

November 30, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Men.

When the earthquake and fire occurred in Tokyo, it destroyed the U. S. Embassy buildings there. Plans are being drawn for the purpose of reconstructing those necessary with some care and detail, because if they are reconstructed it will be desirable that they should be so made as to be able to withstand an earthquake shock. Some of the buildings in Tokyo were destroyed by earthquake and we should ^{not} want our Embassy buildings to be of a construction of that nature. That work is going on. It was spoken of by some of the Cabinet members this morning. There was also a suggestion made that it might be helpful to have some publicity about reclassification. The reclassification work is going on, and I hope that it will be completed at an early date, perhaps so that it can be acted on by the Congress at the present session, though it wasn't completed in time so that it could go into the budget. If reclassification isn't completed in time, of course, the bonus system will be carried out for the present fiscal year. But reclassification will be taken up and considered as fast as it possibly can.

An inquiry about making the Prohibition Unit a Bureau under the Treasury Department. The reorganization plans contemplate putting that into the Department of Justice. That leaves me committed, so far as I am committed at all, to that plan. My mind isn't closed about it, and there may be some reason why it should be made a special Bureau in the Treasury Department. The law now is that enforcement of prohibition is to come under the Collector of Internal Revenue and his assistants and agents.

Has the change been made in the Prohibition Unit since the original plans of the Brown Committee were prepared?

I don't think so. This is an inquiry about an independent plan to put this Unit - making it an independent unit in the Treasury Department, instead of having it under the Jurisdiction of the Collector of Internal Revenue, as the law now says. I don't know if I have made that very plain. The reorganization plan puts it under the Department of Justice. I am committed to that plan. There may be some reason why it ought to be kept in the Treasury Department, and why that would be the best plan. It can be taken up with the Committee and arguments heard for it and against it, and decided there.

Would you care to say why it was recommended by _____ to put it under the Treasury Department?

I can't give you his reasons in detail, other than that the Treasury seems to him to be the natural place for it. More natural than the Department of Justice because the Treasury Department has jurisdiction over the Coast Guard and something else he mentioned over there, that were allied to this work.

Customs?

Yes, perhaps it was customs.

An inquiry about the Craig case. That has been submitted by me to the Department of Justice. All requests for pardons go there for their investigation and report to me. They do not usually come to me. When they come here they are sent to the office there. I have seen the petition signed in the Craig case. It was sent over to the Department of Justice, and I couldn't give you any information until I get the report from the Department.

An inquiry about the authority of the President to pardon. I don't know that there has been any direct decision of the courts about that. There are quite a number of opinions of the Attorney General on it from time to time. There are different kinds of contempt. This, I think, was a proceeding under a criminal contempt, which perhaps would make it more plain that the President would have the power of pardon. If it were a civil contempt, then perhaps the President wouldn't have. I spoke of it when it first came up, in relation to my experience as Governor of Mass. when there was, it was my impression, no authority on the part of the Governor to pardon in contempt cases. That is an action of the court for the purpose of giving the court authority to administer its business. A person may be called before the court to testify. If he refuses to testify than the court has authority to imprison him until he does. Now that isn't a crime in any way, and that he should be kept in confinement until he testifies, or if he doesn't come to send the sheriff after him and bring him. That is not on the criminal side of jurisdiction at all, but if a criminal contempt is committed, which I understand was claimed in this case, then it brings it on the other side of the court.

I have here several inquiries about some actions by the Reparations Commission, which has decided to inquire into Germany's capacity to pay, and dispatches

indicating that the United States may be asked to participate. There isn't any exact information about that. There have come some reports of that nature, and it will be impossible for us to make any determination until we have exact and definite information, or a proposal as to just what was wanted and just what it was proposed to do. I think that I would be justified in saying that the United States Government, of course, would not participate. The only question under consideration would be whether certain U. S. citizens, if they were asked to participate in some action of this kind, would participate. I suppose it goes without saying that no citizen of the standing that would make it desirable for the Reparations Commission to have him there, would participate unless he knew that the U. S. Government did not object.

I suppose that my budget message will be ready whenever Congress is organized and ready to receive business.

Have you any, well definite idea, at this moment as to when your message will likely be presented?

I was going to come to that on another question. This is the budget message I referred to just now. It is my recollection that when the Congress is organized, a committee is sent down to notify the President that Congress is ready to receive the President's message. Congress comes into session on Monday. It is understood that they will adjourn over at once without the transaction of any business, so that Tuesday would be consumed in the organization of the House and Senate, which would make it appear, unless something more should occur, that on Wednesday they would send word that they were organized and ready to receive communications. Probably I should deliver my message in person on Wednesday.

An inquiry about Chairman Farley of the Shipping Board. He came in this morning and I had a short conference with him. He left some papers on which he has made some reports that he wanted to bring to my attention. I have been so busy this morning with Cabinet and so on that I haven't had a chance to look those over, and do not know what they contain. Our conversation was only general in relation to carrying on the business of the Shipping Board as it is now provided under the Jones law.

Senators Reed and Oddie came in. Of course I wanted to find out if, as a result of their investigation, they had discovered any matters for action on the part of the administration to make the Veterans Bureau more effective. I didn't know but they had some information that I ought to have, but General Hines has been

in close touch with the situation and I am sure is making any changes that are necessary, and had made them I think before the Committee began its hearings.

There is some duplication of questions today.

An inquiry about measures of food relief in Germany. ~~It~~ There is nothing yet known of a definite nature about that.

Attorney General Holland has not been in. He may possible have come in to speak with Mr. Slemp, or he may be waiting to see me.

I have spoken about the Craig case.

The Cabinet did not discuss the Veterans Bureau.

+ Another dispatch from London relative to the treaty that is being negotiated. The dispatches in that respect have been rather strange. I do not know whether they have had a foundation for fact. I feel that they have, but the information that has reached us over here has all been pretty much in the nature of newspaper dispatches from London. I don't know whether they are reliable or not. I feel that they are. But I do know, however, that they are not official, and I don't know the reason that these dispatches keep coming out, instead of some official information coming to us over here. Perhaps we are in the enjoyment of outside help in the negotiation of this treaty about which I do not know.

I think that covers everything.

There wasn't anything else in the Cabinet. We were not in session more than fifteen minutes.