

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #779,
Executive Office of the President,
October 28, 1941 -- 4.10 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: (to Mr. Godwin) I'd get a better chair, Earl.

MR. GODWIN: Look at it spread out.

THE PRESIDENT: You have been putting on weight, you know that?

MR. GODWIN: The more I exercise the more appetite I get. You know how it is. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: (softly) Let me ask you if you knew Doc O'Connor. Ten years ago he used to be terribly fat. He's as thin as a rail now. I asked him how did he do it. He said, "Perfectly simple. I keep my mouth shut at the table." (laughter) A lot in that.

MR. GODWIN: That's right. (pause) Is that the map? (the President laughs)

Q You will be going up to Hyde Park to vote, I presume?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Friday night.

Q Friday night?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. EARLY: (to the President) You know, Tom (Mr. Tom Reynolds) will be writing literary pieces as special correspondent very soon.

THE PRESIDENT: What is he studying?

MR. EARLY: He is going to be special correspondent for the new morning paper in Chicago.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh yes, that's right. Really? I didn't know that. Gosh! You had better get out your dictionary. (laughter)

Q All he needs is scissors, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q All he needs is scissors, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (laughter) Any female assistants?

MR. T. REYNOLDS: No. I'm afraid not.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have anything today, except that it has been brought to my attention that it is the first anniversary of the attack on Greece, one year ago. There isn't very much to be said about it, except that it is another example of a completely unwarranted attack on a small and exceedingly brave nation.

Q Mr. President, have you got a reply yet from Mr. Lewis (John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers of America, C.I.O.) to your letter of last night?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet.

Q Have you written any more letters?

THE PRESIDENT: No. (laughter)

Q Er -- would you care to give any general statements on the situation ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) I don't think so.

Q (continuing) --- that exists now, particularly with reference to the demand up on the Hill that legislation be passed?

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

MR. F. KLUCKHOHN: Mr. President, I am instructed by the New York Times to ask if you will release for publication that map and document you mentioned last night?

THE PRESIDENT: No. And for a very, very good reason. The map has on it -- it's in my basket at the present time -- (indicating) -- it has on it certain manuscript notations, which if they were reproduced would in all probability disclose how -- where the map came from. And on account of these manuscript notations it might be exceedingly unfair to a number

of people. It might also dry up the source of future information.

Q Mr. President, are the notations in German? (laughter)

Q Mr. President, could you give to us the nations mentioned on the map of the so-called vassal states?

THE PRESIDENT: No, because that might be the same trouble -- same general idea.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, was it ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Fourteen all lumped into five.

Q Fourteen what, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Fourteen -- entirely recreated -- all the boundaries changed. And out of the fourteen come five vassal states.

Q Mr. President, the -- er -- I understand that The Christian Science Monitor for October 22nd printed -- er -- a general plan for eliminating Christianity. They said it came from neutral sources. Is that the same one?

THE PRESIDENT: Steve (Mr. Early) told me about it five minutes ago, and I haven't seen the plan, so I couldn't tell you whether it is similar to, or even identical to the one that I have.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us where the meeting between John L. Lewis and Mr. Taylor (Myron C. Taylor) will take place tomorrow?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

Q Mr. President, are there any new details that you could give us on the KEARNY incident?

THE PRESIDENT: Don't think so. I saw photographs of the ship as she was coming into port yesterday, but -- er -- I don't think the Navy Department -- they didn't have anything else yesterday.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Was it listing badly, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Was she listing badly?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) She wasn't listing at all. She was on an even keel. Of course that compartment was flooded, both on the starboard side where she was hit clear through, and on the port side, so the weight of the water was evenly distributed.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us the direction from which the torpedo came?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I could disclose it -- from outside the ship!

(laughter) We don't know. The -- the -- er -- the torpedo, of course, struck pretty well below the water-line, and the effect of the explosion was forward and upward -- (demonstrating with his hands) -- after it hit on the starboard side, about a third of the way from the stern. And the explosion went under and up, so that the deck plates -- in these photographs, on the port side above the engine room -- were blown upward. In other words, it very nearly cut her in two.

Q Then it came from the port ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What? We don't know. It was hit -- she was hit on the starboard side. Now whether it was coming in with a glancing blow from the port, or a glancing blow from the starboard, or straight on -- head on -- I don't know.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I suppose that may come out, because they might have seen the track of the torpedo before it hit her, but we haven't got any of that yet.

Q Was the KEARNY alone at the time, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Was the KEARNY alone at the time, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: No. She was hunting submarines, in the midst of quite a number of ships that were scattered --or had scattered all over the ocean. Now, whether she was within a mile, or five miles, or ten miles of any ships that were scattered all over the ocean, I don't know.

Q Had the convoy been attacked?

THE PRESIDENT: What? Oh yes. Some hours before.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, the ---

Q (interposing) Were any British ships in that convoy?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, if you have had time to read the German comment -- Berlin comment -- you may have noticed that they were accusing you of having faked the map. They speak of the map as a fraud, a forgery, a fake ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) (picking up some teletype copy from his desk) You people -- if you people haven't had a chance to see it, I will get Steve (Mr. Early) to pin this up.

MR. GODWIN: What's that?

THE PRESIDENT: What? It's the news ticker.

THE PRESIDENT: If you want some good -- er -- good method of improving your vocabulary -- er -- you will find it good stuff that has come out of Berlin today. It's a scream. It's good. I will get Steve to pin it up, because it is really a liberal education for anybody that wants to improve their vocabulary.

Q Do you think it gained in translation?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Did it gain in ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Of course it sounds better in Germany.

(laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Yes. Let me pursue my question. I won't ask you specifically.

What would you say to the charge of the suspicion that that map was -- had been foisted on you in some way? That it was also a forgery or a fake of some sort?

THE PRESIDENT: Well ---

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) They make that very serious claim.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, they made the serious claim about ten days ago that I had torpedoed the KEARNY.

MR. GODWIN: Personally.

THE PRESIDENT: Personally. (laughter) I suppose that is as good an answer as you can make.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Now it comes from a source which is undoubtedly reliable. There is no question about that.

Q Mr. President, have you had occasion to make that map available to the Latin American nations concerned?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Only -- it would only be done in the very strictest confidence.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) The kind of a confidence that would be -- I suppose so that they could not trace -- er -- the poor devil that we got it from.

Q Mr. President, regarding the labor situation, aside from the coal mine

incident, have you given consideration to such legislation as compulsory mediation recently, or suspending the rights of strikers?

THE PRESIDENT: If you will -- if you will not be so specific, if you will say -- if you will say legislation and not go any further than that, the answer is in the affirmative.

Q Well, I was interested in those particular ideas, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I can't tell you about ideas. If you limit it to that, there are probably ten ideas besides your own. It wouldn't be fair.

Q Mr. President, how much time do you think Mr. Lewis should reasonably have to reply to your third request that the mines be opened?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't thought in those terms yet.

Q Mr. President, has the Chief Executive got any power to act in this case, or will it need special legislation?

THE PRESIDENT: It depends on what we decide to do. Of course it will in very large part, as you know, at the present time. One method would not call ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- for the use of any more than existing powers, and another method would call for the use of legislation to implement them. It would be a different method.

Q You speak of existing powers. What are they? Can you tell us?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I will give you a couple of examples. There were two plants that were taken over by the Government lately.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, do you think that your powers are adequate?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Now that doesn't mean that I am going to seize all the coal mines. This is just illustration.

Q Do you think that your powers are adequate to deal with the situation --

this coal mine difficulty?

THE PRESIDENT: It depends entirely on the method adopted.

Q Mr. President, would you have authority to take -- say the coal that is above ground in the commercial mines? Would you have authority to take that, and reallocate it to defense industries, in the event there were prolonged shortages in captive mines?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I don't know. We are looking into all those things.

MR. GODWIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #780,
Executive Office of the President
October 31, 1941 -- 11.00 A.M.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: You have had the Navy Department announcement a little while ago. (on the sinking of the U. S. DESTROYER REUBEN JAMES) There has been no further news since that time.

The -- er -- one of the other things I have got is -- last night, very much to my regret, Ambassador Daniels (Josephus Daniels) told me he had to give up his post in Mexico, on account of the condition of Mrs. Daniels' health. And Steve (Mr. Early) will give you the copy of his letter to me, and my letter to him, in which I accept his resignation very, very regretfully, but -- and suggest that before it takes effect, he should return to Mexico to say good-bye to his colleagues and friends, and to the President of Mexico, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

I don't know that the country as a whole realizes that, of all of the people in the last eight and a half years who have been in foreign posts in Central and South America -- Mexico -- I think that Mr. Daniels probably has done more to encourage and live up to the Good Neighbor Policy than anybody else I know. And today our relations with Mexico are on a basis of understanding and friendship; with a very great improvement, as we all know, over conditions that existed when he went down there in the spring of 1933.

Q Mr. President, anything to say about his successor?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, does the Administration object -- will the Administration

object if the Canadians establish a news service in New York City, similar to the Australian and the British news services there?

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

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q At Hyde Park recently, you commented on this Hetch Hetchy power referendum in San Francisco. I am requested now by the San Francisco Examiner to ask whether you are aware that Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda have been given grants to develop power on Federal land ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q (continuing) -- and sell that power to ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I will have to find out. I don't know the details, but I will ask Steve (Mr. Early) to find out, and let you know.

Q Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) The general -- the general tenor of what I said at Hyde Park of course was perfectly true -- er -- and that is that the question is living up to the original -- the terms -- the original terms of the charter, or permit -- whatever it was -- when it was first given a great many years ago. That's the issue.

Q Mr. President, is there any possibility of a severance of diplomatic relations with Germany as a result of these sinkings?

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't heard anything about it until you asked the question.

Q Mr. President, now that one of our own warships has now -- has been sunk, is there any difference in our international situation?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. Carrying out the duty assigned.

Q Mr. President, there has been a great deal quoted about the expansion

of arms production in this country, and some people have suggested that goals of the program have been doubled, and that output next year will also be doubled. I wonder if you could discuss that matter?

THE PRESIDENT: You would have to come down to brass tacks more than that, before I could discuss it. You mean the whole program?

Q Those are reports that have been coming in from newspapers.

THE PRESIDENT: No. A good many items, which of course will be doubled. That doesn't necessarily mean the whole program.

Q Stacy May, (Director, Bureau of Research and Statistics, O.P.M.) Mr. President, said that it would be stepped up from forty billion dollars to eighty billion dollars, in a speech he recently made.

THE PRESIDENT: I guess he's a little ahead of me. I haven't worked out any ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- figures at all.

Q Have you any information that German submarines have been sunk, or any that you could give out?

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't tell you if I did. That was answered by the Secretary of the Navy categorically yesterday.

Q Mr. President, would you like to comment on the theory expressed at the America First Meeting last night, that you could wave a wand and bring peace in Europe?

THE PRESIDENT: I never heard of it.

Q Mr. President, does this mean that if we do actually know that submarines are sunk ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes. You are starting off on the wrong word.

Q Then 'provided.' (laughter)

VOICE: (interjecting) 'Whereas.'

Q (continuing) I was just wondering whether it is the policy that we are going to, (know) when our ships are sunk, and we are not going to (know) when those attacking us are sunk?.

THE PRESIDENT: Really -- I think you were here in the World War?

Q I was.

THE PRESIDENT: Sure. Well, you and I remember perfectly well that we didn't announce any casualties to German submarines at any time during the war. We of course did announce casualties to our own ships. For very obvious reasons.

Q Well, we can't keep the secret from Germany, can we?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q We can't keep the secret from Germany, can we?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh yes. We kept the secret from Germany for a long time. That's the point.

Q Mr. President, supposing an American airplane captured a German submarine?

THE PRESIDENT: If! (laughter) We might tell about it, and we might not, immediately. Of course, there are perfectly obvious reasons for that. Everybody knows, when they come to think about it.

I always remember one episode in the World War. I went out -- summer of 1918 -- with -- in a French -- er -- it wasn't -- Yes, a French blimp, out over the Bay of Biscay. We took a ride and I ran the thing. I was sitting in an armchair, and pulled a stick up and down, and turned a wheel right or left. Anyone of you could have run it -- it was perfectly fascinating. We were up four or five hundred feet above the surface. I was out a couple of hours.

And the next day, that -- I had gone -- that same blimp thought she saw -- er -- the shape of a submarine, way down on the bottom -- off a place called Penmarch Point. Well, there had been a German submarine operating off there -- oh, for several months -- and she had sunk quite a lot of ships that were going into the mouth of the Loire river. And everybody was trying to get her. She would be on station a week or ten days, and then go back to Germany and refuel; then return to Penmarch Point.

This blimp saw this shape, down on the bottom about a hundred feet below the water, and dropped a buoy over it, came back, and one of the planes went out and -- er -- dropped depth charges. And I think some of the sub-chasers went out and dropped depth charges all around the buoy.

Well, some oil came up, and the people who had done it said, "Hey. We've got a submarine. We've sunk a submarine." Well, of course, we were awfully, awfully careful, and we didn't claim that submarine at all. -- It wasn't claimed as a 'get.'

After the war was all over -- months later -- they sent some divers down, and sure enough it was a submarine -- they got her. But we didn't know at the time.

Now, of course, obviously, the Germans didn't know what had happened to that ship either. She might have been wrecked. She might have been sunk. She might have been captured. The fact was that she was missing, and that's all that Germany knew. Which, of course, had a pretty -- a pretty -- an -- er -- important effect on the morale of the crews of other submarines. It just didn't come home.

Q Mr. President, do you think that Germany has any reason to wonder about

some of the submarines that have been in contact with our --- (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Go to a good psychologist.

Q Mr. President, are you going to recommend legislation Federalizing the Unemployment Compensation benefit system this -- er -- Session?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. There will be a Social Security message, as I think I said a couple of weeks ago, but it isn't ready yet.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Various kinds of Social Security.

Q And it does mean Federalizing Unemployment Compensation?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know yet.

MR. J. WRIGHT: Some of the States, like Wisconsin, think they have an even better scheme than the Federal scheme; and it has been worked out on percentages of accidents, etcetera, and percentages of unemployment. They very much resent the idea of complete uniformity in Federalization. Is there going to be any exception made on States that have experimented with this sort of thing?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you on Wisconsin, Jim, because I don't know enough about it, but ---

MR. J. WRIGHT: (interposing) So do I.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. J. WRIGHT: So do I. (laughter)

VOICE: (aside) Ask me.

THE PRESIDENT: There is one thing that I think can be said. On the subject of Social Security, not just Unemployment Insurance, but Old Age Pensions, and so forth -- er -- if you make uniformity for all the States, you help those that have, and you don't help those that have not got the wherewithal. And it results in the richer States being

able to pay a great deal more than some of the States that are relatively poor in their taxable values. And -- er -- this -- what we are working on at the present time is a method -- er -- which will give more Federal aid to the -- a great deal more Federal aid to the States that haven't got the riches -- er -- on some kind of a standard basis, which probably would take the form of the per capita income of the population of the different States.

In a couple of weeks, probably, we will be going to Georgia, an illustration of a State that is large in area, large in population, and very low in taxable values, and very low in the -- er -- yearly -- er -- per capita income. Obviously, they ought to have -- this has nothing to do with their State government, or their legislature, but they obviously ought to have more Federal aid than the State of New York, which has an -- an infinitely higher -- er -- yearly per capita income, and that -- that is probably what the basis of the recommendations are going to be.

Q Mr. President, is there anything new to be said on the subject of recommendations on anti-strike legislation?

THE PRESIDENT: No news on that today. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, would you say that the strike situation by and large is getting better or getting worse?

THE PRESIDENT: That -- I -- I haven't had any figures on for two or three weeks.

Q (interposing) Were you ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) It isn't as bad as it was at one time. It's a little worse than it was recently. But what the percentages of slow-up caused by strikes are at the present time, I will have to get the

figures. And, of course, there is also in some individual cases -- er -- not a strike but a slow-up.

Q Mr. President, is there any agency, or are there any individuals in the Government who can be appealed to, to speed up decisions by some of these -- er -- other Governmental agencies?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't quite follow.

Q Well -- er -- put it this way. A defense industry in the City of Toledo ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q A defense industry in a city -- call it Toledo -- has been held up -- er -- for lack of water and sewers. Applications for funds to build these facilities have been pending for over a hundred days, with no decision from here.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, I don't -- I never heard the individual case of Toledo, but it may be some of the facts ---. You mean to say the plant can't run? Is it proved that the plant can't run unless they put a new sewer in?

Q The construction can't go forward until the sewer and waterlines are built.

THE PRESIDENT: I wish you would check on the story, because I have had a number of cases where -- I am not saying anything against Toledo -- this had better be off the record -- I have had other cases brought to my attention, where a community was trying to get a new water system, or a new school, or a new hospital -- all kinds of things. Said they could not start the plant until they got it, where the actual facts were just the reverse. And they were trying to get something from the Government for nothing, where they really could have got along under

their own steam in putting through these additional facilities.

And there are a lot of communities that are trying to get things, on the -- on the ground that the Government is going to make it a defense area, etcetera. One community I happen to know very well tried to get a new hospital the other day because -- er -- there were three or four plants in the region that were turning out -- er -- defense articles, and -- er -- the total additional population of the community had risen from forty thousand to forty thousand three hundred. And now of course you can't get a new hospital because the population has risen three hundred people. They were trying to get something for nothing. I don't know because that -- maybe it's all right.

Q Mr. President, my interest is not whether or not they are entitled to it, but whether it should take a hundred days. It has been cleared by the Defense Public Works for over seventy days. Now it has been in the Budget over a month, without any decision.

THE PRESIDENT: There must be something phoney in the particular case. In other words I am sure it wouldn't have happened.

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

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #781,
Held in the President's Study
In the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
Monday, November 3, 1941 -- 12.45 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Well?

Q Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: You can't have this today. (indicating statement) For
Wednesday morning release, I understand the pictures -- the films were
put on it.

Q Is it good?

THE PRESIDENT: It's not very startling. I just dictated a few words. I
don't know what I am going to say this afternoon, but I dictated a
few thoughts just now to use this afternoon. I don't think they will
let you people in, will they, in the high school?

Q I imagine so.

Q Sure hope so.

Q We haven't heard.

THE PRESIDENT: I think they only let high school graduates in. (laughter)
Maybe you have your certificates with you. It's all right.

Q We have been drinking Poughkeepsie water, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That would admit you to almost anything.

I don't think I have got any news at all. Bill, have I got any-
thing? Where's Bill?

MR. HASSETT: Here, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Have I got anything at all?

MR. HASSETT: Just your own thoughts.

Q (interposing) Can you ---

THE PRESIDENT: No. I shall just put them on paper.

Q Have you any thoughts on your meeting with the Prime Minister? (Mackenzie King of Canada)

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing more than what he said.

Q That was pretty scanty, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q That was quite scanty.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q He said 'anything and everything.'

Q He said he had a 'profitable visit,' Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That is perfectly true.

Q (interposing) Could you elaborate ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I don't think -- I don't think either I can elaborate, or that you can elaborate. I saw somebody's elaboration in the papers this morning. It just wasn't true, but that's one of the penalties of elaborating, Fred! (laughter)

MR. FRED PASLEY: There's a story behind that, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: That's what I call space-filling.

Q Did you -- did you reach any concrete agreement with the Prime Minister this time, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well -- and incidentally there wasn't any conference. Of course, Bill tried to tell you that today, but nobody believed it.

You all do know that there wasn't any conference. (he laughs)

Q We had to write about something.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q We had to write about something.

THE PRESIDENT: Sure, sure.

Q Well, Mr. President, could you say whether you think there has been any greater bond of understanding established, or ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Continuing bond. (laughter) That doesn't help at all.

Q Not much.

Q Mr. President, I would like to ask a question, off the record if necessary.

Lots of people who think just as you do on this war issue, also think that a continuance of diplomatic relations with Germany is a form of dishonesty. Could you elaborate your thoughts for background?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Only off the record. I would have to make it completely off the record.

As you know, we have taken the position -- the Secretary of State was repeating it the other day -- that we are actually and truly only acting on the defense. That's all. That is literally true on all the oceans, and various other places. There are a great many other things to support that, that haven't come out.

Well, I can -- you can't use this, but as an intimation, one of the dispatches this morning showed a very definite attempt on the part of Germany to establish itself, by the infiltration method, in a funny little place called Liberia. Well, that's a thing we can't use, because the -- the Liberian government realizes exactly what the purpose was -- establishing an airline down there. Well, Liberia, of course, is awfully close to South America. It's just another step. And it depends entirely on how you like to look at it. Is it an attack, or isn't it? In one sense it is an attack, because it is the first stage of the development of German control, probably down to a point directly opposite South America.

And as I say, there are constant instances of trying to spread their power all over the world which are not 'shooting' down there, but it's a very definite attempt to attack the Americas. You know the point of view. And naturally we are resisting for the purpose of our own defense, and hemisphere defense. Things of that kind.

And the question always arises here. We don't want a declared war with Germany because we are acting in defense -- self-defense -- every action. And to break off diplomatic relations, why, that won't do any good. I really frankly don't know that it would do any good. It might be more useful to keep them the way they are.

Q There is the thought that in that way the situation would be brought home very directly to the American people.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think the American people understand it pretty well.

After all, in days like this, you don't -- you don't do things for the sake of the record. And that is about all it would be.

MR. F. KLUCKHOHN: Why can't stuff like that Liberian incident be published, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, because, Frank, it isn't the time to do it. Publishing things of this kind is a question of timing, as you will probably see in the course of the next two or three days.

Q Mr. President, this -- there isn't any more you could say about this New York Mayoralty contest, is there? They seem to be doing some awfully harsh talking down there?

THE PRESIDENT: A lot of hard talking. I got one report yesterday ---

Q (interposing) Is this on the record?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, this is on the record. I got a report yesterday that there was a story in New York that I had repudiated what I had said

about the Mayor. And that -- that story was being circulated. Of course there is absolutely nothing, not one word or vestige of truth in it. I think that is all.

Q Really? I don't believe the report was published.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q I don't believe the report was published.

THE PRESIDENT: No. I got it over the telephone from two different places.

Q Oh, oh.

Q Mr. President, is there any comment you would like to make on that thing of mud-slinging instead of issues down there?

THE PRESIDENT: About what?

Q Mud-slinging down there instead of issues?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I said I was taking no part in the campaign. Everybody knows what I said.

Q Are you going to touch on any local issues this afternoon in your speech, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Not local issues. I am going to talk about a thing in education that I have always talked about a great deal, and this morning a little bit that way. I have talked about it for thirty years, and that is: giving the boys and girls in high school a little bit more firsthand knowledge of how, and where, and why the wheels go round.

I am going to use -- I think Bill can give you a -- I don't know that I will follow copy, so you people will have to check me on it. Of course, what I dictated this morning is just very rough -- ideas.

I'll use an illustration of the fact that the average boy and girl doesn't know anything about the procedure of local law. They don't know what a Justice of the Peace does, what his duties are. They don't

know what the police force does in Poughkeepsie -- we hope. They don't know what the County Court does. They don't know what the Supreme Court in Poughkeepsie does. They have never been in a courtroom.

Well, that happened to me. I always think of my own experience. I got through school, and college, then went three years to a law school, and was duly admitted to the Bar of the State of New York. And in 1907, or in there somewhere, I went into a great big law office as a sort of a glorified office boy.

And the day after I got there I was told to go up to the court and answer a calendar call. Now, mind you, I was a full-fledged lawyer, duly certified. I didn't know what a calendar call was. I had never been in a courtroom, and yet I was a lawyer. Never been in a courtroom. And then the next day I was sent up to record a deed in the County Clerk's Office. Well, I hadn't the foggiest idea about the recording of a deed. I had to learn all those practical things. Never been in a County Clerk's Office. I had never been in a big factory, mind you, at the age of -- what? -- 25. Didn't know what a factory meant, where the stuff came from and the different individual processes, and the assembly processes, and the selling processes. Had to learn that long after I had graduated and was in a profession.

I am going to use some of these examples this afternoon. The general idea that in the high schools -- take this County as a perfectly good example, it is a practical thing to take around high school students and let them see the wheels go round. Of course, the County highway system, the Sanitation, County health people, what a Surrogate's Office is. Some of them haven't the faintest idea what a

Surrogate's Office does, and so forth and so on. What a department store is and how you run it, And going back to my old example -- in the spring of 1933, what a bank is, what happens to your money when you put it in the bank. A great many people still think they put it in the safe until you call for it.

Q What does a Surrogate's Office do?

THE PRESIDENT: What did you say?

Q What does a Surrogate's Office do? (laughter) I want to be there for that.

THE PRESIDENT: You will never get there until you are dead. It's all right.

Q You mean, Mr. President, we are going to qualify them for Information Please -- our school children?

THE PRESIDENT: Right. A very good idea.

Q Mr. President, to come back to the international situation, it seems to be pretty well established that the statement the other night from Germany that America has declared a shooting war on the Reich comes from Mr. Hitler himself. Is there any Presidential reaction to such a statement as that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know except what I read in the papers.

Q Is there any more on the REUBEN JAMES, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Nothing. There wasn't last night. I haven't talked this morning.

Q Mr. President, the Neutrality Law revision is moving toward the end.

Are you going to ask your Congressional leaders to speed up this Price Control?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we will probably talk about it on Wednesday morning.

They are coming in then.

Q Did you discuss with Mr. King (Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada) how his Price Control plan is working?

THE PRESIDENT: The trouble is this, that if I said I talked about that, it wouldn't be a fair thing to lift out of the general conversation. We talked about anything. I think he said 'anything and everything.' (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, are you going to vote? About the usual hour tomorrow morning, I mean.

THE PRESIDENT: I think so. We haven't worked it out yet. I think Mrs. Roosevelt and I will go up there about, I would say, eleven or twelve o'clock.

Q Yes, sir. I don't assume you have anything much to say about the local election campaigns?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I can't say anything out loud about it. But for your own private information, Mr. Van Wagoner ^[Wagoner] (Elmer Van Wagoner) -- I think he has been an awfully good Supervisor of the Town. We got -- we got two people that are running for Superintendent of Highways, and they are both named Marshall, isn't that right?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I hope the Marshall who --- (laughter) --- is in now will stay in, because I think the roads are -- I drive over them a great deal -- they are in better shape than I have seen them for a long time.

Q Those two Marshalls, Mr. President -- regarding those two Marshalls, did you ever hear about the time Tuxedo Park voted unanimously the Socialist Ticket? They got a new voting machine, and the handle of the Socialist came down over the Republican. They all voted wrong. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I love it. (laughter)

AcB 11-2-56

Q Mr. President, we were looking over some of the exhibits out there, while we were waiting. How is the Library (Franklin D. Roosevelt Library) getting along? Lots of people coming up?

THE PRESIDENT: Getting along. Much larger attendance than we had expected. I think the figure for the first four months was about 40,000. Am I right on that? Who knows? Where is Shipman?

MR. SHIPMAN: Yes, sir about 40,000.

Q Is that total for the first four months?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: And of course Mr. Shipman is getting a little bit worried because the -- there are so many more things that we are getting, that we are already faced, or will be soon, with the question of space -- adequate space. Of course there are -- a great many people don't realize it, but the space we have will fill up very quickly from material that is now in Washington for about six or seven million manuscripts. Of course the general public doesn't see the manuscripts.

Q What are those, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q In a general way?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I would say -- those manuscripts I would say are not only mine, but papers that I have been associated with -- started back in 1910. Three -- nearly three years in Albany. Then after that, the Navy files through 1920. And then, of course, a great many political files, like the campaign of 1920, and the Madison Square campaign in 1924, and the Houston campaign in 1928. And then my campaign in 1928 for Governor, and the four years of Albany papers. Then, of course, the -- the White House files. Then all you have to do on that is to go

downstairs in the White House and look at what hasn't come up yet. There is an awful lot hasn't come up, but a great many already in the stack. Then, of course, besides that, there are a very large number of my own books, and those are in the stack too.

Q (interjecting) Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) And those are constantly being added to. For instance, we are getting a great many supplementary dovetailing documents and reports from different parts of the Government. Just for example, I got a telephone call yesterday from Dr. Buck, who has been the Archivist, who has been given, for permanent keeping, the old Navy Department files. They haven't got room in the Navy Building any more for them -- the files go back to the French war, and Tripoli War, and the War of 1812. And for -- as soon as Doctor Buck gets them, he is going to have them micro-filmed.

Q That's the new system?

THE PRESIDENT: That's the new system. Have them all micro-filmed, and as I understand it, he will -- I think three copies. They will keep one in a different part of the Archives Building, and they will put another one in the Navy Department Building. And they will send one copy up here, so that if anything should ever happen to the originals, we should still have the micro-film. Of course they take up a certain amount of room.

And then -- well, there are a lot of things. Remember N.R.A.? Well, those files are down in Washington. They oughtn't to come here, but the more important N.R.A. files are going to be micro-filmed and bring the copy up here, because a lot of this dovetails in with my papers. So any student would be able to get here a pretty large portion

of everything that has been connected with the Administration, and not have to run around all over the place to get something here or something there.

Q There's a slight argument ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q There's a slight argument among the boys this morning on how old is the tree in front, out there, that is chained up -- the limbs?

THE PRESIDENT: I think -- the story has been printed, but it is rather an interesting one. I had a tree man here about twenty years ago with a similar tree, about the same age.

And he counted the rings and figured out that the tree started to grow about 1640, which is three hundred years, and then he advanced the extremely interesting theory -- the tree obviously grew under field conditions. In other words, not in a forest -- in those early years -- because the lower limbs started out at a very low level, and branched out fifty or more feet on all sides of the tree. So it must have been an open space. It meant necessarily almost that this was a field, and if it was a field, then it was an Indian field. Therefore there was an Indian encampment, or village, right here.

Q In other words, an accidental tree grew, so to speak?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. It had to grow up under field conditions, and the only fields in the East in those days were Indian cultivated fields. Everywhere else were woodlands.

Q Is that a hickory?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q What is that tree? Oh, I'm sorry.

THE PRESIDENT: White oak. They are all white oaks. And I think it is

rather an interesting thing. Of course, we find all kinds of arrowheads. Right on the drive we dug up a deer bone -- a shin bone that had been made into a needle. And we have quite a lot of arrowheads and things like that that are dug up. It's rather good.

Q Yes it is.

Q Isn't it one of our oldest parts of America up here -- in terms of history then?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q In terms of Revolutionary history?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. This County did not get settled until 1690, something like that, so it couldn't have been a white man's field. It must have been an Indian's field. Of course the other side of the river was settled about 1640, over in Ulster County.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: Mr. President, have you decided when you are going to send a request to Congress for the vastly increased tank production, about which you talked a fortnight ago?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, Tom.

MR. T. REYNOLDS: You haven't got to the point where you will use your draft then?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet.

Q That is just a part of the general raising of the sights?

THE PRESIDENT: Raising what?

Q Raising the sights of the defense program?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, part of the whole thing. Yes. There isn't any time being lost, because of course there are still -- they have allocated, but they are still awarding actual contracts on some of the old money. It isn't all actually contracted for yet.

Q Mr. President, it is probably all right to mention those two candidates?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think so. Only just on the ground that they have been very good in their jobs.

Q There will be no news today, Mr. President, on other candidates, will there?

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

THE PRESIDENT: Did Tom (Mr. T. Reynolds) have a good birthday on Saturday night?

Q Yes, indeed, Mr. President.

Q It was last night, Mr. President, that the party ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Continuing?

Q Yes, sir. Very good.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #782,
Executive Office of the President,
November 7, 1941 -- 10.45 A.M.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. Hassett of the secretariat! They speak of him as Mr.

Hassett of the White House secretariat!

THE PRESIDENT: Do they? What do they call him Judge for?

MR. GODWIN: He looks like it.

THE PRESIDENT: There are a lot of criminals that look like Judges, you know. (laughter)

MR. J. HENRY: Mr. President, we have a successor to Tom Reynolds.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. J. HENRY: We have a successor to Tom Reynolds here this morning.

(introducing him to the President): This is Mr. Smith.

MR. MERRIMAN SMITH: How are you, Mr. President?

MR. J. HENRY: He doesn't take up quite as much room.

THE PRESIDENT: By the way, when does the publication start? (the new Chicago morning newspaper)

Q First of December.

THE PRESIDENT: What are they going to call it?

Q It hasn't been decided.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have got anything, except that I didn't want to give this out outside. I might as well read it to you. It's quite short. And incidentally there isn't any other information, so that will serve you then. (reading):

"The President said today that the Government of the United States is giving consideration to the question of withdrawal of the American

Marine detachments now maintained ashore in China, at Peiping, Tientsin and Shanghai." And that is all -- literally.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what our forces are over there? I heard that there were six hundred men in Shanghai.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q Mr. President, have you any comment on the Railroad Wage Report?

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

Q Mr. President, do you plan to ask Railroad Management, and Labor, to accept the decision of your Board?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't got any news on it at all.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, is there any news on the -- on the probable new labor legislation you spoke about?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Do you still think there is need now for it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't know.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, do you think that a fifteen percent payroll tax to avert inflation is necessary now?

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

Q Mr. President, a great many people are suggesting that the status quo, as to the closed shop conditions, be adopted for the period of this emergency, as in the World War. Have you any comment to make on that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. You're having a bad time today. (he laughs)

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, has it -- has it at any time -- the presence of the Marines in China been a subject of conversation between this Government and Japan?

THE PRESIDENT: I told you.

MR. GODWIN: That is old stuff. Is that all on that?

THE PRESIDENT: As a matter of conversation between us and Japan?

MR. GODWIN: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: No. Never has.

MR. G. DURNO: Mr. President, a high naval authority reports that the patrol has already disposed of 42 Nazi submarines.

THE PRESIDENT: Who did that?

MR. G. DURNO: A high naval authority.

THE PRESIDENT: Who?

MR. G. DURNO: My office didn't tell me what his name was.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh! (laughter) That's a grand story. And that -- that -- that particular question -- reply is so good that it is going to go down in the papers of the President, which Sam Rosenman will edit sometime in the future. So you have become historic.

Q Will you mention the name of the reporter?

THE PRESIDENT: Sure, if he will give it to me.

Q George Durno.

Q George Durno.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh! (laughter) George, you're going in Sam's book. It's all right.

MR. G. DURNO: Without an answer? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No charge! (more laughter)

Q Mr. President, will the withdrawal of the Marines in China bring any new status of the American situation over there?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't -- you heard what I said 'fust.'

Q Mr. President, have you received any indication that Finland may withdraw

from the war?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. Unless something came in during the night. We have had absolutely nothing on it except what I read in the papers this morning.

Q Mr. President, can you say anything about agricultural price ceilings?

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

Q How about a ceiling on wages, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have any information on it at all.

Q Mr. President, just to make another try, what interpretation should we put on your first speech that you gave us this morning?

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't. (laughter) I wouldn't try to interpret, because you know it is a grave question as to whether interpretation is news.

Q It passes for it sometimes. (laughter)

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) When I used to edit a paper, interpretation was generally considered a duty of the editorial desk, but of course, times have changed a great deal. (he laughs)

Q Any idea ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (continuing) --- how many civilians are in those cities in China?

THE PRESIDENT: In what?

Q Do you know how many American civilians are in those cities?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't know. Of course, they have all had -- I think on more than one occasion -- the suggestion that unless it is imperative for personal reasons that they stay -- that they wish to stay -- that they should return. That has been done several times in more than one instance.

Q Mr. President, this doesn't affect the question of extra territoriality ---

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q This doesn't affect our interest in the concessions in China?

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

Q Mr. President, did you have any advance inquiries regarding Mr. Litvinov
(newly appointed Russian Ambassador to the U.S.) this morning?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think several days ago they asked for the usual
agreement through the State Department, to take it to me, and of course
this was given later on.

Q Will Mr. Oumansky come back?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Will Mr. Oumansky come back?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything about the possible future of the
Omnibus Harbors and Rivers bill, whether it will go up to Congress ---

THE PRESIDENT: What kind of a service?

Q The Omnibus Rivers and Harbors bill. That is where you put the St.
Lawrence Waterway.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know what the status on the Hill is. Of course, I
have told them -- it is a perfectly simple thing -- that I am not
particularly concerned over authorizations on projects which are not
defense projects. In other words, the building up of a pool of things
to be done, to take care of the shift-over from defense conditions to
peacetime conditions. Now whether this bill has authorizations in it
or not, I am not sure. On the other -- the St. Lawrence power end of
things is a very vital defense need, and it should be not only authorized,
but it should be appropriated for, because it is a vital defense need.

Q Does that mean it will be taken out of the Omnibus bill?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Does that mean it will be taken out of the Omnibus bill that we put through? It would be taken out?

THE PRESIDENT: No. As I say, I don't know whether the Omnibus bill contains mere authorizations or not. If it contains only authorizations, it would have to be supplemented by an appropriation bill for those projects which are of a defense character.

MR. P. BRANDT: Mr. President, there are -- there are some Congressmen who have supported the St. Lawrence for some time, who now say they are going to vote against it, because they think this is a pork barrel bill, and they don't think a large appropriation should be made. Do you have any comment on that story?

THE PRESIDENT: What is the bill? Tell me what it is? Is it an authorization bill?

MR. P. BRANDT: Yes. It's an authorization bill, that's right.

THE PRESIDENT: Only?

MR. P. BRANDT: That's right.

THE PRESIDENT: That's a perfectly simple thing, as I said before. If these projects of all kinds -- defense -- peacetime projects are authorized by the Congress, that doesn't start them to work.

MR. P. BRANDT: It doesn't what?

THE PRESIDENT: It doesn't start the projects to work. I wish all of you could clear up for the general public -- it isn't generally understood, it isn't even understood in Washington -- that an authorization bill doesn't start anything. You have got to have money.

MR. P. BRANDT: The first step though?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. P. BRANDT: It's the first step though?

THE PRESIDENT: Not necessarily, Pete. We have got something like -- between two and three billion dollars worth of authorizations that date back -- I don't know, what? -- to the time of John Quincy Adams, something like that -- a hundred years -- flocks and flocks. I think it would take a whole -- it would take twenty pages in a newspaper to list all the authorizations that have been made by the Congress of the United States which have never been implemented with appropriations. And people don't understand, through the country, that an authorization bill doesn't by any means start the project going. You have got to have a subsequent appropriation.

Q But you have to have the authorizations before you get the appropriation?

THE PRESIDENT: That's right, yes. That's why I was asking to find out whether this Omnibus bill is an authorized bill, or whether any of the items carry an appropriation.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) It is a very, very distinct thing. People in this country have never understood it. I think it is up to you to enlighten the country.

Q If there are hundreds of billions of dollars -- or I think you said something like that -- of projects that have been authorized, that must mean that many unworthy projects are authorized?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. They have been in the past, that is perfectly true, in the light of subsequent events. I suppose there were among those authorizations in the old days -- for instance, there were quite a number of canals that had depths of -- what? -- six feet. Well, of course, as

time went by, they became completely out of date.

Q Mr. President, as a matter of fact, haven't you the power under the emergency to block the bill, or prevent any project that Congress actually appropriates for?

THE PRESIDENT: Appropriates for?

Q Yes. I mean through the priorities?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but it has got to go to the second stage of the Congress.

Q Mr. President, do you regard the Florida Ship Canal as a defense project?

That is in the bill.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, things are always relative. I wouldn't say that, from the point of view of defense, it is in the first priority, but I think the St. Lawrence power is. We all know that there are shortages of power, both on the Canadian side of the St. Lawrence, and on the American side of the St. Lawrence.

Q Mr. President, any idea, ---

Q (interposing) In the face of anything else, are you willing to have appropriated money for the St. Lawrence now?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, certainly, because we need it.

Q Mr. President, the -- the third largest project in that bill is the canalization of the Beaver and Mahoning Rivers in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Do you consider that a defense project?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't tell you definitely. I think it is. I think it has been listed as one of the principal things we need for the steel industry in that part, but you had better check. I am not dead sure.

Q Where could that be checked?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Where could that be checked? At the Rivers and Harbors Committee?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I would check with the National Resources. I would check with the O.P.M. I would check with the Wallace Committee. Frankly I don't know. You will have to dig that up yourself.

Q Mr. President, you spoke of the power aspects of the St. Lawrence. Do you also want immediately to start on the Seaway aspect?

THE PRESIDENT: If it is possible, yes. But it isn't of as great importance at this particular time as the power end of it.

Q Mr. President, do you have any idea when there will be a decision on this Marines withdrawal?

THE PRESIDENT: This what?

Q When there will be a decision on it?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q Has it been under consideration for some time?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't tell you.

Q Thank you.

MR. D. CORNELL: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #783,
Executive Office of the President,
November 14, 1941 -- 10.50 A.M.

(Press Conference was not held on Armistice Day, Tuesday, November 11, 1941)

Q Does it look like Warm Springs tomorrow?

THE PRESIDENT: Unpack.

Q You are packed?

THE PRESIDENT: I said unpack.

Q Unpack? Not at all?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Not at all?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh yes. I hope so, later. As soon as I can.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: You who are headed for a certain famous cottage in Warm Springs tomorrow night, I think you might unpack for a few days, because I will not be able to get off, partly because of a lot of things happening, and number two, because my nose is not quite settled yet. It's a bit blocked.

Q (interposing) Do you think ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) But I hope to go down -- get down as soon as I can.

Q Do you think you will get there for Thanksgiving?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so.

Q Mr. President, in that connection, have you any plans to confer with the new Japanese envoy (Saburo Kurusu) when he comes?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet. He gets here tomorrow.

Q Yes.

Q Mr. President, when you do go down there, do you expect to go to Fort Benning?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't thought of any plans at all.

Q Mr. President, in regard to Mr. Kurusu's visit, do you think the American people realize the emergency in the Far East?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so.

Q You think they do?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. President, have you signed the Act of yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Because the Vice President cannot sign it in the absence of the Senate, and he won't be able to sign it until Monday, when they meet.

Q I see.

Q Mr. President, do you think anybody over-rates the seriousness of the Far Eastern situation?

THE PRESIDENT: That is awfully difficult to know. It's a difficult question to answer. What do you mean by 'seriously'? What do you mean by 'over-rate'?

Q There is going to be war?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q That there might be war?

THE PRESIDENT: I sincerely trust not.

Q Mr. President, will Mr. Kurusu's first call be at the State Department?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. Ask -- ask the Protocol.

Q Mr. President, can you give us a preview of your meeting this morning with the coal and steel people?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. (laughter)

Q In your letter yesterday to Speaker Rayburn, in the part of it that dealt with the coal situation, you made no mention of the possibility of labor legislation. Is that still a possibility?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q That's an awful short answer to a long question.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (laughter)

Q (interposing) Mr. President, do you have ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) That's all it rates.

Q Do you have authority for the Government to take over these captive mines?

I think there has been some dispute whether or not ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That's a hypothetical question at the present time. I think it's probably better not asked or answered.

Q Mr. President, do you have any plans you could discuss publicly about changing ship routes now?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh no.

Q (aside) Ship routes.

Q Mr. President, could -- could you tell us how you think war between Japan and the United States could be avoided? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I could -- if I said No on that, somebody might use what they call interpretation, and if I said Yes on it, it would be pure guess, absolutely pure guess. I don't know. You don't know. No interpreter knows.

Q Mr. President, do you have any plans for dealing with defense housing?

THE PRESIDENT: I am working on that at the present time -- talking to the Congressional people at the present time, and it's a terribly complex question, because we have tried now for a number of years to give better

living conditions for people in cities and on farms. It isn't just a question of slum clearance, because there aren't any, in one sense. There aren't any slums in the agricultural districts, and yet the living conditions in agricultural districts, many of them, may be relatively as bad as city slums.

And now in -- in emergency war housing, there is always the problem as to how much we could -- we should continue the elimination of very bad living conditions -- housing conditions. Every time that we try to improve that, we run up against the question of permanency, as to whether we will build buildings that will last for a good long time.

At the same time we have certain emergency matters in -- in communities that have been, on a percentage basis, very highly affected by new plants, and new workers moving in. And that means planning. Are we going to build for them the kind of temporary residences that will not last, after the emergency is over, that are done deliberately with the idea that they will be torn down afterwards -- or fall down -- or shall we make it more permanent?

Well, that calls for a guess, the best guess one can make, as to whether that influx of population into a given community is going to be more or less permanent or not.

We have had certain -- we have had, for instance, the U.S.H.A. (U. S. Housing Administration), which has done permanent housing, very excellent permanent housing. How far shall we go on with that and continue, always -- always trying to recognize defense housing needs?

At the same time we have three or four different agencies that are doing temporary emergency housing. Probably in the past it's been not a bad thing to have these different agencies, because in a sense they are

checking against each other, they are competing against each other, both on the price and on the material -- I mean the type of materials. Probably the Army and Navy will pretty well come to an end of their own participation in defense housing. And I think we will be able to get, after what might be called on experimental period, a greater unity and fewer different agencies in housing construction of the temporary type. It seems probable that the more permanent type of defense housing could continue to be made by U.S.H.A. Well, that's about all. There isn't very much of a story today, but I think that we are working toward a greater unification in the temporary housing.

Q That is, ultimately, there will be two setups, the U.S.H.A. for permanent housing, and consolidating temporary housing?

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, how would this Government look upon any attempt to close the Burma Road?

THE PRESIDENT: There are too many -- too many other factors involved for me to answer the question.

(Mr. Hassett hands a paper to the President)

THE PRESIDENT: Who is this from? Is that ready to have this announced?

MR. HASSETT: It just came to me without any identification, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Who put the question mark on it?

MR. HASSETT: I did.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh. (laughter) Well, this has just come over from, what do you suppose it is -- State Department?

MR. HASSETT: I suppose it -- it was handed to me. I don't know where it came from.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know the source of it, but I know it is approximately

correct, as it didn't have any question mark on it till Bill got hold of it. I see no reason why I shouldn't read it to you:

(reading): "The Government of the United States has decided to withdraw the American Marine detachments now maintained ashore in China, at Peiping, Tientsin, and Shanghai. It is expected that the withdrawal will begin shortly."

Q Does that take all Marines we have in China now, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Can you tell us where they will go?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Singapore?

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) I notice that says 'Marines ashore'?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q They will stay there on the water?

THE PRESIDENT: What? Marines ashore? I don't get it.

Q Mr. President, does this affect our forces on the Yangtze -- on gunboats?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't hear you.

Q I say, does this affect our gunboats on the Yangtze river?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Those are naval forces. They are not Marines.

Q Mr. President, do you place any credence to the speculation that has been written about the withdrawal of these Marines? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I am going to have a sign -- I am going to place it right behind me: "Don't Interpret."

Q Mr. President, does this withdrawal leave any -- does this withdrawal leave any American interests unprotected?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I don't know. What do you mean? There are several

hundred American interests in the shape of missionaries and business firms scattered all over China, and these Marines have been in one place. I suppose in one sense that there are buildings, and some Americans, still left in China, and the presence of Marines there has protected them in one sense, but that is just one little place. I don't think that it is a very intelligent thing to write about.

Q Mr. President, one thing that has been widely published and credited is that difficulties about Japanese demands in China in a general way are holding up any agreement. Is that correct, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No.

Q Mr. President, does the withdrawal of the Marines in any way affect our --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) The question and the answer are not worth putting down. It wouldn't mean anything.

Q Does the withdrawal of Marines in any way affect our interests in the International Settlement?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. You will have to ask the Secretary of State about that, because my impression is that we have no treaty rights in the International Settlement, in the sense of setting up an American zone. The British have. The French have. And I think the Japs have -- by treaty. I don't think we have.

Q Mr. President, now that Mr. Daniels has returned, could you tell us when you will be naming a new ambassador to Mexico, and who it might be?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing on that yet.

Q Mr. President, may I ask a question on the Neutrality Law which came up, I remember, and that is would you be able to comment on how valuable you feel the revision of the Law is toward our efforts to defeat the Axis?

THE PRESIDENT: Do what?

Q To comment on how valuable you feel the revision of the Law is, in the efforts to defeat the Axis?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think you can use what I sent up in that letter yesterday. I have got it from the operational point of view. It is very valuable.

Q Mr. President, do you feel that the close vote in the House indicates a disunity, rather than a unity?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I do not.

MR. D. CORNELL: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #784,
Executive Office of the President
November 18, 1941 -- 4.05 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: It's a shame to be in on a day like this. If I didn't have you fellows today I would have probably gone out and taken a drive.

MR. GODWIN: Good driving.

THE PRESIDENT: It's all your fault.

Q We would rather be out riding too.

Q Let's go down to Warm Springs. You can ride down there.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. It's out in the woods.

Q Still hope to get away?

THE PRESIDENT: Mmm -- at the end of the week, but I don't know. I have no idea.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I asked Steve (Mr. Early) if he had anything for me, and he said he had nothing for me that I would be willing to talk about, so -- I think he's all right. (Mr. Early laughs)

Q Could you tell us, sir, what you might be planning in the case of the "captive" coal mines?

THE PRESIDENT: There isn't any news on that this afternoon.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us anything about that conversation at the Executive Mansion yesterday with the two Japanese envoys?

THE PRESIDENT: No. There isn't any news on that either.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us about your discussion this Noon with the Railroad?

THE PRESIDENT: There isn't any news on that either. Three strikes is out.

Q Mr. President, they are coming back tomorrow afternoon, are they not, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Mr. President, is that remark about three strikes with reference to the coal strike?

THE PRESIDENT: Third?

Q Yes, sir. This is the third coal strike in the last two months.

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't counted them.

Q Mr. President, do you consider legislation necessary to handle the labor situation?

THE PRESIDENT: I said I didn't have any news on that today.

Q Mr. President, in your opinion is any strike legislation directly prohibiting strikes Unconstitutional within the terms ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) There isn't any news on it at all, I am sorry.
(laughter)

Q Mr. President, here is a little one. Do you expect to sign the Defense Highway bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't read it. (laughter)

Q Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: I will tell you, on the Defense Highway bill, it is a real -- a real problem, and that is this: We do need money for defense highways, but we are faced with what I think is very nearly an Unconstitutional procedure that the Government, the Congress and myself have been jointly guilty of for a great many years -- and former Congresses and former Presidents -- and that is Congresses which obligate themselves to pass appropriations in a future Session, thereupon directing the President -- Bureau of Roads to tell the Governors of the several States, after allocation of this -- of these prospective appropriations, to go ahead and make contracts.

I don't think that one Congress can bind a future Congress. The net result is that every year I am compelled by mandatory legislation to put into my budget large sums of money to be appropriated by Congress later on; by a moral obligation created by previous mandatory legislation.

And so, in the present case, I got yesterday an estimate for highway building for the fiscal year 1943. In other words, legislation to be passed some time next year before the first of July. And I don't want to do it, but there is this situation. The present Congress has gone ahead and told me that we had to do it, and the Highway Director had to tell the Governors of the States that this money was coming, and therefore he could make contracts for it. Well, I think it is a mistake for us to be paying out two very large sums simultaneously, in a state of national emergency like the present. First a very large sum running, I don't know -- what? -- a hundred and fifty million -- something like that -- or two hundred million dollars -- I have forgotten the exact figure -- to carry out promises made by a previous Congress, and at the same time to be asking for large sums of money for defense highways.

We do need the defense highways, unquestionably. We ought to have that money, but it is on top of all this money which -- which is handed out to several States by the allocation method for their ordinary State highway needs. So that is the situation that I am in. I have mentioned it, I think, almost every year in the past, and it still is there.

We have -- as I say, we do need the money for defense highways, but we ought not to be appropriating money for additional normal State highways that have precious little to do with national defense. So there are the "horns" of the dilemma that I am in.

Q Mr. President, there are reports in Washington that Government employees

are to be placed on a 44-hour week, by Executive Order. Is there anything to those reports, or anything ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Nothing has come to my desk.

Q Mr. President, is there anything further on the ODENWALD?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is there anything further on the ODENWALD?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't think so. Nothing further. This is off the record. I will see if Steve (Mr. Early) can't prepare for you something that came in -- a report from a chief petty officer who was on the boarding party. It is such a joy that we ought to -- it ought to be made public. But I don't know whether the Secretary of the Navy or the Chief of Operations will give it to you or not. You might ask. It's really a joy.

Q Mr. President, has the decision of the Supreme Court been brought to your attention, which holds that State and local governments can impose sales taxes on national defense projects?

THE PRESIDENT: I got a report on it, and the Attorney General has said that that was substantially the Treasury Department's stand. And I referred it to the Secretary of the Treasury, to look into the details of the opinion from the legal point of view.

Q What is your own position on it?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you, because I haven't read the decision. I only had a short synopsis of it.

Q They estimate the cost one hundred million a year.

THE PRESIDENT: I have no idea.

Q The implication is that it could be corrected by legislation?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. And the Attorney General said that the implication in

the opinion itself was a matter that should be handled by legislation.

Q In the same general area of discussion, Mr. President, there is quite a lot of talk among Members in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, about a supposed secret treaty that was drafted by the United States and Great Britain, regarding the exemption of British and American private taxes for defense purposes in the two countries. Are you familiar with that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any secret treaty being negotiated. You would have to ask the State Department. I don't know. They have been working on, you might call it a temporary trade agreement.

Q Is that what it is?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q An agreement?

Q (interposing) On this Supreme Court ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q On the Supreme Court tax decision that had a direct bearing on those cost-plus contracts, now a fixed price contract, there are still a lot of them out. Do you have any provision for reimbursement, or the Federal Government paying those taxes? Have you considered possibly any revision of those contracts?

THE PRESIDENT: I will have to take your word for it. I don't know.

Q Mr. President, have you had an opportunity to consider a successor to Mr. Daniels (Josephus Daniels, recent Ambassador to Mexico)?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Not officially.

Q Mr. President, do you expect to see the Japanese again soon -- Mr. Nomura

and Mr. Kurusu?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose so.

Q No definite engagement yet?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, this is not a question about the "captive" coal strike, but aside from the matter of compulsion, has the Government taken any stand in opposition to the union shop?

THE PRESIDENT: No. None at all. I think you might -- on the coal strike -- if you want something to write about -- make this point perfectly clear, and that is that the Appalachian agreement with all the commercial mines stands just as it has ever since it went into operation; and that no question involved in the "captive" mine strike would affect the pay, or the hours, or the collective bargaining recognition of the United Mine Workers in any of the Appalachian agreement mines.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (adding) You see?

Q That takes account of the point that Lewis made?

THE PRESIDENT: It would.

Q You mean point number A in his letter to you yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: Point number A, yes. The Appalachian agreement stands just the way it has been right along, with full recognition of the union, and full recognition of the conditions of work, hours and pay.

Q Then it would not be modified if it were a contract signed without the union shop?

THE PRESIDENT: It would not be modified in any way, shape, manner or form.

Q May we -- are we justified in drawing the conclusion from your statement that you don't think point A was valid?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think point A was valid, because I am quite sure that no mine in any of the Appalachian agreement mines would change in any way the conditions that were agreed to in the Appalachian agreement.

Q May we quote you directly on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think so. I think so.

Q You said Yes?

Q Could we have him (the reporter) read that?

MR. ROMAGNA: Starting from "make this point perfectly clear"?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Take it slow. Those fellows don't know shorthand.

MR. ROMAGNA: (reading) "Make this point perfectly clear, and that is that the Appalachian agreement with all the commercial mines ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) In all the commercial mines.

MR. ROMAGNA: (continuing) ".....in all the commercial mines stands just as it has ever since it went into operation; and that no question involved in the 'captive' mine strike would affect the pay, or the hours, or the collective bargaining recognition of the United Mine Workers in any of the Appalachian agreement mines."

Q Well, then, the particular thing -- you don't think the point A was valid?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. You can have that too.

Q May we quote you as saying it's a "red herring"?

THE PRESIDENT: All right. Paragraph -- therefore -- (laughter) -- I do not think that point A in Mr. Lewis' letter was a valid point.

MR. CORNELL: Thank you --?

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