

Friday, May 6, 1927.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

There isn't anything further that I can add to what I have said a great many times about my policy relative to the ships owned by the United States and operated by the Shipping Board. I think you will find it in practically all my messages and in a number of my speeches. There is no reason that I know of why I should reiterate it now.

I don't know of any report that Frank Hambridge has resigned as Federal Judge in Honolulu. Something may have come to the office that has not yet come to my desk. I don't know of anything of that kind. It might go as a matter of course to the Department of Justice, but I imagine that I should know about it if such was the case.

I had several gentlemen in to breakfast this morning. Have their names been given out, Mr. Sanders?

Mr. Sanders: Yes.

President: Yes. It was a breakfast very much like all of those that I have, mostly social.

I haven't received any different report from Mr. Butler than that which I have seen referred to in the press. He told me last night that he had seen several of the members of the press yesterday and gave them the information which he gave me, to the effect that he had had a very pleasant journey out through the West, become conscious of the great hospitality out there, thought the country over which he had traveled was

on the whole looking prosperous, and that there was general satisfaction expressed with the course of the Government at Washington.

I haven't any report today from Nicaragua. The only thing that I am certain about down there from reports that I have received is that Mr. Stimson is doing his best to compose the differences and find some method by which peace can be restored. Perhaps the method that he may employ is not so very important, if it results in bringing about an amicable condition. I think perhaps it would be well not to take too literally what the contending sides may think it is necessary to give out as publicity, but keep in mind that the main effort of this country is to restore peace and prevent further bloodshed. I have great hopes that Mr. Stimson is going to be able to bring that about.

There isn't anything further that I can say about flood relief and so on that I haven't already said. Of course, all of us recognize the magnitude of the question that has arisen as the result of this great catastrophe and I have already requested the Secretary of War to direct the Engineering Corps in conjunction with the Mississippi River Commission to make a study and report. We are more engaged just now in affording relief for those that are in distress than we are in trying to lay out plans for permanent protection hereafter, though we are by no means oblivious to the necessity of making every effort along that line. I expect that the crest has passed by. There is little opportunity to find out what the results of this flood have disclosed, but I shall have a preliminary report

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from the War Department as to whether they desire to have the assistance of civilian engineers, business men, and so on, whether it might not be well for some of the committees of the Congress that are going to pass on probable proposals for legislation to begin at an early date preliminary studies, so that they will be in a position speedily to take action when the Congress convenes. There have been a good many different suggestions about special commissions. It is somewhat difficult for the President to start out a special commission, because the law specifically prohibits him from expending any money for that purpose, and any commission that I might convene would have to provide its own resources without any financial assistance from the Government. But we have the Engineering Corps and the Mississippi River Commission which are both proper bodies to do this work, and I judge that they would have authority to call in for consultation any persons that they might think were necessary to assist them. This is an allied question, as I pointed out the other day, of power development, navigation, and flood control. Such discussions as I have had relative to it indicate that things that might be done on small rivers which are tributary to the Mississippi, which would do a great deal towards flood control in the headwaters of those tributaries, would not be of great assistance in solving the real Mississippi River problem.

Question: Has Secretary Hoover made a report yet?

President: He has not made any report. I haven't had an opportunity to discuss that matter with him very much. He did tell me though

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that the water that is going down the main channel of the Mississippi now represents 3,000,000 - I don't know whether it is cubic feet or 3,000,000 second feet, whether it is technically called 3,000,000 cubic feet or second cubic feet - and that one of the large tributaries I think in the ~~headwaters~~ ^{headwaters} of the Mississippi would represent only 4,000 compared with 3,000,000.

Question: Did he name that tributary?

President: I don't -- I was thinking we were talking then about the headwaters of the Mississippi. I am not certain about that. It is not a matter of importance any way. I just mentioned it as an indication of the magnitude of the present flood. We ~~xxxxx~~ ^{can} deal with it very effectively on the headwaters of the different streams that enter in. This has come about by the great precipitation of water over the broad lowland area. While at other times there have been flood waters from 3 or 4 tributaries of the Mississippi at one time that have raised the waters of the main stream, this time there are 8 or 10. All of them are originating in the lowlands, where probably it isn't feasible to try to make artificial reservoirs for water. I don't want to undertake to express any opinion about what ought to be done, or what method ought to be pursued. I simply state what I understand is to be done and the main origin of the present flood. Provision is being made through the Red Cross and through local committees for the purchase of seed and feed and animals. I am expecting that some of the banking interests of that locality will be up here within a day or two to confer with Mr. Mellon and Mr. Meyer to see what plan can be adopted

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to assist in financing rehabilitation. In 1922 there was a very carefully prepared bill intended to take care of the Mississippi flood situation, which provided for the laying out of a dike which was 3 feet higher than the point of the highest flood. That hasn't been high enough to take care of this flood. I merely mention that again as an indication that this question has had very careful consideration in the Congress and by Engineering talent. I think that bill provided for an expenditure on the part of the National Government of \$10,000,000 a year, supplemented by I think \$5,000,000 to be paid by the adjoining territory where the dikes were built. It was thought that when those dikes were built up to that standard there wouldn't be any trouble from floods up and down the Mississippi Valley. Now whether the engineering profession is going to decide that ^{the} dikes are not high enough or not I don't know. From such meager information as I have I judge it will be necessary to conclude that they have not been high enough to carry this flood. Of course, those dikes are not all done. That was an expenditure that was to run over a considerable period of time. I think there are about 23 or 25 miles of dikes up and down the Mississippi and this was to be done each year as funds were available, \$10,000,000 being appropriated each year from the National treasury. This question, therefore, has been studied and considered in a good many of its aspects a great many times, but apparently no final solution has been made, so that I should judge that the whole question will have to be reconsidered and

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conclusions will have to be reconsidered on account of the experiences of the present year and plans will have to be formulated to take care of any emergency of this kind happening in the future.

Question: Do we understand that this bill of 1922 was enacted into law?

President: Yes.