

**CUMBERLAND RIVER ABOVE NASHVILLE,
TENN: HEARINGS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE
IMPROVEMENT OF THE CUMBERLAND RIVER
ABOVE NASHVILLE, TENN. HELD BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SIXTY-FIFTH
CONGRESS, JANUARY 14 AND 16, 1918**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649014958

Cumberland River Above Nashville, Tenn: Hearings on the Subject of the improvement of the Cumberland river above Nashville, Tenn. Held before the committee on rivers and harbors, house of representatives sixty-fifth congress, January 14 and 16, 1918 by Various

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Cover @ 2017

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CUMBERLAND RIVER ABOVE NASHVILLE, TENN.

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Monday, January 14, 1918.

The committee this day met, Hon. John H. Small (chairman), presiding.

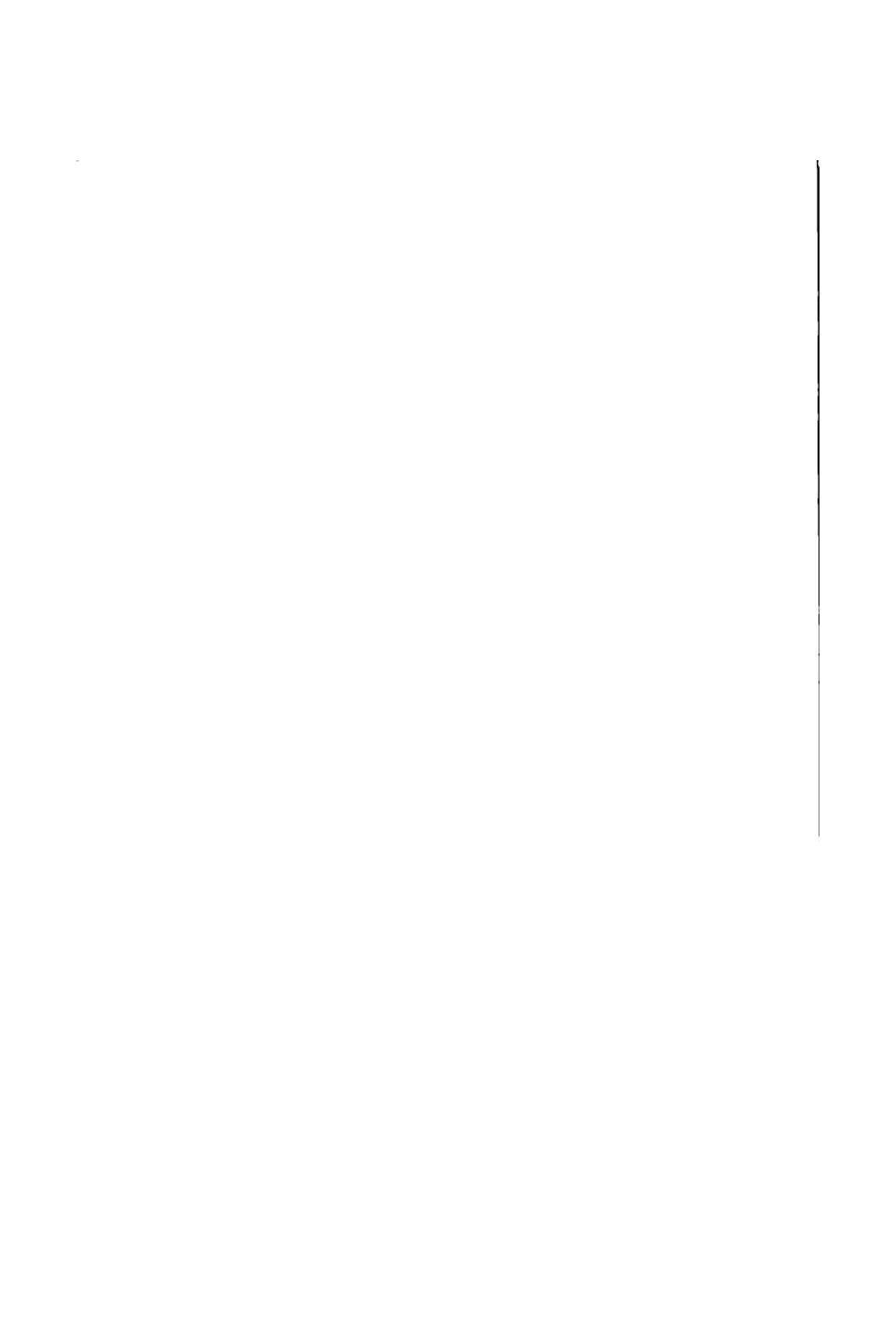
The CHAIRMAN. The committee will be glad to hear from you, Mr. Powers.

STATEMENT OF HON. CALEB POWERS, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM KENTUCKY.

Mr. POWERS. I desire to speak in reference to the upper Cumberland, Mr. Chairman. I hardly know whether this project in which I am interested, the canalization of the upper Cumberland, from Nashville to Burnside, Ky., could be called a new project or an old one. My judgment is it ought to be called an old project, because way back in 1886 the Congress of the United States approved the complete canalization of that stream, and since that date seven new locks and dams have been built on the Tennessee side of the Cumberland River, going from the Kentucky line, and one on the upper reaches of the Cumberland, at Burnside, Ky. The Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and the Chief Engineer of the Army, back in 1906, I believe it was—at any rate in that neighborhood—recommended that no further improvement on the Cumberland River be made at the time, but since that time, and since I have been a Member of this House—I have been here eight years—this project has been approved by the Chief of Engineers of the Army and by the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and in 1914 this committee recommended favorably to the House and the House passed the bill putting the upper Cumberland back on the map.

The CHAIRMAN. That was the bill in the last session of the last Congress, of course?

Mr. POWERS. There have been two bills. One was in 1914, and in that year this committee reported favorably \$340,000, and that passed the House (but was killed in the Senate by the filibuster of the Senator from Ohio), helping to complete Lock No. 8 on the Tennessee side, and to purchase the sites for all the remaining locks and dams on the Cumberland River between Burnside, Ky., and Nashville, Tenn.; about four on the Tennessee side and six or eight on the Kentucky side. Congress has appropriated in the neighborhood of \$3,000,000, and that has been expended in improving the Cumberland River below Nashville, Tenn. About a like sum of money, above \$3,000,000, has been appropriated and expended by Congress on the



canalization of the Cumberland River above Nashville, Tenn. There is a gap in there not yet completed. There is a lock and dam on the upper reaches of the Cumberland River, 30 miles below Burnside, Ky.

The CHAIRMAN. How far is Burnside above Nashville?

Mr. POWERS. Three hundred and fifty-seven miles, is my recollection.

The canalization of this river has been begun both below and above. The usual course is to begin from the mouth and go up, but no reasons exist for such a course on this stream because the Queen & Crescent Railroad, running from Cincinnati, and the north to Chattanooga, and the south through Burnside, Ky., goes across the head waters of the Cumberland River at that point. So transportation facilities are furnished at the head of the river the same as at the mouth of the river. About \$6,000,000 have been expended on this stream, going from the mouth up and the head down. There is a stretch of territory in there that has not yet been locked and dammed. It will take in the neighborhood of ten locks more to complete this stretch of river. The locks and dams have been extended largely from the mouth up, for the purpose, I take it, of reaching the fine coal and timber lands below Burnside, and between Burnside and Nashville, Tenn.

Mr. KENNEDY. How much of the reach of the river has not been improved in that stretch?

Mr. POWERS. About 8 or 10 locks—I expect 100 to 150 miles, possibly.

It is especially important at this time, from the viewpoint of getting coal and timber. If there is any one thing needed by this country toward the successful prosecution of this war it is coal. Coal is essential for transportation facilities; coal is essential for running the factories and munition plants; coal is essential for household purposes; and if there is any one thing essential to the successful prosecution of this war it is coal, and this territory is rich in both coal and timber. I will read to you from a report of the Board of Engineers of Rivers and Harbors of February 4, 1914. In this report they said this:

A large part of this area is covered with timber of high value within hauling distance of the river, but under the existing uncertainties of navigation it can not be economically marketed. Much of the land in the valley and back in the hills is fertile, but can not be cultivated to advantage for the same reason. There are also extensive coal lands that can be made tributary to the upper reaches of the river by short rail connections, and it is claimed that these lands will be developed and that coal will be shipped out in large quantities.

The reason why no coal-mining operations have been put in operation along this river up to this time is this: The river is navigable four or five months out of the year, but, of course, during the summer season it is not. No coal mining operation will be set up along that river, no railroads will be built out to these fine coal fields, because to run a coal plant, you have got to run it the year round, and can not run it six months and close it down the remaining six. As soon as this river is navigable the year round coal mining operations will be put up along that river, short lines of railroads and branches will be extended out into those rich hills,

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and it is tremendously important from that viewpoint that this river be canalized at the speediest possible moment.

There is a scope of territory down there—and I will read you a little further about the timber directly—as large as the State of Vermont that has not got a foot of railroad in it, not a foot. The county of Clinton is rich in coal.

The CHAIRMAN. Along what section of the upper river does that lie?

Mr. POWERS. Right along this river.

The CHAIRMAN. How far above Nashville?

Mr. POWERS. Down in Mr. Hull's district. The railroad does not get up as far as Lock No. 8, I think, on the Tennessee side, but it is from about Lock 8 on the Tennessee side up to Burnside, Ky. There is a scope of territory, as I say, there as big as Vermont that has not got a foot of railroad in the entire section.

The CHAIRMAN. What is the nearest railroad line to these coal fields?

Mr. POWERS. The nearest railroad line to these coal fields is the Q. & C. Railroad that runs through Burnside, Ky., and Burnside is the headwaters of navigation, and, of course, as soon as this river is canalized from Burnside on down the river, to reach these coal fields that will be shipped up the river to Burnside, then have the outlet north and south.

I was a member of this committee, and I never would have left it but for the fact that I could not hold my position here and at the same time retain the position of leading minority member on another important committee. I know that it has been the policy of this committee to make appropriations for streams along which railroads run on either bank, and I voted for them. For instance, the Sacramento River, in California. If we had a railroad running up and down either bank of the Cumberland, I do not think I would be here asking an appropriation. But the equities of our case—having no transportation by rail, having no transportation by water—it looks to me that it ought to appeal to the fair sense of the members of this committee and to the Members of Congress.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Powers, what are the names of the principal towns on the upper Cumberland between Nashville and Burnside?

Mr. POWERS. Well, the county seat towns, Monticello, which is the county seat of Wayne County, that is the first county down from Burnside, and that county seat is not on the river exactly. I do not believe there is a single county seat on the river except Burkesville.

The CHAIRMAN. Along this river?

Mr. POWERS. Along this river. Burkesville is not exactly on it, but right close, and Monticello is pretty close.

As to the timber in this particular section, according to the census of 1910, there were 283,200 acres of standing timber in Clinton County, and 51,367 acres of woodland. Cumberland County had 185,760 acres of standing timber and 95,341 acres of woodland; Monroe County had 86,945 acres of standing timber; Russell County had 80,666 acres.

Through that section of country, which is the largest hardwood section in the entire United States east of the Mississippi River—

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southeastern Kentucky is a tremendously rich country; the entire State of Pennsylvania, great as it is, has only about 14,000 square miles of bituminous coal territory in the entire State. Southeastern Kentucky has 10,000 square miles of bituminous coal territory, as large in vein and as good in quality as any found in the entire State of Pennsylvania. The thing we need is an outlet; the thing we need is transportation facilities; the thing we need is a chance to get to the markets of the world. You take it up in Harland County, to illustrate: A few years ago—that is one of the counties in my district—there was not a single railroad touching it anywhere.

Railroads have gone in there since that date, gone up the three forks of the Cumberland, and on the Clover Fork the railroad has gone up 7 miles within the last two or three years, and from Harland, Ky., 7 miles up that fork of the river it is virtually a solid town 7 miles down, just one coal operation on top of another coal operation; and they are stretching it up 7 miles more, and five years from to-day 14 miles up that fork of the Cumberland River will be a solid town. There are six big veins of coal under that mountain, and they are workable veins of coal, some of them 6 or 7 feet in thickness. It is a wonderful country, and it is a wonderful coal territory. I take it \$3,000,000 would not have been expended on the Cumberland below Nashville and \$3,000,000 above but for the fact of reaching this tremendously rich coal and timber country. Are we going to stop; are we going to throw down and quit? We have got to the very point of reaching what we want. Are we going to throw up the sponge and say we will appropriate no further money, or are we going ahead and complete it?

It may not be germane to this subject, but in one of these little counties here, below Burnside, Ky., the late Shelby M. Cullom, the veteran statesman from Illinois, was born; and in the next little county below it, the county of Clinton, produced two governors, one for the State of Tennessee, Gov. Benton McMillin, and Gov. Bramlette, of Kentucky; and another little county just below has the unique distinction of producing one governor for two States, the State of Kentucky and one of the Western States, Montana, I believe—Preston H. Leslie.

The thing the people need is opportunities. The world needs this coal and timber, and I trust you gentlemen can see your way clear to at least put in this bill an appropriation as large as we had in 1914, which carried \$340,000, to buy up these lock and dam sites and to start this very much needed river improvement.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Powers, will you allow me to ask you one question?

Mr. POWERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. KENNEDY. I notice the commerce in 1916 has fallen off very largely. How do you account for that?

Mr. POWERS. What are the figures for 1916?

Mr. KENNEDY. The figure for 1916, excluding sand and gravel, is 68 tons; the year before 95; the year before that 116; the year before that 120; and the year before that 165.

Mr. POWERS. You mean what is the particular thing?

Mr. KENNEDY. What is the cause?

Mr. POWERS. What is the particular thing to which you have reference?