

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #774,
Executive Offices of the President,
October 10, 1941 -- 10.45 A.M.

THE PRESIDENT: How are you all this morning?

Q Any chance of Hyde Park this morning?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Hyde Park this week end?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q That's good news.

(pause here)

THE PRESIDENT: Lots for you today.

Q Health figures?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Health figures?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have a lot of things for you today, for a change.

Er -- charity begins at home. This morning, Mr. Crim, Head Usher of the White House, came to me and said that he had been rummaging around in the basement, and had turned up about half a ton of copper and brass waste. Now, if that happens in the White House, isn't it reasonable to assume that an awful lot of Government-owned metal, which is not only usable but extremely useful, is lying around all through Washington, and in other Government buildings, and other parts of the country?

This particular metal happened to be some valves and joints, and things like that, that were put aside many years ago, with the idea

that they might possibly be used. They are out of date, and they are going to be sent down to the Navy Yard to be melted up. And I am asking Mr. Peters, the Building Superintendent for the District, to go around and make a search, and see what else he can dig up in the way of -- er -- metals like copper and brass, things we are short of, and deliver them to the nearest point where they can be melted up for Government use. And one building in which you can dig up a half a ton -- a thousand pounds -- is pretty good. And we hope to do our own house-cleaning, so that we can't be charged with not being thorough.

MR. GODWIN: Sounds like Calvin Coolidge.

THE PRESIDENT: Sounds just like President Coolidge all right. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, why couldn't you have such a campaign and have school-children bring in ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Because we aren't ready to have a campaign for brass, copper and things of that kind. We have had an aluminum campaign.

Q Do you plan to melt up any brass hats? (loud laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we are doing that now, and we have a much politer term for it. We call it 'liquidating'. (laughter) Essentially the same thing.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Er -- on the -- anything else on that subject?

MR. GODWIN: Er -- I want to ask about aluminum, when the time comes, sir, that was all.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. What about aluminum?

MR. GODWIN: There have been criticisms that the aluminum campaign was a fake, or a phony, that it was not necessary -- in very bald language. Do you care to say anything about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course it is necessary, because we are terribly short of aluminum in every part of the world. Now, how much actually came in as a result of that campaign you will have to find out from the people who ran it. It was very successful on the whole.

And, the next point is that I am going on -- I am going to call -- this year -- Navy Day, the 27th of October -- broaden it out. I think it should be broadened out. The same way next year -- Army Day -- we will broaden that out. And the thought is that on the 27th of October we will call it -- er -- Naval and Total Defense Day, and -- er -- I probably am going to go down to the hotel here to a dinner -- I think it is under the auspices of the Navy League, and say a few kind words into the microphone.

Number three, I have -- Steve (Mr. Early) has mimeographed it for you -- the checkup on the people who were disqualified under the Selective Service Act for physical, mental or educational reasons. There were about a million young men rejected, which is about fifty percent, just under -- a fraction of a point under fifty -- er -- fifty percent of all those who were called. That is a pretty serious thing. Something the country ought to take unto itself. The breakdown of this fifty percent, or a million men, is roughly somewhat as follows:

About a hundred thousand of them were turned down -- er -- because they couldn't meet the fourth grade educational requirements.

Q (interposing) How many, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: A hundred thousand. Of the other 900,000, they were rejected because of physical or mental disability. So on the basis of that 900,000, this memo Steve has had mimeographed for you shows the percentages along -- er -- physical or mental reasons. And -- er --

there is no use your taking this down, you will get it afterwards. Dental defects -- teeth -- 188,000. Little over 20% of them. That is the principal trouble. Defective eyes thirteen and something. Cardiovascular diseases -- well, I will call it heart and circulation -- relatively the same thing -- ten percent. Musculo-skeletal defects 6-8/10ths percent. Venereal disease 6.3%. 57,000 people. Mental and nervous diseases 6.3%. Hernia 6.2%. Defects of the ears, 4.6%. Defects of the feet 4%. Defective lungs, including T.B., 2.9%. And then a very large miscellaneous group, 17%. Those include loss of an arm, or a leg, or an eye, or something of that kind. They are -- a very large percentage in the miscellaneous are caused by accidents.

Of this number, General Hershey -- er -- estimates that 200,000 out of the 900,000 can be completely rehabilitated and made available for general service in the Armed Forces. The remainder -- many of the remainder can be rehabilitated to perform only limited service. Some, because of mental and nervous cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases, and musculo-skeletal defects are incapable of rehabilitation, or even limited service, and are therefore not being considered under this new rehabilitation program for the Selective Service registrants.

The initial objective, that I decided on yesterday afternoon in this rehabilitation program, will be the 200,000 registrants who can be completely rehabilitated and made available for general military service, at a relatively small cost and a reasonably short period of time.

Certain types of diseases, such as deficiencies of teeth, operable hernia, venereal diseases, and eyes, and other minor defects, will be corrected in cases where the Army determines that the registrant will then be acceptable for general military service.

The registrant will have the privilege of having the services performed by his family physician, or his dentist, in his own community. The cost of it will be borne by the Federal Government, as a necessary part of the national defense program, and additional funds will be made available to the Selective Service System for this purpose.

Well, I think that covers it fairly well. I suppose the easiest way of putting it is this -- you have to take some specific cases:

Suppose a boy turns up, and he has got bad teeth. Well, the first thing you would find out about is whether he has his teeth or not, so we could fix it up. He will then be all right for general service. And probably in the majority of cases, that can be done in a less -- short time -- probably inside of two weeks, for the very simple reason that most people with defective teeth at that age -- it's just because they have never gone to a dentist, and they have got a lot of holes in their teeth that need fillings. To be a little more specific, it doesn't make much difference if one of his front teeth are out, but it does for his general health and availability for general service, that means a lot if his molars -- the things he chews with -- are out. So if he has -- as sometimes happens -- completely lost -- he has had his molars taken out, he is a pretty bad risk to be taken into the Army with false teeth. Something always goes wrong. (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Grant had them.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: Grant had them. He lost them. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Er -- indeed, if he still has enough molars to fill, he can probably be fixed up in a couple of weeks, and then -- er -- to do it,

pick his own family dentist. If he hasn't got any family dentist, as he probably hasn't, the idea is that the Selection Board in the locality will send him to a dentist, and that the dentist, through a -- er -- scale which would be agreed on by the -- er -- American Dental Association, and the local dental association, and so forth and so on, in accordance with some scale of pay, the dentist would be paid for this boy at -- er -- oh, what? -- so much an hour and -- er -- that the actual cost to the Government will be very low -- relatively low per boy who is rehabilitated dentally.

Well, the same -- the same procedure will apply to some of these other categories, and we believe that a large -- a large majority of the dental cases can be rehabilitated -- put back -- put into the service.

In the case of defective eyes, there are some defective eyes which can be sufficiently corrected by the use of glasses -- as we all know -- for -- er -- specialized -- er -- work in the Army -- er -- in Army positions where you don't have to be able to see ten miles. Er -- probably a smaller percentage of defective eyes could be -- er -- taken in -- er -- than defective teeth. Then you come down to a couple of -- er -- categories -- cardiovascular diseases, and the musculo-skeletal diseases. Probably -- er -- a great deal smaller percentage of those cases can be rehabilitated.

Now they are going after those in this way, that those cases will be set aside by the local Selection Board, with a report of those that are what might be called doubtful cases. Then a traveling -- er -- medical board, from the Army Medical Service, will go 'round from place to place -- not one board, but teams. I suppose 'teams' is the easiest

way of putting it. They will go around -- they will look over these doubtful cases, where there is a possibility of rehabilitation, and they will make the final determination as to whether -- er -- such cases should be taken care of by a doctor, for the purpose of rehabilitation.

Then you come to the 57,000 cases of venereal -- 6.3%. Well, of course we know nowadays that the very large majority of those can be cured, and cured in very short order. So they will not be merely discharged, they will be kept under the orders of the Selection Board and told to go and get cured, and report back. There won't be any evasion of service, of which there have been a number of cases because of that particular thing. They will be compelled, under orders, to get cured up and report back for service in the Army.

Then you come to mental and nervous diseases. Again 57,000 of them. 6.3%. Well, probably a very small proportion of those can be rehabilitated, but that requires again a recheck by these traveling -- er -- medical boards. For instance, we have had quite a number of cases of youngsters who have gone before the Board, and there -- they were so scared that -- er -- they were so nervous that their pulse went up from a normal to about 150. (laughter) And they were put down as a nervous case. Well, that doesn't necessarily unfit them for the Army. Possibly a good regular life and much better food than they have had before might cure this nervousness. In other words, it isn't an organic nervousness from which they're suffering. It may be just plain fright.

Then the next category is hernia. Well, we all know that a certain percentage -- probably a quarter of all people who suffer from

hernia -- I suppose at that age -- with a relatively simple operation can be put back on their feet and made perfectly sound. Now, at the present time, practically all of the hernia cases are being rejected. We hope to salvage about a quarter of those boys, and have them fixed up and go into the service.

Then you come to defects of ears. We all know it is a mighty difficult thing to cure deafness, and there isn't very much that can be salvaged out of that category. And defects of the feet -- you can't change that very much. And it depends, of course, on the degree of flat-foot. Defective lungs, including T.B. There isn't -- 2.9 -- there isn't very much that can be done on that. Well, that makes up a rough picture of the 900,000 who have been rejected, and add those still at about the same average -- er -- we would expect to rehabilitate as the first step. And in this general problem -- this program -- it is a problem to rehabilitate about 200,000, salvage them.

Now that leaves, of course, certain -- what is not down here on the paper, because that is -- that is what might be called the immediate program, and it -- it brings up other larger questions of why, roughly, half of all the boys who are called for military service are physically, and in some cases mentally defective. It raises the question as to why ten percent of all the boys who were called -- er -- in all the boys that were rejected -- had to be rejected because they didn't have enough education to get by.

Well, that is -- that is quite an indictment of this nation of ours, the physical, the mental, and the educational. And it is a thing which people are going to give a lot of thought to. We have got to do a lot of studying as to -- er -- how the general health of the young

men and young women of the nation can be improved in the future.

It's a long range thing. It isn't at this time a matter so much of aiding immediate national defense for this year, or the next year, but it is of getting a stronger race of Americans in the days to come. And that is why this subject is going to be of a good deal of interest in the papers, and people talking about it. It requires a more detailed study than anything that we have ever attempted. It requires the cooperation of -- er -- States, and counties, and cities, and townships. And we hope that --er -- out of it all, we are going to accomplish something toward the better health of the nation.

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) The -- one of the phases which we can't approve yet, because we haven't studied it -- is the phase that has been talked about a great deal in the -- in the past few years, and that is the periodic checkup on everybody.

I suppose, under the Constitution, a person has a right to die at an early age. Constitutional. But I think -- I think the -- er -- what we call government, local government, state government, has a right to say to that fellow, "Now, look, don't die. Why don't you get better? Why let this thing go on?" -- and know more or less as to whether that individual insists on dying or not. Constitutionally, he has the right to do it. But the Government ought to know what his attitude is. (laughter)

MISS MAY CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, by what authority --- (loud laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Mental case, Mr. President. (meaning Miss Craig)

MR. GODWIN: Go ahead, May.

MISS MAY CRAIG: I'm sorry.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, Senator? (laughter)

MISS MAY CRAIG: By ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Thank you.

MISS MAY CRAIG: By what authority can you make a man have an operation, or be cured, before you take him into the Army?

THE PRESIDENT: When he appears before the Selection Board he is under the direction of the Selection Board. No question about that.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, there was the ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) You can always induct him right then and there, if you have to.

MR. GODWIN: He is inducted and given a rating, sir, I think?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Isn't the rating on ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Yes, but that is a matter of regulations. You can induct him if he is recalcitrant, and fix him up, and in probably a great overwhelming majority of cases he will prefer not to go into uniform that day, but get cured up by his local doctor or dentist.

MR. GODWIN: May I ask a question, sir? In the Selective Service, with which I have some slight experience, we find differences of opinion by Medical Boards, which have made dentist examinations, who are ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Surely.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- contradicted. Is that being simplified at all under this procedure?

THE PRESIDENT: Under the procedure, there may be differences between doctors in the -- who are attached to the local ---

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- Selection Board. Now, where those dif-

ferences exist, of course -- it's a very small percentage of cases -- one of these traveling boards will come in and make a fair decision.

MR. GODWIN: The Army itself, sir, I think has the final decision?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that's what I mean. They will do it. Practically all the reports of one of these traveling boards which come around here -- they might be a traveling board that will -- take the Selection Boards in -- what? -- Maryland, and the District, and West Virginia, and Virginia, which -- that board will go around to the Selection Board localities as a continuous process.

Q Mr. President, what will it cost to rehabilitate the 200,000? Have you any estimates on it?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't give that cost, but relatively far less than if the Army were to take them all in, and provide housing for them, and food and clothing for them, and their own medical service. Then, of course, there is another -- that was -- we talked over about that yesterday.

The Army -- er -- presented a plan, which they did not approve of, for just that, to take all these 200,000 cases into the Army and put up barracks for them, put them in uniform, and start paying them, which you would have to do, and then turn them over to Army doctors, or dentists, to fix them up.

Well, that would cost a lot of money, probably cost \$500,000,000. Now it's a great deal cheaper, and a great deal more satisfactory to the average Selectee to forego that -- live at home and get fixed up by his own local doctor.

Q Mr. President, -- er -- the primary program is supposedly a salvage program. Do you expect to launch any immediate program to start behind the conditions?

THE PRESIDENT: That's what I have just been talking about.

Q Well, you said it's a long range program.

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps.

Q Do you expect to launch a preventive program soon, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course we have made studies on it.

Q (interposing) Has that been ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Pretty complicated thing.

Q Mr. President, does that have any connection with the general question of socialized medicine?

THE PRESIDENT: No. None at all.

Q Mr. President, it has been suggested that an easy way to cut down the number of rejections would be for the Army to correct their education. Do you think the Army should do that?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, that 100,000 rejected because they haven't a fourth-grade education, are they people who cannot be educated?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. People who are poor, as well as ignorant.

Q Will anything be done about them?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is of course primarily -- always has been -- a State matter, because the Federal Government's educational work has always been limited to -- er -- suggestions, and -- er -- a clearing house of information for all the States' educational departments. It is primarily a State matter.

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Education is a local problem.

Q Would you not then favor Federal aid to education?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Would you not favor Federal aid to education?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't like to say 'yes or no' to that question. There are -- as we know, there are certain sections of the United States that are so poor that their tax valuations -- their assessments -- are necessarily insufficient to bring in the revenue to run modern and adequate schools. Now, perhaps some day we may come to some form of Government aid for the -- not the poorer, but the poorest sections of the United States. As it is, this only proves that they can't afford to educate their own children, but I don't think that the Federal Government ought to undertake running the educational field. Government as a -- I think there are so many -- a great majority of States have pretty good educational systems.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) And certainly the richer States do not need any Federal money.

Q Mr. President, on these below normal in education ---

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Are the people who are -- who are handicapped in health, and in education, grouped in any particular part of the country, or are they pretty ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, that depends -- it depends on which classification that -- there are many classifications. It is perfectly true that the -- er -- larger part of the -- er -- people who failed in education come from the South. Now, when you come down to the -- er -- the medical end of it -- medical and dental -- er -- in some diseases there is a greater proportion in the North. Some -- there is a greater proportion in the West. And some -- er -- of these cases, the greater proportion in the South. I don't know. I haven't got the

figures, so it's a general guess on my part. I would say, offhand, that on the heart disease thing, and the nervous disorders, you would find a higher percentage coming from the cities than you would from the farms. Now that's just guess. But it is based on what you might call common sense reasoning. We farmers are not so nervous as you city slickers. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, is there any comparison between rejections in the United States and in England?

THE PRESIDENT: I have no idea. I don't know.

Q Mr. President, -- er -- may we leave this subject now, and may I inquire -- (laughter) -- er -- whether you have any reports, sir, that Russia might be nearing the point where she will have ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q. (continuing) --- to accept an armistice?

THE PRESIDENT: None at all.

MR. GODWIN: Have you any knowledge of the manner in which your letter to Mr. Stalin was reported in Berlin before anywhere else, or are you aware of that?

THE PRESIDENT: I got a hunch.

MR. GODWIN: A hunch? How does it -- do you care to share the hunch?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

MR. GODWIN: Are you interested at all? Is it a matter of interest ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes.

MR. GODWIN: (adding) --- to the Government?

THE PRESIDENT: You might say interest, but not very great surprise.

Q Mr. President, have you any information that the letter was broadcast to the Russian troops in the field?

THE PRESIDENT: I have no idea. I think not.

Q Mr. President, would you favor the Federalization of the Unemployment Compensation System?

THE PRESIDENT: The what?

Q The Federalization of Unemployment Insurance?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we are still working on that.

Q Is that one of the matters under consideration?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes and no. Partial is under consideration, but not total.

Q Partial?

THE PRESIDENT: Partial Federalization.

Q Oh, I see.

Q Mr. President, do our diplomatic relations with Panama continue unchanged despite the switch in government down there?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely.

Q Do you care to comment any further on that change of government?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No, I don't think so. I talked to the State Department last night, and -- er -- apparently the only thing I can say is that the change was apparently made in accordance with the provisions of the constitution of Panama, and no question of re-recognition is involved.

Q Mr. President, have we guns enough to arm the merchant ships now?

THE PRESIDENT: I can only tell you that off the record, which of course will be in Berlin immediately. It doesn't make much difference. (laughter) -- (adding): and in Tokio. We expect to have enough guns to arm them as fast as -- pretty nearly as fast as they come in. Of course, they are scattered all over the Seven Seas.

Q Will that include anti-aircraft?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Include anti-aircraft?

THE PRESIDENT: It depends on what you call an anti-aircraft gun. That's a military secret.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: (aside) Let's break up.

MR. GODWIN AND MR. REYNOLDS: (together) Thank you, Mr. President.

MR. GODWIN: Who can keep that off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: Who can keep that off the record?

MR. EARLY: You can't. (laughter)

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #775,
Executive Offices of the President,
October 14, 1941 -- 4.15 p.m.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I got some figures here, and I have been -- on Lend-Lease -- and as the people in the front row who heard me talking to Steve (Mr. Early) -- er -- I am trying to simplify them down. Until Steve came in with these figures in -- er -- terms of what we know about the 100,000 people who have been rejected lacking education, I was in the third grade, but now I am in the fourth, since I talked to Steve, and I am assuming that all of you are still in the third grade.

Q (aside) We are in the second grade.

THE PRESIDENT: During the month of September, Lend-Lease aid exceeded that of any previous month. There were actually transferred to nations resisting Nazi-ism, articles and services -- actually transferred -- of approximately a hundred and fifty-five million -- billion dollars -- No. (laughter) We all learned that in kindergarten. That is about three times the average monthly amount of transfers during the previous six months.

Next, the total Lend-Lease aid during the month of September, including articles and services in process -- in other words, this is not deliveries, this is payments made for articles in process -- was about two hundred million. Er -- fourth, well, those -- those two -- two categories they went to Britain, China, South America, the Poles and the Norwegians.

MR. GODWIN: Both of these?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Fourth, the Lend-Lease aid alone is only a part of

the total aid which is actually flowing to the people fighting the aggressors. In other words, since the beginning of the war -- the first of September, 1939 -- the total amount of exports to Britain alone has amounted to about five billions of dollars, all of which were paid for in cash. And that's rather an interesting -- rather a significant figure.

A very large part of the present exports, which are going directly to Britain at the present time, are still those articles which are being paid for, in cash, by Britain, but which were ordered before the Lend-Lease Bill went into effect last March. Now that proportion that is going to Britain, at the present time, is of course a diminishing ratio, but is being more than made up for by the increasing ratio of Lend-Lease Act deliveries.

It's -- for example, if you were to take a -- what shall I say? -- a square piece of paper that was a little -- er -- wider at the right-hand side than the left-hand side, and beginning at the left-hand side -- the shorter end -- you would find up to last April or May that everything was stuff that England had ordered beforehand, and was actually being paid for. Now, from that left-hand corner -- up at the left-hand lower corner up to the right-hand upper corner -- if you follow me, there's a line, and the top half is gradually getting smaller until it reaches the upper right-hand corner. Draw a picture of it, if you like. (Mr. Godwin displays a drawing he just made) And the lower part -- the lower portion of that piece of paper below the lines, starts at nothing -- last spring -- and is constantly increasing, until you reach the right-hand margin, where it occupies the whole of the line. That will be after the previously placed British orders have all

been delivered, and then everything delivered will be under Lend-Lease.

MR. GODWIN: That -- that -- that graph means that the diagonal line is the increasing -- ?

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes. The lower piece is the Lend-Lease, and that is getting bigger and bigger all the time, and the upper part is what they ordered beforehand, and is getting smaller and smaller.

(To Mr. Godwin) You've got a good picture there. You can even draw a straight line. That's more than I can.

MR. P. BRANDT: When do you estimate that the cash orders, or the cash now spent, will be exhausted, and it will be on Lend-Lease?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, Pete. I would say quite a long while.

MR. P. BRANDT: You said the end of 1943 on some of the orders?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hope not as far as that. I should hope that the bulk will be all cleaned up by the end of 1942.

In September -- No -- as of today, all but five percent of the original seven billion dollars appropriated last March has been allocated to War, Navy, Agriculture, Treasury and the Maritime Commission, for the production of arms, ships, food and other defense articles and services.

During -- since March, contracts have been -- this is 95% -- have been let at the average rate of seven hundred million dollars a month, and we only have five percent still to contract for. That means ---
Q (interposing) Mr. President, does that mean, sir, that all but five percent has been placed under contract or merely allocated?

THE PRESIDENT: Allocated is right. Not placed under contract.

MR. GODWIN: May I ask a question? What was the seven hundred million dollars

a month? Is that an allocation?

THE PRESIDENT: No. That's contract. Well, in other words, you can figure it out. In six months, seven times six is what? ---

Q (interposing) 42.

THE PRESIDENT: 42. Four billion, two hundred million dollars have been actually contracted. That means the period of program -- programming and allocating under the first appropriation is now virtually completed. The work of production is on the way, and we are ready to take on the additional amount.

Q Mr. President, -- er -- before you got to the seven billion, my understanding is that there were certain tentative allocations. Are you making any tentative allocations of the five billion, 985?

THE PRESIDENT: Only the ones that are in the bill itself. All of the -- they are all in categories, just like the first bill.

Q Is that as far as the details have gone?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, you used the word 'transferred' in the opening of your --- That is a transfer of cash, is that what you mean?

VOICE: (interposing) No.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) Or is it transfer of goods -- delivery of goods?

THE PRESIDENT: Articles of services transferred.

MR. GODWIN: These gotten delivered?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, you said they went, part of them, to the Norwegians and Poles. Where would they be? In Canada and England?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, through their respective governments.

Q Mr. President, Senator Wheeler was quoted as saying that we were being

urged to send an expeditionary force of three million men to Europe.

Have you any comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not surprised at his statement.

I sent today a letter to Mr. Stettinius, which I will try to put into English. It allocates -- allocates -- Lend-Lease funds to the full extent of the balances that remain under the first appropriation. It gives him authority to do that. Secondly, to transfer defense articles to the value of five hundred million, which is an extension, that is to say, without my signature. It is a -- er -- a delegation of authority. I'd already, as you know, done it beforehand, to save time. This gives him authority to do that -- without my signature -- five hundred million more. And third, to make the necessary transfers which were allowed by law, between the various categories under the first appropriation bill. The fourth thing is a technicality.

Q Mr. President, does that clean up the outstanding five percent?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Yes.

Q That is all cleaned up now?

THE PRESIDENT: There hasn't been -- that last five percent hasn't been allocated, but that gives Mr. Stettinius the right to do it without asking me first.

Q Mr. President, I am not clear -- was that five hundred million in addition to the original three hundred million, or five hundred million altogether?

THE PRESIDENT: An additional. I think that is quite a strain on us. That's all I have got for today.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment on the various proposals in Congress to put a limit on defense contract profits -- seven or eight

percent?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't think I have got any news on that at all. I haven't talked to anybody about it for weeks.

Q Mr. President, is there anything in the situation on the Russian front that would cause you to doubt the ultimate value of the Lend-Lease program?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Nothing.

MR. P. BRANDT: Will it be necessary for the Russians to have Lend-Lease aid?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know yet, Pete. I have got to have -- I have got to see Mr. Harriman before I would have any idea on that subject.

Q Are they asking for further financial aid, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: They are buying right along.

Q They are buying right along?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q For cash?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Is that paid for by gold transfer, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Er -- part of it, and part of it was by a -- a purchase by Mr. Jesse Jones of -- what was it? -- I told you last week -- manganese, I think it was.

Q (interjecting) Strategic materials.

Q (interjecting) Strategic materials.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, various materials.

Q Yes.

MR. GODWIN: (haltingly) Thank you, Mr. President. (and then to the President): That was all right.

ACR 10-30-56

CONFIDENTIAL
 Press Conference #776,
 Held in the Study of the President's Home
 in Hyde Park, N. Y.
 October 17, 1941 -- 10.40 A.M.

(Mr. Harry Hopkins and Mrs. Anna ^[Boettiger] Boettiger were present at this
 Press Conference)

THE PRESIDENT: (as newspapermen file in) Hello, good people. (short
 pause here) Well, I don't know what you are getting out those books
 for. (pause here) I don't think I have anything.

Q Mr. President, have you heard about the torpedoing of the Kearny?

THE PRESIDENT: Had you got that already?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Given out by the Navy Department?

Q Yes, sir.

Q A very brief communique, without any details.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I got that as soon as I got here this morning, and
 within, I think, three minutes.

Q Three minutes from your arrival here?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I don't think there is -- any comment is necessary
 on my part. All details will be given out by the Navy Department as
 they come in.

Q Did your reports indicate whether there have been any casualties?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I asked about that. They didn't have anything yet.

Q Did the reports indicate whether any attempt at retaliation was made
 against the submarine?

THE PRESIDENT: They have no facts at all, except just the sinking -- the
 torpedoing.

Q Our ship apparently was within the defensive zone, was it not -- three hundred miles southwest?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes. Oh, of course. Certainly.

Q Just another act of piracy?

THE PRESIDENT: What? That's what -- I have just said I am not commenting on it at all, until the Navy Department has established all the facts.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Superficially, Mr. President, do you -- the most remarkable thing seemed to be that the destroyer could be hit by a torpedo and still remain afloat.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Doesn't one of those torpedoes have a pretty devastating effect on a lightly-armed destroyer?

THE PRESIDENT: I will have to put you in the Navy, Tom. (laughter)

VOICE: That's a good idea.

MR. G. DURNO: May we use direct quotes on that?

THE PRESIDENT: There is one thing about it George, he floats, doesn't he? We know that. At least we know he floats in the Pacific. The question is whether he will float in the Atlantic. It's a different density of water. This is all off the record, of course. (laughter) He's taking it down, though.

Q Well, he's not ninety-nine percent pure, Mr. President. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, the headlines this morning are very grim, both from Russia and Japan. You met yesterday with your small group of advisers. Is there anything that you can say?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think that I have any news at all.

Q Well, may I try this? (laughter) In Philadelphia, we have a ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I thought it was coming. Go ahead.

Q (continuing) --- sewage system, which literally stinks.

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I am primed.

Q (continuing) If you are primed ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You go ahead and develop the story through.

Most of these fellows don't read the Inquirer anyway. You go ahead.

Q (continuing) For many years it -- they have had a very bad situation where the water has to be treated with so much chlorine that ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) A little like Poughkeepsie. A little like Poughkeepsie, only worse.

Q (continuing) --- And the sewage system is so bad. And at a time like this when the river is lower -- it literally stinks. It is an impossible situation. Philadelphia at this time has become very much of a defense center, with a large percentage of our defense contracts. And it's your ball now, sir. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: You are absolutely correct. The situation is -- there -- is figuratively and literally a stench in the nostrils. And it is a thing that has been developing over a great many years. There is apparently no borrowing power in the city to -- er -- modernize their water supply and their sewage system. Of course, as I understand it, the -- er -- both systems have been hocked -- borrowed against, up to the hilt. Well, it is because of the -- of that situation, that which has been developing, that I sent a letter -- I think Bill Hassett may just as well make copies of it -- which is the easiest way -- then you won't have to take it down -- to McNutt, (Paul V. McNutt, Administrator, Federal Security Agency) which I sent yesterday.

(Reading): "Reports have reached me to the effect that the water and sewer systems of the City of Philadelphia have been allowed to

fall into such a state of disrepair as to constitute a threat to the defense work from fires, and a menace to the health and welfare of the City, on which we are counting for so large a portion of our defense production.

"Defense contracts for more than a billion dollars -- that's an awful lot -- have been placed in Philadelphia, and in addition, the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the Frankford Arsenal, and Quartermaster Depot, make the Federal Government the single largest direct employer in the City. The entire nation has, therefore, an especial and immediate interest in the health and living conditions of the people of Philadelphia, and the safeguarding of all the great industries of that city.

"Will you please determine by a prompt investigation whether or not there are conditions in Philadelphia which constitute a menace to our defense program and, if you find that there are, will you recommend ways and means by which the Federal Government may cooperate with the local authorities to insure that national as well as local interests will be served and safeguarded."

So that's started on its way.

Q Yes. Well, Mr. President, assuming that Mr. McNutt does find that, what ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- what would -- what might the Government do?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you see, I can't -- I can't say, because I have just asked him that question. (reading): "If you find that there are, will you recommend ways and means."

Q Mr. President, to get out of Philadelphia for a minute -- er -- er --

are you hopeful of keeping these negotiations with Japan open?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got any news on that.

Q Are you keeping in touch with Secretary Hull?

THE PRESIDENT: I talked to him this morning.

Q I see.

Q Mr. President, may I get in a local plug? Have you been reading the series that we started this week?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Were they brought to your attention? Who brought this situation to your attention? Was it Mr. Biddle?

THE PRESIDENT: Gosh -- I don't know. The -- er -- No, I haven't -- I couldn't tell you. So many things coming in all the time -- just temporarily have forgotten. I have been -- I have been hearing about it, of course, off and on for a long time. Several years. The thing goes back when I was in the Navy Department and started to work down at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for the first time, in 1913, and there again I had to hold my nose all the way down there. That was caused by complete lack of sewage. You remember that situation.

Q Mr. President, do you -- after you receive this full report from the Navy, do you expect to make any kind of a statement?

THE PRESIDENT: Can't tell you. Have no idea until I get a full report.

MR. G. DURNO: Er -- Mr. President, having done so nobly by Philadelphia, would you do as much by San Francisco? (laughter) They seem to be interested in the possibility that the -- er -- Raker Act might be amended. Is that ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Go ahead and explain it to the boys.

MR. G. DURNO: No. I don't want to. (laughter)

Q (to the President) You are trying to duck work today.

THE PRESIDENT: No. I got the answer. (laughter)

MR. G. DURNO: (continuing) So this Hetch Hetchy power could continue to be piped out by the Pacific and Electric -- Gas Company.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, George, I suppose the easiest way -- as long as you won't give them all the facts ---

Q (interposing) He is going to give them. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Way back in 1913, the Raker Act ---

Q (interposing) How do you spell that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: R-A-K-E-R, I think.-- Yes. Which is to permit the City of San Francisco to build the Hetch Hetchy water and power facilities on Federally owned land. In that Act there was a public power provision which had already been ruled on by the court. The provision was that the City of San Francisco, when the system was built, had to distribute the power through public facilities. Now that was in the original Act, and it was -- probably the Act would not have got through the Congress if it had not been for that provision. The present situation is that the City of San Francisco has made a contract to distribute this power through the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, and that matter is now being re-litigated. As I said, it has been passed on once, and we are going to do it again.

Q You mean, Mr. President, that they are taking a further appeal?

THE PRESIDENT: They are taking an appeal from ---. Well, as I -- I am not dead sure of that, so don't put it in -- it doesn't make very much difference. There has been a Supreme Court ruling. But they are trying, in this suit, to differentiate the new suit from the old suit, and the Government is saying that the old decision applies. In other

words, carries out the perfectly clear intent of what the law said.

Er -- there has been some political effort to tell people that the Congress will change the Raker Act, and let the City out of the definite obligation under which the -- er -- Hetch Hetchy was built. I think all on that I can say is that -- er -- my own personal opinion is that the passage of such an Act is the height of improbability. I doubt very much if a prudent Congress, or a prudent Administration, would be willing to relieve the City of San Francisco of the obligations of the original Act under which the whole thing was started. Is that what you wanted, George?

MR. G. DURNO: Very nice, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Right. (laughter)

Q Er -- getting back to the Kearny, Mr. President, did Secretary Knox -- er -- give you the information?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Er -- still on that same question, Mr. President. May we assume that the instructions you issued in the case of the Greer -- to hunt down the marauder -- apply in this case?

THE PRESIDENT: Regular Navy orders. I don't know that I would say to hunt down the marauders. You ought to go into the Navy, Tom, -- really -- honestly. Sea-faring -- sea-faring -- er -- question. Why, Lord -- we'll get you to Annapolis and put you on the football team. You will be all right. We are turning them out -- this is off the record -- they are ninety-day wonders -- over at -- in Annapolis. It's a short course. You get paid for the taking of it, and graduate as an Ensign, and --- (he laughs).

Q I want a story not a commission, Mr. President.

Q Let's throw him over the side.

THE PRESIDENT: What? Yes. I don't think there is another thing. I finished up last night before I left, practically all -- what we call the homework. In other words, just waiting, sitting here in case anything develops.

Q Have you given any thought, Mr. President, to this -- to this increasing number of strikes in defense?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I think probably that there will be something from O.P.M. on that pretty soon. When, I don't know. Pretty soon.

Q Mr. President, by any chance, you are not going to make any visit down to that munitions plant today -- this week end? I wouldn't think so.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe so.

Q You haven't any thoughts ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) When are they going to open it up?

Q Well, you see, it's a progressive thing, and they haven't -- well, they have gone into production in a limited way -- it's very limited as yet. And they haven't got any number of employees yet.

THE PRESIDENT: Is there any more news in Poughkeepsie about building new so-called defense facilities -- stores, and hospitals, and schools, and so forth and so on, at the expense of the Federal Government?

Q Well, there is a hospital addition which -- er -- is contemplated here.

THE PRESIDENT: What has the population of the city gone up in the past year?

Q Very little -- couple of hundred.

THE PRESIDENT: That's what I thought.

Q In the decade, you mean?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I mean in the last year.

Q Oh. It might have gone up about three or four hundred, because of the --
(laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Of course, this is off the record -- you can't use it --but actually, just for guidance in the office, where the population of a city has only gone up four or five hundred, from forty thousand to forty-four -- forty thousand to four or five hundred, we can't call that defense and create a defense need. If we are building a new school, or building an addition to a hospital anywhere, the Federal Government is only doing these things where there has been a tremendous influx of population and the city can't take care of it. Well, four or five hundred additional people is not a great influx of population.

Q Yes, sir. Of course this plant down below does intend to employ say fifteen hundred or more, when it gets started. And as I understand it, there is another contemplated addition.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, a great many of the fifteen hundred will be people who live in Poughkeepsie, anyway.

Q Or surrounding.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, when you talked to Secretary Hull, did he inform you that General Tojo (Lieut. General Eiki Tojo) was appointed Premier of the government in Japan?

[Hideki?]

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't any news on that at all today.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Mr. President, it couldn't be referred to in a defense -- general way could it, about the local situation with reference to the hospital?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that would be all right. I think that would be all right. I wouldn't refer to it -- to the hospital, or any particular project. I think it would be all right to refer to the -- er -- general

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idea, and we can only spend Federal money when there has been a great influx.

Q Then I can draw my own conclusions.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #777,
Executive Offices of the President,
October 21, 1941 -- 4.10 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Are we all here? Still coming in?

Q Big house today.

MR. GODWIN: A big house today.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I regret to say -- I got -- I just had a flash announcing the sinking of another American ship -- torpedoed -- the American ship LEHIGH -- torpedoed in approximately 8 degrees north, 14 degrees west, which is -- er -- just north of the Equator, and between South America and Africa, near the -- pretty well offshore -- but nearer to the southern end of the bulge of Africa. Night before last, at nine o'clock. One boat of survivors has been picked up.

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Sunday?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) And it is understood that two other boats are missing and are now being searched for. And people in the boat that was picked up believe that no one was killed by the explosion, but that some were wounded. I have been trying -- I have only got this -- had this for about five minutes -- I have been trying to find out where she was. Apparently she is an American ship that had gone over to Bilbao, in Spain, discharged her cargo, and was running without any cargo -- empty -- to the Gold Coast, on a trading voyage. And I think we can all draw our conclusions from those statements.

MR. GODWIN: What flag, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: American flag.

Q How large a ship, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q How large a ship, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: About 9,000 tons, the Maritime Commission reported.

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Can you ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) A sizeable ship.

MR. GODWIN: Can you tell us, or would you tell us how the message got to you?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't tell you that.

Q Did you say, sir, it was an American flag ship?

THE PRESIDENT: So the Maritime Commission says.

Q Did the reports, sir, say how many men were aboard?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q That was in American defense waters?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q That was on the American side of the Atlantic?

THE PRESIDENT: What do you mean?

Q I mean the sinking took place ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) On the Seven Seas.

Q Who owned the ship?

THE PRESIDENT: That I couldn't tell you. You would have to find out.

Q (interposing) Do we know who sunk her?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, put on your 'thinking cap'. Who do you suppose? Certainly wasn't a British submarine. It certainly wasn't one of our submarines. And certainly wasn't an Argentine submarine. It certainly wasn't a French submarine. So what kind of submarine was it? In other words, a process of elimination. Sometimes a very useful thing to do, even in -- er -- writing stories for newspapers. Of course,

it's very rarely done. Leave that off the record. (laughter)

Q (interposing) Is it certain ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Is that fair?

MR. GODWIN: Yes, I suppose it's below the belt.

Q Is it certain, sir, that it was a torpedo from a submarine?

THE PRESIDENT: Surely. Yes.

Q Any passengers aboard, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so -- just an ordinary merchant ship.

Q Can you tell us what cargo?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. That's all I got from the Maritime Commission.

Q Well outside of that so-called blockade region ---?

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Whose blockade region?

Q The Germans' so-called blockade region.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that's all right, so long as you use the word 'so-called.'

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what you propose to do about it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I just got it three minutes ago.

MR. GODWIN: Well, Mr. President, -- er -- the Secretary of State, when asked a similar question, said they weren't going to waste any time or stationery on, I think he said, international pirates.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, which is good.

MR. GODWIN: Would that be a -- a good -- er -- er ----

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) My answer is 'ditto'.

MR. GODWIN: That's it.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us whether the American Navy has taken control over the Port of Halifax?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I saw something from -- er -- the Toronto Star, something like that -- which carried this story. Of course there's nothing to it.

It's all -- I have forgotten how -- it was a certain -- something -- a very polite way of putting it.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) The way I got it was this, that -- er -- we understand that this report -- what's that -- (meaning something he was reading) -- does not conform to the fact that anything is being done immediately. But, of course, as we all know, the -- er -- joint commission, of which Mayor LaGuardia is the American Chairman, has for a long time been considering, in the event of attack, the joint American-Canadian defense, in the same way that we have taken up with other nations of this hemisphere the hemispheric defense. I suppose ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- they have mentioned Halifax in that, and I guess they have probably mentioned Toronto, and Chicago.

Q Will that mean, if the -- if the Canadian -- er -- fleet has been moved east of Iceland, would that mean that we would take over the protection of that area in the North Atlantic?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I never heard of it. East of Iceland? It would be awfully rough out there.

Q It would be.

Q Mr. President, apparently ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) There isn't any land there. I don't know what they base on.

Q Apparently this thing of keeping ships out of the so-called combat zones doesn't keep them from being sunk, does it, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Apparently not.

MR. GODWIN: (aside) That's all right.

Q Mr. President, would you say that the action of Panama in removing the

ban on arming of merchantmen, now makes the combat zone restrictions in the Neutrality Act less pressing a matter than arming our merchantmen?

THE PRESIDENT: I would have to think that one over.

Q Mr. President, can you give us any further details of the attack on the destroyer KEARNY?

THE PRESIDENT: I think nothing else has come in. I talked to Admiral Stark about it, and he is going up on the Hill this afternoon. And I talked to him this morning. He didn't have anything new at that time.

MR. P. BRANDT: Mr. President, can you tell us about Mr. Harriman's report?

THE PRESIDENT: Only what he said yesterday at the airport, Pete. That covers it pretty well.

MR. P. BRANDT: He said there might be a statement from you today.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen him today. He is coming in as soon as you go away. That will be too late.

Q Mr. President, you said that -- that the LEHIGH was sunk at nine o'clock the night before last. Is that our time, or do you know?

THE PRESIDENT: Honestly, I don't know.

Q Mr. President, is there any information on where these submarines operating in the South Atlantic might be based?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if I said No, you would say we don't know anything.

If I said Yes, it wouldn't be wholly correct, so you've got me in an awful hole. (laughter) Some of them come all the way from the Occupied part of France, and some of them probably refuel from -- er -- tankers that get out from the same relative area. And where they refuel in the middle of the ocean varies from voyage to voyage, and day to day. And we wish they would have one definite place to refuel, and then we could catch them.

Q Sir, are there any indications that they are using any of the islands along the African coast -- West African coast -- as temporary bases?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. Lot of reports.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us what -- er -- the orders to the Navy cover in a case like that?

THE PRESIDENT: Why, nothing new on that. Same general orders.

Q Shoot-on-sight order?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is it a shoot-on-sight order?

THE PRESIDENT: You've got to see something before you shoot.

Q I said 'on sight.'

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q I said 'on sight!'

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that isn't worth much, is it, if you can't see the fellow.

Q Mr. President ---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Mr. President, what do you think of shooting an empty ship on the ocean, carrying our flag, with ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) On a trade voyage.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) On a trade voyage. How would you like to express that?

THE PRESIDENT: That's what I have been saying. I didn't really think in this case any comment was necessary, because it speaks ---

Q (interposing) What was that?

THE PRESIDENT: I said before, I did not think any comment was necessary. It spoke for itself.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) As you say, it was an empty ship on a trading

voyage, way down somewhere near the Equator, and there is no fighting going on. Cordell Hull is absolutely dead right when he calls it piracy. It means that ships of any nation, on any of the Seven Seas, may be attacked and sunk without warning. And you might say -- a good many of the younger people have forgotten the words, but the older people remember what a commotion was caused by the message that was dug up in the -- the Argentine in 1917 -- I think it was the German Ambassador down there -- about the German policy of saying that ships were sunk "Spurlos ---"

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Spurlos Versenkt. (Sunk without trace)

S-P-U-R-I-O-S-S ---

Q (interposing) L-O-S.

THE PRESIDENT: S-P --- I have forgotten my German.

MR. GODWIN: S-P-U-R-L-O-S ---

Q (interposing) I-S.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q I-S.

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Only one 'S.' That's right. You are right.

My Lord -- a long time since I was there.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) V-E-R-S-A ---

Q (interposing) Is the LEHIGH the type of ship that would be armed, if the armed ship bill goes through?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think -- I suppose because -- because you can't say that one will be, and the next one won't be.

Q I mean type.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Type ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Type?

Q (continuing) --- would be armed. It's the type of ship that would be armed.

THE PRESIDENT: From the way things are going now, if a ship is going from here to Cuba, we might have to arm her. How can we tell if it reaches there safely? Arm them all.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us in relation to this case, what is the distinction between an act of piracy and an act of war?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, My Lord -- I ain't thinking quick enough today.

Q Mr. President -- er -- do you want to endorse what Mr. Hull said about repealing Section 2, as well as 6, from ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I think I wrote a Message on it, didn't I?

Q Well, you weren't quite as specific as that.

THE PRESIDENT: Have you read the Message?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Do it again. It will grow on you. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you seen Representative Vinson about his bill for a ceiling on defense profits?

THE PRESIDENT: Representative who?

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) Vinson.

Q Representative Vinson of Georgia.

THE PRESIDENT: About doing what?

Q About a bill for placing ceilings on defense profits?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q There is a report that you did talk to him.

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Mr. President, last Saturday, Mr. MacKenzie King, the Prime Minister of Canada, announced his price-fixing scheme to freeze prices at approximately their present level. Do you think that has any parallel in this country, or do you have any message which you could ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Tom, you've got me, because I just got -- Steve (Mr. Early) just brought in a memorandum for me which I haven't had a chance to read. It's quite long, and it's from Leon Henderson. And if you go over and ask Leon to show you, or give you what is proper out of that memorandum -- I think it's all proper -- you can get the answer.

Q Would Henderson release it to us?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Would Henderson release it to us?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't see why not.

MR. EARLY: I will talk to him.

THE PRESIDENT: Steve says he will talk to him first.

Q Mr. President, has the Navy reported inflicting any damage on Axis ships, since they received the 'shoot first' order? Do they believe they have been able to capture or destroy any of them?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I could answer the question, except off the record, because that is a thing we don't talk about. Off the record, the answer is that I don't think so, although maybe some of the people who drop the depth charges do, because I had long experience in the World War. The young men on board ships -- subchasers, and so forth and so on, if you had added up all of the submarines that they sank, it would have been about three times more submarines than the Germans

ever owned.

Q Thank you.

Q Mr. President, your Civilian Defense Administrator, Mr. LaGuardia, is running for re-election. How do you regard his candidacy?

THE PRESIDENT: If you will ask me that on Friday, I don't want to --probably -- I will probably say something about it, but you have got such a big story, I don't want to ---

MR. T. REYNOLDS: (interposing) (loudly) Thank you, Mr. President.

(laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- push the Mayor.

THE PRESIDENT: Is that right?

MR. GODWIN: Yes. Do they still call them 'ashcans,' the depth charges?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #778,
Executive Offices of the President,
October 24, 1941 -- 10.45 A.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: You will have to wait a minute and see if I can find something which Steve (Mr. Early) says there's a story on. I am not sure whether I can find it or not. (laughter) (looking through papers in his workbasket) That's not it. I guess that's it. I guess I can make something out of it. Yes, that's it. (pause) Just let me take a glance at it. (pause)

Well, now that the Lend-Lease bill has passed both Houses, although it is still in conference, I think it is all right for you to say something about the development and extension of the whole program of -- er -- supplies for our own Army and Navy for the future, and also under Lend-Lease. Studies along this line, the eventual objective of looking ahead as far as is possible, because, as you know, things change all the time. It might be called a comprehensive program -- call it an all-out program. Those studies have been going on for two or three months, and they are of course not ready for presentation as a whole at this time. That will come later. But, in the meantime, in making these studies, there are -- er -- certain items that appear to be of immediate importance in the sense that -- er -- the starting of these particular items was not dependent on the whole program.

One of them, for example, is the question of tanks, and we've agreed on a very great increase of the tank program. I suppose that the tank problem is as good an illustration of what happens in a world

war as anything else.

About -- er -- oh, what? -- a year ago last spring, all of our Army people, with the best information that could be got from the people who are actively fighting against Hitlerism -- er -- caused our experts to lay down a tank program which met with the general approval of everybody -- all the experts both here and abroad. And that program was, of course, immediately undertaken, and is -- I might almost say it's in full swing at the present time. Actual deliveries have been made for a good many months, and we are reaching the -- the -- er -- peak of production in it, according to the original program.

Now, since then, certain factors appeared which nobody could tell about over a year ago. Er -- the use of tanks in certain areas, not necessarily all areas, but certain areas, has become more important relatively than was believed a year and a half ago, and that is why for some time we have been working on this increase in the tank program. The Army will give me the actual -- er -- figures -- er -- request for funds -- er -- of which the tank item is the largest. Many thousands more tanks, and of course in addition, certain other critical items of ordnance that -- er -- relative to tanks, are part of the developing program which I hope to have -- I won't say in final form, because nothing is final, but it is in a fairly complete, rounded picture, but we hope soon this autumn, or possibly the first of January -- the Message to Congress.

I can't give you any actual figures, except that the program on, for instance, tanks, will be vastly greater than it is today, and in other words, it is realistic. It will mean the -- er -- increase of output in existing plants, and will probably mean new plants. These

are known immediate needs of essential ordnance items. And probably the request for this will go up fairly soon, with an appropriation to be put into whatever it is -- the next appropriation bill, whether it is called that or a deficiency bill, or something else.

MR. GODWIN: Can you properly give any figures ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- on existing ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. Except that the present program is coming along.

MR. GODWIN: It's in full swing? I mean for the benefit ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- of the public, if you could give any figures on tanks or not. That is what I meant.

THE PRESIDENT: No. I think you could say that the program -- er -- will call for about twice the total of the present program.

Q Mr. President, it is not for the public's information what the present program is, is it?

THE PRESIDENT: That is not given out. Just in the same way that O.P.M. the end of this month will cease giving out the totals on airplanes. Merely give the assurance that it is an increase over the last figures.

Q Is this distinct from Lend-Lease?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q This is distinct from Lend-Lease?

THE PRESIDENT: This is distinct from Lend-Lease, Yes.

Q Did this increase grow out of the Russian experience?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Did this increase grow out of the Russian experience?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I'd say that it came primarily from experience in North Africa last year -- Cirenaica -- Benghazi, and those places.

Q Mr. President, are there other items going to go up, sort of piecemeal fashion in this way, and then appropriations to cover all of them?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. There will be certain essential things that will go up during the balance of this year, and then the over-all program -- well, probably in my Annual Message, or with the Budget.

Q Well, these first ones will be merely authorizations? They will not be asking for appropriations?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I don't know. In other words, we will have to ask the House whether they prefer to put through an authorization bill or an appropriation bill.

Q Mr. President, does this involve any shift from artillery to tanks?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. No. No.

Q Does it affect the size of the Army?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, is this in addition to the announcement of Mr. -- testimony of Mr. Knudsen of plans to step up medium tanks from a thousand to two thousand a month, or is this part of that?

THE PRESIDENT: It's part of that, but it will increase that.

Q Mr. President, will the new program include heavy tanks as well?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you that. Somebody would like to know.

Q Mr. President, will there be no figures at all on airplane production after this month?

THE PRESIDENT: No what?

Q No figures at all on airplane production?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No figures at all.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Except, I think, they probably will tell you that it is increasing, and I think they will also tell you whether it is up to the schedule, or behind the schedule. Now of course it's true you've never seen the schedule -- (laughter) -- but -- er -- (he laughs).

Q Mr. President, will deliveries to Europe take precedence over these -- new program?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I don't think there is any question of that.

Q There is any question of what?

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) As to preference.

THE PRESIDENT: Any conflict. That's it.

Q Mr. President, it was just a short time ago that you told us that you were going to give the totals of aircraft production hereafter, but not break it down into categories ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't think we will give you even the totals.

Q I was wondering what was making that change?

THE PRESIDENT: Because it's information that the other side would like to have.

Q Mr. President, the existing tank program is being carried out largely in automobile factories. Does this new program contemplate further conversion of automobile facilities?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

Q Mr. President, there have been some discussions in the defense agencies of doubling the heavy bomber program too. Can you tell us anything about that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. That's what they would like to know, too.

Q Mr. President, might it be said that you try to conceal large numbers given you instead of small numbers? (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: It reminds me -- I don't know -- I have probably told you this story many times before.

During the World War -- er -- in the spring -- early summer of 1918, we were getting an awful lot of men over to Europe. Of course, they weren't equipped. We all know that. We didn't send any -- any artillery with them, and we didn't send any planes with them, so when they got there they had to be furnished with French or British equipment. Still an awful lot of men to keep secret, and -- er -- we were pretty happy about the whole thing. They were actually being landed.

And we had a policy, as you know, of complete secrecy about numbers, and that lasted all through the -- er -- spring -- early summer of 1918. And everybody was asking the same question: "Why this secrecy? Does it mean an awful lot of men, or are they behind schedule?"

Well, I got over to Paris in early July, and they had a meeting of the -- er -- er -- Inter-Allied Naval Council, and of the Army end of it, and they talked a couple of days as to whether the time hadn't come to do a little boasting. So I was -- somebody else handled the Army end -- and we came out with a big splurge announcing that we had got -- I don't know what it was -- a million and a quarter men, actually in France. And I -- er -- was deputed to receive the French press, and tell them that the Navy, in cooperation with the British and the French, had very greatly cut down on submarine sinkings, and that our Navy had a complete line of anti-submarine aircraft patrol the whole length of

the -- er -- west coast of France -- Bay of Biscay, etcetera.

And the French press came in, and I -- er -- told them the story, and I made it just as big as I possibly could. In other words, the psychological moment had arrived, which made it perfectly clear to Germany that they couldn't win under any possible circumstances. And it's a question of timing. And the thing went through, and of course it leaked back to Germany and probably was done in just about the right way.

Of course I personally had a little episode that was very funny. I received the French press at eleven a.m. in the hotel -- this is all off the record -- it's just a personal story -- er -- eleven a.m. at the Hotel Meurice. And the people in charge of it had prepared one end of the room as a bar, with all the champagne and hors d'oeuvres, etcetera, that you could put on it.

Well, I went in there. It was a great, big room. And the French press arrived at eleven a.m., and they were all in -- er -- full dress suits, with white ties. (laughter) And they weren't the working newspapermen -- a few were -- nearly all of them were the rédacteurs -- the editors -- of the papers, and they were seen. They were having the privilege of being received by 'Monsieur le Ministre.' Apparently it created the most awful furore.

Well, I had a translator there, and started in translating. He couldn't translate it, so I sat on the edge of the table, and in perfectly awful French told the story. "Well," I said, "go ahead and ask questions." Well, that was something that they had never heard of in the newspaper business in France -- asking question of a 'Ministre.' Unheard of. So they asked a few questions, and I answered them as far

as I was allowed to. And then at the end, one of these editors in the full dress suit -- er -- said, "Monsieur le Ministre, is it really true that in Washington the Members of the Cabinet receive the press once a day?" I said, "Yes. Twice a day." (laughter) Whereupon I thought nothing of it.

Next morning I went around to breakfast with old man Clemenceau, and as I went into the room, Clemenceau came at me -- just like a tiger -- with his claws out -- (holding up his hands). He said, "Ah, you overthrow my government. You overthrow my government." (laughter) "You lose the war." Well, I was horrified. I said, "My God, what have I done?" He said, "The French news men, they come -- they want to see me -- they want to see me and my cabinet once a day, and some of them say twice a day." (laughter) "I will resign first." (more laughter) So I darn near overthrew the government and lost the war.

Q Mr. President ---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Mr. President, you said you might have something to say about Mayor LaGuardia today.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes. I have got it right here. (laughter) I will read it -- I told Steve (Mr. Early) that it could be quoted. It is to be mimeographed for you. You will get it on the way out.

MR. EARLY: It will be.

THE PRESIDENT: -(reading):

"Although my voting residence has always been up-State, I have lived and worked in the City of New York off and on since 1904. I have known and observed New York's Mayors since that time. I am not taking part in the New York City election, but --- (laughter) --- what are you all laughing at? --- (more laughter) --- but, because the City of New York

contains about half the population of my State, I do not hesitate to express the opinion that Mayor LaGuardia and his Administration have given to the City the most honest and, I believe, the most efficient municipal government of any within my recollection. The fact that the City election has no relationship to national policies, but is confined to civic policies, is attested by the fact that the Constitution of the State provides for the municipal election in off years, when neither a Governor, nor a President, nor Members of the House of Representatives, or Senate of the United States are to be chosen."

That's all.

Q Mr. President, do you have any additional details on the KEARNY?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet -- for publication. In other words, they are coming in slowly but are not important. Chiefly about technical things ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- Where the explosion probably was, and what damage it was. Things of that kind.

Q Is it permissible to say -- for you to tell us whether it was seriously damaged?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh yes.

Q It was?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, we have a story that one or two papers issued, about a seaman in Honolulu who said he passed through the Red Sea. His ship, he said, was subjected to a very severe Nazi bombing. He said that they couldn't hit a bull with a bass fiddle, but indicated that there is a great deal of that in that area. Are you aware of that, or

have you had anything on that line?

THE PRESIDENT: No. The only thing I heard on that was that Hitler had been going to one of the few -- er -- prominent Jews left in Germany, and told him that he could stay, if he would explain to him how Moses managed to get the waters to stand aside and get the Children of Israel across. (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Is that a good story? Okay.

Q Mr. President, do you believe that farm products should be exempt from the provisions of the price control bills?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know enough about it. I don't know what the status is at the present time.

Q Mr. President, one of our New York papers published the rumor that Ed Flynn was resigning over this LaGuardia situation.

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't think there is any story in that.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.