

WATERWAYS COMMISSION REPORT

PEOPLE'S ADVOCATES OF IMPROVEMENT OF WATERWAYS

(Continued from Page One.)

coordinating the work of the various departments so far as it relates to waterways. Otherwise there will not only be delay, but the people as a whole will fail to get from their streams the benefits to which they are justly entitled.

The commission recognizes that the cost of improving our inland waterways will be large, but far less than would be required to relieve the congestion of traffic by railway extension. The benefits of such improvement will be large, also, and they will touch the daily life of our people at every point, uniting the interests of all the states and sections of our country. The cost and benefits should be equitably distributed, by cooperation with the states and the communities, corporations and individuals beneficially affected. I earnestly concur in the commission's recommendation to this end. Such cooperation should result in the prompt adoption of the progressive policy of inland waterway development.

Hitherto our national policy of inland waterway development has been largely negative. No single agency has been responsible under the congress for making the best use of our rivers, or for exercising foresight in their development. In the absence of a comprehensive plan, the only safe policy was carrying out the great duty of improving our inland waterways. While we delay, our rivers remain unused, our traffic is periodically congested, the materials and natural resources of the country related to waterways are being steadily absorbed by great monopolies, as the report of the commission points out, there is no other which threatens or has ever threatened such intolerable interference with the daily life of the people as the consolidation of companies controlling water-power. I call your special attention to the attempt of the power companies to take possession in perpetuity of national forest lands for the purposes of their business, where and they please, wholly without compensation to the public. Yet the effect of granting such privileges, taken together with rights already acquired under state laws would be to give away properties of enormous value. Through lack of foresight we have formed the habit of granting without compensation extremely valuable rights amounting to monopolies on navigable streams and on the public domain. The republic has at great expense of water rights thus carelessly given away without return has already begun in the east, and before long will be making the west a No rights involving water power should be granted to any corporations in perpetuity, but only for a length of time sufficient to allow them to conduct their business profitably. A reasonable charge should, of course, be made for valuable rights and privileges which they obtain from the national government. The values for which this charge is made will ultimately, through the natural growth and orderly development of our population and industry, reach enormous amounts. A fair share of the increase should be safeguarded for the benefit of the people from whose labor it springs. The proceeds thus secured, after the cost of administration and improvement has been met, should be devoted to the development of our inland waterways.

The report justly calls attention to the fact that hitherto our national policy has been one of almost unrestricted disposition and waste of natural resources, and emphasizes the fundamental necessity for conserving these resources upon which our present and future success as a nation primarily rests. Running water is a most valuable natural asset of the people, and there is urgent need for conserving it for navigation, for power, for irrigation and for domestic and municipal supply.

The commission was appointed to obtain information concerning our waterways as related to the general welfare. Much work was done, but more remains to be done before a plan for their development can be prepared in detail. We need additional information on the flow of our streams, the condition of channels, the amount and kind of water traffic, the requirements for terminals, the area in each watershed which should be kept under forest, and the means of preventing soil-waste and the consequent damage to our rivers. But it is neither necessary nor desirable to postpone the beginning of the work until all the facts are obtained. We have suffered heavily in the past from the lack of adequate transportation facilities, and unless a beginning is made promptly we shall suffer still more heavily in the future.

Being without funds or an expert staff, the commission has confined itself to principles affecting the whole problem and the entire country. Its report is in the best of actual facts, for simplicity and directness in dealing with the great problem of our inland waterways in the interest of the people. It submits no specific plans or recommendations concerning even the most important projects of the Mississippi



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SOME POINTS FROM MESSAGE

The commission realizes that the cost of improving our inland waterways would be large, but far less than would be required to relieve the congestion of traffic by railroad extension.

I call your special attention to the attempt of the powerful corporations, through bills introduced at the present session, to escape from the possibility of government regulation in behalf of the people.

The improvement of our inland waterways should be made to pay for itself so far as practicable from the incidental proceeds of water power and other uses.

United States have been notably efficient in extending and promoting the production and commerce of the country. It is clear that the seasons recurring with increasing frequency they are unable to keep pace with production or to meet the requirements of transportation.

1. While navigation of the inland waterways declined during the later decades of the past century, it has been steadily increasing since the late 18th century. The need for the development of the Pacific coast rivers is not less pressing. Our people are entitled in support of the immediate adoption of the progressive policy of inland waterway development.

2. While the decline of navigation in the inland waterways was largely due to the natural growth and legitimate competition attending railway extension, it has also been due to the fact that there have been successful directed against the normal maintenance and development of water traffic by control of the relation of rail lines to such waterways. Since present and prospective railways reach all parts of the country while navigable waterways are confined to certain natural lines, it is clear that railways can so control transportation as to absorb the traffic of the country, and unless the present, unrestricted and short-sighted competition between the two systems is intelligently checked, they will continue to do so. So large a portion of railway traffic is free from water competition that railways can readily advance their rates and absorb the traffic of the country, and unless the present, unrestricted and short-sighted competition between the two systems is intelligently checked, they will continue to do so.

3. The improvement of our inland waterways can and should be made to pay for itself so far as practicable from the incidental proceeds of water power and other uses. Navigation should of course be free. But the greater returns will come from the increased commerce, growth, and prosperity of our people. For this we have already waited too long. Adequate funds should be provided, by bond issue, if necessary, and the work should be delayed no longer. The development of our inland waterways, and the consequent physical needs of the country. They are interdependent, and they should be met vigorously together, and at once. The questions of organization, powers, and appropriations are now before the commission, and it is urgent that prompt and decisive action.

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5. Existing data as to the nature and amount of the internal commerce of the country are so meagre and incomplete. Such information is essential to the intelligent treatment of the inland waterways, and it is desirable that means be employed to obtain it.

6. Improvements of navigation in inland waterways in the main affect favorably the purity of the waters and the regularity of the flow, and these objects should be carefully kept in mind. The increasing pollution of streams by soil-wash and other waste substances, combined with the increasing population reduces the value of the water for manufacturing purposes, and renders the water supply for communities unwholesome and often a menace to human life. The prevention of these evils should be considered in any scheme of inland waterway improvement.

7. Engineering works designed to improve navigation affect favorably the regime of the streams, and the annual floods of the United States occasion loss of property reaching many millions of dollars, and the loss of life, and the loss of water in diminished water supply, in reduced power, and in the killing of stock, and the loss of life, and the loss of commerce would be less than the amount of this loss. It is desirable that more detailed information be collected concerning the nature and amount of this loss, and the means of its prevention by engineering works and other devices.

8. The annual soil-wash of the United States is estimated at about a thousand million tons, of which the greater part is the most valuable portion of the soil, and it is carried into the streams, where it pollutes the waters, necessitates frequent and costly dredging, and reduces the efficiency of works designed to facilitate navigation, and afford protection from floods. The direct and indirect losses from this source have not been measured, but are exceedingly large. It is desirable that definite determinations be made with the view of devising means for reducing the loss to the extent possible, and the impairment of the streams for purposes of commerce.

9. Both the regime of streams and the purity and quantity of waters are affected by forests and other natural growth, and by farming, mining and other industries in which they gather. Millions of acres in mainland United States have been deforested unnecessarily, and the floods and low waters ascribed to this cause have in some localities occasioned losses commensurate with the value of the timber. Means should be devised for coordinating the forestry, farming, mining and related industries with the use of streams for commerce and for other purposes.

10. The effect of wide variations in the level of navigable streams is to render difficult the establishment of necessary terminals for the handling of traffic, and thus to interfere seriously with the utilization of our inland waterways. The prevention or mitigation of such variations would be most helpful to the revival of river traffic, and means to this end should be adopted in plans for waterway improvement.

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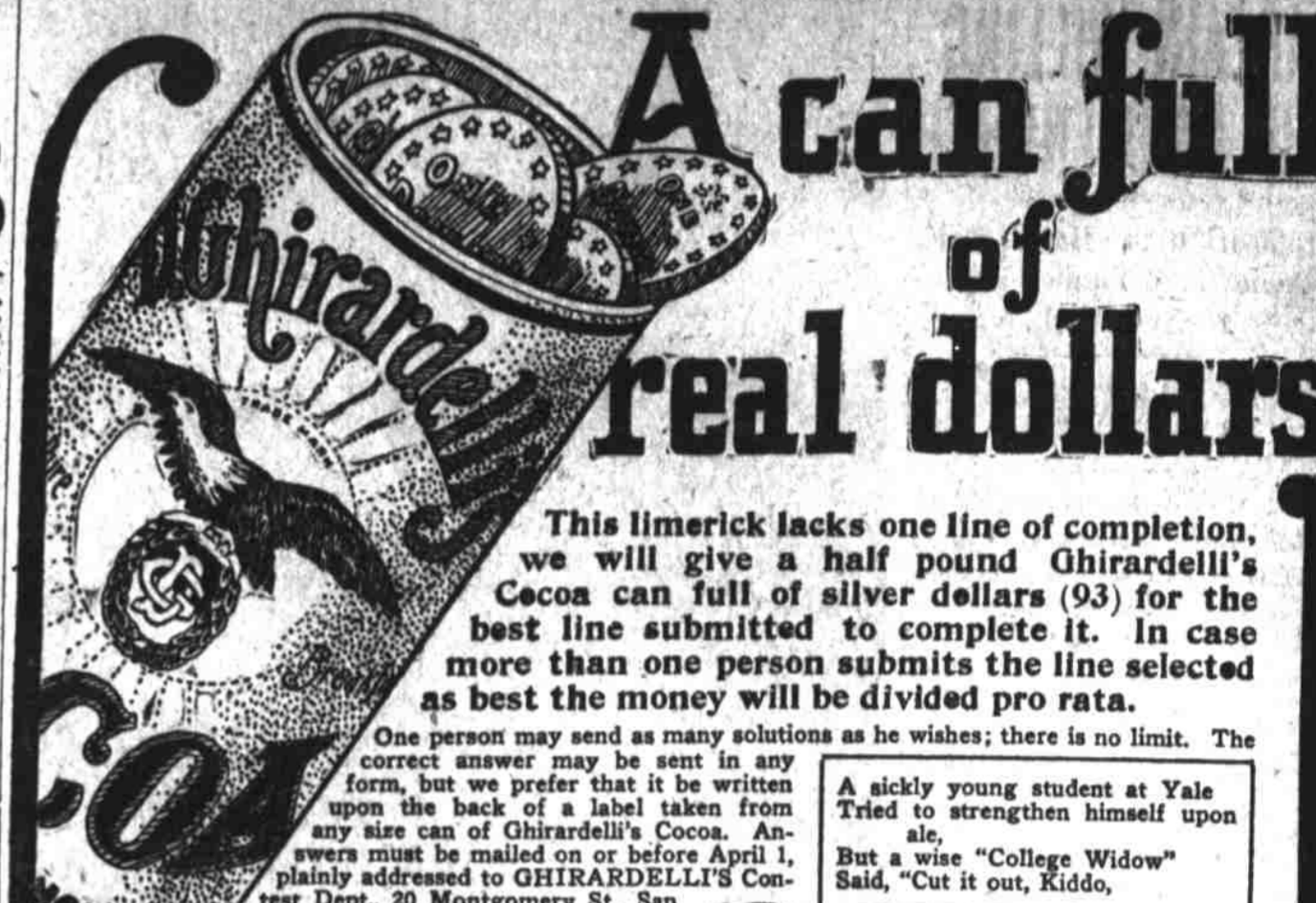
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We recommend that the congress be asked to make suitable provision for improving the inland waterways of the United States at a rate commensurate with the needs of the people as determined by competent authority and we suggest that such provision meet the following requirements, viz: expert framing of definite policy; certainty of continuity and coordination of plan and work; expert initiative in the choice of projects and the succession of work; freedom in selection of projects in accordance with terms of cooperation and the widest opportunity for applying modern business methods.
Legislation.
We recommend that the congress