

Report of Newspaper Conference.

Tuesday, August 25, 1925.

I don't know whether I can get down to Plymouth or not. I wanted to get down there, but it is doubtful whether I can make it with all the things that are coming up here and the engagements that I have to confer with different people that come to visit me.

I have told them to go ahead with their preparations for dedicating the Flagstaff over in Lynn. If it is so that I can come over I will go, and if it develops that I can't get away they will have to go ahead without me.

I haven't any new information about the hard coal situation. I have noticed, as you probably have, the action taken by the New England Governors and the statement issued by Colonel John Hays Hammond, who I suppose is especially well informed about the situation, which was very reassuring as to the ability of every one to have sufficient fuel in case there was a cessation of mining of hard coal. Of course the United States Government will do anything it can to assist in providing the public with fuel in case there is any cessation of mining.

I have got two or three questions here about the Army. I don't think I would take too seriously the dispatches from Washington that purport to emanate from the General Staff. It is one of the characteristics of the reports that purport to emanate from that source that they always represent the Army as just on the point of dissolution. We are spending I think about \$300,000,000 on the Army. Before the War it is my recollection that we spent \$120,000,000. I don't want to be held too closely to those figures, and I suppose as long as we continue to spend \$300,000,000 that the General Staff would be able to provide the nation with

a fair degree of defense. I am quite sure they are competent to do that, so that any dispatches that seem to indicate that that result wont be accomplished would appear to me to be so much a reflection on the ability of the General Staff that I don't place any great credit in them.

Here is another reported announcement that I think I should view in about the same way, that Chairman O'Connor of the Shipping Board fears that the Leviathan is to be withdrawn from the merchant service. Now, Admiral Palmer is conducting the operations of the merchant fleet. If he said the Leviathan was in danger of withdrawal, why that I should think might be a statement that some credence could be placed upon, but I don't understand that he has made any such statement and until he does make it I do not think there is any danger of withdrawing the Leviathan. Now of course all of this is the opposition to my policy of economy. You have got to expect that opposition to be constant. I don't think it is going to be effective. Whenever you come to the question of shipping, you have to realize that it is a highly competitive industry. Those who are competing with the United States ships can put out any statements that will cause a cancellation of reservations on U. S. ships and secure reservations on other ships, and there may be some motive for having it done. I don't say that it is done. There might be some motive for it.

Senator Bingham spoke with me more or less about aviation and probably you recall that he was in the Air Service during the war, and I think he gave out to the press a statement in relation to it. I haven't looked at it in detail, but undoubtedly it was substantially the same as that which he conferred about with me.

I haven't had any official communication with Colonel Harvey. He is up in this region and came down to visit with me over Sunday.

I haven't made any definite plans to return to Washington. I imagine I will get back some time around Labor Day.

I think that the portrait that Mr. Tarbell has painted of me will be finished this week.

I haven't any comment to make about reported articles in the European press.

I expect to return to Washington by train. Perhaps I should have said that.

I don't know when I can get a new Ambassador to Japan. I would like to fill that post as soon as I can, and no decisions have been made about the appointment on the Civil Service Commission. There is a rumor that came to me that one member, I don't know which of the present Civil Service Commission, was likely to retire, and I was waiting to see if that could be verified. I do not know of any basis for the rumor and it probably hasn't any.

Now here is a question about the Belgian debt settlement. Of course our law provides for a settlement on the standard that was adopted in relation to the debt of Great Britain. We have made four or five other settlements on that basis and if any one wants to have any different basis than that it will be necessary for them to show the Debt Commission, as I understand it, specific reasons why in their particular case any exception to the British standard should be made. I suppose every one recognizes that Belgium is in a somewhat different situation

in relation to the war than other countries. It was a neutral that was caught between the great conflict between the Central Powers and Allied Powers, and in a way that appealed particularly to the sympathy and consideration of the American Government and I think to the American people. It was therefore on that account that there was a desire to treat Belgium as generously as we could under the circumstances. Now of course while we speak of the standards adopted in the British settlement the basis of that standard was the ability to pay. We adopted that standard in relation to the British on account of their ability to pay and that is the fundamental standard in relation to each and every one of the debtors that owe money to the United States. That isn't varied by the Versailles Treaty or any other agreement that has been attempted to be made, and the Belgian settlement hasn't anything to do with the debt of any other country to the United States. The basis and standard, as I understand it, is established by law in relation to the British standard. Now this Government is waiting to see what any other country may propose and any reasons that it may have will be listened to as to why any different definite settlement should be made with them than the British standard. That is entirely outside of the Versailles Treaty or any other agreement or obligation which may have been thought to have been in effect.