

May 6, 1924.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

I haven't had any report except in the most informal way from Secretary Hoover about the preferential rail rates known as Section 28 of the Shipping Bill. I know he thinks there ought to be an extension of time, and that is my opinion. I don't claim that I have made a sufficient study of it, so that I would be prepared to discuss the question. I am relying more on the information given to me in the judgment of those who have studied it.

Are you in favor of an extension even beyond June 20th, Mr. President?

June 20th of the present year? Oh yes. I think it ought to be extended for six months or more. That is my judgment about it. But my judgment is based on the opinion of people who I think have investigated it, though I am in entire harmony with what the Shipping Board is trying to accomplish. They are trying to do what we all want to have done, and that is to secure the transportation of American merchandise in American ships. Unless we can do that we can't maintain our merchant marine, and it won't be worth while to have American ships if we are not going to use them. But the difficulty comes, as I indicated before, that there is a difference of opinion as to whether it could be put into effect and leave out some ports, or whether it has to go into effect as a whole or not at all. There are plenty of American bottoms in some ports to carry merchandise, and at other ports there aren't plenty.

The text of the sodium nitrite opinion won't be made public until I have a chance to act on it, which I think will be very soon. The opinion was to the effect that I have authority to act at the present time.

I don't know that there is very much I can say about the tax situation. My position is pretty well known about that. I was in favor of the administration's bill, and not in favor of compromise. I feel certain that there are very undesirable amendments in the present bill in the Senate. Some of them are I think even more undesirable than the general substitution of what are known as the Simmons rates.

By amendments do you mean the publicity feature?

I don't know just what the features of that are, but I am not in favor of general publicity. There are things of that nature that I think are even more undesirable than the Simmons rates.

Are they so undesirable that you might hesitate about signing it?

Of course I can't tell about that. I am speaking about things in the bill/^{now.} Everybody knows that a bill of that kind comes out of conference very much changed. Sometimes the conference changes it in its entirety. I have indicated at several conferences that I always want to try and make my report on a bill to the Congress. I don't think it is good policy for an executive to go out and say I am going to veto this bill or that bill. I think one of the things that is due to the legislative body is careful consideration of the measures that are passed by the executive to see if it is all right.

I haven't any preference for a Secretary of the National Republican Committee. I haven't given that matter any consideration.

There has been no decision as to who will place me in nomination at the Cleveland Convention.

I haven't given any particular attention to a platform. I know that the National Committee is assembling data and getting information on which the Committee can draw up a platform.

There hasn't been any agreement reported to me on the immigration bill. Of course it needs to be kept in mind that we have exclusion now under the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement, so far as I know, and no one is suggesting that that be changed. That is what I mean when I say there is a general acceptance of the principle of exclusion. What we are trying to do here is not to offend the sensibilities of the Japanese nation. If we enter into any agreement with them we want to maintain the honor of this nation.

I haven't given any additional thought to the advisability of reorganizing the Veterans Bureau on account of the speech of Senator Oddie. I have talked with Senator Oddie, and all I can secure from him is a most general statement that there ought to be a reorganization and that certain positions ought to be vacated. He didn't give me any specific reasons for it, nor was he able to cite them in any particular action of wrongdoing. So far as I can learn other members of the Committee that has investigated the Veterans Bureau didn't agree with Senator Oddie's suggestion. I think General Hines has already removed six men. Whether he thinks others ought to be removed or not I don't know. But you might talk to General Hines. I should judge he didn't think any such condition existed in the Bureau as Senator Oddie's remarks would indicate. There seemed to be a difference of opinion between them. I am not able

offhand to judge which is correct, though Senator Oddie gives no specifications.

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Of course I have given constant study to American naval strength. That comes up every time the question of their appropriation comes up, and also every time the question arises as to whether additional ships shall be built. By ships I mean all kinds of craft, both those surface boats and submarines. I don't understand that there is any alarming condition in our navy. Of course the navy consists of units that have a limited period of life that have to be renewed, when there is a change in the methods of building and methods of armament and methods of operation, so that there is a need of changes in construction. X I think that I have recommended or endorsed formally some suggestions to the Congress for the building of some new cruisers and for the laying down of some new submarines, and for the making of a generous appropriation for the carrying on of the navy. It needs constant renewal as I said, and constant rebuilding, but I don't understand that its present condition is any different from the ordinary state. Each year it needs additions and consideration for ships that are to take the place of those that will become obsolete and worn out, and too old for use in a certain number of years. That condition is a going condition of the navy. Attention has been brought pointedly to some things the navy needs. That is pertinent. Of course the navy needs things all the time and those things have to be pointed out in order that they may be remedied. I haven't the slightest doubt that a great mass of information about conditions, showing the great efficiency in other directions of our navy, could be assembled at any time.