



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

June 23, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

There will never be so good a time to stop the shipment of oil to Japan as we now have. Japan is so preoccupied with what is happening in Russia and what may happen in Siberia that she won't venture a hostile move against the Dutch East Indies.

To embargo oil to Japan would be as popular a move in all parts of the country as you could make. Recent expressions of sentiment have demonstrated how the people feel on this subject. There might develop from the embargoing of oil to Japan such a situation as would make it, not only possible but easy, to get into this war in an effective way. And if we should thus indirectly be brought in, we would avoid the criticism that we had gone in as an ally of communistic Russia.

Sincerely yours,

*Harold G. Ickes*  
Secretary of the Interior.

The President,  
The White House.

file  
personal

B.F. Jones Folder

Interior

June 23, 1941.

Dear Harold:-

I have yours of June 23rd recommending the immediate stopping of shipments of oil to Japan. Please let me know if this would continue to be your judgment if this were to tip the delicate scales and cause Japan to decide either to attack Russia or to attack the Dutch East Indies.

Always sincerely,

The Honorable  
The Secretary of the Interior,  
Washington, D. C.



*file  
personal*

*B.F. Hoyle  
Jules Folder*

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

June 23, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

Russia, England and then the United States of America! Hitler continues to fall upon his victims at his own time. He has taken on one nation after another while the others have held back, believing that somehow they would escape the fate that he has told them he has in store for them. It may be difficult to get into this war the right way, but if we do not do it now, we will be, when our turn comes, without an ally anywhere in the world.

Psychologically, the war situation is now a difficult one. I hope that we won't permit the isolationists to get the jump on us and undertake to prove that aid to England is aid to Stalin and communism. Lindbergh and Wheeler will lose no time in renewing their campaign for isolation. And they will have a new and formidable weapon. As a matter of fact, Wheeler started in last night.

It seems to me that we have been caught unprepared in the domestic field while the international situation is far from clear. Public sentiment is terribly confused. Our enemies at home will busy themselves in an intensive effort to resolve this confusion in favor of inevitably destructive isolation.

Sincerely yours,

*Harold Z. Forbes*

Secretary of the Interior.

The President,  
The White House.



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*BSP  
Interior*

*John F. Elder*

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

June 23, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

At our last interview you challenged me to suggest a better man than Knudsen to head up the defense program, with increased powers. I nominate Bill Douglas, even although he would be a tremendous loss to the Supreme Court. He has youth, energy, imagination and decisiveness. Moreover, you would never have any doubt as to whom he was working for. He is used to giving orders and not receiving them, a quality that is now both needed and lacking. He is a liberal who knows why he is a liberal, and he has been a loyal and intelligent supporter of your administration.

Within his limitations, Mr. Knudsen has done a good job but his limitations are obvious to everyone. I do not believe that he can overcome them at his age, with his background. Of his loyalty, no one can doubt. But loyalty alone will not defeat Hitler. I believe that Bill Douglas has all of Knudsen's qualities, and more.

Sincerely yours,

*Harold G. Parker*

Secretary of the Interior.

The President,  
The White House.



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THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

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*Interior*  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
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June 25, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

I am replying to the question you asked me in yours of June 23 whether it would still be my judgment that we ought to stop the shipment of oil to Japan "if this were to tip the delicate scales and cause Japan to decide either to attack Russia or to attack the Dutch East Indies".

As I see the situation, Japan will make no decision to attack either Russia or the Dutch East Indies until it is pretty clear what the outcome in Russia will be. If Hitler, as I anticipate, smashes Russia, as he has other countries, it is my guess that Japan will invade Siberia, just as Mussolini went over the French border when he saw that France was thoroughly licked. Japan will want to be in a position of exacting from a victorious Hitler at least part of the loot. If Japan goes into Siberia, I would not expect her to attempt anything at the Dutch East Indies, at least until she had consolidated her gains in Siberia and found herself more comfortable in China.

In other words, I do not believe that Japan will attack the Dutch East Indies in any event until the die is cast with respect to Russia. Then she will attempt the Dutch East Indies if she chooses, whether or not we are supplying her with oil. But it appears that the Dutch are all ready to render these oil fields of no value to Japan for approximately

a year and a half.

It is presumptuous of me to offer you advice in an international matter and I may be wrong. However, I have followed the diplomatic game with intense interest from the time that Italy invaded Abyssinia, and I think that our State Department has made mistake after mistake. I believe that it has done so particularly with respect to Japan, and I don't think that continuing a mistake will get us anywhere except into trouble.

My dear Mr. President, we are not going to call the tune by which Hitler will dance. And Japan is more tightly drawn into Hitler's web by the German invasion of Russia. Foreign wars cannot be fought without oil and gasoline, and we are furnishing Japan with this sine qua non in order to fight against what we are fighting for.

And so, with diffidence, I continue to believe that this is the best time that we will ever have to stop sending oil to Japan.

Sincerely yours,

*Harold I. Parker*

Secretary of the Interior.

The President,  
The White House.