

**RIVER AND HARBOR BILL. HEARING ON
H. R. 10766. HELD BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBOR,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SIXTY-
SEVENTH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION**

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HEARINGS

ON

H. R. 10766

HELD BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBOR

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

CONSISTING OF

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JANUARY 30, 31; FEBRUARY 2, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, AND 24.
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RIVER AND HARBOR BILL.

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Monday, January 30, 1922.

The committee this day met, Hon. Henry Z. Osborne presiding.

STATEMENT OF GEN. HARRY TAYLOR, ASSISTANT CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY.

Mr. OSBORNE. Gen. Taylor, the chairman of the committee is away on account of sickness in his family and he desired the committee to go ahead and work during his absence. We would be glad to receive from you any suggestions as to matters that should go in this bill. I think that is what we will undertake to do at present.

Gen. TAYLOR. Is it contemplated to prepare a bill along the line of the bill that Senator Jones has introduced in the Senate? That bill proposes to adopt certain projects and certain other legislative matters are taken up by it.

Mr. OSBORNE. Those are just authorizations in Senator Jones's bill?

Gen. TAYLOR. That is all. They are authorizations of projects and modifications of projects. It also includes an authorization for the abandonment of projects recommended for abandonment under authority of the act of 1915; it also includes other legislative matters.

Mr. KINDRED. Are there any new authorizations?

Gen. TAYLOR. Yes, sir. It is proposed to adopt a number of new projects, some of which are quite important.

ABANDONMENT OF PROJECTS

Mr. LAYTON. And to abandon any?

Gen. TAYLOR. Yes, sir. The river and harbor act of 1915 required the Chief of Engineers to report on certain named projects with a view to their abandonment, and also directed him to submit a report on any other project which he might consider should be abandoned or modified in the interest of economy and efficiency. Under that authorization recommendations for the abandonment of quite a number of projects that are out of date were submitted. In this bill Senator Jones takes up practically all of those.

Mr. OSBORNE. This is his personal bill that has not been adopted yet?

Gen. TAYLOR. It is his bill.

Mr. OSBORNE. I suggest to the committee that perhaps it would be desirable to take up and consider these items. Have you made recommendations or suggestions to Senator Jones in regard to those?

Gen. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. OSBORNE. It may be advisable to take up these items and such others as may properly come before the committee.

Mr. LAYTON. Do I understand that this bill comprehends practically your recommendations at this time?

Gen. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. LAYTON. So that if we did not have that bill, but with your presence here before the committee, it would be just practically what there is in that bill that your recommendations amount to.

Gen. TAYLOR. Substantially so. There are a few changes I would like to recommend.

Mr. LAYTON. We will be very thankful for the modifications in order to show that we have done something outside of talking.

Gen. TAYLOR. I can explain the various provisions there if you would like to have me to do so.

AUTHORIZATION FOR MAINTENANCE WORK.

Gen. TAYLOR. I suggest that section 1, which proposes to authorize an appropriation of not to exceed \$17,000,000 annually for preservation and maintenance, be considered first. That was intended to be an authorization for us to go before the Appropriations Committee and ask for any amount up to \$17,000,000 that might be necessary for the maintenance of river and harbor works. We are expending ordinarily from eleven to twelve million dollars for maintenance from river and harbor appropriations.

PERMANENT APPROPRIATIONS.

A question has been raised as to continuing appropriations, and the Appropriations Committee at the present time has under consideration the advisability of recommending the annulment or repeal of all of these continuing appropriations. One of the continuing appropriations is the one from which we get the funds for operating and care of locks and canals and other improvements where there are fixed structures. That is contained in the authority granted by the river and harbor act of March 3, 1909, which authorizes the Secretary of War to draw warrants upon the Treasury for such amounts as may be necessary for the operation of the canals. That authority, therefore, makes it unnecessary for us to come to this committee for money each year for the operating and care of canals. If that authority should be repealed it would then be necessary for us to make our estimates for the operating and care of canals the same as we do for other improvements and as we are now expending about \$5,000,000 annually for the operating and care of canals which have heretofore been constructed that amount should be added to the amount which we now expend for maintenance, about \$11,000,000 or \$12,000,000, making the \$17,000,000 which is given in this bill. Of course, if we do not need that much for maintenance we would not ask for it.

Mr. KINDRED. Is that the aggregate appropriation carried in Senator Jones's bill?

Gen. TAYLOR. That is simply the first section. That is simply an authorization for us to submit estimates for maintenance up to \$17,000,000. In other words, that will give us a standing before the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. OSBORNE. That is for maintenance alone, not for continuing work?

Gen. TAYLOR. That is not continuing work. That is for maintenance of completed structures alone.

Mr. OSBORNE. Where they have silt to look after?

Mr. KINDRED. May I ask from your reading of the bill—I have no copy of the bill here—is there any approximate limitation taken for that whole appropriation suggested by the bill?

Gen. TAYLOR. No, sir.

Mr. McDUFFIE. This is simply a question of maintenance of projects already completed?

Mr. LAYTON. All of these projects in this bill of Senator Jones are already completed?

Gen. TAYLOR. No, sir. All the other projects that are referred to in that bill are new projects which he proposes for adoption. This first section relates to the maintenance of projects which have been previously adopted by Congress and completed.

Mr. OSBORNE. Are there any other questions in regard to this? We will not act on these items as we go along, but will take them up afterwards.

Gen. TAYLOR. I think that the amount of \$17,000,000 will be just about sufficient if the continuing appropriation for operating and care of locks and canals is repealed. It is about what we are spending now.

Mr. OSBORNE. In the event that the Appropriations Committee makes an appropriation for rivers and harbors this year of an amount agreed upon with the Director of the Budget and the Secretary of War, \$27,850,000, approximately that would be the amount taken out for maintenance?

Gen. TAYLOR. Yes, sir. We would take out of that for maintenance probably about \$11,000,000 or \$12,000,000, because we still have th's general authority to draw on the Treasury Department for operating and care.

EXPENDITURES.

Mr. McDUFFIE. About what percentage of the expenditures in the last few years has been for new work?

Gen. TAYLOR. We expended during the last fiscal year about \$41,000,000. Eleven million dollars was for maintenance and \$30,000,000 for other improvements. Three-fourths of the work in the last year was for continuing work on previous authorizations, including on the Ohio River all of the lock and dam construction with the other improvements. We spent \$6,821,955.03 on the Ohio River in lock and dam construction, which is included with the other improvements.

Mr. LAYTON. As the result of former authorizations and former appropriations?

Gen. TAYLOR. Yes, sir; former appropriations. As it was explained before here, the error was made in the first place of taking into consideration only the appropriation bill made last year and considering that that was the amount we had for carrying on our work last year. It was only a small part of the amount we had for carrying on the work the last year. We actually expended \$40,811,608.81.

APPROPRIATIONS AVAILABLE.

Mr. LAYTON. It has all been stated in some former hearings, but I think it is just as well to have it repeated in these hearings. How much money have you now actually, out of former appropriations, that are available for construction or maintenance for continued prosecution of the work?

Gen. TAYLOR. The actual amount that we had on the 1st of December, 1921, was \$28,324,247.89.

Mr. LAYTON. Right there I want to make it clear, because I am mixed up myself, that \$28,000,000 is all that is unexpended of the money that has been appropriated previously in connection with river and harbor work of every kind?

Gen. TAYLOR. That is all remaining of that which has been appropriated. That is all the money that is unexpended that has been appropriated in the river and harbor acts of any kind for other work.

Mr. LAYTON. But this is nothing like all that has been practically authorized if you are going to complete authorized projects?

Gen. TAYLOR. No. The money which has been authorized for projects which have been adopted—that is, the amount remaining to complete projects which have been adopted by Congress, would run into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. KINBRED. How much of that is for maintenance out of that \$28,000,000, and how much for specific projects?

Gen. TAYLOR. All but \$188,000 had been appropriated or allotted to specific projects. Of course, the money which had been allotted to specific projects, if it is in the act of 1920 or 1921, could be withdrawn from that project and allotted to other projects where it was shown to be actually necessary.

In other words, all of the \$28,000,000 that you can count on as being free money is the \$188,000. Out of that \$28,000,000, \$9,774,165.13 is covered by outstanding contracts and obligations, so that on the 1st of December we had unobligated \$18,550,982.76. During December our actual expenditures were \$2,551,769.78, so that that left on the 1st of January about \$16,000,000 unobligated for all further river and harbor work, and, as we are expending or did expend in December \$2,500,000, and in November \$2,962,000, in October \$3,180,000, etc., you can very readily see that by the 1st of July, when we may expect another appropriation to become available, we will not have a very large amount of money left.

Mr. LAYTON. That amount of \$16,000,000 is all that will be added to the appropriations made now?

Gen. TAYLOR. That was the amount left on the 1st of January.

Mr. LAYTON. It is all that can be added to it?

Gen. TAYLOR. Yes, sir; and we will probably spend \$2,000,000 in January. We will say we have \$14,000,000 now to be added to whatever money is appropriated, and each month that goes by that amount is reduced by the amount

spent. I have stated several times, and I would like to repeat again so that there can be no misunderstanding, that practically every dollar that is spent next year will be money that is to be appropriated. We can not depend on any past appropriation as available for next year.

Mr. LAYTON. You men to say that by July 1, 1922, there will be practically no money at your command?

Gen. TAYLOR. For all practical purposes, not a dollar.

Mr. McDUFFIE. It amounts to going out of business?

PROJECTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

Gen. TAYLOR. It amounts to going out of business, absolutely. Every district engineer has been planning his work to make his appropriations last, if possible, until the 1st of July. In that connection, it might be interesting for me to give you a statement of the condition of the various improvements, or rather to show you how many we are actually at work on at the present time. This statement was made up as of the 1st of December. You know, in carrying on our work we divide the country up into engineering districts, each district consisting of quite a number of improvements. The New England district has two districts, one with headquarters at Boston, and another with headquarters at Providence. The Boston district takes in works on the Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts coast as far as the south shore of Cape Cod; and the Providence district goes from the south shore of Cape Cod to the west Connecticut line. In the Boston district there are 22 works. On the 1st of December there was one work in progress.

In the Providence district there are 29 works. On the 1st of December there were 2 in progress. One of these was closed down for lack of funds, December 24 and the other, New Haven Harbor, was closed down the middle of December.

At the end of December there was only one work in New England which was in progress and that was a small work. All the rest were closed down for lack of money.

In the first New York district, which includes New York Harbor, Hudson River, and works on Lake Champlain and many of the smaller harbors near New York City there are 35 works and there were 6 upon which work was in progress on December 1.

In the second New York district, which includes works on the west side of New York Harbor and a portion of New Jersey, there are 14 works and improvements. There are 5 on which work was in progress.

In Philadelphia there were 7 improvements and 2 in progress.

At Wilmington, Del., there were 28 improvements and 4 in progress.

Mr. LAYTON. For all the rest you had practically no money.

Gen. TAYLOR. We had no money. In the Baltimore district there are 25 improvements and 2 are in progress, Baltimore Harbor and Tangier Channel.

Mr. LAYTON. How many contracts involving how much money have been made during the war at high prices of material and labor?

Gen. TAYLOR. Comparatively few, and the reason why we had money to expend last year was due to the fact that during the war we did not make contracts at the high prices that then prevailed. In that connection, here is something that will be rather interesting, to show what the tendency is at the present time in prices.

FLOATING PLANT.

Mr. LAYTON. What is the investment on the part of the United States Government in its dredges, etc., that are used in the prosecution of these projects, and how much do they cost to maintain even if they are not at work?

Gen. TAYLOR. A document which is printed as a Senate committee print contains a letter from the War Department dated May 5, 1921, giving a statement of the more important equipment and floating plant used on river and harbor works, with the cost.

The first cost of the floating plant, that is, the more important items of the floating plant, which does not include ordinary small items, concrete plants, shovels, etc., was \$24,319,824.22.

That is shown by districts on page 6 of the document to which I refer. The more important items listed are sea-going harbor dredges, 26; pipe-line dredges, 74; dipper dredges, 41; bucket dredges, 25; canal boats, 53, etc.

Mr. LAYTON. In that work if they were not ever used at all, how much deterioration would take place per annum?

Gen. TAYLOR. The deterioration would be quite an item. Probably the deterioration would amount to 5 per cent of the cost. That would be something over \$1,000,000. In addition to that we have the maintenance of watchmen of the plant while laid up, quite a number of employes.

Mr. LAYTON. What would that amount to?

Gen. TAYLOR. That would not be a very heavy expense but it would run into the thousands of dollars.

TENDENCY OF COSTS.

In reference to the prices we pay, you asked if we made many contracts at high prices. As I explained, the reason we had money at the beginning of the last fiscal year was that we had refrained from making contracts when prices were very high. We had money on Baltimore harbor and we attempted to make contracts for dredging there two or three times. We did not obtain very good prices but we did make one contract in 1919 for work which was quite important, and we paid at that time 23 cents a cubic yard, and under date of November 28, 1921, we made a contract for further work in the same section of the harbor, which is a continuation exactly of the work we had previously done, but which involved a little longer tow in that the first work was at the beginning of the channel and the work which was let in 1921 was farther up the channel, and we let the last contract at 12½ cents per cubic yard, which is almost one-half.

Another example of the tendency of prices is this: We purchased some steel barges for use in the Mississippi River, at three different times, once in 1920, twice in 1921. These barges were built to the same plans and the same specifications. The price October 26, 1920, for four of these barges was \$21,490; and on July 11, 1921, for two barges the price was \$13,880; and on September 22, 1921, for fifteen barges the price was \$9,250.

Mr. LAYTON. That is for each?

Gen. TAYLOR. Each.

Mr. KINDRED. Of the same capacity?

Gen. TAYLOR. Absolutely the same barge, the same plans and the same specifications. The last contractor stated that he was taking the contract at the bare price of labor and materials and would make no profit and nothing for overhead expenses or other incidentals.

We bought a large number of barges at that time, 15, because we did get such an extremely favorable price. That, I think, is an exceptional case, but it shows the tendency. All the dredging contractors are practically out of business at the present time. We could get dredging work done anywhere for low prices at the present time if we had the money to do it.

Mr. KINDRED. While that saves the Government, let us hope, for the benefit of the prosperity of the country, that that situation will not continue very long.

Gen. TAYLOR. It would be helpful right now if we had some money to keep those plants employed.

Mr. LAYTON. Have you got as many barges constructed as you need?

Gen. TAYLOR. No, sir; nor dredges nor any other plants. I have explained this to the committee before, that during the war, on account of high prices and difficulty in obtaining labor, and on account of the high prices immediately after the war, we had to let a great deal of our plant deteriorate to a very great extent, far more than we ought to.

Mr. LAYTON. From dredges down?

Gen. TAYLOR. Everything we have, and it would require a great deal of money now to put our plant in really good condition, and we very badly need some new dredges.

Mr. LAYTON. Is the deterioration from use greater than the deterioration from nonuse in your plants?

Gen. TAYLOR. No, sir; the deterioration from nonuse is greater than from use. Any plant will deteriorate more rapidly when it is not being used than when it is used.

Mr. OSBORNE. We will meet again at 10.30 o'clock to-morrow morning.

(Thereupon, the committee adjourned to meet again at 10.30 o'clock a. m., Tuesday, January 31, 1922.)

RIVER AND HARBOR BILL.

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Tuesday, January 31, 1922.

The committee met at 10.30 o'clock a. m., with Hon. Henry Z. Osborne, of California, presiding.

**STATEMENT OF BRIG. GEN. HARRY TAYLOR, ASSISTANT CHIEF
OF ENGINEERS, WAB DEPARTMENT.**

Mr. OSBORNE. Gen. Taylor, at yesterday's session you had reached the second section of this proposed bill of Senator Jones of Washington (S. 3017), and I believe it would conserve time to take up each item as it appears in the bill and then such items as may be presented later. The first item is Green Bay, Wis. Perhaps it might be informing if you will explain what was the purpose in putting those items in the bill.

NEW PROJECTS.

Gen. TAYLOR. Last March the Senate Committee on Commerce addressed a letter to the Secretary of War in which a number of questions relating to rivers and harbors were asked. The first question asked for a list of projects heretofore recommended to Congress but not yet adopted, with a statement of the projects recommended, giving the present depth, the commerce, estimated cost, and the date of the report to Congress.

Under date of May 5, 1921, a letter in reply to the request of the Commerce Committee was sent by the Secretary of War to the chairman of the Commerce Committee. That letter was printed as a Senate committee print. On pages 9 to 12, inclusive, is given a list of the projects which have been recommended to Congress but not yet adopted. It will be noted that that list was given chronologically, going back as far as the act of 1802 and the date of the report of 1803. But on page 4 of the printed document this statement was made:

"A table in which are given new projects, which, in the judgment of the Chief of Engineers, should be adopted in the next river and harbor bill, is herewith. These projects are given in two classes; one, those of first importance, and the other those of next or secondary importance. It will be noted that in the table submitted in response to question 1, is a long list of projects recommended to Congress but not yet adopted, the recommendations as to which, in some cases, were made over 17 years ago. On account of the probability of changed conditions since these recommendations were made it is recommended that no projects for which the recommendations for adoption were made more than four years ago be adopted without reconsideration, except the two on the list herewith (Green Bay, Wis., and Clatskanie River, Oreg.) where the conditions are known to be now the same as those which existed at the time the projects were recommended. It is recommended that when the projects for Milwaukee Harbor, New York and New Jersey channels, and Sabine-Neches waterway are adopted that the continuing contract authorization in amount sufficient to complete each be given."

Then from the list of projects submitted the Senate Committee on Commerce selected those for adoption which appear in these bills, S. 3017 and S. 2881.

CONTINUING CONTRACT AUTHORIZATIONS.

Another question in the letter just referred to was a request for a list of the projects which in the judgment of the engineer's office should be put under continuing contracts for completion with an estimate of the amount of contract authorization in each case. The answer to that question is given on page 2 of the printed list, and from that list a number were selected and appear in section 2 of S. 2881. I have no knowledge as to why the committee selected those 5 out of about 20 that appear in the list. I suppose that they thought they could not put them all under continuing contracts as the amounts recommended were too large and they selected those which in their opinion were the most important.

Mr. OSBORNE. Do you know why they cut those out in the subsequent bill, 3017?

Gen. TAYLOR. I do not know.