

## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #571,  
In the President's Study at Hyde Park, New York,  
August 11, 1939, 11.00 A.M.

Q (Mr. Belair) Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Well, Captain (addressing George Durno who is captain by consent of the baseball team, composed of members of the Press, et cetera, which annually plays Mr. Lowell Thomas' team at Pawling), how are you?

Q (Mr. Durno) Fair.

THE PRESIDENT: Here is a statement on the signing of the Social Security Act, which you can all have.

I will keep one copy for myself and you can have the rest. That is for immediate release. I do not want to delay it too much after the signing of the bill. That is easy; all you have to do is to write a two-line lead and put it on the wires.

Q You do not have any other news, do you, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have except that I would be very grateful if you could make it clear somehow that the check I got yesterday, \$600,000., does not go to Warm Springs at all, in any shape, manner or form. It has nothing to do with Warm Springs.

Q Where does that go?

THE PRESIDENT: National Infantile Paralysis Foundation.

MR. HASSETT: All of Tom Rigley's publicity emphasized that.

Q (Mr. Durno) I do not think any of the stories gave that impression, Mr. President.

Q (Mr. Belair) I think I might have done that.

THE PRESIDENT: Because there is all the difference in the world. You

see, the National Infantile Paralysis Foundation has nothing to do with Warm Springs. At the present time it is principally engaged on research into the causes of infantile paralysis. None of that money goes to Warm Springs. That (Warm Springs) is an aftercare thing. That is for after you have been bitten by the bug and it has acted on you.

Last year, for instance, the National Infantile Paralysis Foundation gave away grants to those different institutions, colleges and medical foundations and things like that. Then they gave an amount -- I have forgotten what the sum was -- to Tuskegee to set up a place there to care for colored children.

Q (Mr. Belair) It is an honest mistake that I made. The office told me they were handling the whole thing in New York and then, at the last minute, they came in for a separate story on the money.

THE PRESIDENT: This is all off the record. There is a most amazing ignorance about Warm Springs. They think that all this money has been going to Warm Springs. Well, it has not. Of course, actually the first year's money did go to Warm Springs and out of that money -- I have forgotten what it was -- \$600,000. or \$700,000. -- don't take these figures down because they are all cockeyed, because they are only approximations -- and that went into the new buildings. Then, we have been running Warm Springs at a loss every year of between \$100,000. and \$160,000. Those are just the plain, out-of-pocket losses because out of the average of one hundred people down there, there are about sixty full charity cases where the children do not have to pay one cent. So that the balance of the first year was used to pay off that net deficit of operating Warm

Springs.

Then, as I remember it, the following year the localities got 70% and Warm Springs got 30% and that 30% obtained in that year has been used since then to pay the deficit of operating Warm Springs.

Since then, in 1936 and 1937, it was divided 70% to the localities and 30%, those two years, to this committee on research, and that 30%, in 1936 and 1937, was given to the University of Southern California and the Harvard Infantile Paralysis Commission and, not the Rockefeller Institute, because that is like carrying coals to Newcastle, but to Yale Medical School, to Michigan and to one or two others.

Q There were about ten or twelve.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, ten or twelve. So Warm Springs got nothing in 1936 and 1937 and, in 1938, we started the Warm Springs National Foundation (National Infantile Paralysis Foundation?), which was the development of this research committee, and in 1938 30% went to them and in this past year 50% went to them. So none of this birthday money, since 1935, has gone to Warm Springs. We have been carrying this deficit for operating out of the 1934 and 1935 monies since then and it is damned near gone.

Q How about those last two buildings? They were contributed?

THE PRESIDENT: The education one was but not the big one.

Q Georgia Hall was, was it not?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q I thought there was a plaque in there?

THE PRESIDENT: No. On Georgia Hall, Columbus gave the colonnade out-

side and the rest of Georgia Hall was built about three-quarters with the contribution on the birthday from the State of Georgia.

Q I remembered a plaque in there with something about contributions.

THE PRESIDENT: As given by the citizens of Georgia. Well, it was part of that year's contribution and the other quarter -- they did not have enough -- came out of the contributions subscribed.

I do not think there is anything outside of that.

They say I have got all my bills here.

Q I notice in my statement here that you are glad that insurance benefits had been extended to cover additional employees. Do you mean by that the unemployment insurance benefits? That is down here in the fourth paragraph.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think so; I think you are right.

Q What did you think of the Connally Amendment, the two for one?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that really goes into the fact that this committee is looking into the thing. I will talk background, if you want, on this for a minute. Here is your problem: There are eight or ten states that are either paying nothing by way of old age pensions or are paying such ridiculously low old age pensions that they are out of line with all the rest of the country. Quite frankly, they are in the deep South. For instance, down at Warm Springs, after George (Durno) goes down there and locates in his old age, all he will get for his old age pension is \$3. or \$2. a month. I don't think George will be quite happy on \$3. a month.

Q (Mr. Durno) I could live on the Marvin McIntyre Possum Preserve.

(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: That is right, George. This is an effort on the part

of those states to have the Federal Government contribute instead of matching on a 50-50 basis. In other words, Georgia gives \$5. and the Federal Government gives \$5. But this is an effort to make the Federal Government give \$10. if Georgia gives \$5. The danger is that it is an opening and entering wedge for somebody to bring in an amendment next year that the Federal Government will pay the first \$15. And then a year or two later we will have somebody with a happy thought that the Federal Government will pay the first \$25. In other words, you will be federalizing the whole thing.

Of course the State of New York and the Middle Western States and the Far West, a great many of them are actually paying the \$30. a month. A few are paying more because the Federal contribution is limited to \$15. and a great many states are paying their \$15. to get that and a few are paying more than \$15. out of their own pockets.

Now, that raises the whole question of matching. If you apply it to that, why should not you apply it to education? Let us say the State of New York or the State of California would ask the Federal Government to match all their State needs for education. Also, it would raise immediately the question as to whether the Federal Government should give a larger sum, a larger percentage to the poorer states than to the richer states. And the same thing would apply to health.

This committee, that I speak about down here, is continuing -- it is not news -- is continuing the examination of that whole big subject. They are studying, first, the problem of straight match-

ing; secondly, the problem of lopsided matching, which is giving more to the poorer states than the richer states, and also the trend towards federalizing the whole thing and taking the burdens off the states. Well, of course, obviously the Federal Government cannot afford to do that unless, at the same time, it takes over certain state tax fields because otherwise it could not afford it and, if it does this sort of thing, it has got to find the money to do it with.

Q (Mr. Harkness) The Connally Amendment would have been a step, perhaps, towards the Townsend Plan?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No, the Connally Amendment would not have been a step towards the Townsend Plan but it would have been a step towards, first a differentiation between different states and, secondly, towards the Federal Government taking over the whole thing. But that does not mean the Townsend Plan.

You see, the first step of the Townsend Plan is the sales tax, the transaction tax.

Q (Mr. Harkness) It is for a Federal pension.

THE PRESIDENT: But the fact that this may work toward a Federal pension, the Connally thing, does not necessarily mean it would be financed that way. So I do not think you can say, fairly, that it is a step towards the Townsend Plan because you have another if in there. It is an if on top of an if.

Q (Mr. Belair) Some students of this problem believe that the Federal Government, in working out this program, will ultimately come to raising this money through direct Federal appropriations rather than payroll taxes.

THE PRESIDENT: There again you have an if upon an if because, whatever the Federal Government does, it has to find the money.

Q It is a question of where the tax burden should be levied?

THE PRESIDENT: That is it. It brings up the whole question as to who pays the tax. And, of course, the Federal Government now, for six years and a half, has been opposed to the theory of the sales tax as far as it can get away from it because it hits the poor fellows harder than people who can afford to pay more.

Q (Mr. Durno) Recently you got a letter from President Cardenas (of Mexico) which contained some new proposal for --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) It did not.

Q (Mr. Durno) I was just wondering if you care to talk about it.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so because the thing is being handled in the State Department. Actually, in these negotiations, that is literally all you can say -- they are still talking.

Q Is it too early to attempt a definition of the man who?

THE PRESIDENT: The man who?

Q Looking to 1940?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q I mean not merely who but what kind of a fellow must this fellow be?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I think I said, in simple words of one syllable, about all that can be said and it must be said merely in the words that were actually used.

I will give you an illustration: If I were to say, "Within the next half hour Felix (Mr. Belair) is going to drive to Poughkeepsie," it would not be fair if anybody were to think and say, "The President really meant that Felix was going to drive to Pough-

keepsie with a beautiful blonde."

Q It might have been. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Any more than it would be fair to say that Felix was going to drive to Poughkeepsie in an old coach-and-four.

Q With a brunette, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: With a brunette. (Laughter) In other words, the words I used were somewhat carefully chosen and it is a very, very plain English statement without any other interpretation to it. They were chosen so that they would speak for themselves and not say anything that was not in those words. I said words of one syllable. It is just as simple a statement as saying that Felix, in the next half hour, will probably drive to Poughkeepsie. It says nothing about his condition, says nothing about his companions, says nothing about his speed or the vehicles he travels in. I do not even have to say Felix; I can say Jones.

Q Mr. President, may I ask, in view of the fact that that bill was approved in Congress for making another Federal Court term in Poughkeepsie, between Albany and New York, whether that about suggests the possibility of using that old post office building for Federal building purposes?

THE PRESIDENT: I can give you a real local story on that. They are making a survey now in the Public Buildings and Grounds Division of the Interior Department/as to all the Federal or quasi-Federal offices in Dutchess County with the idea, if there are enough of them, to put into the old post office building all offices of the Federal Government that are paying rent. I do not know enough about the details but there is the F.H.A. and the H.O.L.C. and the

P.W.A. and the Federal Court, et cetera and so on. You can work that up yourself. In other words, all the Federal agencies that are not now in the new post office building. If there are enough of them to warrant using the old post office building and thereby saving rent, it is an obvious measure of economy which would be helpful. We have not had any report yet and I do not suppose we will get one until I get back.

Q Your friend, Spratt (Mayor Spratt of Poughkeepsie), as Mayor, has had requests for space for different Federal offices and has not been able to fill them.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I think it is an advisable thing to do if we can use the old post office building and save that rent.

Q Would it be a temporary thing or indefinite?

THE PRESIDENT: Indefinite.

Q Apparently there has been no definite negotiation from Poughkeepsie to take it over, has there?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Is there anything to the story that you contemplate the appointment of Senator Smathers to the Federal Customs Court?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I have had, so far, 1200 applications for the two places.

MR. BELAIR: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Just one thing, also as background because the thing may come up while I am away: I noticed something from Washington this morning about calling Congress back in November. As far as I know, there is no reason at the present time for calling Congress back at this time -- what is today? August eleventh -- until they

begin the regular session on January third except that if an actual crisis of war became imminent -- I would use that language, not as a quote because I would rather have it used as background, but go ahead and use that language -- if a crisis of war became imminent.

Q That is a crisis of which war?

THE PRESIDENT: A crisis of war became imminent in Europe or the Far East. In other words, if it became reasonably certain that there was going to be a war, I would probably immediately call a special session in order to insure American neutrality along the lines of international law so that this country would not be involved. /

Q Does that, sir, indicate you favor complete repeal of all neutrality statutes as they are now and a return to international law?

THE PRESIDENT: The same thing we were seeking before.

Q A repeal of the arms embargo?

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, going back to international law and making us neutral.

Q Would that, sir, give up cash and carry too?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Dick (Mr. Harkness), there are a good many ways of doing that, so you cannot say, "Yes," and you cannot say, "No," to that.

Q There was, sir, a very definite cash and carry provision in the old law which expired and now --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, you can come close to doing a lot of things by executive action. Well, I will give you an illustration: Back in -- before the LUSITANIA was sunk -- Secretary of State Bryan begged the President to warn Americans to stay off

foreign flagships and that was one reason, because the President did not do it, one reason why Mr. Bryan resigned.

Now, there is undoubtedly authority in the President to warn Americans to keep off foreign flagships and if, in spite of that warning, they go on foreign flagships, the Government does not go to war with the nation whose submarine sinks the foreign flagship. In other words, they do it solely at their own risk.

I just used that one as an illustration. The Government can do a great many things without any law and if a fellow wants to go on a foreign flagship, the mere imposition of a fine on him or the threat of a fine is not going to keep him off.

In other words, we are all for the objective of cash and carry -- the objective of it. But there is a question as to whether it requires legislation or what type of legislation, if any.

Now, that is a rather minor point, that whole thing. I would not stress it very much. It is a very minor point. The big thing is the return to international law.

Q (Mr. Harkness) Congress made so much out of the cash and carry clause.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. The objective is perfectly all right.

Q Mr. President, does it still look like you will get to Campobello by the forenoon of Monday?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so. It depends a little bit on wind and weather. I think that is all right.

Q Are you going to have a Press Conference up there at Campobello, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I will tell you all about the cruiser. (Laughter)

Q You won't be coming ashore?

THE PRESIDENT: I may go ashore. I will have lunch with Franklin at the cottage. It is darned hard to get ashore, as George (Durno) knows, because I have to be literally carried in a chair about a hundred feet up the grass to get up to the house on a very winding and very rough path. But I think I will manage to get up to the house for lunch if it is a good day.

Q What time in the morning do you start out?

THE PRESIDENT: I am calling it ten o'clock. I will make it as close to ten as I can and pick you all up in Poughkeepsie, but I have got to talk to the State Department before I leave. I think there may be one or two other calls coming in. And then down in New York I am seeing at the pier -- has that been arranged?

MR. HASSETT: Yes, I have arranged that.

THE PRESIDENT: I mean the Mayor and Mr. Meaney of the State Federation of Labor. They are coming down there to wish me a happy trip.

Q What are his initials, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: George Meaney.

Q He is Chairman of the State Federation?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Any labor problems involved in his presence?

THE PRESIDENT: You never can tell.

Q I imagine that you couldn't. (Laughter)

Q Where will you get on the ship?

MR. HASSETT: Pier 32.

THE PRESIDENT: I would not put that in.

MR. BELAIR: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hope that all your marks are good, not only those of you who are going on the destroyer but those of you who are going up to live in eastern Maine.

Q You mean in Eastport?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. George (Mr. Durno) wasn't there but it was something that happened the last time we were there.

Q I do not remember that.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, this is off the record, but away before prohibition, even before the World War, the Navy used to kick like a steer, in fact they issued an order that no more ships were to go into Eastport because the liquor was bad. It is literally true because Maine is dry. They had the damndest liquor.

I remember once, up the Coast, we ran out of liquor and I think we ran into Rockland and went shopping. We went up to the hotel and I leaned over the counter and said a few kind words to the clerk. I said, "Where can I get some gin?" He said, "Right in the drugstore, next door. Just give him this card." He said, "Talk to the old man at the rear of the drugstore."

I went to the drugstore and I said to the old man, "I want six bottles of gin," and he said, "Right." I said, "How much?" "Oh," he said, "do you want the best gin?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Ninety cents a bottle."

Well, gin was cheaper then than it is now, so he gave us the gin with nice labels, and I took it back on board and that evening we made ourselves a Martini and everybody said, "How," and "Down the hatch," and, well, we had to spit it out.

We found out afterwards that it was gin that was made out of the heads and tails of codfish. Did you ever hear of such a thing? It was fish gin. It was the most horrible thing I have ever tasted and I think it was about 210 proof.

Well, that was the sample of what you would get and up at Eastport they would give you straight denatured alcohol into which they had put a little brown sugar or something to color it up and it was the damndest thing.

Q (Mr. Durno) It is quite a town.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, quite a town.

Q (Mr. Belair) I think I will skip this trip and go back to Washington. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I will tell you, Dick (Harkness), you had better bring your own liquor with you.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #572,  
Campobello Island, New Brunswick,  
August 14, 1939.

THE PRESIDENT: (Speaking to newsmen embarked in LANG) The prettiest thing last night, about two in the morning, was when I looked out of my port and saw you under the searchlights. You were out ahead of us in a queer sort of a pinkish light, in the fog.

You boys can fire some questions.

Q We had quite a trip up here last night.

THE PRESIDENT: The road here was pretty good, wasn't it?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: The only news that we had was stopping at the SQUALUS operations yesterday. We anchored last night, or early this morning, and stayed at anchor for about three or four hours.

Q Where was that, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: It was seven miles southwest of Machias Seal Island.

The easiest way to describe it is that it was about ten miles offshore from Machias Bay, which is a well-known bay, and then we passed under the cliffs of Grand Manan this morning. I don't think our three friends (referring to newsmen in LANG) were up then.

Q Have you been receiving any reports on the international situation?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but nothing that was at all new.

Q Nothing to give you any concern?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course things are not always pleasant. One is bound to have concern, but I don't think there is much of a lead or a story in it, because it wasn't very different from what it has been in the past couple of weeks.

Q In what sense, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: In a sense of imminence, not eminence, but imminence.

Q Mr. President, in view of your message to the Young Democrats'

League, are you pleased with their general response?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is anything to be added to that famous message. The horrible example I cited at Hyde Park of Felix going to Poughkeepsie, or was it George, with the blonde?

Q That was a million dollars worth of publicity for me.

THE PRESIDENT: For you or the blonde?

Q For me.

Q Have you any comment to make on Mayor Kelly's address to the Young Democrats? It was in the Sunday morning papers. Mayor Kelly addressed the Young Democrats the closing night.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen anything of that.

Q I have the story.

THE PRESIDENT: I will take it back and read it on board. That's fine.

Q I think you had better read it now. (Hands the President a press clipping).

THE PRESIDENT: Old Jim Haggerty. I haven't seen old Jim for a long time. How is Jim, Felix? Well, I hope?

Q Yes, sir. I saw him at the Governors' Conference when they came down to Hyde Park for lunch.

THE PRESIDENT: The answer is, Thank you very much for letting me see the Sunday paper.

Q Do you have any comment on that? Mayor Kelly says the Young Democrats are waiting for your answer. Mr. President, could you comment on your statement to the Young Democrats in this way -- your

stand toward the Presidential candidate -- may that be construed as applying also down the line through the Senate, House, etc.?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't say anything about them, did I? I can't enlarge on those simple English words -- words of one syllable, weren't they?

Q If you knew how much thought went into the preparation of that question I think you would make a statement.

THE PRESIDENT: There wasn't as much thought went into that as into the preparation of the letter.

Q Do you think you will stop at Halifax?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we will drop in to Halifax. It depends entirely on fog going around Cape Sable, and you know that's a pretty foggy spot.

Q When will you stop?

THE PRESIDENT: If we do get around it tonight, all right, we will get to Halifax tomorrow.

Q Do you suppose you will go ashore then, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I will not go ashore anywhere. I might just run in to Halifax for mail and papers. If I don't do that I will go in to Sidney or Louisburg at Cape Breton.

Q Maybe we could drop out and see you.

THE PRESIDENT: You know Halifax is an awful place to get to. By train you have to go to St. John and you know how hard it is to go to St. John from here. From St. John you have to get a steamer across to Digby, and then to Halifax. It will take at least twenty-four hours.

Q From Halifax are you going up around Newfoundland?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. It depends entirely on the weather. If it is perfectly clear, I will go up as far as the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Labrador Coast, and if it isn't clear, I may run around the southern part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton Island and then southern Newfoundland. It is all perfectly vague. I have no idea myself. You saw from last night what the weather can do to you. We are not in a small pilot boat the way you were. With a ten thousand ton cruiser, I am pretty careful of it. I don't want her to bump. When you are in a small pilot boat, it doesn't make so much difference.

Q Have you decided what time you are going to take off?

THE PRESIDENT: About five o'clock or a quarter past. I am having all of the old neighbors out to tea on board, first.

Q How many?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose there will be about twenty of them.

Q Captain Johnson of the LANG is coming aboard?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q We still need a headline, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got a thing. I am sending our Chief Boat-swain's Mate down to get some very long, deep-sea, heavy lead hand lines in case we get somewhere offshore on one of those fishing banks.

Q Not much sport in it, is there?

THE PRESIDENT: Food, food! Great food value!

Q Mr. President, when you say there is no imminence of a crisis do you regard the situation as it generally has been in the past?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Just the same as it has been for the last two

weeks. And, of course, as you know, it is a little bit worse than it was for a month or two before that.

Gosh! I wish I could think of something.

Q I thought you would have a swell story right in the back of your head to give us up here.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh! I will give you a story I had entirely forgotten.

I have been having from a great many people for the last six years, complaints that Thanksgiving Day came too close to Christmas. Now this sounds silly. In other words, between Labor Day, which is generally observed, and Christmas, there is too long a gap up to Thanksgiving Day when it comes at the very end of November, and there is a great long gap even for those states that celebrate the twelfth of October, Columbus Day. The stores and people who work, retail people, etc., are very anxious to have it set forward and I checked up and it seems to be the only holiday which is not provided for by law, nationally, even though it may be in a small number of states. In most states it is a Governor's Proclamation. This year, because Thanksgiving Day is the thirtieth of November, (I had better check on that), I am going to step it up a whole week and make it not the last Thursday but the Thursday before the last Thursday in November.

Q This year, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: This year, yes. And on the history of it, it has been held at various times. In the early days of the Republic it was held sometime in October, being a perfectly movable feast, and it was not set as the last Thursday in November until after the Civil War, so there is nothing sacred about it, and as there seems to

be so much desire to have it come a little earlier, I am going to step it up one week.

Q Did you have anything to say to Mayor La Guardia?

THE PRESIDENT: No, just a nice talk.

Q Have you any more hope for peace in the labor dispute between CIO and AFL?

THE PRESIDENT: No change.

Q In the event we have to use Navy radio, will you please expedite this one?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I did all right with them yesterday except that I had to delete one sentence. They had me attending Divine Services and there was no chaplain on board. They wanted to know why Pa hadn't preached the sermon. We radioed back that I wouldn't let him.

Q That would have been worth the price of admission, wouldn't it?

THE PRESIDENT: The whole crew would have attended. You are going to see some lovely scenery if we get up to those parts.

Q So far, so good.

Q You didn't hear a sharp gong about three a.m. Sunday morning? They thought it was a fire alarm when my head struck a bunk.

THE PRESIDENT: Have you got any fishing lines on board? You ought to get plenty of cod and maybe some haddock, and they are darn good. You are Down East, you know. Have them make some codfish cakes and chowder.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #573,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
August 25, 1939, 10.35 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Be careful of your facial expressions this morning.

You are being photographed. (A still photographer and a movie photographer were taking pictures of the Press Conference, this Press Conference being the first since the beginning of the new crisis in Europe.)

Q (Mr. Godwin) Where?

THE PRESIDENT: You must look serious. That is perfect. (Speaking to Mr. Belair) You should not laugh.

What is everybody coming in for this morning?

Q We have a big crowd.

(It was announced that all of the Press were in the room.)

THE PRESIDENT: I literally have no news this morning. You all know the gravity of the situation. There has been no answer as yet from any of the European countries to the messages that were sent yesterday. I do not think there is anything else.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment on Senator Borah's sources of information? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No. I think the implications that have been made on the air by one or two of my friends were, perhaps, justified.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment on Congressman Fish's activities?

THE PRESIDENT: No. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That soft snicker (laughter), that comes

from the Press. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, is it too early to have given any thought to the possible cancellation of your western trip?

THE PRESIDENT: No, Russ (Mr. Young), I do not think so yet. It is just one of those things -- not making any plans ahead, absolutely none. I have not canceled anything and I have not made any more dates.

Q Does the trip stand, or until further notice?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and just the same way with the trip going to Hyde Park on Monday night. That stands subject to further notice.

Q Will the new crisis increase our armament program, specifically the New England air base?

THE PRESIDENT: Not as of today, no.

Q Mr. President, do you plan a special session of Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think I made that perfectly clear. Perhaps there was a little confusion on the word "imminent." I always think that imminent carries with it the connotation of certainty and I would not regard the present situation as certain to result in war. There is not much more to be said about calling Congress. I think we all very devoutly hope that war is not certain.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Mr. President, there are certain things I should not ask you but I am going to ask you if you have that devout hope based on any knowledge?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing more than you have and we all have. In other words, quite frankly, you all know just as much about the situation as I do.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us something about the efforts being

made to take care of the effects of war on the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course there isn't really much that is new on that.

We have all, ever since early September of 1938, we have all been thinking of the steps to be taken in the event that actual war broke out. There has been certain machinery which has been prepared, such as on the financial needs, the bringing back of Americans from war zones and things of that kind. That machinery has been pretty well protected during the past year and it is a question of its use -- pressing the button at the appropriate time. Almost every department of the Government is concerned with that and probably most of the people I will see today from the departments, that I talk to, will refer to the use of that machinery if it becomes necessary.

Q Mr. President, do you have any Latin American mediator (referring to the President's messages to Poland and Germany) in mind?

THE PRESIDENT: No, nobody in mind.

Q Mr. President, so far as the cushioning machinery is concerned, would you say that it was at its maximum efficiency now to operate immediately, so far as you know?

THE PRESIDENT: I would not say maximum. I would say better than it has been at any time in the past. Nothing is ever perfect.

Q Mr. President, have you received the resignation or retirement of Judge Morton of the First Circuit Court?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so. Have we?

Q Do you anticipate it, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of. Judge Morton?

Q Judge Morton.

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Were copies of your message sent to the Latin American countries?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of.

Q Do you expect to go back to Hyde Park, sir, any time soon?

THE PRESIDENT: Not if the general world situation remains next Monday as it is today.

Q Otherwise, you go up about next Monday night?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I say, if it is as it is today next Monday I will stay here.

Q What has got to happen over there, Mr. President, before you call a special session? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I can go over it again. I tried to make it clear. And, after all, that is, at the present time, as of today's news, a rather minor factor in the world news. There are other things more important today.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Mr. President, would you like to have the minutes of this meeting contain our "Happy Birthday" wishes for Mr. Early on Sunday?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is a very, very excellent suggestion. And to have reached the half century mark! Do you remember when we reached the half century mark. There is one thing we can tell him: We feel younger today than we did then, so that is at least --

Q (Mr. Godwin) (interposing) You may! (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I am just holding a little hope out to him. It is always darkest just before the dawn. (Laughter) I think the fifties are pretty good, don't you?

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #574,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
August 29, 1939, 4.15 P.M.

Q (Mr. Godwin) No stamps.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q (Mr. Godwin) I was looking at some stamps that day that they took the picture and everybody in the United States thinks I was looking at your mail. (Laughter)

Q That is just a guilty conscience.

THE PRESIDENT: No, there was only one fellow that ever did that and he is gone.

Q There are no stamps there showing in the picture (indicating picture).

THE PRESIDENT: (addressing Mr. Godwin) I did not hear you this morning. I overslept and did not wake up until a quarter to nine. Were you good?

Q (Mr. Godwin) I will tell you how good I was: I got an idea off you. You dictated it this morning.

THE PRESIDENT: Good.

(It was indicated that all of the Press were in the room.)

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think I have any special news.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Are you aware of what is going on with the BREMEN?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes.

Q Do you care to say anything about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I heard -- do not mention it because this brings in an old friend of ours -- I heard Al Warner on the radio a little while ago --

Q (interposing) He is right here.

THE PRESIDENT: I heard Al talking about privateers. Of course there ain't no such thing as privateers. There hasn't been for a great many years. A ship today is no longer commissioned by what they called Letters of Marque by governors and there is nothing particularly strange about the NORMANDIE or the BREMEN except to suggest that you link the two names together and you can add the De GRASSE and you can add the NEW YORK that went out yesterday. They are all in exactly the same category. Of course it is perfectly obvious that a government has to protect itself against possible future claims. Once upon a time there was a ship called the ALABAMA that was fitted out in England without guns but met on the high seas a ship with guns and she was duly armed and became a vessel of war of the Confederate States of America, which sank a great many of the Union ships. I think we collected about \$15,000,000. from England for having let her go out, her and the SHENANDOAH and one or two others.

Of course, on this particular thing there is or would be a potential liability on the part of the United States if we allowed any ship of any nation to leave here and become armed or arm itself on the high seas for offensive purposes, and therefore these ships are being searched for information as to whether or not they have the possibility of arming themselves on the high seas.

Q Your picture --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That is about all. It does not apply to the BREMEN only, it applies to the NORMANDIE and the De GRASSE and the NEW YORK and probably any other ship that comes in. It

is a matter of precaution to save this Government from potential future liability. I do not think there is anything very exciting. We know that it did occur during the World War.

Q The Treasury information is if that ship is likely to become -- I do not know if they used the word "privateer" --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) There is no such thing as a privateer. A raider, a Government raider, such as the NORMANDIE or De GRASSE or any other ship.

Q The information I have is that if they suspect that or have some reason to believe it, that the decision on it is up to you?

THE PRESIDENT: All I want to know is whether she is carrying guns or not.

At the same time, if it is perfectly obvious that a ship is pursuing a trading voyage and is carrying purely defensive armaments against enemy warships or submarines or otherwise, we allow them into our ports, in and out of our ports, but it has got to be proved that they are purely defensive armaments of a trading vessel.

See how perfectly simple it is, if explained.

Q The ALABAMA case was liability due to the fact that the other ship, which supplied the ALABAMA with guns, had sailed from England?

THE PRESIDENT: As I remember it, the other ship was a British ship too but had been obviously built for war purposes by the Camalier Yard in Liverpool.

Q What was the World War incident, can you tell us that?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not remember the names of the ships, but there was an action fought -- maybe Dan (Captain Callaghan) can remember

it -- there was an action fought down somewhere near, I think it was the Cape Verde Islands, between a British -- either a cruiser or a merchant ship which had been armed for war purposes, not for merchant purposes, and a German merchant ship which had been armed and sent out as a raider. In other words, certain types of merchant ships were used during the World War. They were what might be called quasi cruisers. They were war ships.

Q This Government, then, is establishing such a policy in the event of a further crisis for any vessels of that class?

THE PRESIDENT: Any vessels, any nation.

Q All nations?

THE PRESIDENT: Any nation that is potentially a belligerent nation.

Q Was the interning of German submarines under the same authority?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Was the interning of German submarines under the same authority?

THE PRESIDENT: No, that is a little bit different case because a submarine is a vessel of war.

Q Does the policy apply on the Pacific as well as the Atlantic?

THE PRESIDENT: Anywhere.

Q Did you take the initiative in this case?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. The thing has been talked about for several years. I do not know who started it.

Q Mr. President, what is the outcome of the search of the BREMEN?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. I do not know if it is finished.

Q Can you tell us anything about the removal of the seventeen passengers.

THE PRESIDENT: No, that is purely an immigration question. I do not

know. I have no information.

Q Mr. President, there is some movement on foot to invite the President of Argentina to come up here on some kind of a visit?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing on it at the present time.

Q In a speech last week, Assistant Secretary of Commerce (Assistant Secretary of War?) Johnson suggested that the present crisis might not have occurred if Congress had approved your neutrality suggestion. I wonder if you have anything on that line?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is a sort of "iffy" question but, on the other hand, there are of course a great many people who do feel that the decision of the solid Republican minority in the Senate plus a minority of the Democratic membership was a contributing factor, of which notice undoubtedly was taken in all the capitals of the world. I say "contributing factor" because the opinion ran from those who say it was a major factor to those who say it was a minor factor, but I think everybody says that it was a factor.

Q What do you say?

THE PRESIDENT: I say it was a factor, a contributing factor. There is no escape from that because that is a well-known fact in every capital of the world.

Q Have you received any indication from those in the Senate who voted against the consideration of the neutrality revision --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q -- that they would vote differently?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, can we get away from the war for a moment? Did you discuss the anti-trust situation with Will Hays yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Did not get around to that?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, have you sent a message to Governor Horner of Illinois, asking a special session of the Illinois Legislature on oil?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I sent a letter to Governor Horner and a copy of the letter to the Lieutenant Governor on the oil problem but I did not actually ask him to call his legislature. That would be exclusively up to him. I had a reply that came in yesterday and I sent it over to the Interior Department for notation and preparation of a reply if one is necessary. I do not think we would give them out here. I think that should come out in Springfield. No reason it should not be published as far as I am concerned.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #575,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
September 1, 1939, 10.40 A.M.

(The Secretary of State, Mr. Hull, was present, also Mr. and Mrs. John Roosevelt.)

THE PRESIDENT: (Addressing Earl Godwin) What time did you get up?

Q (Mr. Godwin) About 3.00 or 3.15, right after you aroused the Nation.

Felt like I belonged to the village fire department.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; you were not the only one.

Q (Mr. Godwin) I know it. I wonder if anybody got Borah up.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Where is he?

Q He went to Poland Springs, Maine. (Inaudible)

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Poland Springs, Maine.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I thought you said Poland. That would have been news.

(It was announced that the Press were all in.)

THE PRESIDENT: I think a good many of us had a somewhat sleepless night. Bill Hasset has told you of what happened at the White House and State Department, beginning at 2.50 A.M. I think that a word of praise should be said for our Diplomatic Service because, without much question, we were advised of the beginning of the invasion here in Washington as early as any other outside nation. Ambassador Biddle got through by telephone to Bullitt about 2.35 our time and it was a very poor connection and it is a question as to whether any further telephoning is possible between Paris and Warsaw -- that we don't know -- and Bullitt began getting

through to us at 2.40 and actually did get through at 2.50. As Bill, I think, has told you, the first thing I did was, of course, to call up the Secretary of State and the Under Secretary and the Secretaries of War and Navy and then Bill (Mr. Hassett) got through to the Press Associations within about a minute after that -- I do not think he even stopped to dress -- and was on the radio within another minute and a half after that.

I do not believe at this particular time of this very critical period in the world's history that there is anything which I can say except to ask for full cooperation of the Press throughout the country in sticking as closely as possible to facts. Of course that will be the best thing for our own Nation and, I think, for civilization.

There is nothing that can be said at the present time on some of the things that they, in what almost might be called "local terms," would be asked about. I would say local for the present time would be such questions as, when Congress will be called, the question of a neutrality proclamation. All of those things must await developments, obviously. Things are happening on the other side today, and probably will tomorrow, which will be important factors in the consideration of these other things, I would say American action.

I hope particularly that there won't be unsubstantiated rumors put out, whether they originate here or elsewhere, without checking. It is a very simple thing to check either with the State Department or any other department concerned or with the White House. I will cite a very simple example: The Secretary

of State called me up about fifteen minutes ago, before I came over here, and said there was a report out -- I do not know whether it was printed or not, but if it was printed it would be a pity -- that we had sent out a general order for all American merchant ships to return to American ports. Now, that kind of a thing is confusing to the public mind and what I hope is that the American public will stick pretty closely to facts. I think they will and, in the long run, they will get the facts anyway. As you know, I believe pretty strongly in the commonsense American opinion as a whole -- the mass opinion.

I do not think there is anything else I can tell you about that you do not know already. If you want to ask any questions that can be asked about at this time, it is perfectly all right.

Q (Mr. Phelps Adams) I think probably what is uppermost in the minds of all the American people today is, "Can we stay out?" Would you like to make any comment at this time on that situation?

THE PRESIDENT: Only this, that I not only sincerely hope so but I believe we can and that every effort will be made by the Administration so to do.

Q May we make that a direct quote?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q May we have it again?

(The stenographer read the President's statement, to wit, "Only this, that I not only sincerely hope so but I believe we can and that every effort will be made by the Administration so to do.")

Q Mr. President, I suppose it is somewhat a matter of routine to ask if you have anything to say about Secretary Hull's visit with you

before the Conference?

THE PRESIDENT: Just this usual batch of dispatches and they are coming in now at the rate of one every ten minutes -- in fact, they are coming in at the rate of one every five minutes.

Q From all over?

THE PRESIDENT: All over.

Q Mr. President, are you considering any changes in the Bloom neutrality law?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not considered anything in the last few hours. That follows what I said before.

Q Did you see Ambassador Wilson?

THE PRESIDENT: Ambassador Wilson presented his resignation as Ambassador to Germany and it was accepted and he has been assigned to special duty in the State Department.

Q Presented today?

THE PRESIDENT: Today, yes.

Q Has anyone been named to fill that place?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot answer questions like that.

Q Mr. President, would you indicate what those duties are that he was assigned to?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know; I do not think we are ready to announce that yet.

Q Mr. President, did you say a while ago when Congress is called or whether Congress is called?

THE PRESIDENT: I said, "When."

Q Will you say whether that means definitely Congress will be called, Mr. President? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it means between September first and January second.

Q (Mr. Godwin) That's right.

THE PRESIDENT: There you are; you asked for it. (Laughter)

MR. GODWIN: I will say, "Thank you, Mr. President," if the rest of the gentlemen are willing to agree.

THE PRESIDENT: I really cannot give you anything more.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #576,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
September 5, 1939, 4.10 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: How is everybody?

Q (Mr. Belair) We have got a visitor to the front row today. (Indicating Mr. George Durno whose custom it has been to stand in the back row so that he may more quickly get to the telephone)

Q (Mr. Durno) I thought I would hear a little better.

Q I met a friend of yours from Georgia, Mr. Irwin.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes; a nice fellow. (To Earl Godwin who had quite a collection of pencils) What do you use, the old-fashioned broad lead?

Q (Mr. Godwin) I generally use this. (Indicating a heavy lead pencil)

THE PRESIDENT: There are a lot of people coming in.

Q (Mr. Godwin) The biggest gate we have had for a long time.

THE PRESIDENT: Is it?

Q (Mr. Godwin) Yes, tremendous.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: You have been told about the regular Proclamation of Neutrality this morning and, at the close of this Conference, the Secretary of State and the others are coming in and we are going to act on the second Proclamation, which is to carry the so-called Neutrality Act into effect. Outside of that I don't think I have anything in particular.

Q Well, sir, as a matter of convenience to the working men, when you say you have to act on it is that all you have to do or will you

have to discuss something which will take up some time?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so. We have read it over once this morning and I suppose, before the final signature, we will read it over again, just so as to check up on the thing finally.

Q Mr. President, will that be given out here or at the State Department?

THE PRESIDENT: At the State Department, I think. The other was, was it not?

Q Yes, sir.

Q Have you got anything to say, sir, about the Proclamation which has already been issued? Anything further than what is now --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I do not think so. Of course it is in the regular form of historic neutrality proclamations. A good deal of it, most of it, of course, relates to vessels of belligerents in American waters.

Q Mr. President, is there anything you can yet tell us about a special session?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not yet.

Q In your first Proclamation you mentioned, several times, "territorial waters." Have we any definition of territorial waters?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know.

Q Again, there has always been a discussion of what constitutes territorial waters. I wonder if there is a definite limit --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That I could not tell you because, frankly, I do not know enough about it to define it.

Q Mr. President, you spoke of this as being the regular form of such proclamations. I was wondering whether the words, "without inter-

fering with the free expression of opinion and sympathy," is not a deviation from the usual form?

THE PRESIDENT: That I do not know; you had better ask the State Department.

Q I was wondering whether that was emphasizing the point you made the other night that you could not ask the people to be neutral in thought as well as action?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know whether it has been in before but it is pretty good emphasis. It may be historic, but I do not know.

(The question was asked as to why the President used the word "so-called" with respect to the Neutrality Act.)

Well, you know the Secretary of State and I have called it that for a good many months. There is nothing new in that. The Secretary always called it that, and I have, consistently.

Q Anything you can say on profiteering?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except that the Department of Justice, as you know, is studying the subject.

Q Has any decision been made to send vessels to convoy American liners returning Americans to this country from Europe?

THE PRESIDENT: No. The concensus of opinion has been, both from the other side and here -- from the American Embassy in London and here -- that it is probably safer for American flag ships, with their flags painted on the sides and painted on their decks and superstructures, to run on the normal, usual course, without zig-zagging and without darkening ship, so that the whole thing is absolutely out in the open. Furthermore, there is nothing secret about the times of their sailing so that, obviously, with the

slightest care in the world, there can be no mistaking them for vessels belonging to any of the belligerents. That is believed to be the safest way for them to come over.

Q Have you received protests from Boston about the sailing of a certain American ship alleged to be carrying gun cotton and aviation gasoline to Germany?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q There is a dispatch from Boston --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) There is a German ship which went into Boston last night.

Q This is an American flag ship.

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q About the Americans returning on ships belonging to belligerents, such as the ATHENIA, will you safeguard them --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) There again, as you know, under international law, they can do so because, under international law, supplemented by the 1930 Convention, which was adhered to by Germany in 1936, any merchant ship is supposed to be stopped and full opportunity given to the passengers to be rescued in safety before such a ship is sunk. That is international law.

Under the present Neutrality Act, Americans are given ninety days to return to their own country on ships of belligerents, so long as that seems to be the only way for them to return, and there is no penalty attached to their going back in belligerent ships. The Embassies in London and Paris, both Ambassadors, have been advised of these two facts and, at the same time, they have been told to tell the Americans that, of course, in going in

belligerent ships there seems to be no question, especially in view of the ATHENIA sinking, that they are taking a greater risk than if they came in an American flag ship or a neutral ship.

Q Has the Government decided to set up a system of convoys for passenger ships, our own ships?

THE PRESIDENT: I answered that, Fred (Mr. Essary).

Q (Mr. Essary) I beg pardon.

THE PRESIDENT: That, by general agreement, both in the Embassies in London and Paris and the State Department, it seems to be safer for American flag ships to come back with all their lights burning and the American flags painted all over them, on a regular schedule and regular, normal course.

Q Rather than with a convoy?

THE PRESIDENT: Rather than with a convoy.

Q Mr. President, from a mechanical standpoint, can you tell us what you consider the minimum notice that would be necessary in the event of a special session of Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I do not know; I haven't got to that yet.

Q Why do you arrive at the conclusion that it is safer to come without a convoy? I would be very glad to hear what you have to say about that.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, because any warship looks like a warship and is probably more likely to be attacked than a brightly lighted passenger ship, which is not zigzagging and is going through regular routes of commerce.

Q Mr. President, is there anything new you can say on the question as to whether Congress will be called?

THE PRESIDENT: I simply haven't any more news on that than I had at the last Conference.

At the present time I am working on certain matters which can be done probably without legislation, probably should be done even before Congress can meet, matters relating to stricter and more careful enforcement of neutrality in this country and matters relating to ordinary filling out of certain gaps in our own national defense.

In the latter case, for example, as you know, the Navy is not even on a peacetime basis. It is fifteen per cent of personnel short of being on a peacetime basis. We only have eighty-five per cent of the regular crews on our Navy ships and probably that fifteen per cent, as a matter of ordinary national defense precaution, should be made up. At the same time, we have certain immediate problems of patrolling our own waters and, in order to do that, it seems advisable to put into commission an idle type of ship, of which we have a good many that are out of commission, the World War type of destroyer. Well, it means providing crews for those ships. As an illustration, on the Army needs, we probably need additional men in the Canal Zone and Puerto Rico.

And, on the neutrality end, it seems rather important to take additional precautions against -- what shall I say? -- propaganda in this country that is aimed at our system of government, propaganda in favor of communism or dictatorships, things of that kind and furthermore, to take precautions against the use of this country as a center or centers of information-gathering that might help any of the belligerents. Those things are being worked on

and probably certain steps ought to be taken in the course of the next few days along those very, very simple lines. What action is necessary I do not know quite yet.

Q You said communism. Did you follow that with any other --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Dictatorships. Systems of government that are contrary to ours.

Q Does the increase in the Army and Navy involve an appropriation problem?

THE PRESIDENT: Not at this time, no. As far as the appropriations go, it would not be necessary to get any appropriations probably until the regular session.

Q How about the northeastern area base for which money was appropriated at the last session?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know.

Q There has been some discussion as to whether the Neutrality Act would invalidate contracts that other countries have placed in this country for airplanes and other equipment. Have you gone into that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I do not know.

Q Do you know whether the contracts would be carried out?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that is a matter between the contracting parties.

Q Has there been any designation of how much shipment of supplies to the belligerents may be held up by the application of the embargo?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know; I have not heard.

Q Does this Government continue to regard Canada as a non-belligerent in view of the delay?

THE PRESIDENT: Has the State Department said anything about that?

Q I do not think so.

THE PRESIDENT: The fact is a very simple one that both South Africa -- well, in South Africa the matter is up for action before the Parliament of South Africa at the present time and, in the case of Canada, the Parliament has been called for whatever action is desired to take on Thursday and that is all there is.

Q Do you think, sir, that we have, already, enough law on the subject of the spread of propaganda for these various systems of government?

THE PRESIDENT: Probably.

Q You spoke here of doing things that would not require legislation so I imagine --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Frankly, the more I have looked into this the less it seems likely that there is need for any legislation except what we have all talked about so long and that is neutrality and one or two very minor matters that really go along hand in hand with it.

Q You mean that can be handled by Executive Order or Proclamation?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; something like that.

Q I was going to ask you if it would simply require stricter enforcement of existing law?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, or, as Felix (Mr. Belair) said, laws (Orders?) or Proclamations.

Q Would you care to tell us a little more about what those details are that go hand in hand with it?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot because we are in the middle of examining it.

I do not know.

Q What anti-profiteering laws do we now have on the statute books, do you know?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know enough about it.

Q Murphy (the Attorney General) said it was inadequate. I wondered what it was, outside of the tax laws.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know.

Q Is it your information which says that it was a submarine which sunk the ATHENIA?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot tell you yet because we have not had a report from the Embassy in London. We have had various statements from the passengers but I think probably those same statements from passengers have been given to the press and we have not had anything official or final from the Embassy.

Q Do you await the American Embassy at London for that?

THE PRESIDENT: London and Ireland.

Q Cudahy was down there.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and the Embassy, in London, has sent one of the Naval staff over there.

Q Mr. President, is there any curtailment of that ninety-day period on belligerent ships, in view of the invocation of the Neutrality Act?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it is ninety days. It follows the actual wording of the law.

Q May we revert to this airplane question for a moment? You said it would depend on the terms of the contract between the contracting parties. Would that be the American manufacturers and the French

and English Governments, or the American Government and the French and English Governments?

THE PRESIDENT: No, because the contracts are between the manufacturers and the French and English Governments.

Q How then could a contract entered into by an American company with the English and French be affected as to whether he can ship airplanes?

THE PRESIDENT: Because if his Government has a law which says he cannot do it, as the Neutrality Act says, he is bound by the law.

Q Then the effect of the Neutrality Act would be to cancel all uncompleted parts of the contract?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q No dispute about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. As to what those contracts contain as to the payment of unrealized profits is a matter between the parties.

Q Most of those with the Los Angeles manufacturers provide some sort of indemnity.

THE PRESIDENT: That is a thing in which this Government has no part.

Q That does not depend on the Neutrality Act?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

MR. EARLY: There was a previous question. I do not think you heard it clearly.

THE PRESIDENT: What was the previous question?

Q I asked if the Proclamation would invalidate the unfilled portion of the contract?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes and no. It depends on the contract. Don't you see?

Q Yes, I understand.

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, suppose the manufacturer and the British Government make a straight contract to deliver planes. Now, legally, it is perfectly possible that the British Government may sue for damages because the planes have not been delivered. That is possible although, of course, they would never get any. What escape clauses they may have I haven't the faintest idea.

Q Most of them have escape clauses.

THE PRESIDENT: The fact is that the Neutrality Proclamation supersedes any and all contractual obligations.

Q That answers the question as to whether there are any loopholes or subterfuges? This cuts it right off?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #577,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
September 8, 1939, 10.50 A.M.

Q Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Are you all ready? (Referring to the trip to Hyde Park)

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, Earl (Mr. Godwin)

Q (Mr. Godwin) How do you do, sir. You know the Carpenter that painted the Carpenter picture over there, the Lincoln picture? The bookseller gave me a book, "Inner Life of Lincoln -- Six Months at the White House," written by this artist.

THE PRESIDENT: I had heard of it.

Q (Mr. Godwin) I will give it to Missy. There is some interesting stuff in it.

THE PRESIDENT: Did he actually live at the White House for six months?

Q (Mr. Godwin) I have not read enough to know; but it is known that he was in there from day to day.

THE PRESIDENT: The modern artists get about five minutes; that is all they are allowed.

Q You would not board and feed an artist for six months? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Who took my copy of the Proclamation? Frank Murphy has it. Frank (addressing the Attorney General), did you steal my carbon copy, the last one I had, of the Proclamation?

MR. EARLY: Did you pick it up with the other papers, Frank?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MURPHY: No, I did not.

MR. EARLY: Are you sure; have you looked?

THE PRESIDENT: You will have to telephone to the State Department to send it over on the run. Steve, I will bet that you took it.

MR. EARLY: Did you tear up a big brown envelope?

(The President picked an envelope out of his wastebasket but it did not contain a copy of the Proclamation.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MURPHY: I think Berle (Mr. A. A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State) has it.

MR. EARLY: I think Berle left it (meaning with Mr. Latta).

THE PRESIDENT: (Addressing all of the Press who had assembled) The whole front row is under suspicion, especially Earl (Mr. Godwin) who, when the last Press Conference was photographed, was caught leaning over my desk in the most suspicious way.

However, we will go on. I have to have a copy before I talk about it. There was a copy on my desk three minutes ago. I will get another copy from the State Department.

No. 1, for the conference in Panama, the Under Secretary of State (Mr. Sumner Welles) is going down there to represent this country. I think that covers that.

Next, I have signed the Proclamation of Neutrality as between the United States and South Africa which, we have been officially informed, is in a state of war. That is the Union of South Africa.

No. 3, the Proclamation of Neutrality in regard to Canada is drafted but final action by the Canadian Parliament, as you know, has not yet been taken.

And the Proclamation I am waiting for is the Proclamation of Limited Emergency, which I will have to explain to you when I get it. It will be here in a minute or two. So, in the meantime, if

there are any questions you want to ask, go ahead.

One question will be on the report on the ATHENIA and that will be given out by the State Department sometime today. It will be the literal and, I think, verbatim copy of the reports from our two Naval Attaches in London. It is simply given out as their report without comment, comment being, I think, unnecessary.

Q Can you tell us of the extra session situation?

THE PRESIDENT: On the special session, there isn't any news. It is still in the study period. I cannot tell you any more because that is the simple truth. Naturally, I have been talking with various members of the House and the Senate for some time but, literally, there isn't any news because there has been no decision.

Q Is the action of the leaders favorable to a special session, that is, generally?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot tell you that.

Q Is it still just a question of when or is it both a question of when and whether?

THE PRESIDENT: There has never been a question of whether and the date last week was between the first of September and the second of January and it is now between the eighth of September and the second of January.

Q Is there any doubt at all or should anyone have any doubt about your intention to ask for a repeal of the present neutrality law, the so-called neutrality law?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you could assume that.

Q May I go further with that question?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q I hear, although I am unable to touch the evidence or produce the evidence, that there is a rising sentiment in the country for the repeal of the embargo. Are you conscious of that, or would it affect you in any way at all?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I had better not answer --

Q (interposing) You do not mind my asking?

THE PRESIDENT: No -- because you people are just as good a judge of that as I am.

Q The report is also that you are going to have a short session, limited to neutrality.

THE PRESIDENT: I think I told you last week, and the only way I can answer that is in the same way, that as far as I can tell at the present time it seems unnecessary to ask for anything except a repeal of the embargo -- action on the so-called neutrality law.

Q In other words, it would not run into the next regular session?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I see absolutely no reason for it because, as you know, while Congress is not in session there are always a number of small things which it would be nice to have acted on but it is not essential that they be acted on.

Q Mr. President, there have been some intimations and suggestions that the Administration might recommend changes in the Johnson Act. Has anything been crystalized on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of it. That is a new one.

Q Anything on profiteering?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of. In other words, the statement that I could not think of anything that was absolutely necessary

other than the neutrality angle covers almost all cases.

Q Can you tell us anything about the profiteering studies that are being planned?

THE PRESIDENT: No. The only thing I can say on that is that as to some of the things that happened yesterday and the day before, there are a lot of perfectly well-meaning people who went to retail stores and found that some of the prices had gone up on foodstuffs, the case of two or three people in the White House, who could not buy more than five pounds of sugar.

Of course the real fact is that there is an actual surplus of food of every variety in this country. There is no conceivable shortage and, as Secretary Wallace said yesterday, all of this fear of shortage of sugar, or a shortage of flour, or a shortage of this, that or the other thing is merely one of those things that we, all of us, ought to do our best to make people realize that they must not get excited about something that does not exist. There is not any shortage and we have got plenty of everything.

On the question of prices, there is so much surplus in all the normal commodities that, while prices of foodstuffs which have been exceedingly low may come up a little bit, they are not going to see the rise, there will not be a repetition of some of the prices we had during the World War. It is an entirely different situation.

Q Will the United States, at the Panama Conference, attempt to inject into the program this plan to keep the Western Hemisphere free from war?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the State Department and all the other Governments which will be represented are, at the present time, studying what they call an agenda and I do not know what it is going to be. In other words, the agenda will be determined by the nations sitting there, not the United States but all the nations together.

Q Has the date of that conference been set?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it has.

Q I think not.

THE PRESIDENT: Again I would have to have a little bit of latitude; I won't say between now and the third of January but I think between now and the first of October.

Q Have you that Proclamation before you?

THE PRESIDENT: I have and here she is. I am going into this with a little care just so -- what will I say -- scarehead stories won't be written. This is all off the record that I am talking about.

Now, a thing called "Declaration of National Emergency" is provided for in a great many statutes, not just one, and if one were to assume to issue a Proclamation of National Emergency without any limitation, scarehead lines might be justified because, under that, the Executive could do all kinds of things.

What I want to do and what all of you want to do is to make it clear that there is no intention and no need of doing all of these things that could be done. There is need of doing a few, what might be called, simple and minor things within peacetime authorizations. In other words, there is no thought in any shape, manner or form of putting the Nation, either in its defenses or

in its internal economy, on a war basis. That is one thing we want to avoid. We are going to keep the Nation on a peace basis in accordance with peacetime authorizations.

That is why the title of this Proclamation really tells the true story: (Reading)

"PROCLAIMING A NATIONAL EMERGENCY IN CONNECTION WITH THE OBSERVANCE, SAFEGUARDING, AND ENFORCEMENT OF NEUTRALITY AND THE STRENGTHENING OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF PEACE-TIME AUTHORIZATIONS"

In other words, I want to make it clear that in no shape, manner or form do we do anything except remain on a peace basis. The Government will function in accordance with the regular departmental and agency method. That is very clear. We are not setting up all kinds of war boards, administrative boards, such as we used when we were in a state of war. (Reading)

"BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
A PROCLAMATION

"WHEREAS a proclamation issued by me on September 5, 1939, proclaimed the neutrality of the United States in the war now unhappily existing between certain nations; and

"WHEREAS this state of war imposes on the United States certain duties with respect to the proper observance, safeguarding, and enforcement of such neutrality, and the strengthening of the national defense within the limits of peace-time authorizations;"

That is the main point to get across. (Continuing reading)

"and

"WHEREAS measures required at this time call for the exercise of only a limited number of the powers granted in a national emergency:

"NOW, THEREFORE, I, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, President of the United States of America, do

proclaim that a national emergency exists in connection with and to the extent necessary for the proper observance, safeguarding, and enforcing of the neutrality of the United States and the strengthening of our national defense within the limits of peace-time authorizations. Specific directions and authorizations will be given from time to time for carrying out these two purposes."

Now, in order to illustrate, at 12.30 the Attorney General is bringing in three or four Executive Orders. One of them, for example, relates to the Army.

On the Army, the authorized peacetime strength of the Army is 280,000 men. The Executive Order relating to the Army will allow the Army to recruit and call back what they call the first-line reserves -- ex-corporals and sergeants and things like that -- a little above this year's authorized appropriations but not anywhere near the 280,000 that are authorized as peacetime strength. I cannot give you the figures now because the final figure has not yet been decided. And there is no use running to the War Department and the Navy Department to find out because they do not know. I have not fixed it yet. I will between now and 12.30 but, when I fix that upper limit, it will be way below 280,000. That will be given out at 12.30.

Now, the object of that, in the case of the Army, is to -- I suppose the easiest phrase to use -- is to fill in the chinks, enough men to man certain defenses, such as the Panama Canal, enough men to Puerto Rico, enough men to fill up certain arms of the service which have been in the last few years, you might say, robbed in order to take care of some emergency things like aviation that we were trying to build up. Now, it is to repay these borrow-

ings of men that we made from various branches of the service, which today have these chinks in them.

The same thing will apply to the Navy. As I remember it, the total authorized peace strength of the Navy is 180,000 men. At the present time we have between 115,000 and 120,000. Right, Dan (Captain Callaghan)?

CAPTAIN CALLAGHAN: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: And under this Executive Order relating to the Navy, we will have additional recruiting and calling back of the first line of reserves, in other words, experienced Navy enlisted men who served their eight years or twelve years or sixteen years or twenty years, and we will increase the present 115,000 to 120,000 by a comparatively small number, but we will not go to the 180,000 of authorized peace strength. The object of that is, again, to fill in certain chinks or gaps. The Fleet is only 85% manned, the active Fleet ships in commission. It is to fill in that 15% so that all batteries, all watches, can be made full-time. It is to put into commission some of what they call the priority I. class of the out-of-commission destroyers, not by any means all of them. We have, I think, about 116 and we will probably put back into active commission only about a third of that number.

Then with the Marine Corps, a small additional number, again not up to the authorized peace strength of the Marine Corps, to fill in certain gaps in the Marine Corps.

So, you see, that is not exactly a startling thing to do; it is an ordinary precautionary measure.

The third Executive Order will merely carry out the exist-

ing law that says, "In the event of a national emergency there is appropriated \$500,000. to the State Department for the aid of Americans in foreign countries." This makes that \$500,000. available to the State Department.

And the fourth relates to what you might say is a combination of neutrality and national defense, an addition to the personnel of certain investigating agencies of the Government to protect this country against -- I suppose the easiest way of putting it -- against some of the episodes, some of the things that happened over here in 1914 and 1915 and 1916 and the beginning of 1917, before we got into the war. There was sabotage, there was a great deal of propaganda by both belligerents and a good many definite plans laid in this country to try to sway American public opinion, done by foreign governments. We do not have to specify. The older ones who are here can remember some of the episodes of that time. It is to guard against that and the spread by any foreign nation of propaganda in this country which would tend to be subversive -- I believe that is the word -- of our form of government.

Those are the only four things we are doing at this time and we see no other major needs for the future. There may be some minor things which will call for Executive Orders in the future but nothing that can be, in any way, construed as putting this country on a war basis. We are going on just as we always have, in running the Government.

Q Referring to the increase in the Army and Navy, are you making any increases in the National Guard?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, this will cover that.

Q In that connection, Mr. President, I assume that will cost money in addition to appropriations that have been made by Congress. Under this Proclamation, is it possible to spend beyond the appropriations of Congress for that purpose?

THE PRESIDENT: The law says that under this method, for example in the case of the Army -- let us take a simple example -- if we increase the Army by one-twelfth, obviously we have to pay -- this will be on a full year and it is only a ten-year (month?) basis so the figures do not completely check -- suppose it is a full year basis, suppose we increase the Army by one-twelfth or eighteen and something per cent, we have to feed those extra people, we have to clothe them and we have to pay them. That means that the Army appropriation for food, clothing and pay would only last until the first of June and we would have to get a deficiency appropriation from the next Congress to make up that deficiency. It goes in in the Deficiency Bill just as so many other laws allow the departments to create deficiencies out of current funds and go back to the Congress in the spring in the Deficiency Bill to carry the department through to the end of the year.

Q Mr. President, where will that \$500,000. for the State Department come from for repatriating Americans?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a regular appropriation like all others.

Q It is there, but needs this Proclamation to be effective? Is that what you mean?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Does this Proclamation of an emergency have any effect upon shipping or foreign exchange?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so, no.

Q Mr. President, will any of these recommissioned destroyers be used  
as convoys?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of.

Q They will be assigned to patrol work, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.