

Mr. RANKIN. Take these pipe lines we are preparing for construction, of course, if the Government owns them, they might make them common carriers so that anybody could ship oil through them.

Colonel THOMPSON. And they should be; yes, sir.

Mr. RANKIN. But if your pipe line should fall into the hands of some big monopoly, the little independent producer would be shut out.

Colonel THOMPSON. I think most of them are common carriers now, and anyone who has oil to ship can have it shipped over the pipe lines, but actually the one who is a producer does not want to ship the oil. He wants to sell it at the well, and he wants to get his money without too much bother. In 10 years I have only had one man who wrote to us about wanting to ship it. We have these wells shut down as I have said, very low, and our State is most anxious to have outlets for this oil. We are just as anxious to produce it as the people up here are anxious to have the gasoline. I feel that the construction of this canal and the pipe line and the construction of additional barges are highly necessary, even from the military standpoint.

Mr. RANKIN. But you would regard the pipe line as merely a temporary expedient? That is, the construction of the pipe line across this Florida Peninsula?

Colonel THOMPSON. Well, 3 years would be permanent for a pipe line. It would pay for itself before the 3 years were over.

Mr. RANKIN. I understand; but you would not regard the putting the pipe line across Florida as a permanent solution of our problem?

Colonel THOMPSON. No; you must have your canal to go along with it, because we have many products besides gas and oil that we want to ship over that canal. Besides wanting this canal to ship gas and oil to the East, we want to ship things back from the East so as to get freight-rate reductions and to get the benefit of cheaper water transportation.

Mr. RANKIN. When you suggested that I was going to suggest that these vessels coming back from the East would be bringing their finished products to the oil-producing States.

Colonel THOMPSON. Yes.

Mr. HALL. It is my understanding that we are discussing these problems today more as a matter of national defense than anything else.

Mr. CULKIN. The public has no rights?

Mr. HALL. Just a minute; I do not yield to the gentleman. We have testimony here to the effect that it would take about 3 years to complete the barge canal and we have testimony here to the effect that the pipe line will take about 6 months. Colonel, which do you think is most necessary from the national defense standpoint, looking at the picture as we have it now? Do you not think we should immediately build the pipe line?

Colonel THOMPSON. The war may last more than 3 years, and I understand General Reybold said in 3 years we could finish this canal, and I figure that all of our preparation ought to be on the long-pull basis, because we should not figure ourselves that this thing is going to be over in 3 years, because it may take 5 or 6 years.

Mr. HALL. Do you not think if we can build the pipe line immediately—if there is authority in law right now to build the pipe line—that that should be done?