

Interior Folder
3-41

PSF

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF PETROLEUM COORDINATOR
FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

October 10, 1941

~~(CONFIDENTIAL)~~

My dear Mr. President:

I would like you to know that while the British have said that they would be able to release from twelve to fifteen tankers from the shuttle service, this is not a voluntary renunciation on their part. Storage in England is substantially what it was a week ago. There is still unfilled storage which, in my opinion, should be filled before England relinquishes any tanker; before we should accept such relinquishment even if voluntarily made.

The fact is that, at best, the English storage is not sufficient to make secure the position of England in the event of a renewed and serious assault by Hitler upon her. Until last week there has been a fortunate reduction in the number of tanker sinkings, but no one can guarantee that these will not increase. Ordinary prudence would require that the insufficient British storage be substantially filled before surrendering back the use of any of our tankers. A different course would involve a risk which we ought not to be willing that England should run, even if only for selfish interests of our own.

It was understood between the British and the Office of the Petroleum Coordinator that no change in the tanker situation would be made except after careful study and a mutual understanding of both of us. It is

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED

significant that only four or five weeks ago Sir Edward Salter wrote a letter asking for twelve additional tankers. Then, without any change in the situation, and without an invitation to us to consider the facts in their broad aspects, the suggestion was made that England would be prepared to surrender, at least temporarily, the use of from twelve to fifteen tankers by the end of October.

The explanation for this sudden change in attitude on the part of the British is pressure brought upon the British by agencies of the Government other than that of the Office of the Petroleum Coordinator. These pressures have been exercised without consultation with this office. Divided councils brought to bear upon the British in the absence of a carefully worked out policy of our own is more than disturbing, it is destructive. Moreover, the responsibility will be ours if, as the result of pressure on our part, the British should surrender tankers that it is their sober judgment, as it is that of the Petroleum Coordinator, should not be surrendered at least until all available storage space in England is substantially filled to capacity.

The hand of the Petroleum Coordinator has been forced in this matter in a manner that is not unusual. First there is the indirect pressure, then the carefully arranged "leak", then questions and clamorings in the newspapers and then a forced acquiescence on our part against our own sober judgment.

On the surface we have no option except to accept gracefully the surrender of these tankers, although so far as the British are concerned, it has been made clear to me personally that such action is against their

own best judgment. In the circumstances, I wish you to know that this offer to surrender tankers has been brought about by indirect pressure upon the British from sources over which the Petroleum Coordinator has no control.

The judgment expressed in the foregoing has been fortified by the statistics on sinkings for the week ending October 5, which have just come to my hand. This is the official report of the British Merchant Shipping Mission which is given to us in secret. From this it appears that four British tankers were sunk for the week in question and two allied and neutral tankers, making a total of six. As against this six, it appears that one new British tanker was put into commission. This loss represents fifty percent of the number of tankers proposed to be returned to us by the British, and it is clear that if sinkings continue at this rate the British will not only not be able to release tankers to us, they will be requiring more, which will have a further bad effect on public opinion in the Atlantic Coast states.

Sincerely yours,

Harold T. Ples

Petroleum Coordinator
for National Defense.

The President,
The White House.

UNITED STATES MARITIME COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

October 29, 1941

The Honorable
Harold L. Ickes
Petroleum Coordinator for
National Defense
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Ickes:

Referring to the attached proposed Administrative Order of the Petroleum Coordinator for the establishing of and describing the functions of the Tanker Control Board:

The Maritime Commission have unanimously decided that they can not concur in the issuance of this Order. In view of the changed circumstances we feel that the continued functioning of the Tanker Control Board is not justified. All functions which the proposed Administrative Order would confer on that Board properly come within the functions of the Office of the Petroleum Coordinator and this Commission and can be efficiently performed by the existing organizations.

Our considered opinion, and in this the Commission are unanimous, is that the Maritime Commission should have the same relationship with the Petroleum Coordinator for National Defense with respect to tankers as they have with the Office of Production Management with respect to dry cargo ships and that the control, direction and handling of all vessels should remain within the scope of activities of the Maritime Commission.

The closest cooperation between your office and ours can continue and in accordance with the President's letter of May 28, 1941, we will be glad to work closely with you.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ E. S. Land

E. S. Land
Chairman

✓ cc--The President
The White House

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Interior folder
2-43

June 26, 1943.

My dear Mr. President:

As an outcome of discussion held in the Office of Justice Byrnes, representatives of State, Navy, War and Interior Departments met to consider the situation presented by our prospective shortage of domestic petroleum reserves and the consequent imperative need to assure adequate foreign reserves, and the best means of proceeding to that end. They in addition gave particular attention to the situation in Saudi Arabia. They have agreed upon a signed report which we are transmitting to you. We concur and support this report. You will note that if one of its main recommendations is to be put into effect, that is, the creation of the Petroleum Reserve Corporation, it would be most desirable that this action

be

The President,

The White House.

Orig. source. filed in Jesse Jones folder, dr. 2-43.

(Report sent to Secy. of Commerce, 6-29-43, re per memo attached to orig. source.)

- 2 -

be taken before July 1.

Faithfully yours,

Cordell Hull
Secretary of State

Henry L. Stimson
Secretary of War

James Forrestal
Acting Secretary of the Navy

Harold L. Ickes
Secretary of the Interior

Enclosure:
Report.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

June 29, 1943.

WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF RACE RELATIONS

The recent race riots were neither accidental nor unexpected. Race tensions throughout the country are such that it may be said that the race disease is endemic. Observers in the field are convinced that further outbreaks, with their consequent destructiveness and lasting bitterness, may be expected anywhere, any time. For the sake of the country's morale health, thorough action on a national scale is urgent.

It is a mistake to assume that the Negroes are the only victims of race prejudice. Like the Jews in Germany, they are only the first and foremost victims, at this moment subjected to violence. But there are millions of other victims, actual and potential. All of them, as a matter of fact, are insecure. This bodes no good for our democratic future.

Nearly one-third of our population may be classed as "minority," that is, suffers from various degrees and kinds of discrimination, misunderstanding, exclusion.

Negroes	— approximately 13,000,000
Slavs	8,000,000
Italians	7,000,000
Jews	4,000,000
Mexicans	3,000,000
Others (Filipinos, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, etc.)	400,000

It is imperative to give these groups an assurance of security and a feeling that they are genuinely an integral part of the Nation.

What is needed is to reassure our minorities and enlighten our majority.

Several Federal agencies deal with minorities, but none of them has a program and none of them has real responsibilities. The Fair Employment Practices Committee

is the best of all, but it is confined to job-defense activities. Others, such as the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (interested in the Mexicans in the Southwest), are limited in scope and action.

It is proposed that the President set up an OFFICE OF RACE RELATIONS (it might, perhaps, be named OFFICE OF DEMOCRATIC RACE RELATIONS), to coordinate all of the work and develop programs of action. The OFFICE should be placed under a Cabinet officer, for purposes of prestige and continuity. The logical place is the Department of the Interior, which already administers Indians. Interior, moreover, has a certain moral, if not legal, responsibility for the Filipinos and Puerto Ricans in this country. Both are discriminated groups, social orphans for whom no one seems to be responsible. Also, the War Relocation Authority operates on Interior lands. Finally, Secretary Ickes is a fighting liberal, and this is a job that requires liberalism and great courage.

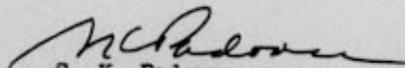
The OFFICE OF RACE RELATIONS should have the following functions:

1. Investigation (by specialists)
2. Information (to serve as a clearing house on all race problems)
3. Legal advice (on race matters)
4. Coordination (of Federal activities)
5. Review (of Federal activities, legislation, publications, etc.)
6. Community organization and cooperation
7. Educational programs
8. Assistance to States and cities in the solution of their race problems.

As a first step, the President might appoint a National Committee on Democratic Race Relations, to make a thorough exploration of the whole situation.

It is my understanding that the Rosenwald Foundation is willing to offer its services and experience. No doubt, enlightened citizens everywhere would gladly serve in this cause. The OFFICE OF RACE RELATIONS might serve as the National Committee's executive arm and center.

A democratic solution of the race problem in this country will have favorable repercussions among our Allies and friends. It will also deprive Axis propaganda of one of its most effective anti-American arguments.



S. K. Padover,
Assistant to the Secretary.

FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

PSF
Interior
Dept

December 4, 1944.

My dear Mr. President:

Herewith I submit my resignation, without reservation, effective at noon on the 20th day of January, 1945, to facilitate any actions you may desire as the new term commences. I am proud to have served under your appointment, and you continue to command my faith, devotion and confidence.

Sincerely yours,

Michael W. Straus

Michael W. Straus,
Assistant Secretary.

The President,

The White House.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
UNITED STATES

Interior folder
BF 2-44

December 9, 1944

My dear Mr. Straus:

This will acknowledge receipt of your resignation under date of December 4 to take effect on the 20th day of January next. Both Secretary Ickes and I are entirely satisfied with your services as Assistant Secretary of the Interior and I have no desire to create a vacancy by accepting a resignation that, while proper in form and in spirit, does not respond to any desire on my part.

Sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Hon. Michael W. Straus,
First Assistant Secretary
of the Interior,
Washington, D. C.

Interior Dept. papers

2-44

PSF

December 9, 1944

My dear Mr. Chapman:

I appreciate your sending me your resignation as Assistant Secretary of the Interior. However, Secretary Ickes informs me that you are continuing to do a first-class job and I have no disposition to accept it.

Sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Hon. Oscar Chapman,
Assistant Secretary
of the Interior,
Washington, D. C.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

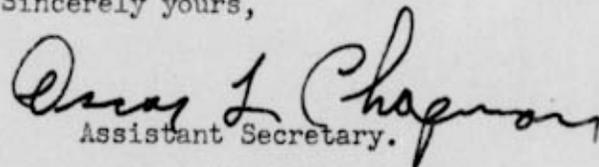
December 5, 1944

My dear Mr. President:

(Through the Secretary of the Interior).

I herewith submit my resignation to take effect at your pleasure. I have been proud to be a member of your administration and assure you that you will continue to have my devotion and loyalty.

Sincerely yours,


Assistant Secretary.

The President,

The White House.

Interior Dept folder
2-44

PSE

December 9, 1944

My dear Mr. Fortas:

I have your resignation tendered under date of November 30 and I appreciate your desire to leave me free to make a change in the office of Under Secretary of the Interior if I should so desire. However, both Secretary Ickes and I are fully satisfied with the manner in which you have performed your duties. I am glad to note your willingness to retire for the good of the service but the service would not be benefitted if I should accept your resignation. I therefore decline to do so.

Sincerely yours,

Hon. Abe Fortas,
Under Secretary of
the Interior,
Washington, D. C.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

November 30, 1944.

My dear Mr. President:

You have twice conferred upon me the great honor of appointing me to the post of Under Secretary of the Interior. In this post and in the others that I have occupied since the first year of your Administration, I have endeavored to the best of my ability to serve you and my immediate superiors.

Aside from my own desire to return to the less arduous and more stable pursuits of private life, I believe that I should facilitate your exercise of your powers to change the personnel of your Administration. Accordingly, I hereby tender my resignation as Under Secretary of the Interior, to become effective at your pleasure.

Whether I am in or out of your Administration, I shall always be loyal and devoted to you.

Sincerely yours,



Abe Fortas.

The President,

The White House.