

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #517,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 13, 1939, 10.40 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: I got a report from the Library of Congress that since last Tuesday's Press Conference there has been a tremendous demand for the works of Benjamin Franklin. (Laughter)

Q I meant to ask you, you said, "The Sayings of Benjamin Franklin" --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't remember the name of the book.

Q But it is by Franklin?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any news at all this morning.

Q Mr. President, in connection with your Defense Message, there wasn't any mention there of any program of training mechanics. Can you tell us anything about what progress has been made on that?

THE PRESIDENT: That we have not any story on as yet because we have not finished our study.

Q Too early to ask for any reaction to your Message yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard anything from it except from the Senators and Congressmen who came by in line and said that they liked it.

Q Anything from the State Department?

THE PRESIDENT: No. There may be but I have not read any dispatches yet.

Q Any appointments in sight today, or isn't the Senate in session?

THE PRESIDENT: No appointments, no.

Q Any successor to Lamar Hardy yet?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, does this new plan of Senator Wagner's for \$800,000,000. more for housing come within your budget estimates, or is that out of the budget?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. What is it?

Q He has put out a statement about putting a bill in for \$800,000,000. more for the U.S.H.A.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I can't tell you because I have not studied it. Didn't I raise the limit a little while ago?

MR. EARLY: That was Federal Housing.

THE PRESIDENT: Then I don't know; I cannot tell you.

Q Is there a sufficient plant in this country for the manufacture of these planes as fast as we need them?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, probably this amount of planes can be taken care of in existing plants. It means, however, that they will have to work two and some of them three shifts. Of course the bottleneck in making planes is in 15% to 20% of a specially skilled labor. The other 80% or 85%, the mechanics, can be developed fairly fast, or mechanics who are already working on other things, like automobiles, can be used. The bottleneck lies in that 15% or 20%.

Q Does that also include jigs and tools? Is there a bottleneck in them?

THE PRESIDENT: Not for airplanes but for other things.

Q Are there any proposals to have a reserve of jigs and tools rather than to build --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That is in that \$32,000,000. item. I cannot give you a breakdown as to what particular tools they are. I guess they are included in that \$32,000,000. item.

Q But there is a plan for the expansion of production facilities in the event of need rather than a definite increase in the total production capacity of existing plants?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that is the point.

Q In this plant building program, does the Administration intend to work under the same system we have in the Navy -- that is, half in private plants and half in navy yard construction?

THE PRESIDENT: No. On this particular program they will be built in private plants except certain experimental planes like, for instance, the Philadelphia Navy Yard turned out three or four planes a year of an experimental type. That is not part of the general program.

Q Along that line, how about antiaircraft and tanks, etc.? Is there an existing Government plant sufficient to take care of this or will they be sent to private plants?

THE PRESIDENT: Guns will probably be made in Government plants since nearly all of our guns are made in Government plants. I don't know who makes the tanks.

Q The tanks, I think the largest part are made up on Rock Island Arsenal, and that is true of antiaircraft, but I did not know how far private plants are geared to take care of that construction. It is pretty intricate.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, but on guns we have probably enough capacity in the Navy Yard.

Q Have you any engagements today?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so. Not very many.

Q Will you need any special roads to move these mobile antiaircraft units?

THE PRESIDENT: Roads?

Q Highways?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Except, of course, there is still a good deal of conversation about and interest in transcontinental and north-and-south highways, and there are a good many people who are studying main, through highways as a method of putting WPA labor to something that is useful, on the general theory that in a great many localities the immediate needs, the essential needs of the localities have been pretty well taken care of, such as schools and local roads and sewers, et cetera, water supply, and the thing is, I think, becoming, well, more popular on the Hill to talk about the possibility of transcontinental and north-and-south main, through highways. There is no particular program yet.

Q Mr. Edison said he was going to talk to you about means to do away with the lag in shipbuilding. Can you tell us what that situation is?

THE PRESIDENT: We are doing all we can, that is about all we can say.

Q Was it labor difficulties?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not labor difficulties at all. It is on materials and also the general effort on the part of the Navy Yards to keep the employment in the yard going at an even rate all through the year. It is a perfectly natural tendency on the part of a manager or Commandant of a Navy Yard. In other words, if they are building a couple of destroyers, the tendency is, when a ship comes in for overhaul from the fleet, to take the men off the destroyers that are under construction and put them on the repairs and overhaul of the ship that comes in. Then, when the ship leaves, they put them back on the destroyers. That maintains an even flow of

employment. Of course the net result is that it slows up the length of time it takes to build a destroyer.

Q Are you doing anything to bring about better relations between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O.?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing at the present time.

Q Have you received a report on the location of the new Veterans' Hospital in Illinois?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet; no. I don't know where that is. Have you got that, Mac?

MR. McINTYRE: It is in the Budget office.

MR. STORM: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #518,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 17, 1939, 4.05 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, how is everybody?

Q Glad to see you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I am thinking of taking only one newspaper man on this
cruise instead of three.

Q Will we have to toss up for it?

THE PRESIDENT: You are going to be awfully seasick. I don't think
you will want to toss up for it. Anyway, you will only get one
story out of the three Press Associations. I am not going to
write three stories. I can write one, but not three.

Q Are you going on a cruiser?

THE PRESIDENT: If I go, yes.

Q We have all had a lot of long sea service.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Gosh, somebody has a good voice. It is all right.

Q It is Mr. Donaldson.

Q Mr. President, can I get Quoddy out of the way first?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q The first question is, Do you plan to use the same plan that you
had before?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not plan to use any plan. Have you read the
letter?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: If you read the letter that is all there is, and that
is very simple, plain English.

Q The second question is: Do you know what agency would act for you in these borings?

THE PRESIDENT: You will have to ask the Congressional Committee. It is up before them.

Q For the benefit of the four local newspapers and to get this small matter out of the way, will you tell us of your conversation today with the Chairman of the House District of Columbia Committee, Mr. Randolph?

THE PRESIDENT: I think he came in and he told me that he had taken the chairmanship and I congratulated him on it and that is all I did. We mentioned the fact that there were problems in the District of Columbia. That is about all.

Q He did not specifically take up these things he said he did?

THE PRESIDENT: No, he is coming back later on.

Q I have a pest, too. (Laughter) What about the St. Lawrence this time?

THE PRESIDENT: You know we are still talking over it and negotiating. We are making progress. I don't think there is any particular news. We are making progress.

Q As long as we are on power in the Northeast, I wonder if you would comment on the attitude of the New England governors with respect to the flood control program?

THE PRESIDENT: You will have to be more specific. In what regard?

Q With regard to the controversy of New England governors with the War Department.

THE PRESIDENT: In what relation? You will have to get specific.

Q Governor Aiken, of Vermont, has said that as a part of State rights,

the land should not be taken without their consent.

THE PRESIDENT: Has the War Department attempted to take land without their consent at any time?

Q No, but that has been his objection.

THE PRESIDENT: Has the War Department at any time sought to take land without the consent of the State of Vermont? Now, that is a rather pertinent question. (There was a brief lull.)

Don't you think that is rather pertinent? Don't you think it would be worth bringing that up? I think there is quite a story in that.

Q Mr. President, in view --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Wait a minute, he is not through with Vermont. I have given him a job -- I have given you all a job.

Q Maybe you can answer it right here?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I am putting it up to you. I am not giving you news on that. I am giving you a chance to follow a trail.

Q They need a little more coaching.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no, you don't.

Q Mr. President, in following that trail, which do you think would be the important guide posts, the question of state rights, or the private power of New England, or the 1940 Republican nominations? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: You see, the most important thing you have to answer on that question is: Has the United States Government sought to take any land in the State of Vermont and condemn it against the will of the people or the State of Vermont? Now, if you find on investigation that the Government has not sought to do that, do

not all of your other questions rather fall by the wayside? (There was a brief lull.) Answer, "Yes," or "No." (Laughter)

Q Do you consider that the Flood Control Act gives the United States the power to take those lands?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know; frankly, I do not know.

Q Has the United States Government ever gone into the State and taken land?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so; not that I know of. And I do not think, in this case, the United States Government has sought to do it, but that is the thing you had better check on.

Q Has there been any suggestion that Vermont would resume its previous disposition to secede and join Canada? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I think it is a situation that will be worked out. I think it is a tempest in a teapot.

Q In that connection, Congressman Rankin in House debate yesterday stated definitely that the 1938 bill had been amended for the specific purpose of permitting power development in New England. Is that your understanding of the bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course that is the objective of it, to permit power development in New England and flood control development and irrigation development and any other you want but emphasize the word "permit."

Q What is the primary purpose?

THE PRESIDENT: The primary purpose, of course, is flood control. It is 99 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the purpose, in fact, it is the whole purpose, 100 per cent. of the present purpose.

Q Mr. President, what was the objection to letting the states have

control of power developed --

THE PRESIDENT: None at all if they pay for it; none at all.

Q I thought they were willing to pay for it two years ago, in the state compact --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Oh, no, the state compact provided that they would purchase and retain the title to the land, do you see? In other words, if you want to build a cottage at Hyde Park, close to my house, I won't sell you the land, I will sell you the right to build the cottage and live there as long as you live, rent free, as long as you pay for the cottage, and when you die I will own the cottage and the land. That is what the state wanted to do.

Q If the states offered a plan under which they would pay all costs, would that be objected to by the Administration?

THE PRESIDENT: The whole thing?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: No, of course not.

Q There was a report in the morning papers from Tokyo, from a Japanese editor, in which he warned the United States that if we should arm Guam, that Japan would have to smash the American fleet. Is there anything you want to say --

THE PRESIDENT: Also there has been some editorial comment about Guam in this country, hasn't there? And one or two columnists have written stories about it. All right, I will put it back in the form of a question: What is it all about, Fred (Storm)? Has any appropriation been asked of this Congress for the rearming of Guam, I mean the fortification of Guam? Answer, "Yes," or "No." It is the same thing. In other words, let us stick to brass

tacks and facts. Do some snooping on that. It is a good story.

Q On this flood --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Wait a minute, he is not finished with Guam yet. He is writing down the answer. In other words, wouldn't it be a good thing for all newspapers, American and Japanese, to find out first, before they rush into all kinds of opinions, whether we are going to ask Congress for any appropriations for the fortification of Guam this year? I should think that would be rather a sensible thing to do.

Q That was recommended by a responsible Naval board. Is it not safe to assume --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) As part of an enormous, big thing -- I don't know what -- two billion dollars. It would be better to find out whether there has been a request for any appropriation.

Q Could we find that out here?

THE PRESIDENT: You can find it out. I don't think that will come up until the Navy is called before the committee. The Army is up there now and the Navy follows them right along in the course of the next day or two.

Q Can you give us your views on the fortification of Guam?

THE PRESIDENT: I can only do it after the Navy gets up there and makes their recommendation for the appropriation of this money. The thing will speak for itself when they get up there.

Q On the line of defenses, has any definite step been taken to have standardization of types of new airplanes, say by having most of the pursuit ships about the same?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. It is a technical question I cannot

answer. In other words, I don't know which companies will build them. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, yesterday there was a rather lengthy conference at the White House with Ambassador Bullitt, the Secretary of War, the Assistant Secretary, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and some people from the Procurement Division of the Treasury and also from the Navy Department. Is there anything you can tell us about that? None of them would talk.

THE PRESIDENT: Just one of the continuous conferences. Probably have a good many more every few weeks.

Q Can you tell us anything about Governor Eccles being here?

THE PRESIDENT: On the general economic situation.

Who wanted to know some more about floods?

Q A story came out on the White House on Saturday that you were considering withdrawing funds allocated for New England flood control if the state continued to impose --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't think there is any news on that, one way or the other, at the present time because I hope that we will be able to go ahead with Federal funds on the problem of the Connecticut River. I have not given up hope yet. It is a pretty long river.

Q Do you think that a solution might include a contract between the state and the Federal Government?

THE PRESIDENT: What kind of a contract?

Q Not the contract that was rejected by Secretary Woodring but a different one eliminating certain phrases he objected to.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know because I never read the contract over.

Q Have you any plans to meet the relief situation if the Congress goes through and cuts this relief bill to \$725,000,000.?

THE PRESIDENT: The only plan is to cut the sail to fit the cloth.

Q In that connection, can you comment on the Byrnes Committee report?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not had a chance to read it. I got a copy of it and a letter from Jimmy Byrnes the other day and I haven't had a chance to read it.

Q In your message on the state of the Nation you said there were means other than war to let the aggressor nations know our sentiments. My editor would like to know if you are willing to amplify that, and whether it would be loans to China, or lifting the Spanish embargo, economic blockades, cooperation with Latin American --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Pete (Brandt), your editor reminds me of old Senator Hale, of Maine, who, way back around 1880 or something like that, when they were talking about building up a Navy for the United States, -- they had not built any ships since 1865 and the Navy was practically nonexistent -- and he kept insisting, when they authorized the first ships for the new Navy, he wanted to know which ship or ships would be stationed off Portland Harbor in case of war. (Laughter)

Q That was thoughtful. (Laughter)

Q In other words, you have not got to the point where you are willing to tell those plans?

THE PRESIDENT: Nobody could ever answer that question, Pete, categorically any more than I can answer the question of the perfectly honest person who comes in and says, "Where have you got a navy?"

Q In that connection, Mr. President is it possible that the action of

Secretary Hull with respect to aircraft manufactures may be extended to other commodities used in war?

THE PRESIDENT: That I do not know. It depends on each case.

Q There is a report that the President of Mexico has accepted your invitation to come here in March?

THE PRESIDENT: No; I am afraid that is only a report.

Q It is also reported that the President of Brazil is coming up here after the foreign minister comes up here.

THE PRESIDENT: I did not know that. I will be very glad to have a visit from the President of Mexico and the President of Brazil, but the only thing I know is that the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Senor Aranha, is coming.

Q Are you taking any new steps in connection with the controversy with Commonwealth and Southern over the sale of their properties?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard a word for three weeks, not a word.

Q Is it your understanding that this entire \$725,000,000. can be used in the next five months or does it depend on the obligations going over into the next fiscal year?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. The simple way of putting it is this: I cannot give you the exact figure out of the \$725,000,000. but you will remember when I asked for \$875,000,000. to be appropriated for the balance of this fiscal year, the budget showed that out of the \$875,000,000. there would actually go out of the Treasury in the form of cash \$750,000,000. before the thirtieth of June. That lag of \$125,000,000. was caused by various elements. For example, materials obligated, that is, ordered the end of May, let us say, or the beginning of May and delivered on the job the

twentieth or twenty-fifth of June, probably would not actually be paid for until the fourth or fifth of July. In the same manner a great many WPA workers, in fact practically all of them, working from the fifteenth of June to the first of July, -- the money would not go out of the Treasury until three or four days into the next fiscal year. Therefore, if the total appropriation is \$725,000,000., the actual burden on this fiscal year out of the Treasury Department would be, Oh, substantially what? -- \$110,000,000. or \$115,000,000. less than the \$725,000,000. It would be approximately \$610,000,000.

Q Can you tell us anything as to the size of the relief cut to bring the figure down to the \$725,000,000.?

THE PRESIDENT: The size of the cut?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that Colonel Harrington has worked that out.

My recollection is that it means a discharge of more than -- somewhere between a million and a million and a quarter of relief workers by the first of June, and judging on the ratio of three and a half people dependent on each relief worker, it takes off relief about, between four and five million people between February and the first of June.

Q Mr. President, could you give us anything on the size of the processing taxes?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it is a pending question. I have not heard anything about it. It will be one of those things studied by the committees on the Hill. The final discretion rests with them. The only thing that can be said is what has been said

before, that processing taxes do fall in the general category of taxes on the consuming public as a whole. They belong in that category just like the cigarette tax, and the gasoline tax and things of that kind.

Q Do you look upon it as a depressant?

THE PRESIDENT: It undoubtedly is a depressant.

Q And in your Budget Message you recommended against any depressant?

THE PRESIDENT: That is right.

Q On this relief situation, Mayor La Guardia told the Senate Committee, as representative of Mayors of cities, that the cities cannot bear this increased cost of feeding these people that are cut off the relief rolls if the cut goes through on relief. Who is going to feed those people?

THE PRESIDENT: I am asking myself that question. The Mayor is substantially correct. Comparing the situation with 1933, let us say, the financial condition of nearly all cities, the great majority, is very definitely better off. It could not possibly be as bad as it was then and have the cities survive. Some of you will remember in the fall or early winter of 1932-33, the problem of the City of New York which had to borrow enough money on tax certificates and one-month, thirty-day notes, and things like that to meet its own payroll. The City of New York was practically broke, could not get credit from the banks or anybody else. That was true. Detroit was in an equally -- rather, a worse situation. Of course that could not last.

Since then, gradually, the cities have been getting to a position where they were meeting their carrying charges and meet-

ing the due dates on their bills and notes and bonds and today the general credit situation of the cities is good insofar as their existing obligations go. But they are not in a position, because they are all very close to their debit line, beyond which they cannot go because of constitutional or statutory provisions. They are so close to it that they could not properly meet very much more in relief costs. Most of them are taking pretty good care of the unemployables, which is in accordance with what has been the policy for four or five years, but they are not able, even today, to take care of the employables who are on the waiting list of WPA. In other words, where there are three million people on WPA, there are at least another million people who are on the waiting list to get on.

Q Mr. President, if there is a reduction in WPA funds, would that reduction be prorated through the months or made heavier toward the end of the fiscal year?

THE PRESIDENT: That I do not know. That has been testified to, I think by Colonel Harrington, before the Senate committee, I don't know what his schedule is.

Q Returning for a minute to my question, if Congress should make appropriations for the 1940 year, so that that money would be available on the first of July, then would you still have to have this \$110,000,000. or \$115,000,000. lag?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Those funds are not made available until the first of July. We could not obligate any of it before the first of July for materials and things of that kind.

Q On this flood control matter, would you care to give us the benefit

of your conclusions as to Governor Aiken's motives in asking for that defense fund?

THE PRESIDENT: I certainly am not going to give you opinions on anybody's motives. (Laughter)

Q Can you tell us anything more about Donald Wakefield Smith?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not done a thing about appointments now since last Tuesday.

Q What about Messages, Mr. President? Any schedule?

THE PRESIDENT: I have only one more Message going in, as I can remember, and that relates to this health report which I am transmitting with a very brief Message. It is health security -- the program of health security.

Q How about railroads?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not any Message on that now. I am not dead sure on railroads that I will send a Message because, after all, we all know what the problem is. I cannot add to the statement very much. I am seeing Senator Wheeler, I think he gets back today, and Congressman Lea.

Q Will your Health Message go up tomorrow?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not written it yet. It may go up Thursday.

Q When did you say you would see Senator Wheeler?

THE PRESIDENT: Within the next two or three days, and Congressman Lea, too.

Q Both of them?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

(At this point Mr. Early spoke to the President.)

Oh, excuse me, I forgot entirely that I have a very important

Message going up on Thursday.

Q What is that?

THE PRESIDENT: On the situation -- two things which go right together.

The first is the situation that has been created by the Supreme Court decision in regard to employees of companies like the New York Port Authority -- and there are a lot of them all over the country -- and also the owners of bonds of organizations like the Port Authority, under which decision, unless there is legislation passed before the fifteenth of the month, the Treasury has got to tax retroactively for three years all salaries of employees of those quasi Government institutions, and the interest on all their bonds, retroactively. And, of course, with that goes the other part of the same subject on which I sent a Message last April regarding the future taxation of all Government salaries of all kinds, Federal, state and local, and all coupons on future Government bonds, Federal, state and local. In other words, conferring by statute the right to put on a Federal tax and the rights by states to put on state taxes. It is a repetition of what I said last April.

Q Will that constitute your short and simple statute -- two parts?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q What was that decision?

THE PRESIDENT: The Port of Authority of New York.

Q I take it from what you say that you send the Philippine Islands' report without a Message?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that will go up without a Message -- go up with a letter.

Q This week?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I have not got around to it yet.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #519,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 20, 1939, 10.43 A.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Will somebody ask a question? I haven't any news.

Q Tell us something about the railroad conference of yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, making progress; that is about all.

Q What about your Philippine Message?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is going up on Monday or Tuesday, not in the form of a Message but of a letter.

Q Will you later on send up a special Message?

THE PRESIDENT: No; letters will cover the whole thing.

Q Is the Federal Government going to do anything about those dispossessed share croppers in Southeastern Missouri?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard since day before yesterday. The Farm Security had some people out there; I cannot give you the details of what has happened.

Q Have they reported?

THE PRESIDENT: To me? No.

Q Will you comment on this suggestion for a world cotton conference?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it would be a very good thing to have one.

The latest report from the wheat conference is that it is going very well.

Q Do you contemplate taking any initiative in that?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know yet; just talking about it.

Q Does it seem as though there will be world wheat control, crop control?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they are working towards that.

Q Has any progress been made, to your knowledge, on a flood control compromise?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard a word since Tuesday.

Q Mr. President, have you heard anything from McNutt (High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt of the Philippines) as to when he is coming back or if he is coming back?

THE PRESIDENT: I think he is coming back this spring. I do not know; I have not had any definite word.

Q Is that a resignation or a business call?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know; the subject has not been discussed at all.

Q Can you tell us when or if you are going to send Donald Wakefield Smith's name to the Senate?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not done anything about appointments since last Tuesday.

Q Mr. President, some of the news this morning, I think, stated that the Attorney General had recommended, or taken some action on possible Federal judges. Has that reached you in any way?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet. We are going to talk over the week end about quite a lot of vacancies, Federal judges and district attorneys and marshals. You see, there are a good many vacancies and, when the new Attorney General went in, he was not familiar with all the details or recommendations and has been studying them. I think he is about ready to take that up.

Q Is Senator Guffey going to talk to you about the Third Circuit today?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of.

Q Can you say whether you do or do not favor the \$5,000,000. appropriation for fortifying Guam?

THE PRESIDENT: Is there a \$5,000,000. appropriation for fortifying Guam?

Q That is my understanding of it.

THE PRESIDENT: Deepening the harbor?

Q Guess you have got me there. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you see a difference between an authorization and an appropriation?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and, by the way, you can all do a very great service to the American people: It is one of those things that, I do not suppose, one citizen out of ten, maybe one out of a hundred understands the legislative process. Actually beginning I do not know when, but early in the last century, the Congress formed the habit -- there is nothing in the Constitution about it -- formed the habit of passing authorizations and for well over a hundred years the Congress has been passing authorizations for future programs.

Now, it is perfectly correct in writing a headline to say that such and such a project, a local project or a veterans' hospital or flood control or Federal buildings or all kinds of things, that it has been authorized by the Congress, but the average layman, the average reader, when he reads that story that the thing has been authorized, he assumes that it is going to start.

The Press can be of real service to the Nation in making it clear to the people that an authorization does not mean that the thing is going to be done.

I suppose, if you were to add up the different authorizations that have been made by the past seventy Congresses, you would find that the amount of money authorized runs into five or six billion dollars of projects that have never been built. Authorization does not mean building. It means that this Congress says, by formal action, "We are going to authorize something and we hope that some future Congress will go along and appropriate the money for us." That is all that it means. And, as I say, there are probably dozens and dozens of Federal projects that were authorized a hundred years ago that have never been built.

Q It would seem to commit the Congress to give the project but it commits the Administration to nothing at all?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely nothing; one Congress cannot commit a future Congress.

Q It could commit itself in one session to act in a second session?

THE PRESIDENT: Not necessarily. This session authorizes -- what will I say? -- a new post office for Baltimore; it does not mean that at the next session they are going to appropriate the money for a new post office in Baltimore. It is an expression of what they would like to do at some future time. There is no commitment. You will find dozens and dozens of things where they have done that at the first session and then have failed to go through with it at the second session.

Q You do not think there is any deception or misrepresentation to have one session of Congress say that it is in favor of doing a thing with no idea in back of its mind of doing it?

THE PRESIDENT: I think, probably, when they pass the thing they expect

to do it. There is no deception in it. It is the expression of a pious hope. (Laughter) It is -- what will I say? -- it is a New Year's resolution. (Laughter) Sometimes they are lived up to.

Q Mr. President, need there be any confusion in anybody's mind as to where you say you stand on Guam, to be specific?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any confusion; I do not think there need be.

Q You are for it?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I am not. That is exactly the point; let us get it perfectly clear: This board of the Navy said, "Here is a beautiful idea. The total cost will run to -- I don't know what -- five or six hundred million dollars. This is what we think at the present time should be done over a course of years. All right. We actually want forty or fifty million dollars spent this year towards that program." All right. Now, I am not taking sides or bothering my head about the long-range program. I am considering the appropriations for this year, that is all. I am not committing myself. I am not making up my mind because I do not know what we are going to need next year or the year after or five years from now on that program. I have not the faintest idea. The change in world events between now and next January might make it possible for us to abandon the rest of that program; I do not know.

Q As of today.

THE PRESIDENT: As of today I am in accord with the proposal to start the dredging of the harbor of Guam.

Q What was that word?

THE PRESIDENT: In accord.

Q In 1919 another Naval board recommended the fortification of Guam and that became the basis of the 1922 Naval Conference. Is there any such thought in connection with this as a possible basis for negotiations with Japan?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I hadn't thought of it at all. We simply thought that the harbor of Guam needs deepening.

I will give you an illustration about authorization. In 1916 the Congress passed an authorization bill for a tremendous increase of the Navy, a great many battleships, some battle cruisers -- three battle cruisers, and 100 destroyers and 50 submarines, et cetera. Older people will remember that particular program; there was a great deal of interest in it. Actually, the program was not carried out because at the end of the war we did not want to build any and then we had the 1921 Conference. We completed the three battle cruisers, which were actually under construction, and converted them into airplane carriers.

Q The dredging will cost about a million and a half?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so.

Q You approve that for next year's appropriation bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q In your Message to the Congress a few days ago, you created or spoke of a Federal Real Estate Board -- I think that was the name of it -- to study the effect of local properties, which includes the District of Columbia. It occurred to me that that might possibly be a general program with relation to the government of the District of Columbia, with respect to which we do not now have

any other bureaus. Anything you can tell us on that?

THE PRESIDENT: There isn't any program at the present time but, on the problem of the District Government, I have been very much concerned of late, as I told you, about the human needs of the District of Columbia. In other words, primarily, the question of hospitals and health. I am not the least bit satisfied with the present status.

As to the future, it is all more or less involved with the question of the government of the District of Columbia. As a general proposition, that involves taxes in the District of Columbia. If you will dig up the report that was made two years ago, you will see that in comparison with the cities in the United States of similar size -- I think they took the five next biggest cities and the five next smallest cities -- it was shown that taxes, as a whole, in the District of Columbia are lower. They are at the bottom of the list of cities of the same size. The first thing we have got to determine is whether the District of Columbia taxes can be raised to bring in more money to run the District of Columbia government. Then, having determined that, we must determine as to whether the Federal Government might add to its contribution more money than it is giving now. But the fact remains that we have got to get more money, both by taxes and by Federal contributions, to improve the government of the District of Columbia.

Q May I ask you one more question? May I presume that I am correct in saying that your reports from that Federal Board, on which there are two members of your Cabinet, would find as to whether or not the Federal Government owed more or less or whether their share

would be more or less?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I do not think so. I think I would put as number one, as to whether the District of Columbia should not pay more taxes.

Q Mr. President, coming back to this Guam thing, there is one point on which I am not quite clear. You said you are in favor of dredging the harbor of Guam. Only a part of the \$5,000,000. appropriation is for dredging. Are you in favor of the \$5,000,000. appropriation?

THE PRESIDENT: What are the other things? To improve the landing facilities for planes, both in the harbor and on the ground?

Q There is another million for barracks?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that is right.

Q You want the whole appropriation?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, because those barracks, as I remember it, are in very bad shape and inadequate for the present number, small number of marines who are staying on the Island.

Q Should they appropriate it so that the \$5,000,000. will be available next year or do you want a million and a half available for dredging?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know because I have not seen the bill.

Q Have you heard yet from Rublee (Mr. George Rublee) concerning suspension of refugee negotiations with the German Government?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing new on that. You will have to ask the State Department.

Q Anything new on the relief situation?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing, except what I read in the papers this morning.

Q Would that plan be acceptable to you for the appropriation (for relief) to carry through until about April at the present rate?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot say anything on that.

MR. STORM: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #520,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 24, 1939, 4.10 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, boys, how are you?

Q What are those (indicating)?

THE PRESIDENT: Just some of the new stamps.

Well, I think it is a very dull day today.

Q They tell me that the Susan B. Anthony stamp is a winner. A lot of women think it is a great stamp. Did Farley ever tell you that it is a big money-maker?

THE PRESIDENT: Get the story on the sales of it compared with the other three-cent stamps. It is way up on top of the list.

Q What is that?

Q The Susan B. Anthony stamp.

THE PRESIDENT: The same way, the Mother's Day stamp went awfully big. But the Virginia Dare, holding a baby in the arms, did not get anywhere at all. Nobody paid any attention to it. (Laughter) I thought that one would go big but they didn't care about the baby.

Q That was a five-cent stamp?

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. It made a difference.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think I have anything today except that on Thursday, if you will go to the Attorney General, he will give you a story about the National Parole Conference that will be held here this spring. Let him give the story.

Q Mr. President, will Mr. Amlie take to the I.C.C. any definite ideas on railroad rehabilitation?

THE PRESIDENT: That I really -- you should ask some other source, probably the Almighty.

Q Has the Attorney General submitted any recommendation on the judgeship for Southern California?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, there have been various reports published in various parts of the country about the possibility of a resignation from Secretary of Agriculture Wallace. Have you any comments?

THE PRESIDENT: About what?

Q About the possibility of the resignation of Secretary Wallace?

THE PRESIDENT: That is another pipe dream.

Q Could you, sir, give us any light on the Federal Communications Commission situation further than you put in your letter to the Chairman today?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so. I think that Senator Wheeler's committee and Congressman Lewis' committee are going to have the Chairman up there to discuss things in the hearing, and probably other people, to see whether something can be worked out for reorganization.

Q What was the cause of your dissatisfaction, the five-man setup or --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, there are -- the principal difficulty, as you doubtless know, is that the law in regard to the work of the Federal Communications Commission in effect says, "You gentlemen are a Commission and you will please do what is necessary in regard to wire communications and radio communications," and fails almost completely to announce any policy for the gentlemen on the Commission to follow. That is pretty generally

recognized, I think, by the Press and the Congress and the Senate -- the House and Senate.

If any of us were given a job merely to supervise such and such an industry without being told what was expected of us, we would find it rather difficult to carry out the job that was given to us. You are supposed to be told when you are given a job what the policy or the objective is but that does not exist in the law and that is the primary trouble.

The first thing that has got to be done is to state the policy of the Government of the United States and, when that is done from the experience already gained, we probably will be able to make certain administrative changes which will make it easier to carry out the objectives laid down by the Congress.

That is about all one can say at the present time.

Q. Any idea of what the policies should be?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing more than I have said. Of course there are a good many different methods of carrying out a blueprint. You can make half a dozen different blueprints. It seems probable we should have a somewhat different setup from what we have now. But, on the other hand, you can pick from any two or three different blueprints, and that is the thing that the hearings will bring out.

Q. Will that change in the setup involve any change in the status of Chairman McNinch?

THE PRESIDENT: No; obviously there will be no change without legislation.

Q. Do you have in mind a three-man Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: I have answered that already.

Q. We did not quite hear that?

THE PRESIDENT: I have answered that already. In other words, I have told you that there can be several different kinds of blueprints.

Q. On the matter of substantive policy, you mean such things as control over networks and approval of states and supervision?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, all those.

Q. Would you like Congress to give them some kind of policy with respect to ownership, multiple ownership?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q. What about newspaper ownership?

THE PRESIDENT: That is one of the things. There is not any policy today and I think everybody would be happier, including newspapers and radio station owners, if they knew the law.

Q. What about individual control over the stations by the chains?

THE PRESIDENT: That is one of the questions. There ought to be a policy.

Q. Does the policy apply to radio alone or to telegram and telegraph and telephone?

THE PRESIDENT: Same thing for them.

Q. Same degree?

THE PRESIDENT: No, because you have a much simpler picture there; you have three things.

Q. Can you tell us anything about the background of the Amlie appointment, who is for him or anything of that sort?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose I might put it this way: I have to pick a non-Democrat. (Laughter)

Q And were Republicans naturally barred?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no; what was he?

Q A Progressive.

THE PRESIDENT: All I wanted to know was, "Is he a non-Democrat?" And they said, "Yes," and that was all right.

Q With whom did you have this conversation? (Laughter)

Q What about his qualifications for the post. Did you take cognizance of that?

THE PRESIDENT: Do you suppose I would have sent his name in if I thought he was not qualified?

Q I am asking what the qualifications are, I assure you.

THE PRESIDENT: Have I ever been asked a question like that in all our Press Conferences? Do you want me to give you a list of the qualifications of people whose names I submit to the Senate? Do you want me to give you his life history, a list of the things that he said or that he did for the last twenty years? That is silly.

Q Mr. President, is there any thought of asking the Attorney General for an opinion on this large controversial question of the President's power to lift the Spanish embargo?

THE PRESIDENT: You will have to ask the State Department about that. The lawyers have been going into it, I think, for the last month and I frankly do not know what the status is.

Q In that connection, putting aside the legal aspects of it, do you feel that the embargo on the shipment of arms to Spain is consistent with traditional foreign policy?

THE PRESIDENT: That reminds me of a piece I read this morning that there should be a specific outline of a definite, hard and fast

foreign policy to meet every possible contingent case, next week, next month, next year and through all the years. Now, how is that humanly possible? Anybody who knows anything about foreign policy knows that it is not.

Q That implies, sir, that you think the foreign policy should be flexible and perhaps --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, it does not; that is exactly the point. That is didactic. In other words, because you cannot outline a specific foreign policy to meet every possible act for twenty years to come, it does not mean that your foreign policy is purely flexible and therefore nonexistent. I think the American foreign policy is pretty well established. It started in 1776 and we have been gathering, during the course of all those years, a pretty definite American foreign policy. It is 150 years old -- a little more than that, 164 years old. That is the American foreign policy and you cannot write that down, one, two, three, four, to meet every situation that is going to come up in every part of the world in the next year or next ten years.

No human being can define foreign policy except a columnist.

(Laughter)

Q Do you feel the present situation in Spain has changed since the time you employed the embargo so that a review of that situation is desirable now?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have the history of the present position as far as I have. I think you can review it and make your own interpretation of what, exactly, has been happening over the last two and a half years. I might not agree with your interpretation.

but I would probably agree with your facts.

Q In your conversation today with Mr. Quigley or Mr. Jones (Jessé Jones, Chairman of the R.F.C.), did you discuss the possibility of R.F.C. financing for those Nebraska power districts?

THE PRESIDENT: I did not with Mr. Quigley. Mr. Jones said, as he was going out, that he had had an application from one company and he did not have much details but he would let me know about it later on. That was one company.

Q Was it one of the power districts in the State?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so.

Q It seems they are looking for money.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us to what extent the Government is going to provide additional facilities for counter-espionage purposes? Can you tell us to what extent the Government has gone into it?

THE PRESIDENT: Only the additional appropriations that have been asked for. That is all we can ever say on that. If we get the money, it will be spent for that purpose but, of course, we cannot tell you how it is going to be spent because that would be the same thing as telling the other fellow that you are after him.

Q Do you favor a City Manager for the District of Columbia?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not taken that up at all. I read it in the papers that I had. (Laughter)

Q In your talks on the local tax situation and other problems, has there been any discussion of what is called "Local Suffrage" and "Local Self-Government"?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q There was a move made in the house today for an inquiry into the possibility of impeaching Secretary Perkins. Would you care to comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Increasing what? (Laughter)

Q Impeaching. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose the answer is "No, not yet."

Q Mr. President, have you conferred in the last few days with Secretary Woodring on this New England flood control situation?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so. I do not think we have talked about it for about a week. Is there anything new on it?

Q Senator Walsh is back in town -- we hope he is -- (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think I have talked to Harry about it for just about a week.

Q Are you going to ask for a deficiency appropriation to continue the monopoly inquiry?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it goes right to the Committee, does it not?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Undoubtedly we will have to. They all feel they have not enough money to last them through the year.

Q The S.E.C. feel that they need a considerable sum of money to carry out their part of it.

Q \$400,000. is what Chairman Douglas told us today.

THE PRESIDENT: Doesn't that deficiency appropriation go to the whole Committee and then get allocated?

Q Yes sir. The original appropriation was split six ways. That is what Douglas said.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes and that has all been allocated. Have not I already

asked for a deficiency appropriation for the whole Committee?

You might check on that. I have an idea I had already asked for another lump sum. I do not know how they divide it up between the six different agencies. I think I have asked; if I have not, I am going to.

Q Have you any comment on the possible extension of medical aid activities to rural aid and to the farmers?

THE PRESIDENT: That is true of Farm Security. I do not know a thing about it.

Q They have a group that is parallel to the Group Health Association.

THE PRESIDENT: In how many places do they have that, do you know?

Q In a large number of counties throughout the Dakotas.

Q. Throughout the country.

THE PRESIDENT: I will have to find out about it.

Q Can you tell us how much the Monopoly Committee will need?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know.

MR. STORM: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #521,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 27, 1939, 10.56 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Remember, Russell (Young), the old days when you and I used to cover the State Department?

Q (Mr. Young) Yes, sir; nice days, too. I always liked Buchanan.

(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: What is the news?

Q Mr. President, do you think the strategic potentialities of Guam inhibiting the possible invasion of the Philippines ought to be considered in the work being done there?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know.

Q Mr. President, has this Government taken any steps to assist or facilitate France in buying planes in this country?

THE PRESIDENT: As you put the question, no. The actual fact is a very simple one. The French Government has wanted to buy planes over here for obvious reasons. We talked it over in Cabinet and we have considered it first from the point of view of the fact that most of the airplane factories in this country are, today, idle. Six of the major companies are practically closed up. One of the largest engine companies just the other day laid off 1500 men. For our own program in the future it is very desirable that we facilitate the getting of new orders to start the airplane plants going, especially if those orders can come in very quickly so that they will be substantially completed before our larger

program can be authorized and actually got under way. The French Government did want planes and we told them there was no reason why they should not place orders for planes -- in fact, it would be an excellent thing for them to do. That is about the size of it.

Q The same for Great Britain, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. I don't think they are actually after any planes at this time; not that I know of.

Q Mr. President, are they being given any financial assistance in the way of credit or anything like that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, nothing at all.

Q Nothing at all, just cash on the barrelhead.

Q Can you clear up this matter as to whether the Secretary of the Treasury had issued orders to permit a representative of the French Air Ministry to fly in this plane at Los Angeles?

THE PRESIDENT: That, again, is putting it just so much off color that it is not quite right. In other words, the Treasury and the War Department have said there was no objection to their ordering planes from private companies. Well, let us be perfectly specific. You want to know what this plane was that crashed. It was a plane which had not been accepted by the United States Government. It was purely a manufacturer's plane. It was being flown at the time at a public municipal airport by the company. We don't know whether, on our new order, we will buy that plane or some other plane because that plane has not yet been placed in competition with the other planes, and we do not know yet what type we will order. Our decision will be based on competition as to type and

also competition as to price. That won't happen, as I understand it, for about another six weeks or two months. In other words, it was a perfectly normal purchase and a perfectly normal testing out of the plane.

Q Mr. President, where does the Treasury Department move in this picture? I can understand about the War Department but I cannot about the Treasury.

THE PRESIDENT: For two very simple reasons: The first is that the Treasury Department is, of course, interested in building up the trade of the United States as a general thing. This is a part of American exports. And the second reason is that on the procurement of planes and a great many other things, the Procurement Division of the Treasury works in very close cooperation with the Army procurement system and the Navy procurement system.

Q Mr. President, will you see members of the Maine Congressional delegation in regard to Passamaquoddy?

THE PRESIDENT: Will I what?

Q Will you see members of the Maine Congressional delegation in regard to Passamaquoddy?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of. I don't think there has been a request to come down and talk to me.

Q I understood that there has been.

MR. McINTYRE: Not recently, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Not recently.

Q Can you comment on the Civil Service conference yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: There will be a story on that but not until Monday.

Q Has Judge Manton, of New York, submitted his resignation?

THE PRESIDENT: No; I have not heard of it.

Q Has the name of Ben Smith been suggested or considered as Ambassador to Russia?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. You will have to ask the State Department. I suppose we have had -- I suppose the State Department has had at least 75 or 100 names submitted.

Q Are you considering the names of possible successors to Mr. McNutt of the Philippines?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing on that at all. I don't even know when he is coming home.

Q Any appointments -- any nominations today?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think, Earl (Godwin) there is anything going up today.

Q Have you had any report from the Business Advisory Council here?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet. I saw two or three of them yesterday who dropped in to see me.

Q What was their attitude toward the Government now?

THE PRESIDENT: Very nice. (Laughter)

Q Are they going to cooperate?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q May we expect a story any time soon about aircraft mechanics?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know where that stands. I know they are still working on it.

Q They told us that it was on your desk, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet. I asked them about it three days ago and they said they are not ready yet.

Q Any comment on the discussion of the Wisconsin Legislature with respect

to Mr. Amlie?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Did a faction of the Democratic Party out there ask you for an interview to discuss that?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

MR. STORM: Thank you, Mr. President.