

Frances Biddle Papers
Box 1
Cabinet Meetings 1941

DECEMBER 19, 1941

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The full Cabinet had a photograph taken for the first time in many years; and thereafter another photograph which included Harry Hopkins, General Fleming, Fiorello LaGuardia, and Paul McNutt.

The President raised the question as to whether or not the United States could agree with the Allies not to cease the prosecution of the war except by common agreement - whether that violated the Constitution and constitutional provisions with respect to the Treaty-making power. He referred this to the Secretary of State and myself to consider further. It might be done in the form of a declaration of intent; or in the form of part of the prosecution of the war by the Commander-in-Chief; the treaty of peace being considered a separate act from the prosecution and completion of the war.

The President openly congratulated the Secretary of the Navy on his excellent handling of the Pearl Harbor situation and stated that the Secretary had made the suggestion to him that he was going to go to Pearl Harbor immediately, with the President's approval. All of the members of the Cabinet thought that the public effect was excellent as showing that the government is not going to white-wash any mistakes made by the armed forces. Knox told me, which was not what Hoover had thought, that there was a great deal of very active, Fifth Column work going on both from the shores and from the sampans. He recommended to the President that the Secretary of War take all of the aliens out of Hawaii and send them off to another island.

The President spoke of the war and that he had information that German soldiers, who were wounded, were being killed on the battlefields and that there was no doubt that old people in Germany were being done away with. I told the Cabinet of the request of the German Military Attache that his insane son be allowed to stay in a hospital in this country to prevent his being chloroformed if he were sent back to Germany. At this point the Secretary of Labor (as the President told me afterwards) looked very white and he thought she was going to be sick.

Paul McNutt suggested that we should coordinate the register work through the employment agencies, Census Bureau, etc., and the President appointed McNutt and myself to make up a board and report further.

There was a discussion as to whether all of the offices should be kept open on New Year's and voluntarily on Christmas. It was the view of most of us that we should make no voluntary opening on Christmas - which would be unfair to employees; and that the offices might be kept open New Year's if desirable to emphasize to the country the necessity of hard work.

Jesse Jones reported that a corporation had been organized setting aside one hundred million dollars to pay for damage from war, which could not be insured against. The President thought this should not be done on a voluntary basis and that the plan should be worked out possibly to pay a fraction of this amount against permanence. That is now being considered.

Claude Wickard and Frances Perkins both thought that the cost of living was being stabilized and farm prices are in pretty good shape.

The President asked me to see Marriner Eccles and Claude Wickard as to whether or not Hatch could be appointed on the Federal Reserve Board (representing the farm interests) on the assurance that the Governor of New Mexico would appoint Jack Dempsey to take his seat and that Hatch, when the time came, would be appointed on the District Court of New Mexico where there may soon be a vacancy.

Afterwards in his study, with Frank Walker, Steve Early, and Byron Price, the President signed the Executive Order which I had drawn appointing Price as Director of Censorship and the letter to the Secretary of the Treasury giving him a \$100,000 to start the ball rolling. I don't think the President has any clear idea of censorship and still believes that Price is going to censor newspapers - which, of course, is not the fact, the President not even having that power under the revised Overman Act.

The President asked me to draw a Daylight Saving Statute.