

## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #694,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
November 8, 1940, 12.10 P.M.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Catch some sleep?

THE PRESIDENT: I got a load of it. I am going to catch up some more next week. I need a lot more. Don't you need some more?

Q (Mr. Godwin) God, I had all there were of hours of sleep last night.

THE PRESIDENT: You do have the worst hours of anybody I heard of.

Q (Mr. Godwin) I know it. All night long on that New York thing. That was tough.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you get double time for night work?

Q (Mr. Godwin) Not with this Wages and Hours Administration.

THE PRESIDENT: I think you ought to do something about it.

Q (Mr. Godwin) I do. I attack them every now and then. (Laughter)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think there is any particular news. I have a party tomorrow night, as you know, and on Monday we have 11.00 o'clock at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and a little fairly short speech after that, about ten minutes.

Q At the Tomb?

THE PRESIDENT: No, at the Amphitheater right behind it. And then, on Monday afternoon, at 4.00 o'clock we lay the cornerstone of the new hospital.

And then next week sometime -- I do not know what, Tuesday or Wednesday -- I think I will get on board the U.S.S. POTOMAC and go down the river for three or four days of sleep and read a lot of documents that have not been read for the last two weeks.

Q You were speaking of the Naval Hospital?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q In that connection, have you anything to do with the disposition of the present Naval Hospital site in Georgetown or, at least, down here a little way? It is a very beautiful site for somebody and I wondered whether the Government was going to build a building or have a park?

THE PRESIDENT: There is no disposition of it yet. It still is allocated to the Navy Department, but the architects have been working on a really lovely design -- this would take Congressional action, of course -- by which the new War Department building on its west end would have some kind of -- what would you call it? a colonnade, with perhaps offices over it, that would tie in on the base of the hill, the south base of the hill, tie in the War Department building with the new Navy Department building. And that, being half way between the two buildings, would be occupied by joint organizations, like the Joint Board, tying the two defense departments together.

Then, the hill itself, according to these architectural or landscape plans, would be turned into a park, which would be a very lovely thing.

Q Mr. President, I think the country would like to know whether you were closer than Mr. Gallup on your electoral vote?

THE PRESIDENT: I was away off. My guess was made, as you know, way back about the first of August, and I saw no reason at any time in the campaign to change it. It was 340 for me.

Q 340?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I was away off.

Q Mr. President, have you made any prophecies in regard to the House?

THE PRESIDENT: What?



Q Have you made any prophesies in regard to the House, the membership of the House?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except that I never put any figures down. I never was as worried as some other people were.

Q You never had any figures?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

And, basing the thing more or less on that 340 -- up there at Hyde Park the boys had a pool on different sections and regions -- I lost them all.

Q Mr. President, what state surprised you?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, about a hundred and ten votes did.

Q Would you care to identify them further?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, the Pan American Union Governing Board, representing the twenty-one American nations, congratulated you unanimously on your election and expressed the view that the vote was an endorsement of the Good Neighbor policy. Could you --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That was awfully nice of them.

Q Do you share that view?

THE PRESIDENT: I think they probably were correct.

Q Mr. President, did you get anything from Herr Hitler or Mussolini?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q I understood you got something from Marshal Petain?

THE PRESIDENT: No. It may be here, Constantine (Mr. Brown), but I haven't seen anything.

Q But Hitler did not say anything?

THE PRESIDENT: No -- not yet.

Q Mr. President, there have been suggestions from the public and the press and in conversations that you might have Cabinet changes to the extent of asking Mr. Willkie into the Cabinet or a Government position. Have you anything to say about that, seriously?

THE PRESIDENT: Only this, that I have not considered anything along those lines one way or the other, and I have to warn everybody, off the record, that this kind of a story (indicating the newspaper in front of him) is silly. Where was it? Oh, yes, (reading)

"That some Cabinet changes were likely was reported in New Deal circles."

(The President was quoting from the front page of the New York Times of even date.)

What I want to emphasize is that it was not reported in New Deal circles; it was written in this particular office.

And the next sentence, (reading)

"It was said that the resignation, etc."

It was not said in official quarters, it was written in the office.

Q Is that off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: No, you can use that if you want to.

Q (Mr. Godwin) As a matter of personal defense, every time I ask you a question and you pick up a newspaper, they say that it is a planted question. Will you solve that? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I will solve it. I will say, "Earl, it was not a planted question." (Laughter)

Q (Mr. Godwin) I happen to be well informed; that is all. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, toward the end of the campaign you made certain statements that were regarded by many people as indicating that you would not accept a fourth term. Did you definitely mean that?



THE PRESIDENT: Well, the question is this: Oughtn't you go back to grade school and learn English? It was perfectly clear to me and to almost everybody else in this country.

Q That was your meaning?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, read it. I am not teaching you English; read it.

Q I have read it, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, read it again. It was a statement, and perfectly plain English. Read it again.

Q Mr. President, a plebiscite in Hawaii voted two to one for statehood.

Would you care to indicate whether you have any tentative opinion or general inclination in that regard?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I have no inclination on that at all. It is all right.

Q Mr. President, anything you have in mind now that would require the attention of Congress between this time and the first of January?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot tell you because I have not seen the Congressional leaders yet. Most of them are away and I suppose they will be back on Monday and I will see them then.

Q Will you comment on the report that Leon Henderson would become a Secretary?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think that originated any place in the Administration.

Q You met yesterday with the Defense Commission and we were told afterward that the Priorities Board was meeting and might give consideration to this 12,000-plane order for Great Britain. Anything definite on that yet?

THE PRESIDENT: I would not put it that way. You see, the Priorities Board would not take up things like completed articles, among them planes, which is a completed article. They will take up, in the first instance, certain component parts, of which there might be shortages, that go

into a completed article. In other words, let us try to think the way they would: Suppose, for the sake of argument, there were orders for 12,000 planes. First, they would look into the question of the manufacturing facilities, the buildings and the labor, skilled labor, and the assembly end of it, and the putting together of the thing, and then they would say, "Where are bottlenecks? What are we short of?"

Now, there might be some essential things we were short of, especially raw materials, so far as getting them up to the line on time.

Well, just for example, just trying to illustrate, yesterday we talked about the steel situation. Probably, through the winter, until next spring when the Great Lakes are open again, there won't be any ingot shortage. In other words, there is enough ore on hand to make ingots of to keep that going. On the other hand, there might be a shortage of manufacturing facilities for some steel process after the ingots are all melted down. There might be a shortage of rolling facilities, or stamping facilities, or something of that kind.

So that is what the Priorities Board is doing at the present time, to check on the primal bottlenecks at the bottom of the line.

Q Mr. President, in dealing with this request of 12,000 planes, you said the Defense Commission had been asked to give its sympathetic consideration. Has that sympathetic consideration resulted in a final decision?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet; it is being studied.

Q Anything to be said about Kennedy (Ambassador to Great Britain) as to whether or not he will go back to London? Any news?

THE PRESIDENT: No. He is carrying on and giving us some very valuable information.

Q There was a suggestion from somewhere that he is going to remain here and



go into defense work?

THE PRESIDENT: We are just talking. He probably will be in touch with me for the next few weeks on information he has and advice.

Q Mr. President, from general word I got from Buffalo, it seems on your trip you qualified pretty much as an expert. Larry (Lawrence) Bell said he never had anyone ask him so many technical questions on airplane production. Can you tell us anything at all about the two plants you saw up there on your visit?

THE PRESIDENT: I think they were getting on pretty well. I don't pretend to be an expert but, having started in on the problem of industrial output in the year 1913, I know some of the major questions that ought to be asked to bring out things on manufacturing plants.

Q Mr. President, what happened to your idea of locating the steel industry on the West Coast?

THE PRESIDENT: They are going ahead with that. They are turning out more and more of certain types of steel and trying -- we are studying the putting in of the manufacturing of other types of steel out there. For instance, you take this new plant up on the Columbia River. It is an aluminum plant and it is hoped that they will build not only the aluminum billets that they will make out there, but that they will do the manufacturing there instead of shipping them east and then shipping the finished aluminum back west again.

Q Who can use the word "priority" on completed articles to which the Government has not yet taken title? I mean, such as airplanes? Is it possible that Britain could get airplanes almost completed and then they could be turned over --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, that has nothing to do with priority.

Q That is not under the Priorities Board but who will make the decision in that case? Army and Navy?

THE PRESIDENT: Probably come up through the Army and Navy to me, I suppose. It has in the past.

Q Is there any movement along that line now?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I will tell you, there is one thing which you might as well print. I think it is all right. I am very often called "The rule of thumb man." Quite a long while ago, about three weeks, four weeks ago, there came a question about munitions of various kinds for Canada and Great Britain, as they came off the line, where we both needed the same thing.

Q That is what I meant.

THE PRESIDENT: And I laid down a rule of thumb, which is only a general rule and, of course, is absolutely subject to exceptions. And the rule is a 50-50 rule. In other words, we take half; they take half.

Q Does that apply to the large bombing planes, the flying fortresses?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Mr. President, in connection with the western steel development, is there anything in the wind in the nature of a development to increase the steel capacity near the iron mines in Minnesota?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I have heard of.

Q Mr. President, does that 50-50 rule apply to big bombers, meaning also flying fortresses?

THE PRESIDENT: As they come off the line, I should say yes, the new ones.

Q Would it apply to planes that are now coming off the lines?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes and no. In other words, we might need more than the fifty per cent for a while, or there might be some article that we



needed less than fifty per cent for the next few months. But, as I say, it is only a rule of thumb, subject to many exceptions in the case of an individual article.

Q Does this 50-50 ratio increase the ratio that has been in existence for the past several months, or by how much does it increase it?

THE PRESIDENT: I should say a little bit. I think before that it was perhaps 55-45 and now it is 50-50.

Q The 55-45 being in favor of the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Have you in mind any arrangement with Mexico paralleling that which we have with Canada?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that the armies of both countries have been carrying on studies, joint studies. Didn't we have the chief of staff of the Mexican Army up here?

Q Yes, sir.

Q Reports have been circulating in usually good quarters in Europe that some sort of peace move may be anticipated in Washington in the next few weeks. The reports seem to say that one step in the move would be the withdrawal of Germany from Belgium, Norway and the Netherlands. Have you heard such a report?

THE PRESIDENT: I never even heard of it; never even read it. The same way, there was a U. P. report this morning of some kind of agreement -- I don't know what it said - "high official sources in London" and I am quite sure it did not come from high official sources in London -- about an agreement between, I do not know what it was, Great Britain, Australia and the United States. I am quite sure it did not come from high sources.

Q You mean regarding Singapore, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I am afraid it was just another one.

Q That is to say that such an understanding does not even agree in principle?

THE PRESIDENT: I should say the report did not come from any high official sources. We will confine ourselves to that.

Q Mr. President, London is wondering whether you might use your good offices to bring Churchill and De Valera together on the question of the use of Irish ports?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, George (Mr. Durno); I never heard of it.

Q Also I have been requested to ask whether any immediate Federal funds are in sight for this Washington-Baltimore Boulevard as a national defense project?

THE PRESIDENT: No. The last I heard about that was when I went to the plant, the aviation plant that day and we came back, you know, from Aberdeen, and the Governor of Maryland (Governor O'Connor) told me that he had a board or something that was looking into the question. He said he would let me know about it as soon as they made a report. I have not heard anything since then.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.



## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #695,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
November 19, 1940, 4.20 P.M.

Q Hyde Park tomorrow night, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q I will ask that for the record, as soon as we start.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; in fact I will tell you beforehand.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I think the only news I have got is that Joe Davies

(Ambassador Joseph E. Davies) has resigned as Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and letters are being given out over there, and I have asked Joe to be the Chairman of the Inaugural Committee -- whatever it is called --

Q (interposing) Has he accepted?

THE PRESIDENT: -- like Cary Grayson had.

Q Has he accepted, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Was his resignation necessary for the acceptance of the chairmanship?

THE PRESIDENT: No, but I think he wanted to spend a good deal of time on the chairmanship.

Q There has been some speculation about going over to London?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q (Mr. Essary) Have you accepted Mr. Bullitt's resignation, sir, as Ambassador to France?

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing I got, Fred, is to tell you off the record that I understand from the Secretary that a letter from Bullitt came in, that it was dated on the seventh and arrived here and was ac-

knowledged and I ain't been able to find it since. It is around somewhere. (Laughter)

Q I am taking it for granted --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) If you want fun, you can stay afterwards and go through my basket. You will probably find it.

Q (Mr. Essary) I would like it, sir. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: It will take you two or three hours.

Q (Mr. Essary) Well, I am willing. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: It is in there somewhere.

Q The last word from the Vultee factory strike is that apparently, while they are talking and negotiating, they are not making very much headway and the plant may be tied up indefinitely. In view of that report, which may or may not be correct, are you considering any appeal to either or both sides -- any move you are interested in making?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard anything about it, one way or the other.

Q Can you tell us, sir, whether you think the incident out there demonstrates the need for any new --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, I do not think --

Q (interposing) I was thinking about machinery, generally, to settle these disputes?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. Each case depends on its merits, you know.

Q There is one other thing on that situation: There have been suggestions that the War Department might recommend to the company that they grant an increase to the strikers and, since these are all fixed price contracts, the War Department might renegotiate each contract and add to cover the added labor costs. Can you comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't the faintest idea.



Q Speaking of Bill Bullitt, there is a report that Ray Atherton is going to be sent to Vichy?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a new one.

Q Another report that Marshall Field is to be sent to London?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a new one.

Q Mr. President, have you any comment to make on Mr. Willkie's post-election speech?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Probably going up to Hyde Park tomorrow night -- first Thanksgiving I have had up there in -- I don't know how many years -- eight years, I think, since I have been away.

Q There have been more increasing demands that this country send food to Europe, especially to those sections, Belgium and unoccupied France, that are in danger of starvation. I wonder if this Administration has any new plans --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q Mr. President, have you any comment on Senator Minton's visit today?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we talked over the Indiana situation.

Q Have you any comment on the visit to you by Assistant Secretary Patterson, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce?

THE PRESIDENT: No; we talked over the political situation.

Q How about Assistant Secretary Patterson of the War Department?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we were talking about a lot of things that there isn't any public news on.

Q Did the strike come up, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. (Laughter)

The only thing I was very glad about, while he was here the Navy

Department got a report from Camden, New Jersey, that the battleship there had not been damaged and nobody had been hurt. You probably saw the news on the ticker that they had a six-alarm fire or something?

Q Anything you can say about the appeal of Greece for airplanes and other military supplies?

THE PRESIDENT: Only what I saw in the Star.

Q Mr. President, does it make any difference to you that the House refused to adjourn today?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No. (Laughter)

Q Was there any further word on Mr. Wallace's visit to Mexico City?

THE PRESIDENT: Visit to what?

Q On Mr. Wallace's visit to Mexico City?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it has been received with a great deal of acclaim, both in Mexico and the United States.

Q Will you send a message down there with him?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. You will have to ask the Protocol whether it will be a public message or a private message or what.

Q Mr. President, there is now an Argentine Economic Mission here. Have you yet been consulted regarding a possible program?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I am to see them when I get back next Monday or Tuesday.

Q After your return?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Monday or Tuesday?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Do the reports out of the Carribean indicate there might be any developments in the near future on Martinique?

THE PRESIDENT: No.



Q So far as you can say, in the future do you expect the status quo to be maintained there?

THE PRESIDENT: You can't tell. You never can tell more than a few hours ahead of anything. I don't care to make any prognostications at all.

Q Have you any report on this Tampico incident, the German ships being apparently almost intercepted by some ships which were either American or a foreign country?

THE PRESIDENT: Don't you think that is a matter that it is advisable for the President not to comment on but for all of us to have a very quiet chuckle about? (Laughter) That is entirely off the record.

Again, off the record, what obviously happened, as far as we can make out, as far as any of us can tell, is that we have had a patrol, which has been going on there for over a year in the Gulf of Mexico. And, when word came beforehand that these ships were going out, there were some of our patrol ships somewhere off there, twelve or fifteen miles, something like that, and when these ships came out, they thought that our ships were British ships and three got back as fast as they could and the other was set afire and went to the bottom.

Q Maybe they thought they were destroyers that were turned over. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, there was another report from Tampico that United States destroyers had stopped a Honduran and Mexican freighter. Have you any confirmation of that?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard of that at all, no. No, I talked to Admiral Stark about an hour ago and I think he would have told me if there was anything we had.

Q You have intimated that you had nothing for Congress to do. But, if it continues to sit here anyway, will you find something for it to do?

Will you send something up?

THE PRESIDENT: There are more of these Army and Navy promotions coming along all the time. (Laughter)

Q Anything on the defense program you might send up?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not at this time.

Q Will you tell us what you and Bill White talked about this morning, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: His future activities.

Q What are they to be, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: You had better ask Bill. I would not want to encroach; he might have a good story there.

Q Mr. White won't talk, sir; we did ask him. (Laughter)

Q One report said that Mr. White is going to start agitation for the transfer of war destroyers to the British. You did not discuss that by any chance?

THE PRESIDENT: No, we did not discuss that.

Q Is there any possibility that Mr. White might go into the Administration in any capacity?

THE PRESIDENT: We did not even discuss that.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what you talked about with Mayor LaGuardia?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we talked about lots of things. We had a very good time.

Q Was a Cabinet post mentioned?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it was not mentioned.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Mr. President.



## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #696,

In the President's Study at Hyde Park, N.Y.,

November 22, 1940, 11.40 A.M.

Q Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: How are things back home? (

Q Very good. Very nice weather.

Q Almost like Warm Springs air.

THE PRESIDENT: We ought to be in Warm Springs instead of here. Actually, it is the first Thanksgiving I have had since I was Governor.

Q Yes, you went to South America in 1936. Everything else has been Warm Springs.

THE PRESIDENT: How is the old station (radio station) coming?

Q (Mr. Coons) Pretty well.

THE PRESIDENT: Are you in the black yet?

Q (Mr. Coons) We missed the election. If we had one of those a month, we would be fine.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think there is a blessed thing. There is a story in Washington, in the Post -- they telephoned to me that General Pershing had been asked by me to go as Ambassador to France -- and that was perfectly true -- last week because, as I felt, he knew the old Marshal Petain, they would understand each other, and I asked him to go. He waited for three or four days and tried to persuade his doctors that the right thing for him to do was to go, and that was one thing he couldn't win out on. The doctors won out and they told the General they thought it would be a very, very grave mistake for him to go abroad at

this time. So, with very deep regret, he sent word to me that he had to take the orders from the doctors rather than from me, and that he could not go. He was grand about it.

Q Does that mean, sir, that Mr. Phillips' resignation has been accepted?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet.

Q He still remains Ambassador to France, then?

THE PRESIDENT: Obviously.

Q Have you anyone else in mind, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't got to that stage yet.

Q How about Joe Kennedy?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard a word except what I read in the papers.

I have not heard a thing.

Q Have you seen the Dies report?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q The Dies Committee report?

THE PRESIDENT: Only read the headlines. I have not had a chance to read the whole report yet. I can talk to you, off the record, about one thing I read about. It has got to be off the record, and for your own information I think some of that stuff about the old library, the German library, (the German Library of Information) I think it is awfully old. I think it is positively hoary. I think we have known about it for months and I think it has been ended for months. It is sort of a dead fish dragged out again. You had better check on that but I think that is the fact.

Q The Rome radio said there were reports going around the Vatican that after your reelection, through the papal delegate in Wash-



ington, you had attempted to sound out the Pope on issuing some sort of joint appeal for peace?

THE PRESIDENT: I guess that is just another one.

Q In view of these bombings of Britain in the last week or so, there are a lot of questions being asked by people as to whether we will step up this 50-50 rule of thumb you mentioned before in order to give them more help?

THE PRESIDENT: That is altogether too general a question. If, at the same time, they would point out how it could be done, it would be a different story. There could be an answer, maybe, to any definite proposition.

Q There has been talk in the press and among the public about getting -- making it possible for Britain to get credit here, and some talk about convoying ships half way across the Atlantic?

THE PRESIDENT: There has been nothing in the Government.

Q Mr. President, do you have any plans for any additional inspections of defense facilities?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q In the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Could you tell us anything about them?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Could you tell us anything, off the record, for our own personal guidance?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except keep your bags handy.

Q Will it be in the month of December, do you think, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Will it be before the fifteenth of December?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot answer any questions.

Q We are trying to arrange our affairs to sneak away.

THE PRESIDENT: No. I think you will get Christmas and New Years; nothing doing that part of the month, but otherwise you have got to work.

Q May we ask how long you plan to remain in Washington when we get back from this trip?

THE PRESIDENT: I will be there all next week.

Q When do you plan to go back?

THE PRESIDENT: Sunday night. Then the usual Monday morning conference if anybody is there.

Q Mr. President, may we take it from what you said about General Pershing that somebody will be going to --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't know; I have not got beyond that.

Q Mr. President, on the Dutchess County situation: In view of Mr. Hardy Steeholm's wonderful run and, of course, the considerable talk that one might expect after an election, I wonder if it is all right for me to ask whether he might be appointed to some post?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not got the faintest idea. I never heard of it before. It is all right.

Q In that connection, Mr. President, of course there has been Mr. Fish's lament over the result, and that has been carried down to Washington. I see he is talking about horsewhipping and --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No! I never heard that. Was he the



whippee?

Q No, he wanted somebody to be the whippee.

Q He wanted to horsewhip the colleagues who put out the story about his house in New York being rented to the Nazis.

THE PRESIDENT: I have not heard a peep about it, one way or the other.

(There was a slight pause.)

Can't you think of anything else?

Q Could you amplify -- would it be possible to amplify at all on your statement on being more specific on this further aid to Britain, that there might be something --

(interposing)

THE PRESIDENT: No, that has got to come from other people; in other words, any suggestions. So far we are just talking glittering generalities that don't mean one damned thing.

Q May we take it for granted that serious consideration has been given?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I do not think you can write a story. As you know, we are doing everything we can at the present time. In other words, if you will show me a way of turning out airplanes faster than we are doing it now, that is a different thing. You cannot pass a bill and issue an order and <sup>get</sup> the plane the next day.

Q Mr. President, I see Mr. Benson and Mr. Townsend outside?

THE PRESIDENT: They are both there?

Q Outside.

THE PRESIDENT: I told them to come up this morning.

Q Anything you can mention in connection with them?

THE PRESIDENT: They just wanted to come up and say, "Howdy do," I guess. I do not think there will be any story.

Q Any developments on the labor peace front?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing except what I read.

Q You sent no message to the C. I. O.?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know. Did I, Kannee?

Q (Mr. Kannee) I have not seen any request, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: You had better not say I did not, because I may have.

MR. CORNELL: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Have a good time. I think it is good golf weather,  
isn't it?



## CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #697,  
Executive Offices of the White House,  
November 26, 1940, 4.05 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have anything; I asked Steve (Mr. Early) and he said he had nothing.

Q Mr. President, will you tell us about your conference with the War and Navy defense officials?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing much to tell you about it; we had a good chat -- no news.

Q Did you hear about the settlement of the Vultee strike?

THE PRESIDENT: That was done last night.

Q Done last night? (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, what are the prospects of a veto on the Walter-Logan Bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't read it. It is to go to conference, isn't it?

Q Walter said he would move to accept the Senate amendment.

THE PRESIDENT: I will have to see it.

Q Did you discuss the general labor situation with the defense men?

THE PRESIDENT: Only in general -- nothing specific.

Q Can you give us some comment on your conference with Dr. Prebisch yesterday on the financial mission?

THE PRESIDENT: I just said, "How do you do?" That's all.

Q Did he say anything? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: He was awfully glad to see me; and I reciprocated.

Q (Mr. Godwin) Mr. President, these young gentlemen want to know something about Mr. Dies, the Vultee strike, Communists, the unions, sabotage, the defense program, et cetera and so on; may I ask whether you care to say

anything about those matters which have been in the public prints yesterday and today? Mr. Dies has telegraphed you --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I saw that.

Q Is that all, sir? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No, as a matter of fact, I am probably going to have a talk with Martin Dies as soon as he gets back here, and of course there will be a conversation -- a round table -- with Justice and State to try to iron out certain things in regard to procedural matters, it being, of course, perfectly clear that the House Committee has every right in the world to make any kind of investigation, but that the House Committee cannot conduct the administrative functions of government under the Constitution. Somewhere in there lies a line of demarcation where co-operation is undoubtedly needed. I think we will get it, all right.

Q May I ask you another question, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Are you satisfied with the reports that the F.B.I. has made -- satisfied with their work?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes. You see, there is one thing I have got to say that is off the record, just for guidance, you might say; there is an awful lot of stuff, I think -- an awful lot of stuff that comes in from time to time about Communist activities or the belief that certain individuals might sabotage something that the Government is doing, information which is not sufficient in a court of law to warrant a conviction, but where there is a danger. There is always a very, very close line where you have people who are suspected, as to what you can do about it, whether you should keep them on under surveillance or discharge them right away -- those being cases where you can't get a conviction under existing law.



Every case has to be determined on its merits. Let me give you an illustration: It was suggested -- not by the Dies Committee but by some entirely outside source -- in talking this whole subject over, Just what is a Communist? Well, there are probably some people in this room that have signed Communist nominating petitions -- I should not be a bit surprised. Does that make you a Communist?

All right, suppose Mr. Bill Jones, in the back of the room, is caught having signed a Communist nominating petition. We have him up on the carpet. We say, "You are a Communist." He says, "Not a bit, but it is my belief that under the law they have a right to their place on the ballot; therefore, in furtherance of my belief in free elections, I signed their petition. I didn't vote for the Communist candidate, but I signed to have him put on the ballot."

You can't convict a man for Communism, for having done a thing of that kind. Every case has to be determined on its merits. And it is perfectly absurd to say that there are 300,000 dangerous people in this country. I daresay some would give me their names and give me the facts on which I have got to separate them from Government service or defense industries.

No, it is a question of orderly administration. I will give you another example: There have been a number of cases, as you know, where people are not only suspected of subversive activities but probably we have got an open-and-shut case on them. All right. Now, it may be advisable not to arrest them but to leave them right there because by watching them we may get information from watching them as to connections with other people. It is a matter for discussion; it is a matter for law-enforcing agents of the Government. Of course if we try all

these cases out loud, we automatically do a great deal of harm to proper law enforcement. In some cases it is a good thing to try out loud, but not in all.

Q Mr. President, is there any law or interpretation of law whereby you can keep Communists out of defense industries?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes.

Q Is there such a law?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes, on the grounds that their retention in the Navy yard or arsenal might be dangerous.

Q I am talking about those having Government contracts.

THE PRESIDENT: There is no law on that but you carry it into effect by another process. Take a case: What is a nearby plant? -- that Martin factory in Baltimore that we looked at, you know. Suppose the Government Inspector for the Army and Navy planes should pick out four or five people, whether they are Communists or not, whom he suspected very seriously of something subversive, some kind of a plot, and had a pretty good case; he could go to Glenn Martin and say, "Now, listen; you ought not to keep those fellows -- you ought not to keep them any longer, because I am the Government Inspector and it is my job to see that this contract is carried through without an explosion." Glenn Martin does his inspecting, and if he checks up with our inspection, the fellows are discharged.

Q But suppose he is merely a member of the Communist Party and they have no case on him?

THE PRESIDENT: It would depend on the individual case. He might be a perfectly innocent little fellow that you would never suspect of hurting a fly.

Q Mr. President, I should think probably the main thing in all this controversy



and discussion is keeping the factories open.

THE PRESIDENT: That is right -- open and undamaged.

Q Mr. President, were all of these remarks off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, all are off the record. I think, frankly, it is not a thing that is very much in controversy; I can't see that there is very much controversy about this problem.

Q Mr. President, may I repeat one question that I asked last week?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q You say the objective is to keep the factories open and undamaged. There has been talk on the Hill the last three or four days about the need of some additional legislation, some law to prevent strikes in defense industries. Can you say whether as a result of your subsequent discussions there is need of new machinery?

THE PRESIDENT: It is under daily study at the present time. As of today, I should say we are asking Congress for no additional legislation -- as of today.

Q Sir, the remark you made about keeping factories open and undamaged -- is that off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: You can use that.

Q Mr. President, did the British Ambassador present any specific requests for additional help?

THE PRESIDENT: I am sorry, I will have to disappoint quite a number of papers; nothing was mentioned in that regard at all, not one single thing -- ships or sealing wax or anything else. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, as I understand it, we may use what you said about getting Mr. Dies around the table?

THE PRESIDENT: You can use that; in fact, I hope Mr. Dies will come up here

this coming Friday because, as you know, I might leave sometime next week and go away. I don't know.

Q Any decision on where --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No decision when or where.

Q You said Justice and State Department would come in around the table.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Does that mean the activities of consular agents might be discussed?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so.

Q Could you answer one more question about aviation? As you undoubtedly noticed, there has been talk about minimizing production -- if not stopping production -- of commercial aircraft. Some of the companies think that would be contrary to public interest, that it would prevent the normal development if all emphasis were given to military production.

THE PRESIDENT: I think a very, very fair answer to that is this: We want to keep commercial aviation going on its present basis; in other words, as far as we can tell, the construction of new commercial ships should proceed at the -- what shall I say? -- 1940 level; but as between increasing production of commercial ships over that amount and thereby taking that away from the military program, the military program ought to come first; I don't want to have to put on priorities. I think it is a matter that the producers of these big commercial ships will see that we do not need to have to put on priorities, and that they ought to go along as they are going, and turn all increased facilities over to the military needs of the country.

Q Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: That does not mean cutting down at all; it means that they must not increase.



Q Mr. President, can you say what you saw Governor Brann about?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, just said, "How do you do?" And we analyzed the election with a good deal of joy. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, who are you going to send to Puerto Rico to replace Governor Leahy?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know yet; probably won't know until next week.

Q Have you anybody in mind for London yet?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Can you say when you will see Mr. Carmody on the public roads defense picture? I understand he has prepared something.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen it. I can give you a story on that now which might as well seep in. It will save me some trouble if it seeps into a lot of Congressmen and Senators between now and January -- save a lot of time down here. The general policy in this coming Budget is going to be to cut down to the bone on non-military public works, because we believe that in the course of the spring and summer the defense program is going to use the very greatest number of people who are out of work and who want work and are able to work; in other words, cutting down on the total number of employable needy unemployed. Also from the financial point of view they are spending an awful lot of money and we ought to concentrate as much of that as possible on defense rather than on non-military public works.

Now, on those public works, if you think of them as individual projects -- an individual road or bridge or this, that or the other thing, we are going to spend a very small amount of money on perfecting the project from the planning point of view; in other words, have a jacket -- a folder -- for these projects that everybody has approved,

including the Congress, in such shape -- all the preliminary engineering work done -- in such shape that we can put it up on a shelf; when this great employment on defense comes to an end -- as we hope it will some day -- as fast as people are thrown out of work in munitions factories, we will be able to take projects that are all engineered, all ready to shoot, off the shelf and put the people who have been working on defense things back on useful public works which have been deferred, thereby taking up the slack and preventing a serious depression.

That is going to be the general policy and that means that we are going to put in for just as little highway money as we possibly can -- only enough actually to carry out the obligations that were incurred by this previous Congress and the Congress of last year. This year's and last year's Congress cut down on new rivers and harbors work that are not connected with defense.

Now, of course you do have to remember this, that if the Congressmen from a portion of Chesapeake Bay wanted such and such a creek deepened from four feet to six feet, so that the oyster boats could get in and out more handily, we probably would have all kinds of briefs up here to prove that it was a matter vital to national defense; and almost everything in the way of public works they try to tie in with national defense. Now, I am trying to lay down a very strict rule that national defense means actually national defense, primarily munitions, and not things like highways.

Q And oysters?

THE PRESIDENT: And oysters.

Q Mr. President, would that call for modification of the policy that you stated about a year ago of not putting more public works on the shelf until some were taken off?



THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I am going to just fill up that shelf, with nothing being taken off of it at the present time; for instance, I expect to save money on the thing you are interested in, Pete (Mr. Brandt), -- the purchase of public lands, park lands and forest lands, things of that kind. This is not the time to spend money on that kind of projects -- parks, roads, national forest trails, highways -- except for fire prevention; that is a different thing.

Q What I had in mind was that there would be nothing in this policy to prevent authorizations by Congress for future --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Oh, no -- no objection at all.

Q It sounds like the P.W.A. is on the way out, or at least very much diminished.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes and no; we are increasing the percentage of defense work that is being done by W.P.A., on the actual numbers; and of course nobody has ever been willing to admit this: We have, let us say, a million, nine hundred thousand people on W.P.A.; why hasn't it gone down? You can't get certain editors to admit any such a problem exists. They very carefully overlook it. The reason is that you have got three-fourths of a million people who are on the waiting list -- maybe a million who are on the waiting list of W.P.A. In other words, we have got to absorb gradually as many people as we can out of the 1,900,000, and also as many as possible of the 750,000 who are on the waiting list. It is not telling the truth if you refer to one side of that without referring to the waiting list too.

Q I have seen some figures about one-half of W.P.A. workers on national defense; do I understand it is your idea to increase that on W.P.A.?

THE PRESIDENT: This is a thing I would not have you say -- it is for illustra-

tion: Suppose we have two and three-fourths million people on W.P.A. or waiting for it; and suppose we reduce that in the course of the winter and spring until you have only a million and a half all told; out of that million and a half, instead of having three or four hundred thousand that are now working on defense things, we might have six or seven hundred thousand working on defense projects -- an increased percentage.

Q Mr. President, does the ban on the highways include the so-called defense highway proposition, like the parking shoulders?

THE PRESIDENT: Parking shoulders?

Q Yes, widening out on the edge, supposedly to let the civilians park as the military goes by. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: You don't mean necking places? (Prolonged laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Time to go, I think! (More laughter)