

The President, before delegation from National Suffrage Convention,
at the White House, December 8, 1913.

I want you ladies, if possible--if I can make it clear to you--
to realize ~~what~~ just what my present situation is. Whenever I walk abroad,
I realize that I am not a free man; I am under arrest. I am so carefully
and admirably guarded that I have not even the privilege of walking the
street. That is, as it were, typical of my present transference from being
an individual with his mind on any and every subject to being an official
of a great government and, incidentally, or so it falls out under our system
of government, the spokesman of a party. I set myself this very strict rule
when I was Governor of New Jersey and have followed it as President, and
shall follow it as President, that I am not at liberty to urge upon Congress
in messages policies which have not had the organic consideration of those
for whom I am spokesman. In other words, I have not yet presented any
legislature my private views on any subject, and I never shall; because I
conceive that to be $\frac{1}{2}$ part of the whole process of government, that I shall
be spokesman for somebody, not for myself. It would be an impertinence.
When I speak for myself, I am an individual; when I am spokesman of an or-
ganic body, I am a representative. For that reason, you see, I am by my
own principles shut out, in the language of the street, from "starting any-
thing." I have to confine myself to those things which have been embodied
as promises to the people at an election. That is the strict rule I ~~have~~
set for myself.

I want to say that with regard to all other matters I am not only
glad to be consulted by my colleagues in the two houses ~~but~~ I hope that they
will often pay me the compliment of consulting me when they want to know my

opinions on any subject. One member of the Rules Committee did come to me and ask me what I thought about this suggestion of yours of appointing a special committee of the House as the Senate has already appointed a special committee for consideration of the question of woman suffrage, and I told him that I thought it was a proper thing to do. So that so far as my personal advice has been asked ~~by~~ by a single member of the committee, it has been given to that effect. I wanted to tell you that to show you that I am strictly living up to my principles. When my private opinion is asked by those who are cooperating with me, I am most glad to give it; but I am not at liberty until I speak for somebody besides myself to urge legislation upon the Congress.

THE END.