

WILSON WILL CONSENT TO NO ABRIDGEMENT OF RIGHTS OF AMERICANS IN ANY RESPECT

"The Honor and Self Respect of the Nation is Involved" He Declares

CONGRESS IS CALMER

President Writes Letter to Chairman Stone After Two Days of Agitation

"Peace at Any Cost But the Loss of Honor"

Washington, Feb. 24.—President Wilson at the end of two days of agitation in Congress for warning Americans off armed merchantmen, wrote a letter tonight to Senator Stone, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, stating that he could not consent to the abridgement of the rights of American citizens in any respect.

"The honor and self-respect of the nation is involved", he said. "We covet peace and shall preserve it at any cost but the loss of honor."

The President expressed hope that explanations of the declared intentions of the central European powers to sink all armed merchant ships without warning would put a different aspect on a situation which now seemed to present insuperable obstacles. "We have had no reason to question their good faith or their fidelity to their promises in the past," he added, "and I, for one, feel confident that we shall have none in the future."

Will Repeat It to Other Leaders.

The letter was in answer to one written late this afternoon by Senator Stone, outlining the situation existing at the Capitol, where since yesterday morning persistent demands had been made for some action which may lessen the possibility of war between the United States and Germany. The President's statement will be repeated tomorrow morning to Speaker Clavin, Representative Kitchin, majority leader, and Representative Flood, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs committee, who late today asked for an explanation in order to explain the position in which the House found itself and ask the President for a statement of the administration's views.

The President wrote his letter during the afternoon, shutting himself up in his study while Congressional leaders vainly attempted to get him on the telephone to and from the Capitol, and to arrange for the call of the House leaders. He began to write after telephone conferences with cabinet members and other close advisers. His decision was to end all speculation over what the position of the government was and to let Congress and the country know what the administration believed the United States could do nothing but stand behind the right of its citizens to the freedom of the seas.

Senator Stone's Message.

The message from Senator Stone, to which the President's letter was a reply, follows:

"Dear Mr. President: "Since Senator Kern, Mr. Flood and I talked with you on Monday evening, I have been more troubled than I have been for many days. I have not felt authorized to repeat our conversation, but I have attempted in response to numerous inquiries from my colleagues, that they should observe, by general understanding of your attitude. I have stated my understanding of your attitude to be substantially as follows: That while you would deeply regret the rejection by Great Britain of Mr. Lansing's proposal for the disarmament of merchant vessels of the Allies, and her allies rejected the proposal and insisted upon arming her merchant ships she would be within her right under international law. Also that you would feel disposed to allow armed vessels to be cleared from our ports; also that you are not favorably disposed to the idea of this government taking any definite steps towards preventing the arming of merchant vessels. Furthermore, that you would consider it your duty, if a German warship should fire upon an armed merchant vessel of the enemy upon which American citizens were passengers, to hold Germany to strict account.

Numerous members of the Senate and the House have called to discuss this subject with me. I have felt that the members of the two houses who are to deal with this grave question were entitled to know the situation we are confronting as I understand it to be. "I think I should say to you that the members of both houses feel deeply concerned and disturbed by what they read and hear. I have heard of some talk to the effect that some are saying that after all it may be possible that the programme of preparedness so-called has some relation to such a situation, as we are now called upon to meet. I have counseled all who have talked with me to keep cool; that in the meantime Congress should be careful not to 'ball up' a diplomatic situation by any kind of hasty and ill-considered action. However, the situation in Congress is such as to excite a sense of deep concern in the minds of careful and thoughtful men. I have felt that it is due to you to say this much. "I think you understand my personal attitude with respect to this subject. As much and as deeply as I would hate to radically disagree with you, I find it difficult for my sense of duty and responsibility to consent to plunge this nation into the vortex of this world war because of the unreasonable obstinacy of any of the powers upon the one hand, or on the other hand of foot-holdings, amounting to a sort of moral treason against the republic, of our people recklessly risking their lives on armed belligerent ships. I cannot escape the conviction that such would be so monstrous as to be indefensible. "I want to be with you and to stand by you and I mean to do so up to the last limit; and I want to talk with you and Secretary Lansing with the utmost frankness—to confer with you and have your judgment and counsel—and I want to be kept advised as to the course of events, as it seems to me I am entitled to be. In the meantime, I am striving to prevent anything being done by any senator or any member calculated to embarrass your diplomatic negotiations. Up to the last you should be left free to act diplomatically as you think for the best to settle the questions involved. I need hardly say that my wishes is to help, not to hinder you. "With the highest regard and most sympathetic consideration, I have the honor, Mrs. President, to be, very sincerely yours, "WILLIAM J. STONE."

President's Position On Warning Americans Against Armed Ships

Washington, Feb. 24.—President Wilson's letter setting forth his position on the question of warning Americans to keep off armed ships of the belligerents, received by Chairman Stone tonight, is as follows: "My Dear Senator:

"I very warmly appreciate your kind and frank letter of today and feel that it calls for an equally frank reply.

"You are right in assuming that I shall do everything in my power to keep the United States out of war. I think the country will feel no uneasiness about my course in that respect. Through many anxious months I have striven for that object, amidst difficulties more manifold than can have been apparent upon the surface; and so far I have succeeded: I do not doubt that I shall continue to succeed.

"The course which the central European powers have announced their intention of following in the future with regard to undersea warfare seems for the moment to threaten insuperable obstacles, but its apparent meaning is so manifestly inconsistent with explicit assurances recently given us by those powers with regard to their treatment of merchant vessels on the high seas that I must believe that explanations will presently ensue which will put a different aspect upon it. We have had no reason to question their good faith or their fidelity to their promises in the past, and I, for one, feel confident that we shall have none in the future.

"But, in any event, our duty is clear. No nation, no group of nations, has the right while war is in progress to alter or disregard the principles which all nations have agreed upon in mitigation of the horrors and sufferings of war, and if the clear rights of Americans citizens should ever unhappily be abridged or denied by any such action, we should, it seems to me, have in honor no choice as to what our own course should be.

"For my own part, I cannot consent to any abridgement of the rights of American citizens in any respect. The honor and self-respect of the Nation is involved. We covet peace and shall preserve it at any cost but the loss of honor. To forbid our people to exercise their rights for fear we might be called upon to vindicate them would be a deep humiliation indeed. It would be an implicit, all but explicit, acquiescence in the violation of the rights of mankind everywhere and of whatever nation or allegiance. It would be a deliberate abdication of our hitherto proud position as spokesmen even amidst the turmoil of war for the law and right. It would make everything this government has attempted and everything that it has accomplished during this terrible struggle of nations, meaningless and futile.

"It is important to reflect that, if in this instance we allowed expediency to take the place of principle, the door would inevitably be opened to still further concessions. Once accept a single abatement of right and many other humiliations would certainly follow, and the whole fine fabric of international law might crumble under our hands, piece by piece. What we are contending for in this matter is of the very essence of the things that have made America a sovereign nation. She cannot yield them without conceding her own impotency as a nation and making virtual surrender of her independent position among the nations of the world.

"I am speaking my Dear Senator, in deep solemnity, without heat, with a clear consciousness of the high responsibilities of my office, and as your sincere and devoted friend. If we should unhappily differ, we shall differ as friends, but where issues so momentous as these are involved we must, just because we are friends, speak our minds without reservation.

"Faithfully yours, "WOODROW WILSON."

MAY INVESTIGATE COTTON EXCHANGE

New York Operators Charged With Depressing Prices

THROUGH A CONSPIRACY

Congressmen from Cotton Growing States Will Urge Investigation by Congress—Bill to Regulate Exchanges.

Washington, Feb. 24.—Democrats of the House from the cotton growing states held a conference at the House office building tonight and determined to urge Congress to investigate the New York cotton exchange to ascertain whether there is a bear conspiracy to depress the price of cotton. It also was agreed to propose a bill to further regulate cotton exchanges.

The conference adopted a resolution charging that the New York cotton exchange had "defrauded the producers of cotton out of millions of dollars on the crop of 1915 by unfair manipulation of prices," and authorizing the chairman, Representative Heflin, of Alabama, to appoint a committee to draft and introduce in Congress a resolution calling for "an immediate, full and complete investigation" of the exchange. His committee is to be composed of one representative in Congress from each of the cotton growing states.

The committee also is to draft a bill for the further regulation of the cotton exchanges of the United States and to submit it to the next meeting of the conference, which called for that purpose by the chairman.

Tonight's conference was called at the instance of Representative Heflin, of Alabama, who wrote letters to the governors and commissioners of agriculture of the cotton growing states urging them to present their views as to regulation of the cotton exchanges of the country. He also got forth that complaint had been made to the attorney general by three members of the House committee on agriculture that there had been a conspiracy among operators on the New York cotton exchange to hold down the price of cotton.

FIVE STILL IN FIVE DAYS.

Ten Thousand Gallons of Beer Destroyed by Revenue Officers.

Floyd, Va., Feb. 24.—Revenue officers in this county in the past five days have destroyed five copper distilleries, poured out ten thousand gallons of beer, and confiscated three barrels of whiskey and ten quarts of low wine fermenters. The stills were operated near each other in a wooded district. The operators all escaped. The three barrels of whiskey will be sold, it is understood, and the proceeds given to the government.

IS OVER NORTH CAROLINA

Storm Moving Northeastward Has Increased in Intensity.

Washington, Feb. 24.—The center of the storm that was over Georgia Wednesday night has moved northeastward to North Carolina and has increased considerably in intensity, the Weather Bureau announced tonight. It caused general precipitation east of the Mississippi river, but in the South Atlantic and Gulf States and Tennessee, the weather will be fair Friday and Saturday. Storm warning were continued tonight from Cape Hatteras to Eastport, Me.

AWARD CUSTOM HOUSE CONTRACT BY APRIL 1

Wilmington Structure to be Completed in 22 Months

Bids to be Opened March 23—Super-vising Architect Tells Mr. Godwin It Will be One of Finest Built by Government in Years.

(Special Star Telegram).

Washington, Feb. 24.—Bids for the handsome Wilmington customs house will be opened on March 23, and the contract is expected to be awarded not later than the first of April and the building completed within 22 months from the time the contract is awarded. This, in substance, is the statement made to Representative Godwin by Treasury officials today.

Mr. Godwin called to ask that the work be hurried up and the officials showed a disposition to co-operate with him in expediting the work. The supervising architect told Mr. Godwin that the Wilmington structure when completed would be one of the finest constructed by the government in many years and that the people of the Wilmington section are to be congratulated and the faithful work of Mr. Godwin commended.

Site Selected at Edenton. Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Newton announced that he had selected the Griffin site for the new post-office at Edenton. Mr. Griffin is to receive \$4,000 for the property. Representative Doughton has recommended Pur L. Choate for appointment as rural carrier from Sparta and W. C. Irwin from Stratford. The President sent to the Senate to-day.

FORGE IN PACIFIC IS FAR TOO SMALL

One Good Enemy Warship Might Destroy Fleet.

ADMIRAL WINSLOW SAYS

Advocates a Navy General Staff—Crosier Tells of Plans for Largest New Fortifications at Mouth of Chesapeake Bay.

Washington, Feb. 24.—While the House Military committee was taking steps today towards getting its bill for increasing the regular army and federalizing the National Guard, before the House within ten days, the naval committee was being informed by Admiral Cameron McR. Winslow that the entire Pacific fleet might be an easy victim for one good enemy battleship.

Admiral Winslow said the force under his command was wholly inadequate, even with all its reserves called out, to meet any probable enemy in the Pacific. Navy Department plans for meeting an emergency there or in the Atlantic, however, he said, were confidential matters of strategy.

Testimony of Brig. Gen. William Crozier, chief of army ordnance, before the fortifications committee obtained today, revealed that the War Department plans for coast defense contemplate placing the heaviest new fortifications at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, which he described as one of the several places where "facilities for land operations are so good that it is worth while to especially fortify them to prevent that operation which would be the landing of an enemy force."

He believed all ships should be kept constantly in commission and fully manned in order that sufficient men might be trained. Asked what authority he would take from the secretary and lodge in the staff, he said, he would have the entire military side of the service absolutely under the staff.

The navy war college, Admiral Winslow said, was a very valuable adjunct of other nations had followed the American lead in establishing such institutions, yet it had been nearly done away with under several secretaries. "The war college," he added, "is receiving the backing from Mr. Daniels than it has ever had."

Enactment of laws to permit promotion by selection as recommended by the Navy Department, also was urged by the admiral. Admiral Badger told the committee the navy would need 102,815 men to man the fleet which will be in commission in 1917.

At other points, such as Rockaway Beach, New York, and San Francisco, he said 16-inch guns mounted in turret angle fire giving them a range beyond any guns afloat or contemplated for navy ships, would answer his defense purposes at such points.

Admiral Winslow told the naval committee that a gunnery school on American ships started on the down grade soon after it had been brought to its present state.

GERMAN AGENTS PLOT TO BLOW UP STEAMER?

Double Guards on Duty at Certain Piers at Seattle

Anonymous Letter Declares Intention to Destroy Liner Halthylus En Route From Victoria, B. C., With Valuable Cargo.

Seattle, Wash., Feb. 24.—Dock owners and operators were warned today by city authorities against a possible plot to destroy the Blue Funnel liner Halthylus en route here with a cargo of rubber, silk and other staples valued at \$5,500,000. The Halthylus left Victoria, B. C., for this port at noon today.

Guards were doubled at certain piers today following the receipt of an anonymous letter from Tacoma by Fire Marshal Harry W. Bringham, declaring that German agents had left Tacoma for Seattle with the intention of destroying the liner.

FREIGHT TRAIN ATTACKED

Carried Supplies for Russia—Crew Captured Two of the Men.

Seattle, Wash., Feb. 24.—Attacking a Great Northern freight train loaded with automobiles and war supplies for shipment to Russia from Seattle, in the Northern Pacific freight yards here today, six or eight men cut the air hose between cars in five places and cut the train in four sections. The train crew fought them off and captured two who gave the names of Sam Rusky and John Ross, and their nationality as Austrian. Great Northern officials said it was known that the train carried supplies from the west intended for Russia.

VERDUN IS THE SCENE OF ONE OF GREATEST BATTLES OF THE WAR

DIFFERENCES ARE SETTLED AMICABLY

By The Atlantic Coast Line And Its Conductors

MEDIATION SUCCESSFUL

Railroad Agrees to Withdraw White Audit System—Conductors Promise to Accept Any Audit by bona Fide Employes.

Through the efforts of Judge William L. Chambers, U. S. Commissioner of Mediation, the Atlantic Coast Line officials and the conductors of the railroad have settled the controversy that had existed for the past few weeks on account of the inauguration of the White Audit system. An agreement was reached yesterday and Judge Chambers left last night for his home in Washington.

The Atlantic Coast Line agrees to withdraw the White Audit system on March 15th, while the conductors agree to withdraw the concluding paragraph of a letter, dated January 14th, addressed to Mr. P. R. Albright, general manager of the A. C. L., in which the statement was made that the general adjustment committee for the conductors of the Coast Line "hereby puts you on notice that the conductors will not stand for any of the conductors being disciplined under the proposed week-system or any other system that you may choose to inaugurate and put into effect that has not been mutually agreed on and accepted by the Conductors' committee and all conductors properly notified."

It is further provided that the railroad company may at its pleasure after March 15th inaugurate its own system of train auditing provided the auditors doing such work are bona fide employes of the railroad company, to be in no way connected with any outside individual or corporation. Certain forms that make it difficult for the conductors to furnish correct showing for the number of tickets collected or punched while train is en route to its destination, are also to be eliminated.

Agreement Very Satisfactory. Judge Chambers came to Wilmington last Friday at the instance of the Atlantic Coast Line. After spending the night at his home in Washington, he returned to Wilmington Tuesday and immediately resumed the conferences with the representatives of the conductors and the officials of the Atlantic Coast Line.

In his manner of conducting the negotiations has been highly satisfactory to both sides of the controversy. He acted simply in the capacity of mediator and held a number of conferences, the last one being yesterday morning. "Yes, I am very glad to be able to inform you that an amicable settlement has been reached through mediation of the conductors and officials of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company and its conductors regarding the train audit system recently put into operation on the railroad against the protest of the conductors and against which committee vote was recently taken," said Judge Chambers yesterday when he was seen by representatives of the press.

The final conference was held yesterday at the Orton Hotel which was attended by officials of the road and representatives of the conductors. The settlement was in every way satisfactory to both sides.

While Mr. L. E. Sheppard, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, acting president of the National O. R. C., and Mr. W. M. Clark, vice president of the O. R. C., of Grand Rapids, Mich., left for their homes last night, the members of the general adjustment committee for the Atlantic Coast Line will be in the city for a day or two in order to take up some other matters with the officials of the Atlantic Coast Line.

Judge Chambers declared yesterday afternoon that, while he regretted that the controversy should have arisen which controversy between the Atlantic Coast Line and its conductors, he personally was under some obligation to both sides for affording him an opportunity to visit Wilmington. He expressed himself as very much pleased with the city and its people.

Compliments of the agreement were secured from Judge Chambers, who when asked by representatives of the press for a statement replied: "There is no better way of doing this, than by furnishing you a copy of all the correspondence between myself and the railroad officials and also with the general officials and committee representing the conductors."

"In doing so," Judge Chambers stated, "I beg the privilege of expressing to you as the representatives of your papers my thanks for the courteous way in which you have treated me and the scrupulous manner in which you have treated the confidence I have reposed in you during the progress of the negotiations."

Copies of Letters. Judge Chambers yesterday sent the following letter to Mr. Lyman Delano, third vice-president of the Atlantic Coast Line, and also to Mr. W. M. Clark, vice-president of the Order of Railroad Conductors, and Mr. S. J. Brooks, chairman of the general adjustment committee of the Atlantic Coast Line. "Wilmington, N. C., Feb. 24, 1916. "My Dear Sirs: Since the several conferences held with you and the committee, in relation to a controversy between the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company and its conductors regarding the train audit system, I have been very much pleased with the city and its people. "Compliments of the agreement were secured from Judge Chambers, who when asked by representatives of the press for a statement replied: "There is no better way of doing this, than by furnishing you a copy of all the correspondence between myself and the railroad officials and also with the general officials and committee representing the conductors."

Incessant Firing of German Guns Answered Shell for Shell by the French

THEIR LINES UNBROKEN

Towns of Brabant, Haumont and Yand Samogneux in Hands of the Germans

Emperor Has Headquarters at Scene of Fighting

Inspired by the presence of their emperor and led by Crown Prince Frederick William, the German troops are engaged in one of the greatest battles of the war on the western front centering around the fortress of Verdun. Attack has followed attack against the French line after bombardments, incessant and terrific, continuing for several days.

While the Germans have been unable, despite the rain of shells and fierce onslaughts by the infantry, to break the French line, nevertheless the French on their right and left wings have been compelled to withdraw their lines, respectively to the south of Ornes and behind the town of Samogneux, six miles north of the fortress.

Cost of Life No Question. Only between Malancour and the left bank of the Meuse had there been any diminution in the intensity of the artillery fire. With Brabant, Haumont and Yand Samogneux, and the wooded sections north and northeast of Breumont, in their possession, the Germans from the Meuse eastward to Fronsmyer are forcing the fighting, seemingly, regardless of the cost of life.

The French guns have answered the German gunfire and so far the casualties on both sides are very great. The French official report describes the battlefield between the Meuse and Ornes as piled with German dead. In Champagne at several points and in the Argonne forest German works have been pounded by the concentrated fire of the French guns, while in Lorraine the French repulsed a German reconnoitering party that attempted to capture a French post north of St. Martin.

On their end of the line near Hulleho, the British exploded a mine and occupied German trenches near Freilinghen and Boesinghe. Engagements on Russian Front. On the Russian front the fighting in the region to East Galicia there have been engagements at various points, but no great results have been attained by either side. In the Caucasus, Petrograd reports that the Russians continue successfully to press back the Turks. The usual activities by the Austrians and Italians on the Austro-Italian front continue.

A French air squadron has dropped a large number of bombs on the outskirts of Metz, a big fire being observed after the attack. Official announcement has been made in the Japanese press that the minister of foreign affairs that Japan does not intend to send troops to aid the Russians.

FRENCH LINE UNBROKEN

Germans Continue Their Heavy Bombardments North of Verdun.

THE DAY IN CONGRESS

SENATE

Met at noon. Resumed debate on water-power bill. Objection prevented Senator Gore from introducing legislation to keep Americans off armed ships of belligerents. Hearing continued into fitness of Louis D. Brandeis for the United States Supreme Court. Inquiry resumed into alleged monopoly of sisal output. Voted 34 to 12 to confirm Henry Prather Fletcher ambassador to Mexico, but final action on confirmation went over until tomorrow because those voting were less than a quorum. Adjourned at 8:25 p. m. to noon Friday.

HOUSE

Met at noon. Consideration of the postoffice bill continued on the floor. Hearing on Representative London's neutral peace congress resolution begun by the foreign affairs committee. Admiral Winslow appeared before the naval affairs committee in executive session to testify on National defense. Legislative, executive and judicial bill carrying \$37,601,539 favorably reported. Representative Mondel introduced bill to prohibit Americans from traveling on armed ships. Adjourned at 5:25 p. m. to noon Friday.