

Friday, February 24, 1928.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

I talked with Mayor Thompson concerning the problem of flood control. There was nothing special that I said to him other than what is contained in my annual message to the Congress. We talked more especially about the financing of the cost of flood control. I told him that if it was merely a matter of taking care of the lower reaches of the Mississippi River and its immediate tributaries there, that is that part of our water system that caused the flood last year, I wouldn't make any very strenuous objection to the U. S. Govt. undertaking to bear all the financing, but I didn't want to set the precedent that would be used all over the U. S., because I do not believe that it is the duty of the U. S. Govt. to go out and protect property against floods. It is rather the duty of the property that is to be benefited to pay the expenses. But that I thought the members of the Committees and those interested are coming closer and closer together on the question, that Senator Jones has a bill that is not far from what I have been advocating and that General Jadwin is working out a bill, and that I felt sure the subject could be worked out in a fairly satisfactory manner. I have suggested that there be a Committee or a Commission to investigate the financial and economic condition of the territory that is interested and make some estimates of the benefits to be conferred and the ability of the different localities to make payments, and report to the next session of the Congress, and on that report the Congress would have information on which it could legislate relative to the apportionment of the cost. There is a disposition in some quarters to have it first determined that the U. S. Govt. is to pay all the cost and then after that is done to sit down and determine what is going to be done. I do not think that is the way to go about it. I think we should first determine what is going to be done and on that we can base some foundation of who ought to pay the

expense. If it is once decided that the U. S. Govt. is to bear the entire expense the demands for work to be done and the requirements for the payment of damages to property taken will probably be in excess of the cost of doing the work. I think that would be a very unfortunate outcome. So I think we ought to proceed in the other direction, which would be in harmony with the plan that I have suggested of passing legislation authorizing certain work to be done and then having a commission of experts, probably appointed by the President, and, if they wish, confirmed by the Senate, make an investigation to see what they would recommend relative to the payment of the cost. I think we have made quite a good deal of progress in one direction. It is generally understood now that this legislation is to be entirely confined to the relief of that part of the Mississippi Basin that was flooded last year and not to include a lot of extraneous projects.

I haven't very much information about the shipping of Russian gold to the U. S. I assume that is for the purpose of making payment on goods that have been purchased here. It is no different than any other commercial transaction, so far as I know. Trading has been going on constantly between Russia and the U. S. Goods have been bought here and payment made for them, and our people have bought goods in considerable amounts in Russia. That makes necessary setting up some method for payment. I suppose this shipment of gold is for that purpose. It would not indicate anything new in the relationship, simply a continuation of what has been going on for a number of years.

No final decision has yet been made about a judge for the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia.

I think I have already spoken of the bill that has been prepared by Senator Jones.

The naval bill which is said to include 15 or 16 cruisers and 1 aircraft

carrier, is not of course of the dimensions that the Navy indicated would be required to meet what they believe would be the needs of this country for national defense. About all that can be said about it is that it is a beginning and probably provides for as many vessels as would be laid down in the immediate future of 4 or 5 years or more. I think it would have been better to lay out the entire program for the Navy, than to try and indicate what they were ready to do just now and leave up to some future time the finishing up of our naval defense. I am told that the bill undertakes to provide a time limit. I have not favored putting any time limit into the bill. I do not think that is necessary. Of course it is not binding on any future Congress. Any future Congress, if the building is authorized, can go ahead and make such appropriations for the carrying out of the program as they may wish to do.