

Tuesday, September 22, 1925.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

Senator Edge talked with me somewhat yesterday about a new plan that he thought might be worked out for the consolidation of Departments and Bureaus. I am in favor of the bill that was prepared by the Committee that has been working on that for some time. I think the bill is known as the Smoot Bill. Now that doesn't mean that I am opposed to some other method of operation. I don't know whether I would be in favor of the plan of Senator Edge. I think his feeling about it, as I understood it, was that it would be easier to secure the adoption of his plan by Congress than that plan that has been pending there for some time. My position briefly I think is already stated. I am in favor of the plan that is already proposed, but I am not opposed to any practical plan. I received a line from Senator Edge this morning which said that he had been misquoted in the press. That sometimes happens (laughter). I hastened to assure him that I didn't think that was a matter of grave consequence. (laughter). I don't know the details of his plan. I suppose it was to put general authority in the hands of the President to consolidate and move about different Bureaus and Boards. I have already done some of that. Sometimes it is convenient to have authority to act and sometimes it is inconvenient to have too much authority. I would be willing to try and carry out the provisions of any law in relation to the reorganization of the Departments that Congress thought was wise, I am quite sure; but the only bill to which I wish to commit myself is that which is already pending, but I don't wish to appear as opposing any other action that seems to afford a promise of practical results.

I didn't give the Aircraft Board any personal views about the needs of aviation. I haven't any other than those that have been expressed to the press several times, of desiring to have aviation in good shape. I believe I called to their attention the amount of money that we have been spending on aviation, something like \$65,000,000 or \$75,000,000 a year. My remarks to the Board was to the effect that I wanted them to make a thorough investigation and secure an assemblance of all the facts and give me the benefit of such conclusions as their judgment would seem to warrant.

I don't think any plans have been developed for the construction or the replacement of the Shenandoah. There quite naturally wouldn't be anything done about that until after the investigation has developed what possible weaknesses there may have been in that dirigible, and also information secured as to what could be done to remedy its weaknesses in the construction of another dirigible. As I said to the conference when the accident first happened - I didn't see any reason for retiring from the use of dirigibles because of the accident, nor did I see any reason for retiring from the water because some vessels might be lost. Now it isn't beyond comprehension that the investigation may reveal that it is impossible to construct a vessel of this kind that will be airworthy, but I should be very much surprised if the investigation did reveal anything of that kind. While it is not impossible, I consider it very improbable, so that I had expected that plans would probably be made for the construction of another vessel of that kind. Some of the people around Detroit, I don't know whether I spoke of this at the last conference, have a plan of constructing a dirigible that would be

covered instead of with a silk envelope, a metal envelope. That would give some chance for internal bracing that isn't possible to be developed with the present silk envelope. That I know is under consideration, but I don't think there is any plan under consideration just at the present time to replace the Shenandoah. Of course we already have the Los Angeles.

I don't want to make any definite statement about the attitude of this Government towards a Disarmament Conference by the League of Nations. Before we could undertake to participate in a Disarmament Conference of that kind I should think we ought to have the authority of Congress. I have been basing my recommendations for a Disarmament Conference on the clause that is annually put into the appropriation bill, I think for the Navy. I think it goes into the Army bill. I know it is in the Navy Bill, and that gives Congressional authority. I don't want to say anything on the other hand that would discourage the calling of a European Conference because I realize that they have delicate questions over there which touch their conditions particularly and in which we are not so much interested. If they can solve those problems themselves, nothing would be more agreeable to our people I believe, and I am sure nothing would be more agreeable to our Government, so that I don't want to have anything that I might say taken in any way as undertaking to discourage their attempt to solve their own problems in Europe. Of course in the general question of disarmament we are interested. The Government as at present constituted is committed to it, believes in it, and I think the country believes in it, and we ought to do everything we can to encourage it.

Nothing came out of the Cabinet meeting this morning.

I sent for Chairman O'Connor yesterday to talk with him about sales of ships. There wasn't any foundation for a rumor that was in the press to the effect that he was to be asked to retire from the Board. I consider him a valuable member of the Board. He holds the Chairmanship by my special appointment, and I haven't the slightest criticism of his discharge of the duties of his office from anything that has come to me, and the only thing I consulted him about was whether there was opportunity to speed up the sale of ships. He explained to me some of the difficulties and told me of the efforts that are being made by the Board and through the Emergency Fleet Corporation to make sales.

I haven't any opinion, personal opinion, about American aviators participating in the warfare that is going on in northern Africa. My only desire about it is to have this country and my countrymen observe the laws of Congress. Mr. Kellogg has never mentioned it to me, and I know nothing about it except what I saw in the press. I understood from the press reports that that was what he was undertaking to do, giving public notice in a way that would call the attention of our citizens to the laws, and suggesting to them that they be careful to see that they do not violate them.

I have already spoken about the League of Nations conference.

I shall try to get out my address that is to be made at Omaha so that it can have a very great deal of mail delivery. I can't tell just when it will be out. I don't expect to make a long address out ~~of~~ there.

I have a question here as to whether communists ought to be allowed to come into this country if they come in for commercial purposes. Well, I rather think that that question would answer itself. The only thing that the Government is trying to do is to see that our laws are observed. It isn't trying to enforce its own ideas or carry out its own desires about people that can come in or stay out. The fact that a person was going to come here and spend a large sum of money I don't think would make any difference in the law. I don't know of any provision in the law that says the right to come into this country is for sale, that the principles of the United States are for sale if you want to pay enough and you don't have to live according to the laws of this country. That isn't what I understand to be the policy of our land. I think I said something to that effect in my first message to the Congress. Personally, I think it is a good policy to permit very free discussion of anything that relates to our institutions. If any one says anything about them with which I don't agree, of course I talk back and it is out of discussions of that kind that public opinion is developed and the soundness or unsoundness of institutions that prevail. But I don't know that that policy has anything to do with the duty that is incumbent upon the public officers of this country to try and enforce the law. When the law says that certain persons are excluded from the country, why then I suppose it is the duty of those who are charged with such enforcement to see that they don't come in. Of course it would be rather absurd to say that they could come if they agreed to spend considerable money after they got here, so I think that question would rather answer itself.