

Friday, December 24, 1926.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

The questions and reporters are not very numerous this afternoon. I wanted those of you who could to come in, in order that I might extend to you personally my best wishes for the holidays.

I have here an inquiry about Christmas gifts that are arriving at the White House. I do not know which member of the staff here is reporting on Christmas gifts. Perhaps you can get a better story from him than you could from me. But we have been very generously remembered by our many friends all over the country in a great many different ways. We are very grateful for the spirit that every one shows to us.

I thought perhaps I ought to say another word about the bill that is pending for the construction of 10 new cruisers. I want you to give full credit to the House Committee on Naval affairs in relation to that bill. I spoke about this at the last conference, thinking that the press had in mind how the matter had developed, so I began somewhat in the middle of it there. You will recall that Chairman Butler came down to see me with a letter from the Committee inquiring what action I thought ought to be recommended by the Committee on that part of my message where I said that we need to strengthen our air service, our submarines and our cruisers, so that unless you called my message the inception the real movement for doing something about it came from the Committee. I told them I would confer with the Navy Department and see what they thought. I did so and he suggested when I came to some conclusion about it to call down some other

members of the Committee. Mr. Sanders communicated with him and five of them came down. As a result of that conference we concluded that it would be a wise action at this time to put in a bill to authorize the construction of 10 more cruisers. I understood that those gentlemen that were there with me without undertaking to pledge their Committee or pledge their own action perhaps, thought as I did that those 10 cruisers were to take the place of the 3 that were already authorized. In 1924 we passed a bill authorizing construction of 8 cruisers; 5 of those are now under construction. So that I didn't in my budget message this year make any recommendation for further appropriations for cruisers to be begun during the present year. Then the question came up about the 3 and the solution of that I thought was that instead of extending the time in which construction on them was to start - it was limited to between now and the 30th of next June, ~~if~~ we could disregard that and put in a new bill for the construction of 10 without any time limit on them. I think that is the background of the story. As I say, I want the Committee to have the credit for starting the measure. It was their idea and we worked it out together. I have pursued a policy, as you know, of avoiding anything that looked like competitive naval construction, competitive armaments. I think that is a wise policy on our part and one that we can well continue to pursue. After conferring with the Navy Department I felt that these 10 additional cruisers would be needed to round out our fleet and it was for that reason that I said that if Congress sought to pass a bill of that kind I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't approve it. I didn't have in mind at all undertaking any

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competition with any other country. I don't see any occasion for action of that nature. We ought to provide a fleet that is adequate for our own needs, rather irrespective of what some other country may be doing. That is what I wished to do.

Press: Is there any date set upon when these 10 cruisers are to be completed?

President: No. I didn't so understand. It authorizes the construction of 10 cruisers and we could build them as we wished to. As I say, we have 5 now under construction. We shall soon have the 2 airplane carriers, which have been a very heavy expense, running I think about \$45,000,000, and that will give us a chance to have funds for the building of cruisers without greatly increasing the naval appropriations.

Press: In the coming fiscal year? That is, we would have funds in the coming fiscal year beginning July next?

President: No. After that we would have. I think it is generally known that there isn't any limitation in the Washington Treaty on the number of cruisers that any country can construct. It is a limitation on their size, 10,000 tons, and the calibre of the guns that they carry, which is limited I think to 8 inches. So that any country is at liberty to build all the cruisers they wish and in so doing they are not in any way infringing on the letter or spirit of the Washington Treaty.

Press: Do you care to comment on Chairman Butler's statement that the United States was fooled by its partners in the Washington Treaty who had gone ahead and built tonnage in violation of the spirit of the Treaty?

President: No.