

Friday, January 23, 1925.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Correspondents.

I don't think there is anything new that I can say about the French debt. I have indicated several times that I didn't like to discuss it. Any discussion by me would perhaps be misunderstood, and I think that anything I might say about it should be said direct to the French authorities. I haven't read the text of Senator Borah's speech. I saw the headlines about it. Last night was the night that we spent several hours receiving people, so I didn't get a chance to see the paper.

Mr. President, would you mind informing us whether the United States in the case of any of its European debtors has ever made any request for payment?

I think so. I don't know just what the nature of that has been. We have as you know appointed a Commission, and several Commissioners have been abroad. I had understood that they sounded out the sentiment of some of the countries. We haven't billed anyone, or approached that method of operation. We haven't done anything formally. There has been a great deal done informally. But I understand that the Debt Commission immediately on its appointment asked for a conference and conferences were had. The British sent representatives over here, the French sent a representative over - one representative anyway, and I don't know but there were more at that time - to confer with the Commission. I think each of the debtor countries have approached the Commission on the subject.

I don't know just when the report of the Navy General Board will be ready for publication. As a consequence of it I have asked the General Board certain questions, and when those answers have been prepared I should think the whole thing could be made public.

I don't now have in mind the name of Andrew C. Pearson, of Montclair, N.J., as having been suggested to me as a possible Secretary of Agriculture. I showed you that list I had the other day. It is a very long list, and since then it hasn't been on my desk - outside at the present - so I couldn't tell now whether his name is among those or not.

I don't know as I can give you any particular desire of mine in relation to different things that are before the Senate, in relation to the order in which they should be taken up. I don't know whether it will be possible to take up the

Lauzanne treaty and get that through, or whether it would be possible to take up the World Court and get that through. I would like both of those things done as speedily as possible, but in order to know which ought to be taken up first I should have to confer with some of the men in the Senate and find out what their opinion might be, as I leave those things entirely to the Senators who know what I want and who are working away at those things as fast as they can.

This is the first information I have had about the free bill, that is, being brought specifically to my attention. That is the bill to extend the period permitting the use of the naval radio on the Pacific for commercial use. I think we had that up in the Cabinet more than two years ago, and at that time it was decided to take the naval radio out of the commercial and express business, so that it now has a very limited use for that purpose. I do not know whether conditions have changed, so that that use can be enlarged. I don't know. But the feeling at the time, as I recall it, was that it would be best to keep ~~the~~ strictly naval radio for naval purposes as fully as possible. Of course it would be best ~~to~~ to keep it entirely for naval purposes. There was some time allotted for the transmission of commercial messages, but the feeling was that it ought to be used exclusively for Government business, as I understood it at that time, but on account of exigencies, there not being other radio at that time, I think that has since been remedied, that would do this business, it was permitted as an emergency measure. That is the way the thing lies in my mind. Now, whether any change could be made, I don't know. I should have to inquire from the Navy Department what the situation is, and what the desire is to make the change. I think the general feeling was the Government ought not to be in commercial business.

Mr. President, at that time of which you speak, I think that privilege was extended for two years, but not on the radio across the Atlantic on the ground that that was competition between the Navy Dept. and the Radio Corporation, but it was allowed to remain in the Pacific until there could be commercial advantages in radio extended to the press, and the extension was granted, I believe ~~with~~ with that in view, until they could put them in the Pacific.

What is the condition there now?

The same as it was two years ago Mr. President.

Well, if the condition is the same now as it was two years ago, why then I should think the Government would take the same action it did then. It lay in my mind that it was an emergency measure.

The extension, Mr. President, I believe expires on June 30th. I think the free bill is an attempt to make it permanent.

Well, I should doubt the desirability of making it permanent. If it is to be made permanent why then it would be doubtful if private enterprise would enter that field.

Mr. President, I think that is a mistake. I think the free bill extends it a year and a half after June.

I do not think there is a necessity for legislation, but I am not certain about that. The most I can say about that question is that I am not certain. I know it was brought up in the Cabinet meeting and it is my understanding it was a temporary measure somewhat restricting what the past practice had been. I should favor extending it, by the action of the Navy Dept., to cover the present emergency.

I don't know what I am going to put in my inaugural address. I suppose that will be a standard question from now until the address gets into the hands of the press. If any of you think of anything that ought to be covered in the address, I should be obliged to you if you will suggest the subject to me at any time.

Nothing has been decided about a Secretary of Agriculture.

I don't know when Commissioner Potter is going to retire. He suggested that he did wish to retire and no successor has been decided upon. I have half a dozen men under contemplation.

My conference today with Mr. Brush was almost entirely of a personal nature. He didn't seem to have any special business with me. I asked him how the shipping business was going on. I was very glad to get his report that he thought the Government shipping business was doing somewhat better, especially in the Pacific, he thought they were doing quite a little better. In the Atlantic they hadn't made so much progress.

I haven't any plans for speaking away from Washington after the first of March. I am going out speaking just as little as I can and keep the public peace. The pressure on me is great at all times. There were eight delegations

in yesterday forenoon and asked me to make speeches, but it is very difficult for me to get out for that purpose.

I am not aware of any special significance to this country in the reported new treaty between Japan and Russia.

I am in favor - that is, I don't find it contrary to my financial policy, I think that is the form of the expression - of a bill carrying the authorization for an appropriation of \$15,000 for the survey of proposed national parks in the Blue Ridge and the Smoky Mountains between Tennessee and North Carolina. The Federal bureau discussed that with me and I have advised the Director of the Budget to send a communication to Congress to that effect.

That seems to cover the questions.