

Franklin Roosevelt's Press Conference on Lend Lease

March 11 , 1941

THE PRESIDENT: At quarter to four or ten minutes to four, the [Lend-Lease] Bill [H. R. 1776] was duly signed in the presence of the press photographers and the picture people; and immediately thereafter -- after they left the room- the second step happened. After talking the thing over with the Army and Navy authorities, the first list of material was approved -- Army and Navy material which will go, the greater part of it, to Britain; a portion of it will go to the Greeks. The items, of course, involved must of necessity and fairness be kept secret until such time that the disclosure of their military identity will not be of benefit to anybody else.

At the meeting this morning on that line, I told the Senate and House members of the Committee- we talked it over and I made the suggestion that they appoint from the two Appropriations Committees a small subcommittee that would feel entirely free to come down here at any time and be kept in complete and constant touch with everything that is being done under Bill No. 1776.

Of course, there is nothing that could not be disclosed except some of these things which probably we should defer announcing- the type of material or amounts involved -- for purely military reasons for a reasonably short time. This particular list of items relates both to the Army and Navy. It is not a very large amount. I only have at the present time the figures showing the total original cost, because you will understand that that does not necessarily mean the billing price for the reason that a great many of these articles are out of date or surplus and haven't got the same monetary value that they had when they were manufactured a good many years ago.

And then I -- well, you saw the gentlemen when they went out; they told you about the letter tomorrow which will be the usual -- I have forgotten whether it is deficiency or supplemental estimate letter -- to the Speaker. It is not a message to the Congress, because this is an appropriation bill and it goes in in the form of a deficiency or supplemental estimate to the Speaker, and, under the rules of the House, it is referred by him to the Appropriations Committee; and then they start hearings, I think, the day after. My letter will go up at noon tomorrow, and they will start the hearings on Thursday; so there is no waste of time in this procedure.

Q. Mr. President, you said you had a total of the value; are you going to tell us what that is?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q. Mr. President, you called these supplemental or deficiency..

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) I don't know whether they call it deficiency or supplemental.

Q. Usually supplemental is for the current year; is this for the current year?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q. What I am getting at, will there be another one for next year?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. You better ask them on the Hill what they want to call it; really, it is an appropriation bill under H. R. 1776.

Q. Mr. President, you have indicated that this list of stuff is current material, surplus, et cetera.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q. I haven't read the bill lately; that bill mentioned a certain amount.

THE PRESIDENT: Up to a billion, three hundred million; the amount arrived at -- the value of this stuff -- will come out of that billion, three hundred million.

Q. I was going to ask you further, sir, if you will permit me, if there have been any terms or any dicker; have you made a deal with these people?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q. Will that be made public at any time you do so?

THE PRESIDENT: As soon as it is proper. Of course the Congressional people will know about it, but it won't be made public until the items themselves are made public. You couldn't do any figuring on dollars and cents unless you knew what the items were.

Q. Mr. President, is this a lending or a leasing procedure?

THE PRESIDENT: I give it up; I'm not interested.

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us when the proposed aid to China may be forthcoming?

THE PRESIDENT: The what?

Q. Aid for China; I heard you mention Britain and Greece.

THE PRESIDENT: That's all I've done today! (Laughter)

Q. Will there be aid to China?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I guess so.

Q. Would it depend, sir, on the report that Lauchlin Currie makes to you?

THE PRESIDENT: That might have something to do with it; I wouldn't say it would depend on it.

Q. Mr. President, will some of this be out of the 1942 budget?

THE PRESIDENT: There is not much we can talk about yet because it is still in the process of working out on the Hill as to whether certain types of things taken out by anticipation, things already ordered but not yet delivered, already appropriated for and ordered and

which would fall into the one billion-three-hundred-million-dollar category -- as to whether they should be deducted, or any portion of them, from the seven-billion-dollar appropriation or not. That is a thing that is really a legislative matter and we hadn't worked it out this morning. There are too many categories of things in there to make an over-all statement; some might and some might not. . . .

Q. Is it proper for you to say whether any of this equipment is now on the way?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no, none of it is on the way -- at least it wasn't until five minutes to four, because I didn't approve it until then. We work fast, but there are limitations!
(Laughter)