

handled by our inland waterways during the past year set an all-time record, and such information as is available indicates a continued increase.

It is my understanding that practically all available equipment of towboats and barges is now in use and that great need exists for additional equipment of this character. May I not, therefore, suggest for your consideration that steps be taken immediately to increase these facilities. It is my considered judgment that if additional floating equipment for use upon our inland waterways is provided, it will go a long way toward relieving the acute transportation situation which many of us fear is certain to result in the very near future.

As you of course know, large quantities of heavy commodities vital to the national defense, such as petroleum and its products, sulfur, etc., are produced along the Gulf coast, and especially in Texas, commodities which heretofore have moved to consuming centers along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts by ocean-going vessels. The Intracoastal Waterway, which skirts the Gulf coast from Pensacola to Corpus Christi, Tex., is now handling a tremendous tonnage in these commodities, and the Mississippi River system, with its connections to the Pittsburgh district and the Great Lakes through the Chicago, Ill., waterway, is rendering valuable service in the distribution of these commodities. It is my information, however, that the floating equipment presently available is being utilized to its fullest capacity.

I take the liberty of submitting this suggestion for your consideration in the hope that it may offer a modicum of relief in the situation which impends.

In this connection, I also wish to call your attention to the suggestion I had the pleasure of making to you personally several weeks ago, that a barge canal across Florida connecting the Gulf intracoastal waterway system with the Atlantic intracoastal Canal system, reaching from Jacksonville, Fla., to Trenton, N. J., would provide a protected inland canal all the way from the Southwest to the great industrial and commercial centers of the Northeast.

With the assurance of my highest esteem, I am,

Sincerely yours,

J. J. MANSFIELD, *Chairman.*

(The President's encouraging reply is as follows:)

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
Washington, March 25, 1942.

HON. J. J. MANSFIELD,

*House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.*

MY DEAR MR. MANSFIELD: I have your letter of March 11, which interests me very much as I am in accord with your thoughts that the inland waterways during the present emergency should be utilized to greatest possible degree. I am further inclined to agree with you that such a program would require the construction of additional equipment, as my investigation confirms your opinion that there is not now sufficient equipment to accommodate the available tonnage.

The program presents some problems such as obtaining necessary strategic materials, providing construction facilities, and in some instances dredging of waterways.

It is a pleasure to advise you that this subject has already been taken actively in hand and is being carefully studied by the Office of Defense Transportation, the War Shipping Administrator, and others. I am hopeful that something constructive may be worked out without undue delay.

Very sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

Mr. MILLER. In the letter to the President, the distinguished chairman of this committee called attention to the service which might be rendered the Nation by the utilization of our inland waterways, and he pointed out, also, the necessity for additional towboats and barges. The President, in his acknowledgment, expressed hearty agreement with the statements made by your chairman, and advised that steps were being taken to investigate the proposals he made.

There are many people here from Texas, Louisiana, and the Gulf coast who are vitally interested in this matter. I hope that they may have the indulgence of the committee and that, regardless of the amount of time consumed, the committee will be patient and give them