

October 30, 1923.

Remarks by the President to Newspaper Men

An inquiry about the pneumatic tubes in Boston and Philadelphia.

My understanding about that is, that this service was put in some years ago, and was discontinued sometime between 1913 and 1921 in Boston, Philadelphia and New York. The tubes in New York have been reopened in part, or in whole, but those in Boston and Philadelphia haven't been reopened. The Postmaster General has made recommendations looking to the reopening of part of the tubes in Boston, and I think all of the tubes in Philadelphia, and it is a question of whether an appropriation ought to be made for that purpose. That question is now before the Director of the Budget. It is under consideration and no final determination has yet been made upon it.

I have another inquiry of the same nature. About all I can say is that the matter is not before me. Should the Postmaster General and the Director of the Budget not be able to agree as to what should be done, very likely they would take it up with me to see what my opinion would be.

+ An inquiry about my understanding of the function of the conference of expert financiers - whether the report of the conference will be made to the Reparations Commission, or will the report of their findings be made to the respective Governments concerned. I have here several inquiries about reparations. I wouldn't be able to answer that question in advance, or give any suggestion or opinion about it that would be worth while. As I understand the situation, it is this. A proposal has been made for experts to undertake to assess what they think Germany can pay. That plan has been accepted, apparently, in principle, by the interested Governments. I understand that Poncaire has indicated that it was acceptable to him, in a communication. Now the question comes of working out the details. That is under consideration by the interested parties, and no decision about that has been made, as to the scope, or just how the thing could be done, either as to how the appointments are to be made, or what is to be considered in detail, after the appointments have been made. Nor has it been determined where the Commission would meet, or anything of that kind. But there is, apparently, a hopeful avenue before us, that plans have been accepted in principle, and that the details are being sympathetically worked out.

An inquiry as to whether it would be necessary to amend the Volstead Act to permit British ships to carry liquor under seal to American ports, provided the British Government granted the extension of the three mile limit to twelve miles. I am not certain about that. It is my impression that it might be arranged by means of a treaty, and if there is to be a treaty, I think, then, there wouldn't be any necessity for an amendment of the law.

† An inquiry here about the conditions laid down by Poncaire that there be no reduction in the German debt. That, I think, would be answered by a careful reading of the note of the Secretary of State. There wasn't any suggestion in that, of course, of any reduction of anybody's debt. It is a simple and plain suggestion that a committee of experts be appointed to try to assess the amount that Germany is able to pay. The rights of France are fixed by her treaty. There can't be any reduction except by the consent of France.

An inquiry as to any action relative to the Alaskan fisheries, as the result of delegate Sutherland's visit yesterday. Mr. Sutherland came in with the District Attorney, I think, of Alaska, to talk with me about their fisheries project. I told him that it wasn't before me at the present time - that the action he wanted taken was in the hands of the Secretary of Commerce - and I asked him and the District Attorney - it might be the Attorney General of the District - to take the matter up with the Secretary of Commerce. There was some question raised as to whether the action that had been taken in making reservations there for fisheries were authorized by the law. I told him, if he had any brief on it, to file it with the Department of Commerce, and they would consider it there with their Solicitor. Also that if it came up to me that I should be very glad to take the opinion of the Attorney General on it.

† An inquiry about the dedication exercises of the George Washington Memorial in Alexandria. It is my ~~expect~~ expectation to go to those exercises. They are held in memory of the First President of the United States, and that is one of the reasons that I want to attend. I don't happen to be a member of the Masonic bodies, so that I do not expect to take any part in the exercises. I shall attend, as I might attend church, and let those who are charged, by reason of their affiliation with the Masonic bodies, with the duty

of conducting the exercises, conduct them. But I wanted to show my interest in the occasion, and my reverence for the first President, by attending.

Another inquiry about the chrysanthemum show at the Department of Agriculture greenhouses. That, I understand, is a very fine exhibition of chrysanthemums. I very much hope that I may be able to get down there.

An inquiry as to whether the Cabinet this morning took up the question of reorganization of the Government Departments. Yes, and the Cabinet practically finished its preliminary discussion of it. I think they understand now what questions there are that we ought to consult about with the Chairman of the Joint Committee, and perhaps with some members of the Committee relative to the proposed plan. It might have been more logical had the Chairman of the Committee on Reorganization come in and explained his plan, but this was a plan that the Cabinet had seen before and talked over some, though not in all its details, so I thought perhaps if we went over it together, step by step in detail, and if there was some step we wanted to raise some question about, we could call in the Chairman of the Committee and have him explain it.

Mr. President will it be ready to submit at the coming session of Congress.

I think it will, undoubtedly.

Is there a Department of Public Works provided for in the plan?

I can't tell you now. I haven't the plan here before me. They are in on the other table. There is a major purpose, as they call it, that runs throughout the plan, of trying to bring together all related subjects. That was the reason of the thought of putting together all the defenses of the nation, and it is contemplated, in this plan, that all public works be brought under one jurisdiction.

An inquiry about the Ambassador to Great Britain. I am not certain whether the State Department has yet received any answer to the inquiry that is always made in those cases. When that answer is received, why then it will be in order to make an official announcement.

An inquiry about Senator Borah's visit this morning. I only had a chance to see him a moment. He has been very much interested in those persons who are now in confinement on account of convictions that were made under the Espionage Act and the other similar statutes; and I wanted to talk

with him a moment, but he came in so late I didn't have a chance. I was just going into Cabinet meeting.

An inquiry as to whether I have any statement or any comment on the statement of Senator McCormack. No, I haven't any comment about that.

+ Another inquiry as to whether the reservations of France, to the American plan, are of such a nature as to discourage hope of beneficent results. I don't think so. I don't think so at all. In fact, that is a matter of the working out of details, and, so far as I know, there hasn't been any official communication to us of any reservations.

Whether this seems to indicate a ~~revision~~ rejection in advance, of any recommendations that might look to a reduction of reparations due France. I think I have already explained that there isn't, technically, any suggestion made of that kind, or that there is to be any reduction of reparations that are due.

+ Will consent to a mere inquiry into German resources and fixing the amount due, or the amount that Germany can pay, constitute an important forward step? I have already indicated that I should answer that question in the affirmative.

I see I have exhausted the inquiries this morning.