

Tuesday, April 10, 1928.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

I have no accurate information about the proposed reduction in postal rates, according to the House bill. There are some slight readjustments that might be made, but of course it would be necessary to make them in such a way as to not interfere very much with the postal revenue. The Post Office already has a deficit, and it wouldn't be possible to make any material reductions without so much increase in that deficit that we wouldn't have the money with which to meet our expenses.

It wouldn't be possible to make any forecast about what may come out of the negotiations with various countries arising out of the proposals for renunciation of war. The most that I could say about that would be that we are disposed to explore the matter thoroughly and do anything that we reasonably can to secure a helpful agreement in that direction among the great powers.

Governor Brewster was in and suggested that Bar Harbor was a very delightful place in the summer, which I know to be a fact, and that he thought they had accommodations there for myself and my family and for my office force and the newspaper men. I told him to send me a letter stating what the situation was and that I would take it up with the other offers that have been made.

Question: Mr. President, he mentioned 1200 ft. as the altitude. Was that correct for the altitude?

President: At Bar Harbor? I am not familiar with the altitude about there. Bar Harbor itself of course is right on the ocean front, so that a great deal of it is practically sea level. He didn't say anything to me, as I recall, about an altitude of 1200 ft. That must be somewhat inland.

I haven't had any reports about the progress of the tax bill before the Senate Finance Committee. Some of the members of the House came in yesterday

to discuss proposals for putting in a very large number - I can't tell whether it was 169 or 69 or something of that kind, it was a very large number - of reservoirs on the upper reaches of tributaries of the Mississippi. After discussing it with General Jadwin it didn't seem that a plan of that kind would give adequate flood control, though it would be advantageous to the territory concerned which is Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, I think souther Nebraska, Colorado and New Mexico.

The flood control legislation is getting into a very unfortunate situation. I was afraid it would, when it became apparent that there was great reluctance on the part of Congress to have any local contribution. Of course, as soon as that policy is adopted, then it becomes a bestowal of favors on certain localities and naturally if one locality is to be favored, all the other localities in the United States think that they ought to come in under the same plan and have their floods taken care of. The bill, of course, is an entire reversal of the policy that has been pursued up to the present time, which was that of helping the locality. This undertakes to have the United States go in and assume the entire burden. It is so drawn that the rule of damages is a new one. It seems to confer property on people and then in another part of the bill proposes to pay them for the property that has been conferred in the way of damages. There is grave danger too that it would leave the United States to be responsible for flood damage that might be hereafter incurred, if any levees should break, or the plan is inadequate, or anything of that kind, which would be a very serious situation, and the cost has mounted from around \$300,000,000 to about \$1,500,000,000.

Question: That was the Jones bill?

President: That is the bill as it has come out of the Committee in the

House, the Jones bill with the House amendments. It leaves the U. S. Government also to pay all the major costs of maintenance, which it has never done before. It almost seems to me as though the protection of the people and the property in the lower Mississippi that need protection has been somewhat lost sight of and it has become a scramble to take care of the railroads and the banks and the individuals that may have invested in levee bonds, and the great lumber concerns that own many thousands of acres in that locality, with wonderful prospects for the contractors. Taking the management and the control and the letting of contracts out of the hands of the Board of Engineers, where it has been, and putting it into the hands of a new body that are to hold office forever would be, if not irresponsible, certainly unresponsive to anybody or anything. It seems to me we might have a flood control bill within reasonable limits that would take care of the situation adequately without the expectation of it costing five times as much as it ought to cost.

I haven't had any suggestion that the farm bill might be modified. There are some things in there that I think I suggested in my message, but not more than 6 or 8 of them I think, though the bill has been changed somewhat, perhaps, since that change was made, and there are a large number of things still contained in the bill that it was necessary to criticize in my veto message of last year. The equalization fee is still there. While the Attorney General held last year that it was unconstitutional, I don't know of anything that has been done to render it constitutional this year. I should like very much to have a measure for helping the farmer in accordance with my various messages to the Congress. It seems as though such a measure might be worked out by the various committees and adopted.