

SURVEY FOR CONTROL OF EXCESS FLOOD WATERS OF MISSISSIPPI
RIVER BETWEEN POINT BREEZE AND FORT JACKSON, LA.

MARCH 19, 1926.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. WILSON of Louisiana, from the Committee on Flood Control,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 9957]

The Committee on Flood Control, to which was referred H. R. 9957, after public hearings on and full consideration of the bill, report it to the House with the recommendation that it do pass. The bill reads as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby authorized and directed to cause a survey to be made, and estimates of the costs of such controlled and regulated spillway or spillways as may be necessary for the diversion and control of a sufficient volume of the excess flood waters of the Mississippi River between Point Breeze and Fort Jackson in Louisiana, in order to prevent the waters of said river exceeding stages of approximately sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, and twenty feet on the Carrollton gauge at New Orleans, and of approximately forty-six, forty-seven, and forty-eight feet on the gauge at Simmesport on the Atchafalaya Outlet, and the Secretary of War is hereby authorized to cause the Mississippi River Commission to transmit to him all engineering records, data, field notes, and such other information in its possession as he may deem desirable and useful in carrying out the purposes of this act.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of War is authorized to use \$50,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, from funds heretofore appropriated for flood control, Mississippi River, to carry out the objects and purposes of this act: *Provided,* That no spillway shall be constructed as a result of the survey authorized by this act whereby the waters of the Mississippi River would be diverted into Mississippi Sound.

SEC. 3. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized and directed to report to the Congress as soon as practicable the results of the survey authorized by this act.

The purpose of this bill is to secure an examination and survey, under the direction of the Secretary of War and the Chief of Engineers, with an estimate of the cost of a spillway or spillways on the Mississippi River below Point Breeze in Louisiana and on the Atchafalaya Outlet, for the diversion and control of excess flood waters of the

Mississippi River. By excess flood waters is meant that volume of water that may not be safely confined within the levees and thus carried to the Gulf of Mexico.

The hearings before your committee established substantially the following facts:

That under existing flood control law and with the appropriations made by Congress and the contributions of local interests, the entire levee line from Rock Island, Ill., to the Gulf will be practically completed up to Mississippi River Commission grade and section within the next three or four years. This means that any flood of a volume heretofore known can be safely confined within the levees to the mouth of Red River, sometimes referred to as Old River, which is the only remaining unclosed natural outlet or spillway.

In high stages of the Mississippi River excess flood waters are diverted through Old River into the Atchafalaya and thence to the Gulf.

All engineers connected with the work of flood control agree that it would not be practical to construct a spillway or waste wier north of Red River, because any water so diverted from the Mississippi River must be returned to its channel, whereas south of Red River such flood waters can be conducted by a shorter route directly to the Gulf.

That the method of controlling the flood waters of the Mississippi River by the construction of levees and bank revetment has been successful from Rock Island, Ill., to Red River in Louisiana in so far as the system has been completed, and has met the expectations of the advocates of the levee system and fulfilled the predictions of the engineers dealing with the problem. But the closure of natural outlets and the reclamation of natural storage basins made available for habitation and cultivation by the construction of levees have necessarily increased the rapidity of the run-off and confined the floods in a more restricted channel thereby increasing the flood heights as the work has proceeded down the river. This was expected.

On account of this necessary result it has been urged by many able engineers conversant with the problem that after the flood waters have been carried within the levees to a point sufficiently near the Gulf to make diversion of a portion thereof through controlled spillways practical, that such a course would be necessary and should be undertaken. In fact, extended investigations have been made and much important data collected upon that question by the Mississippi River Commission and the Chief of Engineers. It may be said that the preliminary examination has been made, and that the point has been reached where a survey such as provided for in this bill should be completed.

The gravity of this problem was urged before your committee when the flood control act of 1923 was under consideration. The then chairman, Mr. Rodenberg, of Illinois, in his report referred to the matter as follows:

As the country above has been developed and drainage districts created which precipitate the surplus water into the river, the flood level in the lower reaches of the river has been continually and progressively elevated.

Due to this fact, many people of Louisiana, and particularly of New Orleans, have advocated other methods of controlling the floods in addition to those

heretofore employed by the commission. The necessity of regulated spillways below Red River, both above and below the city of New Orleans, was urged upon the committee with great earnestness and force.

Your committee favorably reported to the Sixty-eighth Congress H. R. 12004, a bill substantially the same as the present bill, which was passed by the House and Senate, but reconsidered in the Senate because of some fear that the excess flood waters of the Mississippi River might be diverted into Mississippi Sound to the detriment of the Mississippi coast. This objection has been met and the safeguards desired incorporated in the present bill. The report on H. R. 12004 stated in part:

Your committee was much impressed by the showing made at the hearings by engineers representing the State of Louisiana and the city of New Orleans that it would be practical to increase the discharge capacity of the Atchafalaya outlet and thereby regulate flood heights in such a way as to bring greater safety to the territory both above and below that point, and therefore this phase of the survey requested is important and desirable.

The hearings made evident the grave apprehension felt by those living in the area south of Red River in Louisiana, and especially in the city of New Orleans, as to the inadequacy of levees to afford full protection on account of the rapidly-increasing flood heights in recent years, and also the conviction and belief that controlled and regulated spillways would afford ample protection and insure safety.

* * * * *

There were presented to your committee resolutions of indorsement of this bill adopted by the Safe River Committee of One Hundred, New Orleans, La.; the New Orleans Association of Commerce, New Orleans, La.; the National Flood Prevention and River Regulation Commission, New Orleans, La.; the Commission Council of New Orleans, La.; the Young Men's Business Club of New Orleans, La.; and the Chamber of Commerce of Alexandria, La.

The same report quoted the following resolution adopted by a convention of all the levee boards in Louisiana, held at Baton Rouge, La., on January 12, 1925:

Whereas it is recognized that the levee system is the primary defense of the lands of Louisiana against floods from the Mississippi River; and

Whereas bank protection in the form of mattress work and revetment is essential to the safety and stability of all levees in locations more or less secure; and

Whereas below Red River Landing, and especially in the territory adjacent to New Orleans, the conditions of the foundations upon which the levees rest limit the height to which they may be built, and thus make it imperative to adopt other and additional relief measures for a proper safeguard against increasing flood heights; and

Whereas the flood waters of the Mississippi River and its major tributaries flowing through Louisiana do not originate in Louisiana, but do wholly originate in all the States comprising the broad Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Valleys, whose lands drain into streams tributary to the Mississippi, thus compelling attention by the National Government to the problem of flood control in all its phases: Therefore, be it

Resolved by the levee boards of Louisiana in meeting assembled, That the Federal Government be urged to continue its levee program and to increase its yearly appropriation for levee work to the end that better progress be made; that more suitable and much larger appropriations be made for bank protection than are now made; that H. R. 12004, by Hon. Riley J. Wilson, be indorsed; and that the prevention of the river exceeding a stage of 16 feet at New Orleans be recommended.

In addition to these indorsements the present bill was indorsed by a conference of levee boards held in New Orleans, La., April 29, 1925, and also at the annual convention of the Mississippi River Flood Control Association, an organization whose membership in-

cludes practically every levee board in the Mississippi Valley, held in Memphis, Tenn., in July, 1925.

If the survey now requested should demonstrate that flood heights upon the lower Mississippi River can be regulated by controlled spillways at a reasonable cost, then some 2,700 square miles of land in the Atchafalaya and Tensas Basins might be reclaimed and 12,000 square miles on the Mississippi River below Red River, now highly cultivated and thickly populated, would be made more secure. The property values involved are more than \$2,000,000,000, with an estimated population of more than a million people, and this includes the city of New Orleans, with a population of more than 400,000 and property assets of more than \$1,000,000,000. The gravity of the situation is well established by the united support given this bill.

The bill makes no additional charge upon the Public Treasury.

The report of the Chief of Engineers on this bill is as follows:

MARCH 8, 1926.

HON. FRANK R. REID,

Chairman Committee on Flood Control,

House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR MR. REID: I am in receipt of your letter of March 4, 1926, requesting my views on H. R. 9957, Sixty-ninth Congress, first session, "A bill authorizing a survey for the control of excess flood waters of the Mississippi River below Point Breeze in Louisiana and on the Atchafalaya Outlet by the construction and maintenance of controlled and regulated spillway or spillways, and for other purposes," and in reply I may inform you that I know of no objection to the favorable consideration of this bill so far as the interests committed to this department are concerned.

Very truly yours,

H. TAYLOR,

Major General, Chief of Engineers.

