

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #809  
Executive Office of the President  
March 6, 1942, 11.00 A.M., E.W.T.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: It was -- this is an effort to do something for the whole Government all over the country, without issuing any more paper work, an Executive Order, or a letter to heads of departments. And I was going to let the newspapers act as the purveyor of the request. The proposal was that I should send out a notice to the heads of all departments, and establishments, and agencies, in regard to saving electricity -- lights -- and instead of spending a lot of money in sending this out, I will let the papers do it.

The idea is this: (reading): "Due to the constantly increasing demands for electrical energy to meet the vital needs of activities throughout the nation, engaged in the prosecution of the war, it is absolutely essential that every kilowatt of such energy be saved wherever it is possible to do so without detriment to our war effort. To this end it is directed -- you can change that -- to this end it is requested that everybody in the Government service take the necessary action to insure, with respect to buildings of every character occupied by the Government, both in Washington and in the field, that the use of electricity for lighting and other purposes be restricted to the minimum usage essential to the efficient operation of the buildings or the activities conducted therein."

And furthermore, I would like to have some reports on this, to see how much can be saved. It is just an essential routine matter but it is a good deal of importance, and I -- I have had, frankly, quite a

number of complaints -- letters from people complaining that a Government building that was not working all night has been lighted up all over the place -- unnecessarily. So this is just an effort to save electricity, hereby requesting the cooperation of the Press.

Q Well, Mr. President, how about civilian saving?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q How about civilian saving?

THE PRESIDENT: Same thing exactly.

Q What will that do to night baseball?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q What will that do to night baseball?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, after all, there are certain activities connected with the morale of the people of the United States which probably ought to go on. If the people who go to a baseball game at night would turn out all their lights at home, this would be just about the equivalent of using it in the park. Now that is a practical thing. A lot of people, as you know, go out in the evening and leave most of their lights turned on in the house. That is true.

Q Mr. President, in that connection, about night ball games, Mr. Landis spoke recently about blackouts, etcetera -- brought up also by sports writers -- that lighting for baseball would be seen a long ways away, and if the foe did have any idea of doing any bombing, they could pick the night of a night ball game and see from a long ways off.

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) That's true.

Q (continuing) How about that?

THE PRESIDENT: It depends a little bit on where it is in the country.

Q Do you intend to do anything along that line?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. That is a thing that has got to be worked out locally.

MR. P. BRANDT: Mr. President, yesterday you sent the House a request for a 100-million-dollars W.P.A. supplemental appropriation for the so-called disemployed. Will you be able to allocate that in specific areas? Will it be enough? I understand W.P.A. is only about 23 dollars -- a share.  
(loud laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well ---

MR. P. BRANDT: (interposing) I was thinking of Douglas Aircraft. (more laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. The answer is that I frankly don't know the details of it, but if I were you, if the price is only 23 dollars, I wouldn't sell it short. (laughter)

MR. P. BRANDT: Well, will it require special legislation?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't -- I don't know, Pete. I haven't looked into it.

MR. P. BRANDT: Have you also worked out -- decided where they will work? In defense housing, or will they be trained ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) There are all kinds of things. A lot of it will be retraining to work on new types of tools. Some of it will be defense housing and whatever is most useful in that particular locality.

MR. P. BRANDT: Yes, but it will be used and allocated in specific localities -- like Michigan ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) It will be the place where it is needed. We wouldn't put it into a country district that didn't need it.

Q Mr. President, Oliver Lyttleton, the Supervising Minister of Supply in Great Britain, this morning spoke of a new American naval base in Eritrea as being rather small now, but showing every prospect of growing into

what he called "quite a whacker." I wonder if you could give us any further information on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. It would be an invitation to bomb it if I did.

Q Isn't that information?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Wouldn't you call that information?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen the story.

Q They let it come through the Censor several times from the other side, sir, and it has been requested that we eliminate it over here.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is sound. Two "wrongs" don't make a "right."

Q Mr. President, the House Military Affairs Committee criticized Donald Nelson for approving the R.E.A. (Rural Electrification Administration) power line to an aluminum plant in Arkansas. Have you any comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Was there any other side presented to the Military Affairs Committee?

Q (aside) Shall I answer that? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: It's rather important, isn't it? In other words, did they hear just one side of the case, or both?

Q I understand from some of the Congressmen they only heard one side.

THE PRESIDENT: That's what I understood too.

Q Mr. President, the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua (Dr. Arguello) arrived in town this morning, and I wondered if you had any immediate plans to receive him?

THE PRESIDENT: Probably will see him in the course of the next few days.

Q Mr. President, it has been reported that a supply mission -- and perhaps

more than that -- is on its way or about to go to India. Can you tell us anything about that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you will have to ask Sumner Welles about that. There is something in the wind. Whether he is ready to tell you about it or not, I don't know.

Q Mr. President, what is holding up developments along the lines of mobilizing manpower -- civilian manpower for industry?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got anything more on that.

Q The thing is still being studied, is it, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Still being studied. Hope to get something on it next week.

Q Is there any indication, Mr. President, that it might go into the Department of Labor?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of. I don't know.

Q Mr. President, you said in your last (Press) Conference that you had received notice -- some note about that Mount Gilead plan of production. Have you read it since then?

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing I have read is the story in the paper, and it looks like a very excellent plan, which of course would have to be fitted in -- probably should be fitted in to meet the needs and the circumstances of the different localities. You couldn't, for example, put any Mount Gilead plan into effect in every part of the country, because all the circumstances are different. And I would like to know very much that the plan which looks good actually gets followed out. That is the proof of the pudding. Too many -- so many communities get out a grand plan which has everybody's approval, and then it sort of doesn't get carried through. Now if this plan is really carried through, it is something that is worth-while carrying through, in principle at

least, in a great many other communities.

Q This is said to have the approval of everybody except the local banker.

That indicated it is being carried through, I wonder?

THE PRESIDENT: There is always somebody. Not necessarily a banker. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, a new crop of rumors about Cabinet revisions are now being harvested. Have you anything to say about the current report that Mr. Stimson (Secretary of War) is about to step out of the Cabinet?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think probably the only comment on that is that I read the story in a certain type of newspaper, and that that is a very good answer. (short pause) Is that too rough? (laughter) That doesn't mean all the Press, by any means.

Q The Associated Press carried that story.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q The Associated Press carried that story.

THE PRESIDENT: What? I didn't hear.

Q Associated Press.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it originated with the Associated Press.

(laughter)

Q (aside) Let's go. Let's go.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Thank you, sir.

(the President saw Walter Winchell and beckoned to him)

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #810  
Executive Office of the President  
March 10, 1942 -- 4.05 P.M., E.W.T.

(the President had displayed on his desk a small ship model of the Mayflower, and some specially bound books alongside)

Q New models, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I will tell you all about it. It is very interesting.

Q Nice.

(the President held up one of the books to the front row)

Q What rig is that?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Bark rig?

THE PRESIDENT: A ship of the period. A sort of development of the caravel, about one hundred feet long, I think.

Q A hundred?

THE PRESIDENT: About that.

Q About a hundred?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. In fact, I think it was just under a hundred -- ninety something. And there is enough furniture in New England that came over on the Mayflower to have kept her going from that time on until today.

(laughter)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

MR. EARLY: And furnish all the houses where George Washington spent the night.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That's right. (laughter)

I have been given a very delightful thing that is very nice at this time. I will get Steve (Early) to take it out afterwards (holding up the model of the ship, glass encased). A little model of the Mayflower,

made out of a piece of the Mayflower.

A number of years ago, some antiquarians discovered that there was an old barn in England that had been built out of such timbers, and it was sufficiently -- they were sufficiently identified to make it seem almost certain that they were made out of the original timbers of the Mayflower when she was broken up. Sent over by Mr. Brendan Bracken, who was Mr. Churchill's secretary, and is now the head of the Ministry of Information in London, and sent over by John Winant (U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain) -- Gil Winant -- who gave it to me yesterday. The piece of wood that it is made out of was furnished by the Society of Friends, who now own the barn. The model was given by Mr. Allen King. Steve will give you the thing afterwards, together with a history (holding up one of the books) of how they discovered where the timbers came from.

Q Is that glass-surrounded?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is that glass ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- or mica?

THE PRESIDENT: Glass, Yes.

I have a statement, which was worked out by Steve. He is the author. You will recognize his English -- (laughter) -- I said English -- (more laughter) -- he will give you copies. He states:

(reading): "Many people have written to the Executive Office asking for some statement of the general attitude of the Federal Government toward the continuation of various sports, dramatics, concerts, vacations and general recreation and amusement during the war effort. Most of these letters point out that the writers are anxious to do their utmost to help in the prosecution of the war and wonder whether such activities are considered to be harmful to the prosecution of the war.

"It is, of course, obvious that the war effort is the primary

task of everybody in the nation. All other activities must be considered secondary. At the same time it has been proven beyond much doubt that human beings cannot sustain continued and prolonged work very long, without obtaining a proper balance between work on the one hand and vacation and recreation on the other. Such recreation may come by participation in, or attendance at, various sports, motion pictures, music, the drama, picnics, et cetera. All of them have a necessary and beneficial part in promoting an over-all efficiency by relieving the strains of war and work.

"The actual occurrence of very large gatherings, of course, must depend on local safety conditions of the moment.

"Within reasonable limits, I believe the war effort will not be hampered but actually improved by sensible participation in healthy recreational pursuits. It must be borne in mind, however, that 'recreation as usual' is just as bad as 'business as usual'. Recreation under present conditions can be undertaken solely for the purpose of building up body and mind and with the chief thought that this will help win the war."

And of course I can't down here -- nobody down here -- it ought not to be done here -- can make final determination in some specific case. They have got to do the best they can. Not going to set up a bureau in Washington, to tell the people in Poughkeepsie as to whether they ought to have local horse races or not. (laughter)

Q Cocktail parties and tea dances, Mr. President? (more laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you say whether you plan to ask the more essential industries to forego vacations this year? That was suggested last year. Is it your idea that vacations should be ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) You can't lay down a general rule for everybody. I can say that if anybody gets very tired they should do what a lot of people do do, and that is take a few days off, not only -- only if they feel they need it. If they think it is going to make them more efficient and turn out more in the way of munitions -- essential industries -- by taking a few days off, it would be common sense to go ahead and do it.

Q So long as the industry itself doesn't slow down?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. And of course what we always forget is that things of that kind slow down industry so much less than illness slows down industry. The percentage of people who are out because of illness, in any given plant almost, is much higher than people realize.

Then we have all got a question -- I mean here in Washington -- as to whether -- how we are going to blackout Federal buildings in case of air-raid. So the Director of Civilian Defense wrote a letter, for me to send to Federal Works Agency which is in charge of public buildings, and to the Director of Civilian Defense. I suppose there ought to be a copy go to the Commissioners of the District, although this is primarily Federal buildings. It reads as follows:

(reading): "Such preparation shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal Government during an air-raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination. Such ---"

I don't know -- this is not my word ---

"Such obscuration is ---" (loud laughter) ---

Sounds almost like some people's I see before me ---

Q (aside) Oh!

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing reading): "Such obscuration may be obtained either by blackout construction or by terminating the illumination." (laughter)

Q Sounds like ---

Q (interposing) Does that mean turning off the lights? (more laughter)

Q That isn't the one you said Steve (Early) wrote, is it?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q That isn't the one you said Steve wrote, is it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Steve did not write that. The Dean of the Harvard Law

School wrote this. (more laughter)

(continuing reading): "This will of course require that in building areas in which production must continue during a blackout, construction must be provided that internal illumination may continue."

I have known lots of people that have had internal illumination. (loud and prolonged laughter)

Q (interjecting) Just for a holiday though?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing reading): "Other areas, whether or not occupied by personnel, may be obscured by terminating the illumination. (more laughter)

"The Administrator of the Federal Works Agency is hereby authorized to effect this policy in all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal Government, both in Washington and throughout the country."

Steve?

MR. EARLY: Yes, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Rewrite that for me, will you? (laughter) Tell them the buildings will have to keep their work going -- put something across the windows. In buildings that can afford it, so that work can be stopped for a while, turn out the lights and stop there.

I don't think I have got anything else.

Q Mr. President, Senator (A.B.) Chandler (Democrat of Kentucky) said today that he understood the Government was considering seriously the establishment of a supreme command. Is there anything new on that you can tell us?

THE PRESIDENT: Just what does that mean?

Q I don't know, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Neither do I.

Q I assume ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Neither does anybody else that writes about it.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, the impression seems to be widespread that you would say something today on the Sojourner Truth housing project in Detroit -- the race riots out there?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I should, even if I wanted to, because as I understand it, the Attorney General is bringing grand jury proceedings. I think you had better ask him, and for that reason, of course, I ought not to comment.

Q Very well. Thanks.

Q Mr. President, it has been printed that Mrs. Roosevelt is considering going to London. Would you tell us ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't -- I don't think that even she has heard that rumor.

Q Mr. President, there is a bill up -- introduced this afternoon by Senator (B.C.) Clark (Democrat of Missouri) to the effect that all the Army and the Navy, etcetera, would be -- would be included in one department. That has been brought up before, of course. Do you have any comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I hadn't heard that one. After all, it makes very little difference whether you have them all under one department, or two departments, or three departments, or four departments. They all are working together pretty well.

Q Yes.

Q Mr. -- Mr. President, in that connection, will you comment on the reorganization announced by the Navy Department last night?

THE PRESIDENT: No. It is towards simplification. The old Navy method of a Chief of Operations goes back to about 1916, when it superseded what was

called the Aide System. As time went on, from the end of the postwar period down to a few years ago, this Chief of Operations -- of course the title was chosen because he was supposed to be the person who was in charge of the movement of ships. And that worked pretty well during the World War. It was rather a much simpler matter than it is today, on the question of moving ships.

And the difficulty has been that since the World War the materiel situation has become, especially in the last two years, of such very great importance that additional duties have been saddled on the Chief of Operations.

And it has been very difficult to draw the line between Operations in the sense of movement of ships, and Operations in the sense of getting the ships ready to move, or supplying them at some distant place. So it seems better to merge the movement of ships, which was put under Admiral King a few months ago -- merge it with the general duties of Operations, and give to the one person a subdivision -- several subdivisions under him, that would handle the different component parts of putting ships to a task, and at the same time providing them with the necessary things to keep them going in any part of the world.

Well, it is a thing that we have been, I suppose, working towards for the last six or eight years. And it seems a logical thing to do. Also centralizes responsibility -- could be called somewhat akin to the recent so called "streamlining" of the War Department.

Q Mr. President, have you had any reports on the "Sea Otter"? (the new type cargo ship)

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, a great many.

Q What -- can you tell us in general what she did in actual trials?

THE PRESIDENT: I can tell you in general what the problems were. She -- the ship was about the right size as originally designed, and like so many things it got bigger -- grew -- the tonnage grew. And the original idea was that we could use a small type of ship in coastal trade, down in the West Indies, and down the coast of South America, especially to go into a good many smaller harbors.

But the design carried the original estimated draft of ten feet down about five or six more, which made it difficult for the ship to get into the harbors. The rest of it was somewhat technical, which I will try to translate as easily as I can.

The metacentric height was in the wrong place. There were problems of loading and unloading, which could only be worked out through tests. I don't think they have had enough tests. I think there should be modifications in the design. It might be possible to use the same gasoline engine propulsion instead of a Diesel engine. Carry the screw out through the stern, instead of down through the bottom of the ship, thereby solving the draft problem, which is a thing that I think should be pursued further.

The first ship was not satisfactory, but there is a great deal of merit in the basic idea of building a very cheap hull in a very few months, and try to work out the kinks that developed in the first model. That's about all there is.

Q Mr. President, is there any problem connected with the relative bulk of gasoline in Diesel oil engines?

THE PRESIDENT: It depends on the length of the voyage, and to where the voyage goes. If the voyage goes to places where gasoline is reasonably available, I don't think it makes much difference.

Q Mr. President, it was reported from Russian sources, printed in Europe this morning, that several units of the French fleet had been turned over by the Vichy government to Germany. Have you anything to substantiate that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Never heard of it.

Q Can you tell us, sir anything about Admiral Hart's call today?

THE PRESIDENT: We had a very satisfactory talk, and I am going to see him again.

Q Is his status ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Quite a lot of information.

Q Would you clarify what his status is, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is he to get another ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) We haven't talked about it at all.

Q (aside) All right? All right?

THE PRESIDENT: Going?

VOICES: (loudly) Thank you, Mr. President. (laughter)

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #811  
Executive Office of the President  
March 13, 1942 -- 11.00 A.M., E.W.T.

Q Good morning, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning.

Q Are you going to give us a book review this morning? (referring to Marquis W. Childs' book "This Is Your War" lying on his desk)

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Are you going to give us a book review this morning?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I just got it. (laughter)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: There is very little this morning.

I signed last night the Executive Order that carries into effect the change of certain command details in the Navy Department. It combines certain duties of the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet with the duties of Chief of Naval Operations -- one person in charge of the whole thing. And his title is: Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations. He shall be the principal naval adviser to the President on the conduct of the war, and principal naval adviser and executive to the Secretary of the Navy on the conduct of the activities of the Naval Establishment. He has supreme command of the operating forces comprising the several fleets, seagoing forces, and sea frontier forces of the United States Navy, and is directly responsible under the general direction of the Secretary (of the Navy), to the President.

The staff of the Commander in Chief of -- to be composed of first, a Chief of Staff, who in the temporary absence or incapacity of the Commander in Chief; United States Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations,

shall act as Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet -- in other words, the operating portion of the -- of Admiral King's duties -- and such assistants and heads as are necessary.

Then he has, on the naval operations end, another officer who would be the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, who in the absence of Admiral King would handle that portion of his work as Acting Chief of Naval Operations. I think that's about all there is. Steve has got it for you.

Q Mr. President, have the Chief of Staff and the Vice Chief of Naval Operations been named?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No, wait a minute. (turning to Captain McCrea) I don't think so. I don't think so. I think no one ---

CAPTAIN MCCREA: They haven't been announced, but I think Admiral King ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes.

Then, on the problem of "obscuration of illumination" -- (laughter) -- with which you are familiar, we have rewritten it, and made it worse -- (more laughter) -- because we have added to the problem of illumination the question of the safety of buildings in Washington.

And there have been quite a number of incidents of late, some of which you are aware of, and some of which you are not aware of and won't be, if we can help it. There were -- there were -- there were -- I won't say sabotage, but certain incidents which lead us to believe that sabotage might be tried on Government buildings, both here in Washington and elsewhere around the country.

So this letter from the Director of the Budget to me -- it is a memorandum -- points out that we have not only the problem of blacking out but we also have the problem of safeguarding public buildings from subversive acts. And the rewritten letter to Colonel Fleming takes --

gives directions in regard to the blackout, but we are also working on the question of safety.

And it seems like an appalling amount, but after all, when you are -- if you visualize the size of the effort to win the war here in public buildings, and elsewhere in public buildings, the total estimated cost for both of the items -- the blackout and the safety -- is 18 million dollars. So there will be a -- some kind of a supplementary estimate go to Congress to take care of some -- some -- something like that.

Q Mr. President, that 18 million covers the whole of the country?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q That 18 million covers the whole country?

THE PRESIDENT: The whole country, Yes. Yes.

Q Is the problem internal guarding against sabotage? Additional guard details?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know the details. It costs money. I think that is about all I have got.

Q Mr. President, this applies simply to Federal buildings, not buildings of any sort?

THE PRESIDENT: That's right.

Q Thank you.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, one of the morning papers states that you are in favor of the erection of a -- a series of dormitories on the Mall? They had considerable detail on it.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is substantially correct, unless somebody can point out some other vacant land where we don't have to cut down trees, where Government workers in the main section of Washington can walk to and from their -- their work. I don't know of any other place besides the Mall.

Q Was the description of the buildings substantially correct?

THE PRESIDENT: Also substantially correct.

Q Was the expression of your views substantially correct too, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (laughter) In fact, I told it to Ernie (Ernest Lindley, writer of the story) after you fellows left the other day -- one or two people were left behind -- and I gave him a scoop. (laughter)

Q (aside) Gee.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) He was not the only one. There were several others. Of course the point of it -- point of it is that -- I might as well go into it, somebody will probably ask me another question -- it's part and parcel of the problem of winning the war, to provide adequate housing for the thousands of people that have come in, and are coming in.

And there are stories which have come to me from young men and young women who have come down to Washington about their -- their difficulties, their real hardships in finding adequate places to live here at reasonable cost. I don't think people in Washington -- because you are so close to the trees, you don't see the forest just because of the trees -- but the fact remains that there is very great hardship, a great deal of financial hardship.

I know of -- Oh -- four or five top people in the Government who have gone down into their own pockets to tide over the financial problems of some of these young men and young women who have come here with a small sum of 50 dollars or 100 dollars, who completely run out of money. And these people have given them personal loans -- probably get them back. But that condition ought not to exist, to have to go to some higher paid official of the Government and borrow money, in order to live. And I have said -- it is just one of those things -- the Government is

awfully big.

I have been talking for a year about very simple, and also cheap, accommodations for these single persons. And it just -- it didn't get done. It wasn't anybody's "child." Or if it was referred to some so-called expert, they wanted to add to the luxury of the accommodations, and give everybody a separate bathroom, or a separate kitchenette, or a sitting room, or something like that, at an impossible price -- way beyond the means of the individual.

And I still hope that we can go into the dormitory system. Try it out. Two or three buildings here. If it works, we may or we may not have to build some more. Now, if there is any place that is better than the Mall, somebody tell me.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) And in the same way, that ties in with this other problem that I was talking to you -- you have had various newspaper campaigns around Washington -- the problem of information -- people coming in here all the time to take new jobs. Well, I suppose just on what you might call shoe leather alone, if we could have some center of information for them to go to, instead of pounding the pavements trying to find out a third-class boarding house when they first come in, I suppose the amount of shoe leather saved would pay for the cost of the buildings just about. In other words, financially it seems pretty sound. I am not putting in any cost of mental strain or anything like that. I think you might put in, however, the waste of time to existing Government employees of people rushing in and saying, "My God, I have nowhere to sleep tonight."

Well, that -- that comes right down from the President of the United

States down to every officer in the Government, pretty nearly. They have all got cases of that kind. I know of two or three cases where at eleven o'clock at night there wasn't any place for them to go. You know the hotels are filled, even with the giving-up of the D.A.R. convention. And having a central place for these individuals to go to we hope will be the decent thing -- the right thing to do -- help them.

Q Mr. President, do you have any definite plans in mind for starting construction of some of the dormitories?

THE PRESIDENT: Starting some what?

Q Towards getting construction started on the dormitory system?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I am talking with Jack Blandford (National Housing Administrator) about it today or tomorrow.

Q Mr. President, do you have anything definite in mind about taking care of this problem of "Information"?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I thought that was quite obvious. (laughter)

Q I understood that was the brainchild of Mr. (Lowell) Mellett (Office of Government Reports)?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Nothing to do with it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. It was mine.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, don't we ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Might just as well say it was mine.

Q (interposing) The Washington Post hasn't admitted ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I would just as soon they do. They can admit it. It's all <sup>is</sup> right. My shoulders are quite broad.

Q Don't we have a defense housing information agency right across Pennsylvania Avenue?

THE PRESIDENT: Nobody knows where it is.

Well now, here is a practical illustration. A fellow came in to Washington about two weeks ago -- and mind you I have had not dozens, but hundreds of letters of complaint. And what we are trying to do is run this war effort with the least waste of time and money. And this is going to save money ten times over, at least.

And if, when it is built -- this is another consideration that nobody has thought of, or rather put down on paper -- if the thing is built and started, and it doesn't prove necessary, it's being done in good faith. If it doesn't prove necessary, we have got already at least ten applicants for the space -- war work -- at least ten.

Well, this particular illustration -- the fellow who came down, he makes -- well, I won't tell you exactly what he makes -- what shall I call it? -- tiles. You know what tiles are. What are tiles? Who are tiles used by in the Government? Probably 15 or 20 different departments or agencies. And at the end of one week he came up to me and his collar was wilted, shoes were worn out, and he said: "I have had one week of run-around. I have been given the run-around for one solid week." Well, actually, he hadn't been given the run-around, except that he had gone, in the course of that week, to 15 or 20 different departments to find out if -- if they needed tiles. Well, tiles are a sort of thing that you can't centralize. You can procure, Yes. But in time of war there are any number of persons on a very small scale -- this fellow had a small plant -- he only employed 25 men.

Now the idea is to have a man like that -- you have all talked about little business -- little business. Why hasn't the Government done anything about little business? Why there are thousands of little

business men who come down here -- have worn out their shoes. All right. Now the idea is that a man coming down -- little business -- would go to a central place, and say to somebody at the desk, "I want to sell some tiles." Or, "I want to use my shop for making something that I can make, even if it isn't tiles, for the Government -- for the war." And at the front desk the man looks it up and says, "All right. Tiles -- Room 101." Well, that's practical. He gives him a card. He goes to see the man in room number -- or the girl in room number 101.

Now he doesn't get the run-around, and he doesn't get referred to somebody else. He is getting somebody that knows just where to go for tiles, and that person cleans him up in one day. That individual gets service. Well, why should -- any private organization of course would do it. Why shouldn't the Government? That's service.

And then there is just a third crowd of people. You have got all the people coming in for work. You have got people coming in for small contracts. And you have also got another element -- you can ask Mac (Marvin H. McIntyre) about it, because I always turn those things over to him. There are a very large number -- number of Members of Congress -- Senate and their secretarial staffs, who get a letter. Well, they are pretty good -- they are very efficient people. Well, the letter presents a new problem, and the secretary to the Congressman says, "My God, that's a new one on me." And in a war there are thousands of new ones all the time. It's from a constituent of the Congressman. He says, "I don't know where to go for that." And instead of telephoning to half a dozen places, he telephones to somebody at "Information," and is told where to go. Or is told, "Send the fellow down here. Write to the man to come here. We can straighten him out inside of 24 hours."

And if -- as I say, the thing -- the thing is justified by the -- by the letters of complaint on the existing problem, and by the personal calls: "I don't know where to go." And if it doesn't work, we will use it for any one of a dozen -- ten or a dozen Federal agencies that are yelling for space.

Q Mr. President, have you arrived at any opinion on how well the Canadian system of wage control would work in this country?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't got any news on it, because the whole -- that is only one out of many factors in this whole problem, which is being studied at the present time.

Q Can you tell us, sir, whether you participated in the discussions at the White House last Sunday, which Mrs. Roosevelt described in her conference -- in her column on Tuesday ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) No.

Q (continuing) --- about wage control?

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) No. I did not. No.

Q (continuing) She advocated a general, over-all ceiling on prices, wages, and profits. She said she had become convinced by these discussions that you couldn't control one without controlling all three?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is another factor that has been under study for some time.

Q Are you considering any positive action in the direction of wage control, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Under study.

Q Mr. President, do you feel that progress is being made on the matter of controlling inflation?

THE PRESIDENT: In some ways, Yes. In other ways, No. For example, the

vote in the House of Representatives was the "No" side of it. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, you have a book in front of you there, from Marquis Childs.

(This Is Your War) There is a line in that book that stuck in my craw last night: that this was a war of peoples and not a war of armies.

THE PRESIDENT: That's absolutely right. I just got it, and I haven't read it yet, but I read the inside of the cover, which I think says that -- starts off with, "No American man, woman or child can escape the consequences of this war. No other national effort in our history has required so much from each of us in sacrifice and effort. Every single aspect of your daily standard of living is going to be affected. Some of these changes you have already learned about from the newspapers. Here is a complete and authoritative discussion of the shape of things to come. Mr. Childs discusses household equipment, transportation, clothes, food, health, children, personal service, and money."

And then the last sentence -- paragraph -- is pretty good: "A pampered nation in the past, America is inexperienced in war. What the country needs is the practical energy of every citizen. This is your war." Right.

Q The point he makes there in -- I have forgotten what he is discussing -- but to me it's no longer a war of the army or navy as such. Everybody's in.

Q No. It's everybody.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, have you received a recommendation from the War Production Board yet for the mobilization of manpower, and channeling of manpower into the defense industries?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is -- that is under study. It has been for about

-- what? -- three weeks?

Q For about two months.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Two months, I think.

Q Are we now moving to a point where we may expect something on that question?

THE PRESIDENT: I think things are coming to a head.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, Mr. Casey (Richard G. Casey, Minister from Australia), I understand, brought a message from Mr. Curtin (Prime Minister John Curtin) of Australia yesterday and the news reports from Canberra say that they are eagerly expecting an answer. Have you any comment on that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: The matter is under study. I can't tell you any more than that. I wish I could.

Q Mr. President, on that point that this is a war of peoples rather than armies, do you think that there could be a greater concentration of effort on the main problem among various political groups and newspapers?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Very distinctly. I would say it was about time for a large number of people -- several of whom are in this room -- to forget politics. It's about time. We read altogether too much politics in our papers altogether. Of course, they are still thinking in terms of the past. They haven't waked up to the fact that this is a war. Politics is out. Same thing is true in Congress. (laughter)

Q Does that include Members of the Cabinet too, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I -- I think it's not true in regard to the Cabinet. I don't find many instances of any political implications and actions taken by Members of the Cabinet. Wherever I see any implication of that kind I step on it with both feet. It is pretty rare.

Q Mr. President, can you -- speaking of politics, Mr. Frank Walker, Postmaster General, has been taking part in a number of huddles with Pennsylvania Democrats on the governorship situation. Is he acting for you?

THE PRESIDENT: I should say that was a Pennsylvania matter, isn't it?

Q Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Where does he come from?

Q I believe his legal residence is Scranton.

THE PRESIDENT: I think so.

Q He is not acting for you?

THE PRESIDENT: I know absolutely nothing about it, and an implication that I did would not -- well, that would be politics on the part of the writer. (laughter)

Q Thank you ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: What? (laughter)

MR. MARQUIS CHILDS: (who came over to the President) Thank you, Mr. President. That's the best book review I have ever had in my life.  
(laughter)

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #812  
Executive Office of the President  
March 17, 1942 -- 4.15 P.M., E.W.T.

(today was St. Patrick's Day)

Q How are you, Mr. President?

Q What's all that stuff? (a display of shamrocks on the President's desk)

Q What stuff?

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have got quite a lot of things, and I will start with those in lighter vein and come to the more serious things later.

You know, the only -- the only thing that overburdens my shoulders, I being popularly supposed to be overburdened, are some of the dear, "happy thought" people, commentators and editors -- not you news people -- who bring in hundreds of letters to me just because of some slip of the pen. I suppose I have got two or three hundred letters because of an editorial in one of our more solemn papers, which talked about:

(reading): "Now that Admiral King has been given authority in the Navy comparable with those already held by General Marshall in the Army, it should create a joint general staff in charge of the duty of directing, under the President, all naval and military operations."

Well, it has been a perfect headache. It must have taken a couple of hours of my time in answering letters that were based on that completely false statement. Because, of course, we have had a joint staff for a good long time, not once a week, or something like that, but several times a day. And lots of things that come up -- well, I figured it out, being of an historical turn of mind, that probably some poor devil had gone through this process of annoyance in past years, some

previous time in history, so I went quite far back and I found a very nice thing -- I told Steve (Early) to mimeograph it, and he will give it to you afterwards -- because we do -- we do need to restore our sense of proportion sometimes.

I think this comes from Book 44, Chapter 22, of a great historian by the name of Livy, who wrote about Lucius Aemilius, a Roman Consul who had been selected to conduct the war with the Macedonians, B.C. 168. That's not A.D. -- that would be an entirely different matter. This is B.C. -- 168. He went out from the Senate House into the Assembly of the people and addressed them as follows -- it sounds as if it were written in 1942:

(reading): "In all public places where people congregate, and actually -- would you believe it! -- in private parties ---"

Doesn't that sound just like Washington? (laughter) --

"---there are men---"

-- of course today could be added women --

"---who know who are leading the armies into Macedonia, where their camps ought to be placed, what strategical positions ought to be occupied, when and by what pass Macedonia ought to be entered, where the magazines are to be formed, by what mode of land and sea transport ---"

-- and to that we might add today air --

"---supplies are to be conveyed, when actions are to be fought, and when it is better to remain inactive. And they not only lay down what ought to be done, but when anything is done contrary to their opinion they arraign the consul as though he were being impeached before the Assembly.

"This greatly interferes with the successful prosecution of a war, for it is not everybody who can show such firmness and resolution in the teeth of hostile criticism as Fabius did; he preferred to have his authority weakened by the ignorance and caprice of the people rather than gain popularity by disservice to the State.

"I am not one of those who think that generals are not to

be advised; on the contrary, the man who always acts on his own initiative shows, in my judgment, more arrogance than wisdom. How then does the case stand? Commanders ought first of all to get the advice of thoughtful and far-seeing men who have special experience of military affairs; then from those who are taking part in the operations, who know the country and recognize a favourable opportunity when it comes, who, like comrades on a voyage, share the same dangers.

"If, then, there is any man who in the interests of the commonwealth feels confident that he can give me good advice in the war which I am to conduct, let him not refuse to help his country, but go with me to Macedonia. I will supply him with a ship, a horse, a tent, and with his travelling expenses as well. If anyone thinks this is too much trouble, let him not try to act as a sea pilot whilst he is on land." (laughter)

Isn't that a classic? (more laughter)

"The city itself affords plenty of subjects for conversation, let him confine his loquacity to these; he may rest assured that the discussions in our councils of war will satisfy us."

I think it is rather nice. I think that ought to be printed. Be sure you make it B.C., not A.D. -- 168.

Well, to come down to more serious things than that, I am sending up tomorrow a supplemental estimate for the War Department, a little over 17 billion dollars -- 17 billion, 579 million, 311 thousand, 253 period. That is for -- I think all of it -- for planes. And the Budget Director tells me that the -- out of the total -- the total program of 60 thousand airplanes in 1942, and 125 thousand in 1943, the Army is charged with the -- financially -- with the procurement of 148 thousand. This supplemental estimate will take care, with previous appropriations, of 148 thousand planes in those two years, leaving 23,550 to be financed in a program to be submitted within the next 6 weeks.

Q I beg your pardon, Mr. President. Is the Army still to get another 23,500 planes?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

Q Mr. President, could you say how many planes exactly the 17 billion will

provide? That is out of the 148 thousand?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, this -- this 17 billion provides for 148 thousand minus 23,500, you see.

Q Then this -- you spoke though of the previous appropriations? Would they take care ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes, because some of the program -- this year's -- this year's 60 thousand, for example, the Army's share on that has already been financed by existing appropriations.

Q Could you narrow what the 17 million will buy?

THE PRESIDENT: 17 billion.

Q 17 billion, excuse me.

THE PRESIDENT: It will buy the difference between what already has been appropriated for, and one hundred -- let's see, I will do a little figuring---

Q (interjecting) 124 thousand?

THE PRESIDENT: 124 thousand -- and the difference between those two. And there is still 23 thousand to be financed.

Then you have read the good news about General (Douglas) MacArthur. And I got down this, and I am going to give it out to you. I think you might as well quote it, or get Steve to give you a copy.

There will be, of course, immediately -- we all know that -- because we are accustomed to that sort of thing -- there is going to be Axis propaganda that will appear this afternoon on their short-wave, and tomorrow morning, about how this is the abandonment of the Philippines, and that General MacArthur's leaving the Philippines is nothing more than another Van Mook having to get out of Java; etcetera. And of course we know what they will say.

On the other side of the picture, put it this way:

(reading): "I know that every man and woman in the United States admires with me General MacArthur's determination to fight to the finish with his men in the Philippines. But I also know that every man and woman is in agreement that all important decisions must be made with a view toward the successful termination of the war. Knowing this, I am sure that every American, if faced individually with the question as to where General MacArthur could best serve his country, could come to only one answer."

In other words, he will be more useful in Supreme Command of the whole Southwest Pacific than if he had stayed in Bataan Peninsula, where of course the fighting is going on.

Oh -- one other thing. I asked the Secretary of War, and he saw no reason why it shouldn't -- I shouldn't tell you this afternoon. This morning there arrived in Honolulu High Commissioner Frank (Francis) Sayre, who has been directed to come back here to report to me, and to the Chief of Staff, Chief of Naval Operations, and having done so and cleaned up various matters, he will in all probability return, as soon as he can, to the Southwest Pacific area.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Back to report, and then return.

Q In the area of Australia and that general area, are naval operations and air operations also under General MacArthur?

THE PRESIDENT: The whole thing.

Q Yes. I wanted to clear that.

Q Could you tell us, Mr. President, just how much that area includes? Does it include India, for instance?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say it included everything this side of Singapore.

Q New Zealand, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q New Zealand, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That's this side of Singapore.

Q They don't like to be associated with Australia.

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q Mr. President, did you have something more you wanted to ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, I don't think so.

Q (continuing) Well, could you clear up then, sir, what was discussed and what was agreed on in this conference of the labor people today?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, perfectly well, because I think that some of you people need a little clarification in words, and perhaps some of the people who are not here need a little clarification in words, because we don't want to give, I am sure -- any one of us wants to give the country a false impression.

We talked about certain false impressions. Well, for example, I have had -- I have had four -- I have had five letters in the past week from editors of small papers in different parts of the country -- I happen to know all four of them -- they are grand people -- and they asked me why it was -- mind you, they had got their information from reading the papers in small towns -- and they asked me why it was that nobody was allowed by law to work more than 40 hours a week.

Now of course you and I know differently, but they had received that impression either from things they had read, or in speeches they had heard in the Congress and elsewhere, and wanted to know why people weren't allowed to work more than 40 hours a week.

Well, that is an amazing -- amazing state of public misinformation. Of course we all know that in most of the munitions -- anywhere at all there is no limit to 40 hours a week -- never has been. Plain never has been. We also know that in most of the munitions plants, I think

almost all of them, they are working a great deal more than 40 hours a week. On some plants that -- a few plants are working 40 hours, and some are working 30 hours, some are working 20 hours a week. Why? The approximate cause is because the materials are not coming into the plant to work on. I think it is a fair thing to point out the whole story, and not a part of the story.

Now there has been a rule in this country for a great many years. It has been almost -- almost, you might say, a national standard in industrial plants, and that is that you pay for more than 40 hours a week. You don't restrict it to that. You pay time and a half for overtime. Well, we talked about that, and we talked about the desirability of having that known through the whole country, just that simple fact, on which there is a good deal of misinformation.

Then there was another question that we talked about, which I -- I haven't agreed with some of the labor leaders on at all, and that is that there should be double pay for Sunday. But on the other hand, that we should try to do two things as a national policy. The first is to stagger the days of work, so that we would have a six-day week; and let people off for one day a week, not necessarily Sunday -- No -- but one day a week. That means that you get Sunday operation of a plant.

However -- however, to work out there must be some term for it. I don't know what it is. Suppose you want to work 7 days a week. I am just -- the only way I can discuss it is this way: One-sixth or one-seventh -- well, one-sixth of the force would take Sunday off. One-sixth -- I guess it would be one-seventh would take Sunday off. One-seventh would take Monday off. One-seventh would take Tuesday off, and so on through the week. Well, you get a thing which has been the law

of the land in almost every State. I think it was my bill when I was in the State senate (of New York), and I got it through -- the "One Day Rest In Seven" bill -- very strongly backed by almost everybody in this country, the "One Day Rest In Seven."

Now we ought to keep it up, but we want to keep the plants open every day in the week. You can do it by staggering the shifts. It is a practical thing to do. And so I said let's forget about this double time for Sundays.

And I told them an amusing story: that I was talking to a Britisher -- they have been plagued a good deal by it -- by that rule, and they are getting away from it. They have had the double pay for Sundays over there, with the net result, in some plants, that a great many more people reported on Sundays than any other day in the week. See how it works?

So the idea is that we could continue, as has been the custom in Britain and here for a great many years, to pay double time for the seventh consecutive day of work, but to try not to have a seventh consecutive day of work, except in some emergency we have to get some particular job out in a hurry.

Q They have agreed to that part?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q They have agreed to that part?

THE PRESIDENT: That was my suggestion.

Q But they agreed to do it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, silence sometimes gives consent. I think they will take it. (laughter)

MR. P. BRANDT: Mr. President, they have contracts on these -- double pay is

usually covered by contract ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

MR. P. BRANDT: (continuing) How would they ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I should say this, Pete. I should say that the thing would probably work out, and possibly with the aid of the National Labor Board. In other words, in some contracts there are certain inequalities both ways -- both ways. The thing can be worked out. That is a detail which the Board, which has only been in existence only -- what? -- two or three months since the war, is handling pretty well at the present time.

Just the same way with strikes. Oh, I should say this: there are probably, today, fewer men on strike in the United States than there are anywhere else in the world, unless they are regimented, like Germany.

Q Mr. President, to restate that, as I understand it, this proposition would give straight time for 5 days, and time-and-a-half for the 6th day?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I am talking about 40 hours. I am not talking about the 5th day, or anything else -- 40 hours.

Q Five days of eight hours each?

THE PRESIDENT: Not necessarily. I don't care how they do it. Lots of other things ---

Q (interjecting) That is true.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) A piece of paper will show you.

Q Another thing, Mr. President. You said a few minutes ago there was an amazing state of public misinformation about that. I wonder if we could put quotes around that phrase?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that's all right. Well now, for instance, you know the number of people that have been on strike -- Oh, I saw in one of

the -- I think one of the press association stories, some little bit of a two-by-four place that frankly I had never heard of before -- 15 men went out. Well it made all the metropolitan dailies in this country. That's the kind of thing that I call creating misinformation.

Q What were they making in those plants?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q What were they making in those plants?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I haven't the faintest idea.

Q That might be important?

THE PRESIDENT: They may have been baking bread for the soldiers, or some cake, for all I know. I don't think that makes an awful lot of difference, because you can't take a list of things that are absolutely essential. If you did that you would have to list them in about 24 categories, and in priorities of essentiality. You can't do it. I mean it will just become a stunt that wouldn't be quite fair.

Q Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Do you think that any repressive legislation -- any anti-strike ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, there is one thing really -- I always have to check a little -- I don't know whether it's his language or not -- it doesn't sound like his language. What Bill Green said seems to be quoted here in accordance with what happened, but the quote from Phil Murray, we didn't talk about. That's the real answer.

Q What part of that are you referring to?

THE PRESIDENT: This: C.I.O. President (Philip) Murray said -- had agreed that voluntary action by labor to yield its right to strike was a much

more satisfactory answer to the problem of production, of national unity, than resort to restrictive enactments by Congress. Well, the question of strike did not come up, in this sense: that there is no strike problem today. Now that is the big fact. With that -- that was mentioned -- no agreement was necessary on it, because it is a fact.

Q May we quote that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: No. You will have me quoting all over the place.

Practically speaking, there are no strikes today. In England -- let's go back and do a little analogy work -- in England, labor agreed two years ago not to strike. I think it was just about the same period after they got into the war as it was over here after we got into the war. And they agreed not to strike.

Now they haven't struck except this: that those 15 men making loaves of bread for somebody have gone on strike in -- I don't know, what? -- dozens of localities -- one today -- one tomorrow. And I suppose in England there are -- Oh, what? -- four or five little local strikes. They don't like the foreman, and they walk out -- that sort of thing. It's against the orders of the top unions, just as it is here -- exactly. But you get 15 or 20 people who don't like the kind of tobacco that a foreman smokes. They don't like the smell of it. Well, they might go on strike to make him change his brand of smoking tobacco. Now things like that have happened, not only in England but over here. Silly little things. They really don't affect the war effort nearly as much as lots of other things.

Just by way of illustration, I think it probably is true, as I wrote to one of my professional economist friends the other day, he told me that since the -- our war effort began -- I don't know what

it was -- beginning June, 1940, something terrible had happened. We had lost 30 million man days of work through strikes in a year and three quarters -- well, I didn't check, but assumed he was right -- that if we hadn't lost that 30 million man hours of work in a year and three quarters, Japan never would have declared war on us. We never would have lost the Philippines, or the Dutch Indies, or Singapore. And the dear fellow wrote to me really honestly believing it.

And I wrote him back: I have got something almost more serious to tell you about. This is bad enough what you say, but do you realize that if it hadn't been for the common cold in America today, we would be in Berlin? (laughter) We would be in Berlin today if it hadn't been for the common cold, because there were 60 million man days lost in that same period through common colds.

In other words, why don't we in this country get a little sense of proportion and think things through? Well, headlines are responsible for it. Irresponsible people are responsible for it. Somebody has got to write a good lead. I know -- I would like to myself, but let us keep a little sense of proportion.

Now on this -- on some of these other things -- what we did talk about part of it I was saying -- we talked about the fact practically that there were no strikes at present. Secondly, that labor has agreed not to strike, and that we have machinery -- now that is terribly important -- fairly new machinery -- we have been at war 90 days, and yet this present Labor Board -- I have forgotten the exact date -- was set up around December some time.

Q (interjecting) Late -- in the middle of January, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Along there, Yes. And it seems to be working pretty well.

Q Do you think, sir, then, that we don't need legislation on the question now?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, there is some legislation we might need in time, but let us -- don't let us rush things when they are going pretty well.

Q (interposing) Did you discuss ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I would rather, for example, I would rather see a few more parades in this country. I would rather have a few more bands playing.

Q Why can't we, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Why can't we?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we ought to. You can say that I believe it is time for us to wave the flag and get a little more enthusiasm into this. Now there is one thing that some delightful people think can be done. A fellow goes to work, and there are a lot of us who work day by day, and we don't work awfully hard. We sometimes get slack, and we turn out about three-quarters of what we ought to turn out, if we had a little bit more enthusiasm in our work. I think we need more enthusiasm in our work.

And incidentally, Congress can't pass a law to make a man turn out more work in a given time. That is up to the man and not the law.

Gosh, I have given you people enough to write about for a week.

(laughter)

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

MR. F. PERKINS: (interposing) Mr. President ---

Q (interposing) Nothing on the manpower case?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet.

MR. F. PERKINS: Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

MR. F. PERKINS: Are questions barred now?

Q: Everything is over.

Q: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: They all tell you "No."

MR. F. PERKINS: (continuing) I have a question dealing with one State only, that the press association men are probably interested in. Last Friday, you talked about politics a while, and the need for adjourning politics, and that you thought that your Cabinet members were obeying that doctrine. Senator Guffey, who is one of your supporters, makes the charge that Attorney General Biddle is up to his neck, I quote, in Pennsylvania politics, and he makes certain other charges along that line. Would you care to comment on what Senator Guffey has to say?

THE PRESIDENT: Cy (Fred Perkins), I can't comment on any of those things, because I don't know. I haven't got the foggiest idea. I think he is in -- from Pennsylvania, and I think Biddle is too.

Q: Mr. President, I think that would be cleared up very quickly if you would tell us whether you have a candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q: Have you a candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Don't know anything about it.

(Notebooks VII-PC - page 184-192, and  
VIII-PC - page 1 to 12 -- JR)

CONFIDENTIAL  
Press Conference #813  
Executive Office of the President  
March 20, 1942 -- 10.55 A.M., E.W.T.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have something you were asking about. I just got a telegram this morning, from Mr. (George) McNear, president of the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad, saying that he forwarded by air mail a letter to me last night. And it hasn't come in yet -- to be in shortly.

And I signed this morning a Proclamation for Army Day -- April 6. Remember last fall we -- we brought into Navy Day -- we brought all the Armed Forces in. And this Army Day will bring all the Armed Forces in also. And Steve (Early) will give you a copy of it. And I think I may boil it down this afternoon and have some short statement, perhaps a little less formal than the Proclamation.

Wayne Coy suggests that I say a word about a thing that last August I issued a Proclamation on, asking an intensified campaign against accidents, and especially the campaign that is being directed by the National Safety Council. They are now taking an active lead in that work.

They call attention, very properly, to the very large number of people in work of all kinds that are being laid up -- hurt -- by industrial accidents. Of course it is perfectly obvious that when you bring in a great many -- good many millions of people into work which they have never done before, you are bound to have an increase in industrial accidents.

The increase in 1941 over 1940 was five percent. Well, that is understandable, but we want to cut down on that all we possibly can

because of the total number of man-hours and man-days that are lost through industrial accidents of various kinds. And we need more care on the part of the worker, and more care on the part of the company in putting safety devices onto machine tools of various kinds. The total number of the -- of man-days a year that are lost through industrial accidents is very, very high. This brochure that they are getting out says that one out of every 14 persons suffered a disabling injury of some kind. That doesn't mean permanent disablement.

I was -- I think I was telling you, by way of a little comparison the other day, the number of people who suffer from common colds and lose working hours and working days. I was way low. If you take it in the -- from the larger point of view, the real figures -- including in common colds all kinds of respiratory troubles all the way to pneumonia -- about 160 million man-days were lost a year. That again, I wish we could cut down on. The total number of hours lost through strikes is about 30 million, so that is a good deal higher than what I said the other day.

Q This is man-hours, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Man-days.

Q Man-days?

THE PRESIDENT: Man-days.

Q What was the figure again, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: About 160 -- all kinds of respiratory troubles, which would include the common cold, because most of them start with the common cold. About 160.

Q Mr. President, could you give us the number of man-days due to industrial accidents?

THE PRESIDENT: I have -- wait a minute -- see if I can find it here. 460 million.

Q In 1941?

Q Per year?

THE PRESIDENT: In 1941. What?

Q Man-days?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes -- productive man-days were lost. Well, that is 460 million from industrial accidents, and about 160 million from colds and respiratory diseases, and about 30 million from strikes.

Q Are those included in the 460?

THE PRESIDENT: What? No. Oh, No.

Q Not in that 460. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: And there are some other pretty startling figures in here.

I may be breaking this before they are ready to give it out, but it's all right. 101,500 people were killed. 350,000 were permanently disabled.

Q Is that in 1941?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That is industrial accidents only. And industrial accidents were the first cause of death among all males from 21 to 44 years of age. 11 persons were killed and 40 were permanently disabled by accidents, every hour.

Q What was that last figure again, Mr. President?

MR. EARLY: (interjecting) 11 were killed and ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) 11 were killed and 40 permanently disabled by accidents every hour. It is something that is -- that is pretty serious. And I hope if everybody thinks about it, it may be improved. Very largely a question of not letting your mind wander off to other things

when you are crossing the street -- things like that.

Q Is there any great breakdown, Mr. President, as between defense and non-defense industries?

THE PRESIDENT: No. That's the whole thing. That's the whole country. I suppose it probably would be about the same average, roughly.

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, now, I had -- Oh, if you want any more of that stuff to get sufficient detail -- Donald Nelson wrote me a letter in which he pointed out the average hours worked per man per week.

Here are a lot of things -- don't know whether you want any of them: Blast furnaces 39.8, that being 4 shifts per day to keep the blast furnaces running right straight through. Foundry and machine shop products 46.9 hours. Electrical machinery 45.4 hours. Smelting and refining of copper, lead and zinc 39.6. That is another one that is on a 4 -- 4-shift basis, because you keep the smelter running right along -- don't let it cool off. Brass, bronze and copper products 46.1. Aluminum manufactures 45.9. Machine tools 55 hours. Aircraft frames 48.7. Shipbuilding 48.2. Explosives 44.9. Engines of all kinds, turbines, airplane engines, etcetera. 51.1.

And then on the second page he has another column there that takes individual plants. In aluminum, for instance, one plant 58.2. Ammunition 66.1. I don't believe you want all this -- they are way up in the sixties. In one plant of machine tools men are working 77 hours a week, which from the human point of view I would say was a bit too much. I don't believe any of us work 77 hours a week.

Q Are those figures current, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Yes, right up to date -- February. It is the February survey.

Q Yes.

Q Mr. President, have you heard about the Bethlehem shipyards in San Francisco, where all the men want to work free on a Sunday?

THE PRESIDENT: I only heard about it ten minutes ago, and I think it is a grand thing.

Q They are circulating petitions.

THE PRESIDENT: I think Mr. -- Mr. -- Admiral Vickery and Mr. Nelson -- several people have already commended them for it.

Q Mr. President, have you any comment to make on Mr. Wilson's (C.E. Wilson, president of General Motors) suggestion that General Motors labor contract negotiations be held with reporters present so that the public can be informed?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got any comment. I never heard of it.

Q It was in all the papers this morning.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is anything else in here, except details. I think that's all I have got.

Q Would you care to draw any conclusion from those figures, sir?

(the President's reply was negative)

Q Mr. President, there have been two stories from Australia, I believe, about General MacArthur's general plans for an offensive, or offensive action, and relief of the Philippines perhaps. Is there anything you could say that would not transgress the strategic bounds on that problem?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except to say that of course we are doing everything that we possibly can, and others. Once more it's the little old lesson in geography. In getting anything from the United States out there it takes an awfully long time. And as you all know, in the whole world there is a very great shortage of shipping. Every effort is being made.

I thought you were going to ask me about how he got out. Well, we had a few people in for supper the other night, and one charming lady -- this was the day that it had been announced that Douglas MacArthur had got there -- and she said, "Oh, Mr. President, tell me how he got there."

So I told her just how he got there, and she really believed it!  
(laughter)

I told her that he had taken a rowboat, which was the only safe way, had disguised himself as a Filipino fisherman, and had passed right by -- almost right alongside a lot of Jap warships, and destroyers, and submarines, and everything else, and they had not suspected that it was Douglas MacArthur at all. He had rowed all the way down there --  
(laughter) -- right past the Japs. Perfectly simple. It was only a matter of 25 hundred miles. And I think that several people at the table believed it. (more laughter)

MR. EARLY: There's the rumor factory.

THE PRESIDENT: Steve says, "There's the rumor factory." (loud laughter)

There is one thing I will tell you -- I was trying to think of something to tell you. I will have to tell you off the record. It is an awfully difficult problem, as you know, the fact that we are such a long ways off, and that we are apt to get confusing official announcements. And I don't blame -- I heard in the last couple of days two or three of the commentators on the air, and they were dead right -- absolutely dead right. They were complaining that the accounts that were given out about naval battles in Australia didn't always gibe with ours. Well, that is perfectly understandable and it will continue, because where you have joint operations you have all kinds of problems as to

how to announce a thing.

Suppose a plane -- which I think is a simple example -- suppose a plane very seriously damages a -- Oh, what? -- a cruiser in an air attack at a certain point, and they see a fire -- well, I am not talking about any specific case whatsoever -- and they report that they have got the cruiser. Well, the cruiser may put the fire out in the course of the next few hours, or may run into shallow waters and get beached with a couple of feet of water under her keel, apparently still above the surface. A little while later along comes another airplane and sees the cruiser is still above water, and bombs her and sinks her.

Now it is a perfectly natural and logical thing for that -- because of the distance and everything -- to get reported as two cruisers. Actually it is only one cruiser. And so you will have -- as you had before -- you will have actual conflicts on the actual number of ships that were sunk. One pilot in a plane may report a ship was probably sunk, and another pilot seeing the same ship may report it as damaged.

Well, it is awfully hard in time of war to know just exactly what damage you have done to the other fellow, so we might as well make up our minds that these reports are as accurate as they can be made under the circumstances of reporting an action that you have been in, having seen it -- two or three different people -- from different angles. So all we can do is to ask the indulgence of you people and of the country. We are doing the best we can. I suppose that's the easiest way of putting it.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what the men -- 44 to 65 -- who register next month will be put to doing. Do you have any plans for them?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I wouldn't know enough about it to answer the

question at this time. You had better go over and ask General Hershey.

And I think that's the easiest way.

Q General Hershey says he doesn't know. (laughter) He referred us to the White House.

THE PRESIDENT: Ask him to find out.

Also, I saw -- I think it was Steve (Early) said that I wasn't going to register. I am.

MR. EARLY: (interjecting) I didn't say anything about it.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Somebody carried it this morning. Well, I am going to register.

Q Aren't you already in, as Commander in Chief?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That's all right. Take on another job. (laughter)

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I have got plenty of time these days.

Q Mr. President, does your proclaiming the new registration day mean that you are now ready to proceed with some sort of plan for systematic allocation of labor to war industries?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no.

Q How long, sir, do you think that would be before ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I haven't got the faintest idea. You see the point of the thing is this: that at the present time, and probably until next fall, we are getting sufficient people for the jobs of many, many characters to carry on the addition to the work. I am inclined to think that by fall there will be a number of shortages.

Q At -- at that time, Mr. President, you will need then some machinery under which you can make an orderly and efficient transfer of those men to

those jobs, will you not, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it depends, of course -- everybody loves new machinery.

Maybe we could build up the old machinery. I don't know.

Q You mean Selective Service?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I don't know.

Q (interposing) Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) The main point is to get the men. The kind of machinery is probably the least important.

Q Mr. President, do you care to discuss the situation on Capitol Hill, with regard to legislation on the 40-hour week?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I have no more ideas. I have probably far less ideas about legislation than you.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.