

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #592,
Executive Offices of the White House,
October 27, 1939, 10.45 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: What has happened to your patient (Mr. Russell Young)?

Is he sick again?

Q (Mr. Godwin) He is not in today.

Q (Mr. Reynolds) He is keeping his feet dry this morning.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe I have anything this morning.

Q Mr. President, your calling list shows Jerome Frank, Leon Henderson and Solicitor General Jackson are down for a conference this morning. Will that have any bearing on prices and price trends?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so. I have forgotten what it is about. It is two weeks that they were going to come in and now they are coming in.

Q Have you heard anything about the CITY OF FLINT yet?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet; not enough to say anything on.

Q How is it that the Ambassador (Mr. Steinhardt) could not find out from the Russian Government until now, and he has apparently not found out yet, when, where and to whom it should be released?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a long ways from Moscow to Murmansk.

Q There is a telephone.

THE PRESIDENT: I am not sufficiently familiar with conditions -- communications.

Q Mr. President, early last month you wrote Commissioner Lorton of the International Joint Commission a letter in which you asked for his resignation and told him about your plans to reorganize

that Commission. Has anything further been done along that line?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, the thing is nearly through. What I wrote him was that (reading)

"Bearing in mind that the principal purposes of the reorganization Act of 1939 are to economize expenditures and to increase efficiency, I have reached the conclusion that under existing conditions, in which should be included the possibility that the St. Lawrence Waterway --"

I guess that is why you asked the question, Jim (Mr. Wright).

"-- may come up for further consideration in the near future, steps should be taken to reduce the budget of the Commission and at the same time make available to the Commission specialized knowledge on certain technical subjects. The one solution to these points is the replacement of a member of the Commission by a high official of the Government who would receive no additional compensation other than his present salary and at the same time would be technically qualified along the lines I have in mind."

Well, we are carrying that out a little further. I did not know -- I did not ask for it, but my old friend, Governor Bartlett of New Hampshire, heard about this and agreed fully with the purpose of it, the reorganization, and he also has tendered his resignation and I understand that late in winter or early spring former Senator Stanley will do the same thing, so that we will have three Government officials on the Commission instead of three outside men, thereby saving three salaries and also making it possible for us to take care, a little more than we do now, of the technical end, the engineering and things like that.

Q Has that Commission performed any duties in the last ten years?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes; oh, yes.

Q Mr. President, I am a little bit confused as to just how the St.

Lawrence figures in this. As I understand it, it is still in the hands of the State Department. Is that right?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Then where does the International Joint Commission come in on the St. Lawrence?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know a boundary is not just earth; it is water, too.

Q Solely water, as far as this is concerned.

THE PRESIDENT: For instance, not far from Buffalo, there is always a question of just how much running there is on one side of the river and how much on the other.

Q I have heard about that.

THE PRESIDENT: That really is the same thing -- at Niagara Falls and further down the river and the same question in the Detroit River, and up at the Sault (Sainte Marie), all connected with the boundary.

Q Can you tell me whether the negotiations between the United States and Canada on this treaty are near termination now?

THE PRESIDENT: I would not say that; still very preliminary stages.

Q All these stories in recent days --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, let us put it this way: that while it was in a more or less dormant position for about a year, we have taken it out and dusted it off.

Q Is it necessary that it (the treaty) be ratified by the United States before it is acted on by Canada, or would it be likely that Canada would act on it first?

THE PRESIDENT: You mean after the treaty is signed on the question of ratification?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I imagine either country can act first.

Q But the theory, apparently, at the time it went to the Senate the last time was that the United States was to act first?

THE PRESIDENT: It was, at that time. You can never tell what it will be the next time.

Q Can you tell us what three Government officials will be used?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know.

Q Does the Commission remain in existence?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes; absolutely.

Q Just a matter of personnel?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. For example, one of the Assistant Secretaries of State might be made also a member of the Commission, in which case he can only draw one salary.

Q Have you the names of those three?

THE PRESIDENT: Eugene Lorton of Tulsa, former Governor John H. Bartlett of New Hampshire and former Senator Augustus O. Stanley of Kentucky.

Q Mr. President, there have been some stories that the national defense budget for the next year, 1941, will be over \$2,000,000,000.

THE PRESIDENT: I could not give you figures or write a story because, frankly, we have not considered it. We have not got to that. The only part of the defense budget being taken up at the present time is the normal maintenance and operations budget, not of new construction or additional people.

Q Mr. President, there has been a good deal of discussion about the public debts of Latin-American countries held by private individuals in this country -- that is, they are dollar bonded debts -- as an

obstacle to the carrying out of the Good Neighbor policy as now contemplated. Would you care to say, sir, if you favor any consideration of the possibility of scaling down of the dollar debt of the Latin-American countries?

THE PRESIDENT: The public debt to American private citizens? Is that what you mean?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Of course that goes back to 1933 when we gave Government blessing to them -- what was it? a bondholders' committee? It had some fancy name.

Q Bondholders' Protective Committee.

THE PRESIDENT: That is it. They have been working along and, frankly, I do not think they have got very far. That is about the only thing I can say. I am rather disappointed in the success of their operations. I could not give you any details; that is only an impression.

Q Do you mean, sir, by the progress that might be expected of them?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, the remarks of your Secretary (Mr. Early) with respect to Wallace's speech in San Francisco, I wonder if those remarks apply with equal force to the speeches and articles of the Secretary of the Interior?

THE PRESIDENT: Don't you really think we had better confine ourselves to news? (Laughter)

Q That kind of deters me. (Laughter) I was interested in a story in Fred Wile's column the other day about a poem to Jack Garner and one line is, "He is riding high and he is riding straight, and he

is headed for the White House gate." I wanted to know which direction? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, off the record, you remind me of President Coolidge's remark about Senator Borah when he pointed him out riding in Rock Creek Park. He said, "That is the most interesting sight in Washington. He is going in the same direction as his horse." (Laughter)

Q Do we have to keep that off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is an old chestnut.

Q Can you tell us anything about the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees? There is some suggestion that you have modified your stand on the refugee question.

THE PRESIDENT: I think they are working on it. Whether they have adopted a Resolution on it or not, I do not know. They were talking about it yesterday and they are coming in to tea this afternoon at five o'clock to say, "Good-by."

Q Did you confer with Mr. Van Zeeland (Paul Van Zeeland) on the possible sale of raw materials to Belgium?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, are you any closer to your appointment of a Canadian Minister?

THE PRESIDENT: I could not say yes or no. I do not know.

Q Would it be a minister or ambassador?

THE PRESIDENT: It has to be a minister.

Q Mr. President, has Mr. Fitzgerald of Connecticut been in to see you?

THE PRESIDENT: No -- I think so, yes. He came in the day before yesterday -- I thought you were talking about a Congressman; you mean

old Davey, an old friend of mine?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Sure. He came in yesterday to say, "How do." I hadn't seen him for over a year.

Q A number of industrialists have made statements recently about war profits and they differ as to the possibilities of steady recovery and the effect of the spurt in prices on a boomlet. Would you care to comment on any of these statements?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is sort of vague. I think we all want -- industrialists and everybody else -- stabilized prosperity but without the increase of prices. We want profits but we do not want prices to go up. I think that is all one can say.

Q Anything you can tell us about the publication of names of 500 Government employees who were members or on the mailing list of the American League for Peace and Democracy (referring to the lists given by the Dies Committee) --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I have not read enough of the details of that rather sordid procedure to comment.

Q Mr. President, it is very hard to write that story unless you can use the words "sordid procedure" as a quotation.

THE PRESIDENT: I think you can use that.

Q Can you tell us to what you refer?

THE PRESIDENT: No; I do not think so. I think it is obvious.

Q Mr. President, along the lines of the national defense program, will there be an authorization for new Naval expansion by the next session?

THE PRESIDENT: I was just telling Jim (Mr. Wright) about -- or Pete

(Mr. Brandt) about that. We haven't made up (our minds) yet on anything. We have not got to the point of considering it. They are in the study stage in the departments about the expansion of the Army and Navy and the only thing we are working on is the regular Budget figure for maintenance and operation of the existing force.

I won't be ready on any expansion program until, well, pretty close to the first of January.

Q Is this study of expansion still in the departments?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #593,
Executive Offices of the White House,
October 31, 1939, 4.15 P.M.

Q Good afternoon, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Glad to see you, Charlie (Charles Hamilton).

Where is Russ (Mr. Young)?

Q (Mr. Earl Godwin) He is not well. He just did not want to come out today. Something has got to be done about it.

THE PRESIDENT: I wish he would go down.

Q I think we are going to try to do that because he has got something that just knocks him cold.

THE PRESIDENT: If he would go down to Asheville or some place like that for a week or ten days it would not hurt him at all. He is not one of those fellows that has got to be here for broadcasts three times a day.

Q He has something the matter -- at least he thinks so.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, he had better watch it.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Sorry to have kept you all waiting but I was doing the unusual thing of getting a haircut in office hours, just to prove how quiet things are.

Q May we interview the barber?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes. He is the old White House barber, Mays (John Mays). He has been doing it for Presidents since -- I don't know, John Quincy Adams.

Q Mr. President, there seems to be some doubt in Ohio as to whether your reference to the so-called Ham and Eggs Amendment, the old-

age amendment in California, would apply to the Bigelow Old-Age Pension Amendment in Ohio. Will you comment on that, please?

THE PRESIDENT: I'd suggest -- this is off the record -- you should not ask the question and I will tell you why. I do not know anything about this proposed Ohio law and, therefore, I am not commenting on it. It may be a sound thing and it may not. Now the danger of my commenting on it is that if you write that I have nothing to say about it, it may be the proponents may take advantage and maybe the opponents would take advantage of that. I think the best thing to do would be not to ask the question at all because I cannot answer it. That really is the fact. I don't want to be used by either side on something I don't know about.

Q Do you contemplate a trip to Alaska at an indefinite time in the future?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of.

I suppose that relates to a somewhat wild story that Steve (Mr. Early) showed me about the Army buying a yacht to take me to Alaska. (Laughter) Well, it is one of those stories where the story did not live up to the headlines and I ran it down. The Army did need a boat that could take out surveying parties in Alaska, a boat that was seaworthy enough to get there and, at the same time, comparatively small, small enough to go into inlets and they bought an ex-yacht for that purpose. Then I think the story went on and said that the yacht would be available to the President if he ever went to Alaska. Of course the answer is that if I ever go to Alaska I am going on a 10,000-ton

cruiser. (Laughter)

But I do not have any plans for going there.

Q How about Honolulu?

THE PRESIDENT: How about the Philippines? We might as well go the whole hog. And these boys here in the front row, they would very much like to go to Samoa. They say that is even better.

(Laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you happen to know about a proposed eleven-state progressive conference that may be held in Salt Lake, maybe shortly after the first of the year, promoted by two gentlemen, Messrs. Littell and Dimock?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I will tell you. Absolutely all I know about it is that last September -- August, they were talking about having, not a political conference but a conference of people of all parties, to talk about liberal government and it was to have been held in October and it was called off. That is the last I had heard of it. I did not even know it had been put back on the calendar and, at that time, it was explained to me that it was a nonpartisan conference to talk about liberal government, social welfare, old-age pensions and things like that. Now that is all -- agricultural problems -- and, so far as I know, as I have heard of, that is the end of it. It must have been August, about the end of August.

Q They did not tell you, sir, that it might be a matter of promoting a third term for the New Deal, if not a third term for yourself?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I think that was somebody's invention.

Q Whose invention? (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, was this conference that you have just referred to one that was theoretically scheduled while you were en route to the West Coast?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and I would have gone on condition that it was a wholly nonpartisan conference. That would have been the first week in October but, of course, I would not have gone if it had not been a nonpartisan conference. That is the last I heard of it.

Q Mr. Dies has answered your three-word remark about sordid procedure with a long speech. Have you any comment?

THE PRESIDENT: I am sorry; I was working hard that evening.

Q The Republican Party is making renewed efforts to inject national politics into the local election at Philadelphia. Do you see any national issue --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Is that a statement or a question?

Q I think the record speaks for itself.

THE PRESIDENT: The Philadelphia Record? (Laughter)

Q I was wondering if you felt that there was any national issue involved in that local election?

THE PRESIDENT: I know absolutely nothing about it.

Q Mr. President, last Tuesday you said you hoped we would get back the CITY OF FLINT. A number of things have happened.

THE PRESIDENT: I still hope so. I have no more information than what you have got -- these reports along the Norwegian Coast. We haven't another thing. Actually, we get these reports from the various State Department people on the other side just about the same time you get them and they are exactly along the same lines.

Q I think just possibly, for the sake of the record, no one in speaking of this eleven-state progressive conference -- I don't think anybody has called to your attention or asked you about the manner in which it came to be in the newspapers this morning. I suppose you know there was a letter from John L. Lewis to Governor Olson. Are you aware of that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but I do not have anything to say.

Q Well, nobody had asked you. (Laughter)

Q A short wave radio message said last night that it was established that you had sent a second message to the Finns asking to be informed on the progress of negotiations?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q The U. P. had a story there.

THE PRESIDENT: No. The only thing I can think of, Pete (Brandt), is that the State Department asked the Legation over there, but you had better check on that. I do not know why that would break because, obviously, the Legation is keeping us in touch a couple of times a day. I sent no other message.

Q Mr. President, there is a report that the Budget Bureau has rejected a recommendation by Secretary Wallace for a cotton loan on the crop now in the gin. I think the loan was reported to be 8.3 cents a pound.

THE PRESIDENT: No. The thing is being discussed -- the Bureau of the Budget and the Department of Agriculture -- and I am trying to find out why they want more loan money on the 1939 crop. I have not been sufficiently informed as to why they want more money. I thought they had enough. In other words, they are being asked

to present their case.

Q I see.

Q Mr. President, reverting to that change in personnel on the Boundary Commission, sir, that you spoke of last time: There are several score commissions. Are there any in the same category as far as the Budget is concerned? In other words, do you anticipate similar changes?

THE PRESIDENT: We are trying to find out now if the actual treaties which create the commissions, the international treaties, allow us to put in Government officials, thereby saving money. We will probably do it, but some of the treaties make it impossible for us to put in Government officials.

Q I was wondering about all the other commissions. You have many which have been set up by Acts of Congress in the last, oh, many years. There must be scores of them.

THE PRESIDENT: Not very many. We ran them down last year and we have eliminated a good many of them. We wound up their affairs and we are continuing to wind up their affairs. Well, for instance, here is a case you cannot use. It is entirely off the record. You take the Battle Monuments Commission: General Pershing is Chairman of it and, obviously, I am not going to abolish it as long as General Pershing lives. The monuments are completed and the work of the Commission is completed except for the maintenance of the graves and the monuments in France and, in time, that will become a regular function of the War Department.

Q Mr. President, Premier Molotoff today accused you of mixing in Polish-(Russian?)Finnish negotiations in contradiction of our

neutrality policy. Is there anything you can tell us about that?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not had any report of that.

Q Within the past two weeks or ten days Chairman Fly of the Communications Commission has seen you a couple of times and was supposed to have been over here yesterday with Mr. McNinch. Can you discuss it?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so. It is general work of the Commission.

Q Has it anything to do with this surveillance of international neutrality?

THE PRESIDENT: Only that they are going ahead with the survey and checkup of amateur radio stations in this country so as to prevent this country from being used as a base of operations by any belligerent. Of course that is, in a sense, a part of the statute, a part of the neutrality bill which relates to the use of ships. Well, now, this is almost equally important that we should see to it that radio stations in this country shall not be used by belligerents for the furtherance of the war. That is all that the Communications Commission is doing. They are checking up on these amateur sets.

Q We were told the other day that they were doing a good deal more with the cooperation of communication companies, checking on messages.

THE PRESIDENT: No, the Communications Commission is confining itself to the amateur sets.

Q Going back to Molotoff for a minute, do you consider the conduct of his government neutral in the matter of the CITY OF FLINT?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a thing I cannot answer.

Q Congressman Havenner (Representative Franck R. Havenner) said

today that you had discussed with him the status of the Pacific Naval defense. Can you tell us anything about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Both of them (Representatives Havenner and Welch)

wanted a kind word about the Pacific Coast, especially San Francisco Bay, and I gave it to them. I pointed out that, on the Pacific Coast, in the event of any increase in the Navy, we would undoubtedly have to have, on both coasts, facilities to take care of an additional number of ships. On the Pacific Coast, because of the geography, it seems fairly clear that the three main bases, points of operation, are Puget Sound, San Francisco Bay and Southern California. Of course that was a nice kind word to say to San Francisco Bay Congressmen and it is all to the good.

Q Did you discuss developing a steel industry on the Pacific Coast?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, that is an old hobby of mine. That dates from 1913. I have been trying to get the steel companies to build a steel plant on the Pacific Coast because, from all the information we have had from the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines and Department of Commerce experts, there is a tremendous consumption of steel on the Coast and there is a great deal of various kinds of ore (available).

There has always been a shortage of coal out there but, at the present time, as we all know, the electric furnace is becoming a much greater factor in making steel than it was in the old days. Now, out there on the Coast, they have a surplus of cheap electricity. Bonneville Dam could have more generators put into it,

for instance, and can increase its total output. With Grand Coulee coming in and with various other developments, electric power is plentiful and cheap and what we are trying to do -- what I would like to see done, put it that way -- is to see a steel plant or plants built on the Pacific Coast, using western ore and western electricity and western labor. I think it can be made a business success instead of shipping structural steel and all kinds of steel all the way across the continent by rail or through the Panama Canal. Economically it is a sound thing to do.

Q Would the incursion of the steel industry in that way have a strategical value?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know what the story is lately. In the old days they undoubtedly worked against putting up steel plants on the Coast. Whether their attitude has changed in the last few years or not, I cannot say.

Q Was there any discussion of the distance that electricity can be transported in using it for steel?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q That would center it in Seattle?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, there is a good deal of electricity around San Francisco.

Q Bonneville, I meant?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course the bulk of the water power is in the Northwest.

Q We have got some down in the Southwest.

THE PRESIDENT: You do have and there is more there to be developed.

Q What is the objection to building a steel plant out there?

THE PRESIDENT: That you will have to ask the steel people.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Wait a minute. I have one thing I thought somebody would ask questions about. I wrote to Chairman Taylor (Honorable Edward T. Taylor, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee) yesterday, and told him that I propose to submit to the Congress the beginning of the regular session in January, supplemental estimates of appropriations for this, the fiscal year 1940, aggregating approximately \$275,000,000.; in other words, that this sum would defray the cost for this year of safeguarding and enforcing the neutrality of the United States and strengthening national defense within the limits of peacetime authorizations; in other words, carrying out the three Executive Orders of September 8, 1939, where we increase the War, Navy, Marine Corps, Commerce Department -- no, not Commerce but Coast Guard and Justice, which was a very small item in it.

While the increase in rate of expenditures made necessary by these Executive Orders will not require additional appropriations until early in February of 1940, it is wholly within the right of Congress to take up at this time the detail of these authorizations and the deficiencies created thereby. I will be glad to submit detailed supplemental estimates if and when desired by the Committee and, in the absence of any special request by the Committee I will submit supplemental estimates in January, at the beginning of the session.

At the same time I received today a letter from Congressman

Scrugham, of the Naval Affairs Subcommittee on Appropriations, and I understand we are going to send up the details of these estimates I think on the thirteenth of November so that his Committee will have them at that time, study them and be ready for a meeting of the subcommittee around the usual time, which is about the first of December.

Q That is just the breakdown for the Navy?

THE PRESIDENT: No, that is the whole thing.

Q The whole thing?

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, the actual estimated cost of this fiscal year of the increase of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, plus the putting in commission of the various ships and fixing up the training stations, and so on, will be \$275,000,000. I think my original estimate, I gave it as less than \$300,000,000. Well, this is it, it is \$275,000,000.

Q Did you mention Justice?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that is the increase of 150 men. That will go to Justice soon.

Q That means as soon as the House acts on the neutrality bill you are washed up?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Will you ask this session to authorize Colonel Fleming to hold the post to which he has been designated?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. He has been detailed to assist the Secretary of Labor and that is all.

Q I understood that the man who is acting administrator could, under the law, only hold that post for thirty days?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know.

Q Are copies of that (indicating the letter to Chairman Taylor) being made public?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think you need the copies. That is all there is to it.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, sir.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #594,
Executive Offices of the White House,
November 3, 1939, 10.50 A.M.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Where is the Surgeon General?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

I think, as long as you cannot handle this thing (of convincing Russell Young, who had been ill, that he should go to southern climes for his health's sake) alone, you had better have a committee appointed for him.

Q (Mr. Godwin) We are waiting either for a destroyer or a White House automobile.

THE PRESIDENT: It is all right. You cannot have a destroyer but you can have a White House car with a squad of Marines to put him into it. And you can have the photographers too, to let him see how it feels.

Q (Mr. Young) I am going to try to get away.

THE PRESIDENT: Will you go down and see Mac?

Q (Mr. Young) Yes. That's pretty country down there.

THE PRESIDENT: Take a week and see Mac.

Q (Mr. Young) I'd like to.

THE PRESIDENT: I wish you would do that. Mac needs it, too. It is a good idea.

Q When you go to Warm Springs, will you see Mac?

THE PRESIDENT: (Indicating affirmative) He is coming on very well, though.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe I have got anything today.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment on the record of the airlines in having operated five hundred million miles without a fatal accident?

THE PRESIDENT: Steve just gave me a report from Chairman Hinckley. Steve, do you want to have it mimeographed or shall I read it? I can read it. It is not very difficult -- not many figures.

(Reading):

"Last night the 17 scheduled airlines operating within the United States --"

that does not include offshore companies --

"reached a really extraordinary safety record. They have now carried passengers for a total of 500,000,000 passenger-miles since they last had an accident involving the death or serious injury of any person. That is a volume of passenger traffic equivalent to transporting the entire population of the District of Columbia from Washington to Boston and back again. During the seven months and seven days that have now passed since the last serious accident on any of our domestic airlines, more than 52,000,000 miles have been flown by their airplanes and over one-and-a-quarter million passengers have been carried. Prior to the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act in June of last year, there never had been a period of complete freedom from accident that covered operation of more than about 210,000,000 passenger-miles, - nor, so far as records available to us reveal, had the airlines of any other country ever enjoyed complete freedom from accident over an amount of operation even one-half as great as has been rolled up during these seven accident-free months in domestic air transport in the United States."

Q Mr. President, you are probably familiar -- I assume that you are familiar with the Neutrality Bill, both sides, both versions, and it seems to me that the bill to be passed will require you to issue another proclamation and it is not legal until you do so?

THE PRESIDENT: Several proclamations.

Q Are you prepared to say whether or not you will issue the proclama-

tions as soon or as rapidly as you sign the Bill?

THE PRESIDENT: As soon as you go out, I am having Mr. Berle (Assistant Secretary of State) in for a preliminary study of the necessary proclamations and I will see the Secretary of State this afternoon. Until I have studied them I cannot give you any date for their issuance. Of course it will be after the signing of the bill but I hope it will be as soon as possible after the Bill comes down here.

Q In view of the fact that the Bill has been finished up and both ends agreed, can you give us any indications as to whether it is satisfactory from your point of view?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't thought of it. I suppose the most terse way of putting it is that I am very glad that the Bill has restored the historic position of neutrality of the United States.

Q Can we quote that directly?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, almost a month ago a German admiral, Raeder, very kindly sent a couple of our destroyers and subchasers and Coast Guard boats on a wild goose chase, in spite of the closed season. Have you, by any chance, gotten any story or information from the Berlin people as to why the Admiral was so kind as to give that tip to our --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, Constantine (Mr. Brown); that remains one of the mysteries that probably won't be solved until after the war is over.

Q Mr. Landon, speaking two days ago in Iowa, criticised you in respect to our foreign policy generally; he made specific reference to the

safety zones and thought that that was dangerous to our neutrality.

Can you comment on that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so, except that a good many people have failed to read the Panama declaration.

Q Mr. President, regarding that safety zone, -- some people call it a chastity belt -- I don't know whether it is right or not --
(laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: What did he say?

Q Chastity belt. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Did you ever go to the Cluny Museum in Paris?

Q Yes, sir.

Q Mr. President, have you asked the Congressional leaders to stay in Washington until after the adjournment of Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Not since I first suggested it which was about the twenty-first of September. Of course they all know; that was what I said to the Congress. I hope that they will stay or be handy.

Q May I continue my question? (Laughter) -- Whether that belt has actually been enforced -- whether it is now in force or not?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q It is?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q In spite of the opinion of other nations, like Great Britain?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q It is in force now?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the thing to do is to read the Declaration of Panama.

Q I was reading some statement from London too; that is why I am asking.

Q Reports from South America indicate that there are approximately eighty German merchant vessels in various Latin American ports. Apparently the application of the safety zone gives them protection so they can engage in inter-American commerce.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so.

Q It does not?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. In the first place, it does not. In the second place I have not heard of any of them that were actually proposing to engage in inter-American commerce.

Q I think one ship has moved, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: That is probably the HAVILAND. I think she is just trying to get rid of some copra she had on board. As far as I know, she has not taken on any other cargo. She was loaded at the time (of the outbreak of the war) and I imagine she is trying to get rid of what she had on board. That is not engaging in commerce between ports.

Q If a hostile act were engaged in by a British ship against one of those ships, that would not necessarily invoke --

THE PRESIDENT: Now you are getting to the "iffy" stage. We will have to cross that bridge when we come to it. Just like the eighty ships engaging in inter-American commerce, there isn't any sign of it.

Q How long do you think you can use the 1930 Tariff Act as a basis for your Reciprocal Trade Agreements?

THE PRESIDENT: My, you must have sat up all night thinking of that one.

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. That is beyond me. My mind doesn't click quickly enough.

Q Mr. President, do you care to comment on the recent speech of Representative McCormack (of Massachusetts) asking for the recall of Ambassador Steinhardt?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. Of course I think that one could put it this way, only you would have to paraphrase it: That I have never believed that poor manners should beget poor manners.

Q To follow on my tariff question: Have any Governmental agencies or any other agencies -- I mean private industry -- brought to your attention the situation in the fox fur farm industry? The Bureau of Biological Survey contends that there may be five or six hundred thousand pelts dumped in this country from foreign countries and farmers seem a little agitated about it and are trying to get some action either to prevent dumping or to raise the tariff. Has that come to your attention?

THE PRESIDENT: I should not say that that was a normal tariff matter. Obviously in a large portion of the world that is accustomed to buy and use expensive furs the consumer demand has fallen off. In most of Europe the consumer demand for furs, I take it, would be very greatly curtailed. Now, that means that the normal fur supply in the rest of the world would logically seek a market in the Americas where the consumer purchasing power is still fairly high. In other words, it is a war question primarily.

Q Mr. President, was there any news in the visit of the Civil Service Commission and their field people yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: No; just to say "How do you do."

Q Were you surprised at the majority you got in the House?

THE PRESIDENT: Very gratified.

Q Any plans for the week end, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I think if everything is cleared up by tomorrow and I get my proclamations in shape, that I will probably go up to vote either Saturday midnight or some time Sunday and, if everything is quiet on Monday, I will stay over and vote on Tuesday and then come back.

Q That would indicate that you think you will be able to issue those proclamations before you leave?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so; I am going to take it up now -- in a few minutes.

Q Can you tell us something of the nature of those proclamations?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #595,
In the Study of the President's Home at Hyde Park, New York,
November 7, 1939, 10.55 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Good people, how are you?

Q Good morning.

THE PRESIDENT: George (Mr. Durno), you have a red nose, old top. Where does that come from?

Q (Mr. Durno) This cold air.

THE PRESIDENT: Snappy air. It is all right. Do you people all agree with the diagnosis I have just heard from the patient?

Q I think so.

THE PRESIDENT: George swears that his red nose comes from the cool air. Is that all right?

Q (Mr. Durno) I would say they all had better. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I do not think there is any news at all.

Q (Mr. Harkness) Well, now that the Neutrality Act has been enacted, are we going to have politics --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, not as far as I am concerned.

Q (Mr. Harkness) -- or is the truce still on?

Q It was rather unusual for Norway to return the CITY OF FLINT as they did.

THE PRESIDENT: The CITY OF FLINT?

Q Have you heard from Mrs. Harriman?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes. I suppose they have in the Department (of State). They heard verbally last night.

Q Did she get down to Bergen?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think they have any more than the story they

printed this morning.

Q Mr. President, I understand you have been taking an interest in the Vanderbilt Estate. Is that a personal interest or is it on behalf of some Governmental agency?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think you would have to ask the owner, Mrs. Van Alen about that. I think Mrs. Van Alen has been trying for some time to dispose of the place.

Q We understand you went down and looked it over on the last trip.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. She came down here to lunch.

Q Do you have any suggestions or ideas as to how you think it might best be used?

THE PRESIDENT: You know what I have felt all along, for the last twenty or forty years, that it is a place that is probably the most historic large country place around these parts, going back to about 1750 or 1760. It has had very wonderful tree plantings in every generation since then. Incidentally, it is the original Hyde Park, the village was named from it, and the name was given to it by Peter Fauconnier, who was the secretary to the Earl of Clarendon, whose family name was Hyde. I think I am correct in stating that the name was given to it in honor of the Royal Governor of New York some twenty or thirty years before Hyde Park, London, was named, which is rather amusing.

Q Before the Hyde Park of London?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q What is this man's name?

THE PRESIDENT: Peter Fauconnier, and he was the secretary to the Governor of New York and New Jersey and was largely responsible for

the royal grants that were made in both colonies at that time.

This you cannot use, because it is speaking ill of the dead, but I think he got his every time a royal grant was given (laughter), which is literally true, only you cannot use it.

Q It has a familiar smell, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. You know -- again this is entirely off the record --

there was a group in those years from 1660 or 1680 down to 1710 of gentlemen in New York that you and I would call real estate speculators. Among them were two groups of nine. One was the Great Nine. They got all of this section of Dutchess County. It was really a real estate proposition on those older grants. Having got a large grant, this county, for instance, they divided it up into squares and each got a square. There were thirty-six squares and nine water lots and each one got four squares and one water lot. Then they proceeded to bring people in from abroad and other people and gave them, farmers, a piece of land, first on a rental basis but, in effect, with an option to buy. That is how this county came to be settled. Then, another group of nine, some of them the same, got the other royal grant. This fellow, Peter Fauconnier, was the go-between; he was pretty well recognized as the go-between who arranged these grants. He got the Governor, acting for King James, to O.K. the thing.

Q Mr. President, do you mean that this estate ought to be preserved as a public place?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, up here? Oh, I do not know; they have not got to that stage yet.

Q We contacted Washington on that, the Park Service, and they said they

just made a survey.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that is as far as they have got.

Q Mr. President, have you read the newspaper reports on Earl Browder's speech?

THE PRESIDENT: I did not. I only read the headline and I cannot talk to you on the record about it either, but I would use it for background. Where does one draw the line between "revolution" and the two words he used? That is about what they were. Do you remember the two words he used?

Q "Swift transition"?

THE PRESIDENT: Immediate transition, or something like that. Well, it is a very, very nice distinction between those two phrases -- "revolution" and "immediate transition." Of course, if it should be held that the words -- this is only background, you cannot even attribute it to me -- if it should be held that "immediate transition" is the parlor term for "revolution," that they are practically synonymous, then he and the party he is associated with are guilty of conspiring against the Government. Of course it is a question of how the courts would hold in that case. I suppose it could be argued both ways. It is awfully close to the line.

Q It was a very wild speech. I have not read it.

THE PRESIDENT: I only read the lead and it was in the lead.

Probably some of your offices which have not called you up will call you up about these eight ships that are to be transferred. The thing is held up. I did not hear about it until half past six last night and I have asked them to hold it up and to give me, personally, a check on two questions. There is not any question, of

course, about the neutrality end of it at all. That is not one of the questions. In other words, if any of us owned property, we have a perfect right to sell that property to a neutral nation or to transfer it, the title of it, into a neutral nation. There is no question about that. Then there is another thing on this transfer that is not a question, also raised by neutrality: There are no Americans involved in this from the point of view of losing their lives or getting us into trouble, because if these ships are transferred, no American could serve thereon as an officer or member of the crew. Therefore, if they should be sunk, there would be no international episode, either on account of the ship or on account of Americans who might lose their lives or on account of the cargo. There could be no international episode. In other words, it could not involve the United States in a difficult situation if anything were to happen to those ships. That is perfectly clear.

Now there are two questions which the Maritime Commission, at my request, is going to report to me on. We may get it -- I do not suppose we will get it today but probably tomorrow. They both involve the same thing. The maritime law, putting it into the simplest terms, has a clause in it which was put in for two purposes. The clause required the consent of the Maritime Commission for the transfer of an American flagship to another flag. Now, if you go back into the reason for that clause, in the debates on the bill, the recommendations made, it was for two purposes: The first purpose was to prevent the sale of American merchant ships if we considered them important to national defense. Well, just for example, if we thought there was any particular danger of our getting involved in

a war, the Maritime Commission would probably refuse to allow the transfer of a flag on any American ship. That situation does not exist today. Another example is that if a ship had been built under Navy specifications and was still a comparatively new ship, the question of our own national defense might be involved. That is one reason for requiring the consent of the Maritime Commission to a transfer, and I am getting a report on that.

The other reason for putting that clause into the bill was to prevent, in time of peace, some neutral nation from coming in and offering a very high price for some particular line going to some particular place that they wanted to end American competition in. In other words, supposing an American line was running from here to South America and the British or the Germans or the Italians wanted to put us out of commission. They might come in, conceivably, and buy that American line running to South America.

Q You mean under cover, so to speak?

THE PRESIDENT: No. They might buy the line and ask that it be transferred to the British or the German flag, which would put us out of the South American business on that particular line. The maritime act was intended to put the American flag into various runs all over the world, therefore they were required to approve transfers for that reason, so that other nations could not stop our competition. Now on that also I am to have a report.

Q Pending that report, Mr. President, the transfer is being held up?

THE PRESIDENT: As I understand it, George (Mr. Durno), the transfer has been approved, was approved yesterday, but that -- since that action they met last night and told the owners to hold everything

for final confirmation until tomorrow.

Q Mr. President, this is a hypothetical question and, if I may, I will ask it off the record. If the CITY OF FLINT were sunk, I mean by the Germans, I wonder what would ensue in the way of complications?

THE PRESIDENT: Off the record, God knows. In other words, as I said the other day in Washington, this particular FLINT case today has so many absolutely brand new features that nobody ever heard of or thought of before in international law that nobody can guess. In international law one case might apply and one side might say, "No, it is the other case that applies."

It is a field day for international lawyers already. (Laughter)

Q What time will you vote, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Twelve o'clock. Mrs. Roosevelt gets in at 11.45 and I will meet her over at the other cottage and then come over here to pick up my mother and then I suppose we will vote about half past twelve.

Q Any observations on state issues?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. (Laughter)

Q Do you anticipate, Mr. President, having any comment tonight, perhaps?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Any local comments you would like to make?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, probably if Elmer Van Wagner should win, I would probably send a message down via Bill (Mr. Hassett) saying, "Ha, ha" or something like that.

Q I think you said something like that in 1936.

THE PRESIDENT: I believe I did, yes. (Laughter)

Q There have been some reports out in California that you sent a telegram out there as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, endorsing again this oil bill.

THE PRESIDENT: I did. I sent it to Governor Olson and I have not seen a peep about it in the newspapers. It is all right.

Q That is the Dickinson Bill, ^[Atkinson?] is it not?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, the county ticket on November first was not quite complete. Would you want to comment on it or anything in broad lines for the future?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I think I can only say that whoever wins in the Sheriff's fight, I hope he is a citizen of the county and that the Sheriff's office will be a great deal better run than it has been in the last years. That is perfectly all right. It is non-partisan, you might say. It is a thoroughly election day, non-partisan statement.

Q Is this celebration here on the cornerstone laying, is that going to be open to the public; I mean in general? I imagine Dutchess County historians would like to come.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I will tell you. The way they are going to run it is this: There will be special invitations by card to a reception here. That is for the people connected with it, after lunch. And then the actual dedication will be at, I think, three o'clock in the afternoon, the laying of the cornerstone, and I would be delighted to have people come to that, out there in the field.

Q Anybody?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, everybody. The only thing is, we cannot have them

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here in the house because it will be swamped.

Q When are you leaving?

THE PRESIDENT: George (Mr. Durno), I had a bad cold in my nose yesterday and I decided that as long as it is clear you fellows would like to have a little golf and we might wait up until tomorrow night. The cold is much better.

Q Are you going to Warm Springs as usual?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope to get down there Thanksgiving, probably for not more than four or five days. That, of course, is subject to cancellation as everything is these days.

Q The boys seem to be afraid to ask you about this Thanksgiving.

THE PRESIDENT: Which one?

Q I don't know. I just heard the whispering.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is all right. We are celebrating the twenty-third in this State and in the State of Georgia.

Q Ed Rivers said he would proclaim Thanksgiving on the sixteenth if you would come down this year.

THE PRESIDENT: It is all right.

Q He is probably thankful for a lot of things.

Q Do you think you will see Mac (Mr. McIntyre) on this trip to Warm Springs?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so. Either on the way down or back.

Q The Park dedication will be out?

THE PRESIDENT: That is off. It is too cold. I would not want to take you to the Park at this time of the year. It will be like a certain lake in Washington I took you to once. (Laughter)

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #596,
Executive Offices of the White House,
November 10, 1939, 10.36 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Have you been away?

Q (Mr. Young) No, sir; stayed right here.

THE PRESIDENT: Our last resort is the Marines.

Q (Mr. Young) The Surgeon General; he could make me go.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, what news have you got?

Q We have a lot of questions, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Somebody think of something?

Q Can you straighten out the maritime situation for us, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Working on it. That is all I can say.

Q When may we expect anything?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I cannot prognosticate.

Q Any week-end plans, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No; staying right here.

Q Have you made up your plan for tomorrow as far as Arlington is concerned?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, going out to the regular thing. We will go out at quarter of eleven and get there for the ceremony and come back afterwards. In the evening I am taking part in the Red Cross appeal, at 10.30.

At 11.00 o'clock (this morning) I asked some of the seamen Labor Union people to come in, the longshoremen, because I am approaching -- that is about all I can say about the maritime ques-

tion -- I am approaching it from the human angle as well as the property angle, which a good many people seem to have completely overlooked, callously enough.

Q Did you say "as well as the property"?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, as well as the property angle. In other words, we have a problem which was created by the statute. There are about -- well, as a rough guess, it is awfully hard to give any exact figure but I would say, offhand, it is between twenty-five and thirty-five American flag ships that have been running in between the ports that are now outlawed, in other words, belligerent ports or danger zone ports and, as a result of the legislation, they are now tied up or will be by the time they get back from current voyages. Now, that means not only twenty-five to thirty-five ships but also their crews.

There are several things that we are going to talk about at 11.00 o'clock in relation to the human problem. The first relates to something that cannot be done until the next session of Congress and that is to try to apply the social security law to the crews of ships as well as to industrial people who work in industrial plants. That would mean the same system as we use in industry and would cover both old age pensions and unemployment insurance. As far as I can tell now, I shall make a recommendation to cover that to the next session of the Congress. However, that does not give immediate relief and I am working now with the Maritime Commission on a project for giving training under the auspices of the Maritime Commission to a portion, not all, of these sailors and officers who have been thrown out of work because of the neutrality law going

into effect. We hope that we will be able to give additional training to a substantial portion of those people who have been put on the beach because the ships have been laid up.

Q What kind of training, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Seamen's training -- officers' training.

Q Any naval training, necessarily?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. Merchant ship training.

Q Does that have an income attached to it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, the transfer of ships to foreign flags would not affect the number of American seamen put on the beach, would it?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not a bit.

The third thing which I am working on -- I do not want to hold out any hope that it will be effected but it would be of some assistance in this problem -- that is the use by the Government of some of these twenty-five to thirty-five ships in order to go and fetch certain materials that the Government is purchasing under existing law for -- well, I think we have called it "stock piles," haven't we? We are spending a good deal of money to buy various war materials to store up in case of future need. There is \$10,000,000. appropriated for that at the present time and, secondly, we have, as you know, an agreement which went into effect last summer with Great Britain by which we do some swapping. We are swapping some cotton for rubber and tin. Now, that rubber and tin has to be sent for to the East Indies and it will take additional ships to bring that rubber and tin, that is to say, ships over and above the normal commercial needs of that area, to bring that rubber and

tin to this country. I believe -- I do not know whether the State Department said anything about this or not -- I think either that there is an agreement, or it is being discussed with the British, by which they will take the cotton from this country to England. Does anybody know if that has been announced?

Q It has not been announced.

THE PRESIDENT: Of course, obviously, we cannot send American cotton to England in American flag ships.

Q Mr. President, do you regard the transfer in September, and the Maritime Commission's approval given to the transfer, of fifteen Standard Oil tankers to Panama as, perhaps, setting a precedent?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. Of course it is perfectly legal. You see, unfortunately, in spite of what some people say, the President of the United States is more or less bound by the law. It is a curious and strange idea which has been challenged in the past few days by people who, in the past, have been most intent on confining the President of the United States to the strict letter of the law. It is one of those anomalies which columnists are very apt to enjoy. Go ahead, you are one. (Laughter)

Q In the last analysis, wouldn't the interests of these American seamen probably best be served by the maintenance instead of the abandonment of these ships, even if it does involve the transfer to another flag?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think it makes much difference to the poor fellows who are on the beach anyway. If the ship stays at the dock, they are on the beach; if the ship is transferred or sold to some other nation, they are still on the beach.

Q But, after the war is over, they can return to American registry and the American seamen would still, theoretically, have these jobs open to them?

THE PRESIDENT: You are doing a bit of theorizing that, after they have been used for war purposes for some time, they will still be worth transferring back to the American flag. I doubt it. They are all on their last legs now.

Q Could you give us the legal interpretation? You said the transfer of the Standard Oil ships did not set a precedent and that, contrary to what the columnists say, you are bound by the law. Does that mean you interpret that law as saying the ships can be transferred?

THE PRESIDENT: There is no question that the ships can be legally transferred or sold. We are simply trying to work out other methods. That is as far as we can go now. That means transfer with full retention of title in the present owning company.

Q Any thought of transferring any of these idle ships to the South American and other routes?

THE PRESIDENT: You know, that is a thing as to which the average layman has a happy thought, and a great many of them do these days, that it is a perfectly easy thing. There are a lot of routes -- South America, Australia, China and so forth and so on. Why not keep them under the American flag and put them on these other routes? It is a beautiful thought. But a ship goes from one place to another not just for the pleasure of making the voyage. They do it in order to carry goods or passengers or both and, therefore, it becomes a problem of whether there are enough goods and

passengers to justify the voyage. You can be quite sure that if there should be enough goods and passengers to keep these ships under the American flag on other routes, they would be kept under the American flag. But, unfortunately, we have a shortage of goods and passengers.

Q Is there a thought of organizing another company to keep these ships?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not that I know of. I have not heard.

Q Have you read Senator Tydings' complaint that he is being abandoned politically and that a certain Webb of Maryland has been thrown out of office because he happens to be a --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I never heard of Webb. Who is Webb?

Q It is a long story and not a very interesting one. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of it.

Q His last job was assistant something or other in the census.

THE PRESIDENT: Assistant what?

Q State Supervisor of the Census, I think.

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of him and I never heard of the job.

Q Can you tell us something of the conferences with Lewis and Green, other than on the maritime situation?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing to tell that you or I could write. Just continuing conversations; that is as far as we got.

Q Mr. Green intimated very plainly that you asked that the conferences be resumed, and he said his committee was ready any time the C.I.O. was. Mr. Lewis came out and referred us to you.

THE PRESIDENT: I may not have discussed the same thing with Mr. Lewis.

Q He said it was the same thing.

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure you cannot get a story out of it. I doubt if

I could tell you one myself. We haven't got to the point where we can write any kind of a story. Incidentally, the more stories which are not strictly accurate which go out, the more it hurts the possibility of getting labor together. That is really the fact.

Q Mr. President, have you made your southern plans yet?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I will probably go down about the twenty-first, which is a Tuesday, and come back probably on Sunday.

Q Will you come by way of Asheville?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. I hope to either go by Asheville or come back by Asheville and see Mac (Mr. McIntyre).

Q Are you going to attend the Army and Navy Game in Philadelphia?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so, for the first time, almost, in history.

Q Can you tell us anything new about your reaction to Mr. Browder's Boston speech?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, there wasn't anything new. I think Kannee (the recorder) has got the notes of what I said last Tuesday.

Q Mr. President, in a recent Press Conference you spoke of the possibility of using cheap electricity to develop a steel industry on the West Coast?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes?

Q There is a situation in Northern Minnesota that is somewhat like that where the supply of high-grade ores is rapidly going. With the help of the University of Minnesota there is a project developed to bring in gas from the gas fields and develop the low-grade ores. I wonder if your attitude on that would be somewhat similar?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you are scientifically minded, the answer is

yes. In that same connection, you know old Ross (Mr. J. D. Ross), if you will remember, was working for that section, the Dakotas and Minnesota, for the use of this low-grade coal that is up there in fairly large quantities.

Q The lignite?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and very close to the surface. In other words, a strip mining proposition, with the idea of turning it into electricity at the mines and using it on the smelting of low-grade ores. Well, that was two years ago and I have not heard anything more about it since then.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #597,
Executive Offices of the White House,
November 14, 1939, 4.00 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think I have got any particular news. I sent up yesterday to Chairman Taylor of the Appropriations Committee the supplemental amendments on the emergency measures that were started in September. Those were to carry the Army, the Navy, the Coast Guard and the F. C. I. through until the end of this fiscal year. They totaled \$271,000,000. and the breakdown is: for the military establishment, \$119,000,000.; for the naval establishment, \$146,000,000.; for the Coast Guard, four and a half million dollars; for the F. C. I., one and one-half million dollars. Those were the four items.

Q Is the Marine Corps included in that naval figure?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Today is the fourth anniversary of the Philippine Commonwealth. They are celebrating it in the Philippines. I wonder if you could say anything that would make them happy. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you can say that I, also, am happy -- happy over their four years of success as a commonwealth.

Q Have we done anything officially to show concern over the fate of the Netherlands and Belgium?

THE PRESIDENT: Have you asked the State Department?

Q We have.

THE PRESIDENT: And what did they say?

Q Nothing. (Laughter)

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Q Mr. President, the week-end newspapers carry the story that Vice President Garner is going to permit his name to go before the Convention. Does that alter your plans in any way? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, don't be so subtle. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, the Maritime Commission today declined to transfer four American cargo ships to the flag of Panama. May we guess from that that the same action will be taken in regard to the United States liners?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. I did not know they had declined. Of course, at the present time we are working, trying to find cargoes for those ships and jobs for those men and that is about as far as we have got.

Q No decision then regarding the matter?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no final decision. Oh, I think you can see which way the wind is blowing, Fred (Mr. Essary).

Q (Mr. Essary) I think I have.

Q Are you making any success in regard to that quest for jobs for those men? You spoke at considerable length about that.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I think one or two things are about ready to go through. The Coast Guard training has been announced. I think the Maritime Commission training is about ready to go into effect. Of course that works in with W. P. A. in the case of those married people who do not want to go to training schools -- in other words, special projects. And then the other thing is what I have referred to as trying to get as many ships in commission as we can.

Q Will they get priority on W. P. A. jobs?

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

Q Is there anything to say on the Irish protest against the bar to shipping to Ireland?

THE PRESIDENT: Only that we have had, not official protests but we have had unofficial sorrow expressed that a good many other countries are in the same boat. There is the whole of the Baltic; there is all of Sweden and Southern Norway. All of them are independent neutral nations. There is Holland and Belgium and Denmark. They are all in the same boat.

Unfortunately, it is a question of fact as to what is a definite danger zone for American ships. I have the utmost sympathy with all of the countries that are factually within the danger zone.

Q Any thought of transferring any ships to the Irish flag?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. Maybe we might be in a receptive frame of mind if you got a good offer. (Laughter)

Q Did you indicate that those countries you mentioned were among those that, unofficially, had indicated some concern?

THE PRESIDENT: Not officially. I do not mean the governments of those countries, I mean individuals in those countries.

Q Do you contemplate an Executive Order or otherwise with respect to competitive bidding in Army, Navy or Maritime Commission procurement?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing more than what has been done on this business.

Q That only provides for those constructed outside of the territorial limits?

THE PRESIDENT: That is right; that is all. No change any place else.

Q You said you were bound by the letter of the law as well as the

spirit of the law. Secretary Hull said that these transfers would be in violation of the spirit of the law. Do you feel the same way?

THE PRESIDENT: I think, in part, yes. There is one phase that I have not seen anybody bring out sufficiently and that is the question as to whether we ought to put any sister American republics into a position which is different from our own position on neutrality. Of course we have done it in some of those cases where the water has gone over the dam some time before, like the transfer of some tankers to the Panama flag. Well, that was water over the dam but, from now on, the more we think it over, we think we ought not to put them in a different position on neutrality from what we occupy ourselves.

Q That would not apply to Ireland?

THE PRESIDENT: No; no.

Q What is the solution then, to tie up the ships, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I will not try to explain the solution -- various things.

Q Can we tell which way the wind is blowing by the direction of the water over the dam? (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, I noticed over the week end that you saw Ned Bruce's show at the Corcoran Art Gallery. What did you think of it?

THE PRESIDENT: I thought it one of the most interesting exhibits I have ever seen. It is tremendously inspiring and the thing that stands out in modern American art, as shown by the original exhibit there three years ago or four years ago, is that there is nothing morbid about American art. It shows the spirit behind the average

American is refreshingly clean.

(Inaudible comment)

I did not make any comparisons. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you named a W. P. A. Administrator from Missouri?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know; I have no idea. I did not know there was a vacancy.

Q Mr. President, the Delegate from Alaska, Mr. Dimond, said he protested to you about the appointment of Dr. Gruening as Governor of Alaska. Are you going to do anything about that?

THE PRESIDENT: At this time I do not know. Ask me again in a month or two.

Q Mr. President, do you contemplate sending up a recess appointment for a Wage-Hour Administrator?

THE PRESIDENT: For what?

Q Wage-Hour Administrator?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not between now and the time Congress convenes.

Q Would you care to comment on the reported formation of volunteer civilian groups deputized by local police or local sheriffs, like in Kings County, to search out espionage and subversive activities?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not in favor of it.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.