

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #623,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
February 13, 1940, 4.12 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Here is a story of a lost letter and therefore an erroneous record. I think I told you at the last Press Conference that I had not had any letter from John L. Lewis, which was based on a search of our files, and we did not find any. Yesterday we were told by the Department of Labor that they had it and we have got it right here. Bill (Mr. Hassett) can give you a copy of it. It is a letter of October fifteenth from San Francisco and Bill (Mr. Hassett) says, (reading)

"I regret to advise you that John L. Lewis,"  
this is from Bill Hassett,

"replied to your letter to him under date of October sixth. Under date of October nineteenth you referred the letter to the Department of Labor and this accounts for its absence from our files."

Well, Bill will give you a copy of the letter. (Reading)

"Certain of the underlying factors affecting the question of further peace conferences would appear to require additional clarification before such conferences are resumed. Our Committee does not possess any information which would lead to the belief that conferences, if resumed at this time, would be fruitful."

Which is substantially what was repeated to me, as I told you the other day, by him verbally just before Christmas.

Well, I think that is about all there is on that.

Q Is there anything further in this peace situation, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Anything further?

THE PRESIDENT: No; no. I got a memorandum here -- another one -- the last time that that Joint Committee met, which was last spring, sometime in April, I haven't got the exact date.

(Reading)

"It adjourned on the request of Mr. Lewis in order to give him more time to conclude negotiations with the coal operators and perform other duties which he stated to the Committee were essential. The meeting adjourned in all friendliness and with an agreement that it would meet again as soon as Mr. Lewis indicated that he was ready to continue."

Q From whom is that memorandum?

THE PRESIDENT: That was my memorandum.

Q Based on information supplied?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, what all the members of the Committee agreed on.

And I think that is all of that.

I am going to leave, as I have been telling you all along, on my annual trip. I am going to leave tomorrow and take a little trip of about ten days. I don't know definitely yet what port I am going from. I am going to get on a boat and that is why I am going to limit it to the three Press Associations. I would like to have all two hundred of you with me but we haven't got that many bunks and if I were even able to take the correspondents of individual newspapers who have accompanied me to Hyde Park and other places, there would still be a good many hurt feelings because others would like to take the trip as well, including May (Miss Craig) and Doris (Miss Fleeson) and so on, and it would be extremely embarrassing for the Navy to

say that it cannot be done.

Q Mr. President, would you like to exchange good wishes with Senator Guffey before you go?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Exchange plugs or good wishes?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard anything about it.

Q Political good wishes?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know what you are talking about.

Q On his candidacy. Would you like to comment on Senator Guffey's candidacy?

THE PRESIDENT: No -- anybody's candidacy.

Q Getting back to John Lewis, do you want to comment on his proposal that they have a meeting on March fifteenth?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I just gave you the old record.

Q Can you tell us what you talked about with Representative Cliff Woodrum and Representative Lindsay Warren? They said you discussed budgetary matters.

THE PRESIDENT: Just budgetary matters, that is all.

Q Did you discuss the economy drive or the cuts already made?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I told them I hoped very much that the putting back of the money for the National Resources Planning Board would go through in the conference and go through in the House, and they are entirely agreeable to doing so on the simple ground that that is, we all consider, a very necessary part of the Office of the Chief Executive and would be for any Chief Executive.

Q Mr. President, I believe about two weeks ago you had a conference with James D. Mooney of General Motors Corporation, who has just

returned here from Germany. Can you tell us anything?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I see lots of people from all over the world and don't comment on any of them.

Q Did you discuss with Mr. Farley his entrance in the Presidential Primary in Massachusetts?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not that.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us, please, about your two conferences yesterday with the Pennsylvania Democratic leaders?

THE PRESIDENT: They just told me a lot of things. I didn't tell them anything. (Laughter)

Q Well, the last one, the one with Messrs. Boland (Representative Pat Boland), Bard (Guy Bard) and others, that apparently was shrouded in secrecy?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't think so.

Q Well, they came in the side door and went out either the side or back doors?

THE PRESIDENT: They must have had some reason for it.

Q They were not on your calling list so apparently the White House has some responsibility?

THE PRESIDENT: It was down on my list here.

Q It was not outside.

THE PRESIDENT: Wasn't it?

Q Did Ambassador Kennedy show you the statement he said he was going to issue tonight regarding his candidacy or becoming a candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of it; he didn't mention it.

Q The Senate Banking and Currency Committee this morning decided to postpone action on the Townsend Resolution, which may put an end

to the purchase of foreign silver until they can ascertain the Administration attitude on that question. Would you care to tell us, sir, what your attitude is?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think you will have to wait until we look into it a little further, when the Secretary (Secretary Morgenthau) gets back in about ten days.

Q Were there any other items in addition to the National Resources Board that you discussed with Cliff Woodrum and Lindsay Warren that you would like to add to that statement of yours?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. We talked about the Naval Appropriation Bill which apparently has had cut out of it the laying down of two new battleships, and I personally -- I told them I hoped the Senate would put back the laying down of two new battleships.

Q The Senate or the House?

THE PRESIDENT: The Senate -- oh, it would come up in the House but I am talking about the Committee action.

Q The bill is before the House now?

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is before the House now. I do not know if they are going to make an attempt to put it back in the House.

Q I thought maybe you meant the House?

THE PRESIDENT: I was going on the assumption that no effort would be made in the House.

Q Are you going to take any action whatever with respect to the slate of delegates put in in Wisconsin and in Illinois in your behalf?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know a thing about it.

Q Have you come to any nearer news on the intra-Departmental Message and Orders?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I should say there would not be anything on it until, oh, about the tenth or fifteenth of March.

Q Is that "inter" or "intra"?

THE PRESIDENT: "Inter" or "intra," either one -- both.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment on the encouragement of the teaching of democracy in the schools of our country today?

THE PRESIDENT: Gosh!

Q I am from Chicago (The Chicago Times); perhaps I should not have asked the question.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we get lots of good questions from Chicago. It seemed to get me off balance and completely cold.

Q You are never cold, not in Chicago anyway.

We have to meet the challenge of Naziism in Germany and Stalinism in Russia. In other words, would you consider encouraging the move to really foster the study of democracy from the very beginning in all our schools in this country?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me put it in an even broader way and beyond (at this point the Press were laughing and applauding the reporter for the Chicago Times) and beyond schools.

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, for graduates, like you and me.

Q You are; I am not.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, you are. The way I would put it is this: that I honestly believe that democracy, as a whole, can best be encouraged by enlisting freedom of the press but, in addition to

that, freedom of information about what goes on all over the world and then, if people get every side of every story, it will almost necessarily help the democratic processes. I think freedom of information is just as essential as freedom of the press so as to give the honest, factual news about any old subject that people are interested in, no matter what the origin of the subject or place of the subject. And that, of course, should be carried all the way down into the curricula of schools.

Q Would you care to supplement the praise that the press is giving Justice Black for his defense of civil liberties yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: What was that?

Q That Florida case.

Q Unanimous decision.

THE PRESIDENT: If I were, I would put in a general dig that some of the Press should not give a little praise but also a modicum of apology for things they have said in the last two years. Is that fair?

Q That is what I was thinking.

Q Do you expect to see Green (President of the American Federation of Labor) and Lewis (C. I. O.) on your return from the trip?

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

Q Will you not see Mr. Welles before he goes?

THE PRESIDENT: I was going to see Sumner today but he is in bed with a touch of the flu and I hope to see him tomorrow morning before I go.

Q Any developments in the disposal of surpluses -- in your plans for the disposal of surpluses you spoke of last week?

THE PRESIDENT: Agricultural surpluses?

Q The laid up fleet, shoes, guns?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Anything to be said about your talk with Ambassador Bullitt?

THE PRESIDENT: No, just talked over all kinds of things. I talked to Joe Kennedy today and Sumner Welles -- what was it? -- three days ago and I am talking, I think, with the Secretary of State this afternoon.

Q With all those conversations, there should be a lot of situations talked over?

THE PRESIDENT: All kinds of situations.

Q Can you tell us anything about the things you talked with Kennedy about?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, just the general world situation.

Q Is there any particular reason for the vehemence with which the White House denied there would be a joint conference with Mr. Welles and Kennedy and Bullitt?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except that it was a fake story, that is all.

Q Beyond suggesting a conference for labor peace, do you have any blueprint in your mind on how it could be done?

THE PRESIDENT: No; no. I have got very little on my mind.

Q Mr. President, was the settlement between the Colombian Government and the foreign bondholders brought to your attention?

THE PRESIDENT: Only in general, that the thing is getting on very well.

Q Do you wish to comment further?

THE PRESIDENT: The last I heard was about four or five days ago, that

the bondholders' committee had not been finally heard from but was expected to go along with the proposal. Did they do it?

Q Last night there was an announcement there had been a temporary settlement.

THE PRESIDENT: That is grand; that is a definite step in the right direction.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hope you all have a good time.

Q The same to you.

Q Don't catch too many fish.

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #624,  
On Board the Presidential Special Train,  
Immediately following arrival at Pensacola, Florida,  
February 15, 1940, 11.00 A. M.

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, how are the boys? Did you have a good night?

Q Partly. Good morning, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: We had Ross McIntire give orders strictly in the family last night that Fox was to go around and give out solution of phospho-soda this morning, before they got up, in order to be prepared to go on board ship. Well, I don't know what kind of news I can give you.

Q I am about to ask you a question. You had better do it now. After we get on board there won't be any news. I got a telegram from New York saying you might be contacting French, British or Italian people some time during the course of this cruise.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I can comment.

Q You mean that that shuts off any further questions?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I can comment on it.

Q It might be construed as meaning there were possibilities, if you can't comment. It's a rather tricky situation and we thought we were going to get an awful kick in the pants. Please give us an honest count on this, will you? I think I am the fall guy all the way around. Is there anything you can tell us about the cruise itself? Anything you can possibly tell us?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe I can. It may be safe to assume, as it so often happens, that you combine business with vacation or vacation with business. I don't think I can say any more than that.

Q Mr. President, is it possible that you may be touching some Gulf port in four or five days where we might see you again?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, if we do I would see you, and if not you can range alongside and I could wave to you and find out if you are all right. We can talk by radio, not all the time but most of the time. I don't mean radio, but blinker.

Q You don't know in advance what ports you are going to?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't comment on that.

Q Is it possible that your cruise may extend down into the Caribbean?

THE PRESIDENT: Someone had it all figured out, Tommy Quarters, that he had heard it whispered around that we were going first to the Andaman Islands, and then to the Celebes, and after that we would stop at the South Shetlands on the way back, and I told Tommy he could, and one paper carried the story this morning that we were going to the Cheruble Islands. I would suggest on the last one that you probably won't find them in an Atlas. They were discovered by a famous old navigator, Edward Lear, about 100 years ago.

Q When you say it might be safe to assume the trip would combine vacation and business, can you amplify this?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Can you tell us whether there will be more than routine news or mail?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I can't tell you that.

Q Are there any particular points which cover the situation and if you can, tell us?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't tell you that.

Q It's going to be a good mystery novel, Mr. President. Mr. President, will you have a chance to inspect the Neutrality Patrol on this cruise?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't comment on that because obviously you will be finding out something about points of the compass.

Q By the way, it has been just about six months since that patrol was estab-

lished. Would you care to comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: It is doing, I think, exceedingly well -- very well. Well, I will put it this way. That while there has been a big and a serious war raging, there has been mighty little of it around the shores of the Americas, besides which we are learning an awful lot from it. It is very, very helpful.

Q Could you tell us in a general way what?

THE PRESIDENT: I think if you want to write the story I would put it this way, because everybody in the Navy agrees on two points. First, it took us longer to put the reserve ships into commission than we expected, and that is a very important thing to know beforehand. We thought it would be possible to put reserve destroyers into commission a great deal quicker than we were actually able to do it. We learned very valuable lessons on that and then I would put the second lesson as the coordination between the lighter surface craft, like destroyers, and the patrol planes, in duties in the air and of the work with the lighter surface craft and for patrol purposes. Dan, don't you think those are the two important things, and the areas of ocean which can be patrolled?

CAPTAIN CALLAGHAN: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Because there has never been an attempt before this to put any substantial patrol over any area anything this big, what we are patrolling today.

Q The point of view of lessons of national defense?

THE PRESIDENT: Don't overlook the fact it kept things pretty peaceful over on this side.

Q Is there anything you can say, Mr. President, about British blockade authorities forcing American ships into belligerent waters?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing besides what you have all had from the State Department.

Q Are you going to do any fishing on this trip?

THE PRESIDENT: Maybe, sporadically, as we do. Sometimes we do and sometimes we don't.

Q Is there anything you can tell us about where the trip will end, or when?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I wish I could help you more. I feel pretty badly about it, but I can't help.

Q Happy sailing, Mr. President. Goodbye, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Goodbye.

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #625,  
On board U.S.S. TUSCALOOSA,  
February 19, 1940, 1.00 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: This is a highly confidential discussion of Pan-American defense on the theory that defense of the Panama Canal is of Pan-American and not merely United States interest, and therefore an attack on the Canal would be an attack against all American Republics and not only the United States. In the same way, defense of the Canal would be a matter of Pan-American defense and not merely United States. In other words, that is really the development of the past few years of new Pan-American relations. The second point is that the defense of the Canal falls into two parts: one is the old problem of defense when we first built the Canal thirty years ago. At that time the danger to the Canal was from an attack by a fleet, followed by an expeditionary force, on either the Panama side or the Colon side. That was adequately taken care of by the construction of heavy coast fortifications, together with a comparatively small mobile army against attempts to land. Within the past few years the problem has been greatly expanded. The first defense problem is adequately taken care of by existing fortifications and mobile troops. The second problem is primarily an air problem, that is, the new one.

This second problem falls into two parts: first, the immediate defense of the Canal itself, which means planes and antiaircraft guns within the Zone. That is being built up in a satisfactory way. The (b) part of the new problem is to discover the enemy before he gets there, and therefore, because of the increased range

of modern planes, means outlying listening posts to a very great distance from the Zone itself. The modern seaplane has an effective range of 600 miles out and 600 miles back, for patrol purposes, but because of the speed of modern attack planes it is necessary to base the patrol at a substantial distance from the Zone itself. Therefore, for the past few years, three or four years, we have been examining potential temporary bases for seaplane patrols. That has meant on the Atlantic side, the examination of places with a good lee where a seaplane tender could base and act as the mother ship for seaplanes, with a sufficient area of water for them to take off and land under normal conditions. On the Atlantic side it has meant an examination to the south and east, actually into Colombian waters.

(The President explained to the newspapermen, by way of illustration, the possibilities and advantages of the Corn Islands off Nicaragua, as an outlying temporary base.)

Note: In the following discussion, the President is from time to time indicating on chart.

THE PRESIDENT: It means on the Pacific side again down to Colombian waters and out here it means up to roughly the middle of Costa Rica, and if you notice this chart you will see the reason we are here. This morning we ran into Montijo Bay because coming out of here this is across the Pacific end, that is, up toward California, and we have to come around Cape Mala. That, of course, is an excellent place for seaplanes to land in at all times of the year. Under the old treaties we have rights in the Gulf of Fonseca way up here in Honduras. The point in this whole thing is that none

of this is really a matter of treaty because in time of peace we are not going to do anything about it except to know everything there is to know about it.

We are going on tonight -- because of one perfectly obvious thing which we don't talk about -- we are going over to Cocos.

Q To Cocos?

THE PRESIDENT: You will see why, outside of fishing. There is Cocos, just a dot on the map. When you circle from there, see what a patrol plane can do? It's 500 miles across from there to where we are now. A patrol plane, if it can be based on Cocos, has got this perfectly enormous sweep of 500 miles. You can see this and see what it does. Away out to sea, and covering this whole area down to here, and away around here to a point where a patrol from here will more than cover it. They will meet. You get the whole thing actually covered if you can do anything in the way of patrol planes out of Cocos. It really is a strategic place except that physically it is one of the most difficult places to use as a base, as you will see.

Q Are the islands large enough to form a good lee?

THE PRESIDENT: No, that's the trouble. That's the whole problem. We will probably do some actual surveying there tomorrow, and with sounding rods. The soundings are pretty old and fairly sketchy, except in Chatham Bay, so really it's an effort to consolidate our continental defense thinking and planning.

Q Mr. President, you mean that because of what you are looking over you don't want us to mention any points at all?

THE PRESIDENT: No, and that's why I had to say we combined business

with pleasure. On the way back I will have the Army, Navy and Air people in the cabin and on the way through the Canal we will have a general confab on the whole thing. Cocos would be in the same category as some of these other bases. The only thing the Army has got, out of the Zone, is 80 miles away up in here. That's right up in there and they found this beautiful sort of prairie, wild, wide, prairie lands. Then, of course, it is probable that farther up, somewhere up in here, near the border, they will be able to get enough landplane bases up in there over on the Costa Rican side. The international problem really does not arise because everybody is tickled to death to recognize it as one of mutual defense, with practically nothing being done in peace time, just getting it fixed up so we can use it.

Q That place that I called La Vantor, I think that is a real estate name. It has a beach comparable to Atlantic City. The Army has an airfield right off of this beach which is a huge field, because General Brett flew a bomber up there the day that we were up there.

GENERAL WATSON: I don't really know.

Q And they were thinking of putting up quarters along that beach for the morale of the troops in the Zone.

THE PRESIDENT: It can't be far away.

Q Eighty miles.

THE PRESIDENT: This place they were talking to me about yesterday was 1500 feet high. It must be another one.

So you see the problem. The only thing I can think of to say in your dispatches is that we are in the Pacific Ocean conducting a study of Canal Zone and Central American defense on the

Pacific side, with special relation to distant defense, rather than immediate defense of the Canal, and that we are combining business with pleasure, fishing on the side, having already been, the first day, in several different localities, and from there I don't know where you go. Because you see the trouble is, once we start to talk about where we go, we give the whole thing away. You see how important this area is here, because it's a beautiful lee and yet in a straight line from here to the Canal it's very short. It's longer around by water and a comparatively short distance by air. It's only 140 miles by airline and that's why this whole area is of real interest on the continental defense end.

Q When you speak of distant rather than immediate defense, you mean distance rather than time?

THE PRESIDENT: Distance from the Canal. I think you had better call it Central American waters because that's what they are, but without mentioning any of the countries, because the national end of it really isn't involved. The whole policy of hemisphere defense affects each of the independent republics just as much as it does the United States.

By the way, now that the cat's out of the bag, the Cheruble Isles are found in Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense.

Q Mr. President, can you say how long this is likely to last?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know yet. It depends on how things go in Washington.

Q First of the month?

THE PRESIDENT: Probably before that. Around the first of the month,

if everything is all quiet.

Q Are you planning to make a tour of the Pacific end of the defenses?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q The Panamanian President asked me about Panamanians working on the Canal.

THE PRESIDENT: Can't say anything about it. It's in the hands of the War Department and State Department and several committees of Congress.

Q You had some message at one time?

THE PRESIDENT: There have been three or four bills backed by the American Federation of Labor. Don't use it because I am not certain of the facts. Federation wants perfectly straight American employment on the third set of locks. As you know, Americans are all right for supervisory work but they cannot do backbreaking shovel work in the sun. Under the treaty with Panama we are obligated to give Panamanians equal chance with Americans on supervisory work and actually there are so few of them who can do that work, that it's a drop in the bucket compared to the total. We have to live up to the treaty in spite of any Act of Congress. Treaty supersedes any Act of Congress. This day labor -- Panama does not want a large influx of Jamaica Negroes, who are the best workers. They want to improve the percentage of white blood in their population.

Q Mr. President, is there anything you can tell us about the inspection yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing, except they are doing awfully good work and considering the difference in defense between the first time I

was here in 1934, and today, which was only five and a half years later, we have more than doubled the effective defensive strength of the Canal, and the work is proceeding according to schedule. That's about all you can say. And then on the third set of locks, I think we have a 15 million dollar estimate in the bill, isn't that right?

GENERAL WATSON: I am not sure.

Q In the pending Army bill?

THE PRESIDENT: 15 million dollars, approximately, to get the work started.

GENERAL WATSON: The authorization is a big figure.

THE PRESIDENT: The authorization has been made for the whole project.

Q The third set of locks is very much needed?

THE PRESIDENT: Very much needed.

Q There is a great deal of comment about your meeting with President Boyd on your return.

THE PRESIDENT: I will have President Boyd on board just like I did with President Arosemena and President Arias.

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #626,  
On board U.S.S. TUSCALOOSA,  
Gatun Locks, Canal Zone,  
February 27, 1940.

THE PRESIDENT: As a general proposition there is practically nothing further on the Pacific side, but on the Atlantic side there is a further outer line of defense which, however, is defense not only for the Canal but also for the southern United States, which is based on Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. While Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are primarily for defense of the Canal they are equally for defense of the southern half of the United States on the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Both of these defense problems involve perfect teamwork between the Army and the Navy, and that's why these conferences we have been having are of definite value so as to prevent any duplication or overlapping of the work.

Q. The long-range program means more planes and more guns. Do you have any idea how many?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the first thing to do is to finish the present program, and on planes and antiaircraft guns, we have only got about, delivered, half of the total that have been either recommended by the Joint Board or actually authorized, and as I remember it, about the same situation on planes. About half of them have been either appropriated for or authorized.

Q. In your illustration of the concentric circles, would that be interpreted to mean that any defense plan for the Canal would envisage operations within or above these circles?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course.

Q That's the critical defense zone in the Canal?

THE PRESIDENT: When you get to the 200 mile circle you get into Costa Rica or Colombia, and the point that Dr. Boyd made that the Canal is just as important to all of them as it is to the United States or Panama itself.

Q We have a quote from Dr. Boyd to that effect. He said, "We are all in the same boat. Latin America must cooperate with the United States in defense of the Canal because we would all suffer equally." When are we going to find out where we are headed for?

THE PRESIDENT: Thursday.

Q Does your plan for the trip north envisage any stop?

THE PRESIDENT: We haven't sent any word to Washington yet.

Q Your first engagement is March fourth?

THE PRESIDENT: In the morning, I think, we have the usual services, but I haven't heard.

Q And then the Cabinet Dinner that night?

THE PRESIDENT: Monday night.

Q Your seventh anniversary.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Do you plan anything else for that day?

THE PRESIDENT: Work and lots of mail.

Q Are you planning any statements?

THE PRESIDENT: No, signing mail. Press conference on Tuesday. I will be in a grand position because I will have just landed and won't know anything yet.

Q Mr. President, to go away from this trip itself, have you heard anything from Mr. Welles?

THE PRESIDENT: No, the usual State Department bulletins.

Q The bulletin from Mr. Welles refers to a signed message by you.

THE PRESIDENT: Personal notes, personal and unofficial.

Q And there are being presented similar notes to all capitals?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q We had the most interesting bit of news by way of George Durno.

Doris Fleeson went to Europe at the last minute.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it's proper. Is Doris going to follow Sumner all over Europe?

Q As far as Paris, I think.

THE PRESIDENT: If you want to get loose from the Press don't tell anybody where you are going and when you are going. Tell them about two hours beforehand, because I am morally certain that no representative of the Press can possibly get on the same train with you. They are going to be terribly bothered because the one very distinct directive that Sumner has is not to talk. I don't think Sumner will say a single word to anybody.

Q There will be leaks from the foreign offices in the various capitals.

THE PRESIDENT: There will be in France. You can't tell the French anything confidential.

Q There is no domestic news?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing.

Q Anything about the income tax payments in the District?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't had a bill the whole trip.

## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #627,

On board train en route Pensacola to Washington,  
March 2, 1940, 11.30 A.M.

Q Mr. President, for the benefit of those who were not along, tell us a little bit more about this long-range defense system of the Canal, particularly does it contemplate the acquisition of any new territory for naval use?

THE PRESIDENT: I well expected that perfectly natural question and it is one that can be answered by not only a negative but a very firm negative. I won't go into what we three talked about. (The reference is to Mr. Durno, Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Cornell). The final theory for the defense of the Canal proper is that with modern aircraft, bombing planes can fly approximately up to 600 miles and it is perfectly -- even a layman would understand that it is better policy to know about their take-off and try to get them on the way in than to wait until they get to the objective. It is primarily patrols, and it is much easier to run patrols if you can base patrols out near the edge of that circle than having to make the flight from the zone itself. They can stay out longer and cover more territory. That doesn't mean that in time of peace there would be any need for or wish to acquire sovereignty over any territory which the United States does not own now. In other words, people who jump to that conclusion haven't thought things through. The obvious reason is that with present relations between all American republics, an attack on the Canal is a threat involving all American republics, therefore it is a matter of common defense.

Q Wouldn't it imply at least an informal understanding that such ter-

ritory could be used in time of war?

THE PRESIDENT: It is not necessary. The whole thing has been implemented by the Lima Agreement and by the Panama Agreement. Nothing further necessary. In other words, there is a complete understanding. It already exists.

Q Do the facilities exist?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, in great part.

Q Mr. President, do you propose to do anything about the action of the House in cutting out the Panama appropriations?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't say anything about it until I find out what happened. You see it was authorized by the Congress last year and a great deal of the preliminary work has already been done, which is apparently not known in Washington. Just for example, you weren't along with me on the motor trip the last day. We saw two construction camp sites actually being cleared so the contractors would have a place to locate their camps as soon as they got the contracts.

Q Patterson talked about Nicaragua for an alternate canal.

THE PRESIDENT: That was pretty well threshed out in the past. Great deal of money, and a third set of locks would give the required security and also take care of the expected additional tonnage which would use the Canal for a great many years to come if and when peace in the world is succeeded by increased commerce, we all hope.

Q I think the House Committee in knocking out that fund for the final third set of locks thought the Army was going ahead too fast.

THE PRESIDENT: The simple answer to that is Congress has complete authority to defer construction for a year but it should not be

camouflaged under any statement that they are going ahead too fast. The responsibility should rest squarely on the shoulders of Congress for delaying construction for a whole year. Plans are sufficiently far advanced to begin construction this spring. I also noted that Senator Adams of Colorado was quoted as saying that he was in favor of building a canal from the East Coast to the Pacific Coast, and a tunnel across the continent, in the press this morning.

Q What papers was that in this morning?

THE PRESIDENT: It came from New York to San Francisco.

Q Through Colorado?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Does that go by way of the Cheruble Islands?

THE PRESIDENT: No comment on that.

Q Did you also note stories in the paper about submarining of British freighter?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I will have to wait until I get back.

Q (Asked the President to comment on Mr. Welles).

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing can be said about Mr. Welles until we get back.

Q Welles stayed in his stateroom all the way over.

THE PRESIDENT: Off the record, he was probably trying to avoid Doris.

Q Mr. President, while you were away there was a story printed that you would ask the Congressional leaders, stating that you hoped Congress would be out by the fifteenth of May.

THE PRESIDENT: We hadn't talked about it at all.

Q There have been reports of a trip to the West Coast. You may go?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. The only thing is that I promised San Francisco

I would go there last summer and they are opening again this year and I am going to try to fulfill that promise this summer.

Q What time does the fog begin to get bad in the Inside Passage to Alaska?

THE PRESIDENT: As I remember it they told us that it was all right from the fifteenth of May to the fifteenth of August.

Q Do you still hope to go up there?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. Haven't talked about it.

Q Will we make the Warm Springs trip?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so. Last year, you know, we didn't go until around the first of April, for a week, and it was a lot better than previous years when we went in March. If I go it will be around the first of April, for a week.

Q I was going to ask a question about politics but I don't think I will.

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't. (Laughter) Felix, your paper doesn't want stories like that. It's an independent paper.

Q I will have to defer a little bit there.

The weight of the world is off the record, the famous conference room.

A lot of strong men in the Ivory Tower.

It's like this all the time -- think of our responsibility to humanity.

Six Democratic Senators are sponsoring a bill to restore the Farm Credit Administration.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know what has happened on that. I think it still has an independent status.

Q They plan to restore it to take it away from the Department of Agriculture.

THE PRESIDENT: All the difference in the world between taking it away from the Department of Agriculture and giving it independent status, essentially, because it has an independent status.

I don't think there is anything else before Sunday. I can't tell what there will be. Probably will sign that bill (Export-Import Bill), if it comes, after we get there. Whatever will be there, ask him (Stephen Early) if there is anything that he has on his chest outside of this bill because there might be something that I don't know about. Run around to the White House. It would be safe.

Q Do you contemplate any March fourth statement?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q That will make Dave Lawrence mad.

THE PRESIDENT: Pass the tip to Dave that the first of April is good.

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #628,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
March 5, 1940, 4.09 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, how goes fifty fathoms today?

Q Very well.

Q How many fish did you catch?

THE PRESIDENT: Damned few, too few even to count.

Q (Referring to the Pensacola newspaper which the President had in front of him) Local pride coming to the fore in Pensacola?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q They wanted you to come in on the cruiser instead of the destroyer?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, who wrote that story?

Q It is an editorial.

THE PRESIDENT: It is an A.P. story, by gosh. You saw it, didn't you?

Q What is it about?

THE PRESIDENT: A certain gentleman representing the Associated Press cast "asparagus" on the depth of water in Pensacola Harbor by saying it was too shallow for us to get up to the dock. The Pensacola paper takes the Associated Press to task.

Q And the U.P. recoups.

Q The A.P. ought to know what deep water is.

THE PRESIDENT: As a matter of fact, the story was all right. They couldn't get up to the dock, which was perfectly true. It was the fault of the Navy and not Pensacola Harbor. That is a beautiful harbor.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I think probably I gave all the news there was to the

gentlemen who accompanied me on the trip. I meant to bring with me a copy of Edward Lear's book of nonsense verses to read it to you all today, about the owl and the pussycat and the Jumblies, but I forgot it -- I'll have it Friday -- all about the Cheruble Isles and the other places we visited and had a very nice cruise. We had a few narrow escapes.

Q Submarine? (Laughter)

Q Did you go to the Isle of Lonely Women? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No. Ask the accompanying Press; it is all right.

Thank God, they all got back safely.

Q Mr. President, the House Appropriations Committee seems to be against further appropriations for the Antarctic Expedition. Do you care to comment on that? Their view seems to be that they did not understand that it was to be a continuing expedition?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I thought it was going to be and I thought everybody knew it was going to be. There was never any mystery about it. We certainly all talked about it here at the time.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Of course it would save an awful lot of money by making it a continuing expedition, even if it is only for three or four years, than if you send down an occasional separate expedition that stays only for one winter.

Q Mr. President, what is your preference between Senator Guffey and Walter A. Jones in the Pennsylvania Primary? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I told the boys on Saturday last that the following Tuesday, which is today, I would have so recently returned that I would not know anything. Now it is your turn (indicating the

reporter whose question he had interrupted).

Q Mr. President, your name has been entered in the Pennsylvania Presidential Primary and will be on the ballot unless withdrawn in a certain period, I think ten days. Do you intend to let it remain?

THE PRESIDENT: I guess probably what I told the Press on Saturday still holds. I am just back and don't know nothing. (Laughter)

Q Would it be a presumption to recall your saying that you had canvassed the Pennsylvania situation from A to Z with Jack Kelly and had not arrived at any conclusion? It seems everybody that has filed has come into the race and we just wondered if you had any views on it?

THE PRESIDENT: The same thing. I have not heard anything the last two days. I am awfully sorry that these very, very delightful series -- you can keep up with the series -- but literally it is true, I am back so recently I do not know what has happened.

Q Mr. President, have you had a chance yet to read your biographer?  
(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Who did that to me?

Q Ernest Lindley had a very interesting question and answer column yesterday on the front page of the Post (The Washington Post) and I thought maybe you had seen that and could give us something?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not seen that. The only thing I heard about that was that I was talking, I think with Senator Byrnes, on the telephone and he asked me about it and advised me to read it because everybody was kidding Cotton Ed Smith for having been the Senator that told the story to Lindley. (Laughter)

Q They shifted it to Doughton today, I understand?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Shifted it to Doughton today.

Q Did you discuss that situation with Mr. Smith? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I would have to follow the Senate Investigating Committee on that.

Q Mr. President, I asked Mr. Doughton if he was the man and he said, "I have never said anything to anybody that would make me responsible for anything in that story." And I said, "Is it true or not?" And then he repeated that he was not responsible for Mr. Lindley's story.

Now, seriously -- (interrupted by laughter) -- did you talk to Bob Doughton about these matters of presidency, et cetera?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe so; I don't remember anything.

Q He (Representative Doughton) seems to be all upset about it.

THE PRESIDENT: I just talked to Jimmy Byrnes on the telephone.

Q But Earl's (referring to Mr. Godwin) idea, is the story true or not?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know because I have not read it. Steve (Mr. Early) told me that he was mentioning that we still believed in freedom of the press and then I did read Harlan Miller yesterday morning where he quoted Thomas Jefferson on his four points, on the four things that the press could print: news (truths), possibilities, probabilities and lies (laughter), so I am just quoting Harlan Miller now; it is all right, it is good.

Q In which category does this story fall? (Laughter)

Q Have you in mind sending an ambassador to Berlin soon?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know anything about it. I have not thought

about it.

Q Have you had any word that they were to send Dieckhoff (former Ambassador from Germany) back to this country?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard a word.

Q Can you tell us anything about your monetary conference of yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: Only that we discussed the advisability at this time of refunding all of the notes and bonds that come due in June and it was decided to refund the notes and not the bonds at this time. That is slightly more than half of the total.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us why that refunding operation was made the subject of a special conference?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing, except that we have them right along. Every time there is a bond issue comes up, a refunding issue, we do the same thing. Nothing novel about it.

Q Can you tell us why you postponed the bonds?

THE PRESIDENT: Because it was thought to be the best thing to do.

Q Can you tell us why the refunding will be put into another note issue instead of a bond issue?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose because it is the best thing to do. Everybody recommended it.

Q Last summer you asked Senator Donahey to run for reelection out there. On Sunday he said he was going to retire. Any thought of asking him to reconsider or any thought --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, I have not had a chance to see him. I expect to see him in the next week or ten days. I hope he will run for reelection or for Governor because he is a very valuable

public servant.

Q What is the situation on the St. Lawrence Waterway?

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

Q Do you have any comment on the proposed amendment to the Hatch Act?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I cannot very well comment because I understand that there are various bills up there and a series of amendments to them but it has always seemed to me that if you are going to apply the Hatch Act to one type of Federal employee who is paid his whole salary out of Federal funds, that the same line of argument ought to apply to people who are paid part salary out of Federal funds. I think that is about as far as I can go.

Q The local editors are worried about a couple of judgeships in the District of Columbia?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not had a chance to talk to Bob Jackson because I think he is sick abed with the flu.

Q Will you tell us about your conference with Goss of the Farm Credit Administration today?

THE PRESIDENT: We took up a number of very, very complex problems that I wanted some enlightenment on and still do not entirely understand, such as the question of normal valuations on farms. It is a terribly intricate thing and I would be afraid to go into it because I do not know enough about it.

Q Has he resigned yet?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Can you tell us now when Welles (Under Secretary Sumner Welles) will be back (from Europe)?

THE PRESIDENT: I have no idea.

Q Do you expect him, Goss, to resign?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. The Secretary of Agriculture and he have talked that over and it is possible.

Q After your explanation to us on the train, there was a published report that you had received direct assurances from Costa Rica, Colombia and Panama whereby we could use their landing fields whenever we wanted to.

THE PRESIDENT: That is a completely faked story. In fact, I did read that story (laughter) because it was something we had been talking about and doing. I did not see anybody from Colombia; I did not see anybody from Costa Rica and, as I made it perfectly clear on the train, no agreements are necessary, and certainly acquisition of additional territory is not only unnecessary but would be a silly thing to do. I see that legislation has been introduced to that effect.

Q Mr. President, there has been considerable criticism in Congress regarding some of the questions in the 1940 census. Do you have any comment to make on that issue?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't think so. I have been wondering just a little bit as to whether on the issues that have been raised anybody in this room really has anything in particular they want to hide from the United States Government. I am not talking about their neighbors, I am talking about the Government and the use of that information for statistical purposes. I do not think I have anything to hide and I do not think any of you have.

On the question, for example -- I believe there is a question, "Have you ever been divorced?" Well, perhaps I would not want my

neighbors to know that under certain circumstances but I would not mind telling the Federal Census taker. The Federal Government's interest is not the least bit whether you have been divorced as an individual. We would like to know, for perfectly obvious reasons, the trend of -- the curve of marriage and divorce in the United States. It is a rather important thing for the country to know. Nobody gives a rap about who the individuals are and, of course, all census information is confidential information. The same thing applies to income (tax) returns.

Q Is that divorce question a new question or has it been in the census?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, the whole thing, of course, is an obviously political move and nothing else, literally. Everybody recognizes that. Everybody here who is accredited to the Congress knows that that is the sole motive.

Q Could you be quoted on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, you said you did not have anything to hide and while you were away (laughter) Berryman had a cartoon of you on the front porch (of the White House) with the census taker and he was asking you if you had a mortgage on this place. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Pretty cute.

Q Do you suppose that census taker will divulge what you said as an answer?

THE PRESIDENT: I might tell him if he was a genuine census taker, just to test out Government secrecy. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you tell how many bathtubs are in the White House?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Bathtubs?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose it is down in the record somewhere.

Q Mr. President, the War Department announced the sale of ninety guns from surplus stocks to Brazil. Does that have your particular approval or do you care to comment?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, that has been in train ever since the Chief of Staff went down there and we had a return visit from the Brazilian Chief of Staff. Brazil wanted, felt that they were unduly weak in certain heavy artillery and these guns were old British model guns that have got to be reconditioned and they do not fit in with any of the rest of our own Army equipment. They have been working on it now -- I think it was pretty nearly a year ago that the Brazilian Chief of Staff was here, something like that. Nothing out of the ordinary.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #629,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
March 8, 1940, 10.50 A.M.

Q Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning.

Q Mr. Young (Mr. Russell Young) telephoned from Miami last night. He said he was coming up.

THE PRESIDENT: I wish he would stay down until the weather gets better.  
You are late, Mr. Godwin.

Q (Mr. Godwin) I was arranging matters for the dinner at which you are our guest.

THE PRESIDENT: You kept the Press Conference waiting. (Laughter)  
(Due to conferences at the White House, the President had held up the Press Conference for fifteen minutes.)

Q (Mr. Godwin) That is right. I led with my chin.

THE PRESIDENT: I did not hear you this morning. What did you get off this morning?

Q (Mr. Godwin) Just a general howl about taxes. Also Howard Smith's (Representative Howard Smith) inability -- he stepped on his (own) foot.

THE PRESIDENT: Did I hear the door close?

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing I know is that I can see the top of Mark Sullivan's head for the first time in years. (Now) he ducked and I cannot see it any more so go ahead.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Comes up with the vernal equinox.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (Laughter)

Q (Mr. Sullivan) I think it won't be long now, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: I like Earl's adjective, "vernal"; it is all right.

Means awfully green, doesn't it? (Laughter)

I do not think I have got a thing this morning.

Q Mr. President, you talked with Chairman Smith of that special House Committee?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and there is no story in it because I merely wanted to find out what happened in my absence and what they were going to do.

Q Did you discuss his amendments?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Do you know anything about them?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Is Sumner Welles taking any part in these Russo-Finnish negotiations?

THE PRESIDENT: There is nothing to be said on that at all, one way or the other.

Q Do you recall speaking to two Georgia Congressmen, Mr. Ramspeck and Mr. Camp, who, I think, brought you the name of Lawrence Camp for a District job?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Anything you want to say on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think so. I think they told you about it. It was signed by, I think, all the Congressmen and Dick Russell (Senator Russell).

Q Yes, I just wondered if you had --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, I had not thought of it.

Q In connection with that Welles question, London reports said today

the United States might be asked to mediate in that Russo-Finnish war. Is there anything on that?

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing I can say is that it is the kind of thing, of course, that we cannot discuss except for your own information as there has been no such request made on pending things of that kind. If there are negotiations going on, it is the kind of thing which it is better not to discuss.

Q Mr. President, you received this new Minister from Australia; you had a chat this week with him. Did he say anything about establishing relations with Australia, general --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Only that it is a continuation of a discussion that has been going on for the last six or seven years and which I took up with the Australian Prime Minister some years ago and several other Australian Ministers who have been coming through Washington, and both Australia has wanted this to happen and we wanted it to happen and <sup>now</sup> it has happened and we are very glad.

Q Can you tell us anything about your discussion with the new Minister about problems in the Pacific?

THE PRESIDENT: We did not discuss any problems; mostly reminiscences.

(There was a brief lull.)

Gosh, this silence -- you could cut it with a knife.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I really haven't any news at all.

Q Can you comment --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Somebody in the back row, go ahead.

Q -- on Senator Wheeler's visit?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we talked about -- no reason I should not tell you about that -- we talked about the transportation bill which is in conference, and I told him I hoped very much that the conferees would agree and put through a bill at this session.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything about the regulation of water carriers?

THE PRESIDENT: If you go back to a speech I made away back in -- I don't know what it was -- 1932, in Utah, I think it was, Salt Lake City, you will find I recommended at that time that there be a consolidation of Government regulation of all transportation. I think this bill, as I hope it will come out from the conference committee, is a step toward that end.

Q Mr. President, did you discuss this wire tapping investigation with Senator Wheeler?

THE PRESIDENT: What is that?

Q This Committee yesterday recommended a resolution which would investigate a lot of snooping that has been going on.

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of it.

Q Did he say what was holding up his conferees?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, Pete (Mr. Brandt), he spoke about a letter that had been written while I was away by the Secretary of War, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chairman of the Maritime Commission, about which I had not heard until he brought it in with him. It is in yesterday morning's Record (The Congressional Record) and I had not even heard of it. I told him that I thought those points of view related primarily to the individual -- to the authority of individual departments but that the greater good for the greater

number should control rather than any immediate interests of the War Department or the Agricultural Department or the Maritime Commission.

Q Did he agree with that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, in debating an amendment to the Hatch Act yesterday, Senator Chavez said that although he realized the fact that you had signed the Hatch Act, he felt he could state definitely that your heart was not in it?

THE PRESIDENT: I feel reasonably certain that Senator Chavez's heart was not in it and mine was. (Laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.