

PRESIDENT PRESENTS RAILROAD PROBLEM TO CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 2.—Following is the complete text of President Wilson's address to the Sixty-fifth congress today on its reassembling for the final session.

Features of President's Address Before Congress

Gentlemen of the Congress: The year that has elapsed since I last stood before you to fulfill my constitutional duty to give the congress from time to time information on the state of the union, has been so crowded with great events, great processes and great results that I cannot hope to give you an adequate picture of its transactions or of the far-reaching changes which have been wrought in the life of our nation and of the world. You have yourselves witnessed these things, as I have. It is too soon to assess them; and we who stand in the midst of them and are part of them are less qualified than men of another generation will be to say what they mean or even what they have been. But some great outstanding facts are unmistakable and constitute in a sense part of the public business with which it is our duty to deal. It is my duty to set the stage for the legislative and executive action which must grow out of them and which we have yet to shape and determine.

Chief executive pays tribute to armed forces and loyal workers at home.

Declares problem of readjustment after war is taking care of itself without government aid.

Offers no solution of the railroad question; suggests study of problem by congress. Declares he is ready to return lines to private control whenever satisfactory arrangement is made to prevent return to old systems under private management.

Renews appeal for woman's suffrage.

Requests early ratification of Colombian treaty.

Suggests continued government control over exports.

Declares it to be his paramount duty to attend the peace conference in Paris.

Of the whole great undertaking! The patriotism, the selflessness, the thorough-going devotion and distinguished capacity that marked their toilsome labors, day after day, month after month, have made them fit mates and comrades of the men in the trenches and on the sea. And not the men here in Washington only. They have directed the vast achievement. Throughout innumerable factories, upon innumerable farms, in the depths of coal mines and in mines and copper mines, wherever the stuffs of industry were to be obtained and prepared, in the shipyards, on the railroads, at the docks, on the sea, in every labor that was needed to sustain the battle lines, men have vied with each other to do their part and do it well. They can look any man-at-arms in the face and say, "we strove to win and gave the best that was in us to make our fleets and armies surer of their triumph.

Gives praise to Women.

And what shall we say of the women—of their instant intelligence, quickening every task that they touched; their capacity for organization and co-operation which gave their action discipline and enhanced the effectiveness of everything they attempted; their aptitude at tasks to which they had never before set their hands; their utter self-sacrifice alike in what they did and in what they gave? Their contribution to the great result is beyond appraisal. They have added a new lustre to the annals of American womanhood. They have quickened every task that they touched; their capacity for organization and co-operation which gave their action discipline and enhanced the effectiveness of everything they attempted; their aptitude at tasks to which they had never before set their hands; their utter self-sacrifice alike in what they did and in what they gave? Their contribution to the great result is beyond appraisal. They have added a new lustre to the annals of American womanhood.

Least tribute we can pay them is to make them the equals of men in political rights, as they have proved themselves their equals in every field of practical work they have entered, whether for themselves or for their country.

These great days of completed achievement would be sadly marred if we were to omit the act of justice, besides the immense practical services they have rendered, the women of the country have been the moving spirits in the systematic economies by which our people have voluntarily assisted to supply the suffering peoples of the world and the armies upon every front with food and everything else that we had that might serve the common cause.

Have Gained Sure Triumph.

And now we are sure of the great triumph for which every sacrifice was made. It has come, come in its completeness, and with the pride and inspiration of these days of achievement quick within us we turn to the tasks of peace again—a peace sure against the violence of irresponsible monarchs and ambitious military coteries—such a peace ready for a new order, for new foundations of justice and fair dealing.

Refers to Colombian Treaty.

While we are adjusting our relations with the rest of the world it is not of capital importance that we should clear away all grounds of misunderstanding with our immediate neighbors and give proof of the friendship we really feel? I hope that the members of the senate will permit me to speak once more of the unratified treaty of friendship and adjustment with the republic of Colombia. I very earnestly urge upon them an early and favorable action upon that vital matter. I believe that they will feel, with me, that the stage of affairs is now set for such action as will be not only just, but generous and in the spirit of the new age upon which we have so happily entered.

No Leading Strings Possible.

Any leading strings we might seek to put them in would speedily become hopelessly tangled because they would pay no attention to them and go their own way. All that we can do as our legislative and executive servants is to mediate the process of change here, there, and elsewhere as we may. I have heard much counsel as to the plans that should be formed and personally conducted to a happy consummation, but from no quarter have I seen any general scheme of "reconstruction" emerge which I thought it likely we could force our spirited business men and self-reliant laborers to accept with due pliancy and obedience.

Should Reclaim Lands.

I particularly direct your attention to the very practical plans which the secretary of the interior has developed in his annual report and before your committees for the reclamation of arid, swamp and cut-over lands which might, if the states were willing and able to co-operate, redeem some 300,000,000 acres of land for cultivation. There are said to be 15,000,000 or 20,000,000 acres of land in the west, at present arid, for whose reclamation water is available, if properly conserved.

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Recommend Naval Program.

I take it for granted that congress will carry out the naval program which was undertaken before we entered the war. The secretary of the navy has submitted to your committees for authorization that part of the program which covers the building plans of the next three years. These plans have been prepared along the lines and in accordance with the policy which the congress established, not under the exceptional conditions of the war, but with the intention of adhering to a definite method of development for the navy. I earnestly recommend the uninterrupted pursuit of that policy. It would be unwise for us to attempt to adjust our program to a future world policy as yet undetermined.

The question which causes me the greatest concern is the question

of the policy to be adopted toward the railroads. I frankly turn to you for counsel upon it. I have no confident judgment of my own. I do not see how any thoughtful man can have who knows anything of the complexity of the problem. It is a problem which must be studied, studied immediately and studied without bias or prejudice. Nothing can be gained by becoming partisans of any particular plan of settlement.

Control of Shipping.

I have spoken of the control which must yet for a while, perhaps for a long while, be exercised over shipping because of the priority of service to which our forces overseas are entitled and which should also be accorded the shipments which are to save recently liberated peoples from starvation and many devastated regions from permanent ruin. May I not say a special word about the needs of Belgium and northern France?

Was War Need.

It was necessary that the administration of the railways should be taken over by the government so long as the war lasted. It would have been impossible otherwise to establish and carry through under a single direction the necessary priorities of shipments. It would have been impossible otherwise to combine maximum production at the factories and mines and farms with the maximum possible car supply to take the products to the ports and markets; impossible to route troop shipments and freight shipments without regard to the advantage or disadvantage of the roads employed; impossible to subordinate, when necessary, all questions of convenience to the public necessity; impossible to give the necessary financial support to the roads from the public treasury. But all these necessities have now been served, and the question is, what is best for the railroads and for the public in the future.

Co-operation Impossible.

Exceptional circumstances and exceptional methods of administration were not needed to convince us that the railroads were not equal to the immense tasks of transportation imposed upon them by the rapid and continuous development of the industries of the country. We knew that already. And we knew that they were unequal to it partly because their full co-operation was rendered impossible by law and their competition made obligatory, so that it has been impossible to assign to them severally the traffic which best could be carried by their respective lines in the interest of expedition and national economy.

War's End in Spring.

We may hope, I believe, for the formal conclusion of the war by treaty by the time spring has come. The 21 months to which the present control of the railroads is limited after formal proclamation of peace shall have been made with run at the farthest, I take it for granted, only to the January of 1921. The full equipment of the railroads which the federal administration had planned could not be completed within any such period.

Must Decide on Taxes.

For the steady and facilitation of our domestic business readjustments nothing is more important than the immediate determination of the taxes that are to be levied for 1918, 1919 and 1920. The burden of taxation must be lifted from business as sound methods of financing the government will permit, and those who conduct the great essential industries of the country must be told as exactly as possible what obligations to the government they will be expected to meet in the years immediately ahead of them. It will be of serious consequence to the country to delay removing all uncertainties in this matter a single day longer.

Boards Offer Help.

Never before have there been agencies in existence in this country which knew so much of the field of supply, of labor and of industry as the war industries board, the war trade board, the labor department, the food administration and the fuel administration have known since their labors became thoroughly systematized, and they have not been isolated agencies; they have been directed by men who represented the permanent departments of the government and so have been the centers of unified and co-operative action. It has been the policy of the executive, therefore, since the armistice was assured (which is, in effect, a complete submission of the enemy), to put the knowledge of these bodies at the disposal of the business men of the country and to offer their intelligent mediation at every point and in every matter where it was desired.

Returning to Peace Footing.

It is surprising how fast the process of return to a peace footing has moved in the three weeks since the fighting stopped. It promises to outrun any inquiry that may be instituted and any aid that may be offered. It will not be difficult to direct it any better than it will direct itself. The American business man is of quick initiative.

Should Tax Profits.

I entirely concur with the secretary of the treasury in recommending that the two billions needed in addition to the four billions provided by existing law be obtained from the profits which have accrued and shall accrue from war contracts and distinctively war business, but that these taxes be confined to the war profits accruing in 1918, or in 1919, or in 1920, and not to business contracts of the administration in war contracts. I urge your acceptance of his recommendation that provision be made now, not subsequently, that the taxes to be paid in 1920 should be reduced from six to four billions. Any arrangements less definite than these would add elements of doubt and confusion to the critical period of industrial readjustment through which the country must now immediately pass.

Various Alternatives.

I believe that it will be serviceable for me to set forth as explicitly as possible the alternative courses that lie open to our choice. We can simply release the roads and go back to the old conditions of private management, unrestricted competition and uniform regulation by both state and federal authorities; or we can go to the opposite extreme and establish complete government control, accompanied, if necessary, by actual government ownership; or we can adopt an intermediate course of modified private control, under a more unified and affirmative public regulation and under such alterations of the law as will permit wasteful competition to be avoided and a considerable degree of uniformity of the administration to be effected, as for example, by regional corporations under which the railroads of definable area would be, in effect, combined in single systems.

Must Modify Conditions.

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Congress Refrains From Comment on Wilson Talk

Washington, Dec. 2.—Comment for publication on the president's address was not so general at the capitol today as usual. Senator Martin, democratic leader; Senator Lodge, republican leader; Senator Hitchcock, chairman of the foreign relations committee, all refrained from making statements.

Some senators did comment, however, and there were numerous statements on the house side. Representative Kitchin of North Carolina, democratic leader, said:

"The president's message was a great address and his explanation about his trip ought to satisfy his critics."

Representative Mann of Illinois, republican leader, said: "The most important phase of the message was on railroads, about which he gave no recommendations. Next in importance was the entire failure to take the congress or the country into his confidence on his trip abroad to the peace conference."

Speaker Clark: "It was a fine speech."

Representative Longworth of Ohio, republican: "It is not the president's strongest effort. It is interesting to observe that congress is going to be permitted to do something of its own on the railroad question."

Representative Kahn of California, republican: "The president asks congress for its united support. Congress will be much fairer, I am

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