

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

July 17, 1943

Mr. Marriner S. Eccles  
Chairman  
Federal Reserve System  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Eccles:

The President has sent you, as an attachment of his letter of July 15, 1943, a copy of his letter of August 21, 1942 addressed to the heads of all Departments and agencies. As you are aware, by the terms of the letter of August 21 and by Executive Order 9182, the Office of War Information provides the mechanism for the clearance of public statements by the heads and principal officials of all Departments and agencies.

In the exercise of its authority to coordinate the war informational activities of all Federal Departments and agencies, the Office of War Information will, in accordance with the President's letter of July 15, withhold clearance of any public statement where disagreements between agencies as to fact or policy are not settled by agreement of the agencies concerned. In such circumstances, this Office will refer the disagreement to the President or to the Director of War Mobilization for solution.

Very truly,

*Elmer Davis*

Elmer Davis  
Director

FOR THE DIRECTOR  
Mr. Eccles ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓  
Legal Div. ✓  
Mr. Wyatt ✓  
Mr. Smead ✓  
Mr. Goldenweiser ✓  
Mr. Paulger ✓ (CHW)  
Mr. Leonard ✓  
Dr. Parry ✓  
Mr. [unclear] ✓



7/23

From now on I  
trust the Board members  
will always remember this  
order, and entertain more  
respect and sympathy for  
me and my ideas, if  
any  
sincerely,  
✓

TO Mr. Morrill

FROM Mr. Thurston

REMARKS:

7/20/43

The Chairman would like to have the attached circulated and then returned to him for his files.

E.T.  


CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE

O Mr. Thurston:

As per your request.

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The President has sent identical letters, reading as follows, to the head of each department and agency of the Federal Government:

In dealing with the many complex war problems which we face today, it is unavoidable that there be wide differences of opinion between agencies of the Federal Government -- opinions sincerely and honestly held. However, too often in recent months, responsible officials of the Government have made public criticism of other agencies of the Government; and have made public statements based either on inadequate information or on failure to appreciate all the aspects of a complex subject which is only partially within their jurisdiction.

This is inadvisable at any time. But in times of war it is particularly contrary to public policy. It contributes only to the confusion of the public, which naturally does not know what to believe on an involved issue when it gets different stories on successive days from officials of equal standing, though not necessarily of equal understanding.

Such divergencies, especially when coupled, as they often are, with express or implied criticisms of other officials are a direct and serious handicap to the prosecution of the war. Officials divert to quarrels with each other the time and energy they ought to be devoting to fighting the enemy. The people, confused by these contradictory voices, are apt to obtain the false impression that the Government as a whole is uncertain as to its objectives and general method and that it does not know its job.

This feeling is of course pounced upon, exploited, and intensified by opponents of our war effort. Our enemies use this raw material of discord provided for them by men who ought to be making trouble for the enemy and not for one another.

One of the duties prescribed for the Office of War Information is the coordination of war informational activities of all Federal departments and agencies, for the purpose of assuring an accurate and consistent flow of war information to the public and the world at large and for the added purpose of eliminating conflict and confusion among the departments and agencies of the Government in the matter of their public relations. Elmer Davis, Director of this Office, tells me that so far as written statements from departments and agencies are concerned, very satisfactory progress toward this objective is being made. But, he points out that the attainment of the objective is being gravely hampered by verbal statements dealing with matters touching more than one department or agency made by high officials in press conferences and elsewhere, - statements which do not contribute either to the accuracy or the consistency of public information.

In a recent report to me on this situation, Mr. Davis makes a statement which should be emphasized: "The enemy is constantly at work trying to undermine public confidence in the government; why should members of that government help him along by undermining it themselves?"

Where honest differences of opinion exist no one would propose to suppress them. Nor would anyone attempt to interfere with the free use by every public official of the normal processes of information to the public and press. But it is no solution to a controverted question to argue it out in public. If the agencies would refrain from resorting to public debate of this kind they would have a good deal more time to attend to their business, and the nation would have a good deal more assurance that that business was being done right.