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SENATE

{ REPORT
No. 931

POWER-PLANT BUILDING IN DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MAY 26, 1926.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. FERNALD, from the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany S. 4221]

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, to which was referred the bill (S. 4221) authorizing the construction by the Secretary of Commerce of a power-plant building on the present site of the Bureau of Standards in the District of Columbia, having duly considered the same, hereby make report of it to the Senate without amendment, and with the recommendation that the bill do pass.

The following letter from the Acting Secretary of Commerce shows some of the reasons for the need of this power-plant building, and the department's approval of its construction:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
Washington, May 18, 1926.

Hon. BERT M. FERNALD,
Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,
United States Senate, Washington, D. C.

DEAR SENATOR: I am in receipt of a copy of Senate bill No. 4221 "Authorizing the construction by the Secretary of Commerce of a power-plant building on the present site of the Bureau of Standards in the District of Columbia," a copy of which is inclosed herewith, and respectfully urge the importance of authorization for the project at this session of Congress.

Since the present power and heating plant was originally installed 22 years ago engineering practice has advanced so rapidly and the technical needs of the bureau have grown to such an extent that considerable expenditure should be made at once for replacement of obsolete and inadequate power equipment. The proposed plant will permit this to be done systematically, according to an effective program developed for the purpose by expert engineers. The new plant will also permit the effective centralization of the scattered power equipment added from time to time in detached units in all parts of the bureau.

Since the existing plant was installed in 1903 the bureau has grown to ten times its original size, and the variety of its work has become greatly extended and more exacting. The need for the new plant has been realized for several years and at this time has become so acute as to call for action at once. The Bureau of the Budget and the President, realizing this, have authorized the request for appropriate legislation in the letter of January 18, 1924, a copy of which is inclosed.

The power and heating plant is one of three items referred to in that letter. The first has been provided for by Congress, and appropriate action is pending to complete the department's approved program for the remaining two items.

The need for the new plant is urgent from the points of view of operation, administration, and due provision for the technical needs of the Bureau of Standards testing and research.

1. *Operation.*—Great economy and facility will be gained from the point of view of operation. An immediate saving of \$5,000 a year in personnel alone will be effected; the cost of heating buildings will be reduced 25 per cent, and a potential saving of about the same percentage may be expected on other services.

2. *Technical administration.*—The technical administration of the complex plant of the bureau (now extending over a site of 43 acres) will be greatly facilitated in respect to promptness and technical efficiency in adjusting the available services to the constantly varying and exacting needs of the laboratories.

3. *Laboratory needs.*—The new plant will eliminate the costly duplication of power and other equipment when required by several divisions, and at the same time will assure to the 60 or more separate laboratories adequate power and other services of a quality, variety, and continuity strictly essential to effective laboratory work, both in testing and research.

I am sure you appreciate the necessity and urgency of placing the matter on a business basis to provide for the work of this important bureau.

The proposed authorization is not in conflict with the financial program of the President, and this fact is so stated in a letter from the Director of the Bureau of the Budget dated January 18, 1924, a copy of which letter is inclosed herewith.

May I point out that the bill does not provide the funds and is not designed to do so. The bill merely authorizes the project and sets a limit to the cost of the fireproof power-plant building.

Very truly yours,

J. WALTER DRAKE,
Acting Secretary of Commerce.

As shown by the letter from the Director of the Budget, herewith made a part of this report, this measure is one of those approved by the President in 1924.

BUREAU OF THE BUDGET,
Washington, D. C., January 18, 1924.

The SECRETARY OF COMMERCE.

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I have a letter from the Director of the Bureau of Standards, written by authority of the Acting Secretary of Commerce, requesting that he be advised as to whether or not certain legislation proposed by your department is in conflict with the financial program of the President. The drafts of legislation propose that authority be granted the Secretary of Commerce as follows:

1. To acquire a certain tract of land for the enlargement of the present site of the Bureau of Standards, at a cost not to exceed \$173,117.

2. To construct a suitable power-plant building for the Bureau of Standards at a cost not to exceed \$200,000.

3. To acquire by purchase or gift a suitable site and construct thereon a building for a master track scale and test car depot and the installation therein of the master track scale at a cost not to exceed \$50,000.

I have presented this matter to the President, who has instructed me to advise you that the legislation which you propose is not in conflict with his financial program, providing that the legislation pertaining to the power house and the master track scale will not involve the necessity of any appropriation either during this current or the next fiscal year.

I am returning all papers herewith.

Sincerely yours,

H. M. LORD, *Director.*

It has been estimated that \$25,000 a year will be saved by changing from the present unsatisfactory system to this single power plant which would pay for the building within a few years.

