

November 6, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

Here is a reminder that on the 15th of November occurs the 118th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition, after the Louisiana Purchase, to the mouth of the Columbia River, and the suggestion of inquiry as to my view of the importance of that expedition, the general development of that section, and whether it is still a field open to exploration. I suppose that question almost answers itself. Of course, I am conscious that all of you know of the great importance of that expedition, and of the enormous results that occurred to the United States as a result of the expedition. It played a great part in making the Northwest region territory of the United States. At one time it came under discussion in an important national campaign. It is already developed to a very remarkable degree, but there is still an opportunity for a very great development. In that, the Government of the United States is playing a great part, both by encouragement and by the appropriation of large sums of money.

Mr. President, while we are on the subject, will you permit us to ask whether anything in the nature of the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Monroe Doctrine is in your mind?

I haven't, at the present time, any plan for a formal recognition of that. No doubt it will be a matter upon which I may have occasion to comment when the time arrives.

Another inquiry about conferences with different railroad groups, and as to whether there ought to be any changes in the Transportation Act of 1920. I haven't made any final decision about that. I am to have a conference this afternoon, I think, with Senator Cummins. He had a very important part in the drafting and passage of the Act of 1920, and from his experience, both before he came to Congress and his experience here on the Committee, of which he now holds the Chairmanship, I presume he is one of the best informed men about transportation that there is in the Senate. I expect to be able to get from him a great deal of helpful information and valuable suggestions.

An inquiry about a recommendation of the Tariff Commission investigating the cost of citrus fruits. It is my understanding that that inquiry is going on by the Tariff Commission.



And an inquiry as to whether I am going to confer with the Shipping Board to find out what recommendations they want for legislation. I haven't any present plan for conferring with the full Board. I have had a conference with the Chairman just before he went away, and he told me he was going to take occasion, if the opportunity presented itself to him, while he was abroad, to formulate some plans that he wanted to submit to me on his return.

Whether the position of the United States is changed in regard to entering into European embroilments. I don't know of any change in that respect. Our position has been carefully and definitely stated a great many times, both in speech and in writing, and it has been stated, also, by our actions. I think you know of the events that led up to the present situation - the suggestion that was made here as a result of some inquiry that we still had a desire to be helpful in Europe whenever the opportunity offered itself, and the note that came from the British Government, and the reply that was made to that note, which is known as the Hughes note. Now, I think almost every possible inquiry that you can devise will be answered by a reading of the note. I think you will find the answer to the inquiry there. It states the position of our Government definitely and fully, and that it is the desire to be helpful. We haven't any other motive. We have no direct interest to serve, no expectation of reaping any reward. We are undertaking to discharge our obligations - of lending our counsel, if we can, in order to settle a long standing difficulty. Now, there isn't any occasion for being disturbed or discouraged, because we aren't able to step in and settle, in twenty-four hours, a difficulty that has engaged the attention of Europe for hundreds of years. We have got to be patient about it, and try to do the best we can. We observed that the French have taken possession of the Ruhr, and as a result of that there was that passive resistance on the part of the Germans. That finally came to an end, and it seemed to us that that might furnish an opportune moment for a suggestion that we lend our counsel, and that we would be helpful, if our help was wanted. We aren't trying to do anything more than discharge what we think is our duty. We hope that we can be helpful. But that depends on the state of mind that exists over there. If it is one that wants to be helped, then I think we would be warranted in looking at it very hopefully. If it turns out that the state of mind is not one that wants help, why, then there is nothing that we can do. But of course, our people here, we hope people generally throughout civilization, will understand that we tried to do our part. That answers, I think, quite a good many questions.



I had a visit, this morning, from Ambassador Jusserand, who explained to me the position of the French people and the French Government, as has been reported in the press. I undertook to explain to him what I understood our position was.

An inquiry about Senator Cummins. I think I have already answered that.

An inquiry about the Veterans Bureau investigation. Now, it is difficult, of course, for me to comment on the details of an investigation that is being made by a committee of Congress. Perhaps it would be almost enough to say that the Congress had provided for this investigation, authorized it, and directed it to be made by that Committee. It is not to be made by me. The Committee will make their investigation, and after they have heard all the evidence, they will make a report. When that report comes in, I suppose it may call for some action. Sometimes reports do. From the evidence that appears to be coming out, I suppose this report will call for action. But when it is finally made, then such action as the Committee determines, and such facts as they develop, will be taken under consideration, and appropriate action will be taken.

† Whether the Government is making any arrangements to extend relief to Germany before Congress convenes. No, I don't know of any authority that there is in the Government to do anything of that kind. Of course, in the case of the great calamity that has occurred in Japan, why, we had to anticipate somewhat what every one knew would be the desire of the Congress, and give assistance through the War Department and Navy Department, and the Shipping Board, and so on. But I don't think there is any such emergency existing in Germany - though I understand that conditions over there are very serious, and it is my present belief that they will need relief before the next crop comes in. They will very likely need relief during the winter. You might make it stronger than that, but it is generally understood they will need relief during the winter.

Chairman Brown will come before the Cabinet next Friday, I expect. I understand that this is election day in some of the municipalities in Ohio, so that he is there today in the discharge of the duty of good citizenship, and casting his vote. The matter was not discussed to any extent. It was referred to in today's Cabinet meeting and the statement made, similar to that which I have made here. After that, of course, I shall take up the matter with the Committee. Senator Smoot is Chairman of the Committee, and there are some other members.



An inquiry about a discussion with Representative Curry of California about the proposed establishment of a naval base, either at Alameda or Mare Island Navy Yard. I understood that there was now a naval base at the Mare Island Navy Yard. Am I right about that? Yes I think he suggested to me that there had been a proposal to establish one also at Alameda. I told him that the proposal had not come to my attention, and, so far as I knew there was a good naval base at Mare Island. I thought that, for the present, it would be sufficient. But I haven't any information on which I am warranted on passing a final conclusion about that.† We want to be reasonably and adequately protected with naval bases on the Pacific Coast, of course. But this is not a time when we want to go into extravagance about it. We are trying to encourage, throughout the world, the reliance upon reason, as well as the reliance upon force. We have just had a conference on the limitation of naval armaments, very broadly, with a view to removing the necessity for the great burden of expense that competitive armaments entail upon people. So that, if we can avoid the necessity of building another navy yard or naval base, of course, that is what we want to do.

I think that exhausts the questions this morning.