

CONFIDENTIAL AND OFF THE RECORD
Press Conference #858
Executive Office of the President
November 6, 1942 -- (approx.) 11.20 AM, E.W.T.

(This Press Conference was held especially for editors of business magazines and papers. All present were introduced individually to the President by Paul Wooton of The White House Correspondents' Association, the President remarking on Mr. Wooton's ability to remember nearly all the names of the 40 or so he introduced)

THE PRESIDENT: It's good to see you all.

MR. PAUL WOOTON: We have got all the business editors here.

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, we are still doing business! (laughter)

MR. PAUL WOOTON: Still doing business.

I just wanted to mention to you, Mr. President, that this group is manning some very important channels of communication. They reach these channels of communication in every industry, every plant, and every business establishment in the country; and few realize that the influence of their papers extends beyond their 4 million readers. From producers the influence of these publications rather fans out to wholesalers and retailers, and other channels, to the ultimate consumer. And these papers, I am sure, have done a lot to intensify the battle of production. They have made the work of the Price Administration easier. They have helped put rationing on a workable basis, and they have helped get in the scrap, because industry, as you know, is one of the largest sources of scrap.

Their greatest contribution, however, has been in keeping producers advised as to improved practices. All of the shortcuts that are being developed are promptly passed on to industry. And perhaps we can help

with some problem with which you may be wrestling at this time.

But there are just a couple of questions that possibly you want to comment on, because they provide timely material for editorials, if you want to tell them what you visualize in the economic stabilization plan; and since we are here a good deal about the manpower problem today. And we would like to ask you as to the power to control manpower, if it does not exist already, or do we have to wait and go through the throes of political debates on that subject?

We throw those out to you to comment on, if you will. Or if you don't want to, that is all right; but they have to write a lot of editorials.

THE PRESIDENT: Were you people in here at the Press Conference?

MR. PAUL WOOTON: No, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I wish you had been, because we touched on some things that I would like to -- if you weren't here, I will repeat a bit.

On this question of manpower, which we are all thinking about a lot, I said to the gang -- as we call them -- I said don't, in this war, don't over-emphasize the importance of things; try to get it on the basis of understatement instead of overstatement. Now that is absolutely true. And I illustrated it by using this British victory in Egypt. I said, "I read a headline the other day which talked about a decisive victory." I said, "Leave out the word 'decisive' -- that's overstatement." Three separate times before the British have had the Germans and the Italians on the run, and three separate times before, after they had got them on the run, they turned around and the British got on the run. Therefore, it's a grand victory, but nobody knows yet whether it's a decisive victory. Play it up as a victory, but don't claim that it is the winning of the war.

Now the same thing about manpower. I told them I didn't know. What

are we going to do about manpower? The -- I said something that some of you editors write -- it isn't aimed at you, it's aimed at everybody -- the general idea that the manpower problem in this country -- man and womanpower -- is a great emergency at the present time.

Now I don't know any plant that is shut down today because of lack of manpower. I am talking about today. Now we are going to have a manpower problem -- womanpower problem -- in this country during the course of 1943. We all know that. But today it isn't one of those great crises that we have got to meet -- bang! -- like when all the banks closed. We have got enough man and womanpower today. We have got to get 4 or 5 million people into industry during the coming year. In addition to that, we probably have ^{got} to take a couple of million more men into the Army and Navy. Well, that means 6 or 7 million more people. And then I said to them, not -- don't overstate; that's the first thing. And at the same time you can point out that there are a few emergencies, and there are going to be more, probably, but at the present time there are very few emergencies.

There is an emergency in the dairy industry -- now that is true -- because of the lack of help, especially in the dairy regions, in the turning out of dairy production. Dairy farmers are finding it very difficult to keep as many cows during this coming year. And you have to think ahead with cows, because it takes some time to produce a milking cow. (laughter) We all know that -- a couple of years. And outside of that, Agriculture even is not in very -- in a very bad way.

And somebody said at the Press Conference, "What about Southern California?" Well, that's not a problem of manpower. It's a problem of getting the owners of -- the producers of long staple cotton, which is a very small industry in this country compared to other industries --

has nothing to do with ordinary cotton -- it's a specialty; and they are having some kind of a wage row down there, as to what they are going to pay Mexican labor that has been brought across the border. There is plenty of it. It's entirely a wage problem between the people of Imperial Valley and a few places in Arizona, and these Mexican laborers who are coming in under an agreement with Mexico.

Then, using that as an illustration, I have come to the conclusion -- you read a big headline about it. In other words, it's making too many old -- I have talked to you all about it before -- it's making the 5 percent of trouble look like 95 percent of trouble. You all understand that. We all have 5 percent of trouble. We have it in the -- in every profession in the world. We have 5 percent -- I happen to be a lawyer -- of lawyers who are crooked as Hell. (laughter) And almost -- in almost every walk of life you have a percentage of people who will rock the boat, or steal, or do something which is contrary to the public interest; but it doesn't mean that 95% are.

Now I -- I have been studying this manpower thing for literally months, and I don't know the answer. Now that is a terrible thing to say. I couldn't write an editorial on it, although I probably have studied it as much as anybody in this country. Because we are all after the same objective, which is to have enough manpower and womanpower. Now how to put it all together, whether we should have legislation on it, I don't yet know; and I am sure none of you know. You have bright ideas. Oh, I have had 8 or 10 very bright ideas in the past week, but I haven't accepted any of my own bright ideas. (laughter) Now that -- that -- that is perfectly true. It's a difficult problem.

And I have been working along -- I think you can use this -- I have

been working a little bit along this line. We have got to have young, fit men in the Army. And it is going to hurt certain industries. In one of the plants I was at, I saw a young fellow on a machine who was the foreman over about 25 or 30 machines. Well, he was damn good; he was a natural-born leader. That is why he had been made a foreman. Well, he was about 28 years old, and had the qualities of leadership. And the question was, of course, whether he ought to -- he hadn't married, with no dependents -- whether he ought to be in the Army, if you can find somebody to take his place.

Now the problem is for a draft board. Remember that these draft boards are all unpaid. They are doing a very, very grand job -- patriotic duty. They have always got it in the front of their heads, "We have got to have the best army in the world."

Now there is a fellow who, if he were in the Army, would get to be a top sergeant in a few months. He has got the qualities of leadership; he is good. He really would be better in that job than as a foreman over 25 or 30 machines, if we can find a replacement for him. Now that means cooperation with the company that is running that plant, saying to them, "Now there's a fellow who obviously ought to be in the Army. Will you scratch around and try to find somebody -- train somebody to take his place?" It comes down so much to the individual case that you can't generalize on it.

Now I went -- on this same trip -- I went to a camp where they had a special little group of 800 men. Well, I took a look at them -- they were all lined up -- and I was just looking at figures. Suppose they lined you people up, or me! -- (laughter) -- we would look like Hell! -- (more laughter) -- put us in uniform. All right. Now it's that type called a "postural defect," which is a polite term for a big belly.

(more laughter)

And then there was a group of fellows in there who were what I would call "adenoid" cases. In other words -- (and here the President mumbled his words to demonstrate, amid much laughter) -- their mouths opening. And you can cure it sometimes by yelling at a fellow to keep his mouth shut and hold his head back. Sometimes you have to remove his adenoids. (laughter)

Then there were a lot of cases -- one of the most serious things is the draft boards that have taken men over 35, up to 42 and 43, who had led sedentary lives, and we put them to work (doing) setting-up exercises when they first got them to camp -- (who had) hernia. Now that is an amazing disease. (laughter) We don't think about hernia an awful lot, and yet hernia has been one of the great problems in the Army. Now probably those fellows -- some of them can be corrected by giving them a nice, free, hernia operation at the expense of the Government. Or they ought to be sent back to a machine, because a fellow working on the average machine in the factory today -- he can have 10 hernias and never know it; he is all right. (more laughter) Well, it comes down to -- to the actual administration of the individual cases.

Well, on the -- the third thing on the trip I want to tell you about is women. My Lord, they are working perfectly grand. Now whether we like it or not, the big reservoir of manpower in this country is the women; there is no question about it. There is a prejudice against them in some places. We have got to get over that. There are any number of jobs that women can do. If you have a shortage of men, Q.E.D., go to the reservoir of women. You can't just create men at the expense of the Army.

And I am thinking -- as I told you, I haven't decided anything --

but I have been thinking along the lines of getting from Congress a law, calling on the compulsory registration of women. Now those crooked papers, when I said this a week ago, came out with headlines, "President To Ask For Compulsory Draft Of Women." Of course that's a lie. I was very careful. I told the Press, "Now don't say 'draft of women.'" But I think we may be able to get by with it -- but I am not at all sure -- for a law, for a compulsory draft of women between 18 and 65.

Now what happens? The -- say the Employment Service in a given locality -- Poughkeepsie, N. Y. -- they want a hundred women within -- to work within 50 miles on machine tools? Right. What do they do? They have got the list in each district. They have got the cards -- the individual cards in each district. And the card will tell where the woman lives, what she knows, what she has done with her hands, does she want to work, does she want to work at home -- because so many women have to live at home -- or would she take work 10 or 25 or 50 miles away so that you won't have too much disturbance in sending people from New York to California; use the local labor supplies as much as you can.

Now the thought is that if we can get this registration -- this list, sending a questionnaire to every woman on the list, that we will be able to find lots and lots of women all around the country. I know -- I don't know hundreds, I know of hundreds of girls who want to help more greatly in the war than they are doing now. They say, "Where will I help?" I don't know. Now this gives them the chance.

Take the little town of Hyde Park. I know 4 or 5 girls that are keen to do something besides belonging -- besides belonging to the local civilian defense agencies, which of course is merely registration -- warden stuff. They want to work. They don't know where to go to find

out. Now I think we can get an awful lot of women in that way. What the numbers are nobody will know until we try. And do as little regimenting as possible.

Now whether it should be done -- another problem -- by the draft board or somebody else, we have got two or three different schools of thought. These draft boards -- remember they are unpaid -- they are people in professions and businesses. As it is, they can't devote all their days to it; they do the best they can. And my first thought was to give them the duty of checking up the manpower problem for civilian use, as well as for the Army. Well, the answer comes back that these poor draft board people just can't do it. They are doing a swell job today. So I am going on the possibility of another draft board, which would sit almost in the same room -- the next room to the Army draft board, and handle all of the civilian cases.

Then comes the question of who -- who the dissemination of these 4 or 5 million additional workers -- who will be in charge of that. Well, we have got to think of the Employment Services, doing on the whole -- in the country as a whole -- a pretty good job. Well, I hate the idea of starting some new Government department or agency to take care of it. And I incline to the general idea that the Employment Service, which -- where the different States and the Federal Government have always been working together, that they should handle this, in very close touch with Hershey's Selective Service Board. Well, as I say, I haven't checked it.

Now there is one other thing that I wanted to mention, and that is this question of longer hours. One of the boys this morning asked me if I knew anything about somebody's bill in Congress to make people work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. Well, I said, the very simple

answer is this: we all know from studies that have been made by business, and -- Oh, what? -- commercial -- civilian groups -- that type of thing -- in England and in Germany, and over here -- that if I got a plant, say, that is working 48 hours a week, and when I have got an emergency order and I would jump it to 56 hours a week, that I will get, for a few weeks, a greatly increased production. That is true. But unfortunately the -- the production gets up to a couple of weeks, then starts to slide off again. We have so many illustrations in the past, starting with the World War, where longer hours mean increased production only for a certain length of time.

Then I gave them the illustration of what isn't "proofable," but it seems to be pretty good "dope" from our Intelligence Services in regard to Germany. Last spring -- I think it was April -- Hitler was going to make a great final push this past summer -- try to finish up Russia, and in a few months. And therefore he needed an awful lot more equipment of various kinds -- planes and tanks and ammunition and guns, and so forth and so on -- the whole list. So they started in -- in, I think it was in April. They had been working on about a 60-hour week in these -- not all industry in Germany but in the -- in the crucial munitions industries. And starting in April, they speeded up to a minimum of 70 hours a week in many of these plants; in some plants, by actual records of working in these plants, up to a hundred hours a week, where they had to get the stuff out. All right.

And the production of war materials in Germany jumped very, very greatly, and got to a peak in June. And then, still running this long week, it started to slide off; and it has been sliding off ever since. The production per man or per woman today is down to the production of a 56-hour week.

Now the World War figures -- the First World War figures, both England and here -- show that after the first jump and then the sliding down hill, the 56-hour week -- in England and here -- does not produce any more than a 48-hour week. Now there you are. I mean -- I am simply quoting experts -- (laughter) -- flocks of them -- that have been studying this thing.

And 48 hours seems to me to be in most industries -- of course industries vary -- a pretty good maximum for steady month in, month out production, giving you at the end of the year certainly as much as 56 hours, and at cheaper cost, and certainly more than anything over -- more production than anything over 56 hours a week.

Now I mean I am not -- I am not asking why it is, and so forth, but the actual record does seem to check with that statement that 48 hours is about right for maximum permanent production. I thought that would interest you as just being a slant on what we have been figuring on.

And the manpower thing -- I don't know -- I have no idea how it is going to work out in detail. They asked me when I would have something on it. I said I haven't got the foggiest idea but probably -- Oh, I think it will be within the next few weeks that we will have something. I don't want -- I think we all feel -- I don't want to take the fellow that runs the garage in Hyde Park, who is a fair mechanic -- I don't want to send him a notice that he is to go out to Kaiser's shipyard at Portland, Oregon. I -- I hate the idea, fundamentally. It does mean regimenting all of our American life.

Now we can -- if we can -- if we need people for Kaiser's shipyard in Oregon, like the man who runs the garage, I think we can come pretty close to getting them by volunteering -- pretty close to it. I would

rather try that method first than a regimenting method, and I think all of you would too. It's a beautiful idea to be able to have a law that takes any human being in this country and tells him where to go and what to do. I think we can win the war without doing that. At least, let's try. If it doesn't work, we may have to go further. But on the whole I am very much pleased with everything. I think things are working along, on the whole, pretty well.

I do -- I do think that we have all got to look forward to the elimination of certain -- Oh, I suppose the simplest word is luxuries. Somebody asked me -- an old friend of mine of the Press, Jim Wright of Buffalo, did I have any example of things that were unnecessary that I had seen in window-shopping one day, when I went along F Street? I said, "Yes, Jim, I will give you a very good idea." I said, "For instance, you take yourself and me. There's a window down there on F Street that is full of just one article, and I don't think either you or I could regard that article as anything but a -- a luxury, something that would not be necessary for us to have." And of course everybody got all keyed up. Jim said, "What was it, Mr. President?" I said, "It was baby carriages." (laughter)

So I think most of the -- a lot of the things that are unnecessary -- luxuries -- more and more we will have to curtail in their production. But after all it -- it means -- it's the same idea as a baby carriage factory. We can turn -- we can have it turn out something to do. It doesn't mean that the place has got to close. We would keep it open if we possibly can.

I have got another problem that you can all be thinking about: small business. Gosh! I have had -- I don't know, what? -- I think we are on a third experiment with small business at the present time,

and it's terribly hard.

I have got up in Poughkeepsie -- don't use this in print -- he's an awfully nice fellow, I don't think he wants his name in the paper -- he has got an old sash and blind works that employs 30 first-class carpenters. I think they were organized by Henry Lumb's grandfather about 1840 some. And it's an old, small, permanent concern.

Well, there is no building going on there -- private building -- and they have no more orders. I tried to get them some orders. Almost impossible, because the W.P.B. and the Army and Navy, they asked for bids on cots, and wooden tables, and simple chairs, and medicine cases for the wall, and things like that, which Henry Lumb's factory could turn out. What happens? The bids come in and of course some very, very big company like -- what? -- Simmons Bed -- can under-bid this little concern of 30 -- 30 people in the city of Poughkeepsie.

Now what do we do about it? I don't know. Of course we are trying to -- without paying too much -- we are trying to give the little fellow a chance, even if we pay him more than we pay Simmons Bed. He can't afford to make it at the Simmons Bed price. Now what do we do? Theoretically Government wants to get things as cheaply as they can, and yet we are putting him out of business.

And we are trying to -- to, as I say, give a fellow like Lumb in Poughkeepsie a bid -- a price that he can at least break even on, even if he doesn't make a profit; and he is perfectly willing to do that. And probably that would only give 4 -- 4 or 5 percent over the lowest bidder. That, as you know, is a terribly difficult thing to work against. I am honestly trying -- I have tried 4 or 5 different people on it, and we haven't made a big success of it; and I don't know how to do it.

And also, as you know, the -- this whole war thing is -- I am getting the best brains of business that I can get down here. My God, the people that they have brought down here that are Roosevelt-hating -- (laughter) -- died-in-the-wool, old-fashioned Republicans! They have come to me and said, "Would you mind very much if I got so and so?" I said, "No, go ahead. I am not telling you whom to employ." Now we have got W.P.B. (War Production Board), which is -- Oh, let's put it this way -- it's 100 percent Republican. (laughter) That's right. That's fine. And the people there are hiring their own choice. Now that's an interesting fact. And I haven't said "No" yet.

I think you know the story about Knudsen, who came in one day. He was submitting lists to me from time to time, and he brought in a list of 20 names of big business men, important business men. And I looked it over; I knew pretty well who they were. And I said, "Bill!" I said, "Look! Something got by you. There's a Democrat there." And he said, "Oh, No, Mr. President. There's no Democrat there. He was nominally." I said, "Well, what about that fellow there? He comes from Atlanta, Georgia." "Oh," says Bill, "he galls himself a Demograt but -- but he voted for Villkie!" (laughter)

So you -- you business people, you are running the show now. That is literally true. And there hasn't been a name in the W.P.B., or any of these -- of these organizations, where there is one man put in -- not one, and there are thousands and thousands of them -- because of political reasons -- not one. I will give you a challenge to point one out. Now that is pretty good.

"Well, it's good to see you.

MR. PAUL WOOTON: Mr. President, I am assuming that we can use these thoughts?

MR. EARLY: (to the President) Always have, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I think so, Steve.

MR. PAUL WOOTON: Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: It's good to see you.

MR. PAUL WOOTON: Certainly fine of you to see them all. It has been very helpful.

(and then to Mr. Early) Thanks, Steve.

MR. EARLY: You're welcome, Paul.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #859
Executive Office of the President
November 10, 1942 -- 4.20 P.M., E.W.T.

(Mr. Early informed the President that Mrs. Louis Howe was standing in the second row on the right, and the President looked up. Mrs. Howe waved her hand and smiled, and the President laughed and said "Hello")

MR. EARLY: (after conferring with the President again) All set.

THE PRESIDENT: Grand. Really?

MR. EARLY: All set. All set.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I just -- Steve just tells me that -- which makes me very happy -- that General (John J.) Pershing has accepted my invitation to go out to Arlington tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock.

In regard to the African operations, we have practically no news that you people don't get just about as fast as we get official news.

I do want to revert back for a minute to one thing, I don't know when it was -- quite a long while ago, when I talked somewhat at length about peaks and valleys in the conduct of the war. I think we should remember what I said at that time, that there are peaks and valleys, and especially so in -- in lay opinion. In other words, the average person is a layman -- properly -- and that we mustn't get unduly depressed over one operation, and unduly elated over another operation. So far, the expedition into Africa seems to be going well. So far, the British operation in western Egypt seems to be going well. I think we should, on all operations which are either successful

or the contrary, we should not do much -- too much prognosticating as to the ultimate results as laymen. I don't want to throw cold water on something that -- in that particular area, in that particular operation -- seems to be going well up to the present time. We can be very thankful that that is so.

I don't think I have any further news about anything.

Q Mr. President, we realize that there are certain limitations and a certain secrecy which must be maintained, but is there anything you can tell us now, on a "now it can be told" basis, about the planning over long range, and the execution of this African expedition?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I was telling two or three people this morning, which probably will -- would come (to you) second-hand; so I might as well make it first-hand. (laughter)

The inception of this particular operation goes back to about two weeks after Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) -- that is a long time ago -- at the time that I invited Mr. (Winston) Churchill and his joint staff to come over here, just before Christmas last year. It was timed for joint planning between the two of the Allied Nations that have the most military and naval force.

And we discussed at that time the desirability of an offensive. And there were various offensives considered, especially the possibility of a very large frontal attack across the English Channel. That was considered in the light, of course, of the creation of sufficient munitions, such as planes, to make it reasonably sure of success. There was also the very large factor of shipping, as to how many people could be got across from here within a given time.

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And the military and naval opinion at that time was that it would be feasible. And a good deal of work was done along that line.

The more it was studied, however, the more it became apparent that because of physical limitations, an offensive along the coast of France or Belgium probably could not be carried out with a reasonable chance of success in the year 1942. There were, I say, physical limitations -- the production of various munitions, the training of sufficient men, and the transportation of the men and the materials over to the other side.

Therefore, at the time I asked Mr. Churchill to come over here -- I think it was at the end of May or the beginning of June -- there was an issue presented in regard to an offensive; and that was whether an offensive on a very large scale, which would have been compulsory, could be conducted some time around the middle of 1943, or whether an offensive on a smaller scale, for which the same -- for which the problems of transportation and manufacture were not so great, could be started in 1942.

And at that time we surveyed the various possibilities of a -- a -- an offensive more limited in its scope. And a good many of them were dismissed, with the result that by the end of June there was general agreement on the African offensive; and by the end of July certain fundamentals of it, such as points of attack, numbers involved, and shipping problems -- the manufacturing problems -- were all determined on.

And it was about that particular time -- perhaps a little bit later -- that people were beginning to talk about a second front.

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Actually, the second front had already been determined on by the two governments. By the end of August the approximate date of the attack was decided on.

And so in succeeding months both Mr. Churchill and I have had to sit quietly and take with a smile, or perhaps you might say take it on the chin -- (laughter) -- as to what all the ignorant outsiders were demanding.

And I discovered way back a year ago -- nearly a year ago, a very simple fact, and that was that in a world war neither Mr. Churchill nor I could walk down the street and go into a department store and purchase and walk out with a second front. I learned it a long time ago -- many months. I found that a second front was tailor-made -- custom-built. It was an article, no matter where it was situated in any part of the world, they had to decide what kind of a suit of clothes you wanted, and then take it to the expert clothes-makers and not get it delivered until several months had passed.

I thought that most people would have discovered that fact just the way I did. Well, now they have.

And I suppose that's a pretty good rule of all wars. You can throw an expedition together to go somewhere without planning, and in a very rare instance it might work, if you had all the luck on your side, and the other fellow made all the mistakes and you didn't make any. But after all, where hundreds of thousands of lives are involved, we do try to conduct war operations by what is known as a reasonable chance of success. That involves a great deal of study, a great deal of coordination, a great deal of preparation of all

kinds, starting literally in the -- in the -- in the fields and in the mines. It means tying it in with our other operations in every part of the world. It means that you have to find out how much you have got all told in the war of men and munitions and planes and guns, and see whether you have to do any robbing of "Peter" to pay "Paul"; that in order to carry out the one given objective, whether you can maintain the other objectives, or whether you would be forced to abandon some of the other objectives.

And of course -- I am talking just in words of one syllable -- I have acquired that, I think, during this past year or more, that viewpoint -- because it's really words of one syllable -- you can't conduct at top speed objectives all over the world where you would like to, because of all kinds of things: the totals of production, the totals of man -- trained manpower, not untrained manpower. And finally, the problem of getting the man and the weapon to the place where he will fight the enemy.

And it comes back to the fact that you can't find a second offensive in a department store, ready-made.

And so we ordered an offensive about 4 months ago, and it has taken that length of time to actually put it into effect. And we hope it is going to work.

I don't know any easier way of putting it than that.

Q Mr. President, could you fit in the Morocco agreement to this scheme?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Could you fit in the Morocco agreement into this picture for us, how it goes in?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think that one wants to give away things that come very close to a military secret, except this: that I think you can assume that our principal fighting allies have been taken into consultation before anything was done whatsoever. I don't think you could get any trouble out of it.

(here Mr. Early interposed and whispered to the President)

Steve said I said "ignorant outsiders." Well, I didn't mean it in a derogatory way, because it will take -- you can take back the word "ignorant." What I meant was that on a detailed military thing no outsider is cognizant of -- put it in reverse English -- cognizant. (laughter) Therefore, in that sense, they are ignorant of detailed military facts, that's all.

Q Mr. President, have you received as yet any reply from the authorities in Tunisia about your request that we be allowed to pass through Tunisia with troops?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of. I don't think any has come.

Q Sir, could you tell us the position of Admiral (Jean Francois) Darlan in Algeria?

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

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- I really honestly don't know. All I have got is just what you have had in the press.

Q That he has apparently ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- been captured?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. That's all I know. I haven't heard whether he has.

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You see, on the mechanics of this, you have got to remember all of you boys have got perfectly good representatives down there with the Army; and they have got nothing else to do except to see things and write them, and get it onto the cable and the radio. Then, you know, I think most of those boys are working out of London offices -- I think most of them are -- and they are able to get the stuff to London, and London shoots it over to us. Whereas on the -- on the military side, or the naval side, they are -- they are doing a lot of fighting. And as my Chief of Staff said to me the other day, "Any scrap I have ever been in, when I was dodging bullets I wasn't writing dispatches." So we get stuff a great deal later than the press does. And it's a question -- like you asked about Darlan. We haven't had a thing on it; not a thing.

MR. TOM REYNOLDS: Mr. President, in your chronology there was one important event which wasn't mentioned. Were the final decisions clinched during the visit of Mr. (Harry) Hopkins, and (Steve) Early, and --- (laughter)

MR. EARLY: (laughing) Oh!

MR. TOM REYNOLDS: (continuing) Chief of Staff ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I think Steve probably -- that Steve did the whole thing. (much laughter)

MR. TOM REYNOLDS: Well, excluding Mr. Early ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) It wasn't needed. This was a developing thing -- absolutely developing thing. But, in other words, where do you draw -- where do you draw the line? You see, Tom, the difficulty is where do you draw the line as the point of departure? Well,

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the point of departure in one sense was last January, after Mr. Churchill got through here. The next was another step in June. Another step was conversations between June and Steve's visit in July. And then after that there were several steps that were handled partly in person and partly by cable, until the thing got "buttoned up" -- using the worst expression I can use -- somewhere around the end of July. That was the final determination, not merely the policy; that went much further back. Not merely on location; that went much further back. Not merely on general things, like general scope. But it actually got down to that time to details.

Q Mr. President, ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, isn't Steve's visit still a military secret?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Isn't Steve's visit still a military secret?

THE PRESIDENT: My Lord, I had forgotten that! (laughter)

MR. EARLY: (interposing) No. It was announced from Hyde Park.

THE PRESIDENT: Announced at Hyde Park.

Q Oh.

Q Still on this chronology, one other point, sir. Is there -- would it be in the "wrong of propriety" to orient the events at Dieppe too into these series of events?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Everything. All the actions, and all around the world -- China.

Q Was the decision that it would be physically impossible because of

physical limitations to launch a widespread offensive against the Channel made before or after Dieppe? According to your chronology it would have been made before, is that not right?

THE PRESIDENT: As I said, a study of a major offensive against the Channel would of necessity put the date into next year.

Q Mr. President, ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, the decision on the North African offensive, that is, as to place and preparation, not as to precise time, had been made when Mr. Churchill flew to Moscow for his talk with Mr. (Josef) Stalin?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, Yes. Oh, Yes.

Q Mr. President, one point. I understood you to say that the dates were selected at the end of August, and the time at the end of July. Would you make sure what that was ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No. The details you might call -- Oh I suppose a good example is places of landing, general totals of units. That was decided on around the end of July. And the decision on the date came about a month later.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us why the date was put after election?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Jimmie Byrnes (Economic Stabilization Director) made a very wise remark today -- one of those curious anomalies. The date was set without anybody thinking about election. But Jimmie said today, if we had really been smart we would have gone back to the fact that I had shifted Thanksgiving Day one week ahead, and why, therefore, didn't I shift the election date to one week

later? (laughter)

Q Mr. President, getting away from the immediate war theaters for a moment, are you -- are you and Mr. (Basil) O'Connor decided as yet upon whether your regular birthday parties will be held next January?

THE PRESIDENT: It's all decided, and I can't tell you because he is handling the release. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, you spoke of planning these offensives as one does custom-made clothes. Could you tell us whether you are giving any consideration to the possibility of a new suit of spring clothes for Mussolini? (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: A new what?

Q A new suit of spring clothing for Mussolini? (much laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you leave this off the record: by that time he might not have any clothes on at all! (loud laughter)

Q Couldn't we even use that?

THE PRESIDENT: That's all off the record. But they do tell me that he has only got a shirt on now! (more loud laughter)

Q Mr. President, are there any details of the planning you can give us, such as when you made your records, and the planning that went into that -- the French language broadcast? There are some very interesting stories going around on that.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I think they are essentially true. The -- the messages to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Morocco, and His Highness the Bey of Tunis, and -- what was it? -- the Governor-General of -- the Governor of Algiers, I think I did those about -- and signed them -- about 3 weeks ago -- just about -- maybe a little

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more -- perhaps nearly a month ago. And then about a few days -- two or three days later I did the phonograph message in the Cabinet room one day. Even Steve wasn't there. (laughter) But then he doesn't speak French, so it was all right. (more laughter) Admiral Leahy and Captain McCrea, and two special operators were in there and did the transcription.

Q Mr. President, you spoke of the choice between a limited offensive now and a larger offensive next summer. Are the limiting factors necessarily still operating to the same extent that they were?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No. In other words, I don't think you need to assume that the total of prospective offensive operations has been limited in any way by this African expedition.

Q Well, I was wondering if it might not open up additional possibilities, that is, through the release of ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Well, as I was saying to the State Department -- Secretary of State (Cordell Hull) -- or rather as he was saying to me just now, "Before we talk about the future let's get firmly established in Africa."

Q Well, I just meant as part of the war of nerves.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q I just meant as part of the war of nerves.

THE PRESIDENT: Of nerves. Well, I think this has worked pretty well as a sample of the war of nerves.

Q Don't you suppose, sir, it might be all right to put your observations regarding Mr. Mussolini's wardrobe on the record?

THE PRESIDENT: (laughing) No. No.

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Q Mr. President, can you give us the reasons why the Government -- why the attorney general of Puerto Rico has been removed?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you had better ask the Attorney General of the United States.

Q That has been done, sir, and he doesn't seem inclined to tell us.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

Q (continuing) Excuse me.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes?

Q (continuing) Have you reached any decision yet on whether to transfer Selective Service over to the War Manpower Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: That is part of the manpower thing. And I have spent a lot of time on it. But as I told you all the other day, at the present time, outside of dairying, the -- there is no immediate emergency, either for legislation or action. The problems of manpower except in -- in dairying, as of the middle of November, are not -- not so emergent that we have to take action in the next week or two.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) But something undoubtedly, as I said before, something undoubtedly has got to be done during the -- during the next few weeks to take care of what will be an increasingly serious problem. You all know we have to take into the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard ---

VOICE: (interposing) Can't hear you.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- a whole lot more people. I don't know

what the actual number is -- 4 or 5 million more people. And of course that is the -- that is the first consideration: the fighting forces. And we have got to take the best of manhood into the fighting forces. But at the same time we have got to take care of the food problem, which is also very intimately connected with the winning of the war. We have to take care of an increased industrial production, because we have not yet -- as we all know -- we have not yet reached the peak of our manufacturing production. It's on the way up all the time.

Q Mr. President, you spoke of a message to the Emperor, or Sultan of Morocco. I don't recall that having been made public. Is that something new?

MR. EARLY: (to the President) It hasn't been, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: It hasn't been?

Q (interposing) Neither is ---

Q (interposing) Neither have the other two.

MR. EARLY: (continuing) We haven't got a confirmation of it down here.

THE PRESIDENT: What? Oh.

Q Can we use that, Steve, or is that off the record?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you can use the fact that they have been written, but that we have not yet got confirmation of the delivery of those messages.

Q That is to the Sultan of Morocco, is it not, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: The Emperor.

Q The Emperor.

Q Could you tell us the nature of it, sir, or is it too early for that?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say not identical but similar to the messages you have already had.

Q Mr. President, ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President, is Bill Donovan's work still a secret?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Is Bill Donovan's work still a secret?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh my, Yes. Heavens, he operates all over the world.

(laughter)

Q Mr. President, was Secretary Stimson's statement to the House Committee about a 7 million, 500 thousand man Army your decision, or is that a subject which is still under consideration in connection with the whole manpower ---

THE PRESIDENT: No. If you want it today -- you have got an awful lot of stuff -- I would just as soon tell you, in round figures. We are talking about numbers, so far as we can or need to look ahead. Now it looks probable that the fact -- that we are getting every month many tens of thousands of additional men all over the world, and that that means merely -- not merely fighting troops but it means holding of bases acquired. Therefore the Army, of course, must go up. It's now around 4 and a half million men, all told.

And the thought is that toward the end of 40 -- the end of 1943, or the early part of 1944, they going along in on an orderly basis, which is essentially the present basis, it would get up to about 7 million, 500 thousand men. Now that is well over a year ahead. And of course I hope that that will be enough, but I can't

look beyond January, 1944.

Now it means also that on this orderly month by month increase in the total of people in the Army, it means that we have got to be sure that they are equipped, that they have all of the munitions that go with numbers, because the two are integrated. Now that means a large number of people who have to be planned for ahead in civil life, to meet those munitions and equipment for 7 and a half million men which would be coming out at the same date, say January 1944, to keep pace with the orderly increase in the Army. I don't think I would prognosticate beyond that, because I couldn't do it. I have no idea.

Now in the case of the Navy, the Navy is now very nearly up to -- up to one million men. And in all probability we will have enough ships, and enough other duties coming along during the calendar year 1943, so that we could actually use a million and a half men in the Navy by the first of January, 1944. The -- I have forgotten what the exact figures are for the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard, but essentially I suppose you could add with the protective forces of other kinds another --- (to himself): 2 -- 4 -- 3 --- about 3 hundred thousand men by that date. Well, that means another half million in the Navy, and another 3 hundred thousand in the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, a total of 8 hundred thousand. Add that to 7 (million), 5 (hundred thousand) -- these are rough figures -- it means about -- well, put it down in round figures -- a million now, and another million ---

Q (interjecting) What's that? What's that, sir?

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THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) A million now -- now wait a minute now.

You have got a million. How many have you got in the Coast Guard?

Q 3 hundred thousand ---

THE PRESIDENT: (to himself) 3 hundred ---

Q (continuing) --- something like that.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. Well, how many in the Coast Guard?

(to himself): 100 to 150 (thousand). Call it a million, 4

(hundred thousand) today. Add that to 7 and a half (million).

That gives 8 (million), 9 (hundred thousand). And add 8 (hundred

thousand) to that. Well, that is a total number in the armed

forces of 9 million, 7 hundred thousand. That's the easiest way

of putting it.

Q By the end of next year?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. And beyond that I have got the faintest idea, except to express the hope that we won't have to take any more into uniform.

VOICES: Thank you, Mr. President.

MR. TOM REYNOLDS: A little copy there, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. TOM REYNOLDS: You made a few good stories. (laughter)

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #860
Executive Office of the President
November 13, 1942 -- 10.55 A.M., E.W.T.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I am afraid I have nothing. I have got a number of hens that are "setting," but they haven't laid any eggs yet.

Q Do "setting" hens lay eggs? (laughter)

(pause)

Q Mr. President, ---

Q (interposing) Mr. President -- Mr. President, did you hear Representative (Melvin J.) Maas (Republican of Minnesota)? Have you had a report on his speech last night?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Did he make a speech?

Q Quite a speech.

Q Could you comment, sir, on the report that Mr. (Bernard) Baruch is undertaking a study of manpower for you?

THE PRESIDENT: He may be doing it without my knowledge. I don't -- I don't believe so. I wouldn't -- I think it would be a poor guess.

Q Mr. President, have we received a reply yet from Generalissimo (Francisco) Franco, and from the Bey and the Resident (Commissioner) of Tunis to our messages?

THE PRESIDENT: There was one from General Franco, and I thought it had been given out.

MR. EARLY: That was Portugal.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. EARLY: That was Portugal, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I know. I knew we had got Portugal's. There is one. Ask the State Department.

Q Could you tell us anything about the nature of the Generalissimo's reply,

sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Very satisfactory. I don't know about the Bey of Tunis. The State Department may have one. I haven't. You had better ask them.

Q Is the -- Mr. President, is a food czar one of the eggs on which the hen is "setting"?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know. I am not going to tell you too much about the hens. (laughter)

MISS MAY CRAIG: Mr. President, is the Hatch Act stopping you?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MISS MAY CRAIG: Is the Hatch Act stopping you?

(laughter, and cries of "Oh, Oh" as some caught on)

THE PRESIDENT: (laughing) O, May -- May -- really!

(more laughter, and cries of "Oh, Oh" as others caught on)

MISS MAY CRAIG: (repeating for those who didn't hear) Is the Hatch Act stopping you?

Q What?

MISS MAY CRAIG: Is the Hatch Act stopping you?

Q Oh, Oh. (much laughter)

Q Mr. President, have you made any decision on your Supreme Court appointment?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet.

Q Mr. President, have you read the Truman report, advocating a 48-hour work-week?

THE PRESIDENT: Only the papers, that's all. We have got practically a 48-hour work-week now.

Q Mr. President, have you had an opportunity to sign the 18 and 19 year old draft bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think we have got it in the White House yet.

MR. EARLY: That's right, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

(pause)

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

(much laughter)

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CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #861
Executive Office of the President
November 17, 1942 -- 4.05 P.M., E.W.T.

(Mr. Early told the President that a Statement to be given to the Press would not be ready for about 10 minutes)

THE PRESIDENT: I will tell them a story for 8 or 10 minutes.

MR. GODWIN: Tell us about those chickens.

THE PRESIDENT: I will tell bed-time stories to our "young" friend here

(Earl Godwin). (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Tell us about those chickens.

THE PRESIDENT: It takes a Maine girl from a farm to know about chickens.

(Miss May Craig, who asked the question last week) (laughter)

MR. GODWIN: I got a letter about that.

(Mr. Early talked further with the President)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

(Mr. Early still talked with the President)

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

MR. GODWIN: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I think I have only got one thing here. It's a memorandum to all departments and agencies.

(reading): "I am most anxious ---"

-- Steve (Early) has got copies of this --

(continuing reading): "I am most anxious to make sure that no man should be deferred from military service by reason of his employment ---"

-- Bad grammar, Steve. Fix that up, will you --

(continuing reading): " --- in any Federal department or agency, either in Washington or in any other place.

"If any such deferment has been given to anyone within your respective jurisdiction, would you please arrange for cancellation thereof as soon as possible, and notify the Selective Service Board having jurisdiction. No further requests for deferment by reason of such employment should be made, either by the agency or by the employee.

"I am sure that in the overwhelming number of cases this action will be welcomed by the young men themselves who are involved.

"I know that in certain technical or highly scientific or specialized branches of the service, there are a few employees who by reason of unique experience are really irreplaceable by women or older men. If there are any which in your opinion fall within this category, please write to me the full details of them, so that their cases may be passed on individually."

In other words, no blanket exemptions, which I think goes for all the departments.

MR. GODWIN: That -- that runs right straight across the path of a directive --

I happen to be in that service ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

MR. GODWIN: (continuing) --- that we got today, which practically puts anybody who wants to, in the Government service, in 2-B or 3-B.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, this puts that ---

MR. GODWIN: (interjecting) You know about that?

THE PRESIDENT: It stops that.

Q Has that come out, or is that going to come out?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that has come out this afternoon. The copies were

just finished in the other room.

I don't think I have got anything else.

Q Mr. President, have you any figures as to the number of people who will be affected by this?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I guess it will be quite a lot.

MR. GODWIN: Yes.

MR. P. BRANDT: Have you had any reports on the number of deferments that have been asked?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I -- I have got it somewhere, but I don't remember, Pete.

MR. P. BRANDT: Pretty large, I know that.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, altogether too large.

Q Does this include civilian employees of the War and Navy Departments?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, Yes. Oh my, Yes.

MR. P. BRANDT: What about the young officers that are still around here?

THE PRESIDENT: I think most of them have gone too, haven't they? Well, I got a -- I got a report on them about a month ago, and directed that they be moved to happier climes, and I am sure that they would be. You say they haven't, but I will check up on it again, Pete.

Q Does it include W.P.B. (War Production Board) men?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Does it include the W.P.B. men whose connection with the Government is more or less transient?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely. There is no discrimination in favor of brains.

(laughter)

MR. GODWIN: Mr. President, there seems to be considerable clamor in Congress, and wherever automobilists are organized, against immediate nation-wide

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rationing (of gasoline). (There was) something in Congress on it the last day or two. Have you any views on it at all?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't. I am talking to Mr. (William) Jeffers about it, I think at the end of this week. I haven't heard anything further.

MR. GODWIN: What do you think the end of this week will do?

THE PRESIDENT: Talk with Jeffers.

MR. GODWIN: Oh. The end of this week. Yes, sir.

Q Mr. President, have you had any communiques from "Admiral" Maas of Minnesota? (Republican Congressman Melvin J.) (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: No. We call them "field marshals" in the Marine Corps, not admirals. (more laughter)

Q Is there anything you would care to say, Mr. President, about the naval battle (U. S. Pacific Fleet's severe defeat of the Japanese navy in the Solomons)?

THE PRESIDENT: No, except, of course, you can imagine I was very much upset hearing about poor old Dan Callaghan (Rear Admiral Daniel J., who was killed when a Japanese shell struck the bridge), who certainly did a glorious scene taking a 10-thousand-ton cruiser up against a 25 or 30-thousand-ton battleship at point-blank range.

On the whole, of course, the -- the operation -- I think that what I -- this part should be off the record, because it's based on what I told you people the other day about the Southwest Pacific operations.)

The primary objective there is to hold the present line, which runs roughly through New Guinea and Guadalcanal. And that is why I said it wasn't a -- a decisive engagement, for the reason that if we had to fall back to the next line, we could stop them there; but I hope we can hold the present line. Now this action has stopped the latest--

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the third or the fourth -- Japanese offensive against that line. The last we know is what appeared in the papers, that Japan's ships, when last seen, were proceeding in the opposite direction. Therefore, it can be called a major victory.

Q May we put the "major victory" phrase, sir, on the record?

THE PRESIDENT: I suppose so. I think that's all right.

Q Mr. President, to return to your conference with Mr. Jeffers, is there any thought -- is this conference designed to reconsider the question

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No.

Q (continuing) --- of nation-wide rationing?

THE PRESIDENT: Not a bit. I haven't seen him -- Oh, quite a long while ago -- several weeks. It's merely to have him give me the latest "dope."

Q Is there any progress on the manpower control, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Spend a lot of time on it.

Q Mr. President, is any effort being made to change or modify the anti-Jewish laws and regulations now in effect in North Africa?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That is included in the statement which Steve (Early) ought to have here in four -- three or four minutes.

MR. EARLY: It's on the way now, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: All right. I told him I would string you along and tell you some bed-time stories.

(here Mr. Early handed some papers to the President)

It is included in this:

(reading): "I have accepted (Lieut.) General (Dwight D.)

Eisenhower's political arrangements made for the time being in North Africa and Western Africa.

"I thoroughly understand and approve the feeling in the United States and Great Britain, and among all the other United Nations, that in view of the history of the past two years no permanent arrangement should be made with Admiral (Jean Francois) Darlan. People in the United Nations likewise would never understand the recognition of a reconstituting of the Vichy government in France, or in any French territory."

I am afraid I am cutting a lot of good stuff out of the feet -- from under the feet of people who don't think things through.

(continuing reading): "We are opposed to Frenchmen who support Hitler and the Axis. No one in our Army has any authority to discuss the future government of France or the French Empire.

"The future French government will be established not by any individual in metropolitan France or over-seas, but by the French people themselves, after they have been set free by the victory of the United Nations."

It's all words of one syllable stuff -- but it's powerful.

(laughter)

Q (aside) What was that?

Q Powerful.

Q Powerful.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing reading): "The present temporary arrangement in North and West Africa is only a temporary expedient, justified solely by the stress of battle.

"The present temporary arrangement has accomplished two military objectives. The first was to save American and British lives on the one hand, and French lives on the other.

"The second was the vital factor of time. The temporary arrangement has made it possible to avoid a mopping up period in Algiers and Morocco, which might have taken a month or two to consummate. Such a period would have delayed the concentration for the attack from the West on Tunis, and we hope on Tripoli.

"Every day of delay in the current operations would have enabled the Germans and Italians to build up a strong resistance, to dig in, and make a huge operation on our part essential before we could win. Here again many more lives will be saved under the present speedy offensive than if we had to delay it for a month or more.

"It will also be noted that French troops under the command of General (Henri Honore) Giraud have already been in action against the enemy in Tunisia, fighting by the side of American and British soldiers for the liberation of their country.

"Admiral Darlan's proclamation assisted in making a mopping up period unnecessary. Temporary arrangements made with Admiral Darlan apply without exception to the current local situation only."

Now this is in reply to your question:

(continuing reading): "I have requested the liberation of all persons in North Africa who have been imprisoned because they opposed the efforts of the Nazis to dominate the world; and I have asked for the abrogation of all laws and decrees inspired by Nazi governments or Nazi ideologists. Reports indicate the French of North Africa are subordinating all political questions to the formation of a common front against the common enemy."

Q.E.D! (laughter)

Q. Mr. President, is there anything to be said at this time about the position

of General (Charles) DeGaulle?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No. I wouldn't -- I wouldn't worry about it. It's all right.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what -- what bearing this has on the application of Vichy representatives -- diplomatic representatives in the United States -- their effort to become accredited to Darlan?

THE PRESIDENT: Never heard of it. Are they still here?

Q I understand so. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I thought -- I thought of putting in there, but I didn't, an old Balkan proverb, which I cannot have even attributed to me, because at the present time I don't like to call names any more than one has to. It's rather a nice old proverb of the Balkans that has, as I understand it -- has the full sanction of the Orthodox Church.

And it runs -- this is off the record -- complet -- (French for completely) -- (laughter) -- look it up in an encyclopedia of Balkan proverbs if you want to -- (more laughter) -- it runs something like this. The -- mind you, this is okayed by the Church.

It says, "My children, you are permitted in time of great danger to walk with the Devil until you have crossed the bridge."

(loud laughter)

Rather nice!

VOICES: Thank you, Mr. President.

CONFIDENTIAL
Press Conference #862
Executive Office of the President
November 20, 1942 -- 10.55 A.M., E.W.T.

(The Secretaries to the President, the Naval Aides, Administrative Assistants, et al, all adjusted themselves comfortably in their seats behind the President's desk, and waited; but nothing happened -- no newspapermen appeared. The President looked up and laughed. Notice had not been given to the outside to let them in.)

THE PRESIDENT: Will you have tea or scotch? (much laughter)

GENERAL WATSON: A little gin, at this time of day, sir.

(Newspaper men begin to file in)

Q Good morning.

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning.

MR. DONALDSON: All in.

THE PRESIDENT: I have signed an Executive Order yesterday, which really is looking pretty far into the future, because we are not -- not anywhere near up to it, increasing -- authorizing an increase in the number of WAACS up to 150 thousand. That doesn't mean that they will total that for a long time, but it takes a good deal of training; and we expect to be up to -- by next July, in the -- in those on duty -- about 56 thousand. And this merely fixes the maximum statutory strength at 150 thousand; although, as I say, there is no expectation that it will come to anything like that for a long time.

Then I sent a letter yesterday to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, in regard to this question of employees in the departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

There was quite a rush -- of course I can understand it -- we all can -- quite a rush last Tuesday afternoon -- people who thought they were going to be drafted at once, trying to get commissions -- (laughter) -- or enlist. And I don't think we ought to go about it that way, because -- for this reason. There will be a good many people here in Washington who really are essential, and who nevertheless want to get into uniform. Well, if they are essential they ought not to be allowed to get into uniform; they will stay right here. And the whole question comes down to the definition of the word "essential"; that is the thing we are -- we are trying to find out about.

In the meanwhile it will be a fairly long process -- probably two or three months -- before we get through with the whole Government; and during that period we want to be sure we don't make mistakes and have really essential people leave their work, just in order to get into uniform. So this letter to the Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy provides that they must not enlist or commission any of these people, after last Monday, until further notice; ---

Q (interposing) Is any Government employee ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- and they can only do it if they have the approval of the head of the agency or department with which they are connected.

Well, you can see that that is beginning to follow a pattern which eventually, when we get the manpower set up, will mean that we will prevent the drafting of people under the Selective Service law out of munitions plants where they are very much needed.

Q Mr. President, does that drafting of people out of munitions work -- does that not apply equally well to enlisting them?

THE PRESIDENT: Same thing.

Q Essential people have been enlisting ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Same thing. Exactly the same thing.

Q Then eventually the -- the munitions plant worker will not be allowed to enlist?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, he will be allowed to enlist if he is not essential. I mean at the present time.

Q (interposing) I mean, are you looking ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) If he is not essential to the munitions plant, at the present time, he has a right to enlist; but we have got to find out from -- from somebody as to whether he is essential or not.

Q Mr. President, how soon will that be extended to the munitions plants?

THE PRESIDENT: Just as soon as we get the manpower set up, which will be fairly soon, I hope.

Q Mr. President, could you give us any example or definition of what you mean by "essential," in that connection?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you had been permitted to go on the trip with me, you would have understood it. (laughter) For example, there are certain operations in a -- Oh, what? -- a cartridge factory where you don't need an awful lot of skill; in other words, the kind of thing that you can teach a girl to do in three or four weeks. Now (suppose) you are holding that job. And if I can teach a girl to do it, and your figure is good enough to go into the Army, you wouldn't get any exemption. They would take you into the Army.

On the other hand, -- well, I will give you -- I will give you an example. There were two -- two foremen in one of the plants we visited, and they were not only skilled in the sense that they had had long training, but they also were in charge of perhaps 25 or 30 machines, and the people who were operating them. They had not only the manual

skill, and knew all about those machines, but they -- they also had the quality of leadership; they were able to handle 25 or 30 workers.

Well, they happened to live in different ends of the town. Each one of them had a wife, but no other dependents. The draft board gave, in one part -- the north end of the town -- gave an exemption to one of them, but didn't give an exemption to the fellow who was working on the other side of the aisle; and yet the two cases were absolutely similar in almost every way.

Now that is a difficult thing to do, with thousands of draft boards all over the country -- to get uniformity. They do the best they can. And probably, when we come to what might be called the next steps, we can get more uniformity from the draft boards by bringing in an element which is not sufficiently there: have the manager of the plant, or the supervisor of that particular kind of work, certify to the draft board as to whether in their judgment the man really is irreplaceable. I don't think we have got enough of that yet. We don't consult enough with some of these factories, and people who -- people who manage them, as to their own personnel.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) Of course, the training -- the training process is getting better all the -- all the time. For instance, in the case we cited first, if -- if somebody could be trained to take your place in three or four weeks, you ought not to be kept and given an exemption. You ought to go into the Army.

Q Mr. President, in the cases of these two foremen, doesn't that indicate a possible change in the appeal system of the draft system -- the appeals mechanism of the draft system? Is there any ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't know. You have a certain thing called

psychology in there. It is very difficult.

Q (interposing) Mr. President, ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) In other words, probably avoid appeals almost entirely by giving more information to the draft board itself.

Q Yes, sir.

Q Mr. President, some factories, I have been told, have to deal with about 300 different draft boards. Is there any plan for regional deferment boards?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know any -- except New York City. I don't know how they have to deal with 300 draft boards.

Q That is what I have been told by somebody.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you take -- you take the State of New York. Essentially there is an area control in there.

Q Mr. President, isn't it true that men who are working in factories are still under the jurisdiction of their local draft boards at home and in the country somewhere; that is ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interjecting) Yes.

Q (continuing) --- that you have heard of?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I think that is true. I think that is true.

Q I think the one I was talking about specific -- specifically was in Kansas City, where they had to deal with 300 boards.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that's a big area. That's another of the things that is going to be, I hope, simplified. First the national pool, then the regional pool, then the local pool -- things of that kind.

Q Mr. President, what do you think of the Tolson Committee's recommendations along this same line of manpower?

THE PRESIDENT: I honestly -- this will have to be off the record, because it displays too great ignorance on my part. I haven't read the report

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yet. I have got it in my basket. (indicating)

Q Mr. President, speaking of the manpower setup, when can we expect that?

THE PRESIDENT: Soon.

Q Mr. President, will it take the form of a request for legislation, or will it be an administrative measure?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you finally on that, but I don't think much, if any, legislation is required in the beginning. We may, in working into it, require some later on.

Q Mr. (William) Green (president of the A.F.L.) said yesterday that he anticipated an announcement on the registration of women within two weeks.

THE PRESIDENT: Well now, there again, should registration -- it's an open question -- should registration of women be on a voluntary basis or compulsory basis? There are two schools of thought. There is the one school of thought that says, "No, you won't get enough." The other school of thought says, "You will get plenty of them by the voluntary method, if it's made exceedingly simple."

MISS MAY CRAIG: But Mr. President, you don't get the lazy, bridge-playing "no goods" on a voluntary basis. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: That's perfectly true. Query: Do we want them? (more laughter)

Q Mr. President, can you tell us anything about your plans for Thanksgiving?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Not yet. Haven't got the data.

Q Mr. President, what -- what do you think of the filibuster of certain Democrats ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I have absolutely no knowledge about it whatsoever.

Q Do you think the (anti-poll tax) bill would pass?

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THE PRESIDENT: I have no knowledge about it, so I am not going to tell you what I think, because I don't know anything about it; and I haven't talked to anybody about it.

Q Mr. President, do you plan to observe the end of our first year of war on December 7 in any manner, whether through a speech or ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That is something I am going to talk to Mr. Elmer Davis about after this (Press) Conference.

Q Mr. President, what is the situation on the food czar?

THE PRESIDENT: On the what?

Q Food czar?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I don't think there is such a thing as a food czar.

Q Not yet?

THE PRESIDENT: No, ---

Q (interjecting) Will there be one?

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- not yet.

No. Don't use the word "czar" in administering government --

(laughter) ---

Q (interposing) Coordinator.

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) --- under the Democratic process.

Q (repeating) Coordinator.

THE PRESIDENT: (laughing) Oh, we will get something on that very soon.

VOICES: Thank you, Mr. President.