

December 18, 1923.

+ Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

Here is an inquiry about the offer of the Russian Government to enter into negotiation for a restoration of diplomatic relations. That has been answered by the State Dept. in a statement that has been given out to the press within an hour, and the answer in general effect is that no action is necessary on the part of this Government for the Russian regime to comply with the conditions that were laid down in my message. That can be done entirely by them without negotiating with us, and should be done as a foundation for any negotiations. I suppose you recall, generally, the restoration of property, recognition of the debt, and the cessation of propaganda against our institutions. Those were all the result of acts taken there, and can be remedied by acts now to be taken there.

Mr. President, wasn't their another condition?

Well, perhaps so.

Wasn't there the one about mete works?

Well, the doing of those things represent the works.

Also an inquiry about the Mexican situation. It was not under discussion at the Cabinet meeting, and there is no change in the administration's policy. I hope very much that the pending treaty will be speedily ratified.

Mr. President, was the Russian situation discussed in the Cabinet?

No, it was not.

I have two or three inquiries about the proposal for an American to serve on some committee of the League of Nations to look into the control of the Port of Memel. I have no information about that, other than this inquiry. If an inquiry should be made, of course, it would be treated the same as any inquiry coming from a foreign government and disposed of in the same way.

The appointment of District Judges will be made just as soon as I can decide on what appointments to make. I am taking that up with different Senators, making such attempt as I can to make satisfactory appointments.

I have already referred to the Russian communication.

I do not expect either General Dawes or Mr. Young to call at the White House before they go to Europe. I do not know that they mean to call, but I don't know of any reason why they should call.



I discussed with Senator Jones this morning the matter of shipping. He made some inquiry about the residence of Mr. Farley. His residence is the same as the residence of the Chairman of the Shipping Board that was confirmed by the Senate. There is a precedent for confirmation of Mr. Farley. Whether the Senate wishes to follow it or not, of course, I do not know. If there is any real doubt about the legality of appointing a person that lives in a place that Mr. Farley lives in, that might be taken up and an opinion secured from the Attorney General.

There was no discussion at the Cabinet meeting this morning about the officials and members who were discharged from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing by an executive order of March 30, 1922. I think all but one of them have been extended an executive order given by President Harding, which gives them a Civil Service rating and, as I understand it, it is proposed that they be admitted to serve in the Bureau of Printing and Engraving whenever there are vacancies, and there is an opportunity to employ them. There hasn't been any order made yet to that effect. I do not know that it is necessary. I understand that that is the position the Secretary of the Treasury now holds.

Another inquiry about the Russian message. When you come to read the communication from the Secretary of State it makes it very plain.

Another inquiry about the Shipping Board.

Another inquiry about the Baltic seaport.

There is a small matter of some public importance and some interest to the people of Arkansas. They had a somewhat peculiar law down there so that it was provided that they could assess the cost of the state proportion of the cost of building roads on abutting owners to the extent of fifty percent. That worked great hardship on the farming communities. In some cases, it has been represented to me, it amounted to confiscation. So that it has been with great difficulty that taxes of that kind could be collected there. That is a matter, of course, for the State of Arkansas to decide, for it isn't for the United States Government to say by what means and methods they shall raise their proportion of money that is used for the building of roads in Arkansas. The U. S. law has certain requirements, not complied with, which is that they make a contribution of 50%. There have been a great many complaints. Our Government wouldn't want to take any action



that would result in great hardship on the people of Arkansas, and we have been trying to see if we couldn't work out some solution. That doesn't mean that we have any authority permanently to withdraw from them the use of money of the Federal Government in building roads in Arkansas. We are just as desirous of building roads there as we are anywhere else, but we would very much like to have it done in a way that wouldn't work any hardship on the communities through which the roads are built. For that reason the Secretary of Agriculture spoke to me some time ago, and in sending a complaint that came in signed by the President of the Farmers Union, stating ~~that~~ the objection of the farming communities to practically a confiscation of their lands there, ~~so that~~ temporarily I have asked the Secretary of Agriculture to make an investigation and see if we can afford any remedy before he makes any new allotments of money. Those projects that are already under way, and have allotments made, of course, will be carried out. Ultimately we may have to conclude that Arkansas can raise its money if it wants to, and that it isn't the affair of the national government. Temporarily we are trying to see if we can't relieve them of what appears to be a disproportionate burden on some of the farmers there.