

Friday January 15, 1926.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

Here is an inquiry about leasing the Los Angeles to a private company for commercial use. I don't think there is any proposal pending at the present time. There was some talk about something of that kind last summer, but as I recall it, it was before the Loss of the Shenandoah which seemed to change the situation for the time being somewhat. The Los Angeles, as I understand it, was turned over to us on the condition that it was not to be used for war purposes, so it is confined entirely in its use to commercial or peaceful purposes. Unless some new angle is presented to me, I should rather expect it would remain for the present in the hands of the Government for experiment, trial and so on, rather than to be turned over to private enterprise. But if any one should present a plan that would seem to be practical and in the interests of the development of air aviation and would work more in that direction than the present operation by the Government, I should give it very careful consideration and might be inclined to approve it. Now I am, as often happens here, making a wing shot at this. I should want to consult with the Department of course, and have their recommendations and their approval of any proposed plan before I should want to approve it.

I don't know just what the bills are that are before the House and Senate Committees on Civil Service to liberalize Government employees retirement law. I think there was a bill pending last year that I had a good deal of sympathy for, but because of investigations that were being made at that time

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I was rather glad that it was not put up for its final passage. I referred to this very briefly in my message, suggesting that the investigations which are going on ought to be completed as a prerequisite to the passage of legislation, in order that there might be a little more adequate information. I don't know of any reason for changing my opinion on that. I expect that that information will be available in the near future and undoubtedly the House and Senate committees have that in mind. They are going ahead with the preliminary hearings, which would have to be held anyway, in order to take advantage of the report when the full investigation is made.

There isn't anything that I know of that I can say about the French debt, other than that which I have expressed a great many times. Perhaps as the new Ambassador is about to come over here - I haven't any official information about it but the general impression is that he is expecting to negotiate - it might be well to wait and see what he has to say before making any public expression.

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I don't know of any comment that I can make on the 6th anniversary of national prohibition.

There is nothing further in the matter of appointing a successor to Mr. Haney.

Here is a question about George Washington. (pointing out of the window) His monument is still out there.

I talked very briefly with Mr. French of the House Naval Affairs Committee about some ideas he had in relation to the use of the Lakehurst Air Station and taking care of the Los Angeles. I didn't talk with him about whether another airship should be constructed to take the place of the Shenandoah, and I haven't any information about any proposal to construct another airship for that purpose, other than what has already been expressed in the press. My general feeling about it has been that of course because we happened to lose an airship was no reason for our undertaking to abandon that means of the navigation of the air. Further experiments are being made in other countries and further studies should be pursued before we are ready to adopt a plan for the construction of a new airship. I understood that the tendency abroad is to build very large airships. There is a proposal pending here to build an all-metal airship that seems to me to have a great deal of promise - that is, to cover it with metal sheeting instead of with some textile fabric ~~as~~ as is now done. I think that the Navy Department has practically come to the conclusion that it will ask that a certain sum of their appropriation, not very large, I think about \$300,000, be allocated for that purpose.

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Press: For the building of a small ship?

President: Yes, a small one, entirely of metal covering. Some of the engineers interested in that, I think with Mr. - who was that engineer I had on the Aircraft Board?

Press: Coffin?

President: Yes, Coffin. I think he came in to talk with me about that one time, accompanied by several other people that were interested in it, and I at once took the matter up with the Navy Department. I think they have practically concluded that that would be a promising field of exploration and investigation and experiment.

I haven't any new ideas about a Mobile Air Corps with power to take command of the air forces of the Army and Navy and Post Office Department. I noticed a headline in one of the press dispatches this morning. I don't know where that idea did originate. My policy is expressed so far as I know in my message and in the report of the Air Board. That is as far as I have developed it, and in neither place did I make any suggestion that looked towards an independent Air Service and air command.

I have several questions here about the coal strike. There was no discussion about that in the Cabinet or afterwards. I almost always ask the Secretary of Labor whenever I see him in the Cabinet or otherwise, if there are any developments. I think I did that this morning. Nobody else discussed it, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~, and he said there isn't anything except

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what had already appeared in the press.

Senator Pepper, as far as I know, is not taking any action in relation to it, and certainly is not taking any action to represent me in any way. I can't see any way that the National Government can help at the present time towards a settlement of the strike. The legislature of Penna. has convened. I understand they are to take up the matter. It would be too early at this time to make any suggestions about the formulation of any plan for a permanent settlement of labor disputes in the coal industry. I think that it would be very difficult to get the parties to agree on anything while a strike is in progress. If anything of that kind could be, it could only be done I should judge after the strike was ended and there was a suspension of the present tension, in order that some permanent plan might be taken up and considered. I am not contemplating any action by the Government at this time in relation to the supply of coal. There has been a remarkably good supply of fuel in the north and east all the time, and I understand there is now, not so much anthracite as we like but plenty of fuel to keep up the necessary supply of warmth. I didn't know that the Secretary had any meeting with any of the Congressmen from the anthracite district.