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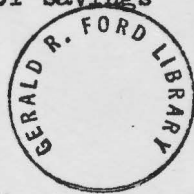
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STATEMENT BY REPRESENTATIVE GERALD R. FORD, JR., MEMBER OF
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL FUNCTIONS OF HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 1951

MR. SPEAKER - It is easy to talk about economy in government; it is difficult to achieve it. The Committee on Appropriations has been sincere and honest in its study of requests from the Department of the Army to carry on its civil functions. This is the work done by the Corps of Engineers. The original request by President Truman was for more than \$640,000,000; the bill being considered today totals about \$514,000,000. The committee has thus made about a 20 per cent reduction below the President's budget. This is the way to reduce the costs of government. In my estimation the committee is to be commended for its work on behalf of the American taxpayers.

To achieve this very substantial reduction it has been necessary to eliminate funds entirely for some of the 110 projects recommended by the White House. For many other projects it has been necessary to slow down the work. But, I ask you, by what other means are you going to reduce the costs of government? The American people as a whole simply have to be satisfied with less in the way of public works. Sacrifices all along the line must be made. Each projected considered and recommended by the committee is worthwhile; each one will provide benefits exceeding costs. This must be the case not only legally but economically.

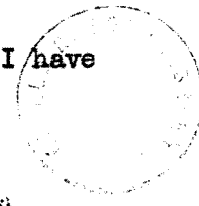
In order to make the savings that have been made and to bring to the House a bill which it can accept, our subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee has had to make very difficult decisions. Obviously it has been necessary to weigh the importance of this project against the importance of that one. Our criteria was simply this. Where could the maximum of savings



be made with the minimum of sacrifice? It hasn't been any easy job, not by any means. But I do say that it has been done objectively, sincerely and honestly by the five members of the Civil Functions subcommittee.

The committee knows very well that the reductions it has made may not be entirely acceptable to every Member of this House. One or more of the projects eliminated or curtailed may be in your District. You have fought hard for it from the beginning and now you don't want it stopped or slowed down. But again, I must remind you that if savings in the cost of government are to be made, sacrifices have to be made. Locally a certain project may have great attraction, but when considered from a national point of view its importance may be much less. And that is just what the Committee on Appropriations must do - it must adopt an over-all perspective. It must weigh the relative advantages of this project against that one from a national viewpoint. That is exactly what has been done in this bill. The committee could not do otherwise and survive - it must be and has been impartial. In addition, and this is important, the five members of the subcommittee were unanimous in recommending this bill to the Congress.

The committee has been consistent in its action with respect to eliminating projects. The Corps of Engineers proposed starting three new projects in the rivers and harbors category with a total estimated cost of \$471,385,000. The request for next year's work on these three projects was \$30,000,000. The committee has recommended that none of these projects be started in the next fiscal year. Certainly, these projects are desirable and when completed would add to the nation's assets. But the point is this: Once started the Congress on these three projects would be committed to very heavy future appropriations - nearly half a billion dollars, as I have



already indicated. It was the considered judgment of the committee that under present conditions the government could not and should not assume such an obligation.

Similarly, there were several projects that had progressed to a point where suspension of operations at this time would not seriously impair their usefulness. Again it was realized that under different world and domestic conditions it might be desirable to complete the work. But today we must cut government costs, so the committee selected with great care those projects on which work could be logically and economically suspended. The reductions thus achieved totaled a little over \$8,000,000. Sooner or later it will be necessary to appropriate funds to complete these projects already under way.

The committee also concluded that some projects could be slowed down and has recommended smaller appropriations than requested by the President. This accounts for several million dollars savings for rivers and harbors alone, and becomes a substantial figure when applied to flood control projects in addition.

The same general procedure was followed with respect to flood control projects. All new projects were rejected for the identical reasons discussed above. In the same way several projects will be slowed or stopped completely where that can be accomplished without serious impairment to work already done.

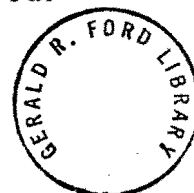
The justification advanced for many of these projects, and especially the new ones, was the contribution they would make to national defense. This is an appealing argument but not always cogent. For many projects the benefits to be derived would become available in five, six, even eight years hence. I do not deny that it may be desirable to have these projects ready for use and production at those future dates, but we must realize that a state of national emergency also exists right now. It is entirely possible that the immediate drain



on our steel supplies, labor force, and other equipment to build these structures would be very serious and would overbalance benefits to be derived several years hence. We all hope most sincerely that the present national and international crisis will be of short duration and if such proves to be the case then the present drain on our economy would be difficult to justify. If the duration of the current emergency is short, then there is ample time to start construction of these projects which have been eliminated as well as complete the projects now suspended.

The arguments with respect to those projects whose progress will be retarded are much the same. Many scarce materials can be diverted to other and more important uses. It is also possible that the generally tight labor market can be eased if the work of the Corps of Engineers is curtailed somewhat. This would be especially true in certain areas of the country. It is not anticipated that the really important and vital parts of any projects will be seriously delayed. It makes relatively little difference, for example, whether the corps buys a few less acres of land for a particular project this year or next, or whether a highway is relocated in the next fiscal year or the one following. It might be desirable to maintain a production schedule, but not to do so will, in many cases, have relatively little effect on the project, at least for a year or so.

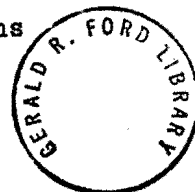
The committee could have gone much further in reducing the appropriations for the Corps of Engineers, as, indeed, it did during World War II. During that period practically all work of this agency was stopped, and that was fitting and proper, and I might add, essential. I do not doubt for a moment but what Congress would do the same thing again if an all-out



mobilization effort became necessary. In fact, there would be no alternative. However, I don't think it can be argued that such drastic action is either desirable or called for under present day conditions. There are undoubtedly those, both in and out of government, who think the committee has been too liberal in its recommendations. I can understand their reasoning but unless conditions become more severe it seems to me that the bill recommended can be justified. In the light of the current world situation, however, I think it would be very difficult to argue for a larger appropriation.

Inevitably as soon as pet projects are brought up for discussion welfish or partisan viewpoints are expressed. We in the Congress and the American people generally immediately are faced with the ever-present problem-- "I believe in government economy so long as my interests are not affected." We simply cannot have both a defense economy and business as usual. Many of the projects in the total program of the Corps of Engineers falls within the category of "business as usual." Some of its work must be postponed so that greater efforts can be made in the direction of national defense. There may be room for further cuts; there is no room for upward revision. Frankly, it just isn't in the cards.

The bill is before you for action. It is a good bill. It is not "pork-barrel" legislation. The work of the Appropriations Committee should be affirmed. To do this requires that all of us put national interests above local interests. If a pet project in any Congressional district is to be delayed somewhat, then the sacrifice in local benefits is made solely in behalf of greater national welfare. I am confident the American people will unselfishly accept the recommendations of the subcommittee on Civil Functions



and the full Committee on Appropriations. It is the responsibility and obligation of the House of Representatives to do likewise.

