

JANUARY 5, 1945

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Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion James F. Byrnes appealed today for a curtailment of non-essential travel and particularly for a cessation of group meetings, such as conventions and trade shows not necessary in the war effort.

This action was taken with approval of the President who has told Mr. Byrnes that even the invitations to the inaugural ceremonies on January twentieth are being restricted as never before because of demands the war has brought about, particularly on transportation and housing. The great majority of the invitations to be issued, it was said, therefore, will go to Members of the Congress, officials of our Government and others who already are in Washington, -- who need no transportation and have their housing accommodations.

Justice Byrnes pointed out that in 1942 after Pearl Harbor, American associations voluntarily cancelled many conventions and trade shows. However, during the past year, the optimism which led so many of us to believe that victory was at hand, also led to a substantial increase in the holding of conventions and post-war trade shows.

"This has added a substantial load to our already over-taxed transportation and hotel facilities, with an increasing demand for additional manpower," he said.

"I am advised that our railroads have 38,872 coaches and other passenger units now as compared with 53,941 in 1918. Our organized military movements alone in eighteen months of this war have required the transportation of 16 million persons as compared with 6,500,000 in a corresponding period during World War I.

"We have about the same number of coaches and only a limited number more pullmans now than we had in 1939. The military are using 10 to 15 per cent of the coaches and almost half of the pullmans. In the face of this, revenue passenger miles have increased from 22,600,000 in 1939, 29,000,000 in 1941, and 53,600,000 in 1942 to an estimated 96,000,000 in 1944.

"Similarly, our hotels are crowded to the extent that persons traveling on important war assignments, and our servicemen find it difficult and sometimes impossible to obtain accommodations."

Mr. Byrnes added that he recognized that some meetings were desirable in the best interests of the war. However, it was his belief that these could be much fewer in number and much smaller in attendance than at present.

Justice Byrnes announced that, with the approval of the President, Director J. M. Johnson of the Office of Defense Transportation had been asked to head a committee to be composed of representatives of the War and Navy Departments, the War Production Board, and the War Manpower Commission to receive and pass upon applications for the holding of group meetings which are to be attended by more than 50 persons to determine if the need for these meetings is sufficiently in the war interest to warrant the tax on transportation and services.

He stated that it is expected that this committee will act not only on requests from the public, but also on requests from the civilian government agencies.

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Justice Byrnes requests that all conventions to be attended by more than 50 persons and scheduled to be held after February 1, 1945, be cancelled unless approved by this committee as necessary in the war effort. He expressed the hope that group meetings of less than 50 be held to a minimum. He requested that all post-war trade shows be cancelled. He particularly appealed to hotel management to decline reservations for unapproved group meetings and trade shows.

Justice Byrnes said that he was so certain that his appeal would receive immediate public support and general cooperation that he has taken no measures to determine government enforcement procedures which might be instituted.

He also stated that he was writing the heads of all government agencies to ask them to institute procedures to examine all travel of government employees with a view to reducing such travel to the minimum consistent with their responsibilities.

He urges the general public to defer non-essential trips.

