

Friday, May 15, 1925.

Remarks of the President at the Press Conference.

There are no developments as far as I know in relation to the settlement of debts abroad. Perhaps it would be helpful if I reiterate again that the thing to keep in mind is that there is a law of Congress which authorizes a settlement and that is the only basis on which any settlement can be made. If a settlement is to be made on any other basis than that, it will have to be made with the consent of Congress by the enactment of legislation. There is no authority to make any settlement except with that authority that is given in the law which Congress enacted setting up a Commission.

I have here several inquiries about the sale of Government ships. I haven't any policy about that other than that which I have announced in my several messages to the Congress, which was, shortly, to operate the ships until they could be sold. That is the policy that was announced in the Jones bill. I haven't any personal information as to the offer that was alleged to have been made by Henry Ford. The only information I have about it is that which I have seen in the press. There wasn't any reason why I should have any information other than that, because the law places the sale of those ships in the hands of the Shipping Board. They have full authority and have the right to act in accordance with the United States statute that is applicable to the sales of ships. I should be very glad to talk with any of them and give them the benefit of any advice I might have, but at the present time I haven't had any conference with any of them relative to sales. I don't know what the terms are of the offer that has been made, or whether an explicit offer has been made, so I can't pass any final judgment on it.

I don't know anything about the changes in the rules of the Federal Trade Commission, other than what I have seen reported in the press. I think quite a good deal more than a year ago some of the Trade Commissioners spoke to me about those rules. I think it is the one applicable to publicity, but nothing was done at that time. I don't know whether a rule could be adopted that would be correctly applicable to all cases. I should think some cases would want to be treated in one way and some in another way. Of course every one recognizes the harm that might come from bringing a complaint against a concern on an ex-parte hearing, exparte evidence, and making it public before the concern has

been given opportunity to answer it or to make any suggestions relative to it.

I think it is fair for the Federal Trade Commission so to carry on their operations as to do as little harm as possible to the trade of the country and at the same time insist upon fair methods of competition and decent trade operations.

Competition of course is competition, and people may sometimes think they are harmed by it. The Federal Trade Commission has very broad powers and they ought to conduct their affairs in a way as, I say, to do as little harm as possible and at the same time insist upon there being fair and just methods of conduct of trade by the different people that are employed in it.

I haven't had any report about the number of employees taken on by the different departments or discharged by the different departments for the month of April.

Several of the Governors are to be in town and wanted to come and see me. I thought perhaps I could see them best if they came in to lunch or dinner. I understand they are coming to dinner tonight. I don't know that they have any special thing to confer with me about, nor have I anything special to confer with them about. I imagine that they came to present to me in person an invitation to attend the Governors' conference in Maine. I doubt very much if I can get up there, but I should be glad to confer with them about that.

I haven't made any conclusions about Defense Day. I do think that it would be unfortunate to use Armistice Day for that purpose, almost as unfortunate, not quite so, as to devote Decoration Day to a purpose of that kind. The only holiday that I think of that would seem to be applicable would be the 4th of July. As I said at the last conference, if it is proposed to have a yearly gathering of this kind I think something ought to be provided by the Congress in relation to it. Last year we held the day rather in honor of General Pershing, who was about to retire from the service, about the 12th of September, I think that was his last day of service. It was somewhat in honor of him that Defense Day was held.

I don't know of any appointments I have made that haven't already been announced. I have made one or two in Porto Rico that I think have already been given to the press, several in the Department of Labor that the press already has, and a Deputy Commissioner or an Assistant Commissioner in the Pension Bureau has already been given out today.

Mr. Haney of the Shipping Board I expect to reappoint. He has indicated that he is willing to serve. He was very doubtful if he would be able to serve, whether he could continue on account of his desire to return to his practice. I think he said the firm of which he is a member would need his assistance in carrying on their practice of law, but I was informed yesterday by Senator McNary that he was willing to be reappointed.

Did you get any information, Mr. Sanders, about the cost of the Coast Guard?

I haven't got it yet, Mr. President.

I haven't any figures relative to the cost of the Coast Guard used against rum running, but I think you will be safe in assuming that that effort is being made within the appropriation. I don't recall just the amount of that appropriation. We had, I think, some \$8,000,000 or \$10,000,000 appropriated for the purpose of providing ships and boats for the Coast Guard - additional boats, and I don't know how much the annual appropriation is. I don't know of any justification for the suggestion that it would cost about \$100,000,000. I think if you would inquire at the Treasury you will find that they are carrying on the operations within the appropriation.

Here is an inquiry about a statement that is alleged to have been made by Wayne B. Wheeler, that the ships of the Navy ought to be used in Coast Guard Service in an attempt to prevent smuggling. So far as I have ever made any investigation in that direction, I haven't come to that conclusion. Further investigation on my part might change my views, but I haven't arrived at that opinion yet. The Navy is for the distinct purpose of national defense, rather than for the work of police duty which deals with smuggling and other violations of the law.

I am not quite certain when I shall go to Swampscott. It will be some time late in June; I think after the business day or the Budget meeting. I don't know of any foundation for that report that I was to go on the 25th of June.

I have already spoken of the Governors' Conference and the dinner that the Governors are to have with me this evening.

I have already spoken about Defense Day.

I think I have covered all the information I have relative to the offer of Henry Ford for some of the ships of the shipping fleet.

I don't know that I have any special view about the activities of the government agencies against liquor smugglers any more than every one would understand that it is my duty to do what I can to see that the laws are enforced. I had no special information about what was to be done. That is carried out by the prohibition enforcing agencies in the Department of the Treasury. Mr. Mellon has been very solicitous to do what he could to prevent smuggling and Mr. Andrews was brought into the Department to help work out the problem of enforcement of prohibition.

No appointment has been made as Minister to Siam.

I think the Secretary of State has virtually decided to promote some one in the Department to be the successor of Mr. MacMurray, but about that I am not entirely certain, because he has not made a final decision. He seemed to think that that probably would be the best solution. He has made no final decision about it. I could only make the obvious comment about the sudden death of General Miles, who was formerly in command of the Army; he had general command I think of the Army at the time of the Spanish War - I knew him slightly. I think he called Massachusetts his official residence. I used to see him up there some. He was a man whose military work reaches back before the Civil War, where he set a record for service, and in the Indian wars, and finally actively in the Spanish war. He was a good representative of the soldierly qualities of Americans.

I should be in favor of some limitation on the sale of poison gases. We already have treaties made at the Washington Conference which limit the use of poison gases in warfare. Now, I don't know just what plan ought to be adopted, in order to carry ~~it~~ that out. It ought to be a plan that would interfere as little as possible with the legitimate use and sale of chemicals. We sell a good deal of iron and steel abroad which might be manufactured into munitions of war, or rather war supplies and war weapons, and it may be that certain chemicals that we sell abroad in that way could be turned into poison gases, but which every one knows shouldn't be used for that purpose. I should like to see a treaty adopted or a law made that would not unreasonably interfere with peacetime activities or any peaceful commercial transactions. It may not be possible to draft a plan to carry it out exactly along that line, but I should like to see a plan adopted that would adhere to that plan as nearly as possible.

I don't know as there is anything I can say about the letter from Commander Drain, other than that he indicated he was in favor of a National Defense Day. I think that is the general attitude of the most of the Legion, not all of them. I haven't any additional information about rents in the District and unless there is some collusion or conspiracy to raise rents I don't know of any way that the power of injunction could be used. I should regret very much to see an increase in rents here when the District Rent Commission goes out of existence. If anything of that kind should occur I should think it would be very likely that the next session of Congress would revive the Rent Commission. Meantime, I should take such action as I have authority to take to protect the rights of the Government employees in the District against having to pay excessive rents.

I expect to take a trip on the Mayflower tomorrow afternoon over Sunday. No successor has been decided upon for the place of Solicitor General.

The chemists that talked with me yesterday discussed generally what I have already outlined - that it would be unfortunate to enter into any arrangement that would undreasonably interfere with the sale and peace time use of chemicals, even though those chemicals might be used at some other time for the preparation and use of poisonous gas.