

Tuesday, December 14, 1926.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

Silas H. Strawn is not now in the employ of the Government, so far as I know. He went to China for us at a very large personal sacrifice and remained there much longer than he expected to remain. On account of the unsettled conditions in China he and his associates were not able to come to any final conclusion, as I understand it. They stayed until all of the representatives of the Chinese Government had been withdrawn or left the conference. That was no fault of theirs. It was due to the unsettled state of affairs there. As nothing could be done without them, Mr. Strawn and the other representatives of the foreign powers of course were forced to discontinue their efforts. I do not know what Mr. Strawn is saying in his speeches. He is a very well informed man and would be very discreet, I am certain, in his utterances, so I do not wish to say that they are approved or disapproved. And of course they are not an expression of any official position of the United States Government. I am merely stating a fact about that. I shouldn't want any unwarranted inference drawn from it that the President had disavowed Mr. Strawn's statements. I am not doing anything of the kind. So perhaps I had better repeat again that I am neither undertaking to approve them or to disapprove them, merely stating what I understand to be the fact, that they are not the expression of the American Government. And, as I do not know what they are, I couldn't tell whether they represent the official position of the

Government or not. I want to repeat again that he is informed and discreet. I do not know that any approach has been made to this Government by the British relative to the recognition of any new government in China. If you want to get more accurate information about that, of course apply to the State Department. They might have made inquiry there which wouldn't be reported to me unless the situation had developed far enough so it was proposed to take some action.

I don't know that any particular disposition will be made of the report and audit of the Alien Property Custodian's office by the Comptroller General. That was done in order to satisfy the Government that the books there had been properly kept, that there had been a proper accounting for the property that came into the hands of the Alien Property Custodian. So far as I have in mind, that was revealed to be the fact by the auditor. There might be some small question about payment for services or something of that kind.

Press: Do I understand that you have the report?

President: Yes, I have the report. I haven't examined it in detail. I have sent it to the Secretary of the Treasury for his examination. I have given Senator Borah a copy of it for his information, he having interested himself in a possible investigation of the actions of that office. I thought this report might be of advantage to him in any action that he might wish to take in that direction.

Both the treaty relative to prohibition of poisonous gas and my message relative to taxation are before the Congress. They are working on

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both those problems. I don't know that there is any comment I could make in relation to either one at this time.

The construction of new cruisers by this Government, as I understand it, is entirely outside the Washington Conference treaty on the limitation of armaments, it having been the understanding that if there was to be ~~any~~ no limitation on submarines that there would not be any limitation on submarine destroyers or cruisers. So that whether we build more cruisers or do not build more, or whether some other country builds or does not build, doesn't affect the 5-5-3 ratio which applies to other forms of construction of war vessels. If you will look at the treaty, I think you will find some statement there in relation to cruisers, but it is not a limitation on the number that can be constructed. I should say that there was some limitation perhaps on the size of the guns that they are to carry or something of that kind. Perhaps on their size also. I should want to consult the treaty in order to be exactly sure what those limitations are in relation to cruisers. But I am very certain there is no limitation as to their number. The 5-5-3 ratio is in relation to what is ordinarily known as the war vessels, the warships, the larger ships.

I doubt very much if this Country at this time would be able to secure favorable response to any suggestion for an international conference at the Hague in the immediate future. The governments naturally interested to the largest extent are so much engaged in other matters which I should have to admit are probably more pressing, more urgent, that I doubt if they would want

to attend an international conference at the Hague at this time for the codification of international law.

I have not reached any final decision about the reappointment of Commissioner Cox of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Some of the departments have the Public Utilities bill for the District of Columbia. I am waiting for their report on it. I of course could not make any appointments under it until the bill is signed. Perhaps that is so obvious as not to require a statement of that kind to the press, but as that is the condition of course I haven't made any effort at the selection of any names. I think some recommendations have come to the office in relation to it, but I have not been able to give it much of any consideration. I should not do so until I had reached a final conclusion relative to the bill.

I do not know of any new developments relative to our relations with Nicaragua. I think all those that have occurred have been already reported in the press.

I am expecting to have a half holiday of the limited kind that is oftentimes resorted to before Christmas. That doesn't mean that everybody can leave the departments, but all those whose presence there is not of such urgent necessity that they are able to get away without detriment to the department. I do not think that rule will be applied to the day before New Year. But it will be applied to the day before Christmas. It is similar to that which was applied to the day before Thanksgiving.