

Tuesday, January 5, 1926.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

Here is an inquiry about the new Mexican Land, Labor and Petroleum laws, as to whether they are in conformity to our agreements with Mexico. I am only partially familiar with these laws, and I am not certain whether this refers to the laws which have been in effect there for some time, or whether it refers to what I had understood was a proposed act and which I thought hadn't gone into effect, or whether it refers to an act that has been passed recently. I knew in a general way that there was a proposal to pass some laws there that the State Department was studying very carefully, but I don't know that the State Department has arrived at any definite conclusion about it, other than what has been already indicated in the public press and communicated to Mexico. It is a little delicate for me to comment on it, but I would like to make it apparent that I had assumed that Mexico of course would pass no laws that were contrary to the provisions of our treaties with that country. I understood that there were provisions in the law that was being proposed, and to which this question may refer, that it was thought were not in harmony with our treaties or might raise questions of whether they were in harmony. But again I want to say that I assume the Mexican Government would not sanction any violation of the agreements that we have with them.

There isn't anything that I can say about the situation in Tacna-Arica that is new. It is known that General Pershing is going to retire - from the field I mean - coming up here, and may - I make this suggestion not

for the benefit of the newspaper men in Washington but for the benefit of the press and of those that perhaps don't know General Pershing as you do, that any suggestion that he is coming home for any reason other than that which he alleges ought not to be entertained. It would be a reflection upon an intelligent and brave man that has always conducted himself with the utmost propriety and with the greatest of courage, and I should regret very much to see any suggestion in the press that he was returning for any other reason than because his health is in jeopardy. My own feeling is that he has stayed there perhaps too long and jeopardized his health too much, and certainly I should want to discredit the slightest imputation that he is coming home for any other reason than that his health compels him. I don't know what will be done about appointing some one to take his place. That is under consideration. I don't know whether it will be necessary for him to resign absolutely and another man be put in his place, and if he regains his health in time that the man put in his place may resign and General Pershing go back. That is something that I could only guess about, and I doubt if that would help to clarify the situation at all. The question of what can be done when he is absent is under consideration.

Mr. Gilbert, Parker Gilbert, the Agent General of the Reparations Commission, called yesterday, mostly as I understood it for the purpose of paying his respects to my office. I talked with him some about the situation abroad, especially that situation that comes under his particular jurisdiction, of the ability of Germany to maintain its payments, which he thought was demonstrated for the present. Mr. Gilbert is cautious and like everybody else will hesitate

very much to prophesy as to what the economic and financial condition of a great country like Germany might be in the course of a year or two. From such information as he gave me I gathered the thought that he expected that the present outlook was reassuring and promising, that Germany had reorganized itself and that its future outlook was bright.

So far as I know now I am not expecting to send any special message to Congress relative to the Alien Property and the attempt to make some settlements of our German claims. The Congress I think has practically all the information that is necessary, or such information as would naturally be supplemented not by a message but by a hearing before the Committee when Mr. Mellon would appear and representatives of the interested parties and some representative of the Alien Property. I don't know whether the situation will develop where legislation can be enacted at this session or not. If the plan, which is somewhat complicated, on being considered and presented to the parties in interest seems to meet with approbation, I should expect that there could be legislation at this session. If it develops that there must be changes made in it, so that it is necessary to consult the interested parties, many of which are in Germany and a large number scattered over the United States, ~~why~~ then it might not be possible to make a decision at the present session. But I hope very much that the matter might be decided during this session.

I haven't decided on any successor to General Pershing.

I couldn't indicate when there might be a decision on the Chilean appeal.

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It is my recollection that the 10th of January was set as the time in which the interested parties might file briefs and other papers, and immediately on their coming in of course we shall take up the matter of their consideration and attempt to make a speedy decision.

No decision has been made about the personnel of the American delegation that will go to the preliminary limitation of arms conference. I expect to use some people that are already in Europe, but which ones hasn't been decided on. Of course it would be natural that some representatives of the Army and Navy would go as advisers.

I am not enough of an expert on traffic laws and regulations to make any comment that would be of any value relative to their administration within the District of Columbia. Of course when I go out I usually go accompanied by a traffic officer, so I don't have an opportunity really to see how these regulations and rules work out in their relation to the travel of the private citizen. There are two main objects to be attained, safety and expedition. Those are difficult to harmonize.

This is the first meeting that we have had since the New Year came in. I forgot to wish you collectively a Merry Christmas. I am very glad to take this opportunity to express my sentiments as desiring that you may all have a Happy and Prosperous ~~Y~~ year and also to express my deep appreciation of the care and candor with which you handle the news that affects me personally and the administration of the Government. I am sure it is very gratifying and must be very pleasing to those in whose employ you find yourselves, and very

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satisfactory to the public in general.