

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #708,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 7, 1941, 4.10 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe anybody wants to talk finances; they have done a lot of it today! (The President was referring to the Budget Conference this morning.)

I have only two things I can think of; one is, I am putting in Minton as Administrative Assistant, to act as legs for me -- with a "passion for anonymity" and one or two other things. I suggest to you that he is not going to be liaison officer with the Hill. He does know a lot about all kinds of things in the Government. He has been on the Military Affairs Committee, but his work will not be confined to military affairs. He will act as legs, eyes, ears, et cetera, as one of the Administrative Assistants.

Q Not specifically assigned to the Hill?

THE PRESIDENT: No, certainly not.

Then the other thing is the Executive Orders that have gone out today; and again I will have to talk to you a little so you will not write stories saying, "It is learned on good authority," or jump to conclusions. (Laughter) I will give you better authority, if you will follow it.

This (holding a copy of the Executive Order dated today) sets up the Office of Production Management, which I told you about the other day -- an Executive Order and an Administrative Order. The Executive Order is to -- I'll try to eliminate the

formalities in here, - to increase production, and so forth and so on --

"...it is hereby ordered,"

First, to be in the Office for Emergency Management of the Executive Office of the President, which is merely conforming to existing law, an Office of Production Management which will consist of a Director General, and an Associate Director General, Secretary of War, Secretary of the Navy.

"With such advice and assistance as--"

may be required

"....from other departments and agencies,"..."and subject to such regulations"----"as the President may from time to time prescribe--

all these things carry out wordings of law --

"and subject further to the general policy that the Departments of War and Navy and other departments and agencies of the Government will be utilized to the maximum extent compatible with efficiency."

That doesn't mean anything at all except, when it comes to getting a filing clerk, instead of going to some other place and bringing down a filing clerk, let's say, from somebody's law office in New York, they will take it off the civil-service lists which are already in existence in the Government of the United States, and everybody, of course, is agreeable to that.

And when it comes to purchases of -- Oh, what will I say? -- a piece of blotting paper, a desk light, a donkey for the desk -- they will buy it through the regular Government purchase sources instead of going on the outside.

It shall: (reading)

"a. Formulate and execute in the public interest all measures needful and appropriate in order " --

get that,

"formulate and execute--"

in order, first,

"to increase, accelerate, and regulate the production and supply of materials, articles and equipment and the provision of emergency plant facilities and services required for the national defense, and--"

secondly

"to insure... coordination of those activities of the several departments, corporations, and other agencies of the Government which are directly concerned therewith."

You can't make it much broader than that in giving powers.

"b."

To

"survey, analyze, and summarize for purposes of coordination the stated requirements of the War and Navy and other departments and agencies"... "and of foreign governments.."

get that; that's in line with what we said yesterday and what we said this morning on the Budget--

"for materials, articles, and equipment needed for defense."

--so that you won't have any conflicts between the foreign program and the domestic program.

Equipment for defense:

"c. Advise with respect to the plans and schedules of the various departments and agencies for the purchase--"

that is, planning them, all these purchases of --

"materials, articles, and equipment..." "major defense orders and contracts..." "keep informed of the progress of various programs of production and supply."

That's the planning end of it.

"d. Plan and take all lawful steps necessary to assure the provision of an adequate supply of raw materials essential to the production of finished products needed

for defense.

"e. To formulate plans for the mobilization for defense of the production facilities of the Nation, and to take all lawful action necessary to carry out such plans.

"f."

I am reading all these because you would not have time to read them yourselves. (Laughter) Am I right? I can say things like that in the family; it's all right.

"Determine the adequacy of existing production facilities and to assure their maximum use; and, when necessary, to stimulate and plan the creation of such additional facilities and sources of production and supply as may be essential to increase and expedite defense production.

"g. To determine when, to what extent, and in what manner priorities shall be accorded to deliveries of material as provided in Section...."

something or other of an act.

"Deliveries of material shall take priority,..." "in accordance with such determinations and the orders issued..." "by the Office of Production Management."

Now, right on that, so that the thing is clear: they will issue the final priority orders; but that will be done after they have gone through one of three sections under them. Under these four there are three divisions -- Production, Purchases, and Priorities. Now, when it comes to a question of priorities, this Division of Priorities, with a director of its own, will make the studies on it and make recommendation to this office of four people. Of course nine times out of ten, or more, the recommendation of the Division of Priorities, which has done all the special work on it, will be carried out and issued as an order by the Office of Production Management.

"Perform the functions and exercise the authorities vested in the President by Section 9 of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940."

Harold (Budget Director Smith), what is that?

MR. SMITH: That is the provision under which the Government may take over plants.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes, that's under the draft law which allows me to take over a plant in case the plant gets rambunctious; and then I tell the Office of Production Management, "You go ahead and take over the rambunctious plant and don't bother me with it."

"1. Serve as ..." "liaison and channel of communication between the Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense and the Departments of War and Navy with respect to the duties imposed..." "on the Commission by the following named acts."

And then follow one, two, three, four, five acts. That is a purely technical provision.

"3. The Director General, in association with the Associate Director General, and serving under the direction and supervision of the President, shall discharge and perform the administrative responsibilities and duties required to carry out the functions specified--"

those a to j functions

"subject to and in conformity with the policies and regulations (not inconsistent with such regulations as may be issued by the President)--"

that is only put in as part of the legal language

"--prescribed by the Office of Production Management."

I suppose the easiest way to do it is that these four people -- the Office of Production Management, Knudsen, Hillman, and the two secretaries -- fix the policy, and then Knudsen and Hillman carry it out, just like a law firm that has a case; say there are two partners, and they carry it out as a law firm. Anybody that knows anything about management -- other than editorial writers (laughter) -- will realize that is the practical way to handle that kind of a matter, just like a law firm with two main partners.

Q Are they equals?

THE PRESIDENT: That's not the point; they're a firm. Is a firm equals?

I don't know. See what I mean? Roosevelt & O'Connor is a very famous firm in New York; there were just two partners; I don't know whether we were equal or not. Probably we might have disagreed in regard to a catch question of that kind; but we never had a dispute or an argument.

Q That isn't a catch question.

Q Everybody in town is wondering about that.

THE PRESIDENT: It's a silly thing to wonder about; it's a firm. In other words, if you had had an important case -- I would not say what kind of case -- and you had hired Roosevelt & O'Connor in the early days, you would not have asked that question.

Q Mr. President, is this the firm of Roosevelt, Hillman & Knudsen?

THE PRESIDENT: I have nothing to do with this.

Q What about the clause, "under direction of the President"?

THE PRESIDENT: That's only to conform with the law. I have nothing to do with it, whatsoever. There may be a question of policy, and they may say, What does the President think of this question with a pro and con on it? They may come in and ask me what I think of it. That will happen very rarely.

Q Does the term "execute" apply to all their functions?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, suppose, as might happen,--

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You mean "if"?

Q I would like to leave out the "if". Take a question of a contract for the Ford Motor Company; and suppose Mr. Knudsen believes Ford should

get the contract because of speed reasons, and Mr. Hillman thinks Ford should not get the contract because of labor reasons; in your view, what should be done?

THE PRESIDENT: The answer is, Suppose that question did not arise, what would you say? You see, in other words, you would feel awfully cheap, wouldn't you?

Q You would expect agreement.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, of course.

Q Why is it you don't want a single, responsible head?

THE PRESIDENT: I have a single, responsible head; his name is Knudsen & Hillman.

Q Two heads.

THE PRESIDENT: No, that's one head. In other words, aren't you looking for trouble? Would you rather come to one law firm, or two?

Q I don't think that's comparable.

THE PRESIDENT: Just the same thing, exactly. Wait until you run into trouble.

Q I would rather avoid trouble.

THE PRESIDENT: I think they will. They think they will -- that's an interesting thing.

Q Mr. President, as I understood the reading of your order, you said this agency -- these two men -- would fix policy; does that mean that in fixing policy they will decide what the Army and Navy, under the defense program, need?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no; the Army and Navy are military things. The Army and Navy naturally would decide.

Q I mean about fixing the policy -- they will fix policy about the execution

of the program?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that's right.

Q Thank you, sir.

Q Mr. President, on the Niagara frontier the Ontario Hydro-Electric Company has authorized --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Who is that? -- Jim?

MR. EARLY: Yes.

MR. WRIGHT: (Buffalo Evening News) --Has authorized an increased diversion of water in order to bring electric power from the Canadian side to the American side. There is some available water there for our side, and there has not been any authorization for increased diversion. Can you tell me how that is? *

THE PRESIDENT: I would ask Knudsen & Hillman; I haven't the faintest idea.

Q When policy isn't involved, would Knudsen have Production and Hillman Labor?

THE PRESIDENT: You can't do it that way. Go back to the analogy of the law firm; suppose there are two partners; one may specialize in contract cases and the other in tort cases, of the two main divisions. That doesn't mean that they won't talk things over; and sometimes it may be a tort case that the contract fellow will take charge of, or it may be a contract case that the tort specialist will take charge of, if it happens to be something he is interested in, or down his alley. They will work on the case together.

Let's say that in any given contract or proposal to create a new plant, or something of that kind, there will be certain problems of materials, transportation, the setting up of the floor, the providing of the tools; and there will be other problems that will be

concerned with various kinds of labor questions; I don't mean questions of strikes or hours or things like that -- that's terribly narrow-- but the problem, Are there enough riveters in that particular area? There is no hard-and-fast division; it is perfectly possible that Knudsen might happen to know more about the riveters in that area than Hillman happened to know. They will work together on it. That's a situation that is terribly difficult for some minds to get, but it's the way all good business is run.

Q Mr. President, will any of the functions of the Advisory Commission remain outside the scope of the Office of Production Management?

THE PRESIDENT: I will come to that later, because there are a couple of other orders in here that really cover that. The Advisory Committee goes right ahead on certain functions that have to be done; for instance, the problem of retail prices -- the housewife; that still is very definitely a Government function to see that the housewife doesn't get gypped. Miss Elliott will continue to give advice to protect the housewives against this firm of Knudsen & Hillman. And the question of the price of copper -- Leon Henderson will continue to give advice to Knudsen & Hillman to keep the price of copper down to a reasonable level. See what I mean?

Q I was wondering whether that would be routed to the Office of Production Management or to you.

THE PRESIDENT: It goes up to the Office of Production Management.

Q Mr. President, in your recent conversation did you find them in substantial agreement?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely. (Continues reading and paraphrasing.)

"4. There shall be within the--"

Offices

"--the following and such other operating divisions as may be necessary from time to time:"

Division of Production, Division of Purchases, and Division of Priorities.

The Division of Production -- Mr. Jack Biggers is going in as the Director; the Division of Purchases, Mr. Donald Nelson is going in as Director; and the Division of Priorities, Mr. Stettinius is going in as Director. So all the places are filled; they are all ready to start.

"Each division..." shall be in charge of a director appointed by the Office of Production Management with the approval of the President.

"5. There shall be within the Office of Production Management a Priorities Board--"

this sets up a new Priorities Board to take the place of the old one

"--composed of six members. A chairman and three other members shall be appointed or designated by the President;"

The Director General and Associate General Director are members ex officio. And on that "chairman and three other members," Stettinius comes in as chairman; Leon Henderson comes in on Price Control; Donald Nelson comes in as a member, I think, but you better check; I have forgotten who the other is. The Priorities Board serves as an advisory body "from time to time as may be required by the Office Of Production Management" to --

"--make findings and submit recommendations with respect to the establishment of priorities, placing of mandatory orders, assignment of preference ratings, allocation of deliveries, and other related matters. In making its findings and recommendations the Priorities Board shall take into account general social and economic considerations and the effect the proposed actions would have upon the civilian population.

"6. Within the limits of such funds as may be allocated to it by the President on the recommendation of the Bureau of the Budget, the Office of Production Management may employ necessary

personnel and make provision for..."

pen and ink.

"However, the Office of Production Management shall use insofar as practicable such statistical, informational, fiscal, personnel and other general business services and facilities as may be made available through the Office for Emergency Management or other agencies....."

(The President did not read No. 7.)

And with that goes an Administrative Order, which is purely routine, on the Office for Emergency Management. This merely further sets up and modifies the old order of last September, a year ago -- September 8, 1939 -- and as I say, it is merely to carry out the law. This Office of Emergency Management advises and assists the President, serves as a division in the Office, as a channel of communication in the Emergency Offices, and assists the President on or before termination of an emergency with respect to measures "needful to facilitate a restoration of normal administrative relations and to ameliorate the consequences of the emergency;" to perform such other duties as the President directs; the work and activities of the following named agencies are under it:-- and then it mentions the Council of National Defense, the Defense Communications Board, the Office of Production Management.

Then there is the order by the Council of National Defense, consisting of the Secretaries of War, Navy, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor, revoking the old order for the purchase group and putting it in with the new Office. That is just a legal transfer of what is set up; and the other abolishes the old Priorities Board and sets up the new one.

Then they got out the "Statement by the Members of the Office

of Production Management" (which I said I would give to you over here because it will save you all time -- otherwise it would be given out over there) signed by Stimson, Knox, Knudsen, and Hillman, which is quite an important statement because it does mention the seriousness of the urgency of this emergency and asks for the help of everybody. They want cooperation from -- it doesn't say so, but they want cooperation from the Press! (Laughter) It's a very good statement.

Q Mr. President, when does this go into effect -- tomorrow night?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so; I haven't actually signed the commissions but I think I have them.

Q Will their offices be in the Federal Reserve Building?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so; I don't know.

Q Mr. President, have you named an Ambassador to Britain yet?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q What about Norweb?

THE PRESIDENT: Norweb is going back to Peru.

Q Reuters is carrying a dispatch out of Stockholm that American troops are occupying Greenland, or have occupied it.

THE PRESIDENT: New one on me! Must have been while I was asleep!

(Laughter)

Q Do you think you will be able to appoint an Ambassador to Britain this week?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I am feeling quite happy over it.

Q Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #709,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 10, 1941, 10.55 A.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: Don't think I have any news this morning. There was signed yesterday a proclamation, on the recommendation of the Administrator for Export Control, Colonel Maxwell, placing six additional materials under the export licensing system, on account of the defense program -- copper, brass, bronze, zinc, nickel and potash.

Q Potash?

THE PRESIDENT: Potash; it's a thing you put in whisky to make it taste.

Q When is that effective, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: February three.

Q Mr. President, is copper placed on the list because copper is reaching Germany through other countries?

THE PRESIDENT: No; just put on the list because we need it.

Q What would happen to such a thing as copper imported from Chile for refining here -- usually imported for re-export?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; has any come in for refining here?

Q Yes, a great deal.

Q Mr. President, would it be a fair interpretation of this proposed legislation to aid Great Britain to say that it has the effect of repealing the Johnson Act?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it would not; no.

Q Mr. President, what does that phrase "notwithstanding the provisions of any other law" refer to?

THE PRESIDENT: It is the usual phrase that goes in almost all legislation. Really, it is legal and technical; it relates to things in the profession of law known as conflict of laws. In other words, if there is a conflict on some specific point, the later law supersedes the former law, as we mentioned in the Budget Conference the other day.

Q Mr. President, should this legislation pass, will the benefits be open to Latin America?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Were we correct in saying you had given assurances destroyers would not come under this?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't see that there is any particular point in talking about that now, because nobody has suggested it, any more than anybody has -- I'll have to talk this off the record, but it might as well be said now so as to stop a whole lot of what is purely, on the part of some papers, the usual old thing known as a crusade.

Martinique -- there are some papers that are talking about Martinique as "this great and valuable base." Some of the boys have put that in because they are required to by their offices. All this talking is done by people who don't know anything about military or naval requirements. There were three fellows who were down with me about three weeks ago. This is all off the record, but it is just so people will know how dangerous and ignorant a crusade can be. For instance, I read a story in one of the papers this morning about how the Army is setting up this new command for the Caribbean and about the gap between Puerto

Rico and Trinidad -- which of course is all utter rot. There are two of these newly acquired bases in that gap, one called Antigua and the other called Sta. Lucia. Sta. Lucia is thirty-five miles from the harbor of Fort de France in Martinique. We lay about three and one-fourth miles off shore, off that harbor. It isn't a harbor for a fleet, it is an open roadstead; and you can't, in time of war, use an open roadstead for a fleet, under modern conditions, because there is no way of protecting a large number of naval vessels against torpedo plane attack, submarine attack, or destroyer attack if they are in an open roadstead. I am going back to fundamentals.

You take, on the other hand, this Jamaica base we saw; that Jamaica base is, potentially, extraordinarily valuable as a fleet anchorage -- a fleet base -- because there are those islands and reefs that lie outside of it, and by comparatively simple work you can, with a dredge, fill in the exposed part on each side, leaving a little island in the middle, with a channel on each side of the island. The result would be that you would have, inside that bay, an anchorage that you could put, perhaps not the whole United States Fleet, but nearly the whole fleet, where it would be absolutely safe because of shallow water on the two sides and two narrow channels in the middle that can be netted -- absolutely safe against submarine attack or destroyer attack or torpedo plane attack. That is a valuable bay.

Fort de France, Martinique -- I started going there in (an awful admission) 1901, and I have been there several times since. It is an open roadstead. Inside this open roadstead is a little

bit of a place called the inner harbor; you could put planes in there; you could put half a dozen destroyers in there. The French at the present time have a cruiser and an aircraft carrier inside the dike or pier; but you could not put a fleet in there. The upper reaches of the bay would be a perfectly good place for planes, both land planes on shore and seaplanes, because it has a good lea just off the beach.

That is fine, but we have an awfully good similar place just thirty-five miles away -- Sta. Lucia -- which is just as good as Martinique for land planes or seaplanes; and neither Fort of France nor Sta. Lucia was big enough for fleet anchorages.

So you see all this stuff is just pure manufactured opinions by people who have never been there. I thought I would tell you, because there is being a great deal written about "this great naval Gibraltar," or something like that.

This is still off the record -- just for your information about things we are talking about. I have got to keep this off the record: We have one perfectly terrific problem in Puerto Rico in regard to population. When we took over Puerto Rico, there were 800,000 people on that little island and already it was a bit of an economic problem in 1898; today there are nearly 2,000,000 people. In other words, better sanitation, better medical care, and so forth and so on have reduced the death rate on that island so that we are adding 40,000 people a year to the population of Puerto Rico. They are American citizens. The surplus of them are coming to the United States in pretty large numbers. They are not subject to the immigration laws.

And using that as an example of the other islands that they talk about, there are 2,000,000 people. In Martinique alone, as I remember it, there are 300,000 people down there. It will create for us a very grave economic question.

Some of the people went ashore -- I think you did, Tommy (Mr. Qualters) -- in Antigua or Sta. Lucia; they're little bits of islands, but I think they have 30 or 40 thousand people on each island. It's a very grave economic problem; and as long as we can get military bases down there -- naval bases -- that are adequate, why buy 2,000,000 headaches when we don't have to? That's the easiest way of putting it. Let's use common sense instead of a lot of this hullabaloo stuff.

Q Mr. President, it has been suggested that the United States might seek the acquisition of some islands in the mid-Pacific that don't present such problems.

THE PRESIDENT: Would they? -- that's the question; that's always the question. Of course, the more islands you have, the more islands are liable to attack by the other fellow. It goes back to what I have mentioned before -- amateur strategists, including myself! There are always two sides to that acquisition of territory; it may become a liability instead of an asset.

Q Mr. President, are you expecting -- or hoping for -- quick action on the British aid bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; of course, on this bill -- I use this as background -- on this bill I really, honestly think that speed is a great essential, because it relates primarily to the placing of new orders, and it will take a great many months before they begin

to fill those orders. In other words, every week that goes by without action on this bill means a week's delay in the placing of the order. Let's put it this way: On this bill, every week that goes by means a week's delay on the appropriation; and of course there is another thing: I always hate to be critical, but I do think we ought to do something to teach the country a little more -- I am not talking about the stories so much as the headlines -- that there's all the difference in the world between authorization and appropriation. It should be made clear that if this bill, which is to be introduced at noon today, I think -- if it goes through it is merely an authorization; we can't do anything. The Government can't do a single thing until an appropriation goes through. As somebody said to me the other day, even some of the new Congressmen don't realize the difference between an authorization and an appropriation bill.

Now, a delay of a week at any time in this stage means a delay of a week in the appropriation bill; a delay of a week in the appropriation bill means a delay of a week in placing the order; a delay of a week in placing the order means a delay of a week in getting delivery. Suppose there is something to be delivered next July that still we have got to get the money for: a week's delay today means a week's delay in July. I think it is perfectly proper not to push anybody on it -- push them around or demand; but it is proper to call attention to those very simple statements of fact. Time gained now means time gained in deliveries at the other end.

Q Is the situation sufficiently urgent to use cloture in case it runs

into difficulty?

THE PRESIDENT: That is for them to decide.

Q You said the Administration couldn't do a single thing; as I read the stories this morning, you could give them information. What I am trying to get at, does it apply only to Federal orders or to anything we do not have on hand?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know; I can't remember. As a matter of fact, most of it will be information coming from the other end, because they're getting stuff in actual war conditions and we are not.

Q Mr. President, do you propose to withhold any request for appropriations until Congress completes action on this authorization?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I have to, just like the Budget; you can't put things into the Budget that haven't been authorized by Congress.

Q Your Message to Congress refers to billions of dollars' worth.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Has any approximate estimate been set yet?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet, I think. Giving this as background, the figures will probably be like the defense program. It is in two parts. One will be cash needed and the other is contract authorizations, for the cash would not be needed until a good deal later -- some of it even as late as the calendar year 1942.

Q Mr. President, does this plan envisage one over-all contract, for instance, say, with Great Britain, or individual contracts to meet, for instance, individual needs?

THE PRESIDENT: It couldn't be an over-all contract because things

change so from day to day. I'll just give you an illustration on that; nobody wants -- Lord knows I don't want -- the power that is apparently given in this bill, but somebody has to do it -- somebody has to have the power in such shape that quick action can be taken. It may be a matter of forty-eight hours or a week, and obviously, for a matter of five airplanes, we can't put a special bill through Congress. The example I was going to use is a matter that came up yesterday. You'll have to use X's and Y's and A's and B's. It seemed to be a pretty essential thing for the defense of democracies that are fighting for their life to get a handful, literally, of planes in a certain area -- never mind the area, never mind the nation. It became a question of speed, so we are seeing if we can't expedite by the transfer method from one nation that is fighting to another nation, this matter of this handful of planes that for military reasons seem very vital to get to a given point at a given time. I just use that as an example to show why, if the policy of the Nation is to help the democracies to survive, you have to have methods of speed that are legalized.

Q Mr. President, in a situation of that sort, you would have to have authorization to give materials on hand, not those provided for by future appropriations.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, again you run into a thing that is a little difficult to explain: Is this to apply only to future needs? I would say probably 99 percent of it, yes; but there might be a situation where you would want to swap off five old planes today to let these people have them. That is the one -- call it

a part of that one percent, as against deliveries that we know will be made two weeks hence of new planes. Now, 99 percent of it is new stuff; but there ought to be authority to make, from a military point of view and absolutely necessary and right, an exception to the rule in a percentage that would be so small that it would not affect the general rule.

Q Mr. President, is it contemplated that any agency of the Government here will be authorized to receive what might be regarded as collateral for any of the stuff going over there?

THE PRESIDENT: That is possible.

Q What agencies would be charged with what we send over and what we take?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know -- maybe the Gold Reserve in Kentucky.

Q Such records would be kept, would they not, of what is sent and brought?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I imagine it would not only be kept but checked and double checked.

Q Mr. President, there's a book called "Sea of Destiny," which tells how vulnerable we are through the Hudson Bay; have you given attention to that?

THE PRESIDENT: Never heard of it. In the winter time that's all "friz" and in the summer time it's all full of mosquitoes.

Q This man says in the winter they can land planes on the ice.

THE PRESIDENT: I'll look into it; never thought of it before. (Laughter)

Q On Tuesday you said you expected to send up your nomination of the Ambassador to London to represent this country.

THE PRESIDENT: I have been too busy.

Q Someone referred to the emergency ship construction program you announced last week, the President's program to build 200 cargo ships, as "a bridge to Britain." Have you any comment on his statement?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't say "bridge to Britain."

Q He did.

Q Are you planning to bring Mayor LaGuardia into the defense setup?

THE PRESIDENT: I read it in the newspapers; that is the first time I had heard of it.

Q Going back to your announcement about the new export control, can you tell us to what extent they will be applied to Latin America?

THE PRESIDENT: You will have to ask Colonel Maxwell.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #710,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 14, 1941 -- 4.05 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have any news. Anybody got any news?

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment on the proposition to
put a time limit on the lend-lease bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no; because if I start commenting on one, you boys
will be asking me about two or three every Tuesday and two or
three every Friday; and you merely start a chain. Don't let's
start one of those chains now.

Q Did you intimate, sir, the name of the new Ambassador to England?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't done anything about it. That's about
all there is.

Q Have you personally made your selection for the Ambassador, Mr.
President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Could you tell us --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q Could you tell us, sir, whether he is acceptable to the British?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't even asked them; and he doesn't know,
either.

Q He doesn't know?

THE PRESIDENT: No -- that he has been selected. Isn't that an awful
mystery? You could almost write an Oppenheim novel around that --
probably will, so it's all right! (Laughter)

Q A lot of people uncertain, sir.

Q Would it narrow the matter down to --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes -- before you finish your question -- it would. (Laughter)

Q I didn't ask the question, but close to it, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Don't do any guessing; because I haven't mentioned this to anybody at all -- not even to myself out loud. (Laughter)

Q Will it be a surprise? (More laughter)

Q You may not realize it, sir, but we are trying to encourage you to mention it now.

THE PRESIDENT: Down East they would say, "You don't say!" (Continued laughter)

Q Mr. President, what lies behind the increased purchases of mercury by this country from Mexico?

THE PRESIDENT: Stocking up -- that's all. Mercury is one of those metals that we produce in very limited quantities ourselves, and it's on that list of metals -- mostly metals -- that we don't have enough reserve war stocks of, and we have been gradually building it up.

Q Could you tell us, sir, about this home defense plan you were discussing?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except that we are discussing it; that's as far as we have got. There is no plan yet that has been accepted.

Q Can you tell us about the objectives in home defense you are striving for?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's to give everybody who wants to do something toward defense a method of doing his or her part, no matter where they live -- every state in the Union, every big city, small city,

town, farm, and everything else -- give them an opportunity to do their share.

Q Mr. President, has there been any agreement between Secretary Morgenthau and Chairman Eccles on Eccles' recommendation?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know; I haven't heard a word.

Q What is the status of that?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose it is still being studied; I don't know.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment on the label that has been put on the lease-lend bill as a "blank-check" bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I suppose so; the easiest thing is, Write me another that you would not put the label on that would accomplish the same objective. That is a perfectly good answer to all these people. That is not an answer to those, at all, who talk about plowing under every fourth American child, which I regard as the most untruthful, as the most dastardly, unpatriotic thing that has ever been said. Quote me on that. That really is the rottenest thing that has been said in public life in my generation.

Q Did you say quote you on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q I wasn't prepared for that. Would you repeat it, please?

THE PRESIDENT: Fred's (Mr. Essary's) ears were "wacky"; he didn't hear it. Foote, read it back, beginning with, "That is not --"

(The reporter then read the sentences referred to.)

Q May we have the question before that?

THE PRESIDENT: I said my answer on the question of the label wasn't an answer to this other thing.

Q Mr. President, where was the statement made -- the original statement?

THE PRESIDENT: I read it in the paper; it has been quoted by several people. It was quoted in one of the radio debates the other night by somebody else.

Q You say you don't remember who said it?

THE PRESIDENT: No; it was said by three or four people. In other words, it's a good time to kill a proposed slogan, at birth.

Q Plow it under!

Q Passion for anonymity!

Q Mr. President, did you receive any reports on the start of the motor strikes in Michigan -- one plant down in Saginaw -- yesterday, all dealing with defense orders?

THE PRESIDENT: All closed?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't heard about it.

VOICE: Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #711,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 17, 1941, 10.55 A.M.

MR. REYNOLDS: Earl Godwin sent you a message, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: What did he say?

MR. REYNOLDS: He said --

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: (to Mr. Reynolds, United Press Association) Sit down.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you!

THE PRESIDENT: Just clearing the air in the front row -- that's all.

(Laughter)

Steve (Mr. Early) says I have nothing.

Q Mr. President, the impression seems to be abroad this morning that Mr. Kennedy is not entirely in favor of the lend-lease bill; I wonder if you got the same impression yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: I wonder whether the public should take a prognostication by writers or whether they should take what Mr. Kennedy says tomorrow night.

Q Mr. President, may we put the question the other way about: Do you feel that Kennedy might be for part of this bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not a columnist. (Laughter)

Q Will he talk as your -- still as your personal representative tomorrow night?

THE PRESIDENT: I said I am not a columnist. I can't give you anything at all. Wait until tomorrow night. Don't prognosticate.

Q But this is not a prognostication; I am asking whether he will still be Ambassador when he speaks tomorrow night.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't the faintest idea. I think he wants -- what shall I say? -- to speak for himself instead of having the press speak for him.

Q That's what he said, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes; I think he is entitled to.

Q Mr. President, the Times-Herald this morning said it learned from sources close to the White House that Mr. Winant is going to London.

THE PRESIDENT: I am sorry to say the Times-Herald didn't learn that from sources close to the White House.

Q Mr. President, have you picked a time when you expect to name your Ambassador?

THE PRESIDENT: No; to tell you the honest truth, I have been so busy trying to write an Inaugural Address the past two days that I haven't given it any thought since last Tuesday.

Q Do you still have the same man in mind?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (Laughter) I hadn't thought of it since Tuesday, but now you ask me, I have.

Q Mr. President, when will Harry Hopkins be back?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. When he went over, it was for two or three weeks.

Q Have you had any communication with him since?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Reports from New York say Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Willkie will talk over a joint microphone.

THE PRESIDENT: I heard one of the broadcasting systems had offered large sums of money to get Harry Hopkins to broadcast; I don't

think he will accept the offer. That's domestic news. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, the Secretary of the Navy told us the other day that he was going to try to put all navy yards on a three-shift basis, and I was wondering whether or not you contemplated any Executive Order changing the wage-hour restrictions.

THE PRESIDENT: No, not at all.

Q Are you in favor of extending navy yard operations to the three-shift basis?

THE PRESIDENT: When was it? -- last -- I think it was August -- that I announced in regard to arsenals and navy yards (it's awfully old news) that as fast as we could do it and needed to do it we were putting them on the three-shift basis. It's only five months old.

Q Mr. President, doesn't that require a change in the wage-hour restrictions?

THE PRESIDENT: Why? You have three people instead of one person; you have three shifts instead of one shift.

Q Well, I understood that the basic rule in the navy yards was forty hours, on the five-day basis.

THE PRESIDENT: Right.

Q If you change that, can you change it by proclamation?

THE PRESIDENT: Don't have to make any change at all. Forty hours is the basic week, and anything over that is time and a half for overtime.

Q They all get it?

THE PRESIDENT: Always have -- not for five months but a good many years.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us, have you had any recent word from the British as to the urgent need for aid?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, will you revise the National Health Bill at this Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know what that is.

Q There seems to be something doing around town, but nothing very tangible.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; is it the same bill as last year?

Q I understood Senator Wagner reintroduced it.

Q Mr. President, will you have any special assignment for Admiral Richardson on his return?

THE PRESIDENT: I think he was ordered to report to the Secretary; I don't know.

Q Mr. President, an Italian newspaper prints a story that the Army and Navy have submitted a confidential report to you that your aid-to-Britain policy is wrong and should not be undertaken.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I suppose the easiest thing to say about that is that it is an Italian newspaper report. That has many connotations.

Q Mr. President, have you any thought of taking action on the Japanese Fleet's suggestion that the American Fleet be removed from Hawaii?

THE PRESIDENT: That's a Japanese newspaper report.

Q Mr. President, in San Diego a strange situation appeared to be developing around the Ryan Aircraft Company. Apparently they were about to call a strike and a member of the local draft board threatened to reclassify strikers and subject them to a draft

above their original classification; have you anything on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard a word about it, except what I read in last night's paper. You better ask the OPM.

Q Are you considering Robert Sherwood for any Government job, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of; we don't have official poet laureates in this country. He's a very old friend of mine.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment on the story that the lend-lease bill is written so that if it seemed necessary the British Navy could be purchased by the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'll ask you a similar question; you know something about my background. The Army complained all the time until the last year that I was altogether too much pro-American Navy. What do you think I would do? -- now, honestly? Isn't that enough of an answer? Of course it is! Also, there is nothing in the bill -- not a thing in the bill to prohibit what might be a very dangerous situation; it doesn't prevent the President of the United States from standing on his head; but the President of the United States doesn't expect to stand on his head and has no desire to stand on his head. The same way, the President of the United States, being somewhat fond of the American Navy, doesn't expect to get rid of the American Navy. Give me another one.

Q This, sir, was the other way around -- that you could acquire the British Navy, under the terms of the bill.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, that's a new one! That's today's. Well, I suppose that Congress might authorize me to acquire the German Navy, too. Don't you think this is awfully, awfully cow-jumped-over-the-moon business? I do.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything about your conference with the Apostolic Delegate?

THE PRESIDENT: Hadn't seen him for two or three months.

Q The question of the lend-lease bill didn't arise in the course of the conversation?

THE PRESIDENT: Well now, really! (Laughter) This is entirely off the record, of course; I suppose I should have, but I didn't -- I should have discussed with him the possibility of acquiring the Vatican Navy! That's off the record.

Q Mr. President, do you have any plans for the future of the Federal Communications Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got around to it; I'll take it up next week.

Q Next week?

THE PRESIDENT: I mean, I will begin to start on it.

Q Will you tell us about your talk with Ann^e Morgan?

THE PRESIDENT: She told me about things; she was back quite recently.

Q Mr. President, since you don't intend to do any transferring of the type you have been talking about, do you have any objections to limitations in the bill on this point?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose they better put in standing on my head, too, and a lot of other things.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us why that separate section authorizes the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy to buy equipment from friendly nations -- why that is in the bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Because I suppose, in a world that changes every twenty-four hours, something might turn up when you would have to have quick action to add to American defense. Now, don't jump at con-

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clusions. I don't know; you don't know; nobody else knows. It's just a precaution, a precautionary measure aimed at the continuing of American defense; that's all.

Q Mr. President, is there any prospect of Mayor LaGuardia coming into your Administration in any capacity?

THE PRESIDENT: No; I have read a lot of political stories from New York City, and that's all I know. Never had been discussed.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #712,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 21, 1941, 4.05 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have an old-time graduate from the Press Conferences who is sitting here, representing, I believe, a paper called the P. I. I don't know what that means. It is published in Seattle. He is complaining bitterly because the morning paper out there never gets any Press Conference news. You see, when we meet on Friday mornings, it comes out in the afternoon paper in Seattle; and when we meet on Tuesday afternoon, it's the same way. I don't know what we are going to do about it unless we change the Seattle time -- unless you people are willing, when we have the afternoon conference, to reserve the news until the following morning. (Voices: No! No!)

Q You can always make up for morning paper release.

MR. BOETTIGER: That's a good idea -- or else hold the conferences at 8 o'clock. (Groans from reporters)

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any news at all.

Q There have been a number of stories about a possible Executive Order freezing the assets of all the countries of Europe; can you tell us about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I suppose that is one of many things that have been studied for a long time, and remains under study, and it hasn't got beyond that stage.

Q It was printed in one of the papers that an Executive Order had already been prepared; is that right?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose there are probably fifty Executive Orders that have

been prepared on all kinds of things for contingencies. I suppose probably there is one in existence.

Q A good many of us today printed the Winant story, about Ambassador to London; any truth in it, sir? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't spoken to anybody about it.

MR. EARLY: Mr. Winant called a few minutes ago and asked the same question. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Did he? I think tomorrow I will probably get around to talking to somebody about it. But the children kept me up very late last night -- I am a little sleepy today.

Q There is a report that Averill Harriman might be named as Minister.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I know; there have been all kinds of reports of that kind.

Q Do you have under contemplation a plan of naming an Ambassador and a Minister?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't any plans -- I'm too sleepy.

Q Are you making a build-up on this?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you are making a build-up!

Q Mr. President, in the consideration of the lend-lease bill on the Hill they are constantly referring to the possibility of convoying ships; is that likely in the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I said the other day I had never even considered it in any way at all, because -- of course I will have to give you this off the record -- I mean this can't -- it's got to be -- Oh, I suppose, background, as long as you don't attribute it to anybody.

Obviously, when a nation convoys ships, either its own flag or another flag, through a hostile zone, just on the doctrine of chance

there is apt to be some shooting -- pretty sure that there will be shooting -- and shooting comes awfully close to war, doesn't it?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: You can see that that is about the last thing we have in our minds. If we did anything, it might almost compel shooting to start.

Q There are reports also, Mr. President -- I think you commented on that a couple of days ago -- about the possibility of your giving the Navy away, or some part of it; can we use that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you can; you can use again the old illustration that I don't want to stand on my head, and I don't think it is necessary to put the prohibition of standing on my head in the bill.

Q How about the suggestions today from Governor Stassen and, indirectly, from Mr. Kennedy that power under this bill might be given jointly to a Congressional committee and the President?

THE PRESIDENT: Have you read the Constitution?

Q Is that prohibited, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Surely.

Q Two ideas have been discussed; one is that the American Navy convoy American ships into British waters; the other is that they be convoyed to Iceland or thereabouts, where the British would then take them up. Does your remark go for both propositions?

THE PRESIDENT: That's a new one on me! How about Falkland Islands?

Q A little bit farther off.

THE PRESIDENT: How about the Celebes?

Q Better trip!

THE PRESIDENT: Got some experts here on the front row on those places.

Q Wouldn't you have that power now?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Wouldn't you have that power now?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I suppose so -- yes. This is all, as I remarked the other day, cow-jumped-over-the-moon, Old-Mother-Hubbard stuff.

Q Can we quote you, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Any comment, Mr. President, on the House action in passing that ship bill unanimously today?

THE PRESIDENT: Did they, really?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine! Fine!

Q Not even one vote against it.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine speed -- in spite of the fact that the ships are slow ships.

Q Ugly ducklings!

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #713,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 24, 1941, 11:05 A.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't give you any news if I had any, because Steve (Mr. Early) is making a speech out West, and he didn't want anything to interfere with his speech. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, Colonel Lindbergh said last night if we hadn't given our moral backing to France and Great Britain, there wouldn't have been a war in Europe; got any comments on that?

THE PRESIDENT: To tell you the honest truth, I haven't read the speech; --

Q (interposing) It's interesting.

THE PRESIDENT: Why should I?

Q Mr. President, do we understand that Lord Halifax is due in Annapolis this afternoon? We were wondering whether --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I am afraid that you will have to continue to write speculative stories, because I can't give you anything positive or definite at this time. Maybe a little bit later I might have something.

Q Later in the day, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Maybe; again maybe.

Q Could you tell us, sir, if and when he does arrive, whether you might go to greet him?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't even tell you that, because there is nothing definite.

Q Could you give us anything more about the designation of Mr. Currie to go to China?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except he is not feeling so well; he is taking some inoculations. There he is, on the sofa.

Q Mr. President, you said the other day you were going to speak to somebody about an Ambassador to Great Britain; have you done that speaking yet?

THE PRESIDENT: I have been too busy; I haven't got any news yet.

Q Have you talked to him yet, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: It's the same old thing; I can't say anything to the Press on anybody until I get what is called an agreement and until I am all ready to send a name to the Senate. That is why my face has to remain completely closed.

Q Mr. President, may I ask --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I told you it is all the same thing; I can't even tell when I ask for an agreement.

Q Mr. President, have you seen Mr. Winant today?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes; I saw him this morning.

Q Just a social visit? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Just a social visit.

Q Mr. President, is there anything you can tell us on the Supreme Court vacancy?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe so. I don't know -- I suppose as background you could intimate this: that it will save an awful lot of time and trouble for an awful lot of good people if they will refrain from sending in recommendations and endorsements and petitions and so forth and so on. I think you could rather intimate that a choice has been made but will not be announced for a long, long time -- weeks and weeks and weeks.

Q Mr. President, could we ask you why such a long time?

THE PRESIDENT: No, you could not even ask that, because you would not get an answer.

Q Mr. President, will the choice be announced after the lend-lease bill is passed? (The President laughed with the rest, but did not answer the question.)

THE PRESIDENT: That really will save an awful lot of headaches. There is not much to speculate on; but there will have to be some speculation, I suppose.

Q It may save you a lot of headaches, but it will keep us in one.

THE PRESIDENT: I will have to do it that way.

Q Mr. President, have you decided on nominations for the Transportation Board?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't had time. I expect to take it up at the beginning of next week.

Q Mr. President, the Republican Governor of Massachusetts has given 100 percent endorsement to your lend-lease bill; I wonder if you have any comments?

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't seen it.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment to make on your conference with Governor Stassen, of Minnesota, the other day?

THE PRESIDENT: No, we didn't even mention the bill.

Q Mr. President, Senator Smathers, of New Jersey, introduced a bill yesterday to ask Cuba to become the 49th State; is there any comment on the general proposition of adding a few stars to the American flag?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Cuba or Hawaii?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't want to comment on that.

Q Mr. President, there are reports through the Capitol that you might be willing to accept some limiting amendments to the lend-aid bill; any comments?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose it is better not to say anything about specific amendments until they are proposed by the Committee or I am asked about them. Of course I would have to know what the language was, and I haven't had anything of that kind.

Q Are you going to the horse show tonight, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q You are not?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Is Dean Acheson to deal personally with British purchases?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; ask the State Department. Frankly, I don't know.

Q There seems to be a great deal of secrecy as to when and where Lord Halifax is to land; could you tell us the reason for the secrecy?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose if you were to work out your own answer, it would be that there might be human lives at stake. I think you can explain that all right. In other words, his method of arrival might be such that, as between belligerent powers, it might jeopardize human lives, one way or another -- lots of possibilities that way -- under the water, on the water, over the water.

Q Mr. President, why did you lift the moral embargo on Russia?

THE PRESIDENT: Ask the Secretary of State.

Q Mr. President, would you give the same answer to the question whether we have a common policy toward China?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know how common it is.

Q Between the United States and Russia, I mean.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know how common it is.

Q Mr. President, there were observations that Dean Acheson would do more than Mr. Grady had done in the State Department; is that right?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q Mr. President, have you any comment on the proposal of the Council of State Governments yesterday to transfer the work relief to State governments?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen it; I read the first paragraph in the paper, and as I understood it, it looks as if it just reversed the present method; is that correct?

Q I think it does.

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, take over the administration, as I understood it -- I may be wrong, and if I am, tell me -- transfer all work relief to the administration of State governments and all direct relief -- people who can't work -- to the Federal Government; is that right?

Q As I understand it, sir, I think that is it.

THE PRESIDENT: Frankly, I don't get it; because that non-work-relief stuff is, essentially, the problem of the residents of the locality. There are people who can't work. It is home relief, in the ultimate sense of the word. That certainly ought never to be administered from Washington; and yet that is the way I read it in the paper. It just completely turns the present system upside down. Maybe when I see the resolution it won't mean quite that.

Q Mr. President, the Allis-Chalmers Company had a strike of 7,000 men, with \$16,000,000. in Government contracts; is there anything you have to say on the policy of strikes in those defense plants?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. Is that strike ended yet?

Q No.

THE PRESIDENT: Is that the strike that Father Haas went to?

Q That's right.

THE PRESIDENT: That's all I know. There is nothing you can say about general policy, because each case is a case by itself. So far, it is very encouraging, on the whole, considering the size of the country and number of industries, the relatively small number of delays that have been caused so far by strikes -- I mean relatively.

One interesting thing, which I will have to give you off the record -- and foreign newspaper correspondents please listen: You know we have had in the past -- what, three or four weeks? -- a very small number of walk-outs, which have lasted for a very short time; and it is rather interesting that in certain foreign papers those small walk-outs have been the lead -- the front-page lead -- trying to give the impression -- well, actually, it has occurred in Italy, Germany, and in Japan -- the general impression that the whole of the United States is flat on its back, tied up with strikes; that nothing is happening, that there is no production.

I had to keep this off the record because it ought not, obviously, to come from me; but the fact remains that the impression is being given in those three countries by the press that the United States is not going ahead with its program.

That is a rather significant thing, and it is in general line with what I talked with one or two of you people individually about, that in the same state-controlled papers certain statements that are made on the Hill (never mind by whom -- you can guess) the maker of those statements has become the hero -- the front-page hero -- of those nations, with

the general intimation to their public that those people represent the overwhelming mass of American public opinion. I think it is just as well that everybody in this country should understand that those people are the heroes in Germany and Italy and Japan.

Q Is that off the record too?

THE PRESIDENT: That is off the record; but it is something you ought to know about. We think we know more about the United States than those papers intimate on the other side.

Q Mr. President, can we use that for background? -- can we use it for our own?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so. It might just as well be said, because actually it is a piece of news that is worth while publishing over here. We get a certain amount of it in the papers in this country through the press association reports from those countries; but of course the press association reports don't cover more than 10 percent of what the State Department gets every day. You see from those places what might be called a summary of the news and editorial statements in those papers; but while it has been printed in this country, I don't think half enough emphasis has ever been given to it. The real truth ought to be told, and there is no reason you people who cover the State Department should not have it. Get Mac/to take care of it for you. There is no particular reason why these dispatches from the other side, a great many of them, should not be made available to anybody who is interested and who is covering the State Department. It may duplicate our own Press Association news a bit, but it will certainly supplement the press association news that comes through -- at the tip!

Q Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #714,
Executive Offices of the White House,
January 31, 1941, 4.20, P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: Steve (Mr. Early) assured me there is nothing, and I am afraid he is right.

Q Mr. President, have you made any plans to go down to Annapolis on the seventh to address the midyear graduating class?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I told them I was very sorry I couldn't do it.

Q Mr. President, is Ambassador Johnson coming back from China for any reason?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think -- has the State Department given out anything on that?

Q Secretary Hull said this morning it was a White House question.

THE PRESIDENT: I would be very glad to tell you what was done if it is all right with the State Department.

Q They referred it to you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Have all the agreements been done? -- I couldn't tell you unless the agreements have been acquired.

Q They indicated it was a White House story.

THE PRESIDENT: That is not quite authority enough. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, is it true that Ambassador Johnson is being transferred to some other post?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you anything about it, because I have got to find out first from the State Department if the agreements have been received.

Q There is probably somebody from the State Department here who could let

you know.

THE PRESIDENT: Is Mc. here? (referring to Mr. McDermott)

Q Mc. is sick.

Q Mr. President, have you noticed the story of Ambassador Dodd appearing in a magazine, reporting his diary? He apparently attended a dinner at Mr. Tugwell's house, and at that dinner the statement was made that one of the Senators advocated the domination of Europe by the Nazis; and --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Bob did? -- Tugwell did? -- who did?

Q I am about to ask you, sir? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, come out with it -- who was the Senator? You know all about the dinner; who was there?

Q I read this in the paper, sir. (Laughter) I also read that the Ambassador had lunch with you the next day, and that you guessed the Senator's name.

THE PRESIDENT: I what?

Q You guessed the Senator's name.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I didn't guess the Senator's name at the time; you know it, too.

Q No, I don't know it! (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Don't be mysterious; go on and tell us the whole story, because everybody knows the whole story; don't make me tell it -- you tell it.

Q I think it would be much better if you told it, sir! (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: If you will ask me the question as to whether such a thing was told to me -- who the people were -- I would answer the question; but I am not going to be responsible, obviously, for breaking this story

that is coming out in the magazine. If you will tell me the whole story, I will give you a story; that's a fair proposition.

Q Mr. President, Ambassador Dodd's son was one of those who said it was Burton Wheeler; and Carter Glass was there; was that true?

THE PRESIDENT: What did the diary say?

Q The diary didn't name the Senators.

Q That's what Bill Dodd said -- that it was Burton Wheeler and Carter Glass who were there.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, this was way back somewhere around, I should say at a guess, 1934. As long as you have asked me if I knew about the story, and have given the names of the people, Ambassador Dodd, you say -- now this is not from me -- the two of you say -- went out and dined at -- was it Tugwell's house? --

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: And that at Tugwell's house, Ambassador Dodd put down in his diary afterwards that he had had a talk with several people, including a Senator, whom Ambassador Dodd's son identified as Senator Wheeler. That is all your story; my story is that Dodd told me that same thing the next day.

Q Mr. President, speaking of ambassadors, has there been a selection for London yet?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I am glad you reminded me!

Q I had every intention of it, sir! (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Gosh! I'll have to do something about that Monday!

Q Mr. President, in this Dodd story, I think Blair Moody spoke of a Senator who had said something about Nazi domination of Europe; did that occur in your own conversation?

THE PRESIDENT: It did.

Q With respect to Senator Wheeler?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; and furthermore -- I was pretty careful to check on it at the time -- that the safety of the United States, in such a probable event, lay in the United States taking over -- those were the words used, or occupying, I think it was the words "taking over" -- Canada and Mexico and the five Central American Republics.

Q Is it asserted here, Mr. President, that Senator Wheeler was in favor of the Nazi domination of Europe?

THE PRESIDENT: Said it was inevitable.

Q Not that he favored it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, what does one do if he has made up his mind that a thing is inevitable? That's a pretty comprehensive word -- the word "inevitable"; you can't even "kick against the pricks", as St. Paul would have said.

Q Were the names of the five Central American states mentioned?

THE PRESIDENT: The five Central American Republics.

Q With regard to the House action on naval convoys and the lend-lease bill, if Congress takes any action that infringes on the President's rights, is that binding on the President?

THE PRESIDENT: You're getting awfully "iffy", by your own admission; you used the word.

Q Now that the others have explained what the Wheeler story is, will you tell us more about it?

THE PRESIDENT: That is -- what do you call it? -- a corroborative witness; I am corroborating.

Q Mr. President, how long ago was it Mr. Dodd told you about this?

THE PRESIDENT: My recollection is that it was away back around -- it was when he came back for a vacation -- I should say in 1934. It might have been 1935, but I am inclined to think 1934.

Q Was it Tugwell's house here or in New York?

(The President hesitated a moment, and another reporter replied that it was here in Washington.)

Q Have you reason to believe that still represents the opinion of the Senator?

THE PRESIDENT: That's an "if" question.

Q When you appoint an Ambassador to Britain, will there also be a minister appointed?

THE PRESIDENT: I doubt it.

Q Can you tell us anything, sir, about these reports that S. Clay Williams would be the minister?

THE PRESIDENT: I would not do any guessing on that.

Q Mr. President, the story was printed this morning that twenty destroyers would be traded for a British battleship.

THE PRESIDENT: Somebody representing a Detroit paper invented that one.

(Laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you any plans to use Tommy Corcoran in a defense post?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of; had him in to lunch today and congratulated him on the birth of his daughter.

Q Is he coming into the Government again?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; we talked about the baby. (Laughter)

Q Talk about its support, sir? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: You are verging on the vulgar! (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, any comment on this action of the War Department with

reference to the Ford Motor Company?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I knew nothing about it until I read it in the paper this morning.

Q Mr. President, in your fireside chat last month you said that the notion of "business as usual" must go; do you --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Did I say that?

Q Yes, you did, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: It doesn't sound like me. (Laughter) You would have to bring me a copy, for I don't think those are the words.

Q Mr. President, with reference to the Sherman anti-trust suits in connection with international patent control, would you say you would advocate changing our patent laws to avoid having anything like that happen a third time?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Paul (Mr. Leach), frankly, that was a matter that we discussed a little at the Cabinet Meeting. It is largely a legal question as to what rights the Government has in developing a very large defense program to use -- take over -- patent properties, either domestically owned or foreign owned, in peacetime, just in the same way that they would have the right under existing law to take over a factory where the owners of the factory were not doing what they had been asked to do by the Government. Of course the right of the Government to do it in the case of the factory is well established in law, and whether that same right under the language of the law applies to patents, which are just as essential to the manufacture of an article as a factory is, that is the thing we are studying at the present time. I couldn't tell you anything more than that, because I don't know.

Q Mr. President, if the Ford plants become essential to armaments produc-

tion, and this situation continues to exist, is the Government prepared to take them over?

THE PRESIDENT: If you leave out "Ford plants" and say "any plants", I would say Yes.

Q Mr. President, there has been a bill introduced in the Senate today that would require a waiting period before any strike takes place. It is very much like the law that has been in operation in Minnesota and has been for several years very successful; I wonder if you have any ideas on it?

THE PRESIDENT: What was it -- a Navy bill or Army bill?

Q No, it was introduced by Senator Ball of Minnesota to apply only to defense industries.

(The President paused a moment.)

Q Are you familiar, sir, with Carl Vinson's bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Are you familiar with it?

THE PRESIDENT: Only in very general terms, of course. As I understand it, the bill would apply to defense industries a waiting period; really, that exists today. The Vinson bill refers to the railroad brotherhoods, and at the same time I am told (I haven't read the bill) it contains a lot of other little clauses that ought to be looked into very carefully.

(Laughter)

Q It has one clause, sir, which prevents an open shop. It interferes with the open-shop principle and theory.

THE PRESIDENT: I was told that it ought to be read through, clause by clause.

Q Mr. President, what do you think of the mediation idea?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q What do you think of the mediation idea, the waiting-period idea?

THE PRESIDENT: It is one method; there are a great many.

Q Mr. President, did Hitler's speech make any particular impression on you?

THE PRESIDENT: Must I tell you the truth?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't read it; I was too busy having a birthday. (Laughter)

Q It was meant for your birthday, sir!

THE PRESIDENT: Was it? (Laughter)

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I haven't opened all my presents yet! (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you a lot of Executive Orders ready to sign when the
lend-lease bill goes through?

THE PRESIDENT: None. Nothing has been prepared at all.

Q Is the appointment to the Supreme Court still weeks away?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #715,
Executive Offices of the White House,
February 4, 1941, 4.20 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: I know so much today that I will have to adopt the attitude of knowing nothing. I have been trying to find out what a kipskin was. I issued a proclamation placing well and refining machinery, radium, uranium, and calf and kip skins under the export licensing system; and apparently you have all been to the dictionary and found it is a form of kid -- not human. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything about your conference today with Secretaries Hull and Knox?

THE PRESIDENT: Just the usual thing.

Q Mr. President, last Friday you told us if you could get clearance from the State Department you might have some information for us on Nelson Johnson.

THE PRESIDENT: They have a story on those appointments and several others, which came in yesterday afternoon too late for me to get up to the Senate until it comes up the next time they meet, which is day after tomorrow; otherwise, I would give it to you today.

Q In that connection, do you expect to see Mr. Winant within the next day or so?

THE PRESIDENT: You are too obvious! (Laughter)

Q I understand he arrived in town today.

(The President did not reply.)

Q Mr. President, is our Diplomatic Mission in Australia to be raised to the status of an Embassy?

THE PRESIDENT: No; no, never heard of that.

Q Mr. President, there were a large number of confidential civil service files removed by unauthorized persons; anything to say about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Ask the Department of Justice, Edgar Hoover, and Civil Service -- which has not caught up with itself yet, running around!

Q Mr. President, I would like to ask if you could comment on that situation in Missouri whereby the Governor is being kept out of office.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I wish I knew as much about it as you do; I wish you would give me the information you have.

(The reporter made no reply.)

Q Mr. President, is there any possibility of an economic defense committee being set up in the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: Never heard of it.

Q Mr. President, there were reports this morning that Donald Nelson submitted his resignation when he came in to see you yesterday.

THE PRESIDENT: He did not -- nothing like it.

Q Mr. President, when, as, and if the lend-lease bill is adopted approximately as it is now written, what is the first thing you can do under that bill that you now can't do, or what is the first aid that the democracies can get or will get that they could not now get?

THE PRESIDENT: Go out in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue and stand on my head; because that is not yet prohibited! (Laughter)

Q How will that aid these democracies?

THE PRESIDENT: It might get favorable publicity!

Q If you would find a nice, rainy day, the boys would like to go with you.

Q What about a report you have planned for a post in the defense set-up for Mr. Willkie?

THE PRESIDENT: Never heard of it -- not even in the London paper!

Q Planning any traveling soon?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q There have been stories of your going to Mexico.

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of that, either -- oh, yes, they came from --
I know where. (Referring to Mr. Maverick)

Q There is a vacancy soon on the Eighth Judicial Circuit; any appointment yet? I believe it is coming up Thursday.

THE PRESIDENT: No; hasn't been decided yet.

Q Mr. President, is there any development imminent regarding the freezing of foreign funds?

THE PRESIDENT: Regarding the what?

Q Freezing of foreign funds; there are rumors in New York of some possible step toward the freezing of foreign funds.

THE PRESIDENT: No; I talked about that some ten days ago; haven't heard of it since.

Q Any decision reached on patent control?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Any change in Bonneville Power status? I understand when that agency was set up it was independent; then it was put under the Secretary of the Interior; and I heard on the Pacific Coast the other day that the War Department would take it over. Is there any truth in that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, certainly not in that. I will tell you what may have given rise to it. It had nothing to do with the War Department -- merely development of the whole idea. That started six or seven years ago. If the TVA worked out as a watershed development for the benefit of the people who lived in the watershed -- mind you, this has nothing to do with any one specific thing, because it covers so many things; it is

not just power or navigation or irrigation or flood control or planting trees or building check dams, but it relates to the general welfare of the people who live in that district, with all those component things that go with human life; and the general feeling back there was that if it worked we might extend the idea of the economic and social development of an entire watershed in other places. And at that time -- it's awfully old stuff, but it has come to a head again, and we talked it over; and I think if you will go back in the old Press Conference Reports you will find that somewhere back there I suggested that if it worked in one place, we could try to work it out in other watersheds.

We didn't want to undertake too large an area, and at that time we rather thought that the Arkansas Watershed was a proper and logical one to try, because the Arkansas River runs all the way from the Mississippi clear back to the middle of the State of Colorado, up through past Pueblo, where they had those bad floods, and away on back through the Royal Gorge; and from Colorado it runs down through the Arkansas area at the eastern slope of the Rockies and flows out to the dust bowl area of eastern Colorado and over into Kansas; and from Kansas over into Oklahoma, and then on down to lower Arkansas, in the south end of the State of Arkansas; so that you have all kinds of problems, not just one but eight or ten entirely separate problems in that one watershed, where they grow all kinds of produce from cotton to cattle.

Away back -- I guess it was '34 -- we talked about the Arkansas Valley as being a proper one to take up this general idea in, and then because we went ahead on certain public works out in the Northwest they got the idea we would extend the plan to the Northwest. We talked about a Columbia River Watershed plan because it was relatively a small area.

That would include the watershed that runs into Puget Sound.

Both of those projects are being discussed on the Hill at the present time -- the idea of setting up some sort of authority to cover each of those places, but certainly not to put any one thing under the War Department, because that would be just power. This goes much further than power.

Q Thank you.

Q Mr. President, is there any comment on the Supreme Court decision yesterday on the wage-hour case?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so.

Q Or the anti-trust cases? (The President shook his head.)

Q Mr. President, Senator Wheeler issued a statement last night saying that the Army and Navy are being denuded of airplanes, that four-fifths of the first-line planes are going to Britian; is there any comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Of course you can work out all kinds of things with figures, official and unofficial. It must be very satisfactory to the Reichschancellor (Hitler).

Q Mr. President, a member of the Defense Commission has suggested an amendment to the lend-lease bill by which Great Britian would be required to purchase a normal quantity of agricultural imports in exchange for the benefits of the bill; would you approve of that amendment?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't like to comment on amendments, except, off the record, I should say that they are approaching the problem of helping the American agriculture from exactly the wrong angle. Call that off the record, because, after all, I don't want to comment on these various amendments; if I once start, I am gone.

Q Can you tell us whether the development of magnesium is dependent on the completion of the anti-trust proceedings?

THE PRESIDENT: I should say it was not. We are going at it.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #716,
Executive Offices of the White House,
February 7, 1941, 10.55 A.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: Steve (Mr. Early) says I haven't got a thing.

Q Where is he? (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you talked with anybody on the Hill about the Dirksen amendment to the lend-lease bill?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q What do you think of the principle?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't talk about all these amendments.

Q Mr. President, may I bring up a matter that is of great interest to the members of the Conference? I --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Fingerprinting? Is it fingerprinting?
(Laughter)

Q Fingerprinting, exactly, plus "mugging".

THE PRESIDENT: Do they take you side and front, both? (Laughter)

Q But the point is, we have all been "mugged" and all been fingerprinted in the last three days -- very successfully, I hope -- and --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I hope so! (Laughter)

Q And we trust, sir, that that will be enough for the entire executive end of the Government, that we will not have to do this in the Navy, Army, and State Department and elsewhere -- that the same card, the same identification, will be satisfactory to them that is satisfactory to the White House.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is a very reasonable suggestion; and if Steve (Mr. Early) will take that up right away, we will try to get it done;

that is a grand idea.

VOICES: Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: What happens if you get your face lifted in between?

(Laughter)

Q In between what?

Q That introduces a brand new question, sir! (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, is there any special reason you could give us for the naming of the cruisers for the islands and territories of the United States, including the Philippines? Some comment has been caused by that.

THE PRESIDENT: No, except that we are getting so many ships now it is awfully hard to find names; that's the size of it. You know we have certain rules -- I don't know whether it is a law -- to name battleships after States and cruisers after cities and territories.

Q Mr. President, Colonel McCormick said before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday that the geographical and strategical position of the United States is such that any talk of foreign invasion was ridiculous;--

THE PRESIDENT: I want to ask you one question back: Did he speak as an expert? (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, it might be interesting to everybody if you agreed to tell us some of the reasons and the characteristics in the appointment of Mr. Winant as Ambassador; that is an interesting appointment, an interesting man.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think I could only say something for background, Earl (Mr. Godwin); I think it is a great mistake to make a lead in any story that he was a Republican; he was appointed because he was an American. I think there is a nice distinction there. (Laughter) He was not appointed because he was a Republican.

Q You better make that background! (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: It is background; I could say that same thing if he was a Democrat -- he was appointed because he was an American of very wide experience, experience in an executive office in one of the States, experience afterwards in social service set-up, and afterwards internationally in the International Labor Office in Geneva. In other words, he had an extremely good background as an American, regardless of what party he belonged to. I realize that this is Washington and people do have to talk about Republicans and Democrats; but in a crisis like this I don't think it is a very good line to take. An ambassador represents Republicans and Democrats and people who are not enrolled in any party; he represents all Americans.

Q Sir, I didn't intend --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) In other words, he had a lot of experience that fitted him for the job.

Q I had this in mind -- didn't have any idea about politics, but here is a changing situation -- social structure here and abroad, and here was a man who seems to be out in front on some of that stuff; and I wondered if that had anything to do with it.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. He is broader than Washington, D. C. That's an awful thing to say, but you know what I mean. He does represent this country pretty well with certain changing situations which most of us have come to recognize the existence of, which can be worked into the constitutional and democratic form of government that we happen to live under, without the necessity of revolution or dictatorship. I think he represents that, shall I say, fact that is going on in our midst and in a great many other places in the world -- he represents that fact pretty well.

Q Mr. President, do you contemplate the appointment of a minister to Great Britain?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us whether there is any possibility of an interdepartmental committee being established to handle economic defense problems?

THE PRESIDENT: What do you mean by economic defense? Everything is economic defense.

Q I mean such things as what we will ship to Britain, particularly coordinating the export control system with the Treasury power.

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't say yes, and I couldn't say no, because there are a great many things in process. I should doubt very much if it would take that form. In other words, we are perfecting machinery on foreign trade and on domestic trade all the time, and undoubtedly there will be various new forms of organization that will be necessary, because of changing conditions or because the times are ripe to do it. I don't think there will be anything exactly the way you suggest; I know what you are talking about. I doubt it.

Q Do you plan any more diplomatic appointments within the next few days?

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

Q Do we understand you are not going to appoint a minister to England?

THE PRESIDENT: I will have to keep it off the record, because I haven't decided yet, but we might make Herschel Johnson, who is now the Counselor -- give him ministerial rank; it has not been decided -- hasn't been taken up with the British.

Q When is Mr. Winant going, do you know?

THE PRESIDENT: About ten days.

Q Is he going on the clipper, or will he go on a battleship?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; he is coming in to see me this afternoon.

Q When is Mr. Hopkins coming back?

THE PRESIDENT: Pretty soon, I think; I don't know when, and I don't know which route.

Q Will there be any extra advisers sent over with the Ambassador?

THE PRESIDENT: No; there are people going over all the time.

Q Has Mr. Hopkins been studying the way that Britain is handling her war -- medical and social changes in addition to other matters he may have looked into?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't any idea.

Q Are you going to see Colonel Donovan when he returns?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose so; but I don't know when he is coming back.

Q Has he any official status?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no.

Q There is a story that Ben Cohen might go to Britain as Counsellor.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know about that.

Q Mr. President, when is your engagement with Mr. Willkie?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't any.

Q You said you were going to see him. I think he is expected at the Capitol.

THE PRESIDENT: I see almost everybody that comes back; I would be delighted to see him as soon as he comes down here.

Q Mr. President, you proposed that Ambassador Biddle in London should be not only our representative with England but also with other nations operating from there; but he was not mentioned as the representative with the Czechoslovakian Government; what is the reason for that?

THE PRESIDENT: I guess you better ask the State Department about that; I

think that is one of those diplomatic technicalities the State Department better talk about, not I.

Q Have you any comment on this Montevideo Conference -- this regional South American Conference?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't followed it closely; I don't know how they are getting along now.

Q They have made an agreement.

THE PRESIDENT: Have they?

Q There has been speculation as to where the new Baltimore highway will be built, whether most of it would run through land already belonging to the Government. Can you tell us about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Between New York and Washington?

Q No, the section between Baltimore and Washington.

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't heard anything about that. I will give you a story on this, because it is just being started now.

As you know, one of the things that we have been thinking about is what happens in this country when we begin to slow down, reduce our defense employment. You remember in 1918, on the eleventh of November, we didn't stop all the employment on defense work. The policy at that time was to make no new contracts after the armistice, and the policy was also to hold up production where contracts had been given but the production itself had not started; but the policy was to continue to completion almost everything that had been actually ordered and was in production.

The result was that during the following year, '19, and even the first half of '20, employment in the United States on defense work decreased rather gradually. It wasn't cutting everybody off on any one

given date or in a month; and the aftermath, the economic aftermath of the war in 1920 was fairly serious but not as bad as it might have been.

At the end of the present fighting, which has to come some day, there will be a slowing-up on defense work, and we have been trying to guard against what would happen at that time to the people who are employed on defense work; so we are starting this reservoir of projects which will be, insofar as possible, ready to shoot, to take up some of the slack, doing it gradually, but we would like to have them in such shape that we know where we are going; and that is why, as a general proposition you may see at this session certain authorization bills for various things going through Congress, which means that Congress very appropriately will decide on the type of work that is to be done when that time comes.

That is an authorization, which does not mean an appropriation, which is an entirely different matter; but it means that the project has been duly authorized and will be put on the shelf, ready to take out when the end comes, all then being needed is an appropriation from Congress.

One of those, you might say, divisions of things on the shelf will be highways; and Mr. Commissioner MacDonald is coming in to see me today at 12.15 to talk about this whole subject of certain through national highways, which we talked about for a great many years -- I think it goes back to the spring of 1933 -- and in that discussion we will talk about, first of all, the needs of the country, both military and civil, in times of peace, for these highways.

And we will talk about the principle of excess condemnation that

we have talked about many times before, by which the -- what do they call it? -- the added increment that accrues to real estate along a new road that is put through virgin territory -- that that added increment which is a mere matter of chance whether you happen to own the farm next to it or five miles away-- if you are five miles away, you are out of luck, and if you are right on the new highway, you may suddenly find the value of your farm increased from \$5,000. to \$20,000.

It seems to be constitutional -- it has been done in several States -- for the Government to buy more land than it needs for the 100-foot or 200-foot right of way and then, over a period of years, sell this land, after having paid for it the reasonable going price of the land at the time, and the Government gets the benefit of the increase in valuation on that land, and in that way pays back either a large part or the whole of the capital cost of the highway.

It has been done in a great many places, and we are talking about that today. That ties in, of course, with your question about this Baltimore road which is merely a local proposition. It might not be anywhere near Camp Meade -- it might be ten miles away -- I don't know. It is a matter for study; but of course there probably would be some provision for a national highway, for example, on the Atlantic Coast; whether it would be right along Chesapeake Bay, close to the shore line of the Bay, or whether it would be twenty miles back or fifty miles back, I don't know.

Q Whole length of the coast?

THE PRESIDENT: Whole length of the coast.

Q That sounds as though this local project is on the shelf until after the emergency; is that correct?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I couldn't tell.

Q What other projects might fall into that category -- hospitals, airports, housing?

THE PRESIDENT: Possibly; any kind of public work, but of course especially trying to build public works in which there would be some kind of a return of capital to the Government.

Q Mr. President, might it not prove necessary to build some of these highways at the present time in the interests of national defense rather than taking up the economic shock at the end of the emergency? They are complaining about the transportation problem between Washington, New York, and Boston -- inadequate highway.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, does the Transportation Division of the Advisory Council admit that?

Q I think almost everybody who uses the road admits it, sir! (Laughter)

Q People get lost in Philadelphia, sir!

THE PRESIDENT: I know it! (Laughter) But all you have to do is show your fingerprint and you're all right! (Laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #717,
Executive Offices of the White House,
February 11, 1941, 4.10 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: It is correctly suggested by the people in the front row that you are at the wrong end of Pennsylvania Avenue this afternoon; why you are here I don't know, because I haven't any news at all.

Q Mr. President, Mr. Willkie said at the Capitol this afternoon that he thought we ought to lend from five to ten destroyers a month to Great Britain; have you any comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I would have to see the testimony before I could comment.

Q Did you see it before it was delivered?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q There was a delay in their hearing of Mr. Willkie.

THE PRESIDENT: What time are they supposed to be through? I am just thinking of my own time table, because I have the Army and Navy Reception tonight, with a very early supper beforehand, and I wanted to have a good talk with Mr. Willkie to get all the information he could give me and tell me all about his trip. I was saying to "Pa" (General Watson) just before you came in, if the Senators keep him there until very late, I am going to ask him to wait and come in the morning, on account of this reception tonight. I suppose if he gets through in the course of the next fifteen or twenty minutes I will have time to see him.

Q They just began questioning him, sir, and it looks as if they would keep him going.

Q Alf Landon got back into Topeka after testifying before the committee, and he says there is a bitter controversy, particularly among the dollar-

a-year men, and he says it centers around the fact that big business is interested in promoting its own business rather than taking advantage of the facilities of small plants.

THE PRESIDENT: Did he specify?

Q Not to my knowledge.

THE PRESIDENT: Then how can I say anything about that general statement?

It sounds almost like a columnist! (Laughter)

Q Haven't you seen any evidence of controversy?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't discuss things like that at all, when they are written that way.

Q Is it true that Leon Henderson is "running out" on the Government?

THE PRESIDENT: I think poor old Leon ran out of health; he is just about all in.

Q Mr. President, could you help us get an interview with Mr. Hopkins after he gets back?

THE PRESIDENT: You let me talk to him first, and then I'll tell you.

Q When do you expect him?

THE PRESIDENT: I think he gets in Friday.

Q Does the lease-lend bill give authority to negotiate the St. Lawrence seaway pact with Canada?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't quite get the connection.

Q Some people think it will authorize the seaway deal with Canada.

THE PRESIDENT: That's along the line of standing on my head in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue. Any St. Lawrence deal obviously would go to the Congress.

Q Mr. President, have you arranged the date yet to receive the credentials of the new Japanese Ambassador?

THE PRESIDENT: No; but I suppose I will do it tomorrow. I am going to try to arrange it tomorrow. He is an old friend of mine.

Q Mr. President, there is considerable fear among the citizens' associations in Washington about the alleged plans of the War Department to rope off certain sections and keep the enlisted men out of them; have you heard anything about these plans?

THE PRESIDENT: I saw a map in the paper. (Laughter)

Q Who are you going to have to check on that?

(No reply)

Q Mr. President, if the United States should have to get into the war in the Far East, would that affect our help to Britain -- deliveries?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, that is an awfully "iffy" question; but I don't see why I should not answer that, because it is perfectly obvious that the answer is, No, it will not affect deliveries to England.

Q Could you elaborate on that?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Could you elaborate on that?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, what is the present status of the volunteer home defense plans you talked to us about several times?

THE PRESIDENT: Still under study. I hope to get something soon. I haven't had a chance to read the latest report that came in about two days ago, and it is still in my desk. I hope to get at it the next day or two.

Q Anything you can tell us on the French situation?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I didn't know anything about it until I read it in the paper.

Q Referring again to the St. Lawrence -- will it be after the lend-lease

bill will be out of the way, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Tell me when the lend-lease bill is going through.

Q They are talking about March 1.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't done anything on the St. Lawrence matter for weeks.

Q You had a conference last week with some men in the S.E.C. and the Deposit Insurance on how to get more money into the financing of public utilities; any comment?

THE PRESIDENT: I would not say it was about that; it was about a whole lot of mutual problems of that kind -- banking problems, and investment problems. It was just one little thing out of twenty.

Q Mr. President, since you answered Mr. Leach's question about deliveries if we get into war in the Pacific, do you think there is danger of war there?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I do not.

Q That would become a very vital question if there were pressure over there. If we were under pressure in the Pacific, it would be a very vital question as to what we would do.

THE PRESIDENT: That is true; but I think the answer to that question stands. I was asked if I could elaborate: No, I can't, because that becomes much more "iffy" than the question, "If we were forced into a war in the Pacific, would we have to curtail deliveries to England?" The answer to that is, No, we would not have to.

Q Mr. President, there is a vacancy on the Puerto Rican Supreme Court; have you decided whom you are going to appoint for that?

THE PRESIDENT: No; I think the matter now is being handled by the Secretary of the Interior and the Attorney General.

Q There is also a vacancy on the Communications Commission; have you decided on anyone for that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't.

Q Is it still to be some time before we hear about the Supreme Court appointment?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q To jump back to the Far East, may we infer from your answer that --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I wouldn't do any inferring. It's a perfectly straight question and a perfectly straight answer.

Q Then may we --

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. (Laughter) I have said I won't elaborate and that any elaboration gets too "iffy" to talk about.

Q Mr. President, this morning at the Foreign Relations Committee hearing Mayor LaGuardia testified that the Committee of American Defense plans are complete, all but assuming the equipment and personnel are available; can you give us any light on that? Do we have a joint defense plan with Canada?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I guess you know as much about it as I do. That is what the Commission was set up for. They have gone ahead with their work and I suppose they will continue. It is a continuing thing. It is not just to make one report.

Q Have they reported to you, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I hear about every meeting. Every time they meet I get a report on it, not an official report, but they are making progress with each meeting and they will continue to do it. You remember last August when that thing was set up, it was not meant to be just a single study with a report; it was meant to be a continuing body.

Q Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL.

Press Conference #718,
Executive Offices of the White House,
February 14, 1941, 10.40 A.M.

(The Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg, Prince Felix, the hereditary Grand Duke Jean, and Lieutenant Konsbruck, an aide, were present at the Press Conference.)

(Just before the correspondents were admitted, seven Chilean newspaper men were introduced to the President, as follows: Manuel Vega, Rafael Valdivieso, Carlos Eastman, Francisco le Dantec, Joaquin Muirhead, Guillermo Valenzuela, and Luis Ignacio Silva.)

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: I have just had the pleasure of welcoming seven newspaper men from our sister republic of Chile. They have come up here for a month or so to be working newspapermen on American papers and at the same time, using the reciprocal method, they are representing Chilean papers, and they are acting as a vehicle of exchange of information between the two countries. I think it is a perfectly splendid idea, and I hope that other members of the working press from other American republics will follow this very good example. I am going to turn them over to the working press of Washington, D. C., and I feel very sure that you will give them every facility of the White House Correspondents' Association. And I may say this to these gentlemen from Chile, I hope very much that we can reciprocate by sending seven American working newspapermen down to Chile; in other words, it works both ways. I am --

Q (Miss Black) (interposing) Mr. President, how about a woman in that?

(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I am quite sure that our people will gain by a trip to Chile.

MR. REYNOLDS: Mr. President, in behalf of the White House Correspondents'

Association, we also want to welcome the working correspondents from Chile. We are glad to offer them our facilities.

Q Mr. President, are there seven working newspapermen in Washington?

(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: While you are here you will be very welcome at these Press Conferences twice a week.

Q Mr. President, if I recall correctly, one of your ancestors was on a ship that went to the Chilean coast?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that in Chile there are a great many descendants of an old New England cousin of mine by the name of Delano who went down there. I think it was on a whaling voyage at the time of the independence of Chile, and he got so much interested that instead of going after whales he went after Spaniards; and I think his whaling ship became a frigate in the Chilean Navy, and I think he became a captain in the Chilean Navy. Anyway, he married down there. One of the Chilean Ambassadors years ago, when I was first here, told me he had a very large number of Delano descendants; so I have a lot of cousins down there.

MR. LUIS I. SILVA: Mr. President, may I say a word to you? One of my brothers is married in Chile to a member of the Delano family!

THE PRESIDENT: Good! Good! Another cousin! (Laughter)

Q Are there any of those in politics in Chile, Mr. President? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I would not say no! (More laughter)

Q Mr. President, have any of your travels in the Pacific extended south of the Galapagos Islands?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I was going south to Ecuador and Peru and Chile in the autumn of 1939, which would have been beautiful springtime down in Chile; but of course we know things happened and I was unable to carry out the

trip, and so I will have to defer it until the world is a little more at peace. I hope to go sometime.

Q Mr. President, there is a vacancy of several weeks' standing on the Public Utilities Commission. That is one of your appointments; do you happen to know anything about it?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't. I didn't even know it.

Q Can you clear up the misunderstanding or seeming difference between you and Mr. Willkie and Secretary Knox on the destroyers?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any news on it -- any more than what Steve (Mr. Early) said last night.

Q Mr. President, the Times said those destroyers are available; is it a question of timing?

THE PRESIDENT: There are a great many things in this that none of you know about -- factors, I think Steve (Mr. Early) said last night, or elements which are not news.

Q You know what the factors are, as far as the public has them, and that statement of Mr. Early still stands?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes; and it may for some time.

Q Mr. President, is there anything new on the St. Lawrence Waterway?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard a word. I hope to see Mr. Berle (Assistant Secretary of State) on that the beginning of the week. I really don't know what the status is.

Q Mr. President, Chester Davis has written a letter to Senator Norris in which he says there has been a failure in some of the decentralization efforts of the National Defense, because the War and Navy Departments determine the sites. Could you say if there are going to be any efforts in decentralization?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't talk on that because it is a generality.

Q Would you agree that there has has been a failure on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; that is too general a question.

Q Have you decided on a new chairman for the S.E.C.?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think it is up to them; I don't think I appoint the chairman.

Q Is there anything you can tell us on the Allis-Chalmers thing, since you had your talk with Mr. Hillman the other day?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard a word.

Q Is there anything to add to what you said on Tuesday about the situation in the Far East?

THE PRESIDENT: No; the Japanese Ambassador is coming in -- is it today? --

MR. EARLY: Yes, twelve o'clock.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) -- at twelve o'clock today, with the Secretary of State, to present his credentials. I don't think there is any other news at all.

Q Mr. President, do you know of any other pending vacancy in the S.E.C.?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Is that another request for Americans who are non-essential to American interests to return to this country, reflecting an increasing gravity in the situation, or is that merely a routine repetition of the previous warning?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a repetition of the previous warning; I think you will have to ask the State Department before you use any adjective.

Q Mr. President, suddenly in the news as it comes to us, there is a very ominous picture or rumor arising as if from the horizon over there; you are aware of that, I presume, in the news; is there anything you can

add to it?

THE PRESIDENT: I think not. I think sometimes (this is off the record) when certain situations seem to develop -- with the emphasis on the word seem -- it is better not to say very much.

Q Mr. President, the New York Times on February twelfth quoted word from Bertram Cruger, representing the British War Relief Association to the United States, as saying in London he had had a conference with you and you had expressed the statement that if Britain could hold out until summer, they could probably win in five or six months; do you care to comment?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President!

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #719,
Executive Offices of the White House,
February 18, 1941, 4.05 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is much news that you haven't already got. You saw Averell Harriman when he went out, and that is a thing that has been in the process of discussion for a month or six weeks; and finally, when Harry Hopkins came back, what we thought probably would be a need has rather definitely become a need; so Averell Harriman is going over in about ten days. As soon as the Defense Program under the lend-stand, lend-lease -- whatever you call it -- bill is perfected more or less, he will go over and -- Oh, I suppose you will all ask about his title, so I thought I would invent one; I talked over with him what his title would be, and we decided it was a pretty good idea to call him an "Expediter". There's a new one for you. I believe it is not in the diplomatic list or any other list. So he will go over as "Defense Expediter".

Q What is the salary on that?

(The President did not reply.)

THE PRESIDENT: That doesn't conform with anything you ever heard of before -- but that doesn't mean it isn't an excellent idea. We won't send his name to the Senate -- it won't be that kind of job; and that is neither here nor there. He will be Defense Expediter, and he is going in about two weeks.

Q Is this a permanent proposition?

THE PRESIDENT: No; we talked it over and both agreed that he probably ought to come back here at the end of, say, three months or four months to

take what they call in industry a "refresher course" to find out what has happened over here and bring himself up to date in regard to the American production program, and then go on back.

Q He anticipates there will be contracts, understandings, and agreements, and so forth under the lease-lend?

THE PRESIDENT: Most of that contract work will be ours over here.

Q I mean somebody has to keep the records to find what they are getting.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; and another thing that Hopkins took up was the matter of priorities. I had a very interesting talk this morning, just to give you a new slant on priorities, with Anne O'Hare McCormick, and she said, "In working out priorities, can you list them as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6?" I said, "No, that is exactly the point; there may be half a dozen different things, different articles, which would all be in the Priority 1 group; now if you list them -- say there are 6 of them -- as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, the general impression of the public is that No. 1 is more important than No. 6; so what you ought to do is to list all 6 under the figure 1. In other words, they may all be equally important."

I think that is something just for your own guidance; that should be explained in writing stories that there is no such thing as saying one particular article is Priority 1. There may be half a dozen that are Priority 1.

Q Has the lease-lend got to such a point, or have you discussed it, where we send them a thousand units of X and there is an understanding that we get back a thousand units of Y?

THE PRESIDENT: No. In other words, Pete (Mr. Brandt), let me -- I can tell you exactly what happened yesterday or day before, when I was talking about this thing. We may take time by the forelock, because we want to

be ready to shoot just as soon as we are given the green light by Congress. Let me put it this way:

We have, let us say, a column showing what we have on order at the present time for our own Army and Navy; it is very simple to work that up to a boiling-down program so as to get hundreds of pages of orders onto one sheet or one column, and that is divided up into deliveries -- expected deliveries; in other words, what they call a "flow sheet". Column 1 will be '41, column 2 will be '42 calendar year, for put-off deliveries, stuff we have already ordered.

Then comes another double column, What the British have already ordered, divided between 1941 and '42. That is very easy to get.

Then comes a third double column, What we are expecting to order; in other words, the stuff that will be all for our immediate Army and Navy out of the new bills that are up on the Hill today, or will be shortly -- deficiency bills, supplementary estimates, and the annual Army and Navy Appropriation Bills for the fiscal year 1942. You see there are three different kinds up there for us. That will be divided into those double columns of 1941 and 1942.

Then you get a fourth category, which is the list the British give us of things that they need which are not on order, and that is the column that the lend-lease bill is about. That will be divided between 1941 delivery and 1942 delivery. Then on the right-hand side of the page you have got a sum-total of all of these things which are on order or we expect or hope to place on order this spring.

Then of course you come to a question of working in -- dovetailing -- the priorities between all these different types of things -- four different types: On order by us and the British, and to be ordered by us

and the British. That is what they are working on so as to get an over-all picture of the whole scheme, looking as far ahead as we can.

Q Might there be transfers from one column to another?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, a small amount of transfers.

Q Haven't the British already started making their list in anticipation?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, coming along very well.

Q Mr. President, where is the column showing the stuff we can spare?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

(The question was repeated.)

THE PRESIDENT: There is some transfer in this, a relatively small percentage; for instance, it is in the bill as it passed the House, from the money point of view -- what was it? -- a billion-three, out of former appropriations.

Q Mr. President, what is Mr. Harriman's relation to our Embassy over there? -- does he represent you directly?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, and I don't give a -- you know! (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, how does he report?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know and I don't care.

Q Is it part of the Office of Production?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose he will report to the proper authorities.

Q That means you.

Q There is a report that Mr. Hopkins will be Administrator of the lend-lease program.

THE PRESIDENT: No, nothing in that.

Q Mr. President, did you have an opportunity to examine an open letter in the Cleveland Plain Dealer (February 15, 1941) about what men past draft age can do?

THE PRESIDENT: I did; and I thought it was a very interesting story. I have got it right here. It is by a former Marine who is past draft age. This is an open letter, of which the general tenor is -- well, there are three things in it, really. It starts off:

"A good many times when we were lying around in the mud in 1918--"

meaning over in France

"--we said, somewhat bitterly: 'When the next war comes along we'll go down to the corner and cheer. We'll take off our hats and salute the boys who are marching away. And then we'll dive into the nearest restaurant and order a big steak. With onions.'"

Then he goes on and he says (the President paraphrasing) the other night a lot of draftees were marching away, and they watched and they cheered and then they went into the nearest restaurant and ordered a big steak, with onions -- a fine steak, but it had no taste; so apparently, it won't work. When one's country is facing an uncertain future, one cannot fail to be concerned -- which brings us to the point.

"What we want to know,"--

he says,

"--is this: What is our part in the current job? What can we do?"

(The full text of the open letter will be found at the close of this report.)

In other words, there are the older fellows, who want to do something and do not quite know what they should do. And that is one of the things that we have been giving a lot of thought to. Quite a lot of people are working on the problem, men and women who want to do something back home, too old to go to the front, Army or Navy. What can they do? They want to do something.

Of course, really, there are two answers; and I suppose, to use a

very much overworked word, the word "priority" applies to people as well as it does to machines and tools, people who are doing any kind of useful work in their own community, performing service.

I got a letter the other day from a driver of a school bus up in Dutchess County, 52 years old, who wanted to do something. Well, he is taking kiddies to school every morning and taking them back every night. Somebody has to do it, and he is performing useful service at the present time, probably as useful as is possible for that fellow to do. He ought to be satisfied. He is really doing something.

And the fellow who is running an automobile garage does a lot -- another friend of mine up there. He wants to do something. He is performing a useful service to his community. He repairs automobiles and fills them with gas at the present time.

In both of those cases that is about as good a job as they can do. They are performing useful service; they are keeping the wheels going -- something which is a useful service. We haven't yet got to the point -- and I hope we never will -- where we have to take many men and many women off their normal work in the life of the community and put them onto something else. A good many of them in a perfectly natural way at the present time are moving over into the defense program itself, learning how to run a tool, doing something in a defense factory; but they may be doing an almost equally good job if they are making suits and dresses and baking bread -- just as useful a job as if they were turning out guns. And those people ought to feel that they really are doing something.

I take it this Marine has some regular, steady job that is a useful job in his community, and he is doing it today. Now, if time goes on, it may be necessary for us to -- how shall I put it? -- do a lot of

picking and choosing of some of these people, because they may be needed in other things connected with defense. We might have to increase the defense personnel; but as far as we can tell at the present time the increase in the total on immediate operations of defense is growing in a normal way.

At the same time in these communities there are a lot more things that can be done, and that is what we are studying. We are studying better health of the communities, better physical education of boys and girls and middle-aged people. You remember a few weeks ago I accused you all of being physically soft; you are still. We may put in some kind of Swedish exercises out on the front lawn in front of the Executive Offices, and I will lead you -- from a chair. (Laughter)

There are lots of things that can be done through local cooperation, and I think what we call the home defense thing is coming along pretty well. We will have some kind of a plan within a week or two -- I keep putting it off -- that will indicate from a central point what might be called ideal programs, leaving it to the communities -- in other words, decentralization -- as to how best to carry them out in communities and states. They are not ready for anything on it yet. I haven't got down to it yet, but I will pretty soon.

Q Mr. President, are there any parts of Mr. Hopkins' information that you could usefully discuss with us?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think anything more than what I have talked about.

Q He said, Mr. President, he had a definite mission; could you tell us what that mission was?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, there were about twenty different things; I have mentioned three or four of them already today.

Q Is there anything to be said, sir, about the destroyer matter?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard a word about it -- not a word. I haven't even read anything since last Friday, Fred (Mr. Essary). (Laughter)

Q You haven't read the papers?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't read the papers since last Friday.

Q Mr. President, Jesse Jones is quoted as saying before one of the House committees that we are in war, or nearly in war, and we are preparing for it; any comment?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, anybody can debate on that; it means nothing -- a lot of words. I don't mean what Jesse said, but what anybody says; even if you write it, it's a lot of words -- don't mean a thing. That's an awful thing to say, isn't it? (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, the destroyer program is running ahead of schedule; is there anything you can tell us on that, in general terms?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say, of course -- look, here's the thing: it's awfully hard to explain in a story, but you set out a goal for a year, or two years, ahead; what is it? It's an estimate; it may be a good estimate or it may be a bad estimate. In the case of plane production, about -- what? -- a month and a half ago, Mr. Knudsen said he was not satisfied, that he was 30 percent behind his guess that he had made. He couldn't tell you whether his guess was right, or whether it was too high or too low.

In the case of destroyers, the Navy Department made a guess as to how long it would take to turn them out; and that was back -- Oh, what? -- about the first of November. I read their guess and I said, "I know enough myself, just as a layman, to know that your guess is silly -- turning out destroyers in 24 to 30 months; in the World War I turned out destroyers in 10 months." So they revised their estimate; they have

nearly cut it in half. Now I don't know whether they are going to live up to that new estimate or not, but the construction of destroyers is speeding up very materially. As I said once before, I don't know whether it is going fast enough yet; if it goes fast and you are tickled to death, the next thing you do is to make it go still faster.

Q Mr. President, there is a vacancy on the District of Columbia courts -- one of your appointments; do you happen to know anything about it?

THE PRESIDENT: I have done nothing about it, not a thing.

Q Have you got a likely man in sight?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't anybody in sight. I had --

Q (interposing) Have you any plans for the week-end, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) -- an application I think from one gentleman, as long as we are going outside the District -- if we go outside the District -- from one gentleman who is a lawyer in one of the Hawaiian Islands, who thought it would be nice to come to Washington on that District job.

(Laughter)

Q I should think it would!

Q Mr. President, anything on the St. Lawrence schedule?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing new.

Q Mr. President, Mr. Hoover and others are promoting a new plan for feeding the starving populations of Belgium and other conquered countries; do you think now there is anything this country could do toward helping those people?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say it is largely a question of fact, and let it go at that; that will make it difficult for you to write a story about it.

(Laughter)

Q Would you say it is Germany's responsibility?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know what it was; it is largely a question of fact.

None of us know enough to give an answer -- not even you (Doris Fleeson) and John (Mr. O'Donnell)! (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you have any travel plans for the week-end?

THE PRESIDENT: I may go to Hyde Park; if I can get off, I am going up Friday evening. The Library has a lot of stuff that needs going over.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President!

* * * * *

"WHAT FOR US PAST DRAFT LIMIT, MR. PRESIDENT?"

"By Roelif Loveland

"(An open letter to the president of the United States.)

"Dear Mr. President:

"A good many times when we were lying around in the mud in 1918 we said, somewhat bitterly: 'When the next war comes along we'll go down to the corner and cheer. We'll take off our hats and salute the boys who are marching away. And then we'll dive into the nearest restaurant and order a big steak. With onions.'

"Well, the other night a lot of draftees were marching away. We stood on the corner and cheered them. And then we dived into the nearest restaurant and ordered a big, thick steak. With onions. It was a fine steak -- but it had no taste.

"So, apparently, it won't work. When one's country is facing an uncertain future, one cannot fail to be concerned. Which brings us to the point.

"We are a lot of people, Mr. President -- we, who are too old to register for the draft.

"What we want to know is this: What is our part of the current job? What can we do?

"There are many people who know what their job is.

"Knudsen is too old for the draft, but his job is cut out for him.

"Stettinius knows what he has to do.

"Gen. Marshall knows what he has to do.

"Joe Smith, who operates a turret lathe, knows what he has to do.

"Bill Jones, the shipbuilder, knows what he has to do.

"But there are millions of us, Mr. President, who are not smart enough to do Knudsen's job, or capable enough to hold down Stettinius' job. We aren't military men like Gen. Marshall, and we don't know a continental thing about a turret lathe. We couldn't build a ship.

"Yet we love our country. We think it is the finest country in the world. When we see our boys away for military service we can't go in and eat a steak that tastes like ashes.

"We are groping around, Mr. President, hoping that we may learn what our job in the present emergency should be.

"Obviously we wouldn't make very good soldiers, for we huff and puff up the stairs, and we can't run very fast. But, given time, we can do a pretty fair job. We manage to hold down our peacetime jobs with a fair degree of skill, and we try to pay our debts.

"We realize, Mr. President, that whatever our part may be in the months to come, it won't be spectacular. We won't win any medals. We're not looking for any medals. But we would like to feel that in some small way we can contribute to the nation's effort to be strong -- so strong that alien theories and the denial of individual rights will crack up before our defense.

"A lot of people have been asking this question: 'What can I do?' They aren't very big people, and individually they couldn't do very much. Collectively they could do a lot.

"One man with whom we have talked has an idea that our job is to become perfectionists in the ordinary way of living. His notion is that if the health of the nation is a requisite to national defense, we should strive to become healthier; that if the ability to take orders is necessary, we should train ourselves to take orders instead of getting red-headed about it.

"This man has an idea that our job is to do better the things we have been doing in the past. If we have been making machinery in the past we should, he feels, continue to make machinery--only we should make it better.

"If we have been publishing newspapers in the past, we should continue to publish them, but we should work harder, and the result should be better. If our staffs become depleted (and the young men are leaving all the time for service with their regiments) we old veterans should tuck our long white beards under our topcoats and go back to chasing pictures without sounding off too much.

"It would seem that things like this are necessary -- that unswerving loyalty to our country can be manifested in the unheroic things that make up daily life.

"It would seem that a sweet degree of reasonableness which would prevent us from tossing brickbats at dachshunds because we dislike Hitler's political theories would be a part of it.

"We should like to know, Mr. President, what our place is in the national picture.

"Because, although we do not expect to carry the flag, we love it."

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CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #720,
Executive Offices of the White House,
February 21, 1941, 11.05 A.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe I have anything this morning; what have you got? (Pause) Nobody has anything at all?

Q Mr. President, General Fleming, in a speech at Bangor, Maine, recommended that extra legal arrangements which called for overtime pay on Saturdays and Sundays might be waived in order to avoid the week-end black-out.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know anything about it; I haven't seen it.

Q Have you given any thought to Passamaquoddy as an American-Canadian naval base?

THE PRESIDENT: No, never heard about it until I read about it.

Q Mr. President, is there anything to say about the situation in the Far East?

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

Q Mr. President, there was a story from London yesterday that there was a plan on foot to continue the economic restrictions on Japan; any comment?

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't heard about it, Jay (Mr. Hayden); I hadn't even read it.

Q The State Department denied it.

THE PRESIDENT: And still they ask! (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, General Marshall was quoted as having said that we were strengthening our armed forces in Hawaii and perhaps some of the islands we possess south of Hawaii; is that correct?

THE PRESIDENT: Who quoted him?

Q Various Members of Congress, I believe.

THE PRESIDENT: Who was supposed to have said this?

Q General Marshall.

THE PRESIDENT: In what kind of meeting?

Q In a secret meeting.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I don't know why this should be anything more than background; I don't think it needs to be off the record. I read the papers this morning.

Now mind you, it is not for the people whether my left eyebrow is raised or whether my tone of voice is angry -- you better cut that out. I am not the least bit angry -- I am interested; I am really interested in a problem of ethics that I think the American people ought to be interested in. It does present a problem, and it is interesting, in times of world upheaval.

I will try to put this -- what shall I say? -- logically; there are certain things in regard to the defense of the United States that it is advisable, for the defense of the United States, should be kept confidential; and that is why, occasionally, before certain committees on the Hill, these matters -- which for national safety it is believed ought to be kept confidential -- are spoken of by the experts in those lines, are spoken of only in secret or executive sessions of a committee.

There is not very much new in this; I mean, it has been going, I think, since 1776. It still lives, this problem does; and this morning, when I started my breakfast, I read in all the papers, front-page stories about the Chief of Staff of the Army who was said to have given certain information to the Senate Committee on Military Affairs; and the stories then went on to say exactly what this Nation was supposed to have done.

Well, you raise two questions, both of which concern ethics, morals,

and patriotism in exactly the same way. The first question is, frankly, as to whether members of that committee, ethically, morally, or patriotically ought to disclose to anybody on the outside what was said. I am simply raising this as an interesting problem.

No. 2: If they do disclose what went on in the secret meeting, it is perfectly obvious that any reporter who is worth his salt will try to find out -- perfectly all right -- if the story is disclosed to him either by a member of the committee, either under seal of secrecy or without any seal of secrecy -- it is perfectly all right for the reporter to take that story to his office, because that is part of a reporter's business; and so I don't think there is any blame attaching to any reporter who carried those stories to his office; but the printing of the story or putting it on the wires by press associations or newspaper offices in Washington presents another very different, very difficult problem: Is or isn't the owner or the manager or the managing editor or the head of the Washington office under the same moral or ethical or patriotic duty not to print a story which has come out through a violation of confidence, out of a secret session of a Senate committee?

That is a nice question -- something that ought to be thought about; and, as I say, I don't attach any blame to any of the newspapermen who got these stories -- that is a part of your job, obviously -- but I do raise the question in regard to newspapers printing a story of that kind.

And, finally, just to close the thing up, I have got in my hand here from the Chief of Staff a story of what he said, that size (holding up a typewritten sheet). It is completely different from any of the stories which actually did appear, second- or third-hand, in any of the papers this morning.

Q Mr. President, in that connection, isn't there a difference between what might be published in peacetime and what might be published in wartime?

THE PRESIDENT: What do you mean?

Q High officials do give some testimony affecting the welfare of the American people; don't you think it is the function of the Press to keep the public informed?

THE PRESIDENT: Do you mean to say that it is the duty of the press to publish what are considered to be military secrets involving the safety of the country?

Q No, sir, I made that clear; I didn't include that.

THE PRESIDENT: I fail to see exactly what you are driving at.

Q Can you tell us, in the interests of accuracy, what the facts are?

THE PRESIDENT: Certainly not! That would be what you might call compounding a felony.

Q Would you consider, sir, that the publication this morning has injured American defense in any way?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I do.

Q The reason I ask that is because you threw a doubt in my mind as to its accuracy.

THE PRESIDENT: It is not correct, in the first place, but a lot of people are going to think it is.

Q Sometimes an erroneous report will do more damage than a true one.

THE PRESIDENT: Exactly!

Q Therefore, I suggest that we have the truth! (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: That's a little too slick!

Q Mr. President, what does constitute a national defense secret?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't think we have ever had any trouble about that

before. There has been mighty little that has been kept secret, and I don't think it has hurt anybody; and it is things that have been kept secret on the advice or recommendation of the people who are responsible -- primarily responsible -- for American defense, the Army and Navy.

Q Mr. President, must this remain background?

THE PRESIDENT: No; no, you can use it.

Q Mr. President, if we take the attitude that any testimony -- if the attitude is taken that any testimony given on the Hill in executive session remains secret, isn't the final test what the Government wants to give out and what it doesn't want to give out?

THE PRESIDENT: No, only if the Government didn't give out or held secret things that there was no reason for holding secret.

Q Then what is the test?

THE PRESIDENT: The test is what the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy thinks it would be harmful to the defense of this country to give out.

Q He is not required to give that to a Congressional committee which leaks.

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Then that would be the safest way -- not to give it to a Congressional committee.

THE PRESIDENT: It might be the safest way; but of course, naturally, one doesn't like to withhold information from committees of Congress. The best way would be to have no disclosures by members of the committee and no disclosures by publishers.

Q If there is a conflict?

THE PRESIDENT: Then the second is essential.

Q The second is a reporter taking it to his office.

THE PRESIDENT: No, the printing of it, I am talking about.

Q You would not have the second if the first did not arise.

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q In your criticism of the Press -

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I am not criticizing the Press -- haven't been.

Q May we suggest that you include the radio also?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, quite right. It does raise an interesting question of ethics, morals, and patriotism.

Q My observation has been that anything that didn't leak out of a secret committee session up on the Hill, and wasn't published by the newspapermen, that about three days later some Congressman will bring it up on the floor, so it gets out anyway.

Q Or it might be made available at a Press Conference, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; after all, you are getting off into rather extraneous things. Suppose, for the sake of argument, there was something that ought not to be made public today; it might be perfectly all right to make it public a week hence. It's a question of when, and somebody has to have discussion on that.

Q The logical corollary of your argument seems to be that something ought to be done.

THE PRESIDENT: I am not suggesting any remedy, in any shape, manner, or form. I am raising the question as a problem which the American people ought to be interested in.

Q If you do not blame the reporter who gathers the story for the publisher, do you blame the radio reporter who gathers the story and puts it on the air himself?

THE PRESIDENT: If he puts it on the air himself, he is in the position of the man behind the desk.

Q If he can't use it, why should he get it in the first place? You blame the newspaper reporter for --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I am not blaming the newspaper reporter.

Q Then you blame the radio reporter.

THE PRESIDENT: Is he a radio reporter or a radio announcer?

Q A commentator.

Q Mr. President, the Secretary of the Navy has issued to the radio outfit -- maybe to the newspapers -- exactly what he wishes they would not print, no matter where they get it -- certain ship movements and things of that sort; but that was a custom, I think, during the World War.

THE PRESIDENT: On the whole, things worked out very well.

Q If it is serious, it might be well to have somebody promote that sort of thing -- if it is worth while.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course there are two different crowds; there's the crowd that covers the Navy Department and the crowd that covers the --

Q (interposing) It would all go to the publishers, Mr. President.

Q Mr. President, you realize, of course, that we are up against a proposition; not being a Government-controlled press, we have to decide what really constitutes a dangerous secret.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think you do.

Q It may be we will if there is an attempt, under secrecy, to withhold information.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so: because the only things that ought not to be printed that come out of a secret session of a committee are determined by the defense people, not by you, not by me.

Q You would not object, then, sir, to printing what might come out of a secret session on a tax bill or something of that sort, rather than from national defense?

THE PRESIDENT: Now you are trying to draw a line between battleships and taxes.

Q Of course there is some relationship there (laughter); say a bill to establish a national park.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think they are ever talked about in secret session.

Q Don't you believe we have this problem, that one publisher may want to avoid using a certain story, but another will print it.

THE PRESIDENT: That's a terrible problem of the publisher; you and I know the case about the fellow who gets a story and he is not going to run it; but then he discovers that he has to run it in so-called self-protection.

Q Should that be taken up in the Publishers' Association?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q In line with General Marshall's testimony, I wish to say this, that I called the Navy Press Bureau late yesterday. The way we got the report was that it would bolster the Pacific fleet. Officially, the Navy Press Bureau said, "We have no news," but unofficially, "Not for distribution". It was reported that army planes would be carried on aircraft carriers to Hawaii. They didn't know whether they would do it or not; if not, they would be carried by regular army transports. I was told that yesterday, with no strings on its publication from the Navy.

THE PRESIDENT: That I didn't know about.

Q Assuming that these reports endanger the country, do you think we ought to be thinking about the possibility of censorship, without a declaration of war?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course not; that is why I am putting it up to the people of the country.

Q You think it ought to be done voluntarily?

THE PRESIDENT: There is no question of censorship.

Q You want the papers to figure on some method of their own?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q You have taken it up with the Press; do you intend to raise the problem
before the Members of Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Let's have a little discussion and see what the Congress does.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, sir!

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #721,
Executive Offices of the White House,
February 25, 1941, 4.05 P.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in!

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Godwin says he is all in; go ahead.

Q Mr. President, Mr. Justice Murphy recommended a further study of civil service in connection with that special report filed yesterday; do you have any comment on his suggestion?

THE PRESIDENT: No comment yet.

Q Do you expect to have the Executive Orders prepared which I assume are necessary to carry that out?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I haven't talked to anybody about it.

Q Mr. President, have you received any report on the so-called "Battle of the Bottles in the Balkans"? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No, only what I have read; it's a very sedate account -- an AP account, not a UP account. (Laughter)

Q Mr. President, is there any possibility that Mr. Earle will be recalled as a result of this?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not that I know of.

Q Mr. President, there is a report from Buffalo that because the Lackawanna steel employees -- the steel employees at Lackawanna -- have voted for a strike, that you have been requested to act as arbiter.

THE PRESIDENT: No, that is not true. I think some conciliator has gone up there; that is all I know about it.

Q Did you and Mr. Hillman talk that over?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I established from Steve (Mr. Early) that somebody else sent a conciliator up there.

Q Mr. President, in your talk with the Attorney General did you take up the Eighth Judicial Circuit vacancy?

THE PRESIDENT: No, we didn't.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything about your talk with Mr. Hillman today?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing of interest -- just general things.

Q The strike situation?

THE PRESIDENT: No, we didn't talk about that.

Q Mr. President, have you seen the statement by the Foreign Minister of Japan in which he said the white race should cede Oceania to the Asiatics?

THE PRESIDENT: I read that in the paper; I don't know as there is anything I can say about it, except that I am still not quite clear as to what Oceania means.

Q Mr. President, in tracing some of the men connected with the OPM, I find they are with the British Purchasing Commission, some of them with salaries as high as \$2,000. a month.

THE PRESIDENT: That's a brand new one on me. I think you might tell that to the committee in Congress that is looking into those things.

Q Mr. President, the OPM yesterday imposed priorities on aluminum, which may mean there will be less aluminum for pots and pans in the future; I wonder if you expect more similar sacrifices in the future?

THE PRESIDENT: Sacrifices?

Q Well, priorities that will mean sacrifices for consumers.

THE PRESIDENT: Are you worrying about your breakfast?

Q What?

THE PRESIDENT: Are you worrying about your breakfast?

Q No, but I was wondering about how far this may go in the future.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q Mr. President, will the priorities necessarily mean sacrifices?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; it depends a little bit on the definition of the word sacrifices.

Q I mean so it could be felt -- whether you could or could not buy a car or an aluminum pan?

THE PRESIDENT: Are you particular what utensil your eggs are cooked in in the morning? That would be terrible; wouldn't it? It depends entirely on the definition of the word sacrifice.

Q A curtailment of something good.

THE PRESIDENT: Not necessarily a curtailment -- that's exactly what I was talking about; you don't care particularly what kind of pan your eggs are boiled in, do you?

Q No.

THE PRESIDENT: It might mean that you would have to take them boiled in some kind of a pan other than aluminum; that doesn't mean you go without eggs.

Q Does that apply to automobiles?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Does that apply to automobiles?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I read in the paper they were going to have the same engine under the hood but change the outline a little.

Q Did you discuss the Ellender amendment this morning?

THE PRESIDENT: We discussed a lot of amendments.

Q What is your opinion on it?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I can talk about any of those amendments at the present time. I don't think it is a good thing to discuss those amendments. It is obvious that we don't want the kind of amendments that

would change the policy of the Government or the request of the Government for authority to give all possible aid to the British short of war.

Q They were saying up on the Hill that if, as you have repeatedly said, you have no plans to send American troops abroad, there was no reason why you could not approve this amendment.

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing I can do is to talk to you off the record. That is not a mandatory amendment, as you know.

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I have to make this entirely off the record, because it is largely a question of -- what shall I say? -- a question of geography. What would happen, for example, if -- I can't even name names -- if in a certain area in the Pacific Ocean there were an unoccupied island that nobody was on and the title to it -- the sovereignty -- had never been clearly established; and some other nation would come in there and suddenly turn it into a submarine base, and it were right close to an American, a U.S., possession? Now, I just raise that question.

Q Mr. President, on the record, is there any way, for practical purposes, that you could define the Western Hemisphere?

THE PRESIDENT: Define the Western Hemisphere?

Q Yes; there have been all kinds of discussions in Congress. Some have defined Siberia as being part of the Western Hemisphere.

THE PRESIDENT: Not on the record; it is too difficult on the record. I can do it off the record, but it would have to be really off the record, just for your information as to what the normal, logical way of applying the rule would be. It would be a line drawn in the Atlantic about halfway between the most westerly part of the western continent -- North, Central, and South America -- which is the sticky-out point of

Brazil, and the same relative point on the other side, which happens to be the sticky-out point of Africa. Well, a line halfway between the two, drawn due north and due south, would about define it.

And in the Pacific, except for a funny little jog at the top, if you will look the thing up on the map, it is, roughly, the international date line. That has always been considered the halfway point.

Q Mr. President, that then places Greenland in the Western Hemisphere; is that correct?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Part of Iceland, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think it misses Iceland by 40 or 60 miles; and misses the Azores about 120 miles.

Q Does that put part of Alaska in the Eastern Hemisphere?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q New Zealand?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know where New Zealand lies in relation to the international date line.

Q A little tip of Siberia in the Western Hemisphere?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so.

Q We couldn't use that, even without attribution?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

(The question was repeated.)

THE PRESIDENT: If you put it on what might be called a normal, common-sense definition.

Q Mr. President, have you read a somewhat similar description made by Stefansson, the Arctic explorer?

THE PRESIDENT: Who?

Q Stefansson.

THE PRESIDENT: No, I hadn't read that. My authority, really, was Dr.

Bowman, President of Johns Hopkins University, who used to be the head of the American Geographical Society, which is the real scientific geographical society in this country.

MR. EARLY: Still off the record, or on?

THE PRESIDENT: That is off the record, because the thing it applies to is off the record.

Q Mr. President, is this all off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; all you have to do is take a map yourself; you can run it as easy as I can run it.

Q No objection to use of that information if it is not attributed to you?

THE PRESIDENT: No, that's all right.

Q May it not be necessary for Congress to define the Western Hemisphere for this bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; it's a legislative problem, not an executive problem.

Q Mr. President, is Mr. Winant taking any ideas to London as to what sort of peace to negotiate after the war is over?

THE PRESIDENT: I should say the first thing to do is to win the war, wouldn't you?

Q Mr. President, in connection with the ceding of territory in Oceania, is there any thought of ceding any islands to Japan that are in the East Indies?

THE PRESIDENT: No, never heard of it.

Q Mr. President, have there been any discussions relative to the need of increasing the importation of raw rubber from the East Indies?

THE PRESIDENT: You better take up the actual figures with either Mr. Jones or Mr. Stettinius. We have been getting a lot of raw rubber, and we have quite a good sized stock pile on hand.

Q Mr. Stettinius estimates the supply will last 16 months, Jones 2 years, and the Goodyear people, 6 months.

THE PRESIDENT: Why don't you get them in a room together? (Laughter) We think the situation is pretty well in hand at the moment. We are adding to the stock pile, and we think that with the present stock pile and with, if necessary, a pick-up campaign -- we have used this before, and it's all old stuff -- a pick-up campaign to find all the old spare tires in the back yards and barns, that we would have enough rubber to keep us going until we could put into production a sufficient number of synthetic rubber plants.

Q Isn't tin a more serious problem, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Probably not, no.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President!