

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #804
Executive Office of the President
February 10, 1942 -- 4.10 p.m.

MR. DONALDSON: All in. (this was scarcely heard above the hubbub)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have sent out a letter to all heads of departments, agencies, etcetera -- a memorandum saying, "It is essential that an equitable and uniform practice be followed in applying provisions of the Selective Service and Training Act to officers and employees in the Federal service. The policy with respect to deferment from military training and service on occupational grounds, recommended in the attached memorandum of February 5, has my approval, and all concerned will be governed accordingly."

And I will ask Steve (Mr. Early) to have some copies or photostats made of the recommendations to me by Secretaries of Treasury, War, Navy, and General (Lewis B.) Hershey, and (Wm. H.) McReynolds, Personnel Administrative Assistant. And see if I can shorten this a bit for you, and many other items, on what it's all about.

They recommend, and I have approved and put into effect, the following: Request for deferment from service of any officer or employee of the Government shall be made only by the head of the appropriate department. Such request must be made on forms prescribed by the Selective Service System.

Secondly, no such request shall be made except when the head of the department shall certify, first, that the officer or employee is in a position, the duties of which are clearly related to the war effort or its essential supporting activities. Secondly, that the officer or

employee is in a type of position listed by the Selective Service as one in which it is difficult to obtain replacements, or a type of position in which he cannot be readily replaced except by the training of a successor through work experience for a period of at least six months.

Number three, the initial request for deferment will be for a period of not to exceed six months. If the duties of the position are of a type requiring work experience of at least two years, the appropriate agency will take immediate steps to train a successor.

Fourth, request for deferment beyond the initial six months period will not be made except when the head of the department certifies that one of the following conditions exist: First, that to attain reasonable competence in the duties of the position, work experience of two years or more is necessary. Second, that replacement has been secured for the individual, but that a further period of training is required before the trainee is qualified to go in. And third, that the Selective Service system has found that a shortage of persons with qualifications required in the particular position exists, and that it has been impossible to get a replacement. Heads of all departments make inventory of all officers -- to make an inventory of all officers and employees who in all probability will be placed in Class 1A, and where necessary recruit and begin the training of persons who are to take their places.

I think that covers that pretty well. That goes with it Steve.

(handing Mr. Early some additional papers)

Q Mr. President, do you have any estimate on the number of persons who might be ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. Not yet. Steve just asked for it. They

will probably come in very soon.

Q Mr. President, do you care to comment on the speech made by Premier (Mitchell F.) Hepburn of Ontario today, in which he says that the Japanese have obtained such naval superiority in the Pacific that the present United States Fleet is in hiding?

THE PRESIDENT: Very simple answer in two forms. I haven't seen the entire speech, merely an alleged excerpt. And secondly, if I did see the entire speech it would be of course for Ottawa to say anything, and not Washington.

Q Mr. President, the -- the hearing -- investigation of the Farm Security Administration is going on before a committee on non-essential expenditures. Would you care to say whether you consider their work non-essential?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say it is extremely essential to keep that going. Our whole food situation for the duration of the war is intimately connected with it. Furthermore, the whole problem of security for a large number of individual families is at stake. Of course it is essential.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, in that connection ---

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Mr. President, in that connection it has been testified and admitted, as I understand it, that the Farm Security Administration has in Alabama paid poll taxes. Would you care to comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think that they should pay the poll tax.

Q Mr. President, it was also brought out by Senator La Follette today that Ed O'Neal has a checkoff system by which public Alabama landlords and others are collecting dues of the American Farm Bureau Federation from

sharecroppers. Would you care to comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say exactly the same thing. I don't think they should do that.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us about your conference with Mayor LaGuardia?

THE PRESIDENT: Didn't he see you on his way out?

Q No.

Q No, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, he is ending his service. He brought out a point which I hadn't thought of before, but it is perfectly true. He wasn't appointed because there was some -- some question in the -- in the New York constitution as to whether he could take appointive office.

MR. EARLY: (interjecting) That's right.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) But I requisitioned his services. I think he has been serving without pay, and he is now -- what do you call it? -- relinquishing that work, having arrived at the period of the completion of the organizational work.

Q Who will succeed him, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. -- Dean -- Dean Landis.

Q He will get the title too, will he?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. I guess he will be paid too. (laughter)

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Off the record, whether he does a Sally Rand act or not. (more laughter)

Q The final say -- will his say be final?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Will his say be final?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope not. You might kill him. (laughter)

Q Will Landis say in his --

THE PRESIDENT: His "say"? I thought you said his "pay." Oh! Yes.

Q Mr. President, do you have any sort of order in preparation for creation of a manpower mobilization board, to make the powers -- to consider mobilizing manpower for industry as well as the armed forces, and allocating the same?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say that the matter is under study still. Has been for about -- about three weeks.

Q Is it near completion, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet.

Q Is there any truth to reports that Mr. Hillman will head ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't know. We haven't got to the problem of personnel yet. It is entirely a problem of how to organize it.

Q There are also reports that he has been offered the position of Secretary of Labor?

THE PRESIDENT: Good. Good.

Q Could you comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't care. The papers can print what they want. They will probably be wrong, but that is up to the papers.

Q Mr. President, is there anything being set up to manage the Fisheries in order to obtain that 200 million pounds of exports ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Manage the what?

Q The Fisheries, in order to build up 200 million pounds of export that there is planned ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I haven't heard anything about that at all. You mean to increase the catch of fish?

Q Well, it is partially that, but to handle the problems connected with ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) With what?

Q Military -- 200 million -- 200 million tons of -- of dried -- canned fish that are to be exported under Lend-Lease. And I understood that there was some Executive Order being prepared to set up a body ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I haven't heard it. I hope we can export 200 million pounds.

Q (interjecting) Pounds.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I never heard about it. It would be a grand thing if we could get that many fish to export.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us, sir, about your conference last week with the A.F.L. and the C.I.O. committee?

THE PRESIDENT: We had a very useful and very pleasant round-table talk.

Q There was a story published this morning, sir, that you had read to them a memorandum from Leon Henderson opposing ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. I didn't read them any ---

Q (continuing) --- specifically ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- memorandum from anybody.

Q Mr. President, you conferred with Congressional Leaders with regard to the St. Lawrence today. Did anything develop from that?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing further than the fact that it is in the report of the Committee, and in the bill. That was all.

Q What is that that is in the report of the Committee? Can you say what?

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead and build the dam. Can't get anything out of the needs of the Government until you build the dam.

Q Well, does that mean that it will be taken up in the House?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh Yes.

Q In the future?

THE PRESIDENT: It is in the bill.

Q How about the navigational feature, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: You have to build a dam before you can do anything. Let's build a dam.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, it has been suggested ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) That -- that -- that's what they call a practical Dutchman talking. (laughter)

Q It has been suggested in the House that you exclude Congressmen from the new expanded pension retirement system. Has such a suggestion reached you personally?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I haven't heard anything about that at all.

Q (interposing) Representative ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Except one of my friends came in and told me that under the bill he thought it applied to the President of the United States, and by paying a few dollars down the next -- little less than three years, that I could get a permanent pension for the rest of my life, at \$37,500, which -- that would be quite a discovery, wouldn't it? I would be able to retire on \$37,500 a year by the payment of five percent, or something, for a few years.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, there are some Congressmen who would like to have you find a way to get them out of it. (laughter)

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: Well, there is always one way out. That is not applying for the pension. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, would you sign a repeal bill?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Would you sign a repeal bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to see just how it was phrased first. (laughter)

Q Mr. President -- Mr. President, were you ever under the New York State retirement fund?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I was under it for four years.

Q You are not under it now?

THE PRESIDENT: No. When I came down here they quit paying me interest, and I asked to get the principal back, which I did.

Q The reason I ask was that both of the New York Senators are still in under that, and apparently they could qualify without any trouble under the Federal system?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, both.

Q Double pension?

THE PRESIDENT: Surely.

Q Mr. President, do you plan any additional steps in the cases of Admiral Kimmel and Short?

THE PRESIDENT: The matter is still under study.

Q Mr. President, a great deal has been said and written these days on the matter of "complacency" in this country, in the face of bad news in the Pacific. Would you care to comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and a part of it is true. Not all of it, because I think we are beginning more and more, every day, to be more realistic in regard to the existing situation. And there is a better understanding in every part of the country that whether we like it or not this is a -- a world-encircling war, and that the first objective, obviously -- I am talking what might be called major strategy now -- is to prevent a break-through, and cause as much attrition of the resources of the

enemy as all of us can during the period in which we are able to build up the overwhelming superiority which is necessary and which will be forthcoming while we are engaged in preventing break-throughs and damaging or destroying as much of the personnel and materiel of the enemy as we possibly can.

Q Mr. President, Mr. (William L.) Batt said last week that a great many Americans do not realize that we could lose the war.

THE PRESIDENT: Now you are getting into "if" questions. I am only talking about realities as they appear today.

Q (interposing) Could we quote you on the ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) That answers that question.

Q Could we quote you directly on your answer to that previous question?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. I think you can paraphrase it all right.

Q Mr. President, in connection with what you just said, some of the men who kept their mouths shut for two months are now breaking out with "I told you so's" about airplanes and tanks and guns. Would you care to comment on their morale-building statements?

THE PRESIDENT: What? In what particular, I mean? That is too general.

Q Well, they are saying, "I told you so. We haven't got the planes. We haven't got the tanks. We haven't got the guns." They shut up for two months, but they are breaking out again.

Q (interposing) Senator Wheeler, specifically. (laughter)

Q (interposing) Those that didn't tell you so two months ago.

THE PRESIDENT: What did they say two months ago, that there weren't estimates and appropriation bills -- not large enough?

Q No.

THE PRESIDENT: What? Isn't that the implication in the words, "I told you

so"? I think that answers it pretty well.

MR. J. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

(as the newspapermen were leaving, a reporter asked the President when the resignation of Mayor LaGuardia became effective. With Mr. Early standing beside him, the President answered that it was effective immediately)

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #805
Executive Office of the President
February 13, 1942 -- 10.50 A.M.

(Sir Philip Gibbs was a guest at this Press Conference)

THE PRESIDENT: Earl. (Godwin)

MR. GODWIN: How are you, sir?

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have, for quite a long while, been interested in one particular housing program that is very much needed in the city -- outside the city of Detroit. Really this is more a local than a national story, but out there they have got this new Willow Run bomber plant in Ypsilanti, with a great many -- it will, when it is going full speed, probably use 75 to 100 thousand people in it. And there is not enough housing in that area. This is perhaps illustrative of some of the things that are, on a smaller scale, the same kind of problem. And they have been talking -- oh, I don't know, what? -- two months about meeting some of them. The trouble is that this area includes probably half a dozen communities, and three separate counties, and the State of Michigan, and various agencies of the Federal Government. And when you get a situation like that, there is only one thing to do and that is to tie it together under somebody.

I have asked Frederic Delano to assume the job of bringing all these different agencies together -- local and county, State and Federal, and get something started. So I have sent him a letter to that effect. He has already held two or three conferences here, and will go on out to the site -- place -- and hold further conferences there. And we hope to get fairly quick action, considering the number of governmental --

I don't mean Federal -- Federal and State, and county and local (agencies) together, and try to see if we can't get the thing started.

MR. GODWIN: Get what started? The housing ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) This housing.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- housing matter?

THE PRESIDENT: This housing facility. We don't even know how many houses should be put up. We don't even know yet definitely how many families, as families go out there, would have to be taken care of.

Q Is this -- is this the so called "Defense City," sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I believe some people have called it that, but that's using a name which should not be used. It is the Willow Run bomber plant housing problem.

MR. GODWIN: (interposing) Did you say ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Because it may not always be in one place, it is a misnomer to call it a defense city. It is a question which is being held on that line.

MR. GODWIN: Sir, did you ---

Q (interposing) How much money ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't know. We don't know yet.

MR. GODWIN: Did you say that 75 thousand to 100 thousand people would be in the bomber plant, or near the area?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I understand that it's in the bomber plant -- tremendous big thing.

Q This will not affect Mr. Delano's position on the (National) Park and Planning Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q This will not affect ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Oh No.

Q Mr. President, did you see Secretary Wickard's statement that the F.S.A. (Farm Security Administration) has not been paying poll taxes?

THE PRESIDENT: I did, and somebody -- I don't know who it was -- I think you did it -- (pointing to Phelps Adams of the New York Sun) -- you asked me a question based, as it turned out -- you put it as a statement of fact, and you asked me a question based on that statement of fact. It turns out the statement of fact was not true.

It ought to be made perfectly clear that the poll taxes were not paid by the Government in any way, shape, manner or form. In other words, let's tell the real facts.

These tenant people, these people who come under Federal grants have a budget which is made up -- well, that includes everything, every necessity of life. It includes food, includes clothing, includes a bed to sleep in, and it includes taxes of all kinds. And in those budgets they allow people to put down one form of tax, which is a poll tax. Therefore, the premise was entirely wrong, on the Hill and here. I accepted it because I supposed that it had been definitely stated or established that we were -- that the Government was paying the poll tax. That was not true. And you can't wiggle it round to make it seem as if it was true. You may also, if you did that, say that the Government was paying them some other form of tax. The taxes are a liability on the individual tenant. Now that's the real story.

MR. P. ADAMS: May I simply point out that I said that "I understood" ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

MR. P. ADAMS: (continuing) --- that Mr. Baldwin (C.B. Baldwin, Administrator for F.S.A.) had admitted that they were paying the poll taxes.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. And there were a lot of people that fell into the same mistake, that is perfectly true, including some Members of the Senate and the House, I think. But actually it was not true. They were allowed to put in their expenses, very properly -- their poll tax.

And of course the type of mind of some people -- I am not talking about you (Mr. Phelps Adams) -- I am talking about people on the Hill and -- Oh, what? -- columnists -- (laughter) -- some of them -- it's the same type of mind that really was quite thrilled seven or eight years ago, when there was a drive in this country to prevent anybody on W.P.A. from voting. Now that is an awfully good parallel. I am talking about types of mind. Why, there were cheers and yells from that type of mind in the country when it was proposed that persons, because they were poor, would have to be cut out from voting -- the right to vote. That is just a little saying -- what will I call it? -- a homily. I think you will catch on. You know what I mean.

Q Mr. President, do you -- do you approve of the poll tax in principle? Do you think it's a sound tax, anyway?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose the best thing to do is quote the war editor of the Montgomery Alabama Journal and let him talk to you.

(reading): "No one questions the wisdom of the Alabama law which prohibits anyone from paying another's poll tax. It might be a good --"

and mind you that is a State tax --

"--it might be a good thing if it were enforced generally in the South, but the law does not forbid a farmer or anyone else to go to his bank and borrow money to pay his taxes -- poll taxes or no poll taxes. Why then all the fuss about the F.S.A. which is the only bank available to many farmers?"

MR. GODWIN: That's right.

Q Do you think the poll tax in itself, Mr. President, has kept the poor

people in the past from voting in the past?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, of course it has.

Q Do you think that is a good idea?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I have been opposed to a poll tax all my life.

MR. P. BRANDT: Mr. President, at the same time there was something about a checkoff ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes, Pete. I asked Wayne (Coy) about that just now, and I don't know. We haven't got the information on it -- whether that is allowed in the budget or not.

Q I understood that that was not denied.

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know. You would have to go and find out. Now, let's see ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, have you any thoughts on the status of French-American relations?

THE PRESIDENT: Of what?

Q Relations of the United States and Vichy?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, you will have to ask the State Department about it.

Then I have got one other thing. The other day -- three days ago -- I had -- Oh -- after two or three weeks of study, we sent a directive to all departments, establishments, agencies, etcetera, on the question of personnel facilities which have become available because of the additions of the 44-hour work week.

(reading): The voluntary extension of the work week to 44 hours by practically all agencies throughout the departmental and field services has augmented the manhours of Federal employment.

"This substantial increase in the work week has provided material relief for those agencies that were under-staffed to meet their increased work -- work load under the defense program, and calls therefore for a re-survey of personnel requirements during the remainder of the fiscal year, and the next

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fiscal year. These agencies which were adequately staffed on the basis of a 39-hour work and are not confronted with an increase in the work programs are now obviously under-staffed in most cases. [over?]

"It is imperative that this manpower be immediately capitalized and effectively channeled into defense work. It means that the agency heads must survey every operational activity and determine those employees who may be promptly released for employment in other agencies. Particularly in Washington, this action must be expedited in order to help meet the shortage in personnel and housing and to avoid as far as possible bringing new employees into the city. To the extent that personnel -- experienced personnel can thus be obtained, the housing situation in Washington will be helped, and the demand for office space decreased."

And this has been going on for several weeks.

"I have instructed the Director of the Budget, in cooperation with the departments, to review the appropriations for personnel services, departmental and field, in view of this new situation, and establish administrative reserves for the remainder of the fiscal year 1942, in proportion to the approximate increase in manhours that are accruing to the respective agencies."

Then, of course, that is merely another step in the same line as the step the other day for the relief of people who are liable to the Selective Service law. That will take some people out too.

MR. GODWIN: Perhaps this is interesting -- to us locally. Many clerks complain -- it's not general but they say ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- that their extended hours leave them with nothing to do at certain -- not enough work to do.

THE PRESIDENT: That's the reason for this. Exactly.

Q Mr. President, will copies of this ---

THE PRESIDENT: (after turning to Mr. Early) Steve will give you copies.

I think that's all I have got here.

Q Mr. President, is there any estimate on the number of persons who might thus be diverted from civilian departments to war effort under this ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. Of course, it will depend -- it will depend on what develops out of this. Of course one development is that you can't generalize. And it always raises on these surveys, which of course go on all the time -- Budget -- all the time to the appropriation committees of the Congress -- and they -- they aim to cut down certain things not connected with defense, but you have to get Congressional action for it.

Well, let us for example take the case of -- oh -- the bright boys who say you can curtail all of the Federal expenditures. Well, all right. When some bright boy who writes that and sobs over it that it hasn't been done, you ask him a question and say, "Where?" He says, "Oh, well ---. That's a detail. That has nothing to do with me." I am a leader of public opinion on this thing. I am not supposed to know any details."

I had one of those chaps in the other day. You have read a lot of his stuff, and -- and I said, "Where?" And he couldn't tell me where, that was not his business, where to curtail. So I said, "All right, let's take an example -- meat inspection -- meat inspection. It costs the Federal government an awful lot every year for the inspection of meat, and to see that it is decent meat for people to eat." I said, "Do you want to curtail that? Perfectly possible in wartime to curtail that. Absolutely simple. All you have to do is to get the Congress to eliminate or greatly curtail meat inspection. It's a cinch. Why not? It's wartime. Who cares whether we eat diseased meat in wartime? Save money! It will save -- what? -- a few million dollars."

Well now, it's a question -- if the nation wants to stop meat inspection it has an absolute right to do it through its elected offi-

cials. And I won't curtail, because the Congress has told the Executive that meat is to be inspected. And, therefore, having put that job on the Executive, the Executive sends to the Congress an estimate, and then the Congress goes over that estimate and tries to find out whether there are too many people for the inspection of meat. And sometimes they cut it down a bit, and I have known them to raise it. And we get inspected meat. Now they can cut that out any old time they want. I can't do it, because they have given me a directive to inspect meat. Well, that's a pretty good example.

You take dozens and dozens of bureaus here in Washington. Your glib boy says, "Oh, cut them all out. Cut them all down." Congress has an absolute right to cut them out, or cut them down. I have a directive.

That really is the -- the problem on going -- taking steps -- just rule of thumb -- Executive steps beyond this question of seeing, as we are trying to do now and have been for some time, whether this increase in the hours of work is not going to be -- enable us to carry on meat inspection and other things, and have some people left over. And it is going along in an orderly way. We have already impounded of course an awful lot of money which the Budget didn't think was necessary to expend, while at the same time we were carrying on the obligations imposed on the Executive by the Congress.

Q Mr. President, I am not one of the glib boys. What about the three C's and the N.Y.A.?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the N.Y.A., just to take an example is turning out, I think, between 80 and 90 thousand boys who are being trained for defense work, every three months -- every three months.

MR. GODWIN: Are they being trained for mechanical work?

THE PRESIDENT: For mechanical work, Yes. Well, I think that answers your question.

MR. GODWIN: Well, do you know how much ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) There are some boys still in the C.C.C., though a very greatly reduced number. They are very nearly all people who have not reached draft age yet, and some of them are physically too -- they are not acceptable to the draft. And others are too young. Others, by going through the C.C.C., will be physically satisfactory for the Army or the Navy, when they reach 20 years old.

Q What about rehabilitating the C.C.C. boys then -- boys that are physically unfit?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. They have done a lot of that.

Q (interposing) Is there any check on that?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- and a very large number, I can't give you the figure offhand, of the C.C.C. boys have been rehabilitated, and been made useful for defense work, where they couldn't go to the front.

Q Some -- months ago Mr. Morgenthau suggested a cut in the farm section (??). Now prices are up. How about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Congress has an absolute right to cut them any time they want.

MR. GODWIN: Well, Mr. President, the American -- the American Forestry Association viewing the C.C.C. and the N.Y.A. ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- and the trends, complains in a public statement that whatever is going on is increasing the fire hazard ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) It is.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- in the forests. Do you know anything about

that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that is perfectly true. In cutting down on the C.C.C. -- mind you it might be slow but we call it a voluntary cut because the boys are not applying -- we are decreasing the number of fire-fighting ---

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- units in this country, not only in the large forests themselves but on the lands that have trees on them, public lands and private lands too. And the fire hazard is therefore greater. But actually that is a moot question as to how many people we should employ in keeping the fires out of the forests. It is a question which is being -- being taken care of by itself almost. We are only taking volunteers and those who are taken are, in general, not people who could serve in the Army.

MR. GODWIN: Voluntarily in C.C.C.?

THE PRESIDENT: In C.C.C. Nobody is compelled to go into the C.C.C. It's an application.

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) No.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) They are not people who would be taken into the Army, and most of them are not people who have any skill on machines.

Q Mr. President, aren't 10% of the C.C.C. enrollees still war veterans?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I can't tell you the percentage but we still have quite a number of camps ---

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) 10%?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- and I think probably I would suggest you might go up and see with your own eyes any veterans' camp. Talk to the men. Talk to them while they are there, and your story would be very

different from what you would write if you hadn't been there. I think it is a very nice and humane -- right thing to do.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, are you planning to make some sort of a radio address Sunday?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, whatever the time is. Monday, not Sunday.

Q The announcement in Ottawa, sir ---

MR. EARLY: (interposing) (to the President) That's the recording, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: That's the recording. It's already been done, only don't say that, because it will take the bloom off ---

Q (interposing) Is it for this coming Sunday, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is it for this coming Sunday, sir?

MR. EARLY: (interposing) (to the President) Yes, Mr. President, it is Sunday evening. Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I guess you had better not mention it at all because I don't want to take the bloom off for the Canadians.

Q Mr. President, it has already been announced that you are participating in some sort of national broadcast.

THE PRESIDENT: That's a good way of putting it. I am -- I am participating.

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, have you a job -- make it another way -- do you know anything about Admiral Hart's future? Have you a job for him -- a duty for him?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course he has been not well at all. He is on his -- he is going to come home..

MR. GODWIN: Well, I ask you that, sir, very frankly.

THE PRESIDENT: He is going to come home as commander-in-chief of the Asiatic

Fleet.

MR. GODWIN: Lots of his friends seem to think that he has had an unfortunate deal. And I put it that way, because it is quite news in Washington in Navy matters.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I'd say that was typical.

MR. GODWIN: All right. He is coming home as commander-in-chief?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: He is coming home as commander-in-chief of the Asiatic Fleet?

THE PRESIDENT: Of the Asiatic Fleet, Yes.

Q Hasn't that been suppressed, the "Asiatic Fleet"?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Hasn't that term been suppressed?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Is it not now called the "United States naval forces in the Southwest Pacific"?

THE PRESIDENT: That's only for the joint operations.

Q Oh, I see.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q But the Asiatic Fleet term still exists?

THE PRESIDENT: C. and C. -- Asiatic.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Can you tell us something of the program to cooperate with Brazil, to get rubber and other vitally needed strategic materials? I believe you ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) We are doing all we can to get the rubber out. I think I mentioned a few weeks ago the total rubber supply that they could get out of Brazil would be a minimum that everybody knows about --

accessible rubber -- about 15 thousand tons now. Anything over that has got to come out of the wild forests. It is a question of getting people in, and getting the stuff out. Now how much that will run in excess of 15 thousand tons, I don't suppose anybody in the world can guess. The estimates run from -- what? -- 30 thousand tons up to 60 to 70 thousand tons, and it's pure guess. It is a question of getting human beings to go into these jungles and tap the rubber trees, and get them out, and then get the rubber itself ---

Q (interposing) Isn't there also ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- down the river.

Q Isn't there also a health problem there?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q The average life of a rubber cutter ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- in Brazil used to be three years.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. The natives don't like to go in there. They realize that it is pretty risky stuff, but we are getting out all we possibly can, and of course that part will be financed ---

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

THE PRESIDENT: Don't you like rubber? (more laughter)

MR. EARLY: (to the President) Sir Percival (Philip) Gibbs is here, and wants to say Hello.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, Yes. Sure. (who then spoke with the President)

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Executive Office of the President
February 17, 1942 -- 4.05 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Aha! I have got all kinds of things -- and nothing.

Q For us?

VOICE: (as Mr. Godwin sits down) Easy does it.

MR. GODWIN: Good morning, Chief.

THE PRESIDENT: When does our turn come to register, Earl?

MR. GODWIN: You know ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Pretty soon, isn't it?

MR. GODWIN: I didn't look that far forward.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: I didn't look that far forward.

THE PRESIDENT: Some day we will have to, Yes.

MR. GODWIN: The day I got a commission in the last War the German retreat started for good.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

MR. GODWIN: I think ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Did it? Good. It's all right.

Q Tell Bill Donovan.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Earl (Godwin) and I were talking about the day we would be old enough to register in the Draft. It would be a great sensation. What percentage of the White House Correspondents' Association had to register? I saw the percentage at Congress.

MR. GODWIN: Quite a good set.

Q They even got (George) Durno, Mr. President.

MR. EARLY: Three or four hands are going up. Their hands are going up.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hope you will have good luck and be called soon.

(laughter) I have so many things I haven't got any particular thing I think I can start in on. Have you got any ideas, Earl?

MR. GODWIN: No, sir.

Q Mr. President, did you know about the bill that the Attorney General recommended to the Congress yesterday, on disclosing contents of any confidential or secret documents -- no definition of "confidential," or "secret"?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't.

Q Didn't have anything to do with this Chicago Tribune disclosure, did it?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't know there was one -- that he put in one. Oh, I knew about the Chicago Tribune one, but I didn't know the Attorney General ---

Q (interposing) Apparently that affected the case? I mean if you remember the story ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- it doesn't seem to be limited to military information?

Q No.

Q Any confidential documents, anything they declare confidential, they can't get to it.

THE PRESIDENT: I give it up. I couldn't define these days what is military and what is not. Maybe lawmakers can.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, there are persistent reports that Secretary Knox's report on Pearl Harbor did not tell all. Can you comment on that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know what ---

Q (interposing) That it was worse than the report indicated?

THE PRESIDENT: What report?

Q Secretary Knox's statement on our losses at Pearl Harbor.

THE PRESIDENT: When did that come out?

Q When he came back from the Islands?

THE PRESIDENT: What do you want him to do, disclose all the military information they saw out there?

Q No, sir. Reports that are going round have been printed that the losses were greater than he had -- than he indicated.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know what epithet you can use for the kind of report that you are referring to -- I don't mean Secretary Knox's report -- the kind you are referring to. (spelling out): R-O-T is the best word for it. And there are an awful lot of reports going around town.

MR. W. H. LAWRENCE: What does R-O-T mean?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. W. H. LAWRENCE: What does R-O-T mean?

(loud and prolonged laughter, during which the President laughed and clapped his hands together in delight)

MR. EARLY: (to the President) Did you see the (Washington Evening) Star cartoon today? Look at it.

MR. W. H. LAWRENCE: I give up. (more laughter)

MR. EARLY: (to the President) Look at the Star cartoon today, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know who it was asked that question. I wish he would look at the Star cartoon (by Clifford K. Berryman) this evening. It will be a very good thing if it is circulated around this country.

The millstone that Uncle Sam is holding, carries out the thought in Mr. Winston Churchill's speech, that, "Whoever is guilty of bringing

a crime -- of bringing about the crime of disunity, of him let it be said that it were better that a millstone were hung about his neck and that he were cast into the sea."

And over in the corner of the room is a poor little fellow called John Q. Public, and there is a -- another figure, what might be called a type -- people that you see more frequently in Washington than in any other community in the country.

And he is saying, "The British want to fight to the last American."

"Why help the Russians? They will turn on us later."

"We ought to pull out of the Far East. We can't win here -- can't win there."

Well, I think the cartoon is a pretty good one, and it is especially applicable to Washington, D. C. -- people that you see and hear around here. It is the worst rumor factory, and therefore the source of more lies that are spoken and printed throughout the United States than any other community. Now let that sink home about Washington. And you can prove it very easily.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I can prove it. You can prove it.

Q These reports are coming from the West Coast, and as to the gossip recently---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes, yes.

Q (continuing) --- they seem to be rife out there.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, probably, they started here and were relayed to the West Coast so that you would get the proper date line.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment, in that connection, on the arguments that are made against loans to Russia, on the theory that it is dangerous to make loans to them -- they will become too powerful after

the war?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so. I think that argument is about on a par with other arguments that are set up by the Cliveden set of Washington.

Q (interposing) Would you care to specify ---"

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) You have read something about that too.

MR. GODWIN: Would you care to disclose who the Cliveden set ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You know the names.

MR. GODWIN: Yes. Would you care to get any closer to it than ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. I am awfully polite.

Q Mr. President, could you tell us something about the new loan to Russia which is now apparently in process of being made?

THE PRESIDENT: I think one of the things is -- is that on the original loan we are getting down to the point where most of it will have been obligated. That means not paid out of the Treasury, or anything like that. But it has been obligated, so that when the stuff is made it will be paid out, and that in order to keep the stuff going and the flow continuing without interruption, we will soon have to have more Lend-Lease authorizations so that that flow can continue.

Q There were reports, sir, apparently from pretty good sources here that deliveries going to Russia were running considerably below the commitments we made to the Harriman mission in Moscow. Is this connected in any respect to those reports?

THE PRESIDENT: The two things are totally different. The stuff that comes out of this loan has nearly all of it just begun to go, although in the last couple of months now, in actual deliveries, there was a promise -- entirely different thing -- of things which had already been completed, you see, and that we would get -- this was last -- Oh, what? -- September

was it? -- about there -- October -- that we would send -- so many tons is the easiest way of putting it -- put it in individual articles like planes -- so much a month. And we were up to the promise of shipment on the 7th of December. And then we slowed up in December, and in January, and fell behind the schedule of shipments. And by the first of March we will have caught up again in those two weeks.

Q Did you discuss this matter, sir, with the Soviet Ambassador and General Repin?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q By the time the Nazis could launch an offensive in Russia in the spring, Mr. President, will our shipments be up sufficiently so the Russians will have all the materiel we promised them?

THE PRESIDENT: Our promise on shipments will be up to date on the first of March, less than two weeks from now.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) And then from then on, of course, it will be -- quite a lot of the stuff which had been obligated under the first Lend-Lease money will be coming along, so they will be getting it right along.

Q Could you tell us, sir, the amount of the new loan ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't know.

Q (continuing) --- in contemplation?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment on the strategic value of the loan to us -- the strategic value to us of the loan to Russia?

THE PRESIDENT: Put it in terms of dead Germans and smashed tanks. Isn't that a pretty good strategic sentence?

Q It's okay with me.

Q May we quote that directly, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: No! (laughter)

Q Mr. President, there seems to be considerable concern in the country over the possibility of an attack this year on Alaska. Can you give us any reassurance as to the ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Of course I couldn't give you any assurance on exactly -- on what is going to happen this summer. But a thing like that is perfectly possible -- perfectly possible from the point of view of enemy operations.

Q I was about to ask ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q (continuing) --- whether in your opinion the air force as it stands, and the Navy as it stands in the Pacific, are sufficient to deal with anything?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Certainly not. They can come in and shell New York tomorrow night, under certain conditions.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) They can probably, so far as that goes, drop bombs on Detroit tomorrow night, under certain conditions.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment on the agitation to have General (Douglas) MacArthur ordered out of the Philippines and given over-all command?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't think so. I think that is just one of "them" things that people talk about without very much knowledge of the situation. A very polite statement.

Q Mr. President, have you a particularly personal interest in the plans for Willow Run, the new model city -- garden city -- which is to go up ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Didn't I talk about that the other day?

Q You said (Mr. Frederic) Delano was going there.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard anything since. I don't know if he has gone or not.

Q Tomorrow, I believe.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. I don't think ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, could you tell us anything, sir, about your conference with the British Ambassador today?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh No. We had a very pleasant lunch -- a good lunch. It has to be a good one.

Q He didn't look as happy ordinarily, Mr. President, as a man who ate a good lunch. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, he had an awfully good lunch.

Q Can you tell us anything about plans for the Alaskan highway -- the proposed Alaskan highway?

THE PRESIDENT: No. The War Department is -- I think it has just about completed working on plans. There are various routes that have been suggested, and if there is going to be anything accomplished that would be useful by January, 1943, something would have to be done in the next couple of weeks so as to get the advantage of good weather -- the whole summer -- get the materials up there.

Q Do you think it important to get something started before then?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it is important to get better communications to Alaska.

Q Through Ontario?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you would have to have a map before I could talk to you.

It wouldn't be intelligent -- in other words, there are various things that have been suggested. It has been suggested that for the immediate

needs of this war it would be more practical to build a -- a light, one-track railway -- easier to keep it open in the winter. Well, that is one of the things they talked about. Another suggestion is that it would be more practical to send things up on the inland passage -- to the end of the inland passage and then a highway from there on. And others have said it would be easier to do the whole thing by transport planes, instead of building a highway. I am speaking in terms of military needs of this year, and possibly of the beginning of next year. Well, I don't -- I could not prognosticate what they will do, if anything.

Q Mr. President, got any decision on Admiral Kimmel and General Short?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet.

MR. J. HENRY: Thank you, Pr. President.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: All right.

MR. GODWIN: I might have had a story.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. GODWIN: I might have had a story there. (laughter)

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #807
Executive Office of the President
February 24, 1942 -- 4.10 p.m., E.W.T.

(as John Henry, newly elected president of the White House Correspondents' Association, walked up to the President's desk, the President shook hands with him to congratulate him)

MR. J. HENRY: Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: That's all right.

MR. J. HENRY: If you want a good campaign manager, Mr. President, let me recommend George Durno. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: That trick of the wrist with the gavel -- (demonstrating) -- you had better practice.

MR. J. HENRY: I would be glad to do that.

THE PRESIDENT: (spreading out a newspaper map from the London Daily Express) Now that's a newspaper map that is one. I thought you would like to take it out afterwards and feel it. It's quite heavy paper. It's the kind of thing that could be distributed in an edition by the richer papers -- the syndicates or something. It's a peach. And it has got most of -- I am sorry to say most of the maps that I saw yesterday and the day before in the daily papers did not have most of the islands that I was talking about on them at all.

Q We have a new setup in the press room in the National Geographic ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes. It's awfully hard to print a good map as part of a paper. It ought to be separate.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I was just showing the front row -- this is not for publication, it is between us -- it's off the record -- I am talking about

our -- our profession at this time. This is a British newspaper map, and I will get Bill (Hassett) to take it out to the press room. It happens to be the (London) Daily Express map. You can -- technically it is pretty good. The quality of the paper is fairly stiff -- the kind of a map that is extraordinarily accurate.

Last night a lot of people were looking at maps, I am sorry to say, that -- for example, on the islands between Pearl Harbor and the Philippines -- the maps -- a great many of the maps I saw did not have the islands on them at all. You might work this up, if some of your offices are interested. I think it would be an awfully good thing to get out something like that, because it -- it is a permanent thing -- in good shape -- and would be a very nice Sunday present for the richer papers. (laughter) So, Bill, take it out and show it to them, because it is quite interesting.

Q Mr. President, in your speech last night you emphasized the difficulty of getting ships to the Bataan peninsula. Correspondents who are subject to military censorship there have been sending stories recently indicating -- quoting officers and men, saying how badly they want planes. And today there is a story by Clark Lee of the Associated Press, saying they are taking up a fund to buy one bomber. Could you make any comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you will tell me how to get a bomber in there, they can have a bomber.

Q Couldn't it be flown in, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: And land on what?

Q Well, maybe a bomber could land on the sea, couldn't it?

THE PRESIDENT: On the sea? How long would it remain intact? What kind of

a bomber landing on the sea? One of the B-17's? I'm afraid they wouldn't float.

Q Mr. President, some of us have made the interpretation that since these stories are subject to military censorship, that this indicates that perhaps MacArthur is a little at odds with the high command here as to the possibility of reinforcing him. Do you think that is a correct interpretation?

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't do any -- well, I wouldn't -- I am trying to take a leaf out of my own notebook. I think it would be well for others to do it. I -- not knowing enough about it -- I try not to speculate myself.

MR. J. WRIGHT: Mr. President, would you be disposed to say anything about General Chiang Kai-shek's statement in India, with reference to Britain, and so forth?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so, Jim. I saw a statement out of London on it.

MR. J. WRIGHT: That might mean that maybe they were willing to have something said about it now?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we can all have our opinions. Sometimes -- sometimes it is better not to burst forth with them. That applies to public officials, and American newspapers, in relation to the affairs of other peoples and other nations.

MR. J. WRIGHT: One more question then, Mr. President. In your -- in your speech last night there seemed to be a paragraph that related to that situation -- or similar situation. Is that what you intended?

THE PRESIDENT: How do you mean, Jim?

MR. J. WRIGHT: You spoke about the self-government of peoples, etcetera, there in one paragraph?

THE PRESIDENT: Well ---

MR. J. WRIGHT: (continuing) --- I wondered if you had this in mind?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- I had -- I don't know, I would hate to count them up -- just dozens of situations in mind. So did Churchill when the Atlantic Charter was drawn up.

MR. J. WRIGHT: (interjecting) Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) In other words -- this is off the record -- don't you think we might win the war before we start determining all the details of geography, and of forms of government, and boundaries, and things like that? Wouldn't it be just as well to win the war first, as long as you have principles?

Q Mr. President, would you comment, sir, on the shelling of the California coast by a submarine last night?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose the best comment is to repeat what somebody said earlier this morning, just after I got waked up, and that was that it was an excellent example of political warfare. I think it was too.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Only I think it might -- it might react in the -- in the opposite direction from what it was intended.

Q Mr. President, have you any information from the Navy as to what happened to the sub?

THE PRESIDENT: To what?

Q As to what ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Oh No.

Q (continuing) --- happened to the sub?

THE PRESIDENT: No. At the present time it is probably under water. (laughter)

Q How far?

Q Voluntarily?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Voluntarily?

THE PRESIDENT: So far as I know, voluntarily. (laughter)

I got a long thing here today to give you. If you have got any other questions first, go ahead and shoot them. Then I have a whole story for you.

Q I have one, sir. In your radio talk last night you mentioned at one point Americans who in and out of government since Pearl Harbor have been whispering all these rumors about the Fleet, and the planes, and casualties, etcetera.

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) Did you have anyone specifically in mind when you said that?

THE PRESIDENT: Quite a number of people.

Q Would you care to ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q (continuing) --- mention any names?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you know just about as well as I do.

Q Mr. President, there is a report published in a Mid-West paper that Secretary Hull was going to resign?

THE PRESIDENT: I saw that report, because it was sent over to me, and it has already been commented on by the State Department, ---

Q (interposing) But with ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- so I think ---

Q (interposing) --- due deference to you, sir ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q With due deference to you, sir, that is why I asked the question of you.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the State Department characterized it as a flat lie. Furthermore, that the whole story was a flat lie.

Now this has got to be off the record, because it is just between us. There is one of the things that I was talking about last night. This has to be off the record -- the Miami-Herald and the Detroit Free Press ran a story this morning to this general effect: that indignant British and Russian officials in Washington have made known their feelings regarding the situation in the Caribbean, which is swarming with Nazi submarines based on French islands.

Now, in the first place, I raise the question, just among us, as to whether that is not, ab initio, a lie. I don't believe that indignant British and Russian officials in Washington made their feelings known. I don't believe it for a minute. I think that's pure invention on the part of the young gentleman who wrote the story, and many of you do too. No responsible British and Russian officials have said anything of the kind in Washington.

I will make an even money bet with the fellow who wrote the story. I will make an even money bet today that no responsible Russian or British official said so, because any responsible British or Russian official would not deliberately say something that he knew was not true. That comes right back to the fellow who wrote the story.

Number two -- based on French islands. As far as anybody in the Navy or State Departments, or I -- Consular services, or anything like that are concerned, that is not true. We have had absolutely no information. Then he goes on and says, "the presence of these submarines in the vicinity was known February 2, and a high British officer who had been there made a report on the Vichy French there," and he goes

on, "told the State Department about the submarines."

Well, our -- well, the State Department swears that nobody did such a thing, and I don't believe that any high British officer did it, because as I think the -- the Under Secretary of State mentioned this morning, we have had an observer in Martinique for over a year and a half, and we have had awfully good information about everything that has happened down there. Kind of a little bit of a place, as you know. It would be mighty hard to hide any -- any German submarine base in those islands, without everybody knowing it inside of -- inside of 24 hours.

And then it goes on and talks about the Secretary being at Coral Gables, and of course he is. This is all off the record entirely -- the Secretary has been really very, very ill, much more so than you fellows have printed in the papers. And I am very grateful that you haven't printed the fact that he was very ill. We think he is going to get all right in the course of the next two or three weeks. But he does have to have absolute, complete rest. There is no thought about his being ousted from the Cabinet, or resigning, or anything else.

Well, the rest goes on about the so-called appeasement policy. But the point of it is this: that that is an awfully good example of just what I was talking about last night. It is incorrect information that starts people whispering and talking on lines which are based on falsity. Now there you are. Now there is the example -- probably came out in those papers within -- simultaneously with my talk last night. And that is the thing we have to guard against.

MISS MAY CRAIG: Mr. President, I have a very small question. (laughter)

Every spring a great many high school seniors come here for a spring trip. They are writing in now to us asking whether they should or should not

come to the crowded city here. Do you have any thought on that?

THE-PRESIDENT: I don't think so, for publication, May. It's awfully hard.

MISS MAY CRAIG: I know.

THE PRESIDENT: I would say if they can come here and have a good time, and go away without using up too much gas, and without "discombobolating" Washington, it would be all right.

MISS MAY CRAIG: Most of them make their reservations the year before, but the hotels now would like them to give them up because they are crowded.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know whether they "discombobolate" or not. It is a thing for them and the hotels to work out.

Q Mr. President, there has been some confusion about who is going to handle alien property. Can you straighten that out?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Still studying it. There won't be anything on it for a while.

Q Mr. President, in connection with these stories about Secretary Hull, there have been some stories printed about changes in the Cabinet, some of which are not destructive or merely critical. Could you say if you have any plans whatever ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Absolutely none.

Q None?

THE PRESIDENT: Are you ready for this Order?

Q (interposing) Can you tell us, sir, whether there is anything new on the manpower mobilization board?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing yet.

Q Soon, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I hope so.

Well, here is this -- two Executive Orders. And this is quite

important.

As you know, we started in with certain kinds of housing, quite a long -- a good many years ago -- six or seven years ago. And in a sense it grew up like Topsy, for the very good reason that when each new organization was started there seemed reason at the time for making it a separate organization by itself. And the result has been, over a period of years, that it has become pretty evident that we ought to have some kind of a simplification, based on the general thought that housing of human beings is a subject that is separate in itself, even though it affects all kinds of -- different kinds of people. The housing has to be of all kinds of different characters, and it affects a good many different departments that housing in the country has become such. And there has been so much recognition of the fact that it was a permanent problem, not slum clearance, but to take care of changes to improve conditions to keep people from losing their own homes.

That was one of the earliest things -- Home Owners' Loan Corporation, to encourage building, Federal Housing Administration, etcetera -- that after a long study we at last got it down to the point of having a consolidation of all housing.

And the first Executive Order sets up this new organization, to be called the National Housing Agency. And I am putting in charge a young man who has been in the Government, and has shown amazing executive ability: Jack Blandford -- John Blandford, Jr., the Assistant Director of the Budget.

This new organization will be able -- you can get an idea of the thing -- (holding up chart) -- there is the old -- I have got copies of these outside -- there is the old organization, you see how complicated

it is. And this is the new organization -- (holding up chart) -- you see how much simpler it is. Bill will have copies of those for you.

The -- I suppose I had better go through it in this way. This is a consolidation for swifter and more efficient prosecution of the present war, consolidating the various housing agencies in one National Housing Agency, with the single Administrator having the full power to carry out the responsibility. This plan of consolidation resulted from unusually widespread agreement among Government officials and all kinds of students of housing in the practical, private field who are actively engaged in day by day administration of housing activities, in and out of the Government.

Heretofore, there have been 16 different agencies which have either built housing with public funds or sought to encourage private enterprise to build housing with private funds through the extension of Government credit or guarantees. The result has been without any question a lot of duplication, conflict, disputes and overlapping among these public agencies themselves, and also between them and private building agencies.

The plan of reorganization streamlines most of these agencies, and the leasing -- the housing functions of all of them into one agency with a single Administrator. In this Agency, and under him there will be consolidated war and other housing activities that have heretofore been carried on by Federal Housing Administration; Federal Home Loan Bank Board -- you will get all this afterwards -- Federal Home Loan Bank System; Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation; Home Owners' Loan Corporation; U. S. Housing Corporation; U. S. Housing Authority; Defense Homes Corporation; Non-farm Public Housing, Farm Security Ad-

ministration; Federal Works Agency; Public Builders -- Public Buildings Administration; Division of Defense Housing and Mutual Ownership Defense housing Division in the Federal Works Agency; and that part of the War and Navy functioning that is not on military or naval reservations. Then also the defense housing of the Farm Security Administration, and the Division of Defense Housing Coordination.

Now part of these agencies that are transferred to this National Housing Agency by this Order are now in Federal Works Agency, and the rest are now in the Federal Loan Agency. We are taking them out of those Agencies -- I would say of Federal Works and Federal Loan -- and we are abolishing the Federal Loan Administration altogether. So we are not -- we are creating a new agency, but we are abolishing the old one. So you have the same one as you had before.

Those things in -- in the Federal Loan Agency which are not housing are being transferred to Mr. Jesse Jones as Secretary of Commerce. He has been handling them in the past in his position as Federal Loan Administrator. Well, that title is being taken away from him, but we are turning over to him as Secretary of Commerce all the things like the -- the R.F.C., etcetera, and lots of others -- a whole group of them that have hitherto been Federal Loan Agency.

Q Is the R.F.C. as such abolished?

THE PRESIDENT: What? Oh No. Oh No. Nothing -- how could you -- you couldn't abolish the R.F.C! (laughter) It's put under (Jesse) Jones as Secretary of Commerce, instead of (Jesse) Jones as ---

Q (interposing) Will it still retain ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- Federal Loan Administrator, that's all.

Q (continuing) Mr. President, is there a Federal Loan Agency left?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I said that is abolished. That has gone.

Q But the individual components of that Agency still remain?

THE PRESIDENT: Of the R.F.C.? Oh, sure. Because they are doing the bulk of the loaning we do.

The third constituent -- wait a minute now, I am getting ahead of my copy -- it means that the recent Order for the conversion -- for the transfer of Government workers to the war effort is going to be attained also in housing, because on this reorganization there will be quite a lot of people who will be let out, or rather who would be let out, if it were not for this transfer Order of the other day. They will be transferred to other agencies of the Government, probably defense agencies of the Government.

Q About how many, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a thing that we can't give you the figures on. But quite a lot.

All Government employees doing work relating to war housing will be under one pool, under one supervision. The new agency for administrative convenience will have under it only three principal constituent units. That in itself is a great streamlining of the Public Housing Authority, which will be an amalgamation of all the various agencies and personnel engaged in constructing housing with public money. That is the distinctive feature of that.

(Leon) Keyserling will be the Acting Administrator of that Division. The second Division will be the Federal Housing Administration, and will continue to be known as such. In other words, the guaranteeing or insuring of mortgages placed by banks and lending institutions on homes. And Mr. (Abner) Ferguson will continue as Commissioner of that, only we

are going to call him Commissioner instead of Administrator, because Administrator is the name of the top person in charge of the whole works.

The third will be the Federal Home Loan Bank Administration, and will include all the functions of the Home Loan Bank System. John Fahey will remain as Commissioner of that.

All of these three units will be under the supervision and administrative control of the National Housing Administrator. He will also thus be able to save a lot of overhead in consolidating all of the functions now scattered all over the place relating to research in housing construction, materials, methods, etcetera, and general urban development planning relating to housing and similar facilities.

The Order will not cause one day's delay. Actually it ought to begin within a very few days to speed up the production of war housing.

Q Mr. President, will Mr. Keyserling be called Commissioner?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Will Mr. Keyserling's title be changed to Commissioner?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q What will happen ---

Q (interposing) What will happen to Mr. (Charles F.) Palmer, the (Defense Housing) Coordinator?

THE PRESIDENT: I am coming to that in a minute. (laughter) At the same -- that's all in one Executive Order. Then there is another Executive Order by which we transfer the functions of the present Federal Loan Agency to the Department of Commerce, and abolish the Federal Loan Agency. Those functions that are transferred to the Department of Commerce are the Reconstruction Finance Corporation; Electric Home and Farm Authority -- this is all down -- R.F.C. Mortgage Company; Federal National Mortgage

Association; Disaster Loan Corporation; Export-Import Bank of Washington; Defense Plant Corporation; Rubber Reserve Company; Metals Reserve Company; Defense Supplies Corporation, and War Insurance Corporation.

And they all go out from under Mr. Jones, and under the control of Mr. Jones. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you say why they go to Commerce? Is it because of the personality involved? Why not ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q (continuing) --- send them to Treasury?

THE PRESIDENT: No. It's because essentially I would like to see the Department of Commerce built up with things that don't -- ought not to be under the Treasury; and yet I suppose the easiest answer is that the Commerce seems to be the best place to put them.

And then I have written a letter to Mr. Palmer, asking him in behalf of the new National Housing Agency -- with one or two assistants -- to proceed to England as my representative, and representative of the National Housing Agency, to study and report on the work over there at the end of two years and a half of actual war, because as each month of war over there has gone on, they have modified and developed their various methods of dealing with housing.

I think that covers it all right. I am glad to get ---

Q (interposing) (loudly) Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: That's very good.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #808
Executive Office of the President
February 27, 1942 -- 10.50 A.M., E.W.T.

THE PRESIDENT: (to Mr. J. Henry, new president of the White House Correspondents' Association) How is it weighing on your shoulders?

MR. J. HENRY: Taking it all very lightly.

THE PRESIDENT: Don't you think he looks older?

Q I don't know.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Getting a little gray.

Q He's bearing up -- a little shiny.

MR. J. HENRY: I certainly look much balder.

Q That's because of his "coronation."

THE PRESIDENT: Is that it?

Q That's because of his "coronation."

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. Yes, yes. When are we going to have the induction?

MR. J. HENRY: We would be glad to have you come, if you could attend?

THE PRESIDENT: We ought to have one.

MR. J. HENRY: We will have to wait until Steve (Early) gets back.

THE PRESIDENT: Has your Association got a gavel of its own? It has, hasn't it?

MR. J. HENRY: I don't know.

Q No.

Q No, it has not.

THE PRESIDENT: I have got about 20 or 30 gavels at Hyde Park. I think I will have to give you a gavel -- with an inscription. (laughter)

MR. J. HENRY: Fine. Fine.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have anything. You got last night the Executive Order, putting the defensive harbors on all three coasts under the Navy, which is just another means of unifying things. And probably the Navy will use that part of the Navy which is most familiar with port conditions -- I would say the Coast Guard as the nucleus to build up that protection ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- the Coast Guard command.

Q (continuing) --- will that include mine-laying?

THE PRESIDENT: That I don't know.

Q Will it include land guns -- coast -- for harbor defense?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh No. Oh No.

Q Just naval?

THE PRESIDENT: Docks, and things like that.

Q Mr. President, it is designed rather against internal sabotage than external attack, is it not?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Mr. President, is there any reason why the memorandum from the joint C.I.O.-A.F.L. committee should not be made public?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, there were several memoranda. I don't think there is any one that you can get your teeth into though. It is part of a discussion stage, as I said the other day, in regard to the cost of living. And I think, as I also said the other day, the -- in viewing the cost of living, whether -- whether one should, or even whether one shouldn't take into consideration a whole lot of elements such as the regional element or the local element.

Oh, I read in the paper that the cost of living in Washington, D. C., was higher than any other place in the country. I don't know. Should that be taken into consideration, or should we view the thing from the average of the -- of the whole of the nation? That is just something that is being worked on.

Q Did that report, sir, make a recommendation for a new independent or new division of the Labor Department, to handle the questions of mobilizing ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I wouldn't say Yes, and I wouldn't say No.

It was one of the matters that was talked about in the discussion.

Q Have you defined in your mind, sir, any definite policies toward the mobilization question on manpower?

THE PRESIDENT: Not yet.

Q How soon do you expect to?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know.

Q Thank you.

Q Does there seem to be any serious conflict between the position taken by the two labor groups and by Price Administrator (Leon) Henderson?

THE PRESIDENT: Very little.

Q Mr. President, would you comment on the Smith (Rep. H. W. Smith, Democrat, of Virginia) proposal about the 40-hour week, now in the House of Representatives?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I haven't read the amendment. The only way -- thing I can do is to talk to you as "background," without attribution. As I understand it, this would repeal all kinds of -- of laws, except I think the railroad employees laws.

Q (interjecting) And the one on postal ---

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q And one about postal clerks.

THE PRESIDENT: And one about postal clerks. And of course at the present time we have to remember that we are working a great deal more than 40 hours a week -- some industries that are working as high as 60 hours a week. I suppose the -- I haven't got any figures, but I suppose the average is around 44 or 46 hours a week at the present time. So the general effect of an amendment repealing existing laws might be used for the purpose of eliminating any payment for overtime. Well, that would mean, of course, a reduction in the pay envelope at the end of the week, or the end of the month. And as far as I can see, that would be about the only effect.

Q Mr. President, isn't it also true that this would eliminate the 40-hour week requirement in non-defense industries?

THE PRESIDENT: I think so, Yes. The repealer would do that.

Q Also the textile industries, in Cox's (Representative E. E. Cox, Democrat, of Georgia) District?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. Clothing --- (laughter)

Q Mr. President, this would -- Congress could not pass a bill which would rescind or void the present contracts, would it? For instance, any number of contracts are on a 40-hour week ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- some of them for time and a half, and some for double pay?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that is true, but the contracts keep running out all the time.

Q Well, most of them have a continuing clause that they can be taken up?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. By either side.

Q By either side. But the point is they are rarely done.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MR. P. BRANDT: Might Congress -- Congress enact a law which would void those contracts?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, Pete. I would have to ask a better lawyer than I am.

Q The point is that if the Congress cannot, ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- then those that have contracts are in a better position than those who do not?

THE PRESIDENT: That is right.

Q You don't know whether that ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q But, Mr. President, I would like to say that there is a tendency in contracts now to refrain from putting in the 40-hour -- 8-hour -- under the law, and if the law changes --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) On the contracts it depends mostly on the individual case.

Q Mr. President, has there been any suggestion that the President should have discretionary powers in regard to the 40-hour week?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I have ever heard of. (laughter)

Q In that connection, Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q (continuing) --- last Monday a thousand citizens of the town of West Warwick, Rhode Island, addressed to you a petition recommending that you put the nation on a 168-hour work week. Have you seen anything on that?

THE PRESIDENT: 168-hour week? (laughter) How many days is that?

Q 7 days.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Seven 24-hour days.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh! I see. No time out to eat?

Q Apparently not.

THE PRESIDENT: Probably most of the nation would be dead at the end of one week. (laughter)

Q Have you seen that petition, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, could you remove the 40-hour week restrictions without Congressional action?

THE PRESIDENT: There isn't any 40-hour restriction at the present time.

Q I mean -- abolish time and a half, or ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I wouldn't abolish time and a half. I don't want to have people get less in their pay envelopes than they are getting today, especially with the cost of living going up.

Q Mr. President, does that need to be "background"?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q That is all "background"?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Don't bring me into this thing. It is purely a matter for the House at the present time.

Q Mr. President, the Nazi radio from Paris today reports Admiral Leahy has demanded of the Vichy government that they do not use any of their ships of the French Fleet without the consent and approval of Washington, that Vichy in turn has rejected that request, and Admiral Leahy will be recalled. Can you say anything on that?

THE PRESIDENT: That came from Paris?

Q It came from the German radio in Paris, as I understand it.

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have answered the question.

Q Thank you, sir.

Q Mr. President, the Executive Committee of the New York County Democratic Committee is meeting this afternoon to try to pick their leader. Have you any advice to offer them?

THE PRESIDENT: No. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, a dispatch from Berne quotes the Moscow radio as saying that the Russians have sequestered Japanese property in Soviet territory. Have you any advice to that effect?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q Mr. President, have you heard anything about this production program at Mount Gilead, in Ohio?

THE PRESIDENT: I will be perfectly frank. I got it just one second ago. Bill (Hassett) gave it to me along with a lot of stuff. I am going to read it this afternoon. I don't know anything about it now. Just got it.

Q Mr. President, some days ago we were told that a system similar to convoys would be worked out for protection of South American -- Latin American shipping. Can you tell us anything about that without revealing military secrets?

THE PRESIDENT: No. It would reveal military secrets if I did.

Q Can you say that something is being done about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we are trying to protect as many ships as we can, on all of the oceans, with an insufficient amount of "butter" to go around on a very large amount of "bread."

Q Mr. President, anything new on the Alaskan highway?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard a word. What is Congress doing on it? Anything at all?

Q It's still in the House Committee.

THE PRESIDENT: Might ask the War Department on that, because they have got all the documents and everything else. And I am -- frankly I am waiting for a positive, definite recommendation from the War Department.

Q Mr. President, any of the South American countries contributing a little "butter" to that "bread"?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Yes. That's right. They are.

Q Mr. President, would you care to comment about the practice developing in Congress of placing vetoable legislation on non-vetoable bills?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I have changed much in the last -- well, let us see -- from 1913 on I have had a rather definite idea about it, that it is not quite fair either to the Congress or to the country to attach riders to principal, main appropriation bills which relate to matters which are not exactly germane to the fact of appropriating under an authorization. It is a very -- it is a very reprehensible method of legislating.

Q (interposing) Specifically ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I think most of the country has always felt it.

Q Would you suppose that violates the spirit of the Constitution?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I wouldn't go so far as that because that might be bringing in a Constitutional argument. I don't think it is a Constitutional question so much as it is a matter of -- well, what shall I call it? -- legislative ethics.

Q Specifically, Mr. President, do you want to make any further observations about that Farm bill that was passed the other day against your advice?

THE PRESIDENT: Well -- except this: that it seems to be pretty true that it would raise the cost of eating in the country about a billion dollars. I

think everybody ought to realize that. I don't think we want to add to the cost of our meals -- of a billion dollars, if we can help it.

Q Mr. President, would you say that was about the best way to start the inflationary system that we have been trying to avoid?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course people are sitting up nights trying to invent new methods of accelerating inflation, and I am sitting up nights trying to block the acceleration of inflation. (laughter) And this is one of the -- one of the plans which would accelerate inflation -- no question.

Q Mr. President, in your reply to the question about non-germane riders, you qualified somewhat your answer to appropriation bills?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that would apply to any other bill too.

Q Any other bill?

THE PRESIDENT: In the constitution of the State of New York, as I remember it -- you had better check on this -- see whether I am right or not, because it is quite a long while since I was Governor -- there is a clause that in effect prevents that. The title of the bill has got to cover everything that is in the bill, which in effect means that if you start to put a rider on it in the Senate or the Assembly in the State of New York, the title of the bill doesn't cover the rider and therefore such -- such a bill would be vetoed by the Governor as unconstitutional. Quite a number of States have a provision of that kind.

Q Well, isn't that to prevent secret legislation? You can amend the title?

THE PRESIDENT: (after a short pause) No. You see -- you see the usual method in the title is "For so and so, and other purposes." Well, that is cut out under the constitution of the State of New York -- "and other purposes."

Q Yes. But what I mean -- you could amend the title to the bill?

THE PRESIDENT: The interesting fact is: in Albany they don't. (laughter)

It's pretty strictly lived up to, the intent of having legislation only cover one subject.

Q Would you say then, sir, that legislative ethics in Albany are higher than in Washington? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No, because we have it in the constitution at Albany -- the State constitution. They haven't got it in the Constitution of the United States.

Q Mr. President, would you construe the Smith amendment to be that type of a rider not germane to the War Powers bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Again, is that "background"?

THE PRESIDENT: That is still "background." (laughter, and cries of "Oh")

Q Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You can write a nice story.

Q Mr. President, if the bill covers the War Powers of the President, and the President is denied discretionary powers on the 40-hour week, that surely would not be germane to the bill, would it?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I don't know. I would hate even to make a snap judgment on that.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.