

Governor Johnson's Reply to President Wilson

Governor Johnson of California has replied to the administration's message delivered through the secretary of state. The governor's reply is as follows:

"Honorable William Jennings Bryan, Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.: Your very courteous telegram relating to the alien land bill reached me late Sunday night. I take it from our conversations and your request made to me to withhold executive action until opportunity was afforded for the presentation of suggestions from the federal government that your telegram embodies what was your wish, and the wish of the president to say to us before final action.

"In this response it is my design most respectfully to present the situation from our standpoint and the views that actuated our legislature in passing the bill and that impel me to sanction it.

"For many years, a very grave problem, little understood in the east, has confronted California, a problem the seriousness of which has been recognized by statesmen in our nation, and probably viewed with apprehension by the people of this state. When the present constitution of California was adopted, more than thirty years ago, it contained the following declaration: 'The presence of foreigners ineligible to become citizens of the United States is declared to be dangerous to the well being of the state and the legislature shall discourage their immigration by all means within its power.'

"Of late years our problem from another angle has become acute, and the agitation has been continued in the last decade in reference to our agricultural lands, until finally affirmative action in an attempted solution became imperative. This attempted solution is found in the action of our legislature in the passage of the alien land bill. In the phraseology of this bill, in those whom it affects, in its scope and in its purpose, we believe we are within our moral rights and that we are doing only what is imperatively demanded for the protection and preservation of our state. In this enactment we have kept ever in mind our national good faith as evidenced by existing treaties, and our desire and anxiety have been to act only in such fashion as would commend us to our sister states and would justify us to our fellow countrymen.

"The objections to our bill are based first upon the treaty obligations of the nation, and secondly upon the assertion that our act is offensive and discriminatory. The protest to our measure, as your telegram states, comes from the representative of Japan. The bill that is now before me, as you know, provides substantially in its first section, that all aliens eligible to citizenship under the laws of the United States may acquire real property in the same manner as citizens of the United States, and the second section provides that all aliens other than those mentioned in the first section may acquire real property in the manner and to the extent and for the purposes prescribed by any treaty now existing between the United States and the nation or country of which such aliens are citizens or subjects, and may, in addition, lease for a period of three years lands for agricultural purposes.

"Thus we have made existing treaties a part of our law, and thus have we preserved every right that any foreign nation, by international contract, has insisted upon preserving with our national government.

"The treaty of 1911 with Japan, in reference to the citizens and subjects of each country, provides that they shall have 'liberty to own, or lease, or occupy houses, manufactories, warehouses and shops; to employ agents of their choice; to lease land for residential and commercial purposes and generally do anything incident to or necessary for trade upon the same terms as native citizens or subjects, submitting themselves to the laws and regulations established.'

"We assume that the right of the Japanese to own real property for the purposes described is absolute in our state and we seek to deal only with our agricultural lands. We embody the treaty in our law and we add to it permission to lease our agricultural lands for the period of three years.

"Where such extraordinary care has been exercised to preserve honor and good faith, in the very words of the contract made by the protesting nation with our own, and to do more by authorizing leases of agricultural lands, it

would seem that we ought not to be open to any accusation of violation of treaty rights, or desire to entrench upon that which belongs alone to the national government, or which might become a matter of international policy.

"By the law adopted we offer no offense; we make no discrimination. The offense and discrimination is contained, it is claimed, in the use of the words 'eligible to citizenship' and in making a distinction between those who are eligible to citizenship and those who are not. We do not mention the Japanese or any particular race. The constitution of California in 1879 made its distinction, and there never has been protest or objection.

"The naturalization laws of the United States, long since, without demerit from any nation, termed who were and who were not eligible to citizenship. If invidious discrimination ever was made in this regard the United States made it when the United States declared who were and who were not eligible to citizenship, and when we but follow and depend upon the statutes of the United States and their determination as to eligibility to citizenship, we can not be accused of indulging in invidious discrimination. May I venture to call your attention to the immigration law now pending in congress, which passed both houses of the last congress, where apparently certain classes, who shall be excluded from our country, are described as 'persons who can not become eligible under existing laws to become citizens of the United States.'

"At this very moment the national legislature, without protest or objection—indeed it is published in California by express consent—is using 'the terms that are claimed in California law to be offensive and discriminatory.'

"At least three states in the union have in the past enacted laws similar to the contemplated law of California and the enactments of those other states have been without objection or protest. That the protest is now made in respect to California but emphasizes the acuteness of the problem confronting California, and demonstrates that California is differently viewed than other states of the union, and that if discrimination exists it is discrimination against California.

"We insist that justly no offense can be taken by any nation to this law, and more particularly does this seem to us clear in the instance of a nation like Japan, that by its own law prevents acquisition of land by aliens. It is most respectfully submitted that, after all, the question is not whether any offense has been taken, but whether justly it should be taken. I voice, I think, the sentiment of the majority of the legislature of this state when I say that if it had been believed that offense could justly be taken by any nation to the proposed law, that law would not have been enacted.

"We of California believe firmly that in our legislative dealings with this alien land question we have violated absolutely no treaty rights; we have shown no shadow of discrimination; we have given to no nation the right to be justified in taking offense. So believing, with strong reliance on the justice and righteousness of our course, and with due deference and courtesy and proper consideration for the feelings and the views of others—we had hoped the authorities at Washington would have seen the question as we in this state have been forced to see it—as we must see it or be blind.

"And so, with all courtesy, the state of California feels it its bounden duty to its citizens to do that which the interests of its people demand; that which the conscience of its people approves; that which violates no treaty rights; that which presents no discrimination and that which can give no just cause of offense.

"You have suggested to me delay, but this question was very earnestly and fully presented by you to our legislature and the legislature determined to proceed. My province is to approve or disapprove the law as presented. Our people as represented in the legislature have overwhelmingly expressed their desire for the present alien land law bill. The vote in the senate was 35 to 2, and in the assembly 72 to 3. With such unanimity of opinion, even did I hold other views, I would feel it my plain duty to sign the bill unless some absolutely controlling necessity demanded contrary action. Apparently no such controlling necessity exists.

"It is with the highest respect for yourself and the president that I feel my duty to my

state compels me to approve the action of the legislature.

"HIRAM W. JOHNSON,
"Governor of California."

An Associated Press report says: With the sending of the telegram today the controversy over the alien land bill is at an end so far as the California administration is concerned. Governor Johnson has until June 16 in which to sign the act and in the normal course of events it will become law at the expiration of ninety days from the closing of the legislature, or on August 10 next. The only contingency that might arise to check its operation from and after that date is the threatened referendum petition which Theodore A. Bell has said he would circulate against the measure as soon as it was signed.

THE BILL SIGNED

Governor Johnson of California signed the anti-alien land bill May 18. As soon as it was known that the governor had approved the bill Secretary Bryan handed Japanese Ambassador Chinda the reply of the United States government to the Japanese protest. The ambassador immediately cabled this reply to Tokio. No indication as to the nature of the reply was given out.

PAN-AMERICAN BANQUET

Abstract of Mr. Bryan's address at the Pan-American banquet held at the Waldorf, in New York, Thursday evening, May 15, 1913:

His Excellency, the Brazilian ambassador, has furnished us the keynote of this occasion when he suggests that only those can understand each other who are lead into the investigation by sympathetic interest. Sympathy is the greatest need of the world. Tolstoy was so impressed by the belief that it was essential to the right solution of all human problems that he indorsed the bread-labor theory advanced by Bondareff, who argued that only actual and continuous contact with toil could bring one into sympathy with his fellows and make him to understand their requirements and their point of view.

It is not relevant to our present subject to discuss whether this theory is well founded or whether there are other means which can be made more effective but it is quite certain that no progress can be made in understanding the questions that enter into real life until one has brought himself into real, heartfelt sympathy with those with whom he has to deal.

I know of no better occasion than this to present this recipe for international ill—this means of ensuring amity and good-will among nations. The Pan-American union is an institution established for the purpose of reducing to a minimum any friction that may be excited by intercourse between American nations and of increasing to a maximum the beneficent results that flow from mutual helpfulness. It is the business of the union to search for opportunity to advance the common weal and to put into use every instrumentality that can be employed for the enhancement of the common good.

Geographically we are neighbors and this physical relationship could not be altered even if we desired to change it and we would not desire to change it even if it were possible to do so. We are nearer to each other than we are to the lands across the sea. Only to our neighbors on the north are we so intimately related by the position which we occupy upon the map. All the countries north of Panama are within 2,000 miles of New York and the northernmost countries of South America are nearer to us than the nations of Europe.

The canal with which we shall soon divide the isthmus will connect us with the western shore of South America. Whether we will or no, we must be neighbors and it is to our mutual advantage—as it must be our mutual delight—to make the most of this proximity.

The Latin-American republics are but partially developed—their latent resources can not even be estimated with any accuracy. They await the enterprise and the activity that have during the last century elevated the United States from a colony to a world power. They turn naturally to the United States for such assistance as can be legitimately rendered. We have capital in abundance. We have constructive ability to spare and we have the experience necessary for the successful employment of both. All that is necessary is that which the newer republics need shall be supplied on terms that are fair and under conditions that are just.

The president has by speech outlined and by act illustrated his conception of fairness. He is prepared to give to American enterprise every