

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #630,
Executive Offices of the White House,
March 19, 1940, 4.03 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Russ (Mr. Russell Young), it is good to see you back. Makes me think of old Charles Francis Young. He used to be my old boss in Tammany Hall.

Q (Mr. Young) I don't know him. I don't know anything about bosses at all.

Q He never had any.

THE PRESIDENT: Would you rather be called Francis A. Young or Ed Kelly Young? It is the same thing.

Q (Mr. Belair, who had just been elected president of the White House Correspondents' Association) You notice we keep our platform pledges. (At the White House Correspondents' Dinner the previous Saturday evening, Mr. Belair had introduced as a "plank" in his platform a pledge that White House Press Conferences would be held on time.)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (Turning to Mr. Young) It is good to see you back; how are you feeling?

Q How are you feeling -- that is important. (The President had been confined to the White House with a cold.)

THE PRESIDENT: Rotten. I ache still. It's the old flu.

Q Still hangs on?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I thought I would come over here and try it instead of sitting upstairs in the sitting room and bedroom.

Q Can't be any worse.

Q Do you think you will go away?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. I am going to Warm Springs as soon as I can.

Q Do you think you will go to Hyde Park for Easter?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, my, no; I never had any thought of that.

Q I will ask you that question for the benefit of all of us.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, with the boss (meaning Mr. Russell Young) and the ex-president (of the White House Correspondents' Association, meaning Mr. Godwin) and the new president (meaning Mr. Felix Belair) standing right here in the front row, I can say that on Saturday night I was very glad I went to the party. It was all right; a good party.

Q We were very glad that you could come. We really thought it was a swell piece of work --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Grand.

Q -- for you to get there at all. (The President had been ill.)

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing I want to do is borrow that film, if I can, to show it to the family. (Laughter) They all want to see it in the White House.

Q We have had three requests already.

Q You can get it; Bob Denton has it.

Q (Mr. Young) The president (Mr. Belair) will attend to that, sir.
(Laughter)

Q The boss talks.

Q (Mr. Belair) Who said so?

Q The boss.

Q Do you have any plans to go to Hyde Park over Easter?

THE PRESIDENT: No; I will stay right here.

Q How about Warm Springs?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope to get down to Warm Springs soon; I cannot tell when.

Q Senator Wagner last week in the House Labor Committee decided in favor of the addition of two men to the Labor Board. May I ask whether you are in favor of that idea?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot because it is pending legislation and it changes from day to day.

Q In the light of recent discussions on the subject, would you care to clarify for us the policy of your Administration toward releasing airplanes and armaments for foreign shipment?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the trouble is this, that it is awfully hard to lay down a hard and fast rule because each case ought properly to be considered on the facts of the immediate case and in careless writing it is awfully easy if you have one general rule to fail to differentiate between two different cases with different facts. However, I will have a go at it by way of explanation.

Speaking as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy which, under the Constitution, entails a certain amount of responsibility on my part, a year ago when things seemed to be coming to a head in Europe -- I mean seemed to the Administration; some other people didn't agree -- we began to look around to see what our national defense problem was. We looked at it, of course, primarily from our own point of view but also in the light of experiences in other nations. At that time it seemed to us -- this was a full year ago -- at that time it seemed pretty clear

to us that one of the essentials of national defense, more and more so in the light of modern experience, is productive capacity of airplanes. We had seen instances of nations having a pretty good air force with very little or no productive capacity for new planes. We had seen other nations with practically no airplanes -- I mean relatively -- but with potentiality of a large productive capacity.

And so, looking at it from strictly our own point of view, beginning at that time we began to ask ourselves two questions: first, how many planes do we need in peacetime? How many pilots do we need in peacetime? As a result we felt that we were too low and we got through Congress appropriations for very definite increases to the Army, Navy and Marine Corps air services and we began putting in orders.

But, at the same time, we looked at it from the point of view of production and we found that American production of military planes, military and naval planes, was an even more serious problem than our shortage of actual planes in full commission. The increased Army and Navy orders of last year, last fall, did help slightly, but very slightly, to increase our plant capacity.

The beginning of the war in Europe showed us that we could build up our plant capacity if we could sell -- the Nation could sell -- private manufacturers -- a large additional number of planes to other nations, not only belligerent nations but other nations, neutral nations, and the orders began coming in.

So, looking at it from a purely selfish point of view, we did everything we could to develop American productive capacity,

and we have been doing it right along with the net result that inside of a year, approximately, we have multiplied American capacity about three times. It is an amazing story. We have about three times the capacity of engines and engines really are the neck of the bottle -- it is harder to increase the engine capacity than it is your fusilage capacity. All that is, from the point of view of the Commander-in-Chief, the most significant thing that has happened in the past year from the point of view of improving national defense by building up our productive capacity of planes.

From that as a statement of policy, you come to the obvious next question: How could we have done it unless we had been able to sell planes? Well, the answer is that we could not. What was the criterion on selling planes? Sell them a plane that they would buy. There is your answer.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Now, when you come down to all this bunk about secrets: The P-40 -- I believe there is some talk about it at the present time -- I saw one down here at the Army Field -- I think some of you people went down with me -- in November, 1938. I think some of you saw it there at the time. It was almost in the stage of having its drawings, etc., perfected and being put into the point of getting orders for it -- a question of a few months longer. But we actually saw a P-40 down there that had been flown. That was nearly a year and a half ago. There is no secret about the P-40. As I remarked, bunk!

Now, what is secret? There are three or four devices -- a plane is not a device -- there are three or four devices which we have in the armed forces of the United States which we think other nations have not got and they are absolutely secret, to be given to nobody and they will be kept secret as long as it is possible for us to keep them secret. You ask what they are and I will tell you frankly it is none of your business and don't go looking for them for that is not a part of good Americanism.

Q Mr. President, I think nearly everyone is in agreement that the P-40 is safe to release now but there are two others of the same type that are later models. Are you in favor of selling our very latest models?

THE PRESIDENT: Depends on what you mean by the "very latest model."

Q I mean like the Aircobra; that is the Bell ship?

THE PRESIDENT: Anything confidential about it?

Q I don't know.

THE PRESIDENT: Neither do I. There was a beautiful engine the other day that everybody called the latest type of engine. It has not been put into actual production yet. One of the latest issues of an aeronautical magazine has complete drawings of it. Does that help you any?

Q It does not answer my question.

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, I cannot answer your question because I do not know which particular type it is, whether it is public property or not, whether it has been placed on order by us or not, whether on a small scale or a large scale. I would have to have all the facts.

Q Do you follow the recommendations of General Arnold on such matters?
General Arnold's recommendations?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't read it. Is that before the Committee?

Q I mean where it is a matter of releasing a plane for export?
(Question again inaudible)

Q He means as a matter of policy do you follow his recommendations
or do you fix your policy?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I never received his recommendation.

Q Do you seek his advice?

THE PRESIDENT: I get those things through coordinating boards --
the Army and Navy joint boards.

Q Mr. President, where you said that this trebling of the capacity
was the most amazing and significant thing, do you care to men-
tion any figures per month or per year or not?

THE PRESIDENT: Didn't Steve (Mr. Early) give those out last week?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: As I remember it, roughly from seven -- are these
figures right? -- from 7,000 to 21,000 or 22,000.

Q Senator Barkley gave all those figures in the Senate a week ago.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, the same figures.

Q Do you consider our own national defense policies, our national
defense aims are involved in selling to one or the other of the
particular sides in the current controversy in Europe?

THE PRESIDENT: Consider what?

Q As involving our own national defense aims, in other words?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't quite understand?

Q Do you consider it necessary or advisable to sell to one or the

other groups in Europe instead of our own national defense?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we are selling to everybody that comes and gets them at the present time. Isn't that the rule?

Q Mr. President, at Toronto today Mr. Cromwell, our Minister to Canada, made a speech in which he criticizes American isolationists and warns that Germany frankly and openly seeks to destroy the institutions, the social and economic order upon which the United States Government is founded. Is that the official viewpoint of this Government?

THE PRESIDENT: I am afraid I could not comment on a particular story.

Q Mr. John B. Kelly is the gentleman up in Philadelphia who was down to see you six weeks ago when you discussed the Pennsylvania political situation with him?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. Kelly, speaking before the Democratic Women's Luncheon Club in Philadelphia, quoted you as saying to him --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You know I could not comment on a story of that kind, obviously. I would have to find out first what Mr. Kelly said he said. You know I never comment on quoted stories of that kind.

Q Mr. President, have you heard anything from Rome since Steve (Mr. Early) gave out --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Not a single thing, Pete (Mr. Brandt). The only way I can illustrate it was that somebody said that in -- I think it was a five-column lead in one of the most respectable newspapers in this country that, when you went down and read all the stories under that head, it came down to this: that two heads

of Government had taken trains at distant places and had met on top of a Pass and it was snowing, and they had sat in a railroad car for a couple of hours and when they came out they shook hands, each went to his own train and they went home. I think I have told that story in about thirty-five words. Well, that is about all there was in the whole story. It is all that anybody knows; it is all that we know here; it is all that anybody knows in London or Paris or Rome or Berlin, except the people who took part in it.

Q The Vatican seemed to have an idea.

THE PRESIDENT: Now, well, I was interested in that. Who do you suppose it was in the Vatican?

Q The correspondents, I understand, have a tipster.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, that's the fellow. The courtyard in front of St. Peter's, there is a fellow there all the time on his hands and knees with a pail and a scrubbing brush. (Laughter) That's the fellow! I know him.

Q They pay him a hundred dollars a month.

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, it wasn't the Vatican?

Q It wasn't the Vatican.

THE PRESIDENT: Of course not.

Q That is a long way to go for a handshake. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: It was the boy who was scrubbing St. Peter's pavement.

Q Possibly.

Have you had any more encouraging advices from Charlottesville about Franklin's wife and her fall?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a slight fracture of the hip. It means three or

or four weeks in a cast.

Q Getting back to the airplane question once again for a moment:

Where you discriminated between devices and planes, that remark would seem to indicate that you do not think there is much likelihood of any secrets being given away as to construction or design of planes. Is that correct?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes -- something they couldn't get just as easily by sending somebody over to look at the thing. If we did not sell a type of plane as late as the P-40, because I don't know if we have cleared anything else -- well, what would you do if you were a Britisher? You would send somebody down to take pictures of it and look it all over, which anybody can do. There have been pictures in almost every magazine in the United States -- design and everything else. A lot of aeronautical magazines have had cross sections of the mechanical parts. What would you do if you were a Britisher with that information? You would go and build them in Canada, wouldn't you? Well, I would rather have them built here.

Q That illustration you used of a cross section in a mechanical magazine, is that a later type than the P-40?

THE PRESIDENT: The one I saw was the P-40.

Q Could you give us your views on the Hatch Amendment in view of the changes made in the Senate?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I gave you my comment a couple of weeks ago.

Q Can you tell us anything about your conference with Senator Donahey about a week and a half ago?

THE PRESIDENT: I am trying to think -- that was quite a while ago.

About all there was to it was that Vic (Senator Donahey) said he really, honestly did not want to run for anything this fall, as he had remarked a year before and a year before that, and still was of the same mind.

Q Did you hear Farley's speech Saturday night on tolerance?

THE PRESIDENT: I read it and thought it was a perfectly grand thing -- fine. And, by the way, that brings up rather an interesting subject that I am in a sort of quandary about and I think that most of you will sort of sympathize with me: When did we have the last Press Conference -- a week ago Friday? Well, somebody at that time asked me about an article by Ernest Lindley; in other words, one of his columns. I said I had not read it, which was perfectly true. I did read it afterwards.

Now, here is the predicament and I would like to have a little help and advice as to what a fellow does about it. You know that every day there are all kinds of columns published in the morning papers and afternoon papers, and the best that can be said is that they run the gamut from the so-called respectable columns, which are, oh, about twenty per cent wrong, something like that -- I mean, contain a twenty per cent average of misstatements, down to the other column, which we need not characterize, that runs eighty per cent of misstatements.

Now, the question is this: I am asked a question in a Press Conference, "Is such and such a thing true in one of these columns?" It is either one of the respectable columns or one of the other variety.

If I once start, you know, trying to, I might say interpret-

ing or answering questions about things written in columns, there is no end. I could not do it. We would have to have a Press Conference every day and, well, it would be just one continual row between me and the columnists. So, I think for seven years, I have always declined to comment on statements that were made in columns on the ground that they were not straight news.

Now, of course, that brings up the question, should I differentiate, should I decline to answer questions about things that are written by the less reputable people and answer questions about columns by people like Ernest (Mr. Lindley) and good old Mark Sullivan, et cetera and so on, the four or five so-called respectable columnists? (Laughter).

Now, of course, that creates a class and it is very difficult, so I have to apply the rule to the so-called respectable columnists.

Of course, in this case, obviously, those of you who know me -- that story of Ernest Lindley's was made completely out of whole cloth -- obviously. But that is not the point. Of course I never said such a thing about Jim Farley, and the rest of the story was equally false. The point is, though, that after I had said that day that I had not read it, which is perfectly true, and the next Press Conference we did not hold, I stayed over at the White House, and the next I did not hold, I was thereupon accused by some of the columnists, do you see? deliberately accused of having, because I had not answered it, led people to believe that I had given out that interview to that Senator or Congressman or whoever it was. You see what an awful position

that places me in? There was a perfectly simple rule that I do not comment on columnists' stories but it does not seem to make it easy for me when my living up to the rule is used against me.

Now, the question is, shall we maintain the rule or not? It seems to me the only practicable thing is to maintain the rule and not to characterize as being true or untrue stories of that kind that are written by special writers.

Q Mr. President, this article was unusual in that it quoted you direct -- this Lindley article.

THE PRESIDENT: As having told something to this undisclosed southern statesman?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: There you are! Heavens, half the columnists in that type of story use direct quotes from me to an undisclosed statesman, southern or otherwise. (Laughter) It happens all the time.

Q How about this daily Press Conference? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I do not think it would be bad at all because Kannee would be taking it down and we would get out a real volume after a while. I wouldn't mind.

Q When do they start? (Laughter)

Q May I ask if you are saying that the entire Lindley story was made out of whole cloth and that you did not mention --

THE PRESIDENT: The whole story, because I never talked along that line, in any way, to any distinguished statesman from any point of the compass.

Q Can you tell us if you have discussed the question of the Danubian

Federation with Archduke Otto when he visited you?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no; did not talk politics at all.

What was it over there (indicating another gentleman of the Press who had started to ask a question simultaneously with the last)?

Q Mr. President, is any consideration being given to returning an ambassador to Berlin?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q In that connection, sir, a story would put it rather definitely that you have in mind the name of Clarence E. Pickett to be Ambassador to Germany?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard of it.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #631,
Executive Offices of the White House,
March 29, 1940, 4.05 P.M.

(Mr. Harry Hopkins, who had been ill, was present at this Press Conference.)

Q (Mr. Godwin) Mr. President, "Boss" Young has asked me to take this seat, with your approval.

THE PRESIDENT: All right.

Q (Mr. Young) He is aging.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, his feet are playing out on him.

Q I'll say.

Q Looks like the work is stacking up.

THE PRESIDENT: No, it is going very well.

Q All that for us, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I have got quite a lot for you. Loaded for bear.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: In about three minutes there will be presented to the Senate a number of nominations, Foreign Service officers, unclassified vice-consuls of career and secretaries in the Diplomatic Service, also a new Assistant to the Attorney General and also the name of a new Commissioner of the District of Columbia.

I have had a good deal of difficulty in finding somebody to take George Allen's place because I had set my heart on finding somebody in the District who had certain qualifications: first, preferably somebody who had been born in the District; secondly, somebody that had very distinctly the atmosphere of scholarship and secondly (thirdly), somebody who was somewhat skilled in

politics. After a good deal of search I found just the man for the place, a man who was the first white child born in the District (laughter); secondly, a man who was the president of a great college, a great institution of learning, and thirdly, a skilled politician -- Mr. John Russell Young. (Prolonged applause - cheers)

So that makes it unanimous. Now you have all got a job. We all know it is going to be terribly difficult in the Senate to get him confirmed so every one of you is appointed a committee of one to see that we get him past the Senate of the United States. (Laughter)

Q (Miss Craig) That is lobbying. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, we are all volunteers.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I am very, very happy. It is richly deserved, Russ (Mr. Young), and some day you have got to make a speech in reply -- you can do it now! (Laughter)

Q (Mr. Young) Mr. President, I wish you had given me a little time. A lot of my scholars are here and I am afraid I won't show up to good advantage.

It came a little sudden but I will say, sir, that I hope this has no political significance to it (laughter) and I hope I am not held down to any particular terms. Anyhow, I will do the best I can, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: You know, I told him, I told Russ this morning that he was just my age and I thought he ought to begin public life before it is too late, because, of course, he will be fairly old when the question of a third term comes up. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, I would like to ask if the new Commissioner will hold press conferences?

Q (Mr. Young) I never heard of them.

THE PRESIDENT: Twice a day.

Q (Mr. Young) Never heard of them.

Q (Mr. Godwin) How does he stand on suffrage? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we have not worked that out yet.

Q And is he dominated by any particular newspaper, do you suppose?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. Heavens!

Q He has never been in a newspaper office.

THE PRESIDENT: He has been run by the White House Correspondents' Association all these years, you know. (Laughter)

Q (Mr. Godwin) Well, I will tell you, Mr. President, my first feeling is that that is one good way of getting rid of a boss. (Laughter)

Q (Mr. Young) Let's talk about something else.

Q (Mr. Godwin) It is all right; fine stuff.

THE PRESIDENT: All right; it's a grand thing.

The other is a statement which Steve (Mr. Early) will give you copies of. I might as well read it to you -- it is not very long: (Reading)

"Under Secretary of State Welles has concluded the mission upon which he was sent to Europe and has reported to me and to the Secretary of State.

"As I said when the announcement of Mr. Welles' mission was made, Mr. Welles was sent to Europe in order to obtain information with regard to existing conditions. He was neither authorized to make, nor has he made, any commitments involving the Government of the United States, nor was he empowered to offer, and he has not offered, any proposals in the name of this Government. He has not received, nor has he brought back to me, any peace proposals from any source.

"The information which he has received from the heads

of the governments which he has visited will be of the greatest value to this Government in the general conduct of its foreign relations. As was announced at the time of his departure from the United States, the information communicated to him by the Italian, German, French, and British Governments will be regarded as entirely confidential by this Government. It relates to the views and policies of the European governments mentioned.

"I am glad to say that Mr. Welles' mission has likewise resulted, through personal contacts and through the conversations which he held, in a clarification of the relations between the United States and the countries which he visited and will, I believe, assist in certain instances in the development of better understanding and more friendly relations.

"Finally, even though there may be scant immediate prospect for the establishment of any just, stable and lasting peace in Europe, the information made available to this Government as a result of Mr. Welles' mission will undoubtedly be of the greatest value when the time comes for the establishment of such a peace."

(The President had accentuated the underscored words.)

Just outside of this I suggest -- as Steve (Mr. Early) put it yesterday in his statement, in order to be helpful to all of you good people -- that you note these words, "even though there may be scant immediate prospect." It means just what it says. It means, "scant immediate prospect." It is not a prognostication for the future because the word "immediate" means "immediate" and not "future" and, of course, none of us can tell from day to day what developments take place or will take place in the European field. It means "scant immediate prospect" and nothing more. (Reading)

"To Mr. Welles go my thanks and full appreciation for carrying out this difficult mission with extraordinary tact and understanding, and in accordance with the best American diplomatic traditions."

I think that covers that all right. I am afraid there isn't any more news in it than what is in it.

Q Mr. President, has there come to your notice the press reports concerning the White Book issued by the German Government today?

THE PRESIDENT: Only a telephone message that there was something about it on the ticker, which I have not got and therefore cannot answer intelligently but, off the record, or perhaps for background, put it that way, I think everybody should take with a grain of salt any propaganda that is put out in Europe at the present time. I would make that two grains of salt -- anywhere.

Q You know then, about what --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) The general purport. In fact, make it three grains of salt.

MR. EARLY: Let that go on the record.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, you can use that.

Q Is the St. Lawrence Treaty about to be signed?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I have not heard anything about it; I haven't had any report at all. Buffalo papers please copy.

Q Have you canvassed at any time the report that is around the Hill that it would be possible to go ahead with this on the basis of a Joint Resolution and appropriation by the Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard that at all.

Q That is not under consideration?

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of it at all.

Q Mr. President, there is a strong movement up in New England to get a district weather forecasting station. I wonder if you had any --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I read about it in the paper and intended to ask the weather people about it and forgot to do it. Steve (Mr. Early), will you or Pa (General Watson) take it up? I would

like to have a report on it.

Q There was a report at the State Department that Mr. Bullitt was coming in to see you this afternoon. Was that correct?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of.

Q Since Bullitt figured rather prominently in this White Paper by Germany, is there a probability that you will talk --

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of. He is going back next week and all I have is the expectation of seeing him for a few minutes before he goes. There is no appointment.

Q In the light of business conditions as they are now, do you think a billion dollars for relief will be enough for the next fiscal year?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know yet.

Q What is Mr. Harrington likely to say to the Committee about that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think he is going up Wednesday of next week. Of course, as you know, on that relief situation it is terribly difficult to forecast employment and unemployment very, very far ahead and in previous years, as I remember it, we have generally sent up the best forecast we could make just as late as we possibly could. I think that in previous years it has been around the end of April when we have sent that up, and this year I don't suppose any final action will be taken until sometime in April. So I suppose we will, beginning next Wednesday and continuing up to the last minute, give the best figures we have got. There will be nothing final yet because it is all guesswork.

Q Before the Woodrum amendment was put in which required you to spread the appropriation over the entire fiscal year, as I

remember it, you used to take it in about two whacks.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Any prospects of returning to that system?

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't say there was a prospect. The whole thing is completely open.

Q No definite recommendation will be made, then, by Colonel Harrington next Wednesday?

THE PRESIDENT: Only a tentative recommendation, again subject to change, so that we will get the last possible information to the Committee before they bring the bill out on the floor.

Q There have been reports that a free hand in handling this matter may be requested?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q A free hand, that it is not so much a matter of different figures but leeway to spend the money according to need.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that was the same as what was said over here about changing the Woodrum amendment -- it comes to the same thing. As I say, there is nothing final yet.

Q Any basis for reports that they might ask for the elimination of the 18-month provision -- that you cannot hire a man until after --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Not that I have heard of.

Q Will Mr. Harrington recommend the lifting of the Woodrum amendment?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know; they are going to discuss it.

Q Mr. President, are you going to Warm Springs in the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. There are a lot of things turning up now. The cold is very, very definitely better, the flu bug,

but I haven't made any final plans. I may go and I may not.

We are on a 24-hour basis.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Thank you, Mr. President. I think we have got a bookful and I thank you, sir.

Q Can you tell us anything about your visit with Budget Director Smith and the reorganization plans?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except it is a continuing thing. I hope to have another Reorganization Plan within the next week or ten days.

Q Any decision been reached on the Forestry Service?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot tell you anything about it. The thing has not been buttoned up.

Q Is it (referring to the Reorganization Plan) intra or inter?

THE PRESIDENT: Both.

Q Would you care to comment on the House action on the Labor Board -- the wages and hours?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it is still pending; they are not through yet.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #632,
Executive Offices of the White House,
April 2, 1940, 4.01 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: I was just looking around. I think that when the new Dean (Mr. Godwin) is not here, I think you (Mr. Thomas Reynolds of the U.P.) take up more room than anybody in the front of the room so, when the Dean is not here, the new Dean, you take it.

Q (Mr. Godwin) I think he ought to take it anyway.

THE PRESIDENT: No, you and I are older men.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Speaking about old men, if you had been at J. Russell Young's party last night you would be twice as old.

THE PRESIDENT: Did he have one?

Q (Mr. Godwin) It is still going on.

THE PRESIDENT: I heard the Press started as soon as they left this room last Friday. (Laughter) It must have been a good party.

Felix (Mr. Belair), are you keeping them under control pretty well?

Q (Mr. Belair) Pretty well.

(At this point Mr. Early introduced Mr. John Henry as Mr. J. Russell Young's successor on the White House assignment.)

Q (Mr. Godwin) Russ (Mr. Young) has had to take up his residence over in Casey's to keep away from the job seekers.

THE PRESIDENT: That is awfully funny.

Q (Mr. Godwin) It is wonderful.

THE PRESIDENT: Somebody ought to write that up.

Q (Mr. Godwin) I think they will, in time, but they don't want to tell where Casey's is.

THE PRESIDENT: That is a good story.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I think the only news is the Reorganization Plan No. III which was sent up today. It is intradepartmental. I do not know if you have had a chance to read it or not. It relates to, first, the Treasury Department, which relates to consolidations of certain services there under the direction of a permanent fiscal Assistant Secretary, setting up a fiscal service. It brings together the Office of the Treasurer of the United States, the Office of Commissioner of Accounts and Deposits and the Public Debt Service, including their various subdivisions and certain other related functions. (Reading)

"The net effect of these adjustments is to establish within the Fiscal Service the Office of Fiscal Assistant Secretary, the Office of the Treasurer of the United States, and a Bureau of Accounts under a Commissioner of Accounts, and a Bureau of Public Debt under the Commissioner of Public Debt."

The rest of it is all highly technical until you get down to the Federal Alcohol Administration and there it is proposed to put the Federal Alcohol Administration, to correlate it with the activities of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, particularly its Alcohol Tax Unit. There will be a good deal of saving of money in that.

Any questions on that?

Q Any amount of savings?

THE PRESIDENT: We have the totals at the end for all these things.

The Department of Interior transfers the Bureau of Fisheries and the Bureau of Biological Survey, or, rather, consolidates them

into a new Fish and Wildlife Service.

Q May I ask a question there, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q This is a negative question: that is, the matter of the transfer of Forestry to Interior.

THE PRESIDENT: It is not here.

Q Have you anything you care to say about the fact that you did not do it?

THE PRESIDENT: There will be another Message, but do not get out on the end of a limb, sometime around the end of this week. These are all purely intradepartmental things.

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: It puts these two things which, of course, tie in very closely together, under one bureau with two assistants, one in charge of fish and the other one in charge of little animals.

Q Anybody at the head of both?

THE PRESIDENT: One person at the head of both.

Q Have you made up your mind on whom?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no.

Then, in the Department of Agriculture, we are putting into effect what is almost in effect now through administrative channels. We are consolidating the Division of Marketing and Marketing Agreements of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration with the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, a new single agency to be known as the Surplus Marketing Administration. This facilitates the work of the department and there will be one person at the head of both.

In the Department of Labor we are abolishing certain offices, many of which have not been filled -- things called Commissioners of Immigration and District Commissioners of Immigration and Naturalization. I think, in the former, the (offices of the) commissioners have been vacant since 1933; I have never filled them.

Q That refers to local commissioners rather than Mr. Houghteling?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes; nothing to do with him, just local commissioners.

(Reading)

"The former have been vacant since 1933; the latter impose an unnecessary level of supervision above that of District Director of Immigration and Naturalization in certain of our ports and should be eliminated in the interests of economy and sound administration."

The Civil Aeronautics Authority: (This) Clarifies the relations of the Administrator of the Civil Aeronautics Authority and the five-member Board. (Reading)

"The Administrator is made the Chief Administrative Officer of the Authority with respect to all functions other than those relating to economic regulation and certain other activities primarily of a rule-making and adjudicative character which are entrusted to the Board. This will eliminate the confusion of responsibilities existing under the Civil Aeronautics Act and provide a more clear-cut and effective plan of organization for the agency."

You know, you will remember when that bill was passed there were three different organizations in the Civil Aeronautics Authority -- there was a five-man Board and then there was the Administrator and then there was the Safety Board, (giving you) a language you could have taken almost any way. This is a clarification thing.

(Reading)

"Improvements and Savings: The principal

advantage of the reorganizations proposed in this Plan will be increased effectiveness of operation of the agencies concerned. In addition to improved service, some economies may be expected. I estimate that immediate annual savings in administrative expense of approximately \$150,000 will result. This comparatively small amount in no way measures the worth of the proposals. In fact, if they resulted in no administrative savings at all, I should still consider them worthwhile in view of the increased effectiveness of administration that will result."

Well, that is just about all there is. And then, with it, the legal language relating to approval of accounts and things like that. There isn't much of a story in that. It is just another move.

Q Mr. President, what do you think of Mr. John L. Lewis' proposal that

he is going to start a third term unless the Democrats name a --

Q (interposing) A third party.

Q Third party, unless the Democrats name a Liberal -- (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know why I should comment on that (any more)

than nearly all of that type of news which I read in the newspapers these days.

Q Can you tell us about your conference with Admiral Land yesterday with relation to the laid-up fleet?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; no decision made.

Q Have you had your census taken?

THE PRESIDENT: I have had my census taken, with pictures.

Q Do you want to say anything about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I read the questions through and had no hesitation in answering any of them.

Q Have you answered them all?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not finished answering them all but I have a

second sheet which I won't do until I get to Hyde Park and that is the agricultural sheet.

Q As I understand it, you are being counted as a resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and you have to account for the whole household, do you not?

THE PRESIDENT: For everybody, including the servants and everything else.

Q Do you have to answer all that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. My heavens! I did not know. I am sending for Captain Ker to give me the information on it.

Q I thought you were going to say you are sending for Senator Tobey.
(Laughter)

Q Did he ask about the bathrooms?

Q Did you tell him who uses your swimming pool?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think they asked me that. I would have been perfectly willing to (tell them) though.

Q You have to answer as the head of the household, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the White House?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. And then, of course, probably what will happen is that it will be sent up from here because there are a great many questions I cannot answer -- it will be sent up to the Supervisor in Dutchess County so that when I get up there I will be met on the front doorstep by the local fellow to fill in the data relating to Hyde Park.

Q You are accredited to Washington, D. C., aren't you?

THE PRESIDENT: Not as a legal resident, no.

Q No, but for counting, are you a part --

THE PRESIDENT: That is a thing I do not honestly know. That is a technicality. I said to Mr. Austin (Director of the Census), "You will have to look that up and I will take your decision on it just so long as you do not count me twice."

Q Was there anything about a mortgage?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q A mortgage on the White House? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No, because, you see, that falls in the category of over \$5,000. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you tell us about your conference with Commissioner Helvering of the Internal Revenue Bureau the other day?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we just went over the estimated tax receipts in a very preliminary way and they won't be ready until about the end of this week to give me the estimated figures for the balance of this fiscal year and also, yes, also the estimated receipts of income taxes for the balance of this calendar year.

Q Was Mr. McNutt mentioned?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, the Senate Commerce Committee today presented a bill calling for \$200,000,000. for navigation, on the rivers and harbors project. Have you any comment in view of what has been said in the past?

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing I can do, I think, is to tell you a story: I have had two visits, one was from Judge Whittington of the House Committee and the other was from Senator Sheppard, Senator McNary and Senator Bailey, representing the Senate Committee. They told me they were very anxious to get through some kind of

a bill this year so that everybody would feel sweet or perhaps I should say sweeter -- an authorization bill, not an appropriation bill, and, therefore, of course, being only an authorization bill it would not have any effect on the budget or anything like that.

So, of each of these groups, House and Senate, I asked a question. I said, "How many millions of dollars of authorizations are now on the book?" They said, "About 650 million dollars worth."

"Well," I said, "you and I know perfectly well that the Government would no more appropriate 650 million dollars worth of these river and harbor things; I could not possibly do it inside of several years." I said, "I have a distinct objection to piling up these hundreds of millions for more authorizations."

So, in both cases, they said, "But, of course, as a matter of fact on these previous authorizations there are somewhere around a couple of hundred million dollars, we all know, of projects already authorized which will never be built." I said, "Gentlemen, I will make you a proposition: If you will eliminate, by law, cancel out and repeal 250 million dollars worth of existing authorizations, I will sign a bill for 200 million dollars worth of substitute projects."

Well, of course, they looked at me, these good people, and they said, which is perfectly obvious, they could not get a bill like that through.

So that is the way the matter stood when they left here.

Q You are still --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That was piling, what is it, Pelion upon Ossa?

Q (Mr. Godwin) It is Ossa upon Pelion.

(Note: Webster's dictionary indicates that the Greeks used "Pelion upon Ossa.")

THE PRESIDENT: Same idea. What is the use of more authorizations when you have enough now to last for a generation?

Q Does that apply to flood control as well?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Have any reports of the Pennsylvania flood situation come to your personal attention as yet?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard anything since last night. I got a report this afternoon -- the Red Cross has the situation well in hand and will handle it just like we have done in previous floods.

Q What can be done about those floods up there? Is that a Federal proposition or do you think the State should do a major portion of the work on preventing these floods in the future?

THE PRESIDENT: That is too general. You have to specify what river and where.

Q The Susquehanna Valley.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know -- we have, as you know, in the Susquehanna Valley we have a Corps of Engineers' plan which is being worked towards, and there has been a great deal of construction work done in the past three or four years. Of course that plan, if carried out over a period of years in an orderly way, will probably succeed, when it is finished, in curbing these very disastrous floods. It is a little bit -- it is to be taken from the point of view of the whole river watershed, just like the Tennessee Valley. You see, the Tennessee Valley, in another two or three years, it

will be so controlled that we will eliminate approximately 25 million dollars worth of annual damage, which occurred in the Tennessee Basin before the T.V.A. started to work. It will be a net annual saving of about 25 million dollars. We will put the Susquehanna on the same principle.

Q Therefore, Mr. President, any action on the part of the State which would be in the nature of a recision of funds or a termination of expenditures in cooperation with that program could be termed shortsighted?

THE PRESIDENT: Could be what?

Q Could be termed shortsighted to not spend any money?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard any suggestion of that kind but, obviously, the more local cooperation we get the quicker it will be done.

Q Can you tell us about your interview with former Governor Brann of Maine?

THE PRESIDENT: Just came in to pay his respects.

Q No politics?

THE PRESIDENT: No. (Laughter)

Q Brann and no politics? (Laughter)

Q Returning to the rivers and harbors question for a minute, on the line of reasoning you indicated as a barrier to additional authorizations now, would that apply to the St. Lawrence too?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, there is nothing in prospect on the St. Lawrence.

Q Assuming your treaty is going up soon -- is it going up soon? Can you say or not?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. It is just another of them things for

the future.

Q Mr. President, the Panama Canal improvements, would this discussion here have any application to the Panama Canal improvements?

THE PRESIDENT: No. As a matter of fact, I told them that that was, as far as I knew, there were only two -- wait a minute, now that is a different subject. You are on appropriations and not authorizations. You see, that is an entirely different subject, but on that subject of appropriations, the Panama Canal has been authorized and of course I want the amount of money that we asked for restored in the Senate and, in the same way, there were one or two projects that were, oh, what, two-thirds or three-quarters done and for common-sense reasons ought to be finished, like the Utah project -- I think I spoke about that last time -- where we had finished the dam and the reservoir and it was all ready for the water but we could not put the water into it until we put a tunnel through to bring the water through. Well, obviously, we ought to do that.

Q What about the Senate wire-tapping investigation?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know anything about it. I did not know they were going to do it. What committee is that?

Q I think it is the subcommittee of the Interstate Commerce Committee.

THE PRESIDENT: Not the La Follette Committee?

Q No.

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of it.

Q Any comment on your talk this morning with Bullitt?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except to say good-by to him. He is leaving on the plane tomorrow and of course, as you know, he was to have

left about ten days ago but his little girl had an accident, fell off a horse, and he wanted to stay until he was sure she was all right.

Q Did you get out this afternoon to look over the arrival of spring?

THE PRESIDENT: I did -- I had a nice hour's drive.

Q How far did you get?

THE PRESIDENT: I went around and around and around. (Laughter)

Q Anyone in mind for the Third Circuit Court vacancy?

THE PRESIDENT: Third, Third, what is that? Pennsylvania?

Q He said, "First" -- New England?

THE PRESIDENT: No, that only came in the day before yesterday. I have not talked about it at all.

Q When do you plan to leave for Hyde Park?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope to go up either around the end of the week or the beginning of the next week just for a couple of days. I have got to put in 50,000 trees.

Q Anybody in mind for the Interstate Commerce Commission vacancy?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet. I am establishing what they call a file.

Q The Securities and Exchange Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: The same thing; I am establishing a file.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #633,
Executive Offices of the White House,
April 5, 1940, 11.15 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Where is Russ (Mr. Young)? Isn't he doing newspaper work?

Q Here he is. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you will be here after the fifteenth --

Q (interposing) Will the Hatch Act cover commissioners who act as reporters?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it does. I think it does. It means that after the fifteenth you will be sitting over here on the sofa.

Q (Mr. Young) Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Right between Lauch (Mr. Currie) and Dan (Captain Callaghan) and I am going to open the thing up and let the Press ask you questions.

Q (Mr. Young) It will be pretty hard, sir -- for you. I would hate that job.

THE PRESIDENT: Don't you think it will be funny, Earl (Mr. Godwin)?

Q (Mr. Godwin) Yes, let's do it.

THE PRESIDENT: We will do it. You and Felix can act as a committee of two to cook up the questions.

Q I think Felix (Mr. Belair) would rather lay on the couch than ask questions.

Q Does that mean that this Press Conference is a political activity?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Does that mean that this Press Conference is a political activity?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, absolutely.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: We are raising a very nice question here in the front row as to whether Commissioner Young is not covered by the Hatch Act at the present moment and whether this Conference isn't a political activity on his part.

Q (Mr. Young) They can't vote, sir. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, he still has ten days of private life; just think of that. Isn't that nice?

Q (Mr. Young) It is telling on me too, sir. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, he says it is telling on him.

I do not think I have anything particular today. I am going to Hyde Park, I plan to, tomorrow at noon and stay there until Monday. I have a good many things to do up there such as choosing the tint for the walls of the new Library and things of that kind, seeing that the trees get planted.

Q Mr. President, did you discuss Missouri politics with Governor Stark yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Anything in particular?

THE PRESIDENT: No. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you had a report from the Weather Bureau on a Boston district?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not. Steve (Mr. Early), will you look into that because, to tell you the truth, I forgot it.

Q Is there another Reorganization Plan imminent?

THE PRESIDENT: Not imminent. I hope next week.

Q Do you wish to say anything regarding your participation in the Pan

American Day exercises? I think you are scheduled to speak there?

THE PRESIDENT: I am speaking there in the morning and then they are all coming to lunch with me. I have not prepared anything on it yet.

Q Mr. President, Wendell Willkie, speaking before the Town Hall in New York (Boston Chamber of Commerce) yesterday, charged that the New Deal was out to get him if it was the last thing it did.

(Laughter) Have you any comment to make on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the comment has already been made by the Press Conference, the roars of laughter. Of course nobody takes things like that seriously.

Q Mr. President, are you for or against the Walter-Logan Bill?

THE PRESIDENT: To tell you the truth, I have not read it and do not know what status it is in. I have no idea. There is this to be said for bills -- I do not even know if the bill as it is in its present status falls into this category or not -- but if the departments of the Government, including the quasi-judicial commissions, are required to transact all of their business under the law under which they exist in accordance with the usual practice and procedure of courts, courts of law, where there is a plaintiff or a defendant in civil cases and a prosecutor and a defendant in criminal cases, it means that under those rules of practice and procedure one side or the other, either the plaintiff's side or the defendant's side, can slow up the machinery of Government on ordinary administrative matters, putting it -- giving to the side with the most money, it really comes down to that, the opportunity to slow Governmental procedure up to an unconscionable degree. I

think everybody wants to avoid that in the ordinary carrying on of Government business. That really is the big question.

Q Mr. President, is there a distinction between a new type of operating agency and an old-type regulatory agency that the Logan Bill overlooks?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you would have to get specific cases. It is too hard to answer that as a general question.

Q I think he is referring to the Federal Trade Commission which was eliminated under an amendment passed by the House Judiciary Committee when they reported out the bill. They eliminated the Federal Trade Commission and various other older agencies and included the S.E.C. and various new agencies.

THE PRESIDENT: On what ground?

Q Well, that I do not know. That was up to them.

THE PRESIDENT: It would be interesting to know what the ground was for having a different rule for one quasi-judicial body and a different rule for another one.

Q Do you think that the fault of which he spoke is inherent in the Logan-Walter Bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I do not know what the language or the status of the bill is at the present time.

Q Then your statement --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) My statement relates to principle. I just said that I have not read the bill and I do not know what its present status is. It may have been completely changed from the way it was originally introduced, which was a year ago.

Q It is on the House calendar. I think you will find, as between the

Senate and the House, I do not know whether it has been changed in any great detail or not.

Q The House had a rule on it several weeks ago.

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot talk about the bill itself because I do not know what is in it.

Q Mr. President, have you received any radio report from Admiral Byrd yet that would indicate his present plans?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, he has left. I got a radio from him about a week ago, a week or ten days ago. He is on his way up to Punta Arenas or Valparaiso -- I do not know which. He said this year's mission has been accomplished very satisfactorily and he has left two bases ashore, twenty-five men at one base and thirty at another -- do you remember the actual figures, Dan?

CAPTAIN CALLAGHAN: A total of fifty men.

THE PRESIDENT: A total of fifty men altogether in those two bases, and in the spring, their spring which means our autumn, as soon as the ice conditions permit, there will be an expedition down there to relieve these men. Meanwhile they will work on meteorology and all kinds of scientific things during the winter.

Q Does that depend on further appropriations?

THE PRESIDENT: Whether those men get back from the Antarctic does depend on additional appropriations.

Q By leaving them there we could keep possession of the country?

THE PRESIDENT: There might not be any men.

Q The Washington Post had a story this morning saying there was a drive for a one-year extension of the Hull Trade Agreement law? Would that be satisfactory?

THE PRESIDENT: I heard about that yesterday afternoon and I suppose the best thing to do is to talk about it from a somewhat novel point of view in Washington in a campaign year, to talk about it from the point of view of the national good. That is almost unheard of -- I mean it takes our trend of thought back to something we are not accustomed to these days, the national point of view regardless of party. We all know that tariffs are a headache from the point of view of any administration or any Congress and, furthermore, that when a tariff is up for discussion or legislation, industry and agriculture both are thrown somewhat into confusion; they do not know what the future is going to bring forth. It slows up the economic processes of the country. I might put it this way: That if it were the custom for the Congress to rewrite the tariff of the United States either in whole or in part every year, it would be a very bad thing for the United States, no matter what the administration was. We have all had -- the older people here, I think, have seen a great many examples of that, what happens to the country when a general tariff debate (occurs). Now, next year, if this bill goes through on the basis of a one-year bill, I think it would be very harmful for the Nation, no matter whether we have a Republican administration beginning the next twentieth of January or a Democratic administration, or a Republican Congress or a Democratic Congress, no matter who the individuals are that are the heads of such an administration, in the very first year of such an administration to have to go into the whole subject of tariffs again as, in a sense, we are doing at the present time. I think it is very harmful for the

United States.

The present status of the bill, I think it is a three-year bill, seems to me a reasonably good thing for the country as a whole, regardless of party and, personally, again thinking in terms of the United States, to bring up the tariff subject -- because this trade agreement matter is essentially a tariff subject, general tariff -- to bring it up again next year I think would be bad for the country no matter what administration is here a year from now. I think that is the easiest way of putting it.

Q That would not disturb the present trade agreements, though, if the bill should lapse, if the law should lapse?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it brings up the subject next year. You have a general tariff debate. If you put a one-year limitation, up she comes again right after the twentieth of January.

Q Can you say anything about your conference with Mr. Woodrum today?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we are going to talk about relief. I don't know what we are going to talk about, just relief.

Q Do you think there will have to be an upward revision of the relief estimates next year, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know; we are just in the discussion stage.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

By the President's direction the following is included as part of this Press Conference:

"Over the Coffee" by Harlan Miller
(From the Washington Post, 4/5/40)

"SUMNER THE SILENT

"Not in the memory of the oldest cave-dweller
has the Capital encountered anything so aggravating

as the stone wall of Sumner Welles' silence.

"Avid with curiosity, if only for a word picture of Hermann Goring wolfing cream puffs and kum-mel, they can't even induce the Undersecretary of State to reveal whether Hermann wore jodhpurs, kilts or a toga.

"Nor will Mr. Welles say whether Hitler whispered, yelled, cooed or ranted in their conversation. He simply won't discuss it.

"One wily newsman tried to finesse him into some sort of a revelation by mentioning an official press release in Berlin after his conversation with the Fuehrer.

"'No,' said Welles, 'that wasn't after my talk with Hitler; it was after my talk with Ribbentrop.'

"Mr. Welles doesn't mean to be aggravating, nor to withhold enlightenment from Americans. He has simply made a gentleman's agreement with his confreres overseas to refrain from talking, and he intends to keep his end of the bargain. So far the European bigshots have kept theirs.

"This hasn't prevented some Washingtonians, by an exercise of mental telepathy, from proffering voluble versions of what was said at each and every one of Welles' conversations in Rome, Berlin, London and Paris.

"He simply smiles and says he hasn't communicated with any of them in any way, not even by mental telepathy. Only disclosure so far: He got cold in some of the hotels and trains.

"Welles has observed privately that if he were to comment even on trifling matters (for example, on how Mussolini looked or how Chamberlain sounded or what kind of a necktie Daladier was wearing, or how people looked on the streets) his words would be twisted by pundits, commentators and analysts--and if not by them, then by the cable condensers and the foreign translators--into something subtle, pregnant and significant.

"At the White House there is a hint of a sound,

sensible reason for all this reticence:

"Sumner Welles may have to go to Europe again, to gather further inside information from the same sources, when and if an appropriate, hopeful situation arises.

"Even if he hadn't promised silence, an eye for the future would prescribe it. His sources might shut up like a clam.

"But this being the kind of Republic it is, open and above board, one can't help wishing Mr. Welles could give us an inkling.

"Still, it is fascinating to speculate on some of the riddles to which clues or partial answers are locked in Mr. Welles' ample cranium:

"How likely is it that Goring may succeed Hitler for the sake of a sort of peace?

"Does Hitler intend to launch his bombers against London this spring?

"Would Chamberlain make peace with Hitler, Goring, Hess, Goebbels, Schacht, or whom?

"Will Britain get into the Black Sea to blockade Russian oil headed toward German tanks?

"How healthy is the axis this spring?

"Are there any secret understandings with or about Russia?

"Are the bigshots thinking of a United States of Europe?

"Things will happen, of course, to throw light on what sort of conversation Mr. Welles encountered. As Mr. Hull would say, there will be developments, phases and ramifications.

"In fact, there's already a ramification. Berlin's release of allegedly phoney documents intended to prove America's 'war guilt,' timed to coincide with Mr. Welles' return, indicates Hitler didn't feel he had made a good impression on Welles,

or vice versa.

"It is preposterous to expect diplomats and heads of governments to disclose their conversations permaturely.

"Every man knows a wooing can't be conducted under a spotlight, and even a peacemaker must look out for a sock in the nose.

"But secret diplomacy isn't popular in the U.S.A., and the State Department might as well reconcile itself to being badgered for revelations-- especially by some of the screwballs on the Hill who prefer to believe a Nazi propagandist rather than an official who belongs to the opposite political party in this country."

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #634,
Aboard the Presidential Special Train,
en route from Highlands, N.Y., to Washington, D.C.
April 9, 1940, 2.15 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, John (Mr. O'Donnell) how are you?

Q (Mr. O'Donnell) Fine.

THE PRESIDENT: Slide up in the corner, big boy (to Mr. Reynolds) --
way up in the corner -- go on, you are not half way there. That's
better. George (Mr. Durno)! Well, did any of you go to sleep
again last night?

Q Two or three did.

THE PRESIDENT: George, what paper do you represent?

Q The Police Gazette.

THE PRESIDENT: I think you represent the "Cascaret Monthly." Maybe
we had better say the "Milk of Magnesia Monthly".

Well, you know as much as I do.

Q Can you make any comment on the foreign situation, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q You have been in touch with Washington today?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; a number of times.

Q In touch with any of our men abroad, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q No transatlantic calls?

THE PRESIDENT: No; that is what they call a radio fake. (Laughter)

Now, don't print that. You would hurt Carleton's (Mr. Smith's)
feelings.

Q Any steps to be taken to see what can be done about our neutrality

law and its application in the present situation?

THE PRESIDENT: That is up to the State Department. I can tell you this, that there are two questions involved: First is a neutrality proclamation (a) in regard to (Denmark) -- because as far as we can tell, this is the sort of thing I can't even say whether it is involved in the case of Denmark because there hasn't been any fighting. The question is, is there a war going on between Germany and Denmark? It is a matter of looking into that question. Secondly, in the case of Norway, we probably won't know anything about that until tonight, as to the legal status of it.

However, the question of a neutrality proclamation is involved in both cases -- maybe.

And the other thing is a question of the extension of the proclamation over closed waters and, as far as we can tell by the reports already received, the zone of warfare has been extended north of the line which was drawn last September and would, therefore, call for a new supplementary proclamation.

All of that data is being got together and will be taken up on my arrival in Washington.

Q You are going to see Secretary Hull? -

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Anyone else?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, there will be various people to telephone to. I don't know that I will see anybody besides the Secretary and the Under Secretary of State.

Q Have we been approached by Norway or Holland with the proposition that the neutrals should get together and by some united action

bear down on violations of international law, such as --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Not that I know of.

Q The Dutch were talking about that very strongly back in the days of the Altmark incident when I (Mr. O'Donnell) was there and this action -- do you think that would be feasible?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't the faintest idea. My mind does not travel as fast as yours.

Q I am sorry, sir; I didn't get that.

THE PRESIDENT: I said, "My mind does not travel as fast as yours."

In other words, it is so highly hypothetical -- not as a question but as a subject.

Q This Altmark thing might open --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Put it down as speculative.

Q With Germany claiming Greenland and Iceland --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Denmark does not possess Iceland -- it is an independent republic.

Q (Mr. Durno) All I know is what I read in the papers. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Iceland is an independent nation --

Q (interposing) Controlled by Denmark.

THE PRESIDENT: It is not; it is not controlled by Denmark. It has the oldest parliament in the world. Iceland has, as its king, the same fellow who happens to be King of Denmark and, as a matter of saving money, they use the Danish consuls and ministers instead of using their own. Our Minister to Denmark is also accredited as Minister to Iceland, with a separate document.

Q Which is a coincidence, I suppose?

THE PRESIDENT: No; no; that is the sovereignty status.

Q Really?

THE PRESIDENT: Sovereignty status; sure. You boys are learning a lot.

Go on -- what is the question?

Q Well, get back to Greenland, then?

THE PRESIDENT: What about Greenland?

Q If Germany has taken Denmark, does that extend Germany's domain into Greenland?

THE PRESIDENT: You mean sovereignty?

(A pause followed by laughter)

Q It is getting a little tough now. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: You see, the trouble is this: We are all talking about things we don't know anything about. Nobody knows what has happened to Danish sovereignty at the present time. Where is Danish sovereignty? Has Germany taken Denmark or has Germany said to Denmark, "We are occupying you temporarily and at the end of the war we will restore you to the control. You still retain the sovereignty." Nobody knows, so it is one of those things we can't talk about. Denmark has got sovereignty over Greenland.

You run into another thing, just to show you how silly it is conversationally and how difficult it is to write stories correctly. It is highly speculative the whole damn thing. I don't know. Suppose, for the sake of argument there is a little corner of France where John (Mr. O'Donnell) was during that terrible experience he had up at the front where he got his wound stripes and things like that; suppose there is a little corner of French territory that is occupied by the Germans? All right. Now, there wouldn't be any sense to ask about the German control over Martinique. You see

the point? It is an absolute parallel.

(Pause)

Go on and shoot; you are good.

Q Do these developments abroad of the last 48 hours -- the expansion of the war zone -- bring the war closer to the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you can put it this way: that the events of the past 48 hours will undoubtedly cause a great many more Americans to think about the potentialities of the war. --- And stop there. Now, there is no implication -- don't read anything in as to what we are going to do or not going to do. Just what it says -- it will cause a great many more Americans -- which is a grand thing -- to think about the potentialities of this war in relation to the United States than they have been doing in the past six months. (Pause while notes are being jotted.) I warn you, somebody is going to get hung if they try to hang something on that statement that isn't in it. In other words, it is a damn good thing for Americans to think about the subject and not take everything for granted.

Q Like Iceland, I suppose. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is a grand thing to speculate right along that line. But, of course, it is wholly speculative -- you have to recognize that. I don't the least bit mind speculation on the part of the public -- not the writers.

Q Stories out of Canada this morning say that Mackenzie King is coming to the United States and will probably drop into Washington.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard about it but he generally does take a holiday around this time of the year. I haven't heard that he is

going to but I will be delighted if he does because he generally does stop on his way south or north to see me.

Q I suppose this is a question which has been asked before but it is only my (Mr. John O'Donnell) second conference in a long time: Are you planning to send --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You know, John, now he almost has the technique of the British press. It is good. (Laughter)

Q (Mr. O'Donnell) I didn't think I was as bad as that. (Laughter) I get criticized for many a fault but that is a new one.

THE PRESIDENT: No, but it is an entirely different technique from what we use. Go on. That is not a slur at all. It is very interesting.

Q After the introduction, the question was whether the situation has arrived at a point where we want an Ambassador in Berlin.

THE PRESIDENT: I think at every Press Conference for the past six months (I have said) I don't know anything about it; never heard of it.

Q May we put it this way: Has Wilson completed his mission for which he was recalled?

THE PRESIDENT: I think he is on special duty in the State Department. That is all I can say to you.

Q I think he has resigned as Ambassador -- resigned the ambassador status.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. Did he? Didn't he -- this is off the record -- didn't I read in the paper that he was doing some work for Hoover on the Hoover Relief?

Q I am not aware of it if it was published.

THE PRESIDENT: Maybe I am mixed up with Hugh Gibson. I think if you will check you will find that Hugh Wilson has been doing work for Hoover on the campaign for Finnish funds. I am not dead sure.

Q Mr. President, do you anticipate that a proclamation might be issued some time tonight on the neutrality?

THE PRESIDENT: It might. I can't tell. When you get there you had better -- what time do we get in?

MR. HASSETT: Eight o'clock.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we would not know until nine. Call up the office around nine o'clock. I would know by that time if something is coming out.

Q We will be there.

THE PRESIDENT: You be there and I will try -- you know it is one of those things I can't promise to hold up until morning if it is after nine o'clock because it might have to be issued tonight, but I will know definitely by ten as to whether something is going out or not and get it to you just as quick as the old mimeograph will work. It depends a little bit on how they are doing the home work during the day.

There was something else about Hyde Park that I wanted to mention. I have forgotten what it was.

Q Norwegian pine?

THE PRESIDENT: Now, there is another case that is highly speculative.

Last year I lost the whole damn crop.

Q You thought it was good for the American people to speculate?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. There was something and I can't remember what it was.

Q It wasn't the dream cottage this trip?

THE PRESIDENT: What was the thing about the dream cottage?

(No answer)

Q Have you heard anything from Illinois or Nebraska today -- the primaries?

THE PRESIDENT: No. There are certain things like primaries and politics which sort of get eclipsed by the news of the last 48 hours. They don't seem to have quite the same relative importance that they had before -- except as space filler.

Q Some people also get eclipsed in them too.

THE PRESIDENT: In what?

Q Some people get eclipsed in the primaries.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they may and they may not. There are some things more important than anybody getting eclipsed.

MR. BELAIR: Thank you, Mr. President.