

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #735,
Executive Offices of the White House,
April 15, 1941, 4.05 P.M.

MR. GODWIN: Did you see that C.C.C. book? (handing book to the President)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, this is nice. It is a good piece of work.

Q What kind of reaction did you get from the country on your high pitch?

THE PRESIDENT: On my what?

Q What kind of reaction did you get from the country on your high pitch
yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: Good. Darn good. Yes. It had a very definite curve on it.
I wasn't going to risk the lives of the photographers, so I made it
high. (he laughs)

(The President here conferred briefly with Lauchlin Currie)

MR. GODWIN: Who is tickling me? (to lady reporter behind him)

SHE: Not me.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have anything except a little human interest
thing that I saved out yesterday. In the first list of non-military
equipment which the British Purchasing Commission wanted, I ran my eye
down the list and suddenly it brought back something to me, when three
of the items ---. I remember, once upon a time, I was talking about
what people would do if their neighbor's house caught fire -- if they
happened to have some garden hose in the cellar they would take it out
and lend it to their neighbor to put his fire out. On this first list
of -- there are a number of different items like tar, kettles, and
road rollers, and pumps, and graders. The last three items are for
900,000 feet of garden hose! (laughter) Not garden hose but fire

hose -- actually fire hose -- at a total cost of about \$300,000. I thought it was a rather nice little coincidence.

Q Mr. President, you said you were going to loan them to them at the time?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Mr. President, do you have any ocean-going fire hose?

THE PRESIDENT: We will have to get it over the ocean some way.

Q Mr. President, could you talk to us about the possibility of dropping the minimum age limit from 21 to 18, and the possibility of keeping troops in training longer than the one-year period?

THE PRESIDENT: No, we are working on it at the present time. We haven't anything yet. It was felt, I think, that both in the Committees of the House and also in the War Department it was better to get some idea a little bit later on. I don't know what dates Committees are set for hearings. I would say at a guess not until the end of May, the beginning of June, which will give plenty of time for any legislation to be enacted before, let us say, September. It is being studied.

This is entirely off-hand. Of course, literally nothing has been decided -- that after the first needs are filled, in the way of manpower in relation to the different grades and necessities of turning out an army, then we would come to a more regularized system with the age limit lowered and a certain number of years for people to give their one year of service to the Government of the United States. And of course, as you know, there is a certain amount of talk about everybody giving a year of service to the Government of the United States out of their life. It isn't a bad idea. I should think, as I remarked before, all of you, and I, would have been a lot better off today if we had given one year of service to the Government of the United States

from the time we were 18 until the early 20's. That is just general.

Q Yes. Now, about the other phase of it --
(interposing)

THE PRESIDENT: / What?

Q About the other phase of it -- the possibility of one year not being effective to make a well-rounded soldier. Can you talk about that today?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think that has been discussed yet.

Q Mr. President, in that connection, has the top age limit of 36 been discussed with the possibility --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, I think that covers it. In other words, after the present necessities are filled, that would mean taking some more people in their late 20's or early 30's, but that eventually it would be the -- the age limit could be reduced.

MR. GODWIN: My experience with the Local Draft Boards is that they seem to be hilarious over getting the top ages 35 to 36 -- if they could possibly not take them, they do. If they possibly cannot take them they won't take them.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes, their physical condition is not apt to be so good.

Q Isn't there another feature of that, and that is that you would have had an army of 20 to 21 year old men if your first registration had been on that basis, and now you have got the older men in it, or will have them in, and therefore wouldn't it be a top-heavy army?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not saying 21.

Q No, I know that, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: It might be reduced from 35. It will work out. After you get that through, get things actually going and adequate numbers of people in the first instance, then it carries itself along pretty well.

Q Mr. President, Dr. Hu Shih (Ambassador from China) gave the impression

today that there might be some announcement here this afternoon regarding the Far East.

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't think so. I had a visit this morning from the Chinese Ambassador and Dr. Soong, taking up various details. As you know, there has been nothing happening lately to change the general policy in regard to nations that -- against whom aggression is being continued, and that includes China, and the machinery is in existence, the list of needs have in part already been analyzed and already started to be processed, and we are continuing analyzing and will process other needs of all kinds.

Q What do you mean by processing, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, processed means one of two things: It means taking existing stuff and starting it over, or it means ordering new stuff.

Q Mr. President, have you seen or heard the reports that the Japanese have a lend-lease scheme of theirs?

THE PRESIDENT: They what?

Q Have a lend-lease scheme of theirs, that is, leased a lot of battleships to the Germans?

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't heard it.

Q You had no report on that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No, only news reports, and they don't always count. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you say anything about the North Atlantic air base expansion in Narragansett Bay? Senator Green indicated that it was under consideration yesterday.

THE PRESIDENT: Under consideration? It is nearly finished. (laughter)

Q He indicated that there was something beyond the naval air station, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, oh -- I know. That is the question I wanted to talk

about -- the possibility of providing additional shipping facilities -- discussing things of that kind at some point in Narragansett Bay for over-seas shipments, and I am getting a report on it. It is a question largely of location, or deep enough water, how much water there is in the channel to various places in the bay; Providence, Bristol and the top end of Rhode Island, and also the question of adequacy of docks, because it is a high, free port and it is pretty handy. It is in the center of a very large manufacturing center of the country and it may be advisable to work out something in the way of better shipping facilities. I don't know.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Excuse me (to the gentleman who asked the previous question) I thought you were thinking of Quonset Point. That is very nearly finished.

Q How extensive --

Q (interposing) Do you plan to dedicate Quonset Point?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know that I would call it dedicating, any more than I dedicated the Jacksonville base.

Q How extensive will Harry Hopkins' power be in his new job?

THE PRESIDENT: I hate beginning to define, any more than it was defined before. I would say that they would be powers -- I wouldn't say powers -- I think that his greatest duty is to carry out the task assigned.

Q Mr. President, the press reports from Europe indicate that the situation looks rather gloomy for the British at the moment.

THE PRESIDENT: Do they?

Q Would you care to comment?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. No. I don't look that way, do I? (laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you expect --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I hope that is a good enough answer.

Q Do you expect, sir, an early resumption of coal mining?

THE PRESIDENT: Do I expect what?

Q Do you expect an early resumption of coal mining?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so.

Q Mr. President, now that the S.W.O.C. and Big Steel have reached an agreement on wages, can you tell us what went on last week in your conference with Mr. Murray, and Olds and Fairless?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think I told you what they were.

Q Sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I told you at the time, didn't I? Yes, we had a Press Conference since then. I don't think there is anything new to add.

Q The situation has changed since then.

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q An agreement has been reached --
(interposing)

THE PRESIDENT: / The conference didn't change.

Q What I am getting at is this: Did you have something to do with bringing about that agreement?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. I never have anything to do with that. (loud laughter) (The President enjoyed his answer)

Q In their talks with you, did Mr. Olds and Mr. Fairless intimate that if they raised wages they might have to raise prices?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. We talked about all kinds of technical things, as to the amount of molybdenum that was needed for a ton of steel, and things like that. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Carborundum, for instance. (more laughter)

Q Talk about escalator clauses?

THE PRESIDENT: Only escalators where they are needed to get people from one floor up. (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Mr, President, the restoration of Wilson's birthplace made formal May 4. I have heard stories that you were going down there. Do you know anything about it?

THE PRESIDENT: It's just one of those things -- lots of things I would like to do. I would like to go to that.

Q Are you going to Warm Springs, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I was afraid somebody was going to ask that question (He laughs). It will come out anyway -- Walter Winchell will break it. What happened is -- it's one on me. What happened was that I had hoped to leave last night for Warm Springs, but about last Thursday they had a rather violent outbreak of German measles down there. I didn't mind particularly. I have had German measles. I don't know whether you can get it again, but of course I have quite a number of members of the press following me around, and I was thinking about their fate; so -- (laughter) I had given the trip up until the thing had died down, and then somebody said, well, you would have to do it anyway, because if the President should come down with German measles at this time -- (this brought the house down with laughter). It would be subject to a radio broadcast. So, I still hope to get off, but it does depend on what happens down there.

Q Twenty years ago that was called "Liberty Measles." (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I remember it in 1917 -- there was quite an outbreak, and we called it "Hun Pox". (loud laughter)

Q Mr. President, will Mr. Hopkins be a dollar-a-year man?

THE PRESIDENT: No, he will not. (he laughs)

Q Will he be an Administrative Assistant then, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't know what he will be, but he won't be a dollar-a-year man.

Q Will he get paid? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, sure. He's a Democrat! What a foolish question. (this brought the house down again with laughter)

Q Mr. President --

[Bill]

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That was what I said to Phil Knudsen, the other day. In about the fourth or fifth list of these dollar-a-year men, they were all listed as Republicans except a boy who had graduated from Yale last June and never voted, and I said, "Bill, couldn't you find a Democrat to go on this dollar-a-year list anywhere in the country?" (laughter). He said, "I have searched the whole country over. There's no Democrat rich enough to take a job at a dollar a year. (more laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you tell us -- do you expect to meet MacKenzie King of Canada in the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: He is coming down here for a holiday very soon, and I hope to see him, but where, of course, I don't know, because I don't know where I will be, or where he will be. Just before he goes back I hope to see him.

Q Is it the policy of this Government to protect American merchant ships wherever they go, as long as they are not in combat zones?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is it part of the policy of this Government to protect merchant ships -- our merchant ships -- wherever they go, as long as they are not in a combat zone?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is the law, you know.

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Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) It is not a question of policy, it is the law.

Q Have any of the commodities shipped abroad to aid the Democracies under the terms of the Lease-Lend Bill been sunk?

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

Q Mr. President, could you tell whether you feel there is an increasing demand toward the use of American naval power?

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

Q Mr. President, is there any agreement --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I would also -- let me put it this way -- there has been more nonsense written, more printer's ink spoiled, more oratory orated over that subject by people who don't know a 'hill of beans' about it than any other subject in modern times. I know a little bit more about it -- not an awful lot -- but I know so little that I wouldn't care to discuss the thing from the point of view of 'if that' or 'if the other' thing. That is just a word of suggestion. Most people have no idea about the subject of protection of shipping.

Q Mr. President, your answer to the question about the protection of ships wherever they go, if they are not in combat zones, leaves the impression that if our ships go through the Red Sea we will protect them there.

THE PRESIDENT: No, because I don't know of ships (American) that are in the Red Sea.

Q You know of ships going there pretty soon?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Sir, there has been some talk of the possibility of arming our merchant ships. Is that under consideration?

THE PRESIDENT: No, only by orators.

Q Isn't that prohibited under the Neutrality Act?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Isn't arming prohibited under the Neutrality Act?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I think it is. Anyway, as I have said, it has never been discussed except by orators.

Q Is there any thing more about taking Halifax out of the combat zone?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Would you care to comment on the Danish Minister's decision to disregard the order for his recall?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I can give you a little historical background on that. You see it has been perfectly clear to anybody who has ever analyzed it -- as far as I know practically all writers or people who had anything to do with the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine -- way back -- that there was recognition at that time of the sovereignty of certain European nations over territory in the Western Hemisphere, but at the same time a general interpretation of the Doctrine that that sovereignty could not be transferred, that it might be against the interests of the Republics of this hemisphere if they were transferred from one European nation to another. There were several instances where it was attempted, with the general disapproval of the American Republics, and there was one instance, of course, where a European army did come to this continent when we were somewhat busy with other matters, and as soon as the Civil War was over, the European army withdrew.

In the case of Danish possessions, there were principally two of them, one was what used to be called the Danish West Indies, colonized in large part by Danes, and the other was Greenland, which again had been colonized in large part by Scandinavians. They had a civiliza-

tion up there, as you know, which started at the time of Lief Erickson. They had a Christian people up there. They had a cathedral, I think, and quite an influx of immigrants into Greenland that came from Norway and Denmark, which during at least part of that time were in the same kingdom under the same king.

At all times, through all the centuries, Denmark was, you might say, the Father -- the sponsor -- of those colonists in Greenland. And during the past century, for instance, they have done a great deal to help the colonists and the natives -- the Eskimos. They have seen to it that they improved agriculture. They have helped them on mineral surveys and on actual mining, and they have seen to it that they had enough food to last them through bad winters. They have sent ice-breakers there early in the year, and a few years ago a question did come up involving, you might say, the old question of the right of sovereignty as gained on one hand by colonization, on the other hand by exploration. The United States had a claim by exploration to a large part of Northern Greenland. That of course was disputed by other countries which had sent explorers up there -- earlier explorations by the British. And as an example, some explorations by Norwegians, and the thing came to a head because there was a lot of rather wild claims about Greenland.

Denmark, however, had the only claim to Greenland through the process of colonization. This country (U.S.A.) said quite rightly, "That is a better title than mere exploration, and we therefore are going to recognize your sovereignty over Greenland because of colonization, and the fact that colonization has been going on for about 900 years -- way back in the days of Lief Erickson. Long before Columbus. It seems

to be the just thing to do." Therefore, it was recognized by us, thereby officially putting Greenland in exactly the same status as Martinique, British West Indies, Guadalupe, Curacao and the Dutch West Indies, and the same status which had previously been held up in 1917 by the Danish West Indies which at that time -- January, 1917 -- we purchased. Therefore, clearly, Greenland fell within the interpretation, and the historic treatment that had been accorded to other European sovereignties -- territories -- in this hemisphere.

Now, on the recent thing, that being perfectly clear, you have to go back to a year ago last 9th of April, when the government of Denmark was overthrown by surprise, and Denmark was occupied by a large number of troops of another European nation. From the very beginning the Ministry of Denmark here, as you know, and the State Department, held that most unfortunately the government -- the existing government of Denmark -- was a government under duress, (that has been held by us for over a year), and that during war it was impossible to regard the government of Denmark as a government not under duress. It was under duress as a matter of actual fact. That being so, we are applying to Denmark (The President said Greenmark) it might be called a carrying out of the Monroe Doctrine, which of course has been reinforced by the conferences at Lima and Panama, and Havana, and we are protecting Greenland against any other European nation, and will continue to do so, and trusting that as soon as the duress is lifted from the government and people of Denmark, Greenland will be restored to an independent Denmark. That is about all.

Q Mr. President, does the visit of, or as a result of MacKenzie Kings' visit here -- is there any possibility of your repaying that visit to

Canada this summer?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of.

MR. GODWIN: If I can go back into your background, wasn't it the episode of the French army under Maximilian, and we ran them out, as I recall?

THE PRESIDENT: Physically not, but we had a very large army under a fellow named Sherman! (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #736,
At the Executive Offices of the White House,
April 18, 1941, 10.45 A.M.

(Three House Guests of the President were present at this Conference.

They were: Mr. and Mrs. Hancock Griffin, and their daughter Katherine).

THE PRESIDENT: I wonder -- how do you think the Poughkeepsie golf course looks? How is the ground?

Q Pretty well dried out.

THE PRESIDENT: Maybe you will get a chance to use it -- I don't know.

MR. GODWIN: The 19th hole, the 19th hole -- (laughter)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got any particular news. Over the week end I will probably take action on an Executive Order on a matter of ultimate importance, and that is the Executive Order putting into effect the Ramspeck Bill, which covers into the classified service a very large number of people who hitherto have been exempt, but I have not finished going over it yet, so I think we might as well hold it to give the people on the train, or at Hyde Park, something to do over the week end.
(laughter) They never have any stories up there, so I am holding it for that purpose.

MR. GODWIN: When would that become effective, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a technical question. Practically, it will become effective about the end of June -- first of July -- actually it will become effective the first of January. Now that sounds funny, but -- in other words, you have to have six months, do you see. People that come in after the 30th of June are not eligible for the January appointment, so practically it goes into effect first of July. Of course,

it will take some time to get all these lists gone through and the classification of the people who take examinations.

Q Mr. President, has any material, or any material form of aid actually started on its way to China?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I would have to ask Mr. Currie.

Q Have specific authorizations been made, sir, for such material aid?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so.

Q In connection with China, sir, we understand that there is a meeting on in Singapore this morning with diplomatic and naval representatives of this country, Great Britain, Australia and the Dutch East Indies?

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't yet heard.

Q Not yet heard?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Have we engaged in any consultations on general policy of the Far East?

THE PRESIDENT: I think since 1810. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, Mary McCauley of Newport, R. I., said that you would be up there again June 22. Have you anything on that?

THE PRESIDENT: New one on me. Making up my schedule for me. I haven't. I can't look ahead like that.

Q Do you have any comment on the possible danger of harmful draft rumors because of insufficient draft publicity?

THE PRESIDENT: What is that? What is that? Read it again. (jokingly)

Q Do you have any comment on the possible danger of harmful draft rumors because of insufficient publicity? What I mean is -- (laughter) I am referring specifically to such kind -- as to Senator Smith's son, in regard to his deferment?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I can make any comment on any specific cases.

I don't think it will be a fair thing.

Q Mr. President, can you give us any idea of how that 3½ billion dollars of new taxes can or ought to be raised?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, oh -- it will be --

Q (interposing) Yes, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't the faintest idea. That is what the Committee has begun to work on. It will take them a couple of months.

Q Mr. President, would you comment, sir, on your feeling now about a general sales tax, or payroll tax?

THE PRESIDENT: Just the same as I have always felt. (jokingly)

Q That you don't particularly care for it?

THE PRESIDENT: Not very much, no. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you any general thought on the progress of the war in Europe?

THE PRESIDENT: No. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you feel that --

Q (interposing) Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, you see, you haven't greased the palm of the Delphic oracle sufficiently for me to answer that question.
(laughter)

Q Would you care to say whether you feel that American opinion is adequately aware of the present acuteness of the war?

THE PRESIDENT: I should say, in answer to that, no, that it is not, but becoming increasingly so.

Q Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Increasingly aware.

Q Mr. President, how could you increase that awareness?

THE PRESIDENT: Mm -- General American intelligence -- mental processes, based on information and thought -- cracker-barrel conversations, National Press Club conversations (some laughter), and so forth and so on.

Q Do you feel, sir, that these reverses in Greece have increased the danger to this country?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I don't think that that is the kind of a question that should be either asked or answered.

Q Mr. President, the motor car manufacturers have agreed to decrease production by 20% into next year. Is that the forerunner of other curtailments in consumer goods?

THE PRESIDENT: I ain't no seer. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, could you tell us whether you have received Senator Tobey's (Senator Charles W. Tobey of New Hampshire, Republican) telegram?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't, but Steve (Mr. Early) has. (laughter) Steve told me about three minutes ago that the telegram had come in, just before the Press Conference, and he had referred it to the Navy Department. I haven't seen it.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us something about your talk with MacKenzie King?

THE PRESIDENT: No, we were talking about German measles. (laughter) I am going to see him next week, somewhere. We don't know where. We didn't talk about anything else.

Q Did you mention what you plan to take up next week?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Have you seen Sir Arthur Salter yet?

(The President didn't answer this question, probably not hearing)

THE PRESIDENT: We had a very short talk over a cup of tea, and that is all

that happened. We didn't take up anything of any importance at all.

Q No Halifax?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, do you plan to make a tax statement to the public sometime soon?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I expect so, sometime.

Q Could you give any idea as to how or when?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't decided. You will know it when it is given.

Q Mr. President, have you any comment to make on Mr. Henderson's action in freezing steel prices?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh --

Q (interposing) You approve of that? (laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you still plan extension of the Social Security and Old Age Pensions?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Altmeyer (Arthur J. Altmeyer, Chairman of the Social Security Board) is coming in today to lunch with me, to talk about it.

Q Did you see Mr. Altmeyer yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I had to leave him out because I got behind in my schedule.

Q Mr. President, have you any word as to the extent of the coal shortage resulting from the three weeks' shutdown?

THE PRESIDENT: Er -- No. Nothing except the general thing that it has not yet seriously affected the defense program.

Q Do you plan any action to end that shutdown soon?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope that there will be some mines running next Monday.

That is all I can say.

Q Mine or mines?

THE PRESIDENT: Mines.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment to make on the War Department's announcement yesterday of a plan establishing a civilian observation corps for protection against aviation attack?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it is a thing, of course, that has been tried out and worked pretty well, and this plan of theirs is to do the same thing all over the country that was done in a very limited area last fall. Those of you who were up to those maneuvers of about a hundred thousand in Northern New York -- I think they probably told you at the time. We were there before this actual mimic attack took place but they had organized certain communities all around the area clear down to the Mohawk on the south, and clear over beyond Lake Champlain on the east. Through various existing organizations, principally the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, they set up a system of watchers against planes in all these communities. Well, when the attack actually began in this mimic battle, they began getting from the outskirts of this area immediate reports from the civilian population. The area that was passed over by the attacking planes would get notice to the defending army up there -- what direction they were coming from, how many there were, etc., which was purely civilian effort, and it worked awfully well. The Army is very much pleased. This is an organizing of the -- I suppose greater part of our country along similar lines.

Q Mr. President, is there an actual danger of air attack on this country?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is there an actual danger of an air attack on this country?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know just as much about that as I do.

Q Mr. President, do you know when tanks will be available for export?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you, I don't know. The light tanks, I think, are actually being delivered now.

Q Mr. President, one last question, or comment -- the Southern Operators claim that they have a freight rate differential against them which makes it necessary to have a lower wage rate. That seems to imply that the I.C.C. (Interstate Commerce Commission) might do something toward alleviating the situation? Would you care to comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Only that the I.C.C. is looking into it, and also that the Bituminous Coal Bureau has a lot of figures on the actual costs of the Southern Coal area on production.

Q Can you give us any background as to why that freight rate differential is in there?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know that has been a burning question now all through the South for a great many years, and it is felt that there was discrimination in many of the present rates, and I have agreed with them. I don't know any specific rate. I could give you the information now, but there are a great many things where the South is discriminated against under the present rates.

Q How long would it take -- is it necessarily a long process to get the freight rate change made by the I.C.C.?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Too bad.

Q Would you comment, sir, then, upon the Operators' insistence upon a differential?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it all depends on how you read figures. Some people say that they don't need the differential to show all the profits that they have made, and others say they do.

Q Mr. President, the Rome radio said last night that you were appointing
a new ambassador to the Vatican. Is that true?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #737,
Executive Offices of the White House,
April 22, 1941, 4.09 P.M.

Q Is that all news? (indicating papers on the top of the President's desk)

THE PRESIDENT: No, only the top there. I have very little news. I don't have much; I haven't got over Sunday yet.

Q What is your best day?

Q Wednesday?

THE PRESIDENT: Friday. I'll hand you out some fish and ham. (he laughs)

THE PRESIDENT: (to Mr. Godwin) How is your boy getting on?

MR. GODWIN: All right.

THE PRESIDENT: Steve (turning around to find Mr. Early behind him) how can you have a three-day conference on May 26th?

MR. EARLY: (indicating on the sheet the President was holding) Beginning -- Look, sir, (indicating) 26 - 27 - 28.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh -- all right, all right. (the President laughs)

Q (to the President) He has to check up on you.

Q Poor copy reading. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I had better read it over first.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I am calling a National Conference on Nutrition, May 26, 27, and 28, in Washington. I have a suggested press release, which I am not going to bother you with. I will give you the high spots.

Nutrition is an important part of the defense program. While we have an abundance of food, there is still a nutrition problem, because many people are not receiving the kind of food they require for full

physical and mental vigor. Recent scientific advances have been so great that it is time to put the knowledge of them into practice. It is especially important that we eliminate all diseases due to malnutrition from workers in the defense industries, boys in the training camps, and to give to each household in the country the opportunity of seeing that the family is properly fed, with special attention to the needs of children. And as this memorandum suggests, we should put in part into effect the lessons that we have learned from running training tables for athletic teams.

This Conference will be under the direction of Mr. McNutt (Paul V. McNutt, Administrator, Federal Security Agency). That is a lot better than a formal statement.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, when you have had that Conference, what is the -- what comes out of it, knowledge only, or is there --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I hope practice.

MR. GODWIN: As far as what is concerned?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the Government has soldiers. -- For instance, the -- if the Government had any control or even influence over you or me, they would watch our diet, and be very good to you and me. But it would help -- it might even help you and me.

VOICE FROM THE REAR: Louder please. (the President laughs)

Q What types of people are covered, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got a list here.

Q Mr. President, to get on a local subject, could you tell us anything about Mayor LaGuardia's visit?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, just continuing our talks on coordination of certain aspects of home defense, of which he is the Chairman of the Council

of Mayors, and whom he has been working with for some time.

Q Have you asked him, sir, to take the Directorship of that yet?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q Do you expect to ask him, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't know that there will be one, (he laughs) so I wouldn't do any guessing. You are sure to be wrong.

Q Is there something to guess about? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No, there is nothing to guess about.

Q Mr. President, Lyndon Johnson (Lyndon B. Johnson, Congressman from Texas, Democrat) just announced he is a candidate for the Senate in Texas.

Could you make any comment on that, or on Mr. Johnson?

THE PRESIDENT: He told me, too. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President --

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) He must have told you a few minutes ago.

THE PRESIDENT: He did -- just one minute before he told you.

MR. GODWIN: He didn't tell me. Well, you know that -- you don't mingle in these State primaries, but I would like to ask you if you look with favor upon Mr. Johnson?

THE PRESIDENT: Wouldn't that be mingling if I said yes or no? Have you stopped beating your wife, yes or no? (he laughs)

MR. GODWIN: She's away. (laughter) (after a short pause) That's the answer to that. (more laughter)

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) As a matter of fact, of course, it is perfectly obvious you can't make any -- you can't write any story that gives the wrong impression or the wrong facts about this. The Texas papers will be for or against any one of a great many -- good many

candidates. Now it is up to the State of Texas to elect their own Senator, that is number one. Number two, I can't take part in a Texas primary. Number three, if you ask me about Lyndon himself, I can't take part in his election. I can only say what is perfectly true, -- you all know he is a very old and close friend of mine. Now that's about all. Now don't try to tie those things together! (the President brought the house down with laughter) (He adds): And print them all instead of just one separately! (more laughter)

MR. GODWIN: That's it. That's all right.

Q How many other Texas candidates are there?

THE PRESIDENT: This is not a comparative meeting. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, last week, Secretary Knox said the Navy is considering spending large sums of money to expand its facilities in Narragansett Bay. Can you give us any details on it?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I never heard of it.

Q Could you say anything about that report of Senator Green's on expanding ship facilities?

THE PRESIDENT: No; no report on it.

Q He says he sent it last week, I think.

THE PRESIDENT: No report, probably sent it down the line.

Q Mr. President, a press dispatch from London today said that the British are becoming concerned over public opinion in this country concerning the war. Would you care to comment on it?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. That's a press report. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, could you say anything of whether British reverses in the Balkans would have any effect on the amount of shipments of materials we will send to Britain?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't live at Delphi.

Q Sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't live at Delphi.

VOICE IN THE REAR: You're lucky. (the President laughs)

Q Mr. President, could you tell us about your conversation with Mr. Kaiser today and his --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, I never met him. He was brought in. He has a lot of work out there on the aluminum, and I think steel and magnesium. I have heard a great deal about it because he helped build the Boulder Dam and the Grand Coulee Dam, but I never met him before.

Q Did he mention steel expansion?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, everything to do with more materials for the West Coast.

Q Could you tell us what your reaction was?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't like the word.

Q Sorry. (the President laughs)

Q Mr. President, Mr. Kaiser said, when he came out, that he had complained about the difficulty of obtaining sufficient steel to build on the West Coast.

THE PRESIDENT: Ship plants and things like that.

Q If not steel for building those plants, he said he would ask you to do something about that. Are you going to?

THE PRESIDENT: I sent him to the people who have charge of priorities of steel.

Q Senator Taft has challenged the right of Mr. Henderson (Leon Henderson, Administrator of the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply) to fix prices of steel -- he challenged the legality of it, to fix prices. Do you have anything to say on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. (laughter)

Q Another thing in this price thing, Mr. President, we receive reports from different newspapers about housewives complaining of the steady rise in the cost of food, vegetables, and steadily increasing rents --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Where? Where?

Q In Cincinnati, Cleveland. My own wife, for instance, says they are going up here.

THE PRESIDENT: What is going up here?

Q Prices.

THE PRESIDENT: What prices?

Q All kinds -- meats, the kind of things that all of us eat.

THE PRESIDENT: I know, but we have got to be specific on those things.

Q Well, I mean if there is a general rise in certain commodities when Mr. Henderson said that -- they would take that up later on, but in view of the new tax bill it seems to me that the steady rise in the cost --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You have got to have something behind a generalism. You have got to have some evidence, something that is going up, and where.

Q Do you have any indications?

THE PRESIDENT: Some things. In some localities things are too high.

Q Is there any way of combating that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, we are going after it all the time. They have knocked a lot of prices down already on individual things in individual localities. Sometimes it is the fault of the grocer. Sometimes it is the people who all rush to buy, because they think there is going to be a shortage -- panic buying. Sometimes it has been corrected, where the thing was out of line with other communities, but I wouldn't call it --

I don't call it a strike, but they fail to buy the things for a little while, and then something happens to the price. It goes down, but we can't generalize on that. You have got to be specific in cases and places.

Q How about sugar, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, where and what? What price?

Q The East Coast refinery.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q There have been complaints about the price of sugar in the East Coast refinery.

THE PRESIDENT: What have they gone up to?

Q You've got me. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: What a --

Q (interposing) Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) In other words, that is one of our troubles.

We just plain generalize. Now, we have got to have specifications.

MISS MAY CRAIG: Mr. President, I can give you a little specification.

THE PRESIDENT: Good, I know just what I will do with you.

MISS MAY CRAIG: In the last month a report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on a visit of 51 cities on general food prices showed that from the middle of March last year to the middle of March this year there had been increases in pork chops, steak, chickens, round-steak, ranging from 12 to 18%.

THE PRESIDENT: Steve (Mr. Early) will you arrange to have May go and see Miss Elliott (Miss Harriet Elliott, Division of Consumer Protection of the Council of National Defense) right away after the conference.

(Laughter)

MISS MAY CRAIG: I was just helping Otto. (Otto Janssen, United Press Associations) (?) (more laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, there is -- there is a specific instance which may be taken over by Congress -- the alleged rise in the cost of rents and rooms in Washington.

THE PRESIDENT: You are right, and the hearing is up.

Q. Is that a matter which you are interested in?

THE PRESIDENT: The Housing Commission is supposed to have all kinds of data on that. Now I will give you just an illustration of how -- what shall I say -- how really stupid it is to generalize when we don't know. And none of you know, and I don't know.

The other day I had two people come in, one right after the other, without any arrangement. It just so happened. One was a citizen of the District, who was very much concerned over the increase in rent to these new people that are coming down to work in Washington. The next was a Congressman, and I told him about this, and he said, "That is perfect nonsense. I have got a new secretary and she had no difficulty in finding a perfectly nice room at a reasonable rental, and at the older rental that my previous secretary had paid." Now, which was right, the first person or the second person? None of you know, and I don't know.

Go to the people who have got the facts on it.

Q Well, that is what --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) The Housing people are supposed to have the facts on it. Maybe they are wrong.

MR. GODWIN: I think that they are both right, and I think that the secretary probably got a rent -- or a good room at a good rent. It is also true

that a good many are paying too much and living in rather congested quarters.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. Well, of course, as you know, the survey did show the need for additional buildings. Now the additional buildings, I think, are being put up. Whether they are being put up in sufficient numbers is a thing that further survey, constant checking, alone can determine.

MR. GODWIN: Well, you were here during the World War and you remember exactly what happened, and they cured, or I think they cured it by a Rent Commission.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. Now we may have to come to that. Perfectly possible. We may have to come to that, but I haven't had a recommendation for it. I do know that they are studying it.

Q Mr. President, anything on the plan for expansion of the food stamp plan?

THE PRESIDENT: That I couldn't tell you. I haven't heard a word.

Q Mr. President, will you say what has happened to the defense highway report, please?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh -- I think -- I think I have sent it to somebody for a recommendation, and I couldn't tell you -- I thought I had sent it to the National Resources Planning Board, but I think that I had already sent it there, and I think it has gone somewhere else now.

Q Would it go to the Budget, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q Mr. President, do you believe that the nation will be able to absorb the $3\frac{1}{2}$ billions tax bill without injury to the consumer purchasing power?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say it depends a little bit whether the nation wanted to do everything that it could for the defense of the nation, and the

future of the nation or not.

Of course it can. It won't ruin the economic system.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Of course it won't, but it depends largely on the desire of the nation to borrow a little bit less and pay a little bit more, and I think they are perfectly willing to.

Q Mr. President, would it be a defense secret to disclose any American ships delivering supplies through the Red Sea?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, it would.

Q Mr. President, have you heard any reports from observers now in London, for instance General Arnold, on the situation in Europe on which you could comment?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course there are so many reports that are coming in all the time it is awfully difficult to know what should be made public and what shouldn't. Some are true one day and some -- they are not the next. I think we should realize -- I think the only thing we should realize is this, that, let us say, the reading public, radio-listening public in this country -- if they read history, they ought not to go up on a pinnacle of hope one day because of a sea battle off Italy, and go down to the depths of despair the next day because of an Axis advance in Greece. The obvious thing that people are becoming, I think, to realize more and more, is that this war won't be won by one sea fight, or one retreat in Greece, or even the Eastern Mediterranean. It will only be won by keeping the existence of the main defense of the Democracies going -- and that is England -- the British Empire.

Q Mr. President, is there any information that could be given about the amounts of loss of war materials on the way to England?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't anything. I haven't anything.

Q Mr. President, do you feel confident that the defenses of England will be kept going?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, that statement implies, in answer to the one I asked before, that there will be no diminution of materials to Britain?

THE PRESIDENT: It certainly won't.

Q Mr. President, have matters yet got to the point where it looks as though convoys would have to be seriously considered?

THE PRESIDENT: I never lived at Delphi.

Q Mr. President, aside from the question of convoys, have any steps been taken to insure the passage of material and supplies to England, that is, some measure of protection for this so called Bridge of Ships?

THE PRESIDENT: That is too glittering a question.

Q Would you care to comment on the relationship with the defense of England to the rail from Egypt to Dakar?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I am not an amateur strategist.

Q Have you any information indicating that the Germans are moving over to the West Coast of Africa?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

(Somebody knocked over some of the President's novelties on his desk, to the amusement of the President and others)

Q Mr. President, may I ask one last question, to clear up something for

the rest of the boys? In your talks with MacKenzie King, did you take up the St. Lawrence?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Anything new?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q Something about the legislation you were going to send up?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not ready on that yet.

CONFIDENTIAL
 Press Conference #738,
 Executive Offices of the White House,
 April 25, 1941, 10.45 A.M.

MR. GODWIN: Old men have to sit down. (he sits down) Fat old men have to sit down.

Q And how!

THE PRESIDENT: Where's Fred? (Fred Essary)

MR. GODWIN: Haven't seen him.

THE PRESIDENT: Away? Is he on vacation or something, or what? (He laughs)

THE PRESIDENT: That's an interesting thing there. (survey marker) That's a new marker they put on a concrete thing for their surveys.

MR. GODWIN: That's a little bit better.

THE PRESIDENT: I think it's better, don't you?

MR. GODWIN: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: It's less clumsy.

MR. GODWIN: Did you ever run across those things?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, we still find them occasionally.

MR. GODWIN: Yes, I found them up around the George Washington National Forest.

THE PRESIDENT: I wonder if Steve (Mr. Early) has anything for me. (turning around to find Mr. Early behind him) Got anything? (Mr. Early's reply indicated no)

Q Quiz program?

Q Double or nothing? (laughter)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Steve (Mr. Early) says there isn't anything -- any formality, or anything to be -- to talk about today. (there was a short pause here)

Q Mr. President, three strong speeches were made yesterday by three cabinet

officers --

(interposing)
THE PRESIDENT: /Three? (jokingly)

Q Yes, Secretary Hull, Secretary Knox and Secretary Wickard.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, is that so?

Q (continuing) About possible advances in foreign policy, and greater aid and more initiative, etc. Would you comment, sir, on this?

THE PRESIDENT: I think they speak for themselves pretty clearly, and for the great majority of the American people.

Q And also for you, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

MR. GODWIN: Would you mind having him (the reporter) repeat that, sir?

(the reporter started to read back the President's previous answer)

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Just a minute, we're finishing something here.

(reporter read back "I think they speak for themselves pretty clearly, and for the great majority of the American people.")

Q Mr. President, the newspapers this morning generally seem to regard these speeches as indicating that it may soon be necessary to resort to an extended use of the Navy in protecting the Bridge of Ships. Would you consider that a fair interpretation of the speeches?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think that we had better talk about interpretations.

I think we had better confine ourselves to facts, and I am sorry, but I have to make a liar out of a lot of people -- some of them in this room. What -- I will tell you how.

In September, 1939, about a year and a half ago, the whole subject of hemisphere defense came up, as we know. And at that time, because of the conditions surrounding the outbreak of the war -- in other words, a

complete failure to adhere to international law, a surprise invasion, which was followed by other surprise attacks on peaceful nations -- at that time there was instituted by the western hemisphere what is known as a patrol, and that patrol extended on all sides of the hemisphere as necessary at the time. Of course, nobody here knows geography. People said it was 300 miles off-shore. Off what? -- it wasn't. It was a patrol that was carried out partly by the American Navy, partly by other American ships, off what was then considered a reasonable limit, depending on where it was. A lot of very careless people called it 300 miles. If you went over to the eastern shore of Maryland, you would have found for the past year and a half that that patrol was extended a thousand miles out to sea at that point. It was maintained as a patrol for such distances as seemed advisable, in view of the conditions at the time. That patrol has been extended from time to time in different places. Some places it has been pulled in, depending entirely on the conditions and the locations on any given duty, for a year and a half. That was a patrol. It was not a convoy.

I think some of you know what a horse looks like. I think you also know what a cow looks like. If, by calling a cow a horse for a year and a half you think that that makes the cow a horse, I don't think so. Now, that's pretty plain language. You can't turn a cow into a horse by calling it something else; calling it a horse it is still a cow. Now this is a patrol, and has been a patrol for a year and a half, still is, and from time to time it has been extended, and is being extended, and will be extended -- the patrol -- for the safety of the western hemisphere.

Q Could you tell us, sir, how far it may possibly go?

THE PRESIDENT: That is exactly the question I hoped you would ask. (he

laughs) As far on the waters of the seven seas as may be necessary for the defense of the American hemisphere.

Q Mr. President --

Q (interposing) Will there be any extension of its functions?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q Could you define its functions?

THE PRESIDENT: Its function is protection of the American hemisphere.

Q By belligerent means?

THE PRESIDENT: Protection of the American hemisphere.

Q Mr. President, does that include the protection of shipping, that is --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Protection of the American hemisphere.

Q Mr. President, just what --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Now you can't --. Just what? What do you mean, just what?

(the answer was not forthcoming)

THE PRESIDENT: The point of it -- is the -- is the protection of the American hemisphere, and will be so used as it has been for the past year and a half. Now I can't tell you what is going to happen.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us the difference between a patrol and a convoy?

THE PRESIDENT: You know the difference between a cow and a horse?

Q Yes, I know the difference.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, there is just as much difference, Jim. (Jim Wright, Buffalo Evening News) Just exactly as much difference.

Q Is there more patrolling against --

THE PRESIDENT: The point is the protection of the merchant convoy. The escorting of merchant ships in a group to prevent an act of aggression against that group of merchant ships under escort. A patrol is a

reconnaissance -- I think that is the word -- of certain areas of ocean to find out whether there is any possibly aggressive ship within that area, or areas, or the whole of the ocean, which might be coming toward the western hemisphere, or into the western hemisphere.

Now one thing that will occur to you as being, just as you say, a rule of common sense -- back there in 1939 the area of the patrol on the Atlantic was nearer, because there didn't seem to be any danger of an attack on places like Bermuda or Newfoundland, or Greenland, or Trinidad, or Brazil. The events, however, in the later period of the war show that such attack is more possible today than it was then. We have, incidentally, some rather valuable American lives and American property at various points that we didn't have in 1939. Again Greenland, Newfoundland, Bermuda -- all agreeing in between -- Newfoundland, Bermuda, is the obligation that we have under the Monroe Doctrine for the protection of Canada against any other non-American nation. That's old stuff. Then you have got other islands, the Bahamas, Antigua, and all the West Indies, Trinidad, British Guiana, which were not an American possession a year and a half ago. Today they are. Those bases, those points --

Q (interposing) Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) It's a little bit like I was talking to one of the Senators over the telephone today. He happened to come from the West, and it's rather a good -- rather a good simile. In the old days a wagon train across the plains -- of course it had its immediate guard around it, that was perfectly true, -- but it didn't go -- it didn't move across the plains unless it got reports from a long ways -- 200 to 300 miles off. It was not felt safe to wait until the Indians got two

miles away before you saw them. It was advisable, if possible, to find out if the Indians were 200 miles away.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I think the simile probably is a useful one.
(he laughs)

Q Mr. President, if this patrol should discover some apparently aggressive ships headed toward the western hemisphere, what would it do about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me know. (loud laughter)

Q Mr. President, has this Government any idea of escorting convoys?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no, and that, I am afraid, will be awfully bad news to some of you.

Q Is there any better plan?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Has it any better system?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you remember Mr. Bairnsfather. (English cartoonist in World war I, who made the celebrated cartoon character Old Bill say to his worried friend in a shell-hole, "If you know a better 'ole, go to it.")

Q Mr. President, to some of us who read those speeches of the Cabinet officers, they seem to be concerned about the delivery of aid to Britain. How does this tie in with that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, it's a new one on me.

MISS MAY CRAIG: Well, Mr. President, won't we have a nice, safe sea route from here to Greenland?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope it will be safe up in those waters. I hope there won't be any further act of aggression. I am not at all certain that Greenland is not in part occupied by the Axis at the present moment. I don't say that it is. That is surprising, isn't it?

Q Occupied in part, did you say?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q You said, I hope there will be no further act of aggression?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Were you speaking of Greenland, particularly at that point?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Specifically?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Could you tell us, sir, in what manner Greenland is occupied at the present time?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

Q Fifth columnists, or something like that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q Mr. President, is this designed to accomplish the same thing that convoys would accomplish, or more effectively than they could accomplish it?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't the faintest idea.

Q Isn't it a bigger problem getting the shipment across when it gets over toward the other side?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no.

Q Mr. Secretary, could you tell us -- (loud laughter) could you tell us whether these patrol ships have any instructions as to the action they should take, in the event there was an attack in nearby --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I can't tell you where they are because the next question would be just where are they, and just where are they going tomorrow. You see?

Q Mr. President, does this extension of patrol involve any revision of the so-called Pan-American Security Zone?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q No connection?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, are we doing anything special, with any --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Just an extension. After all, it's just what has been going on for a year and a half. Now, that will answer all your questions.

Q This is on Greenland specifically, sir? Are we doing anything specifically to counter-act any Axis --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us whether there were more than just wagon trains --?

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q All wagon trains?

THE PRESIDENT: All kinds of wagon trains. (he laughs)

CONSTANTINE BROWN: Mr. President, last week you said that people in this country are not quite aware of the gravity of the situation. Would you care to amplify that a little bit?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think, Constantine, without some further, some further thought about it beforehand. Perhaps I could put it as one little thought to throw out.

There are people who in effect in this country I am sorry to say, probably -- I can't recognize any faces here, but some in this room -- who are adopting a rather curious attitude, which I should say hadn't been thought through -- what will I say?-- a level of intelligence that doesn't apply to most of us (he laughs), and that is the idea that will -- like an editorial I read this morning -- that there is a new order in the world, a new form of government, who say out of one side of their

mouth, "No, I don't like it, I don't like dictatorship," and then out of the other side of the mouth, "Well, it's going to beat Democracy, it's going to defeat Democracy, therefore, I might just as well accept it." Now, I don't call that good Americanism. I am not mentioning any names (some laughter) but that attitude is held by a minority in this country. It's just the same way -- I read an editorial on Monday, or something like that the other day -- which said in effect -- Why, we have always had conquerors all through the history of the world, and Alexander the Great who tried to conquer all the known world, he was not satisfied to stay at home -- where was it, Macedonia? -- he went out and tried to conquer lots of people he never saw before, just to add to his empire. He was not satisfied with his own people, his own flesh and blood.

And there was another fellow called Caesar. He was not satisfied with the Rome of his day, and went out to conquer the whole of Europe and North Africa, and the Near East, and so forth and so on. And then there were, according to this mentality -- there were two other conquerors -- one was Cromwell, who conquered England, and the other one was George Washington, who conquered America. (laughter) Now, any mentality that lumps George Washington and Cromwell with Caesar and Napoleon -- oh, yes, Napoleon -- Napoleon and Alexander the Great -- well, all I can say is I am awfully sorry that people with those mentalities are in such high places that they can write or talk at all. (he laughs) It's just dumb.

Now, coming back to this mythical person in our midst (he laughs) who takes the attitude that dictatorships are going to win anyway, I think that is almost equally dumb, because I am 'agin' them, and everybody

else in this country -- the overwhelming majority are 'agin' them. We will fight for the Democratic process, and that's all. We are willing to fight for the Democratic process. I don't want to lie down and say, "Dictatorship is inevitable. We have got to do the best we can. We have got to make our peace. We have got to yield to the demands of the dictatorship because it has the military might to win." I don't think along those lines, and neither do you.

CONSTANTINE BROWN: Mr. President, how is it that the Army, which needs now distinguished fliers, etc., has not asked Colonel Lindbergh to rejoin his rank as Colonel? If I am not mistaken, I think he is still on the Reserve list?

THE PRESIDENT: Still?

Q I think he resigned. He resigned.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

If you go back to the roster of the Army in the Civil War -- we called on people there from liberty-loving people on both sides -- both the Confederates and the North; and from outside this country we had people fighting for us because they believed in it. On the other hand, the Confederacy and the North let certain people go. In other words, in both armies there were -- what shall I call them? -- there were Vallandighams. Vallandigham. (Ohio's Clement L. Vallandigham, leader of the "Copperheads" in the Civil War)

Well, Vallandigham, as you know, was an appeaser. (laughter) He wanted to make peace from 1863 on because the North 'couldn't win.' Once upon a time there was a place called Valley Forge and there were an awful lot of appeasers that pleaded with Washington to quit, because he 'couldn't win'. Just because he couldn't win'. See what Tom Paine

said at that time in favor of Washington keeping on fighting!

MR. GODWIN: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: It's worth reading.

MR. GODWIN: Wasn't it, "These are the times that try men's souls"?

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (answering Mr. Godwin) Yes, that particular paragraph.

MR. GODWIN: That --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That paragraph?

MR. GODWIN: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: In fact, I read it in the Post or the Star the other day.

Q Were you still talking about Mr. Lindbergh?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (laughter)

Q Have you had any reports, sir, that some forty percent of the aid we have sent across the seas is lost?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think that is entirely manufactured. I don't think anybody has any figures at all on it. Nothing like as high as that.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

Q The defense industries in Detroit seem to be concerned over the refusal of the Canadian Government to permit the transfer of supplies to Canada in trucks. Did you take that up yet?

THE PRESIDENT: Never heard of it. Look it up.

Q The point is that it has been going on for several months. They are perfectly willing that they should be hauled in Canadian trucks and labor, but the railroads and railroad labor in Canada have bitterly resisted permitting the use of trucks. They say it saves from two days in the transferring of supplies. If they could --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I hadn't heard about it. I would have to

find out.

Q The Board of Commerce and Industry out there seem to be quite stirred up about it.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know anything.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President. We've got enough now.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #739,
Executive Offices of the President,
April 29, 1941, 4.10 P.M.

MR. GODWIN: Let the fat boy sit down!

THE PRESIDENT: It's a shame to have to work today.

MR. GODWIN: I suspected you didn't work all day. Did you go on a nice drive just now? What did you see?

THE PRESIDENT: The airport. (Washington National Airport at Gravelly Point)

MR. GODWIN: Do you like it?

THE PRESIDENT: Fine. It will be nice when they grow some grass on it. So much dust there now.

MR. GODWIN: Can I ask you a question about it?

(The President indicated later)

THE PRESIDENT: When are they moving in?

MR. GODWIN: I don't know.

THE PRESIDENT: Er -- when are they going to use it for commercial planes?

MR. GODWIN: I don't know.

THE PRESIDENT: Who knows? Who is here from Washington? (jokingly) When do they open the airport?

MR. GODWIN: I was going to ask you the same thing. They change the date on it every now and then. They were going to have it last December.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have two small matters here. As part of the lend-lease program, I have written a letter to the Secretary of Commerce to please make a survey of all the civil transport lines -- airlines -- and see how much -- how many civilian transport planes it is possible for us to buy from them here, to turn over for the defense of the Democracies. There

is a real need for such planes, and we hope to get a substantial number.

The other thing is a request of Mr. Stettinius, (Edward R. Stettinius, Council of National Defense) with the approval of Mr. Jones (Jesse Jones, Secretary of Commerce) and of Mr. Schram (Emil Schram, Chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation) -- Mr. Schram is going on the invitation of Mr. Stettinius to become Assistant Director of Priorities temporarily, retaining his status as Chairman of the R.F.C. while performing this extra duty.

I think that's all I've got.

Q Before we get further afield, I would like to ask about a local matter.

Do you have any comment to make on the Overton Plan to fix the Federal payment toward expenses of the District Government?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard anything. They were in here a couple of weeks ago.

Q Mr. President, in regard to this airline situation, some of the airlines still claim they can't get enough planes for their own domestic requirements. Has that all been withheld?

THE PRESIDENT: I am asking Mr. Jones (Jesse Jones) to find out.

Q Whether they have enough, and then whether they can turn in some of the ones they now have?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Would it be the idea that they could get enough planes to replace some --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't know. I am just asking the question.

Q What are those planes needed for?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q What are those planes needed for?

THE PRESIDENT: They are needed by the people who are fighting for Democracy.

Q Are you asking that for any time?

THE PRESIDENT: Right off now, quick.

Q Right away?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Any certain kind of a plane?

THE PRESIDENT: Any half-way known kind of plane.

MR. GODWIN: What about your trip to the airport today, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have been asking to find out. I went down to see how nearly it is finished. There is still a cloud of dust down there. I hope it will be used. The quicker the better, from my point of view, that we get off that present field. It is going to be a very fine field when finished, but it seems to me that I dedicated it a long, long time ago. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, is there anything contemplated in the way of a national daylight saving (he hesitates here) -- movement?

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't heard anything about it, except what I read. I think that is entirely a matter for Congress. I am perfectly willing to work and play on any time they set. (laughter)

Q Mr. President --

Q (interposing) Mr. President, is there any possibility of the curtailment of commercial aviation in this country to meet the demands --

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

Q Is there any possibility of cutting down in the CAA training program, -- possibly a civilian training program?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you the details of that at the present time. There was a cut provided, as I remember it, in the Budget. What it went to I don't know.

Q Mr. President, there are rumors of dissatisfaction with respect to the current production of airplanes. If that is true, has it come to you, and does this request have anything to do with it?

THE PRESIDENT: No, this has nothing to do with it. Nothing at all.

Q Mr. President, could you comment on the visit of the new Chinese foreign minister to you today?

THE PRESIDENT: No. He has been on the list of appointments ever since we knew he was going back to China.

Q Would any of these planes turned over from the commercial -- civilian airlines possibly go to China, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know. I am not going to tell you where planes are or are going to go.

Q Could you tell us --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) It might help somebody else.

Q Could you tell us, Mr. President, whether the Chinese foreign minister mentioned the need for planes?

THE PRESIDENT: No, he did not.

Q When he left here, sir, he said he was encouraged by the cooperation between the United States and China.

THE PRESIDENT: So was I. I was too. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you think it is liable at this time to transfer any part of the Coast Guard to the Navy?

THE PRESIDENT: There might be something on that pretty soon. How soon I can't tell you.

Q Admiral Stark (Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations) indicated this afternoon, sir, that foreign ships in that -- might be transferred to Britain.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know -- I don't know what he is referring to.

Q Mr. President --

Q (interposing) Mr. President, in a speech this afternoon, Admiral Stark said something about naval patrols being extended some two thousand miles out from the United States.

THE PRESIDENT: It depends where you measure from.

Q Is there any possibility of elaborating that here?

THE PRESIDENT: Did he say where it was measured from?

Q No, he did not, except from the United States.

THE PRESIDENT: From the United States? What does he mean by the United States?

Q He said they were going half-way across the Atlantic.

THE PRESIDENT: From where?

Q From North to South, all the way down the line. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: From North to South? (he laughs as he said this)

Q He indicated that they were patrolling pretty well out, and that the line was half-way across.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it is necessary for me to elaborate at all on that, except to ask you to -- if you would really like to write something, to re-read what I said last week, because the maps that have been drawn, and in the news' stories that came out immediately, they were all right, but the columns, editorials, etc., they just didn't follow copy. Do you get what I mean by that? You fellows were all right. If you re-read what I said, you would get some idea of that. Well, I think even any of us could draw a map from what I said, -- (he laughs)

Q (interposing) Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) -- I haven't seen a map yet that meant anything -- not a single map. They have all been cock-eyed.

Q Mr. President, the confusion seems to arise from talking about this thing.

La Guardia said definitely a thousand miles from --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Who said a thousand miles? Now just let me repeat exactly what I said. The only time I mentioned a thousand miles was in a sentence -- I can't quote you verbatim, but essentially this -- that a year and a half ago, in September, 1939, at that time we were patrolling a thousand miles out from the eastern shore of Delaware. Now, that is the only time I ever mentioned a thousand miles.

Q Well --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) In other words, they didn't follow copy.

Q La Guardia previously said a thousand miles from our coast, -- southward --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q La Guardia had said previously a thousand miles.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know what La Guardia said, or anybody else.

Q Today Admiral Stark said two thousand, but he didn't say what point he was mentioning.

THE PRESIDENT: Because it means nothing. I gave you one thousand miles, September, 1939, from the eastern shore of Delaware -- or Maryland.

Q Is that the present limit?

THE PRESIDENT: Now that is the only time I ever mentioned it and I stated it to you as an historic fact. I didn't say that that was all we are doing today. Now do you see? You have got to follow copy. (he laughs)

Q Where does that leave us today?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Where does that leave us today?

THE PRESIDENT: Read what I said the other day. Figure it out again for another story.

Q You did say that the patrol would be extended as far as --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) As far as necessary, to protect this hemisphere.

Q Has it been extended since you spoke to us?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you.

Q Could you tell us, sir --?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) That is purely an operational matter. Where the actual ships were last Tuesday as compared to -- last Friday as compared to Tuesday, I don't know.

Q Mr. President, Admiral Stark --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Measure a map to see how far two thousand miles is. Maybe he isn't following copy either. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, is it satisfactory --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) You could draw a map on this easily, in words of one syllable and one sentence -- that it would be extended out as far as necessary for the protection of this hemisphere. Now is that clear? Now, how can you draw a line on that statement, I ask you?

Q Mr. President, can you say whether American warships will be prohibited from entering the combat zone as defined around Great Britain?

THE PRESIDENT: The old one that we defined. Remember that -- I don't know, I don't know.

Q There is a certain zone that has been defined by Germany as a zone of operations around Great Britain.

THE PRESIDENT: I know absolutely nothing about that.

Q How about the ones you defined?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know whether -- in the first place, of course, that Executive Order has nothing to do with United States warships -- absolutely nothing.

Q And they could go in there?

THE PRESIDENT: They can go in there if it is necessary for the defense of this hemisphere. That doesn't mean that they are going in there.

Q Is it limited to merchant ships?

THE PRESIDENT: Sure. The same old sentence still applies -- anywhere that it is necessary for the defense of the American hemisphere. Now, is that clear? Don't try to put that on paper with a line, because it will be different every single day that this patrol is going on, as it has been for a year and a half. Now, is that clear? Any more geographical questions? (he laughs)

Q Yes, what do you hear from Greenland?

THE PRESIDENT: Not a peep. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, there has been a proposal, I understand, on your desk for some time for the establishment of dirigible bases up and down the coast for patrol duty. Is there any action being taken in the immediate future on these dirigible bases?

THE PRESIDENT: I think they have been approved, but you had better check.

Q I think they have been approved by the Navy Department, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I think they have been approved by me, but I think you had better check.

Q Mr. President, is Mr. Jesse Jones, in addition to his other duties, to be known as a super-mediation board?

THE PRESIDENT: It looked like that last night, didn't it? (he laughs)

Q Can you give us the reason for calling in Mr. Jones on the situation, outside of the fact that he did a good job?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that's a pretty good reason. (he laughs)

Q Well, was there any financial connection involved?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. (laughter) Not that Jesse and I know about. (more laughter)

Q Well, now that this settlement seems to have been reached, is there any arrangement, or any understanding, that "more steam" will be put back of the effort to rearrange Southern freight rates?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is probably one of the things that will be brought out in further mediation conferences.

Q Between the Southerners and the mine workers?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q That would apply only to coal, or all Southern freight rates?

THE PRESIDENT: That would apply to everything, like opening up Pandora's Box.

Q Would there be any other Southern leaders called in?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

Q Have you any comment on Mr. Winston Churchill's speech Sunday?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Did you hear the speech?

(the President nodded his head)

Q Mr. President, the people of South Carolina would like very much to know if you are planning on filling the Supreme Court vacancy at the present time? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, now that this coal mine trouble is out of the way, I might be able to turn my thoughts to a few other things -- I don't know.

Q Do you expect --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) But if I don't turn my thoughts to other things, I hope they won't be disappointed. (he laughs)

Q The Supreme Court session lasts only another five weeks.

THE PRESIDENT: By Jove, that's right! (laughter) I am glad you mentioned it.

Q Mr. President, do you expect --

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I am getting near the dead-line. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, do you expect to ask for some price control legislation soon?

THE PRESIDENT: What kind?

MR. GODWIN: Price control.

THE PRESIDENT: Mmmmm -- yes and no. I don't really know when it will be advisable to do some further things on price control. In other words, it is a matter that we are giving attention to every day, and I don't know. I might do it, and I might not.

Q Did Mr. Henderson have a concrete plan toward the objective that --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, no concrete plan.

Q What price quotations aren't you able to make now?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know; I haven't the faintest idea.

Q If legislation is in the offing, it would seem to imply --

THE PRESIDENT: No -- general situation, major general. (jokingly)

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.