

ENLARGEMENT AND EXTENSION OF THE INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY SYSTEM

MONDAY, MAY 18, 1942

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
Washington, D. C.

The committee met at 10:30 a. m., Hon. Joseph J. Mansfield (chairman) presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will please come to order.

Gentlemen, this hearing is called for the purpose of considering the bill H. R. 6999 for the enlargement of the Intracoastal Waterway on the Gulf coast, from the Mexican border to the west coast of the Florida Peninsula, and the extension of the barge channel across Florida to connect with the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.

The project completed would constitute a continuous channel from the Mexican border to Trenton, N. J., more than 2,400 miles in length and of uniform width and depth ample to supply the prospective needs of barge traffic.

For the immediate relief of the acute oil and gasoline situation in the East, the bill provides for a temporary pipe line across Florida to connect the Atlantic and Gulf Intracoastal Waterways. This pipe line could be made available within a few months.

The urgency of these measures has been brought about by the war conditions which have practically destroyed our coastwise shipping. About 80 percent of this shipping consisted of oil and gasoline, which was transported in deep draft tanker ships. The Associated Press announced last Monday that 191 of our American ships have been destroyed by enemy submarines since the Pearl Harbor incident. Additional to that, many American-owned tankers under Panamanian registration have been destroyed.

The tankers vary in size and cost. They carry usually from 50,000 to 125,000 barrels of gasoline and cost from \$2,500,000 to \$3,000,000 each. The total loss in ships and cargoes might conservatively be estimated at several hundred million dollars. But this loss in dollars and cents is of little consequence as compared with the loss of human life that has resulted.

All oil production in the Dutch East Indies is now in enemy hands. Gasoline for our armies and Navy will have to be transported great distances across the seas. It will be a serious problem to provide the necessary tankers for the service. Such ships could not well be spared for domestic trade, even if there was no submarine menace. In these circumstances inland methods of trans-