

Friday, December 14, 1928.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

Here is an inquiry about a resolution said to have been introduced in the Senate this afternoon, which I judge undertakes to have the Senate interpret the peace treaty in its relation to the Monroe Doctrine and the Washington Arms Conference treaties, and as to what might happen if any of the parties to the treaty went to war under the league of the Locarno pacts. I haven't seen that resolution.

Press man: Mr. President, it is to be dropped in this afternoon. Hasn't been introduced yet.

President: Well, then I think I had better not undertake to make any comment on it at all. I was going to say I hadn't seen it. It will be difficult to comment on it without seeing it. I should think it would be difficult for the Senate to undertake an academic interpretation of the peace treaty and to try to decide in advance what this country might do under certain circumstances. That goes away beyond the treaty. The treaty doesn't undertake what the country is to do in advance of circumstances, any further than to say that those who have signed it are to renounce war as a national policy. The strength of the treaty lies in the fact that it leaves to the determination what is to be done when future circumstances arise for the action of the Government at that time. It leaves the Congress free to take such action as they may think appropriate. I should say in general that any proposal to modify or make reservations to the treaty as it has been presented would necessarily be regarded as an unfriendly move towards the treaty. The passing of a resolution of this kind is merely an expression of the opinion of the Senate, I suppose, and would not have any effect on the treaty one way or the other.

Press: Some folks up there say that it would put us in the same position that Great Britain was given by the Chamberlain -

President: I think we are already in that position now, so that so far as I am informed there is no occasion for our taking any action to be in the same position that all other countries are. It would be a good deal of a misfortune, if after having proposed a treaty of this kind and secured the approval of other countries, we should fail to approve it ourselves. It would leave us in a peculiarly embarrassing position. I do not think there is any danger of that. I am simply stating the position we should be in if such a contingency should arise.

I have called the attention of the Departments to the fact that the law imposes on the President the duty of submitting the budget and after the budget has been submitted it imposes upon the Departments, all the heads and subordinates, the injunction not to undertake to get the amount that the President has submitted increased. For any one connected with the Government to undertake to do that is a violation of the law and contrary to the direct and explicit direction of the Congress. The budget isn't new now. It has been in operation for a good many years. I think all the departments and all the members of the Departments know of that provision. It is their duty to observe it and my duty to enforce it.

It will be necessary to make some provision for the island of Porto Rico, which will cost several million dollars. I think the estimates run as high as $7\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars, of which $2\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars are to be expended without any expectation that the island will ever return the money, and \$5,000,000 is to be provided as a loan fund for the purpose of restoration of the area that was injured by the storm, so far as its productivity is concerned, to help agriculture with the necessary credit to get productivity started. That is a further increment to the apparent deficit at the present time.

Of course, a good many proposals are made by people that have very excellent things that they would like to have the Government do, but they come from people that have no responsibility for providing ways and means by which their proposals can be carried out. I don't think in all my experience, which has been very large with people that come before me in and out of the Government with proposals for spending money, I have ever had any proposal from any one as to what could be done to raise money, and very few suggestions of what could be done to save any money. Sometimes linked with the proposal for an immediate large expenditure is the suggestion that it ultimately will result in a saving. I think that is about the extent of the outside assistance I have had in that direction.

I noticed in the morning press some suggestion that it was thought in some quarters that the present administration didn't desire to take part, any further part, or was suggesting that action should be postponed, by the Committee of the League that has been holding the preliminary conferences on limitation of armaments. That movement is entirely in the hands of the League. It was of course instigated by them and would have to be carried on by them without suggestions from us, because we are not a part of the League. Our Government hasn't made any intimation that it wanted action postponed, and it is ready to respond at any time to any desire on the part of the League to participate in the deliberations of the preliminary conference.

I haven't heard anything further about the Christmas holidays. The reports from mother Goodhue are so discouraging that Mrs. Coolidge is expecting to go up there for two or three days next week. Mrs. Goodhue's condition is such that it isn't possible to make any plans at present about the Christmas holidays.

I doubt if I could add anything to the very full newspaper comment relative to the South American tour of Mr. Hoover. It is evident that the people of the countries

that he has visited have been pleased to receive him and are appreciative of his visit, and I have no doubt that it will result in an increased amount of good will. It is especially a demonstration on the part of the man whom we expect will be chosen when the electoral college meets to be the next President of his desire to have a thorough knowledge of the conditions in those countries, his appreciation of the value of their friendship, and his wish for mutual helpfulness and cooperation.