

Tuesday, January 24, 1928.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

My position relative to the Navy was all set out in my message to the Congress. I don't know of anything I can add to what I said there. I have commented so many times about the statements that always appear at this season from quarters that are interested in national defense, that I don't know that there is anything I can add. I don't know why it is, when other appropriations go through without any effort to alarm the country - the Post Office Department has an appropriation of some over \$700,000,000 I think and it isn't considered necessary to resort to inflammatory statements to secure the passage of that bill - that it is supposed that the passage of the appropriation bills for the Army and the Navy won't go through unless somebody asserts that the country is about to be engaged in war. There doesn't seem to be much of anything the President can do about that. I suppose the press likes to have it done. (Laughter) Well, I say that in all seriousness. There is every indication that that is what they like, because you know the very alarming criticism that the press would make if anybody suggested to men in the Army and the Navy that they ought not to say things of that kind. It would be asserted on all sides that they were muzzled, and that some one was attempting to cut down their privilege of free speech, and so on. I do suppose that when persons go into the Army and the Navy they go in on the understanding that they will conduct themselves in such a way as may be best for the country which they serve. I find in my own case that my privileges of free speech are a good deal curtailed, because I am President. I think that rule might well be taken to heart by the military men of the country. I don't think there is any reason for taking seriously any suggestion that the country at the present time is in danger of being attacked. I know very well that we do not harbor any

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intention of attacking any one else. But I suppose that those who have on them the burden of national defense naturally dwell on it, amplify it, enlarge it, and emphasize it. I don't know that they would be of very much value to the country if that wasn't the case. But I do not agree with the methods that they sometimes employ. I don't see why the press should take them very seriously. I haven't any way to make any change in it.

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