

Tuesday, February 8, 1927.

Report of the newspaper conference.

The best I can do to help any one that wants to know my attitude about public affairs is to refer them again to that book that was published by Mr. Slemp. I suppose that you have all followed the suggestion I made that your offices should provide you with a copy of it.

Press: We don't know what question that is that you are answering just now.

President: Well, that is a general question.

I don't know just when I shall take up the matter of making any decision relative to the tariff on pig iron. A report has come over, I think, from the Tariff Board and then I have that referred to the Department of Commerce and the Department of the Treasury to see what effect it would likely have on commerce and what effect it would have on our revenue. Then I decide what action I wish to take.

I haven't seen any detailed report of the speeches that Colonel Thompson is making. I assume if he is speaking in relation to the Philippine Islands that he is telling what he saw there and the conclusions that he drew, probably the same as were contained in his report he made to me and which I submitted to the Congress. His views are in very close accordance with mine. We differ about some things. My views on the Philippine situation were set out in my message and especially in that letter I sent to one of the officers of the Philippine Islands, I have forgotten whether it was directed to Mr. Quezon or Speaker Roxas.

Press: Roxas.

President: Then I think my message to the Congress last December

corresponded very closely to the recommendations that Colonel Thompson made in his report to me. I had expected to be able to confer with General Wood before I took final action on the resolution passed by the Philippine legislature relative to taking a plebiscite on independence, but the General has recently had another operation, so I am not sure that he can reach this country in time for such a conference. Of course, I have reports from him and statements of his views. I shall put off action, however, to see if I can confer with him and if I can't why then I shall go ahead and make my decision without such a conference.

I saw some press reference to the resolution suggested by Senator Shipstead for a conference to consider the question of a Confederacy of the Central American countries. That, of course, is an interesting suggestion. They have by that treaty that was negotiated in Washington, especially relative to domestic disorders, something of that nature already. This occurs to me though, in relation to this question, that such a movement might more properly come from the interested countries than from the outside intervention of our own country. Of course, it goes without saying that the people who are responsible for the foreign relations of our country, who have to carry them on and keep on friendly terms with other peoples, wouldn't think of putting a thing of this kind out into the public press or taking any action in relation to it without first making inquiries of the countries concerned whether anything of this nature would be agree-

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able to them, whether they would want to consider it. I spoke the other day about the difficulty of conducting foreign relations through the newspaper and this is an example of it. It would be very inappropriate for myself, for instance, or the Secretary of State, to put out a suggestion of this nature without first approaching the countries concerned to inquire whether they would be willing to consider anything of this kind, and if they said they would, why, then we would take it up with them further. If they said not, then the matter of course would be dropped. Now, there is a little difference between that which is not immediately affecting our interests and a statement of policy such as we make concerning matters where our interests are involved, like we did in relation to the Chinese situation the other day, sending a proposal to different elements over there making such suggestions to them and then, in order that the public might know what we were trying to do, giving publicity to the proposal that had been made. But for a new departure of this kind, where our interests aren't particularly involved, of course the only method to proceed would be by first making a diplomatic approach.

I have never made enough study of the question of how the sky-line and height of buildings around Lafayette Square ought to be treated, so that I could express any mature opinion in relation to it. Of course the building that is across the Square, which was put up by the Government, put up in time of war to be sure, but still put up by the Government, which is now

occupied by the Veterans Bureau, is a comparatively high building. I think it is a little unfortunate that so high a building has been erected on that location. I don't know what is proposed to be the height of the building that is to be erected on the other corner where the John Hay house was located, and I am not enough of an expert to know whether that would injure the artistic appearance of the locality about the Square ^{and} the looks of the White House. It is suggested here that the National Institute of Architects think that it would. That is a body of men well trained in matters of that kind. Their judgment would be worthy of a good deal of consideration and will undoubtedly be given all the consideration that it is entitled to.

While no final decision has been made and of course isn't made until the nominations go to the Senate, it is expected that Hugh Gibson, who is now our Minister to Switzerland, will be transferred as Ambassador to Belgium.