

LANSING QUITS POST
(Continued from page 1)

state courts to the federal supreme court, which the state department had contended was the only tribunal which had jurisdiction in the case. No further action has been taken by the American government so far has been announced.

Following is the correspondence between the president and Secretary Lansing:

Wilson Quittes Lansing
"The White House, Washington, Feb. 13, 1920.
"My Dear Secretary:
"Is it true, as I have been told that during my illness, you have frequently called the heads of the executive departments of the government into conference? If it is, I feel it my duty to call your attention to considerations which I do not care to dwell upon until I learn from you yourself that is the fact.

"Under our constitutional law and practice, as developed hitherto, no one but the president has the right to summon the heads of the executive departments into conference and no one but the president and the congress has the right to ask their views or the views of anyone of them on any public question.

"I take this matter up with you because, in the presence of every constitutional system, custom and precedent are of the most serious consequence, and I think we will all agree in desiring not to lead in

any wrong direction. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of writing you to ask you this question and I am sure you will be glad to answer.

"I am happy to learn from your recent note to Mrs. Wilson that your strength is returning.

"Cordially and sincerely yours,
"Woodrow Wilson.

"To Honorable Robert Lansing, secretary of state."

Secretary Admits Sessions
"The secretary of state:
"Washington, February 9th, 1920.
"My Dear President:
"It is true that frequently during your illness, I requested the heads of the executive departments of the government to meet for informal conferences.

"Shortly after you were taken ill in October, certain members of the cabinet of which I was one, felt that in view of the fact that we were denied communication with you, it was wise for us to confer informally together on inter-departmental matters and matters as to which action could not be postponed until your medical advisers permitted you to pass upon them. Accordingly, I, as the ranking member, requested the members of the cabinet to assemble for such informal conference, and in view of the mutual benefit derived the practice was continued. I can assure you that it never for a moment entered my mind that I was acting unconstitutionally or contrary to your wishes and there was certainly no intention on my part to assume powers and exercise functions which under the constitution are exclusively confided to the president.

President's Wishes Observed
"During these troubled times when many difficult and vexatious questions have arisen and when in the circumstances I have been deprived of your guidance and direction, it has been my constant endeavor to carry out your policies as I understood them and to act in all matters as I believed you would wish me to act. If, however, you think that I have failed in my loyalty to you and if you no longer have confidence in me and prefer to have another conduct our foreign affairs, I am, of course, ready, Mr. President, to relieve you of any embarrassment by placing my resignation in your hands.

"I am, as always, faithfully yours,
"Robert Lansing."

The White House, Washington, 11th February, 1920.

My Dear Secretary:
Explanation is Rejected
"I am very much disappointed by your letter of February 9 in reply to mine asking about the so-called cabinet meetings.

"You kindly explain the motives of these meetings and I find nothing in your letter which justifies your assumption of presidential authority in such a matter. You say that you felt that, in view of the fact that you were denied communication with me, it was wise to confer informally together on inter-departmental matters, and matters as to which action could not be postponed until my medical advisers permitted me to be seen and consulted, but I have to remind you, Mr. Secretary, that no action could be taken without me by the cabinet, therefore could have been no advantage in not waiting in regard to the matters concerning which action could not have been taken without me.

Suspicion Deepened
"This affair, Mr. Secretary, only deepens a feeling that was growing upon me. While we were still in Paris I felt, and have felt increasingly ever since, that you accepted my guidance and direction on questions with regard to which I had to instruct you only with increasing reluctance and since my return to Washington I have been struck by the number of matters in which you have apparently tried to forestall my judgment by formulating action and merely asking my approval when it was impossible for me to form an independent judgment because I had not an opportunity to examine the circumstances with any degree of independence.

"I therefore feel that I must frankly take advantage of your kind suggestion that if I should prefer to have another conduct our foreign affairs you are ready to relieve me of any affairs you are ready to relieve me of any embarrassment by placing your resignation in my hands, for I must say that it would relieve of embarrassment, Mr. Secretary, the embarrassment of feeling your reluctance and divergence of judgment, if you would give your present office up and afford me an opportunity to select someone whose mind would more willingly go along with mine.

No Personal Feeling, Claim
"I need not tell you with what reluctance I take advantage of your suggestion, or that I do so with the kindest feeling. In matters of transcendent importance like this the only wise course is a course of candor, where personal feeling is as much as possible left out of the reckoning.

"Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) "Woodrow Wilson."

"Honorable Robert Lansing, secretary of state."

"The secretary of state,
"Washington, February 12, 1920.
"My Dear President:

Resignation Contemplated
"I wish to thank you sincerely for your candid letter of the 11th in which you state that my resignation would be acceptable to you, since it relieves me of the responsibility for action for which I have been contemplating and which I can now take without hesitation as it meets your wishes.

"I have the honor, therefore, to tender you my resignation as secretary of state, the same to take effect at your convenience.

"In thus severing our official association I feel, Mr. President, that I should make the following statement which I had prepared recently and which will show you that I have not been unmindful of the continuance of our present relations was impossible and that I realized that it was clearly my duty to bring them to an end at the earliest moment possible with the public interest.

Feeling Dates Far Back
"Ever since January, 1919, I have been conscious of the fact that you no longer were disposed to welcome my advice in matters pertaining to the negotiations in Paris, to our foreign service, or to international affairs in general. Holding these views I would, if I had consulted my personal inclination alone, have resigned as secretary of state and as a commissioner to negotiate peace. I felt, however, that such a step might have been misinterpreted, both at home and abroad and that it was my duty to cause you no embarrassment in carrying forward the great task in which you were then engaged. Possibly I erred in this, but if I did it was with the best of motives. When I returned to Washington in the latter of July, 1919, my personal wish to resign had not changed but again I felt that loyalty to you and my duty to the administration compelled me to defer action as my resignation might have been misconstrued into hostility to the ratification of the treaty of peace or at least into disapproval of your views as to the form of ratification. I therefore remained silent, avoiding any comment on the frequent reports that we were not in full agreement. Subsequently your serious illness, during which I have never seen you, imposed upon me the duty—at least I construed it to be my duty—to remain in charge of the department of state until your health permitted you to assume again full direction of foreign affairs.

Had Resignation Ready
"Believing that that time had arrived, I had prepared my resignation when my only doubt as to the propriety of placing it in your hands was removed by your letter indicating that it would be entirely acceptable to you.

"I think, Mr. President, in accordance with the frankness which has

marked this correspondence and for which I am grateful to you, that I cannot permit to pass unchallenged the imputation that in calling into informal conference the heads of the executive departments I sought to usurp your presidential authority. I had no such intention, no such thought. I believed then, and I believe now, that the conferences which were held were for the best interests of our administration and of the republic and that belief was shared by others whom I consulted. I further believed that the conferences were proper and necessary in the circumstances and that I would have been derelict in my duty had I failed to act as I did.

Accusation is Denied
"I also feel, Mr. President, that candor compels me to say that I cannot agree with your statement, that I have tried to forestall your judgment in certain cases by formulating action and merely asking your approval when it was impossible for

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you to form an independent judgment because you had not had an opportunity to examine the circumstances with any degree of independence. I have it is true, when I thought a case demanded immediate action, advised you what, in my opinion, that action should be, stating at the same time the reasons on which my opinion was based. This I conceived to be a function of the secretary of state and I have followed the practice for the past four years and a half. I confess that I have been surprised and disappointed at the frequent disapproval of my suggestions, but I have never failed to follow your decisions, however difficult it made the conduct of our foreign affairs.

Lansing Claims Relief
"I need hardly add that I leave the office of secretary of state with only good will toward you, Mr. President, and with a sense of profound relief.

"Forgetting our differences and remembering only your many kindnesses in the past, I have the honor to be, Mr. President,
"Sincerely yours,
(Signed) "Robert Lansing."

"The president, the white house,
"Washington, Feb. 13, 1920.
"My Dear Secretary:

"Allow me to acknowledge with appreciation your letter of February 12th. It now being evident, Mr. Secretary, that we have both of us felt the embarrassment of our recent relations with each other, I feel it my duty to accept your resignation, to take effect at once; at the same time adding that I hope that the future holds for you many successes of the most gratifying sort. My best wishes will always follow you, and it will be a matter of gratification always to remember our dear and personal relations.

"Sincerely yours,
(Signed) "Woodrow Wilson."
"Honorable Robert Lansing,
"Secretary of State."

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