

Tuesday, February 2, 1926.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

I regret very much that it seems necessary to have the preliminary Arms Conference in Europe postponed. I think you all know the intense interest I have had since I have been President in promoting something of that kind; so much so that while the proposal that was made wasn't exactly in line with what I had desired I thought we ought to undertake to cooperate as far as we could with the other nations that wanted to proceed in a somewhat different way from what I had thought was practical. So we at once accepted the invitation and were preparing to take part in the Conference. I hope that this delay will only be temporary. I haven't seen the official dispatch in relation to it, so I don't know just what that may imply. And I don't understand exactly the reason that has brought about postponement. I want to take that up as soon as it can be, and shall continue my desire to cooperate.

This is the season of the year when you expect weekly or semi-weekly statements to be given to the press about the Army and Navy. Sometimes they go out together; sometimes they alternate. The Army is represented one day as in very serious condition and the national defenses have entirely broken down. The next day or the next week it is the Navy. I have always regretted that it was thought necessary to represent that as the condition of our national defense in order to get an adequate appropriation from the Congress. I don't think that under the budget system that is necessary. But it is the old habit of those that have charge of the publicity of the Army and Navy to proceed in that method

and it is still going on. I hope the country will understand that statements of that kind are made for the purpose of influencing public opinion and getting the necessary reaction in Congress to secure an adequate appropriation, and that the public wont be unnecessarily disturbed about the condition of the national defense which I think is fairly adequate. In the past six years the Congress has appropriated and the Executive Departments have expended about \$4,000,000,000 for the Army and Navy, which I am sure, as I have expressed to you before, has been very wisely expended under the direction of exceedingly competent men in the General Staff of the Army and the General Board of the Navy and has resulted in a good Army and a good Navy and a very adequate national defense. I don't want to be understood in saying that as thinking it is perfect. We are working all the time on it in order to perfect it, but I don't want to have the country have the impression that the national defense is not in very good condition.

There are two sets of people in the country at the present time that I think have the wrong impression of our vote to become members of the World Court. One set thinks it doesn't mean anything and wont be helpful. I think it will be very helpful. It will be regarded all over the world as a helpful attitude, and an expression of the sentiment of desiring to cooperate, and a desire to put America on the side of having differences settled by orderly procedure and as near as they can be in accordance with international law, friendly conferences and settled rules, rather than to resort to force and have the question settled because one country or the other has a larger Army and Navy.

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There is another opinion that is being expressed; that this is merely preliminary to our country becoming a member of the League. I don't regard that as the case at all. You will recall that in my message to the Congress I differentiated the very marked difference between adherence to the protocol that established the Court and adherence to the Covenant of the League. They are two very separate and distinct things. One of them doesn't at all imply the other. I don't regard the action that has been taken as at all indicating that there is any difference in public opinion in this country in relation to any suggestion that America should become a member of the League. I rather regard it as an implication to be taken in the other direction, that we wanted to become identified with the Court, and a rather definite expression of the fact that we don't want to become identified with the League. One is a judicial institution; the other is a political institution. Their aims are different; their methods of procedure are different; and because we wanted to belong to the Court is no indication at all, but rather the contrary, that we want to belong to the League.

This is the season of the year of our political calendar when we can expect a good deal of political discussion and suggestions. I hope, too, that the country will bear that in mind and wont take too seriously speeches that are made in the country or made in the Congress relative to the administration of the business of the Government. So far as I know it is proceeding fairly well. The results in the country seem to be good. I don't mean there again that conditions are perfect. That is never the case. But so far as the national

Government can be helpful to make them perfect, why those efforts are constantly being made. There are always questions arising about the violation of the law. As those questions come up they are considered as best they can, and I think proper effort is always made to see that the laws are enforced. I think the country may be fairly well reassured that the National Government is making such effort as is possible in behalf of a prosperous condition of the people, an observance of the law and an orderly procedure of our civil functions.