

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #768, --
Executive Offices of the President,
September 16, 1941 -- 4.10 P.M., E.S.T.

(Press Conferences for the 9th and 12th were not held,
due to the passing of the President's mother)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have anything, except a rather minor matter,
as far as it goes, but it is just an instance of how we are trying to
-- er -- work towards the cutting of red tape, and speeding things up
on the administration of the Lend-Lease Bill.

We made a survey about two weeks ago, showing that it is taking
too long a time between the -- er -- a preliminary application on the
part of the -- er -- er -- people who want the aid from Lend-Lease --
the Chinese or the British -- er -- to get final action. It was tak-
ing 25 or 30 days before they could get final clearance, so we started
in and cut down on the length of time that the papers stayed in the
various Bureaus they had to go through, under the law. And we cut it
down to about 16 days.

And in a further effort to cut the time, I decided that there was
about a twenty-four hour delay in the whole thing -- out of the whole
thing -- in the White House itself. In other words, every day, I have
been signing these books, and I suppose the average book called for 20
different signatures on my part. And they would come in the late after-
noon, around five o'clock, and I would sign them and they wouldn't get
back -- er -- to the -- er -- Lend-Lease people until the following
afternoon; and there was a twenty-four hour delay which we didn't think

was necessary. And under the law I have power to delegate those actual signatures and get a report of what has been approved -- er -- by my agent, once a week.

So I have sent a letter to Ed Stettinius (Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Chairman, Priorities Board) -- er -- saying that I had appointed him as Special Assistant, to act as Administrator of the Lend-Lease program, and this will give him general supervision and control over the program -- er -- as carried out by the Executive Officer, and his Executive Officer of the Division of Defense Aid Reports. In other words, General Burns -- is the easiest way of putting it -- and his staff; which means that Ed from now on will sign all these papers every day, instead of my having to sign them.

We will save 24 hours. It's not much saving, but some saving.

And he will make a report of what has been authorized once a week.

Q Why only a 15-day saving?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Why only a 15-day saving?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you knew the places it had to go, you would think that was pretty good.

Q Is there any way of cutting down those places?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is there any way of cutting down those places?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Probably not below that.

MR. GODWIN: What was the book that you said you signed?

THE PRESIDENT: It's the authorization -- er -- I had to sign two letters for each one -- one to General Burns, and the other is to the Treasury, for certain items.

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) And each one required two signatures on my part.

MR. GODWIN: Yes. That is under the law?

THE PRESIDENT: All kinds of items. There are literally hundreds of different kinds of items.

MR. GODWIN: Under the law?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. But it was under the law I can delegate those signatures to Stettinius.

MR. GODWIN: Stettinius pinch-hits for you on this thing and saves a day, is that the idea?

Q Mr. President, are you going to take any -- make any suggestion that the British speed up their signatures? The story is it takes them about 70 signatures to get a requisition over here.

THE PRESIDENT: No. I think it is pretty good. It all has to be dove-tailed into our program. And incidentally, if some question arises here, it has to be cabled back to the other side. That is -- it creates an almost inevitable delay.

Q Mr. President, a number of editorial writers and columnists who support your foreign policy found the Lend-Lease report yesterday disappointing in the totals of aid actually shipped. Do you think that is a fair interpretation?

THE PRESIDENT: No, because ninety-nine and nine-tenths of the articles cannot be purchased on the shelves of a department store. They have to be ordered and manufactured.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, continuing that -- last night, news from London quoted -- I think it quoted Averell Harriman as saying that there would be -- I think he said a doubling of output. Is there some basis not

now in existence? It gave me the impression that he meant more factories would be up -- something that would increase the output.

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't see the article, and I would hesitate to give any figure of anything like doubling. But, of course, it is true that there will be a whole lot of factories which will go into full production during the course of this autumn, which were started -- authorized by Congress at the beginning of the year, and have been building and we have been tooling them for the past eight or ten months; and they are now going into production.

Q Mr. President, in your speech, you disclosed that we had outposts in Labrador. I think that was new. Can you tell us anything about that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

MR. KINGSBURY-SMITH: Mr. President, could you tell us whether convoys figure in protection which the American Navy is now giving to ships on the American side of the Atlantic?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that what I said covers it sufficiently.

Q Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (adding) Amateur strategists should not think that there is only one method of protection.

MR. D. CORNELL: Mr. President, will there continue to be announcements of sinkings or attacks on American-owned vessels?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. It will depend on the military situation.

MR. D. CORNELL: Will there be announcements if there are any encounters between our naval ships?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. It will depend on the naval situation.

Q Mr. President, you have been known for some years as a very enthusiastic motion picture fan. Have you been impressed with the dangers of war

propaganda in motion pictures lately? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I have not. (he laughs)

Q There has been quite a hullabaloo about it.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Do you care to comment on the hullabaloo about it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I saw Berryman's cartoon in tonight's Star. I think it's worth reprinting. It's rather -- rather good. Are you familiar with that? (holding up copy of The Evening Star showing Jim Berryman's cartoon on the front page)

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Yesterday's? Is that today's?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) A picture of Charlie Chaplin. And he is standing in very much the old Charlie Chaplin attitude, holding a subpoena to appear before the Senate Committee investigating motion picture propaganda, and Charlie is saying, "Now, I -- now what could I possibly tell those past masters about comedy?" (laughter)

Q Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, I have got another one. I don't know whether it should be off the record or not.

MR. EARLY: The address should. (be off the record)

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. EARLY: The address should.

THE PRESIDENT: No. The man who wrote it. How about the fellow who got it?

MR. EARLY: I wouldn't tell them.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. EARLY: I wouldn't tell them his name.

THE PRESIDENT: It is to a Senator -- there are 96 of them, so that's perfectly safe.

MR. GODWIN: What State? (laughter)

MR. EARLY: (softly) Connecticut.

THE PRESIDENT: The date is September 10. It is addressed to Senator So and So, Washington, D. C.:

"Have just been reading book called Holy Bible. Has large circulation in this country. Written entirely by foreign-born, mostly Jews. First part full of war-mongering propaganda. Second part condemns Isolationism, with faked story about Samaritan. Dangerous. Should be added to your list and suppressed."

(laughter)

VOICE: Marvelous!

Q Mr. President, would you care ---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Could you tell us whom it is from?

THE PRESIDENT: What? No. Steve says I can't.

Q Mr. President, is there anything you can say about this proposal to bring back part of Arlington County into the District of Columbia?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q In connection with that war propaganda in the movies, there have been charges made that the Government has exerted pressure on them to make and distribute war propaganda films.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, the -- "Government" is a pretty broad word. The Head of the Administrative government has not.

Q Mr. President, you did say that there was more than one way of protecting ships. Many people have said that the STEEL SEAFARER would not have been sunk, and many of our other merchant ships would be much safer if they were armed. Do you think that is true?

THE PRESIDENT: That -- I don't think there is any news on that today at all.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Will you be asking soon for any change in the Neutrality

Act at this time?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any news on that either.

MR. ALFRED STEDMAN: Mr. President, with regard to the debate on foreign policy, some question is raised as to whether Republicans, who are strong supporters of the Administration's foreign policy would be opposed by Democratic candidates supported by the Administration, next year?

THE PRESIDENT: Only one general answer -- why drag party problems, or party questions into this picture of danger to the United States at this time? Either people who do the dragging, people on the Hill, or people down at this end of the Avenue, or newspapers or radio commentators or would-be candidates, or anybody else. I think it applies to us all.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment on the tax bill in its final form?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I haven't had a chance to see the final form.

Q Mr. President, in your discussion with Mr. Davis (William H. Davis, Nat. Def. Mediation Board) this morning, did the question of the so-called maintenance clause come up at the Kearny Shipbuilding conference?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Has that clause been ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I haven't got the faintest idea. You would have to ask somebody else.

Q There are reports of Axis sea-raiders near the Panama Canal. Can you comment about that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Wouldn't if I could.

Q Mr. President, does the Red Sea fit into the defensive waters of the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: No -- no news on that today.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

MR. GODWIN: (to the President) What about the gorilla?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: The gorilla?

MR. EARLY: (interposing) Didn't get time for it, Earl.

PRESS CONFERENCE #769,
Held in the Library of the President's Home
in Hyde Park, New York
September 19, 1941 -- 11.30 A.M., E.D.T.

VOICE: Grand weather!

THE PRESIDENT: Isn't it grand?

There isn't any use of your coming out, you fellows, except the fresh air is good for you. I think that's the only object in you boys coming out today.

I am trying to get out -- who is that over in the corner? -- Ann? (Ann Gillis of C.B.S.) Er -- I am trying to get out some more -- I have been doing it now for a couple of months -- the Navy books. They are more or less scattered all over the house, and they go down from here -- Tommy (Tom Qualters) packs them to go to Washington. They get the cards from the card index put in, and then they go to the Archives -- into the lethal chamber -- where they are gassed, and then they are sent up here to Mr. Shipman, who puts his people to work putting them away in their proper places, and get them -- the catalog -- to conform with the rest of his catalog. (To Mr. Shipman) How is the attendance holding up?

MR. SHIPMAN: Fairly well, Mr. President. The average has been, since Labor Day, about 180.

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Good.

MR. SHIPMAN: (continuing) This time of year it is very good.

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Fine.

MR. SHIPMAN: (continuing) We will have about 4,000, including the attendance on Labor Day.

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Uh-huh.

MR. SHIPMAN: (continuing) Well, it's too early, of course, to make any estimate for the fiscal year, but during the months of July and August we had an average of about 10,000 a month. Of course that will slow up during the winter, and will begin again in the spring, so that it will probably run -- total paid attendance -- if the same figures can continue, somewhere around 80,000 people the first year. And of course, a lot of other people free -- schoolchildren.

Q And newspapermen?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Newspapermen?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. You can go in any time at all.

MR. GEORGE DURNO: Free, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Shipman, take a look at him, his name is Durno, and he is called 'Dean' of all the boys, you see, and he gets in free.

MR. SHIPMAN: He gets in free? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: All right, George. That includes Durno and lady.

MR. SHIPMAN: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: That doesn't include more than one, though. (laughter)

I don't think I have got any news at all.

Q Mr. President, was this report that was published in Lord Beaverbrook's paper this morning about the American Navy destroying a raider -- was there any basis in fact on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't say anything about it, one way or the other. Now, that -- that is for the record.

Now I will tell you off the record. Mind you, this is off the record. We have absolutely no information whatsoever, at least we didn't up till last night. Never heard of it. But, if I were to say yes or

no, do you see, to your original question, "Was there any truth in it?" -- there might have been a raider destroyed far out to sea they never heard about. So if I said "No," I would be denying what Lord Beaverbrook had printed, and I can't say "No" because I never heard of it. So you see the dilemma I am in on that kind of a thing.

Literally, absolutely -- and this has got to be off the record -- there isn't -- there isn't a -- any information whatsoever, so Stark told me yesterday afternoon.

Q Could you tell us ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) All I can say is -- can't say anything about it.

Q It -- er -- may cause a little confusion.

THE PRESIDENT: I know. That's the difficulty about these things.

Q (interposing) There was some ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) On the question of odds, the chances are that it's ten to one there hasn't been a raider seen or destroyed. But there is just the one chance in ten that one was. We haven't heard about it, so what do we do?

Q Our officials were pointing out ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I know.

Q (continuing). -- in your press conference statement that you would not say whether any announcement should be made should a raider be destroyed, and later on Secretary Knox who said should a raider be destroyed we will tell the world ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) It's a question of timing. Still off the record. Of course it will come out, should we get a report. Suppose we have no reports -- but suppose we should get a report next week that a raider had been destroyed. Well, there might be reason for us to

hold up that story for a week. Maybe we would find a rendezvous with another raider somewhere, or an oil ship. Obviously, the thing to do would be to keep quiet about the rendezvous ourselves. Now there are all kinds of things that can happen in operations of this kind. You will get it all right, but we have got to say when.

Q During the last war, weren't sinkings held up -- submarines in particular?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh my, yes.

Q For military reasons?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q They didn't know what was happening?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q In fact, I think they had a strike on ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) In Germany.

Q In Kiel.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, have you seen any of this printed talk about whether there will be elections in 1942?

THE PRESIDENT: On what? Let us see. This is the only thing I can say. I hadn't -- er -- seen it, but I guess I had better answer it off the record. (laughter) That this is still summer, until the 21st, which is day after tomorrow. Therefore, this is still a solstice. (laughter)

Q That is off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: That is off the record.

Q I have an inquiry, Mr. President, as to what you talked about ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What you call heat madness. (laughter)

Q It's nice and cool here.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but it did not originate here. (laughter)

Q I said the subject of your conversation with Chief of Police Kelly in Washington. They would like to know if there is anything particular ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. I will tell you what the only thing we talked about was. I was very glad to find that he is a very old friend of Valentine's in New York -- Police Commissioner -- and he is going to talk with their Police Chief Valentine, and others, in regard to the whole traffic problem in Washington, which is a serious one, and there is no other city with the same kind of a problem as Washington, D. C. And he told me he was very anxious to help improve things, and is going to talk with Traffic Departments of other cities.

Q Are you referring, sir, to the rush-hour traffic situation, when you say that?

THE PRESIDENT: Partly that, and partly -- I won't say bad driving, but it probably will improve the standard of driving. (he laughs)

MR. J. EMSLEY: Mr. President, the munitions manufacturing company down below Poughkeepsie, you know, seems to be making good progress.

THE PRESIDENT: What is it, the old ---

MR. J. EMSLEY: (interposing) That's the old Delapenha plant.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes.

MR. J. EMSLEY: They seem to be making very good progress. And Mr. Hart, the president, told me this week that they were going to expand further and that -- er -- apparently the Government had assigned them some more orders that were not anticipated previously.

THE PRESIDENT: Are they producing yet?

MR. J. EMSLEY: Well, in a very limited way. Of course they had to get the job set up, and after all they only took over the property in April, and they are making very good progress.

THE PRESIDENT: What are they making?

MR. J. EMSLEY: They are going to make aircraft cannon.

THE PRESIDENT: Uh huh.

MR. J. EMSLEY: (continuing) And they have on hand this raw material -- barrel stock largely, and they have a good many machine tools set up in the old plant, which used to be the old factory plant.

THE PRESIDENT: They are not doing the forgings?

MR. J. EMSLEY: No.

THE PRESIDENT: They make the rough barrel?

MR. J. EMSLEY: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: And machine it?

MR. J. EMSLEY: Yes, and -- er -- they are going -- as I understand it, however, they are going to examine the old unit because they are planning these test pits -- test tunnels, and -- er -- I thought it was interesting. And everybody here is pleased.

THE PRESIDENT: I will drive down and see it, sometime.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Are you going to be here long this time?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Probably only to Sunday or Monday. I don't know which.

MR. J. EMSLEY: You probably would not get down this week?

MR. DURNO: Mr. President, you brought the tax bill up with you?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I brought it up.

MR. G. DURNO: Are you going to act on it today?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. It depends on whether I get time enough to go through the bill itself, and also go through the various analyses of the bill that have come from the Treasury Department.

MR. G. DURNO: Isn't there some -- er -- hurry about signing it?

THE PRESIDENT: Very little. Nearly -- a very large part of it applies to

the -- the much greater part of it applies, of course, to the fiscal year and all the corporate taxes and the others. There are two or three things -- er -- which apply as of October -- I think it's October first.

Q That's right.

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, holding it up a couple of days won't cost the Government anything.

Q They have been using a figure -- er -- of three million dollars a day.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. How could they possibly get that?

Q There are no taxes ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I only got it yesterday afternoon. I think I am entitled to 48 hours to read it. If you ever saw it, you would think that was pretty good speed. (laughter)

Q There are no taxes that are effective immediately upon your signature in the bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, the inheritance tax.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Mr. President, has the time come when you can tell us anything about the conversations -- the discussions that have been going on about Japan with Admiral Nomura?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I can't tell you anything about it.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Can you tell us anything about the nature of your discussions in the last few days with Mr. Hull?

THE PRESIDENT: No. We see each other, or telephone almost every day, you might say. As you know, when I am up here, I talk to him every day on the telephone.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: You saw Secretary Hull and Admiral Stark together?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but that was a coincidence. Stark and Nimitz came in, and I kept Stark over.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Mr. President, just one other thing: In Poughkeepsie -- Dutchess County -- there seems to be some want of, and a scattered arrangement of housing these various volunteer defense committees, etc. Er -- and there are a good many women too who are interested, as well as the defense councils. And I wondered whether, just as a matter of suggestion, whether the -- whether you might think that the old Post Office building would serve as a temporary central setup for that part of it, and do you think that is a good idea, or not?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I would have to see, first of all, whether -- whether the people here -- the defense people -- wanted it.

MR. J. EMSLEY: (interjecting) Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: (Continuing) If they did want it, send me an application for use of it, and I will send it over to the Post Office Department.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Offhand, doesn't the thing sort of sound good to you? I mean ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't see why not, but, after all they ought to have something to say about it, if they are going to live there.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: There is nobody in it now?

MR. J. EMSLEY: No. Of course, you know, the plan was at one time to possibly house the established Federal Agencies in this vicinity there.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

MR. J. EMSLEY: And of course you remember the Poughkeepsie situation.

THE PRESIDENT: I remember it well.

Q Mr. President, is there anything you can tell us about this ship strike in New York?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know any more than you do about it.

Q It looks like we are not going to get a story.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe there is a story.

Q Are you going to do anything about Mr. Hassett's State of Vermont going to war?

THE PRESIDENT: About what?

Q Going to war the other day -- the State of Vermont?

Q Yes -- the State Legislature.

THE PRESIDENT: I could not say anything in Bill Hassett's presence.

Q No Neutrality Proclamation?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q No Neutrality Proclamation?

THE PRESIDENT: As between Bill Hassett and the State of Vermont, I think the situation is too delicate. (laughter)

Off the record, there's another thing: I -- I had a little bit of a problem when I was Governor of New York. I had to open -- this is off the record -- the bridge between -- over Lake -- Lake Champlain -- between New York and Vermont. And the dear, sweet old Governor of Vermont -- old man Weeks, was about 80 years old, and he was a perfect old darling. He was just as nice as he could be. And we drove over -- we met in the middle, and he held one side of a pair of scissors and I held the other side, and we cut the ribbon that opened the bridge.

I drove over to the Vermont side, and right down by the approach at the Vermont side was a very nice farm. And by way of conversation, I said, "Governor, there's a nice farm down there. It won't be very nice to live there, what with all this bridge traffic going over it."

"Hmmm," he said, "they paid one thousand dollars too much for that

farm." (laughter)

He was grand. Then we came back again for the speech-making, and I put on a very serious face, and said how embarrassed I was, as Governor of New York, to have to take part in a ceremony with a large slice of the United States which had seceded years ago from the State of New York, and the State had never recognized that Vermont had seceded from the State of New York, and we did not quite know what to do.

Well, the poor old boy -- all the Vermonters saw no humor in it whatsoever -- (laughter) -- as being a little too subtle, but all my New York friends thought it was a grand joke. He was a great boy, old Weeks was. Do you remember him?

MR. HASSETT: Yes. He's still going strong.

THE PRESIDENT: Is he really? Well, he must be happy, because the bridge is paid.

Q A familiar ring in that voice.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q A familiar ring in that voice.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Still Durno's turn to go to church, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Didn't he go the last time?

MR. G. DURNO: I did, and you weren't there. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: That was why the Rector reported that he got a good collection that day.

Q That's it.

MR. G. DURNO: I was the bald-headed boy in the Processional.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (laughter)

MR. G. DURNO: (adding) And also the Recessional.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I have no idea yet. It's too early. It depends on a great many things.

Q Well, thank you, sir.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Good-bye. Good-bye.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #770,
Executive Offices of the President,
September 23, 1941 -- 4.00 P.M., E.S.T.

THE PRESIDENT: (to Mr. Godwin) How is the traffic situation getting on?

MR. GODWIN: Russ (John Russell Young, D.C., Commissioner) says he wants more common sense and fewer experts.

THE PRESIDENT: Who does?

MR. GODWIN: Russ, the Senator.

THE PRESIDENT: That's all right.

MR. GODWIN: (laughing) That's his slogan.

THE PRESIDENT: Of course, the real answer is: more common sense on the part of car drivers in Washington.

MR. GODWIN: We don't care where it comes from. (he laughs)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I just got word from the Navy Department that that ship that the State Department told you about this morning was sunk on Friday last, at 23 hours and 25 minutes G.M.T. (Greenwich Mean Time) on Friday night, which of course, if you work it out for the position of the ship at the time, was Saturday morning, obviously. 23.25, for those of you who don't go on a 24-hour day, means 11.25 p.m., and G.M.T. means Zero time, or Greenwich time; which translated into the position of the ship would be -- er -- oh, what? -- two or three hours difference in time. I am wrong on that -- it wouldn't have been Saturday morning, it would be early in the evening (Friday) at that time.

Q Nine o'clock.

THE PRESIDENT: The latitude was 61 (degrees) 36 (minutes) North. The longitude was 35 (degrees) 07 (minutes) West. And for those of you who

haven't got maps, it was about 275 miles northeast of Cape Farewell, which is the southern tip of Greenland.

Q Northeast?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Obviously it could not be Northwest, because then it would have been the other side of Greenland.

MR. GODWIN: What was that longitude?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: What was that longitude?

THE PRESIDENT: 37 (degrees) 07 (minutes). I mean -- I am wrong. 35 (degrees) 07 (minutes).

MR. GODWIN: 07?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. KINGSBURY-SMITH: Mr. President, any indication as to what happened to the crew?

THE PRESIDENT: No word as to whether there are any survivors or not. The only information we have is that it was a submarine attack, and the ship was in company with a Canadian-escorted convoy.

Q Was the ship bound for Britain, or for Iceland, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Iceland.

Q For Iceland?

THE PRESIDENT: Yup.

MR. GODWIN: How did you get the word on this?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I can tell you that.

Q Mr. President, was it a general cargo, or any specific cargo?

THE PRESIDENT: General cargo.

MR. KINGSBURY-SMITH: Mr. President, do you think that these ships that are being sunk so -- er -- rapidly, should be provided with some measures of self-defense?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a pending question.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) In other words, this whole thing -- if we look at it from the point of view of each little detail, aren't we rather greatly overlooking, or tending to overlook the main objective, which is national defense? And by going into the details of this, that or the other thing, aren't we drawing a 'red herring' across the objective of national defense?

It has been made perfectly clear what is happening in this world today. The world is facing the most outrageous history -- er -- the most outrageous movement in all history, literally all history of the world up to the present time -- recorded history.

A certain group of people is trying to dominate the whole world, and we are trying to defend the Americas against that attempted domination.

Congress has made it perfectly clear that a part of that defense is to try to help, in every way we can, those people who are conducting active war against this attempted domination of the world. It is part of our work. We are doing all we can to help them. And, incidentally, to prevent -- er -- the dictators from gaining footholds, or acquiring positions where they could immediately and directly threaten us. That is why we have got American troops in Iceland today. That is why we are keeping the lanes open. That is why we are trying to get stuff over to England safely, for their use -- munitions, and foodstuffs -- to keep them going in this battle.

I don't think that there is much argument that is justified -- with honesty -- in trying to obscure the main objectives, by talking

about whether the ship was in convoy, or was not; whether the ship was armed, or was not; whether the ship was carrying the Panama flag, or the United States flag. They are just 'red herrings' drawn across the trail of the main purpose of this Hemisphere. Thank you. That's all for today.

Q Mr. President ---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Mr. President, if you had ---
(interposing)

THE PRESIDENT: / I said that was all for today.

MR. GODWIN: Let me make a statement in favor of it. You can always squelch a poor reporter. Er -- if it is -- if it is a matter of details, suppose we look at some of the details, isn't it easier to defend the Administration's position, and the United States, with guns on the ships than without?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it is.

MR. GODWIN: Is that a fair question?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you are right, and I think probably that we are heading toward the arming of American merchant ships, and possibly the providing of arms to the merchant ships of -- let us say -- other American nations. This particular ship (Pink Star) did carry a gun. Panama registry. American ownership.

MR. GODWIN: May I ask a question of fact? In history, on this thing, the arming of merchant ships was an ordinary affair, under the -- under international law, was it, or not? Under a plain principle of international law, but before we had the Neutrality Act?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, absolutely and clearly. Now, you take the examples that I have used of the -- of the so-called quasi-war against France in 1798. Nearly all of our merchant ships were armed, and a great many

of them, because of their armament, beat off French privateers. Same way in the War of 1812; a great many of our merchant ships were armed, and -- er -- in accordance with, as you say, international law ---

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- beat off the attacks of British privateers.

And there were a great many cases of -- er -- American -- er -- privately owned ships, that were armed for voyages into the Mediterranean, which beat off the attacks of Barbary Corsairs. There isn't any question about that.

Q Mr. President, assuming ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) According to present law it forbids that.

MR. GODWIN: Yes, sir.

Q Mr. President, if we are going to arm merchant ships, we have got to amend the present Neutrality Law, that is right?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that is right.

Q Then is it going to be piecemeal repeal on that from now on, or are you going ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, that's the thing that's under consideration at the present time, but there probably won't be any decision on it until next week.

Q That's bigger than a 'red herring'?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. In other words, the problem is how much we will ask in the way of repeal.

Q Mr. President, while we are on the subject of merchant ships, have you anything to say regarding the seamen's strike? (Seafarer's International Union, A.F.L.)

THE PRESIDENT: The what?

Q The seamen's strike?

THE PRESIDENT: The seamen's strike is being certified this afternoon by the -- er -- at the request of the Maritime Commission, and by the Department of Labor, to the National Mediation Board.

Q Mr. President, assuming that the policy in relation to this case was pretty well said in your speech a few days ago, doesn't this case only forbid adequacy of protection?

THE PRESIDENT: This particular sinking of this ship?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's just another -- another instance. In other words, we are doing everything we can to protect ships. On the -- on the -- this -- er -- shipping pool thing -- those ships -- of course it is perfectly clear that -- er -- those ships have got to move. They simply can't be kept tied up.

Q Would it be possible then, Mr. President, for the Maritime Commission to take over the majority of the merchant lines?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think we can go into that at the present time. I don't think you can go beyond the -- I don't think you can go into method or detail at the present time, but you can use the statement that I said that the ships have got to move. They can't be kept tied up because of labor disputes. And at the same time, the trouble is being referred to the National Mediation Board, to see if it can be amicably pooled.

MR. GODWIN: And the ships have got to move?

THE PRESIDENT: But the ships have got to move.

Q Mr. President, to refresh our memory, when you were in the Navy in 1917, were merchant vessels armed by a fiat of the Government, or did it go to Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: I think Congress did it, but I think also, as I remember it -- this is just recollection -- you have got to check ---

Q (interposing) No, Mr. President, there was a filibuster in 1917.

Q Filibuster.

THE PRESIDENT: No, that was a filibuster up to the 4th of March. Then, when the Special Session began, and almost immediately afterwards ---

Q (interposing) In the meantime, President Wilson said he had the power.

Could he do it?

THE PRESIDENT: He did it. And more than that, I remember distinctly that beginning about the -- er -- 5th of February, when I got back from Haiti and San Domingo -- er -- with the approval of Mr. Daniels (Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy at that time) we went ahead ordering the guns with which to arm the ships.

Q Mr. President, that was between the 4th of March and the 7th of April that we went ahead with it.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Congress convened around the 5th or 6th of April.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that's right.

Q Mr. President, have you already ordered the guns for arming our merchant ships?

THE PRESIDENT: The answer to that is that we are building every type of gun that is useful -- that can be used -- as fast as we can do it, under the present appropriations and orders.

Q Mr. President, from what you said, apparently Panama wants us to put some crews on those ships?

THE PRESIDENT: I -- I couldn't tell you whether there are any.

MR. GODWIN: If there are any more, how many?

THE PRESIDENT: Panamanian flag ships are either armed or being armed. You would have to find that out from somebody else.

Q Could you tell us are all the other American ships able to arm themselves if they want to, with legislation?

THE PRESIDENT: Some of them would have -- er -- guns on them, and others probably have not got sufficient guns.

Q But legally, sir, can they arm?

THE PRESIDENT: Legally we can Lend-Lease the guns to them.

Q Do any of those countries have laws prohibiting the arming of ships, as we still have?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. (he laughs)

Q Are you discussing with them the problem of arming their ships?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. You will have to ask the State Department.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what type of gun this boat (Pink Star) had? Was it an anti-aircraft gun, or a gun capable of defending it from a surface raider?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, an anti-aircraft gun can fire right out straight, as well as up in the air.

Q Some are not very effective though, used against a surface vessel.

THE PRESIDENT: It depends on the distance.

Q I see.

Q Mr. President, if it will be decided next week, will it be a Message?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know that.

Q Mr. President, Secretary Knox said the other day that we did not have enough guns to arm our merchant ships. Is that a problem you are considering too?

THE PRESIDENT: That is -- that is true, if you count all of our merchant men.

Q Do you have enough for the ships that are engaged in that particular run we have ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I should say so.

Q (continuing) --- across the Atlantic?

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President. (then to the President) Good story.

THE PRESIDENT: Good story. It's all right.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #771,
Executive Office of the President,
September 30, 1941 -- 4:10 p.m., E.S.T.

THE PRESIDENT: (to Mr. Early) Do you want to have that mimeographed for them?

MR. EARLY: Sure.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

(the President confers briefly with Mr. Early)

MR. EARLY: You announced it. It's all Lend-Lease. That's all right.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes?

This is rather an old story for headline artists, but it is -- it is quite interesting, I think. It relates to a ship that was sunk four or five days ago, and therefore it is hardly front-page stuff now, but it is still interesting.

You were asking about the cargo of the Pink Star. And what I want to emphasize is that -- er -- the ship was bound for Iceland, and then was going to put ashore, on Iceland, part of the cargo, for the population, and for the -- er -- troops in Iceland. Then was going on to -- er -- Great Britain.

But what I want to emphasize in some of these figures is what -- what it means to American defense, and the fact that it has got to be replaced. The orders have got to be -- er -- started on their way again. The material has got to be purchased, which may take some time, because we may have to wait our turn. And eventually the replaced cargo will go on its way, on -- in another ship.

Most of this cargo was food, which of course, I suppose, is contraband of war, under some rules, because the maintenance of the bodies of a nation which is fighting for its existence is rather important.

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You can't eat tanks, or guns, or planes, and that was the principal part of the cargo of this ship.

For instance, she carried enough cheddar cheese, which I think is made -- it is made in a great many places in this country -- Wisconsin and others -- to feed more than three and a half million laborers for a whole week under the current British rations. This cheese on this little boat -- she was a little boat -- represented one year's milk production of more than 2,000 cows.

Then she carried powdered milk, the equivalent of more than 432,000 quarts.

She carried evaporated milk, a year's production of 300 cows. The equivalent of more than a million and a quarter quarts of fresh milk.

She carried -- er -- concentrated orange juice, enough to supply the vitamin C requirements of 91,000 individuals for 12 days.

She carried pork products, representing approximately 8,000 hogs. And she carried lard, representing the bi-product production from some 87,000 hogs.

She carried the -- she carried corn, representing the production of more than 600 acres. She carried tractors that could have ploughed up 715 acres a day, and mechanical potato diggers that could have dug up 250 acres a day.

Then she carried something -- a very small amount of what might be called military supplies. The metallic links for machine gun belts, which of course is a very small matter in bulk, but every belt has to have metallic links. Enough of those little links to arm 10 squadrons of fighter planes.

And she carried some small machine tools, enough to require the

labor of 300 workers for four months. These tools were primarily for use in making aircraft engines.

Now all of that has got to be re-ordered. As I said, some of it can be bought quickly off shelves, and other parts will have to be manufactured. Start all over again. And that shows one reason why we consider it rather necessary for our own American defense, to get things of that kind over to the people who are doing the actual fighting, which is first, of course, for their own preservation, but of almost equal importance to the defense of the United States.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) And I say, that's a pretty stale story; but there it is.

Q Mr. President, on this subject of ships sinking, there are rumors floating around London, and Vichy, and in several of the other capitals this afternoon, that the American ship CAESAR has been sunk near Iceland. Have you received such a report?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. Never heard of it.

Q Mr. President, a question along that line: You stated sometime ago, sir, that your 'rule of thumb' policy was fifty-fifty on shipping our defense armament abroad.

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) Since that time Russia has been invaded, and we have a mission in Moscow that promises the greatest aid possible. Can you tell us anything about a new 'rule of thumb' under present conditions?

THE PRESIDENT: No. That's still the 'rule of thumb'. And of course, as I said, being a 'rule of thumb', it does not mean fifty-fifty on every single item. Probably average fifty-fifty, and -- er -- in some cases,

where there seem to be immediate and very emergent needs, we are increasing the 50% that is going abroad on certain items, and perhaps decreasing it on others at the same time. A certain proportion of items which -- er -- had been allocated to Great Britain has now been reallocated to Russia.

Q Mr. President, at the time you gave us that fifty-fifty rule -- it -- you were talking specifically about aircraft. Does that still apply?

THE PRESIDENT: I was talking about everything.

Q Does that still apply?

THE PRESIDENT: On some things; some not.

Q Mr. President, you mean allocate it under the Lend-Lease Act?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no, no.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (Continuing) Purchased -- let us say a paper transaction turned back before they are taken off Lend-Lease and sold to Russia.

Q Mr. President, there are suggestions that we divert all of our production to Russia, not Great Britain, for a stated period. Er -- do you think that is feasible, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard the suggestion.

Q Congressman May made the suggestion.

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't heard.

Q Mr. President, have you decided the extent to which you would like to see the Neutrality Act modified?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet. Still under study.

Q Have you decided, sir, whether you will send a Message?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet.

Q Mr. President, it is also suggested that the Draft be limited, or perhaps

limited altogether; or that phase of the conscript army be frozen where it is now. Do you have any reactions you care to express?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I would like to know who suggested it. I would like to send him to St. Elizabeth's here across the river.

Q Mr. President, there is an inventory of ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q There is an inventory of trucks and busses. Has it been started? I understand you have had some report on it?

THE PRESIDENT: On trucks?

Q On trucks and busses. A defense survey.

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't heard it. No.

Q Mr. President, -- er -- the State Department got out a letter from the Polish Ambassador today showing that the Russians are going to allow the Poles to have their own churches.

THE PRESIDENT: I have just got it -- the mimeographed State Department letter -- but I also got it from another source this morning.

Q Would you care to make any comment on it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. It speaks for itself.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) As I think I suggested a week or two ago, some of you might find it useful to read Article 124 of the Constitution of Russia.

Q What does that say, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I haven't learned it by heart sufficiently to quote -- I might be off a little bit, but anyway: Freedom of conscience ---

Q (interposing) Would you say ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) ---Freedom of religion. Freedom equally to

use propacanda against religion, which is essentially what is the rule in this country, only we don't put it quite the same way.

For instance, you might go out tomorrow on -- to the corner of -- er -- Pennsylvania Avenue, down below the Press Club, and stand on a soap-box and -- er -- preach Christianity, and nobody would stop you. And then, if it got into your head, perhaps the next day preach against religion of all kinds, and nobody would stop you.

Q Mr. President, will the -- still speaking of Russia -- will the Lend-Lease Act terms be extended to Russia? *

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. That is the thing that nobody knows at the present time.

Q Mr. President, to go back to the Pink Star cargo, I suppose it is to condition us for something, but I don't know just what.

THE PRESIDENT: To what?

Q Condition us for something, but I don't know just what. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I think, up in Maine, you won't have to go without much.

Q Mr. President, the impression seems to prevail that the exploratory talks with Japan are not going too well. Could you tell us anything about that?

THE PRESIDENT: You would have to ask the State Department.

Q Mr. President, do you endorse the suggestion of Mr. Morgenthau that all profits over six per cent be taxed 100%?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that's a Treasury matter. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything about your talk today with Ambassador Daniels?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I did not get much of a chance to talk to him. He is coming back in two weeks.

Q Mr. President ---

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment to make on what Governor Stassen (Governor Harold E. Stassen of Minnesota) said as President of the Conference of Governors, at the convention to support the established foreign policy of the Government?

THE PRESIDENT: To support what?

Q The established foreign policies of the Government?

THE PRESIDENT: I did not know that had happened.

Q It's today, at Indianapolis.

THE PRESIDENT: Mmmm. I used to be on the Executive Committee of the Council of Governors. We used to pass resolutions occasionally.

Q Mr. President, do you think Russia will be able to hold out this winter?

THE PRESIDENT: Now, honestly -- do you expect me to answer a question of that kind?

Q I thought you might like to encourage them.

THE PRESIDENT: It's what they call a 'rhetorical' question. Right?

Q Mr. President, do you think this is an opportune time to revise the Social Security structure to increase taxes?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I took that up this morning, and they have gone back to do some more homework. And -- er -- it seems probable that pretty soon I will make a recommendation to the Congress for a more generally inclusive -- er -- law, to cover a great many people in this country who are not covered at the present time, in various groups outside of the strictly industrial groups, which are the only ones covered at the present time; and seeking to accomplish three things:

The first is to make the -- the -- er -- coverage as wide as possible. That means Unemployment Insurance and Old Age Pensions.

And -- er -- the second is to try to work out a method by which

the -- er -- Federal aid will be extended more greatly to the poorer states, which, because of -- er -- very, very low taxable values -- actual values -- very low average -- er -- earning power on the part of the individual, are literally unable to -- to comply with the matching method which is now in force.

As you know, some States -- the richer States -- are fully capable of supplementing the Federal Government contributions, so that the old-age people can get as high as \$30.00 a month. Whereas, in some States, the -- er -- wealth -- per capita wealth, or earning power, is so low that all they can pay out of the State treasury is somewhere around \$4.00 or \$6.00 a month. And of course those are areas -- where there is the -- er -- lowest per capita income -- which really are most in need of a better standard of living. And we are looking for some formula -- which has already been pretty well worked out -- by which that can be accomplished.

In other words, we will reverse the old idea 'To him that hath shall be given' and go to help the people that 'hath not'. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, is it also planned to build up a larger Unemployment reserve?

THE PRESIDENT: No. That should carry along each year with a relatively small reserve.

Q Mr. President, will this cost a great deal in taxes?

THE PRESIDENT: What? Wait a minute.

Q Will it be necessary to increase taxes -- payroll taxes?

THE PRESIDENT: It might be, yes. Larger contributions.

Q Mr. President, at the time of your Budget Message, the per capita income formula was ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- under consideration.

THE PRESIDENT: That was the one they were working on. Well, we haven't got this thing in shape yet, even for a message, but the idea is that this would be put in as a Message to this Congress, with the -- er -- two-fold hope that if a more widely established Social Security is passed, and relatively soon, it is going to help in two ways:

First, it is going to be a slight deterrent against inflation. Of course you all understand that. And the other reason is that when the emergency is over, and we come to the readjustment period, the more people we have under a standard Social Security system, the easier the transition is going to be.

Q Mr. President, you only made two points. You said three.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, those two were the next one.

Q Mr. President, does this include any general increase of the top limit above the present \$30.00?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q There have been suggestions that you were in favor of a larger amount.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, we haven't got down to details. We are working more on the problem of principle at the present time, rather than figures, except that we are trying to make it as self-sustaining as it is possible to do.

Q How about the age limit?

THE PRESIDENT: 65.

Q 65?

Q Have you solved the problem of collections in the matter of farm labor?

THE PRESIDENT: They have got two or three things they are still talking

about. That again -- that's the detail of it and not the principle of it.

Q Didn't you send a Message on that once?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, Secretary Morgenthau has a plan for a separation wage, where the employee would put money aside from his pay-check. He would receive it back when he left the firm. Has that been discussed?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Isn't that about the same as buying Baby Bonds on the installment plan? The effect is the same.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Mr. President.

(some of the newspapermen start to file out)

Q How many more millions of people would be covered by this extension than you are now covering?

THE PRESIDENT: About double it.

Q How many people would that be?

THE PRESIDENT: Roughly, I'd say -- this is a wild guess -- you had better check, for Heaven's Sake -- forty to eighty million.

Q One more question, Mr. President: Governor Maybank announced sometime ago your tentative acceptance to attend maneuvers in North Carolina. Have your plans passed the tentative stage?

THE PRESIDENT: Not just yet -- the usual hope.

Q Thank you, sir.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #772,
Executive Office of the President,
October 3, 1941 -- 10.50 A.M., E.S.T.

(the Hon. Joseph Davies was a guest at this Press Conference)

THE PRESIDENT: (to Mr. Davies) Haven't you been to one of these parties before?

MR. DAVIES: No, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't you? I didn't know that.

MR. GODWIN: Is Joe Davies a Democrat?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: Is he a Democrat?

THE PRESIDENT: No. He's a Russian.

MR. GODWIN: (to Mr. Davies) Hi, Joe! (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Off the record.

MR. GODWIN: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: He lives on caviar now.

MR. GODWIN: I know he does.

THE PRESIDENT: Is that right you live on caviar?

MR. DAVIES: When we can get it.

Q (handing newspaper clipping to the President) Here is something that might interest you.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I am trying to get up for you for next Tuesday -- I hope I will have it by then -- some rather amazing -- rather disturbing figures about the health of the people of the United States. I am trying to get for you some kind of a breakdown on the -- er -- er -- percentage of the Selectees who were turned down because of physical conditions. It

is a rather alarming story. It came to me -- I was so worried by it, I thought I would do some checking. That is all we can do now. A very high percentage of physically unfit young men who were in the original draft selection.

MR. GODWIN: Do your observations take into consideration that the standards are pretty high, at least they seem to be pretty high?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, in some respects they are high, and in other respects, they are a good deal lower than they are in normal times. If in -- for example, in the -- in the Navy, where there are no Selectees, the -- the actual standards have been let down just a little bit, compared with the normal standards of the pre-emergency.

Q Mr. President, -- er -- I was talking to a man recently who has been turned down as physically disabled. He said he was just completing a seventy-mile hike, including a climb to Mount Whitney. How do you think that would bear on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I would have to know more about the case. He might have had a bad heart at that. I am no mountain climber to know whether you can climb mountains with a bad heart.

Q Mr. President, in this connection, do you have in mind a program of health insurance, in connection with Social Security?

THE PRESIDENT: Not -- that hasn't been discussed in this particular thing.

Q What about using ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q What about using it to condition the boys?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it opens up a very big field. If you remember, dear old Mr. Taft, when he left the White House, went to New Haven, and did a great deal of work -- er -- I have forgotten what the organization

was called, but it was -- the purpose of it was to persuade everybody -- every man and every woman, to get a physical examination once a year. And that was a matter of very great public interest. That was an awful long time ago. We haven't heard much about it since. It does raise the -- the question of a physical checkup for everybody.

Q It would be a remarkable way of conditioning the boys?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Those that would have been rejected, after six months could be accepted?

THE PRESIDENT: A great many of these boys who are being rejected could be put in such shape that they would be better able to serve. A great many of them, a very large percentage.

Q What about Mr. Kelly's program, sir, to get America on its feet?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they are working on it -- I don't know -- you will have to find out. It is supposed to be moving.

MR. G. DURNO: Mr. President, -- er -- could you tell us whether you gave Mr. Harriman instructions, before he took the American delegation to Moscow, to take up the question of religious freedom?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Yes, I did.

MR. G. DURNO: Er -- well, has Ambassador Steinhardt, (Laurence A. Steinhardt, U. S. Ambassador to Russia) or any other ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, I can't go into details, but I have done it before.

MR. G. DURNO: I beg your pardon?

THE PRESIDENT: I have done it before.

MR. G. DURNO: You have done it before? Anyone besides Ambassador Steinhardt?

THE PRESIDENT: I say, I can't go into details.

Q How long before?

THE PRESIDENT: Fairly recently.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Has that question also been taken up by Mr. Myron Taylor with the Pope, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I will have to wait until Myron Taylor gets back.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Have you had any reports, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: By the way, I think Myron Taylor is due today, isn't he?

Q He is in Lisbon, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q I think he is in Lisbon.

THE PRESIDENT: Uh huh.

Q Have you had any reports, sir, from Mr. Harriman on that particular ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. Not yet, no.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Do you have cause to believe, sir, that these overtures might result in some success?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't tell you anything more, because Mr. Harriman hasn't reported yet.

MISS M. CRAIG: Mr. President, is this a start on one of the Four Freedoms?

THE PRESIDENT: A what?

MISS M. CRAIG: Is this a start on one of the Four Freedoms?

THE PRESIDENT: Er -- I think, May, if you had read what I have been saying for eight years, you wouldn't have asked that question.

MISS M. CRAIG: I have tried to ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) My own record, don't you think that's pretty good? Huh?

Q Mr. President, do you overrule Mr. Churchill, or does he overrule you?

The question is about this Lend-Lease program. He calls it Lease-Lend,

and you call it Lend-Lease. (laughter) We are worried about style.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is information that you have given me. I didn't know that that -- I didn't know that that terrible situation exists.

Q Mr. President, what is the status of the Neutrality proposals?

THE PRESIDENT: The what?

Q The status of Neutrality revision?

THE PRESIDENT: Won't be anything more until probably next Tuesday. I am having a meeting sometime next Tuesday.

Q Have you decided, sir, to send a Message?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't say anything until then.

Q You have decided not to send a Message?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Have you decided not to send a Message?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't tell you until I have talked to those people next Tuesday.

Q Who are you planning to talk to?

THE PRESIDENT: I think probably the Senate Leaders -- er -- with possibly -- er -- Congressman Bloom there as an observer from the House.

Q Does that mean a bipartisan group of Senate Leaders, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, are you aware of the statement that Senator Pepper issued last night? You may not be able to say anything about it, but he had the suggestion that you could do all this, by simply revoking the parts of the Proclamation -- by wiping out these zones -- torpedo zones -- keep-off-the-ocean signs. And I would like to ask whether that is with your acquiescence?

THE PRESIDENT: Never heard of it, Earl. Of course, you come down to a

thing like that, to making zones, to -- don't -- don't use this, except the way I -- the way I put it. In other words, don't construe it. You know what happens to construction. Sometimes they are wrong, and sometimes it is your fault, and sometimes it is my fault.

But you come down to a -- to a question of what is a dangerous zone. Now, let us say that there is some area in the ocean where one ship out of 500 gets sunk. Question: Is that a danger zone? All right. There is another area of the ocean where five ships out of 500 get sunk. Is that a danger zone? There is another -- er -- section where ten ships out of 500 get sunk. Is that a danger zone? Well, it's always a question of -- er -- somebody's got to decide it. And the law doesn't give any percentage as to whether it's a danger zone or not.

You had a very good illustration, I think it was last week, when some of the merchant crew went out because they wanted a bonus for going down to the West Indies. Well, is the West Indies a danger zone? They claimed it was. Of course, actually, we know that there haven't been any sinkings down there.

MR. GODWIN: The law -- the law directs you, I believe, sir, to make these decisions yourself, and make the proclamation ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) Isn't that so?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. It becomes a question of interpreting whether -- what constitutes danger, what percentage. It's like the old question of -- of the effectiveness of a blockade. If you put a blockade around a given area and -- er -- under the old international law -- I would almost say international law, which is partly dead now. A blockade is

instituted against a coast. All right. If the ships bound for that place -- for that coast get through -- through the blockade, is it an effective blockade? In another case one quarter of the ships headed there get through. Is that an effective blockade?

In the case of the Confederacy -- the United States -- the North proclaimed a blockade of the Southern coast. England didn't recognize it, because every once in a while a blockade-runner would slip through, going in or getting out. We said it was effective. England said it wasn't effective.

Q Well, Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Is this to say, sir, that you feel that the combat zones which have been proclaimed by you may be repealed?

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't construe it. I am simply stating the problem. See what I mean?

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, don't you think that American ships should be kept out of zones that you have considered dangerous?

THE PRESIDENT: The law says that. The law says that. It is a question of the definition of the word 'danger'. Now, don't construe this as meaning that I am headed for this, that, or the other thing. I am merely stating an actual fact of the difficulty of determining -- of defining the word. That's all.

Q Mr. President, that wouldn't get into a more fundamental question of arming a ship, would it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. That's a different thing.

Q That requires Congressional action?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, doesn't the arming of a ship also depend on prior issuance of a proclamation by you on a state of war?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. A prior proclamation?

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) No.

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

MR. GODWIN: Well, Mr. President, is it possible that you will welcome repeal of the Neutrality Act? That may sound like a foolish question, but there is so much confusion about it.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, there is going to be some effort undoubtedly to do something with the Neutrality Act. I won't be able to tell you until next Tuesday.

Q Mr. President, when you say that arming of merchant ships is a different thing that will require Congressional action, do you mean that new Congressional consideration will be necessary concerning the question of combat areas?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No. They are unrelated.

Q Mr. President, isn't this question you were just talking about deciding what is dangerous and what is not, something that is your responsibility under the law? That is up to you finally, isn't it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Do you have any idea if that section of law has mentioned the arming of ships in those zones by you on ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I hadn't thought of the subject until it was brought up this morning.

Q Well, Mr. President, could you explain why Congressional authority is needed for arming the Merchant Marine today, when Wilson armed them without Congressional authority?

THE PRESIDENT: You had better ask a good lawyer. (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: (aside) Where is there one?

THE PRESIDENT: I think -- I think that the law is so specific about it -- under the law we can't arm ships, that there is no -- er -- it would not be the right thing for me to try to wiggle out of a definite prohibition by the Congress.

Q Well, in other words, the mere repeal of any section would be sufficient?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, there is a story in this morning's paper saying that the White House is considering replacing Commissioner Kutz (Brig. General Charles W. Kutz, Engineer Commissioner) by Mr. Covell (Lieut. Col. William E. R. Covell). Could you comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't the faintest idea. I didn't even read the story.

Q Mr. President, have you decided on your next appointment for the F.C.C. -- Federal Communications?

THE PRESIDENT: Very nearly.

Q Mr. President, will a disability insurance be part of the new proposed Social Security program?

THE PRESIDENT: What kind of disability insurance?

Q Insurance for people permanently disabled, and therefore lose their jobs?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. The question hasn't been raised. It wasn't even in the report I sent.

MR. GODWIN AND MR. REYNOLDS TOGETHER (LOUDLY): Thank you, Mr. President.
(laughter)

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #773,
Executive Offices of the President,
October 7, 1941 -- 4.00 P.M., E.S.T.

Q When did Lauch Currie grow a mustache?

THE PRESIDENT: Mmm?

Q When did Lauch Currie grow a mustache?

(the President looked in the direction of Mr. Lauchlin Currie,
Administrative Assistant, but made no oral reply)

Q Distinguished looking.

THE PRESIDENT: (To Mr. Godwin) Earl, will you remind me to bring in,
next time I go to Hyde Park, a little book that belongs to you. I
have been keeping it beside my bedside, and I read it -- "Six Months
in the White House."

MR. GODWIN: You can have it, if it is any use.

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. I have just about finished reading it. Awfully
interesting.

MR. GODWIN: I read it all the way through.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Er -- had the Fine Arts Commission look into the ques-
tion of bringing that picture ---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Over here?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- down to the White House, and they told me
it was sixteen feet long.

MR. GODWIN: Oh sure. It's a whale.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't remember ever seeing it. There's no room in the
White House for it.

MR. GODWIN: They don't paint them like that any more.

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. It isn't much of a picture, is it?

MR. GODWIN: Not exceptionally -- historically. All sitting around in their -- er -- (holding his hands out from his sides)

MR. DONALDSON: (interposing) All in.

THE PRESIDENT: Steve (Mr. Early) is a master, as you know, of understatement, and suggests that it is -- er -- somewhat unseasonable today, (temperature was 94 degrees) and that I shouldn't keep you more than five minutes. I see various people in the front row are nodding their heads. I haven't got any news.

Q What about the health of the nation?

THE PRESIDENT: Er -- that I have had to put off until Friday, the Army tells me. They haven't finished their homework.

Q Mr. President, what do you think of the Gore bill, which was introduced -- on the price-ceiling plan---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q The Gore bill on price ceilings ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I haven't seen it.

Q Haven't seen it?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q It's for a general ceiling on prices.

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't seen it.

Q Mr. President, can you comment on the action of the Republic of Panama on prohibiting the arming of merchant ships?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you had better ask the Secretary about it. I suppose it is following our present legal restrictions.

Q Mr. President, do you propose to ask the ships to take off guns that have been put on under Panama registry?

THE PRESIDENT: Why the Panama registry? Don't you think -- it's under the

jurisdiction of Panama, isn't it?

Q Well, the ships are American-owned, but it is presumed that they are under Panama jurisdiction.

THE PRESIDENT: They are under Panamanian clearance.

Q Mr. President, there is a report that Great Britain is going to return somewhere between 12 and 18 tankers. Does that indicate that they asked for more than they needed?

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard that report.

Q Mr. President, I was reading over what you said at the time you signed the original 1935 Neutrality Act. And there was a line in it that I wondered if you could talk about today, when you said a situation might arise in the Act, giving a very different effect from what was intended, and the inflexible provisions might drag us into war instead of keeping us out. Is that your feeling about the desire for a Neutrality change?

THE PRESIDENT: Partly, yes. Partly, the -- also, the fact that general world conditions, and our relationship to them, have changed very materially, as we all know, since then. I think -- oh, what was it? ---

Q (interposing) 1935.

THE PRESIDENT: By the last Neutrality Act. 1937, was it? 1939?

Q 1939.

THE PRESIDENT: 1939. That one. Yes. Of course, what applies to these days -- two years before, or six years before -- doesn't necessary apply today. As a matter of fact, we know it doesn't apply today.

Q Mr. President, -- er -- is there any possibility that Panamanian-registered ships will be transferred to some other Latin American country?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't even thought of it.

Q Mr. President, would you say that the action by Panama increases the need for rapid revision of the Neutrality Act?

THE PRESIDENT: I should think so.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment on the conference this morning with the legislative leaders on the Neutrality ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I think they told you we recessed until tomorrow morning.

Q Is there any particular point on which there is disagreement, or ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I think they agreed to say that, and nothing else.

Q That is true. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything in your conversation with Mr. Myron Taylor?

THE PRESIDENT: That's five o'clock this afternoon.

Q Is there any preliminary report on it?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Any report from Harriman?

THE PRESIDENT: From who?

Q Harriman, or Steinhardt, on the Russians?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not that I know of. I haven't finished reading today's dispatches. (indicating his workbasket) I don't think there is anything there.

Q There was a dispatch, Mr. President, from Moscow, quoting one of the Soviet spokesmen as saying that so far as he knew, no one had approached them on the subject of religion. Had that come to your attention?

THE PRESIDENT: No. What kind of a dispatch was it?

Q From Moscow. Lozovsky (Vice Commissar S. A.) was the spokesman.

THE PRESIDENT: What kind?

Q I think it was on the printer today.

THE PRESIDENT: Was it a press story?

Q Yes. It said that so far as any official knew, nobody had approached them on the subject of religion.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen it at all.

MR. GODWIN: (loudly) Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Right. Take your coats off.

MR. GODWIN: (to the President) I got a note from the Weather Bureau today, which stated this drought is caused by a blot along the seaboard of dry air sucking the air up, instead of down.

THE PRESIDENT: Really?

MR. GODWIN: Yes.