

February 19, 1924.

Remarks by the President to Newspaper Men.

I doubt if I can give you much of any information about the statement made by the Alien Property Custodian, Colonel Miller. His statements have all been in the press and he seems to have been misquoted. He reports that he was misquoted, so that the suggestion that it is stated that figures have been changed, or something of that kind in the Treasury Department, of course fails. He says he was misquoted in the report that indicated he had made statements of that kind.

Mr. President, did he report to you?

He sent me a copy of the letter that he sent to Mr. Mellon. I think that letter was published, was it not? Yes. So I judge that was cleared up. I don't know whether he was speaking from a manuscript at the time when his remarks were quoted, or that it was an unprepared address. X I have a great deal of sympathy for people who have to make speeches, even if they have to make them before the Gridiron Club. X Perhaps Mr. Miller is entitled to sympathy in that direction. My general observation about these figures in relation to the bonus has been that they are a dispute over terms, rather than over facts. I made a statement the other night in an address I made in New York, which was to the effect that if all of those who were entitled to take money or take certificates did so, the cost would be so and so, and the entire cost would be so much. Nobody knows what part of them would take the money, or what part would desire the other beneficial privileges. So I think that careful analysis would show that these apparent discrepancies in figures are not really discrepancies, but as I said, simply a dispute over terms. One person estimates that half the ex-service men would do one thing, somebody else one-third, and somebody else five-eighths. In that way they get a conflict in what they guess, and not a conflict in the arithmetic of it.

X I am having some inquiries made of the Commissioners of the District and also of the Prohibition authorities relative to that very lamentable accident that occurred the other night when Senator Greene was injured, in order to see whether any one was to blame and if so, to have appropriate action taken, and further to see if there are any necessary steps to be taken to prevent the recurrence of a tragedy of that kind. I haven't had a report yet, but I am expecting one from the Commissioners and from the Prohibition Department. Very likely the present rules and

regulations about the use of firearms are not at fault. Perhaps the fault came in not observing those rules. But that is a mere supposition on my part, although I should rather presume that was the case. It is dangerous of course to have any one go out armed that is not trained in the use of fire arms. It is dangerous anyway.

Here is an inquiry about the thirteen Pan-American conferences that are scheduled for the coming year and in the early part of 1925, on science, education, child welfare, and other matters that cover a wide variety of subjects. It is the policy of the Government to encourage this tendency towards cooperation between North and South America. That has been a well-known policy of our country for many years, a notable expression of which was the Pan American Union which we maintain here under the direction of Doctor Rowe, who I think is doing very splendid work in that direction. It is especially desirable from every point of view of which I can think. X It is desirable in the first place to maintain the most friendly relations between North and South America. We are contiguous countries and our interests are substantially the same, being in the western hemisphere. And I go from that on to the commercial possibilities which at the present time appear to be greatest for our country in that direction. The European field is fairly well taken up. It is an old country. It isn't a developing country in the way that new lands are. Those of South America are new and open to development. The natural resources of South America have yet to be developed. There are opportunities there for all kinds of production from agriculture to manufacture, so that the opportunity for production there being great, the opportunity for exchange is great. It isn't one Government usually that trades with another, but it is the people of one country that trade with another. The governments can help in that direction by the diffusion of proper information, and by rendering every possible encouragement to the <sup>one</sup> people of ~~that~~ country to trade with the people of another country. In that direction I think our commercial welfare lies to a good deal of an extent.

The Attorney General has not resigned and there was no discussion of him or his office in the Cabinet either before or after the meeting.

I haven't given any special consideration to the selection of a successor to Mr. Denby.

X I don't know just how far I can go hereafter in giving out any information about the oil lease cases. I am willing at all times to give the press anything I can give without embarrassing the cause of the public service. Now it is very seldom that that would be the case, but it is especially the case in the prosecution of cases in court. I don't imagine that those who may be defendants in these cases feel that their case was helped by supplying the details of their defence to the press, nor would the case for the Government be helped by supplying to the press the details of the Government's case, what it might think about the law, or what facts it had to present. X I imagine though, that the press will be and is in possession of all the facts, and can advise itself about the law. But I think it would be better for the men who have charge of that, I mean Senator Pomerene and Mr. Roberts, to assume responsibility for giving out information. That doesn't mean that you won't get what you can from any other source. It is perfectly proper to do that. I prefer, though, that they should take the responsibility of giving what they can to the press other than doing it myself. They will stand in the same relation to these cases that the Attorney General stands to the other legal requirements of the Government. X They are public officers, appointed under statutory provision and confirmed by the Senate, and that resolution or statute gives them full authority to prosecute these cases. I give you that as a preliminary, in order that you may understand hereafter if I don't have an opportunity to say much about the cases.

X I think I have already covered this matter of the regulations of the use of firearms, and I don't know what the regulations are, but as I say it will probably be found that they are sufficient and the trouble has come from their violation. X

I haven't heard anything of the suggestion that Secretary Roosevelt was to retire. So far as I know I expect him to remain.

There was no discussion in the Cabinet this morning of the oil lease matters. The general discussion in the Cabinet was in relation to the prevailing business conditions over the country, which were reported to be fairly good. Of course I am making a moderate statement about that. There doesn't seem to be any unemployment anywhere, and while the orders that are on hand in manufacturing establishments are not large, that seems to be the result of a policy not to put in large orders for

deliveries way ahead into the future, but that everything that can be manufactured in the country seems to be finding a ready market. There are evidences that the building trades are going to be active the coming season. The boot and shoe industry is active and able to dispose of <sup>its</sup> ~~their~~ products as fast as they can make them; and the textile industry in the same way is able to dispose of its products. Also iron and steel. But in these larger things there are not a great amount of orders on hand, but a very ready market. Now, that indicates a very healthy condition. If there are <sup>great</sup> no stocks of merchandise it means that no one is speculating in merchandise, (undertaking to buy it at a great increase in price and holding it up, and coming to a point where they will have to sacrifice it.) But it does indicate a very healthy condition over the country at the present time. I don't know whether you can get a sympathetic ear for a report of that kind. But I think it is very significant, and perhaps people very generally now are going to remember that we <sup>have</sup> are our ordinary vocations to look after and that the U. S. Government will go on functioning as it always has, meeting such requirements as may be necessary to take care of itself, and that the great bulk of its business is carried on without any suggestion from any source of any wrong doing, and that we ought to be especially careful in giving credence to the many rumors that arise. X It is a serious thing for a man to have an implication made against him in times like these, to which at other times nobody would pay the slightest attention, but which now with a general suspicion in the air, passés for a good deal. Such information as comes to me, I shall lay before the Government's special counsel for their action, without undertaking to run it down myself or determine what action ought to be taken. They are ~~sp~~ responsible for that. I expect to find that a great deal of it has no foundation and that people are going to go on with their usual affairs, and the country is going to prosper, and the Government is going to be able to take care of itself. X

Did the Secretary of Labor report anything about the coal settlement at Jacksonville, Mr. President?

That came to me last night in the form of a communication from him saying that the sub-committee in effect, I don't know just what it is called, had made an agreement which would be reported back to the larger committee for confirmation,

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and that undoubtedly it would be confirmed this afternoon or this evening. So that there will be an agreement, I think, running for a space of three years. That is another confirmation of what I was speaking of in relation to business conditions of the country.