

**HEARINGS BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE
ON APPROPRIATIONS, HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES IN CHARGE OF THE
FORTIFICATION APPROPRIATION BILL**

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Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives in Charge of the Fortification Appropriation Bill by Various

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HEARINGS

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BEFORE THE

U. S. Congress, House.

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE
ON APPROPRIATIONS,

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

CONSISTING OF

Messrs. WALTER I. SMITH (chairman), J. W. KEIFER, J. V. GRAFF,
J. J. FITZGERALD, and STEPHEN BRUNDIDGE, Jr.,

IN CHARGE OF

THE FORTIFICATION APPROPRIATION BILL.

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FORTIFICATION APPROPRIATION BILL.

Hearings conducted by the subcommittee, Messrs. W. I. Smith (chairman), J. W. Keifer, J. V. Graf, J. J. Fitzgerald, and S. Brundidge, jr., of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, in charge of the fortification appropriation bill, on the days following, namely:

THURSDAY, *January 25, 1906.*

ENGINEER DEPARTMENT.

STATEMENTS OF BRIG. GEN. ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, U. S. ARMY, AND MAJ. FREDERIC V. ABBOT, ASSISTANT TO THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, U. S. ARMY.

The CHAIRMAN. General, the clerk of the committee was requested some time since to ask you to bring with you at this time a table of unexpended balances of these appropriations.

General MACKENZIE. Yes, sir; I have it for each item.

CONSTRUCTION OF GUN AND MORTAR BATTERIES.

Mr. SMITH. The first item of this bill is one for the construction of guns and mortar batteries, and the Secretary of War has reduced the estimate to nothing?

General MACKENZIE. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. What is the amount of unexpended balance under that appropriation at the latest date that you can now give us?

General MACKENZIE. \$585,015.41.

Mr. SMITH. At what date was that, General?

General MACKENZIE. That was December 31, 1905.

Mr. SMITH. What, if any, outstanding contracts were there involving the expenditure of that money?

General MACKENZIE. There was nothing in which that money was involved. We actually had on hand at the end of the year \$709,000. The difference between that and the other figure that I gave is covered by outstanding liabilities and uncompleted contracts, which aggregate about \$124,000.

Mr. SMITH. In view of your statement with reference to this item, we may assume that all our balances are reduced by subtracting outstanding contracts, except as otherwise stated?

General MACKENZIE. Yes; we have always taken out from the money on hand the amount covered by contract. That is all given, Mr. Chairman, in this table item by item—the outstanding liabilities and the uncompleted contracts.

Mr. SMITH. You have a table of all matters covered by appropriations under the control of the Engineer Department up to the 31st of December?

General MACKENZIE. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. Is that table in such form that you can hand it to the reporter, so that we can put it in the hearings?

General MACKENZIE. I could, but I believe it has not been customary for the subcommittee to publish these tables and matters of that kind in the hearings. We have always furnished these tables, but of course with regard to many of these details touching fortifications, where they are given in detail, as is done here now, the locality and the amount available for each having been detailed, ordinarily have not been printed in the hearings.

Mr. SMITH. I realize that it was not customary to print them in the hearings, but I did not know there was any objection to printing the totals.

General MACKENZIE. The totals are of course added for the different localities, and there would be no objection, certainly so far as the committee is concerned, to giving the totals.

Mr. SMITH. You mean allotments have been made to localities from the appropriation as well as the bill itself?

General MACKENZIE. Yes. This shows the amount for each locality.

Mr. SMITH. So that it would be better, if I understand you, General, it would be better as to each item in the bill to ascertain the total expenditure under the item rather than print the detailed statement you have there?

General MACKENZIE. Yes. As to the other balances that are shown in the tables, it should be understood that these amounts are all allotted to these various localities. They are not available for new work, you might say.

Mr. SMITH. They are allotted, but no contracts are out on that?

General MACKENZIE. They are allotted but not covered by definite written contracts.

Mr. GRAFF. But they could not be expended for any other locality?

General MACKENZIE. They could, but it is not desirable that they should be. This amount of money is required to complete work that is already under way at these particular localities.

Mr. SMITH. What were the annual expenditures under this item during the last fiscal year, if I may use that term, although it possibly does not apply to this bill? If you have it there for the year previous to the 31st of December, it would be satisfactory; that is, the total.

Major ABBOT. This year is the first year that our expenditures have been divided on the 31st of December. Our figures for previous years are not brought up to the same date. It could be found out; but it has not been calculated in that way.

Mr. SMITH. Have you any figures for the fiscal year or any other showing the average of expenditures in past times under this head?

Major ABBOT. We have not got it here.

General MACKENZIE. We have not given much consideration to this item in the way of figures, inasmuch as there was no new appropriation asked for.

Mr. FITZGERALD. Let me ask you this, General: Does the Secretary of War omit this recommendation because of the fact that this new board that had been appointed to review the Endicott board plan had not yet completed its work and made its recommendations?

General MACKENZIE. I could not say certainly. That may have had some influence, but I think it was more with the idea of cutting down the estimate. Of course, the estimates as presented were very large, and the Secretary instructed that they be reduced quite a large amount.

Mr. FITZGERALD. In your annual report you give an estimate "For construction of gun and mortar batteries." Was any particular line of batteries and mortars contemplated by this estimate that would have been required under the Endicott plan?

General MACKENZIE. That estimate, which the Secretary of War omitted, was for going ahead and starting new works in accordance with the Endicott board plan. We still have estimates for the work of bringing some of the older fortifications up to date, and of putting in some accessories in the way of fire control, and searchlights, and matters of that kind. Such things were retained, inasmuch as it was thought that only a limited amount of appropriation would be granted, and these items were considered to be of more importance at the present time than to go on with new works. That was the main reason. It was upon our own suggestion, to a large extent, that the reduction was made by the Secretary of War, and that this item was stricken out.

Mr. FITZGERALD. Your annual report is not published?

General MACKENZIE. It is published, but so far as the fortification work is concentrated it is rather general.

Mr. SMITH. Is there any other member of the subcommittee who desires to ask General Mackenzie a question on this item?

Mr. KEIFER. I want to ask a question in order to find out the uniform rule—why there was a change in the allotments from the fiscal year to the calendar year.

General MACKENZIE. Not a change of allotment, but this statement of balances available that we have brought with us is made up to the 31st of December.

Mr. SMITH. That was done on my request in order that we might have the latest possible information as to what the balance was, for the benefit of this committee.

Mr. KEIFER. Then it was not a change at all, but merely a matter of convenience in getting the figures?

General MACKENZIE. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. We thought a statement up to the 1st of January would be valuable, inasmuch as these are not annual appropriations, but are available until expended. The later they come down the more satisfactory. I requested Mr. Courts to ask him to bring them down to the 1st of January.

MODERNIZING OLDER EMPLACEMENTS.

The next item is for modernizing older emplacements. What is the available unexpended balance of this on the 31st day of December?

General MACKENZIE. \$332,626.96.

Mr. SMITH. Now, during the time since this appropriation was made a year ago you have only expended about \$120,000 of the \$450,000 that was given?

General MACKENZIE. I would explain that, Mr. Chairman, in this way: Of course we can not go ahead or make arrangements for the expenditure of this money until we get it. That is, we can not expend it until it is appropriated. It then becomes necessary to have the different officers throughout the country report as to the character of work that is needed under this appropriation.

We get their estimates in the office, and of course the total amount of these generally exceeds very materially the amount of the appropriation. We then have to allot it. Then the detailed drawings have to be made, so that it results that during the first half of the year very little construction is done, and the main part of the expenditures comes in the second six months; so that now the plans are all made and arrangements are made, and this amount will be expended fully by the close of the fiscal year.

Mr. SMITH. Now, you say that after you get the appropriation you send out to the different places for information as to just what is needed. You have, of course, General, information on this subject before you can make your estimates of the total cost?

General MACKENZIE. Oh, yes; of course; but it is with a view to getting the latest information and selecting and determining which are the most urgent pieces of work to be done with the amount actually given by Congress.

Mr. SMITH. Have these new emplacements or new designs of emplacements greatly improved the efficiency of these guns?

General MACKENZIE. Yes, sir; of course; and they are absolutely necessary, you may say, for the proper handling of the guns. They are built especially in connection with the operation of the new improved ordnance.

Mr. SMITH. You speak chiefly of the improvement in the stability of the emplacements?

General MACKENZIE. You are referring to this item, are you? Of course many of these emplacements were built ten years or more ago, and there have been constant changes and improvements and little modification in ordnance and in the operating of guns, and there has been a gradual improvement in the construction of emplacements.

Mr. SMITH. But in the report of Major Abbot, Acting Chief of Engineers, stress seems to be laid on the ability of the new emplacements to withstand the blast and jar due to the use of smokeless powder?

General MACKENZIE. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. Will not the old emplacement for a reasonable time stand that jar?

Major ABBOT. It is not so much the jar. The portion of the parapet right under the muzzle of the gun is what suffers from the new smokeless powder, and in the older batteries that is made of Rosendale cement, which is eroded several inches every time the gun is fired. It has to be replaced; but if you cut down that upper surface of Rosendale cement some 18 inches deep over a considerable area and replace it with Portland cement it will withstand the blast of smokeless powder. With the advent of smokeless powder the blast was

greatly increased, and this necessitated this change to be made on all the older emplacements, which perfectly withstood the effects of brown powder.

Mr. SMITH. To what extent does it impair the efficiency of the guns now in service—the form of guns now in service—the fact that this old form is in use?

Major ABBOT. The injury is not serious, but the looks of the batteries are impaired, and that attracts the attention of inspectors every time they see it. It looks ragged to have broken-up slopes and embankments around the guns, and numerous official protests and complaints follow. As to the effectiveness in time of war, there would be practically no effect. With the passage of time and the action of frost the upper surface of the injured parapet would be disintegrated unless the surface was maintained so that the water would run off. The frost would penetrate and the freezing would crack the cement so that these breaks certainly ought to be repaired. When the Rosendale top layer is replaced with Portland-cement concrete of sufficient thickness it protects all the rest of the Rosendale concrete parapet below.

Mr. SMITH. You see we are simply trying to find out how pressing that is.

General MACKENZIE. That is only a portion of the work that comes under this item. The other point is improving the delivery of ammunition to the guns.

Major ABBOT. The guns now fire about once a minute. The guns that were first supplied to us were expected to fire about once in five minutes, and in the first instance we provided ammunition service for that rate; but inasmuch as the guns, by modifications of the carriages, can now be fired once in a minute we must overhaul our ammunition hoists and other methods of ammunition supply in order to get the powder and ammunition to the guns as rapidly as they can be fired; that has entailed a very large expenditure.

Mr. SMITH. This is chiefly a civilian committee. Does the emplacement include all means of delivering the ammunition?

Major ABBOT. Yes; the Ordnance Department supplies the carriage and the gun only. We supply the parapets and loading platforms, magazines, and projectile rooms, as well as all means of transporting ammunition and projectiles from the lower stories of the batteries to the upper levels.

Mr. SMITH. I did not mean so much what the Engineering Department had charge of as whether the modernizing of the older emplacements technically included the means of transportation of the ammunition.

Major ABBOT. Yes; it does. It includes modernizing everything exterior to the gun carriages.

Mr. KEIFER. It is not only necessary to have improved conditions in order to protect the guns and gunners, but it is really a part of the fortification. Is not that the principal thing?

Major ABBOT. Yes; the gun crews were well protected in the older emplacements; but they want conveniences now necessary in handling the ammunition with the required speed—they want more area. One of the items in this heading is consequently widening platforms. They used to be able to ram the charge home with a rammer staff projecting beyond the loading platform, but now the rammer has to be

handled so fast that the crew needs more room so they can reach the end of it; as a result we had to add to the width of the loading platform.

Mr. KEIFER. It is just as essential to keep that in perfect condition as any other part of the fortification?

Major ABBOT. Yes; that is right.

Mr. SMITH. Now, there is another matter that I wanted to interrogate you about, General. After you got the \$450,000 you said you sent out for detailed information as to how much would be needed at each place. You have made no change, however, in your estimate of the total cost of this work. Did not this more detailed and later information make any change at all in the estimate of what would be required to complete the work?

General MACKENZIE. The general character of work is not changed by sending out this information. We sent out to get more details. We sent out to get detailed plans for these different portions of the work in different localities.

Mr. SMITH. Would not that more full information in any degree change the estimate in any amount as to the completion of the work of modernizing these emplacements?

General MACKENZIE. This amount may change, of course, Mr. Chairman; new necessities may come up, but up to the present time we have not seen any occasion for changing that estimate as first made.

Mr. SMITH. So that these detailed estimates as they first came in did not exceed your estimate?

General MACKENZIE. They would be detailed plans, you may say, of doing a certain piece of work. Say there was an item for widening the platform and an item for a new ammunition hoist, these plans would cover all details with respect to that particular work. Of course, at any time, adding all the detailed estimates together, they would give a little different figure from that \$942,500, but up to this time there has been no necessity for changing that figure.

Mr. SMITH. This appropriation of \$450,000 under the law, as I am now advised, was available, not at the commencement of the last fiscal year, but as soon as the bill was signed. Is that correct, as you understand it?

General MACKENZIE. Yes; on the 3d of March.

Mr. SMITH. So that in place of this expenditure that you have made covering six months, it has, in fact, covered ten months and more; about ten months. Is that right?

General MACKENZIE. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. The appropriation of March 3, 1905, was the first appropriation for this item.

General MACKENZIE. I would suggest that the season of the year necessarily cuts quite an item.

Mr. SMITH. It is practically a full year, as far as working seasons are concerned, since that \$450,000 was appropriated, is it not, General? There would be no time between now and the 3d of March that would be seasonable for construction work, so that you have in fact had all of a seasonable year.

General MACKENZIE. We have had the appropriation for one seasonable year, but the preliminary work of getting plans and allotting