

April 11, 1924.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

+ Here is an inquiry about a statement in the letter of Secretary Mellon to me in which he ends a sentence by saying "I must advise you that neither I nor any other man of character can longer take responsibility for the Treasury." That doesn't indicate a desire to retire from the Treasury on his part, but simply an indication that if somebody else is going to run the Treasury, then of course Mr. Mellon ought not to be charged with the responsibility for it by those that are undertaking to operate it.

I haven't had any reports from the visit of Mr. Meyer and Mr. Jaffrey to the northwest. Mr. Jaffrey was here the other day and had lunch with me, and I talked the situation over with him at that time. I didn't know that Mr. Meyer was going up with him, but I did know in a general way that they were to confer with each other to see what could be done that might be helpful.

The Cabinet didn't discuss the Government's rights under the disarmament treaty to convert its coal burning ships to oil burning. The matter was merely mentioned there by Secretary Wilbur as one that was under consideration between him and the Secretary of State. But there was no discussion of it, and no conclusions. Of course we have in mind a general policy of not wanting to do anything that would cause an increase in the outlay of naval armaments of the United States or any other country. That is somewhat regardless of the treaty. + Very likely our country in this particular wouldn't be especially solicitous to put in oil burning apparatus and convert ships from coal burning to oil, if that of itself would make other nations who are parties to the treaty think that they must go to a corresponding outlay. on One of the very basic foundations of the disarmament treaty was to get away from competitive armaments, so that as a practical question our country wouldn't want to embark on the rebuilding or reconditioning of its ships if we know it would cause a large outlay on the part of other countries.

+ I haven't given any instructions about the indictment of Senator Wheeler. I didn't know about it until I saw it in the paper, and don't have in mind any instructions that I should give. Of course it is in the hands of the Department of Justice. +

I don't believe I can give any rule about campaign contributions that would be particularly helpful. I would say offhand that I do not like as a matter of principle large contributions given to campaign funds, because they create a bad impression and give the idea of a wrongful motive. But I think that it would be well to keep in mind that it isn't so much the size of the contribution as the purpose with which it is given. I can imagine a very large contribution that would be given for a perfectly justifiable purpose, and I can imagine a very small contribution that might be made for an entirely unjustifiable purpose. I don't mean by that that a large contribution can't be made for the purpose of supporting a party policy and promoting private principles without any reason for criticism, but a very small contribution might have selfish purposes and the purposes of securing favors or something of that kind, and would of course be subject to very just criticism. I don't like the idea of large contributions. I don't know just how they could be limited, and I shouldn't know exactly where to set a limit, though I think the law of Massachusetts sets a definite limit on campaign contributions.

I haven't had any report about a slowing up of the development of the operating policy of the Shipping Board, on account of differences between the Board and the Emergency Fleet Corporation over questions of consolidating existing Government steamship services.

I can tell you a little about the conference that I had yesterday in relation to sodium nitrate. There is only one plant left in the United States that produces that commodity. It is a small plant in the State of Washington employing twenty five or thirty hands, as I understand it, and representing an investment of some \$300,000 or \$400,000, and they find it is impossible for them to compete with the foreign producers of this commodity, so that there has been a proposal made to the Tariff Commission, through this office, though I can't say whether it was before or since I came here, though I think it was before, for an investigation on the part of the Tariff Commission to see if the tariff should be raised. That of course depends on the cost of production here and the cost of production abroad. When the Tariff Commission sent abroad to find out the cost of production there, as I understand it, the producers there would not supply them with any information or give them the necessary information, so that they could make a proper finding. They have some information on it, and perhaps they can make a finding, but they couldn't

get all the information they desired. Then some question arose as to whether the Tariff Commission ought to furnish the foreign producers with the information that they had about the cost of production here, or some details of that kind, which the Tariff Commission refused to do, so that some kind of a suit was brought to restrain further action of the Tariff Board. So that is held up, and no reports have come to me. The American producers talked to me yesterday to see if I could do anything to assist in the way of trying to get the report of the Commission.

I had no information about the speech that Senator Pepper was to make in Maine. I never saw it and had no information about what it contained. He did not consult me in reference to it.