

December 4, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men

I have an inquiry as to when I am expected to deliver my message to Congress. Whenever I am notified by a committee from the Congress that it is organized and ready to receive communications. I judge that it will not be before tomorrow. It might possibly be some time after that, but I should think it would be safe to prophesy that it would be at the usual time tomorrow. I shall go up whenever I am invited.

Here is a suggestion that Brigadier General Smedley Butler of the Marine Corps is likely to be invited to come to Philadelphia as the Director of Public Safety. That hasn't been brought to my attention directly. Very likely that is the purpose of a visit that I am expected to receive from some of the officials of Philadelphia during the latter part of the week. I can't tell whether that would be feasible or not until I consult with the Navy Department. Sometimes they are willing to grant leave of absence to men to serve some special civic purpose, and sometimes it is impossible for them to comply with such a request. The situation is entirely evenly balanced by a desire to help any locality that we can and the absolute necessity of maintaining our own organization and keeping always on hand men who may be called upon to act at any time. I suppose it is well known that the Marines are especially an arm of the service that are called on to go anywhere at any time, and there would be a little more difficulty in weakening in any way that branch of the service, than there would be other regular army men. It sometimes happens that in the army there is an oversupply of officers, and very likely that may happen sometimes in the Navy. It would be unusual in the Marine Corps, so that until I get information on all of these points I wouldn't be able to make a decision. It would be very largely influenced by what the Navy Department said was the right thing to do.

+ An inquiry about^a/report of Major General Beach as to the safety of the White House. I haven't seen any report of that kind. I think there was some reference to it in the newspapers. Whether he has made an official report that would properly be characterized as representing the White House to be unsafe or not, I do not know. I have much doubt whether the report would go to that length.

+ Mr. President, the report was that of Major General Beach to the Secretary of War. If my memory serves me correctly, he said he called that to your attention.

+ I am not going to dispute a gentleman and an officer. I don't have time to read every communication that comes into the office, although I look at every communication that comes to my desk with the care which it deserves. But that hasn't

come to my attention. The White House is an old building, but I think it is fire proof to the roof. Whether it is unsafe in any way, I don't know. A man who was there with President Cleveland told me that they found during his term there was an accumulation of books and old papers and documents, which you know come to be very heavy, placed up on the third floor, that was causing a sagging of the floor. There may be something of that kind there now, some water tank, or something of that kind that makes a crack in the wall.

An inquiry about Muscle Shoals. There hasn't been any new offer about that. I understand that the offer that Mr. Ford made is still open. There isn't any view that I know of that I can express about the House organization. I am not familiar with the details of it. But from such information as I have, I rather expect that they will effect an organization some time today.

The matter of General Butler I have already referred to.

The Mexican treaty, of course, will be submitted to the Senate for ratification, and it is desirable that we secure ratification as soon as we can here on account of the effect it would have in securing ratification in Mexico. I believe their Senate adjourns on the 31st of December, so that there will not be a very long period for them to consider the question of ratification. It is important on account of the claims that our citizens have that have been waiting a long period for adjustment and settlement.

Mr. President, any likelihood that you would go to the Senate with that?

No. That would be simply submitted with a very short statement.

Mr. President, it isn't necessary for us to ratify the treaty first is it?

No. Not necessary. But I think if we ratify it that might have a desirable effect down there.

There was practically no business before the Cabinet today.

An inquiry about the treaty with the British Government. That is still under negotiation.

† Here is a reference to a party that came under my notice, when I was Governor, by the name of Ponzi. I judge that the rest of you heard of him. He became notorious around Massachusetts and ended up under sentence which he is now serving at Plymouth. I think that no formal application has been made for his pardon. It is my recollection that he did write a letter here, which would be answered by sending him an application for pardon, which would be considered the same

as any other application, should he make it. I don't want to prejudge any application. From such information as I have I should think it would be very doubtful if his case would be one which would warrant executive clemency. Some change in his condition, or the breaking down of his health, or something of that kind might cause a change in my position. That appears to cover all the questions.

Mr. President, ~~xiii~~ the question of an Ambassador to Mexico, the U. S. appointing one before Mexico does?

There hasn't been any decision made about that. I should prefer to wait until we can get the treaty ratified.