

January 25, 1924.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

Here is an inquiry about some Cabinet meetings in 1921 and 1922. I don't recall that the proposal to make the lease of oil lands was ever discussed in the Cabinet, before I became President. I don't say that it wasn't. But I don't recall. I think I should have recalled, had it been discussed at any length, or been referred to.

Mr. President, were you present at all of those meetings?

Substantially all. Of course I was away in the summer of each year and once in a while I would be away speaking somewhere. I was away in August, 1921, and August and September 1922. Sometimes I would be out of town on a trip to Chicago, or St. Louis, or somewhere.

Here is another inquiry about the recognition of the Russian Government by the British Labor Government. That has not been done yet, though I saw a report in the morning paper, I think, that it was expected that the Labor Government would recognize the Russian Government. I don't know that that would have any effect on the action of the United States Government as to its recognition of Russia. The executive end of the Government you know gets foreclosed sometimes by the legislative end, even on those things that the executive end alone has constitutional authority to act on. I think there is pending in the Senate an investigation of the question of whether the Russian Government ought to be recognized. Something may develop there that will produce information that would be controlling. The investigation is in such hands that I know that whatever develops there will be pertinent to the subject. So that I think at present I am disposed to wait and see what that investigation may develop. I don't know of any developments that have taken place since my message to the Congress that would in any way change the position that I took in the message. My position there was plain. I don't know of any development since that would change that position.

An inquiry about the conference on the Dakota banking situation.

That will be called at once. I am not certain that the call hasn't already gone out. The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Commerce are looking after that for me and conferring with the Federated Farm Bureau and the United States Chamber of Commerce to get suggestions from both of those quarters of

persons that ought to be called to the conference. It will be a small conference, but representative of the banking interests, the loaning interests, real estate mortgage loan companies, insurance companies, transportation interests, the railroads, and anyone that we think might have any general information about the situation which would be helpful.

I have an inquiry here about the progress of the criminal investigations in the Department of Justice. Of course, if I had any information about that, and I haven't any, it would probably be improper for me to disclose it. Very likely as I had occasion to say before, it would defeat the ends of justice.

Here is an inquiry about the tax bill. My observation about that is that as it comes to be better understood, and as the proposals for changes come to be better understood, that the administration's bill is getting more and more support both outside the Congress and inside of it. So that I think the prospect for a substantial agreement on that bill is getting better and better. That is my opinion. It may be wrong, but that is the best opinion I have. It is not my purpose to try and make it a partisan measure for the purpose of claiming credit for it. Credit for it will go to those that vote for it, and I should welcome support for it from anyone that wants to vote for it, and be glad to extend credit to any one that wants to support it. But my general opinion is that it is going along all right. It isn't a matter that can be worked out at once, to give figures on what the result would be of a proposed tax bill, by the Treasury Dept. It is a long and detailed operation, but I think when they come to give out the figures on other proposed bills it will be found that the results on those proposed bills are not such that any one would think that they could ^{be} supported, after they study the proposed administration bill. As I say, they are going to come more and more to the conclusion that it meets the requirements.

I haven't made up my mind about the Chairmanship of the Shipping Board. I am waiting, of course, to see if the three names that I submitted yesterday for membership on the Board are conformed.

I have here a number of inquiries about the Senate investigation into the oil leases. My position about that is as already indicated, that the Dept. of Justice is observing the course of events there and will very carefully review any testimony and take whatever action is necessary to protect the interests of the United States, and to punish any infraction of its laws. There seems to be

two questions. I have already indicated them. One, and perhaps the most important is to undertake to punish and bring to justice anyone that is guilty in this situation in any way that is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States. Now I don't want to be understood as jumping at any conclusion. I am very loath to believe that any one has been guilty of any criminal intent, but it is very evident that evidence has already been given up there that requires explanation. It requires investigation, and it points toward a criminal action. That of course will be investigated by the proper authorities to see whether any criminal action will lie. You can't start a criminal action on mere rumor. It requires, of course, substantial evidence, which can be produced before a Grand Jury and which can ~~readily~~ later be produced at trial. That will be taken care of, it goes without saying, if anything of that kind appears. The other matter is to see whether the United States suffered any injury by leasing these oil lands. That is a separate question and while it might be of considerable importance financially, it isn't the main question here. The main question is whether there has been any criminal wrong doing. If the lease that has been made doesn't seem to be a proper one, why of course, appropriate action would be taken either for its annulment - I don't know of any other action that could be taken. In either instance every proper action will be taken to protect the rights of the United States and its property, and to protect the citizens of the United States against criminal wrong doing.

I didn't know that any work had been stopped in the naval oil reserves. I am very sure that if that has been stoppped it has been stoppped by those that hold leases there, if that is the meaning of this question. I am certain the United States Government has taken no action in that direction.

Admiral Palmer called today merely to report to me that he was apparently getting on well with his shipping operations. I haven't heard anything from Comptroller Dawes in relation to his trip into the northwest.