

Tuesday, March 20, 1928.

Report of the Newspaper Conference.

I am not sure whether any members of the House and the Senate have said anything to me about railroad consolidation legislation since I mentioned it in conference the other day. I have, though, recently received favorable assurances that Congress will take up the bill and probably pass it.

I am in favor of the Madden bill relative to Muscle Shoals, not because it is exactly what I would like in every respect, but because it goes in the right direction of putting Muscle Shoals under private operation, and it is also the bill that is very much desired by some of the farm organizations. And as I am for the Madden bill, of course I could not be for the Norris resolution.

I do not think the Secretary of Labor has finished his tabulations of his reports on the question of unemployment, but he tells me that so far as the situation has been disclosed he does not see anything that is at all serious. There are a few more people that are out of work, or were when he made his survey, than there are at some other times, some places that have some unemployment, other places where it is not possible to secure the amount of labor that is desired.

I am sending a message to the Congress relative to the Austrian debt. You may recall that 4 or 5 years ago we extended the time - put on what would be technically known as a moratorium for Austria, which runs into the early 40's. Now, Austria wants to do some financing, and has secured the consent of all the other interested governments of Europe and wishes to secure our consent. That consent is being given by the other governments on condition that agreements are made for funding the present indebtedness of Austria to the

other countries. We thought we should go in on the same basis. So that I am asking for legislation that would authorize us to grant the extension that is requested and to accept a funding settlement with Austria that will be as good as that which is given to any of the other countries.

Question: Will that message go up today?

President: It is on the way now.

I saw some headline relative to a proposal that was made by Governor Fisher for a conference for the purpose of trying to arrange some adjustment of the coal industry. If it is true that he is suggesting that representatives of the States and of the operators and of the miners and the National Government should all come together, my offhand opinion would be that such a conference would be so large that any practical and affirmative result would be very doubtful. You will probably recall that the Secretary of Labor, with my approval, called a conference of miners and operators just at the opening of the Congress, which did not result in any affirmative action. Some of the operators did not appear in person, but sent messages. If this was a mere question of wages, something of that kind might hold out more promise of effective success, but it is a question of reorganizing the coal industry. I don't want to indicate that if Governor Fisher wishes to have a conference of that kind that I should in any way oppose it or fail to have representatives of the Labor Department there. Now, it may be that he has something in mind that will be very practical and helpful. He is, of course, quite conversant with the coal industry and the coal situation, and any suggestion he made ought to be given very careful consideration. Of course, if he meant to have a small conference, that would remove some of the objections that at present appear to me, but I assume he intends to have representatives from

quite a large number of States, and if there are going to be representatives and from all the operators, /from those who are engaged as employees, it would make it quite a large gathering. The operators perhaps might send one or two operators, perhaps the employees might send one or two representatives, and in that way keep the conference from being too large.

I have just learned with great regret of the death of William F. Brooks, the Republican National Committeeman from Minnesota. The message came last night from Minneapolis. He is the third member of the Committee that has died quite recently, Mr. Keeling of Indiana, and Mr. Remmel of Arkansas. I am sending an expression of sympathy to Mr. Brooks' family.

I regretted very much the rejection of my nomination of Commissioner Esch to succeed himself on the Interstate Commerce Commission. It is never possible to secure perfect men for any place. Commissioner Esch has had long experience and was in possession of very valuable information that would be helpful in the discharge of the functions of his office. As he had already been confirmed by the Senate, I assumed that he would still continue to be considered. / <sup>He is</sup> a man of such character and attainments as would be worthy of their confirmation again. The results seem to have turned on some decisions that have been made by the Commission. I am afraid that if decisions are to be reviewed by the Senate in that way, it is going to be difficult to secure the services of men of the calibre I ought to have for that important post. It is a post of great importance. Some tell me it is second only to that of the Supreme Court of the United States. I gave Commissioner Esch a recess appointment, and I am going to ask him to remain for the present. My appointment would continue in effect until the Senate adjourns, in order that he may finish up some of the work that he has peculiarly under his control on the

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Commission. Of course, I don't want to indicate that I am thinking of giving him a recess appointment. As the Senate has decided that they do not wish to confirm him, I of course would regard that as practically final, but I am asking him to stay and close up some of the work he is engaged in and give me an opportunity to find some one for the position.