

Friday, October 8, 1926.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

Here is an inquiry about purchasing land in the District for school sites and park purposes. I judge from the question that there is a provision in the current appropriation bills that provides that not more than 25% above the assessed valuation shall be paid for such sites. Now, if it isn't possible to buy land for the assessed value plus 25%, one of the most obvious comments to make is that the assessed value apparently is too low and that not enough taxes are being levied on land of that kind. Another one is that that is not necessarily so in every case. It may be that a person has land that is adaptable to these purposes which that person doesn't care to sell. Of course in that case the remedy is to proceed by condemnation, take the land and let the damages be assessed by a jury. I rather think that a provision of this kind is quite warranted. Where land is taken or bought they ought not to have to pay more than 25% above the assessed valuation. But it is like a great many things of that kind. It is impossible to tell whether it is going to work well until it is put into operation. It may be that experience will show that such a provision in the law is unwise. It has undoubtedly arisen because some one thought some land had been purchased for more than should have been paid for it, so they have tried to protect the public treasury by this method. The motive is good. I don't know what the result will prove to be.

I haven't given any special study to the enlargement of the Board of District Commissioners or to the proposal that a form of administration be established for the city that would be under one man, in the nature of the ordinary administration of the Mayor of a city. Wherever we have had Mayors, in all the places with which I have had acquaintance, they have been accompanied by a Board of Commissioners, sometimes drawn up on the legislative plan of a Common Council and a Board of Aldermen. Sometimes the administration is left to a Mayor and a single chamber. I should doubt if it would be wise to leave the Government of Washington entirely in the hands of one man, even under such restrictions and limitations as would be imposed by Act of Congress, and I am not yet convinced that it is necessary to have more Commissioners than we have now. So far as I have been able to observe, the work can be divided among three Commissioners in such a way that it can very fairly be attended to, and they have the advantage of exchange of counsel and ideas that comes from having a Board rather than one person. I should think three was sufficient. If on further study I found they couldn't do the work, which I very much doubt, then we would need to have some other method of administration here.

I have talked with Secretary Jardine about the cotton situation and he says that cotton is one of the products that lends itself most easily to storage and that there are plenty of storage warehouses in the country. I have talked with the Secretary of the Treasury, who is assured by the

interests connected with the Federal Reserve Board, that there is no difficulty about credit. In 1922, or some time previous, when there was a considerable reduction in the price of cotton, the difficulty arose from bank credits. That is not the difficulty now. It seems to be a difficulty of coordination of selling and buying and the fact that the Government reports show a very large crop. I think the last report indicated an expectation of a crop of 16,000,000 bales. We use about 7,000,000 to 7,500,000 and export about that number and we had a carry over I think last year of about 5,000,000 bales, so that there is a considerable amount of cotton, but there is money to finance it and efforts are being made to coordinate buying and selling and storing and the providing of credits for cotton in such a way as not to force a large amount of it on the market.

I haven't any information about the ~~purpose~~ prospects of passage of the radio bill. It is my recollection that it was left in conference, that the bill passed the House and then the bill was amended considerably in the Senate and that it either went to the conference or was left in disagreement between the two houses. I have no doubt that at the coming session a suitable radio bill will be passed, probably something in the nature of a compromise between the House bill and the Senate bill.