can get little action at all. This, I see, relates to economic questions. Of course economic questions is a field that covers all creation. I haven't read the resolution, so that I don't want to say that the resolution is as broad as that. Senator Borah has a very good comprehension of our international relations, and I should expect that he would draw a resolution with a good deal of care, so I am only referring to such reports as I have seen about it which would seem to indicate that it is rather broader in its scope than anything I would feel justified in approving. I feel quite certain that Senator Borah and I after a conference of that kind would be able to agree on it.