

Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, Pres -

F. D. R.

*His Personal Letters*

1928-1945

II

*Foreword by*  
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This memorandum to Justice Byrnes, who had been nominated to the Supreme Court on June 12th, related to another letter from Ickes requesting the President to send an order transferring Forestry to the Department of Interior.

*F.D.R. to Harold L. Ickes in Washington (letter in F.D.R.L.)*

THE WHITE HOUSE,

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,

Ickes, who had been named Petroleum Coordinator on May 28th with responsibility for the production and distribution of oil in accordance with defense needs, could see little justification for continued shipments of oil to Japan.

He replied to this letter in injured tones, and F.D.R.'s answer follows:

*F.D.R. to Harold Ickes in Washington (letter in F.D.R.L.)*

HYDE PARK,

JULY 1, 1941

Dear Harold:

There you go again! There ain't nothing unfriendly about me, and I guess it was the hot weather that made you think there was a lack of a friendly tone!

As a matter of fact, I think the whole business of exports to Japan was made difficult by the press and the press only—including perhaps just a pinch of State Department snootiness thrown in. Both of these are elements that we have to live with whether we like it or not.

You are doing a grand job as Petroleum Coordinator—so

much so that it looks to me as if you will have to take unto your manly bosom the coordination of the whole power situation if things get any worse. That would include, of course, coal—hard and soft—water power, and domestic consumption of all of them.

I think it will interest you to know that the Japs are having a real drag-down and knock-out fight among themselves and have been for the past week—trying to decide which way they are going to jump—attack Russia, attack the South Seas (thus throwing in their lot definitely with Germany) or whether they will sit on the fence and be more friendly with us. No one knows what the decision will be but, as you know, it is terribly important for the control of the Atlantic for us to help to keep peace in the Pacific. I simply have not got enough Navy to go round—and every little episode in the Pacific means fewer ships in the Atlantic.

I am still running a bit of a temperature and wish this flu would clear up,

As ever yours,

Ickes had told F.D.R. that he did not think embargoing oil would influence Japan either way. In his opinion, the chief factor in Japan's decision on her next move would be Hitler's success in Russia. In November F.D.R. appointed Ickes Solid Fuels Coordinator, which covered all the jobs mentioned in this letter except water power.

*F.D.R. to E. W. Starling (memorandum in F.D.R.L.)*

THE WHITE HOUSE,

JUNE 25, 1941

Memorandum for Colonel Starling:

The following is an excerpt from a letter to the President from Ambassador Claude G. Bowers:

"A German just left me who brought a story I do not take too seriously, but it is to the effect that he has heard talk in