

August 29, 1924.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

Good afternoon, gentlemen:

The Cabinet meeting didn't develop much of anything this morning. The Secretary of Agriculture reported that the foot and mouth disease had apparently been stamped out in the West. There is a little danger of it in some of the mountain regions, though we can't make any official statement about it. There have been periods of two or three weeks when there has been no new outbreak.

I haven't yet decided on the personnel of the Agricultural Committee.

There wouldn't be any way to send a representative of this country to the Irish Free State until the legislation required by an act of Congress establishing a ministry there is passed making an appropriation to defray the expenses of it.

I haven't had the matter of removing an embargo on arms to Cuba brought to my attention. I put one on some time ago, because of threatening conditions that existed there at that time. I know that those conditions seem to have been eliminated. It may be that the embargo can be removed soon, but it is a matter about which I have no definite information one way or the other.

Neither the President or the Secretary of War has heard anything about legislation to pay the draft boards for their services during the war. If General Duncan has made any statement about that, it hasn't come to the attention of either the War Department or myself. I don't know whether it is true that he has made such a statement or not.

I suppose the Washington Baseball Team is the one that represents the whole nation. The others have some local claims. That which comes from the City of Washington I suppose represents the nation in its entirety more than any other team. If it should be so fortunate to secure first place, in that respect I suppose it would be more agreeable to the whole nation than that which could be secured by having any local team win the pennant. I don't know as I can make any statement about the present condition of our team that hasn't already been better made by someone else. I am not an expert on baseball, though I enjoy the game. I haven't made any plans yet about attending the World's Series, but should that be the case I assume that it goes without saying that I should want to see the opening game.

Mr. President, would it be permissible to quote that remark about baseball, Mr. President?

No, I don't think so.

I haven't been able to do much of anything about the report on the sugar tariff. I took some of that report with me to Plymouth, but wasn't able to do much about it, because I found when I considered it that it was going to be necessary to consult people here. Of course I couldn't do that very well there.

I haven't any plans about speeches other than what has already been given out. I haven't any plan about a conference with Mr. Butler, the Chairman of the Republican Committee. I suppose it goes without saying that he will be here from time to time in order that he may keep me posted as to the progress of the campaign.

I haven't seen the British protest against increasing the range of our guns on American battleships. I am not certain whether any formal protest has been received. My position about that would be to maintain whatever right the American Government has under the treaties, as a matter of right. Now, in addition to that is the matter of policy. Our Government, in conjunction with others, is trying to discourage competitive armaments. It entered into treaties for that purpose. It is also known that the governments in Europe are struggling along under a heavy burden of debt. I don't want to do anything here that would make it necessary for them to start increasing their naval armament expenses for the purpose of building new ships, or changing over those ships that they already have. I should be very loath to start in on a policy of that kind. But that is entirely apart from what right the American Government may have under the treaties. As I say, whatever right we have I shall assert at all times. I don't want to surrender the right. That is somewhat different from what we might consider a practical policy to pursue. I think the practical policy to pursue at this time is not to enter into a competitive method of arming ourselves. As I have already indicated, they have staggering expenses abroad. I don't like to refer to it too often - they owe us money over there. I should very much prefer that they should take their money and pay us, than on account of any action we took over here feel that they should take their money and build battleships. I think it would be very much better for all concerned to adopt a policy of that kind. I never knew of just how much importance the British protest was, whether it was a natural form they took for the purpose of filing a protest in order to save any right they might have and to indicate they might not want to start in on any competitive armament at this time, or whether they thought it was a distinct injury to them or a violation of the spirit of the

treaty. I haven't seen the protest. The time for action on it wouldn't arrive until we made an appropriation by the Congress, and then undertook to determine whether we wanted to spend the appropriation that had been made. I think I have made myself clear - that is, to assert all the rights we have and surrender none of them. But so far as the policy is concerned, I am very loath to take any action that would cause the governments abroad to think they must spend great sums of money on their naval armaments.

I don't know as I can make any statement about the improvement in the business situation. I think everyone has noted a distinctly more optimistic feeling as a result of the London Conference, and I have no doubt that the action of the German Government today, which has come to me indirectly but which I think is reliable, in approving the Dawes plan, will have a further result in the same direction. It seems to be perfectly apparent that when the people of America and Europe understand that the reparations question has reached substantially a final settlement, or apparently is in process or a final settlement, though I don't want to anticipate too much, they will feel that the time has arrived when they will be justified in going ahead with development plans for commercial extensions and other developments. I think that should result in enlarged purchases of raw materials. There is every opportunity to finance such purchases, especially in this country, on account of the abundance of capital and the low charge of interest at the present time. Of course the purchase of raw materials would immediately mean an increase in business.