

September 21, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspapermen

+ I am reminded that when I came here I did a good deal of wondering whether I would be able to be helpful to the members of the press in these conferences that we have, and especially as to whether I wouldn't find it more or less of a bore on my part and, perhaps, not particularly pleasant. I haven't found it that way at all. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that I rather look forward with pleasure to having you come in twice a week, in order that I may talk to you, give you a little of the idea I may have of what the Government is trying to do, and satisfy you, insofar as I can, on the questions that you ask.

+ I am reminded too that my boys have returned back to school. They are just such boys as some of you have, I have no doubt. I hope that they can remain there at school without much of anything in the way of publicity. When they are here anything that they can do to be helpful, or that we can do, we are glad to do, but I sent them up to Mercersburg, which is a very excellent school. They have always been in the public schools at Northampton and would have been there now, had we remained in Massachusetts, but there is no one in Northampton now, but my housekeeper. I wanted them to be under more supervision than that, so I sent them up there in order that they might be out of Washington and have that opinion, which I think boys are entitled to have, of privacy in their school affairs. Dr. Irving has been very helpful to them up there, and I presume that if you make any application to him, or any of your associates, to get any story about the boys up there, he will have to tell you that we very much prefer that they be not subjected to publicity while they are there.

Now I have several inquiries here - more than I do sometimes.

The veteran inquiry about the Governors' Conference. I have practically determined that I shall adopt the time when the Governors are meeting in their annual conference, which is in the middle of October. I have adopted that as a result of some communications that I have had from Governors, indicating that ~~they~~ that would meet their convenience, and that it would be of very much greater assistance to them, than should we call it at any other time.

Q. Where do they meet?

A. They meet in Indianapolis. I think it is the 16th or 15th of Oct.

Q. The meeting will be after that?

A. I am not sure yet whether it will be right after or right before.

I am under the impression now that it will be more convenient if we have it immediately following.

Q. Do we understand that they will come here or you go there?

A. Oh, no. I shall not go there. The conference will be here.

I have several inquiries about an extra session of Congress. Nothing new has developed on that. I have already expressed to you quite a good many times that I couldn't see any reason at the time I was speaking, nor do I now, for calling an extra session. There are many questions to come before Congress but I think, so far as they have been presented to me, they will be able to wait. Now as I said before, I don't want to foreclose a session, and should it be disclosed to me that on account of some condition Congress might render a great public service by coming into session earlier than about eight weeks from now, I will take that instance up and decide it when it comes. At present, I don't see any reason for an extra session.

An inquiry about the Oklahoma situation. So far as I know, there have been no representations made to Washington in relation to that situation, and an inquiry as to whether there is any Federal observation being made on it - not any that I know of. It wouldn't be necessary to do it from Washington, of course, because the Executive is represented there by the Marshal and the United States District Attorney, as he is in every other jurisdiction, and should there be any violation of the laws of the U. S., why, of course, that would be the tribunal before which said violations should be brought.

Regarding the shipping board policy. I have no new policy about that. It really isn't the business of the executive, as I understand it, under the law to try to formulate a policy for the Shipping Board. I am glad at all times to confer with different departments, give them the benefit of any judgment that I may have or any information that may come to me, and assist them in every possible way. The Shipping Board has certain directions under the law for carrying on the shipping business of the U. S. to - generally speaking to try and get ~~the~~ it into private hands as soon as possible and to liquidate it. The plan that they had appealed to me, especially because they represented it to me, and it was my judgment that it was, perhaps, a first

step and the best step that we could take towards private ownership and private operation. It has appeared that it isn't possible to put it into effect under the present statute. I haven't conferred with the Board yet. I got that opinion from the Attorney General yesterday, I think - today has been Cabinet day. I am going to confer with Chairman Farley or any other members of the Board very soon, and see if I can help in any way. I don't know whether they will desire legislation about it. Of course, one of the main elements of their plan was that it could be put into operation without the mediation of Congressional action, that it could be put into operation immediately. That was the essential of it. Whether they think they want to pursue some other plan, if it is necessary to secure legislation, I do not know. Of course the Board had the plan that was explained in the Shipping Bill last year and which was debated in the Senate, but never came to a final vote. I suppose that represents the idea that the Shipping Board has of the kind of legislation they would like to have, rather than forming another, but whether they think it advisable to do anything about that legislation in the coming session is something I couldn't give you any definite opinion about now.

+ An inquiry also about Mr. Amster and his conference with me. That leads me to say a general word about matters of this kind. Of course, the people that come here to see the President come because they have something that they want to lay before him. Something they want to tell him. Not because they expect to get information from me. That being so, I give them the opportunity, insofar as I can, to tell me what it is that they have in mind. Very much as you come in and get information from me, ~~not~~ not by all talking to me, but by permitting me to talk to you, and it is the reverse of that operation that goes on here when any one comes to see me. When they go out they are, of course, at liberty to make such representations as they want to. They are not supposed to quote the conferences with me, but sometimes they undertake to do that and sometimes they don't. Now, I shall have to adopt the rule, of course, of not being responsible for what people may say when they go out. They are good about it, I know, and mean to represent everything just exactly as they understood it, but if I should undertake to follow up all those things and correct them all, I don't suppose I would have an opportunity to do very much else. So I am not going to do that.

This inquiry is in relation to ~~the~~ railroad consolidations. I haven't been into the particulars of that. Senator Cummings has it under consideration.

He is a veteran in the study of railroad problems, was one of the authors of the present law, and I should want to confer with him and with others, of course; with the Interstate Commerce Commission, also, before I could have any mature opinion about railroad matters.

There wasn't anything that came up today at the Cabinet Meeting that is of any particular interest. We discussed a lot of small details as to when we might be able to meet and take up some questions, but there were no decisions made, and while I had expected to take up the agricultural problem especially at this meeting of the Cabinet, I was not able to do so because Secretary Wallace hasn't completed his survey of the wheat situation.

Another inquiry about the Merchant Marine problem. I have already spoken about that, and I can't give you any more information as to what the next step will be.

I have already spoken about the Oklahoma situation. As I said, no representation, as far as I know, has been made in Washington at all about that, and it would be very unlikely that any representation would come from anyone except the Governor.

Further inquiry as to what may be done about profiteering in coal. The Federal Trade Commission, as I have already said, has all the facts that were gathered by the Fuel Commission. They are studying those, and undertaking to see if they can make any representations that would be helpful. On the 24th, which is next Monday, the Interstate Commerce Commission meets, I think, at Pittsburgh, in order to consider rates, especially of coal. I think that has virtually covered the things that you had in mind.

I am reminded that the Conference of Governors is at West Baden instead of Indianapolis. I assume that Mr. Welliver is right. He almost always is.