

AFTER RECESS

The committee reconvened at 2 p. m., Hon. Joseph J. Mansfield (chairman) presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, are you ready to proceed?

MR. MILLER. Mr. Chairman, the next witness has been very active in the development of waterways in the coastal areas for many years, and I am glad to say that he has been an active member of the Intercoastal Canal Association for more than a quarter of a century. I might say, in passing, that he happens to be a native of Texas. He is now the president of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans. It is my pleasure to present Mr. Lester F. Alexander.

STATEMENT OF LESTER F. ALEXANDER, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE PORT OF NEW ORLEANS

MR. ALEXANDER. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, I have been engaged in transportation and in the construction of inland-waterways equipment for quite a number of years. I wish now to present a little memorandum as representing the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans. Then, if you desire to ask any questions about other matters before you, I will be glad to answer them to the best of my ability.

The Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans was organized and exists for the purpose of facilitating, aiding and encouraging the easy flow of commerce entering the port either by water, rail or highway, and due to the strategic location of the port of New Orleans, particularly as to water-borne commerce, our interests go far afield.

The port of New Orleans is the logical gateway to and from that great producing and consuming area reaching from the Rio Grande River on the north to the southernmost tip of Argentina on the south and bounded on the east and west by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, fertile fields for exchange of commerce and other good neighborly exchanges. The Mississippi River, with its numerous tributaries, provides the port of New Orleans with low-cost transportation to and from the very heart of the producing and consuming center of the United States.

Shortly after the turn of the century farsighted friends of lost-cost water transportation, both in Louisiana and Texas, and headed by Capt. Horace Harvey, of New Orleans, visualized the possibilities of an intracoastal canal tapping the Mississippi River on the east and the Rio Grande on the west. I know that you gentlemen are familiar with the handicaps and obstructions that these early friends of the intra-coastal canal had to contend with; however, the arguments they continued to present finally prevailed and they were given a canal 40 feet wide and 5 feet deep, beginning at New Orleans and extending westward, but utilizing all bayous, lakes, and bays where possible. The pioneers of this movement were, of course, happy to obtain this small recognition of their views, although they were not satisfied. The value of the little 5-foot by 40-foot canal was soon demonstrated and the howl for a wider and deeper canal, and one removed from the dangers and delays occasioned by navigating the open waters of lakes and bays, so manifested itself that a canal 9-foot by 100-foot bottom width was authorized and provided.