

Excerpts from the White House Diaries of Theodore Joslin

Wednesday, April 6, 1932

It often is said that the President lacks humor. Here is one instance to the contrary. Conferences were endless today. Each dealt with a different subject and each subject was controversial. The Republicans in the Senate were not giving the President the support he desired, while the Democrats were raising hot. With Pat Harrison doing his suave, pin pricking stunt, the President called Senator Glenn in and gave him an armful of material for a counter attack. Secretary Stimson, who leaves Friday for Geneva, refused in his bull headed manner to follow a lead the President gave him and this made the President disgusted. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation flatly refused to put out a statement the President wanted issued. And a half a dozen groups came in to try to induce the President to take action that he considered unwise. So it went throughout the day. Just before leaving the office this evening the President remarked: "I have a five ring circus on my hands and a lot of bad actors."

Sunday, May 8, 1932

The President made up his mind today to make a radio speech, carrying his demand for economy and balancing the budget directly to the people. He spent much of the day working on the early draft. . . I gave the A.P. and U.P. some background, telling them that the ranking Republican and Democratic members of the Senate Appropriations Committee were busy lining up the members of their respective parties in a "battalion of united action" to stand up and fight for the revenue provision of the compromise tax bill. I also told them the purpose of the President's conference last night was to secure full cooperation by the Republicans in the non-partisan action. Although all this was news, it was buried in the dispatches because of the conference, to which the press got wise, between the President and the Republican members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Fred Hale, who has a brain of a gnat, was responsible for the leak. In these troublesome times, such leaks are very exasperating, but cannot be helped. The press knows big news is pending and keep an extremely close watch on the White House.

We learned absolutely flatly today that Al Smith, Raskob and Barney Baruch have united on Owen D. Young for the Democratic presidential nomination, Smith to put him in nomination when the appropriate moment comes. Their game is to keep this agreement secret. As it is for advantage to keep Roosevelt out as far in front as possible, I leaked the information to Roy Vernon who will use it as his own in the *Chicago Daily News* tomorrow.

Monday, May 9, 1932

The President is about as disgusted with the Republican members of the Senate Appropriations Committee today as he can be. He had to talk, argue and fight with most of them last night to whip them into line. "They are a dusty-brained, foozle witted lot," he said this morning. "You can't imagine what difficulty I had last night in making them appreciate the necessities of this situation."

"We are having a new economy bill drafted. I have gotten Senator Jones to agree to a subcommittee to work on the proposal. Jones is the worst of the lot. He is afraid to take action that must be taken. I told him: Jones, you don't know the conditions in your State. And I am telling you that for every voter in your State who objects to the closing of a navy yard there are 7000 who will slam you if the economies are not affect[ed]. The trouble with Jones is he is scared to death because he has two opponents for renomination."

Th conservative Democrats are really working with the President as well if not better than the Republicans. Today for example, it was Senator Robinson of Arkansas, who, through agreement made the motion in the Senate sending the Oddie resolution to rescind the unscientific 10 p.c. [%] appropriations cut resolution back to the Appropriations committee so that a real committee of three Republicans and three Democrats can be selected to handle all the economy matters.

Saturday, October 8, 1932

The President put in a few words today the difficulty that confronts him and the Republican party in this election: He said: "We are opposed by 10,000,000 unemployed, 10,000 bonus marchers and 10 cent corn. Is it any wonder that the prospects are dark? Is there any cause for surprise that we must give every ounce of strength, every one of us, to win."

And that reminds me. Efforts are being made again to get our off horse [senator Borah] back into harness. The President has sent two more emissaries out to Boise. He awaits their report impatiently. He observed: "If Borah is going to be any help in this campaign, he must get into the battle within the next three or four days." We know he thinks it would be a national catastrophe if Roosevelt should be elected. Yet, also, we know no more. Gosh, how much he could help if he only would swing into action.

Friday, November 18, 1932

The President directed me late today to call a special meeting of the Cabinet for 10 o'clock tomorrow, but not to call Stimson. Coming after an hour's conference with Stimson and Mills, it gave me a start, until the President told me the purpose of the meeting was to go over the budget.

He is pretty sure now of making a saving of \$500,000,000 and he wants to increase it to \$700,000,000. This would necessitate a 15 p.c. cut in wages as a substitute for the furlough, something the President is hesitant to do. Earlier in the day the President said:

"I am fearful of what the next few months will bring. If I had been re-elected business would now be on the upgrade. Orders totaling several hundred millions were placed in September and Oct subject to the election. Those orders have been canceled. Business refuses to go ahead. There is nothing that can be done. These four months threaten to be all that I predicted in the campaign that they would be. I am laboring under a terrific handicap. I can recommend the plans I outlined during the campaign. This I shall do. But I can't do more. I can't for example go ahead with the agricultural relief program I had intended to launch. It wouldn't get anywhere. It would merely be attacked. It would accomplish no constructive purpose. I must withhold that action. This country is in a much more serious condition than the people realize. It is in a damned mess."

Saturday, November 19, 1932

Nothing has irritated the President more since the election than letters from well intentioned people sympathizing with him over his defeat. He wants no one to weep over him. He made this perfectly clear to a minister in Minnesota who wrote that he was going to make his sympathy the subject of his next sermon. Replying, the President said:

"I wonder if you have not a misconception of the election. It was not a game or a sport for personal gain but an event that so far as the personal side is concerned the victory was to him who lost and the defeat to him who won. I can say that never in the last fifteen years have I slept more soundly than I have since the election. I have almost a feeling of elation. My only concern is what will happen to the country as a result of the change in policies.

Monday, December 18, 1932

I had a long personal talk with the President this afternoon, outlining some of the [writing] proposals that have been made to me. To my surprise he gave me permission to use many confidential facts incident to his Administration. He liked the idea of having such information come out in a series of articles by me to be syndicated by the N.A.N.A. Then he said:

"Here's what I am going to do, I'm going to lay off for six or eight months and then I am going to start in raising hell. I've caught a lot of it in the last four years; now I'm going to give a lot of it. I'm going to talk and write and do any damn thing I want to do. An ex-President doesn't need any agency for expression. He has a drawing power of his own and I'm going to get into the thick of things. Somebody is likely to get hurt. Anyway, I'll have a lot of fun"