

October 23, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men

+ I have here an inquiry about the disintegration of Germany, and as to what views our Government might have about it and whether it will make more remote the likelihood of collecting our foreign debts. The only Government attitude that we have toward Germany is that expressed in our treaty of peace, and our other treaties that we have recently made. I should presume, if there was a general breaking up in Europe, that it would make more difficult the collection, or rather the payment, of our debts. No one could tell exactly about that. Of course, it is the policy of our country to permit other countries to have such a government as they want, and to administer their internal affairs in any way that they may desire. I don't know of any treaty obligation that we have to interfere in Germany, or of any policy that we have outside of a treaty, to interfere there in any way at the present time. I don't ~~know~~ mean by that, that we don't desire to be helpful, but I don't know of anything we could do at the present time to be helpful.

+ I have another most interesting inquiry. It has quite a long preamble, but there is one very significant thing in it, "The United States has never interfered in the internal affairs of other nations, except by precept and example;" and inquires whether it is the hope of the United States that people will eventually be at peace everywhere under democratic forms of government. I have partly answered that question in what I have already said - that we demand<sup>ed</sup> <sup>at one time</sup> the right to have such a form of government as we want for our people, and we have to concede that same right to others. I don't know of any case where the United States has interfered directly with any other government, because they had a form of government too democratic, or not democratic enough, in accordance with our views. I think the inquiry is very well answered when it sets out the sentence that I have just read, which says that we have never interfered in the internal affairs of other nations, except by precept and example. That, of course, is the notable exception, and I might go on with a discussion of this inquiry, <sup>the monarchy threat,</sup> so on and so forth, and you all will see the implication and the application of it, that our country expects to maintain its present form of government. We wouldn't want any country to interfere with our form of government, and we don't want to take any action that would interfere with the rights of other countries. While the United States Government has no opinion, I have no doubt that

thoughtful people in our country have hope that governments, similar to our own, will ultimately, and could ultimately, be established. No doubt, they have been gratified to see republics springing up, and there has been an absence of gratification when anything like a reaction occurred, tending to bring people back under any form of government that wasn't an expression of their own will and their own wish. Anything like a dictatorship, or any manner of government of that kind, of course, is not a condition that is gratifying to the American people.

An inquiry about the release of political prisoners. No further decision has been made about that.

The Cabinet took up, this morning, very briefly, the matter of the budget. I am very gratified at the progress that is being made, and took occasion to express that gratification to the Cabinet for their cooperation with the Budget Commissioner, and the desire, present in all Departments, to bring their wants within the means of the Government and the taxpayers, at the present time, suggesting to them that if I could help adjust any differences or difficulties, in any way, I would be very glad to cooperate with them to that end.

An inquiry about the public building program for Washington, and whether the Secretary of the Treasury has conferred with the Supervising Architect of the Treasury relative to this. Nothing of that kind has been done, so far as I have any knowledge. I think I stated at the last Conference that there are plans already in existence, as I understand it, awaiting an appropriation of money, in order that it may be carried out.

A statement that J. B. Griffin, member of the Sacramento Board of Education, quotes me as endorsing the principles involved in the American Revolution and the War of 1812, contained in Muzzey's American History. "I assume that this statement is accurate" and it goes on to say that "It has been charged that the history contains pro-British propaganda", and gives me the privilege of making such comment as I may deem proper. I haven't any recollection about that. I don't now recall this history. It may be that I have issued some statement about it, but I think it is very improbable, and my offhand opinion ~~opinion~~ would be that, either Mr. Griffin is mistaken, or the report that he has made the statement here alleged, is mistaken.

An inquiry about the conference I had with Major Knox of Manchester, New Hampshire, the editor of the Manchester Union. He came in to talk to me about cooperative marketing, as he had seen it when he was in Denmark some time ago. He went over there to make a special investigation and study of it at that time. I only had a moment to see him, but one significant thing was developed, and that was that the cooperative marketing they have in Denmark ~~was~~ is a development of a plan that was taken over there from the United States.

Also an inquiry about recommendations for the safeguarding of the issue of permits for liquor. That hasn't come directly to my attention. I think there are some statements in the morning papers from the Secretary of the Treasury, or his Department, that indicate that the plan is already in operation.

An inquiry as to whether any replies have been received from railroad executives relative to suggestions looking to rate reductions. No. I hadn't expected any replies. That matter is before the Interstate Commerce Commission. They are, as we would say in the law courts, trying a case about it. One of the executives was here the other day, and I expressed the hope that they would find there is an opportunity to make some reductions in that direction. Whether they can, or not, of course, I am not in a position to say, and I wouldn't want to make any statement that would appear to be trying to influence the Interstate Commerce Commission about it. I mentioned it, because my suggestion, I thought, was received in a very friendly way, and indicated a hope that there might be some relief in that direction.

+ Here is a type of inquiry that sometimes comes to me. Usually there isn't anything I can say about an inquiry of this kind. It reiterates that there is a rumor circulated that the Secretary of State intends to resign within the next few days. I haven't any information about such a rumor. I am very certain that it is without any foundation whatever. I suppose there are rumors afloat at all times and in all places about various resignations that are to come in the Cabinet, and below that in the diplomatic service and consular service. Most of those rumors are without foundation. Or there are rumors about appointments to be made. Of course, many different men have to be considered for appointments, when that question is before the Departments and before me. Usually I don't pay very much attention to rumors of that kind and the present one, I am very certain, is without the slightest foundation.

An inquiry about a conference with Mr. Bonyge and - I can't recall the name now, but it was the German member of the Mixed Claims Commission. Mr. Bonyge brought in the German member of that Commission to present him to me. It was just before I was going into the Cabinet meeting, so I didn't have any chance to have anything in the way of a conference with them. Mr. Bonyge stated that they had about 12,000 claims before them, and that important decisions were to be made within a short time on some of the disputed questions, some of the test cases, which they might be called. When those decisions are made it will clear up the situation to such an extent that they expect to go forward and finish their work within a year.

That covers the questions of the morning.