

Open Locks and Canal Project at Oregon City Considered by U. S. Engineering Department.

RESOLUTION BY SENATOR FULTON MERELY ASKS THE WAR DEPARTMENT TO ASCERTAIN THE DIFFERENCE IN COST OF LABOR AND MATERIALS NOW AND IN 1900 WHEN BOARD OF ENGINEERS DECLARED IN FAVOR OF GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP.

The passage of the Jones Free Locks and Canal bill in the last legislature has given the people new hopes of having, in the lifetime of their lives, a chance to sail up and down the Willamette river without paying tolls to a corporation planted at the falls of the river near Oregon city. The Jones bill provided that the state contribute \$300,000, and three annual payments of \$100,000 each TOWARD THE PURCHASE BY THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT OF THE AFORESAID LOCKS AND CANAL.

One was the decision of the rivers and harbors committee to not undertake such projects unless the state in the future would take the initiative and bear at least a part of the expense. The other reason was that the federal government has the right to maintain and operate locks and canals on navigable rivers. HENCE STATE OWNERSHIP ALONE WAS IMPOSSIBLE AND FEDERAL ACTION WITHOUT STATE AID WAS IMPRACTICABLE. So the joint plan was agreed to by the state legislature and will be accepted by the federal government. As the correspondence with the engineering department will show the projected improvement is considered as pending and only requires a few preliminaries to be ready for the action of congress.

Work of Open River Association.

The Willamette Valley Open River association has overcome one step toward to accomplish the final result of free locks and canal. There has been a marked advance in the cost of lumber, iron and steel for concrete work, and labor is higher than it was in 1900 and estimates for the cost of rebuilding the locks and canal at Oregon city made in 1900 WILL NOT DO FOR A GOVERNMENT IMPROVEMENT TO BE MADE IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

There has been developed in conferences between the Willamette Valley Open River association, and the United States engineering department at Portland in Washington are disposed to consider in their consideration of the feasibility of the project. Following editorial in the Portland Journal has called forth these statements. The Portland and Salem Journal have fought "side by side" FOR THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE COMPLETION OF THE LOCKS AND CANAL AS A PROJECT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, which is to be made in the next two years.

(Portland Journal Editorial, Feb. 6.)

"WHAT DOES IT MEAN?"

A layman cannot understand the ingoings and outgoings of legislation. Possibly the upmovings and downittings of legislation at the Journal is pardonable; if it errs in this humble inquiry: Is it necessary for a new survey of the locks and canal at Oregon City to ascertain their probable cost? Such a "survey" has already been made by the United States engineers, and their report is at hand. The figures are on file with the war department, and if it really matters to congress can get them without the slightest trouble. These figures naturally excite curiosity as to why Senator Fulton has had introduced to the senate a joint resolution ordering a new "survey" of the locks and canal, with a view to determining their probable cost. The "survey" all the waiting people of Oregon are to get out of this? Does the action mean that there is to be no appropriation for the purchase of the locks and that this specious bit of "sap" to-wit, a "survey" is to be thrown to Oregonians as a solace for their disappoint-

ment? Having had a "survey" already, if this is not what it means what does it mean?

Why a New Estimate Is Needed.

Senator Fulton has introduced and had deferred to the committee on commerce a resolution reciting that the state of Oregon has passed an act appropriating the sum of \$300,000 to aid the general government in purchasing the locks and canal at Oregon City or building a new flight of locks at the falls of the Willamette at that place, and directing the war department to have an estimate made of the difference in cost of labor and materials now and in 1900 when a former survey was made for the purpose of acquiring the locks by the general government and ASKING THAT DEPARTMENT TO LAY BEFORE CONGRESS AN ESTIMATE OF COST. The war department is disposed to consider the project as pending, and that it has all the information necessary for congress to act, except that an appropriation cannot be made intelligently without knowing what the work will cost, and when a rivers and harbors bill is prepared this project will have right of way.

The Project Is Pending.

Following correspondence with the engineering department has been had showing the status of the proposed government work for which an appropriation has been made by the state and WILL BE MADE BY CONGRESS AS SOON AS ALL THE FACTS ARE FULLY BEFORE IT.

Letter of Major Roessler.

The river and harbor act of March 3, 1899, provided for an examination of—

"The canal and locks situated on the west side of the Willamette falls, in Clackamas county (Oregon): With a view to ascertaining the desirability of their condemnation and purchase by the United States."

Major Fish made the preliminary examination and a board of engineers made the final report and estimate of the cost of acquiring the locks of the Portland General Electric company, or of building a new flight of locks on the other side of the river. The conclusion of the board was that \$456,000 COULD ADVANTAGEOUSLY AND ECONOMICALLY BE EXPENDED BY THE UNITED STATES IN BUYING THE PRESENT FLIGHT OF LOCKS on the south side and putting them in a state of repair corresponding to their condition when new, or to build a flight of locks on the other side. In making this recommendation the board stated, however, that before anything was done it would be well to ascertain the rights of the United States to the Willamette river at this point.

Acting on this report, the river and harbor act of June 13, 1902, contained the following item:

"Canal and locks at Willamette falls, Willamette river, Oregon: The secretary of war is hereby authorized and directed to ascertain, through a board of engineers or otherwise, and report to the house, whether either the acquisition of the present canal and locks at Willamette falls, Oregon, or a construction of new canal and locks by the United States government and their operation for the exclusive benefit of the navigation of said river, would, by withdrawing the waters of the Willamette river from the channels in which they have been accustomed to flow or otherwise, injure in a material manner the operations of the manufacturing enterprises now in operation or contemplated at the Willamette River."

This matter was also referred to a board of engineers which, in turn,

obtained an opinion from the U. S. district attorney, John H. Hall, as to the rights of the United States in the premises. It was Mr. Hall's opinion, based upon certain decisions of the courts, THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD THE RIGHT TO AS MUCH WATER AS IT NEEDED FOR NAVIGATION PURPOSES, EVEN TO THE EXTENT OF TAKING THE WHOLE OF IT, without any liability to any of the vested interests in that locality.

This information is embodied in two reports. The first one is No. 202 H. R., 56th congress, first session. The latter is No. 99, H. R., 58th congress, third session.

THE RE-READING OF THESE PAPERS LEADS ME TO CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS A DEFINITE PROJECT BEFORE CONGRESS WHICH IT CAN ACT UPON WITHOUT FURTHER DATA. It would be unwise, however, for congress to make an appropriation upon the estimate of the original board because that estimate was based upon unit prices which were less, in some cases considerably less, than those prevailing at the present time. That estimate must be revised and expecting some such query as the one you have made at the instigation of Senator Bourne I have already instructed my assistant to revise the original estimate on a basis of the present unit prices for rock excavation, concrete, etc. I SHALL IN DUE TIME WRITE TO THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS TELLING HIM OF THE FACT THAT THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE IS NOT A SAFE GUIDE AT THE PRESENT TIME AS TO THE ULTIMATE COST OF THE WORK BY REASON OF THE PRESENT PRICES, AND WILL TELL HIM HOW MUCH THE ESTIMATE SHOULD BE INCREASED TO CORRESPOND WITH THE PRESENT PRICES.

The above is the situation as I understand it. THERE IS A DEFINITE RECOMMENDATION FOR THE ACQUISITION OF THE PRESENT LOCKS BEFORE CONGRESS, or failure to get them at a reasonable figure, a definite recommendation to build a parallel flight of locks on the east side of the river. WITH THESE REPORTS BEFORE THEM CONGRESS HAS ALL THE INFORMATION IT USUALLY REQUIRES BEFORE MAKING A DECISION UPON A PROJECT.

Project Is Ready for Action.

It can be readily seen from what Lieutenant Colonel Roessler of the corps of engineers of the U. S. A. says in the above that the Oregon City locks and canal project—the project to make them FOREVER FREE TO THE PEOPLE AND GIVE THE PEOPLE FREE AND UNIMPEDED USE OF THE RIVER, is in the best possible condition for the delegation in congress to secure favorable action. In fact, Congressman Hawley has introduced a bill to appropriate \$300,000 for the purchase of the locks and canal, with the aid of the state. The state has already acted in good faith and the federal government has gone too far to retreat. With an united harmonious delegation and the hearty co-operation of the state and the engineering department there is no good reason why the embargo of 50 cents per ton on the commerce and products of western Oregon shall not soon be removed forever.

The Fight for an Open River.

The entire delegation in congress is pledged to make this the initial fight for an open river from Eugene to the Columbia, and WITH THE LOCKS OPENED AND MADE FREE FROM THE GRASP OF THE CORPORATION THAT NOW OWNS THEM there will be hundreds of thousands of dollars saved annually to the shippers of western Oregon. The Open River association is keeping up a constant fight to reach this result of making the open river a possibility within a few years at the outside.

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