

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

May I take this opportunity, at the beginning of this discussion, to thank the chairman for his very courteous and considerate introduction, and this splendid assemblage for their cordial reception and their interest in affairs of state as evinced by their presence here tonight.

As Governor of this State, I am commanded by the Constitution and the laws of the State to discharge certain duties. One of the many duties is to be Chairman of the Everglades Drainage Board, which has the control of the reclamation work in the Everglades, as well as its financing. In discharging these obligations, as required by the law, the Drainage Board has, for a period of years, been engaged in the reclamation of the Everglades.

In April of this year an Act was passed by the Legislature of this State empowering the Drainage Board to negotiate for the sale of bonds to carry on this work. Under the provisions of this Act, the Drainage Board proceeded to enter into arrangements for the sale of bonds in order to obtain money to properly finance the work in the Everglades.

In June our Senior Senator, Honorable Duncan U. Fletcher, saw fit to give to the press of this State several articles criticizing the drainage of the Everglades and the sale of the bonds. In the same month Mr. Herman Dann, President of the State Chamber of Commerce, also saw fit to write to the local Chambers of Commerce throughout the State and to many prominent citizens of the State a letter, on the stationery of the State Chamber of Commerce, and sign it himself, as President of the State Chamber of Commerce, criticizing the drainage of the Everglades and the sale of the bonds.

The statements of Senator Fletcher, regarding the drainage of the Everglades and the sale of the bonds, were so erroneous and unfair, and evinced such a total lack of knowledge of the subject, that I addressed a communication to him asking him to meet me in joint debate in his home city (Jacksonville) on this subject, in order that the people of the State might hear both sides, and that we might give them information from the platform face to face. Senator Fletcher declined the debate, and I shall later, in my discussion tonight, take up the statements that he has made relative to the Everglades and the bonds in order that you may determine how incorrect they were.

Believing that Mr. Herman Dann, when writing on the State Chamber of Commerce letterheads, signing his name as President and addressing a com-

munication to the various Chambers of Commerce over the State, as well as to prominent individuals who were members of the State Chambers of Commerce, could be speaking for none but the State Chamber of Commerce, and realizing that he was making statements that were not borne out by facts, I invited Mr. Dann to meet me in joint debate on the Everglades, the drainage question and the sale of the bonds, in his home city, St. Petersburg. Mr. Dann has accepted, and I am happy tonight to be present and discuss these subjects with him.

In the beginning of this debate, I find it hard for me to reconcile the statement of Mr. Dann's that he was speaking for himself individually when he used the State Chamber of Commerce stationery, addressed a letter to the Chambers of Commerce throughout the State and to their members and then signed the letter himself, as President. If he was thus speaking for himself individually, how would he speak as President of the State Chamber of Commerce? Had his letter not been signed by himself as President, then I could understand that he was speaking for himself individually.

There is another remarkable feature in this debate that is worth mentioning, and that is, after he had sent out this three-page letter criticizing the drainage of the Everglades and the sale of the bonds, and had accepted my invitation to debate the question with him, he then wrote me two letters, and wired me, as well as other members of the Board, for information with which to use in the debate. It strikes me the correct thing for him to have done was to have gotten this information before he sent out his letter of criticism, and not to have waited to get information on a subject on which he had already written so authoritatively and officially in his letter of June 2d to the Chambers of Commerce.

Everyone will agree that, before one offers information on any subject, particularly an important one, he should familiarize himself with the subject matter before he speaks, especially on a matter of grave importance to his State, and not seek information on a subject, after he has spoken, in an attempt to substantiate what he had already said.

And now I have this unique situation: The President of the State Chamber of Commerce, writing on the letterheads of the State Chamber of Commerce, signing the letter as President, mailing it to the various Chambers of Commerce throughout the State and to the individual members of the State Chambers of Commerce, saying now that it was an individual

letter of his and not an official one. What a remarkable process of reasoning!

Then again another strange incident: A man occupying the position that Mr. Dann does, as President of a State Chamber of Commerce, writing to its members throughout the State and to the various State Chambers of Commerce imparting information to them that is incorrect. Then, when he is challenged to a debate on the subject, he accepts the challenge, and then writes the man who challenged him to give him information so he can debate the subject with him.

I shall prove tonight by the highest authority in the world, in Mr. Dann's own estimation, that he didn't know what he was talking about when he wrote the letter—and that authority shall be none other than the gentleman himself—by producing his letter stating that the bonds that were sold were $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ bonds when they were in fact but 5% bonds, which was followed by his subsequent letters and telegram asking for information so he could debate. I know of no higher authority, in his own estimation, that would convince him that he wrote his first letter without being posted on the subject. What stronger proof can I offer to you than his own confession that he was not familiar with the subject than to produce his letters and telegram written after he accepted the challenge, asking for information so he could debate? If he had been posted he would not have needed to ask me for this information. What stronger proof can I give you of his mis-statement of facts when he stated in his letter, which I hold in my hand, that they were $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ bonds when they were only 5% bonds? So, in the very beginning, the gentleman has confessed his lack of information on this matter upon which he, as President of the State Chamber of Commerce, has undertaken to advise the people of Florida, and has attempted to create a sentiment of hostility and bad feeling throughout the State of Florida against the Everglades project and the sale of the bonds.

I hold in my hand this letter of Mr. Dann's, dated June 2d, written on stationery of the State Chamber of Commerce and signed by himself as President. If there is any doubt as to this fact, I offer it here for observation. In this letter he also states that the people of Florida yet remain in ignorance concerning the price for which the reputed sale of bonds had been effected. On the day after the sale of the bonds, May 11th, the price of the bonds was given to the press and was published. I hold in my hand an issue of May 12th of The Miami Daily News, a paper

that has seen fit to criticize everything I have done as Governor and is my bitterest critic, giving the price of the sale of the bonds. If Mr. Dann didn't see this item in the papers, or if he did see it, and didn't comprehend what it meant, it wasn't my fault, but his misfortune. If Mr. Dann failed to read the papers or could not comprehend the price of the bonds as published in them, I am here to state that he could have gotten the information if he had written to the Board or any member of the Board, which he has never done except in the last week or ten days, since he accepted my challenge for debate.

Mr. Dann also stated in his letter to the Chambers of Commerce throughout the State that it was his personal conviction that $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ bonds, should be marketed for par and a premium. Let me state here and now that the bonds were not $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ bonds, but were 5% bonds, which shows conclusively again that Mr. Dann was in ignorance of the facts when he sent out this letter to the Chambers of Commerce of the State giving the impression that they were $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ bonds, when they were not. He also states in his letter that we have not solved the Everglades problem nor established the fact technically that the Everglades can be drained; that some of the lands are peat lands; that there was no comprehensive report made by agricultural experts, and that firms and corporations, as well as individuals, will ultimately be beggared if we reclaim the lands and they have no place in our agricultural future. These statements I shall take up later on in my discussion.

Here, now, we come to the question of the Everglades, the drainage problem and its financing, which is the subject of debate.

The Everglades is a marshy and grassy savannah which, in their natural state, were covered by water approximating 4,300,000 acres of land, lying and being in eleven counties of Florida. This area is larger than the States of Rhode Island and Connecticut combined, the greater part of which was granted to the State of Florida by the United States government through an Act of Congress in 1850 and was patented to the State through the efforts of former Governor Jennings in 1903. This patent to the State of Florida vested the State with the fee simple title to the Everglades and carried with it an obligation on the part of the State of Florida to drain this area and make it possible for cultivation and settlement. By virtue of the acceptance of this grant, which contains the expressed conditions set out in the Act of Congress, the State of Florida became obligated to reclaim this area, and thus the first obligation of the people was

created by the acceptance of this patent. The question of the State's obligation to reclaim it was settled twenty-four years ago.

In 1904, Napoleon B. Broward made a campaign for Governor, pledging to the people of Florida the reclamation of the Everglades if he was elected. He was elected on this issue alone, and, by his election, the people of Florida twenty-three years ago ratified and approved the project and committed the State to the drainage of this area.

This fully explains what the Everglades are, how the State came to own them, who began the work, and in whose administration, and how the people of Florida were committed to its reclamation. This was done long before I ever became Governor and in which I took no part.

I shall now discuss the next question at issue—the drainage problem.

In 1905, in the administration of Governor Broward, in keeping with his promise to the people of Florida that he would begin the reclamation of the Everglades, the first drainage law was passed by the legislature, and, by virtue of this law and the amendments to it in 1907, Governor Broward began the physical drainage of the area. During Governor Broward's entire administration the physical work accomplished by him was the digging of some 13.2 miles of canals. The money used by him in financing the digging of these 13.2 miles of canals was derived from the sale of lands in the area at a price of from 25 cents to \$1.50 per acre, and a 5 cents an acre drainage tax. These were the only funds that Broward had with which to reclaim this vast area. It can clearly be seen now, from this statement, that the lands were patented to Florida during Governor Jennings's administration, and it was through his efforts that the assuming of the obligation to drain them was made, by virtue of the covenants in the grant from the federal government, and Broward began the actual drainage of the Everglades. So, if there be any criticism as to how we became the owner of the soil, the administration of Governor William S. Jennings must be responsible for that, and if the beginning of the physical work was a mistake, then the administration of Governor Broward is responsible for that. However, it must have been satisfactory to the people of Florida, because they put their stamp of approval on it by solemn vote at the polls by endorsing Broward's idea of reclamation and electing him to take charge of the work.

Governor Albert Gilchrist succeeded Broward and

fell heir to carrying on the reclamation work. During his administration great progress was made in the digging of canals and the building of locks. It was also in Governor Gilchrist's administration that the Drainage Board employed the most competent drainage engineers in America to make a comprehensive survey of the area and lay out plans which, if followed, would result in their reclamation. These engineers were in the Glades for approximately six months, and, at the conclusion of their observations, they laid out a definite plan for the reclamation of the area which would result in their ultimate drainage. They also reported that the area could be drained, and that it was entirely practical to drain them, and that there were no unusual obstacles from a drainage standpoint. For this service the Board paid them the sum of \$35,000. The comprehensive plan laid out by them has been followed by each succeeding administration in so far as the money would permit it to be followed. Governor Gilchrist's administration accomplished more work than Broward's because he had more funds available on account of the increased sale of the lands.

In both Broward's and Gilchrist's administrations these two Governors had only the money derived from the sale of these overflowed lands and a five-cents-an-acre drainage tax with which to carry on this work. Isn't it apparent to everyone that five cents an acre was a very small drainage tax and would net very little money for this enormous project? Yet both these Governors struggled along the best they could with the small amount of money and carried on the work.

Governor Park Trammell succeeded Albert Gilchrist as Governor and took the work over where Gilchrist left off, inheriting the responsibility. It was in Trammell's administration that the first bond issues were authorized. It was also in Trammell's administration that the proceeds from the sale of State lands in the area were discontinued, being used for drainage purposes. Trammell, in his message to the legislature, recommended that the work be kept up, stating that the value of the lands had risen in price from 25 and 50 cents an acre, before the work began, to \$15.00 an acre. This was in 1913.

The reports of the trustees show that in 1913 the average sale of lands in the Everglades was \$15.45 an acre. This was after the reclamation work had been in progress for about ten years.

Governor Sidney J. Catts succeeded Governor Trammell and fell heir to the manifold duties of draining the Everglades, and it was in his administra-

tion that the first sale of bonds was made that was authorized in Trammell's administration. Governor Catts had a great deal of trouble in selling these bonds. Bond houses were not interested enough to make an offer, and great trouble was experienced in getting anyone to purchase them. After great perseverance, the Board succeeded in getting one firm to buy them, and the first issue of \$3,500,000 were 6% bonds and were discounted, so that the interest cost the Drainage Board 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ %. The second lot of bonds sold in Governor Catts' administration were also 6% bonds and were discounted so that the interest cost the Drainage Board 6.53%. The total amount of bonds sold in Governor Catts' administration was \$6,000,000. Great progress was made with the money obtained from these bonds, and more work was done in that administration, as a result of this money, than in any other administration up to that time. Let it be borne in mind, however, that these were short-term bonds, and matured early at a high rate of interest. The first \$3,000,000 had an average maturity of 12 1/2 years and the second issue had an average maturity of 13 2/3 years.

Governor Cary A. Hardee succeeded Catts in 1921 and \$5,250,000 worth of bonds were issued in his administration. He, too, had great trouble in financing the area and selling bonds and did succeed only in selling bonds to one firm, being unable to interest others in their purchase. Nobody was interested in the purchase of Everglades bonds, and it was almost impossible to get capital to invest in them.

Governor Hardee's administration sold bonds bearing 6% interest, and he discounted them so the money cost the Board 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ % interest; he also sold another issue of bonds bearing 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ % interest to the same firm and discounted them so the money cost the Board 5.95% interest. These, also, were short-term bonds, the average maturity of the first being sixteen years and of the second of his issue being 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ years.

It will now be observed that the best price obtained in Governor Catts' and Hardee's administrations for bonds was on a 5.95% basis, and the highest were sold on a 6 5/8% basis. In fact, most of them were sold on a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ % basis.

On January 6, 1925, your speaker became Governor of Florida, and fell heir, as did his predecessors, to the Everglades and the drainage problem. Be it thoroughly understood that he claims no credit for having had the lands patented to the State, or having the obligation of draining that area placed upon the State, or the responsibility of beginning the physi-

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terest anyone in the further purchase of Everglades bonds. Over \$2,000,000 of Everglades bonds lay in a bank in New York for a year and a half. No one would buy them.

The Drainage Board, rather than abandon the work, was forced to borrow money from every available source, and did borrow and obligate itself in the sum of \$1,500,000 rather than abandon the work, trusting that the 1927 Legislature would find some way to finance it.

Your speaker spoke to the people of Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Okeechobee in an effort to crystallize public sentiment in these localities so that some plan could be submitted to the Legislature whereby the Glades could be financed.

Everyone wanted the work to go on, but nobody came forward with any plan by which the money could be had. Nearly everyone was opposed to taxing the State of Florida as a whole to drain the Glades. Nobody advocates that in Florida today. None of the counties in which these lands lie want to extend the boundary of the area and come in with their thriving cities, so the question of taxing the State was eliminated, and the question of extending the area had to be abandoned. Everybody wants the Glades drained, but no one wants to put forward their energy in digging ditches and building locks without some compensation. So the Board found it a difficult problem to carry on this great work without funds, especially when everybody was anxious for it to proceed, but nobody would favor anything that would get the money to pay the bills. Every Governor complained of the lack of funds to carry on this great work. Senator Trammell, when Governor, wrote the Legislature that it was only a question of money. It never has been adequately financed, each administration had to work along the best that it could with the money available. Try wherever the Board would, and your speaker also, they could get no one to even discuss Everglades bonds except one firm who had always bought them, but they insisted on the area being extended or the State taking the matter over, which was impossible. It was freely discussed and predicted by my political enemies that I never would be able to finance it and that they would destroy my chances for political preferment because I could not accomplish this apparent impossibility.

About two months before the convening of the Legislature your speaker succeeded in interesting Eldredge and Company, one of the foremost bond dealers in the East, and Dillon, Read & Co., one of the

largest financial concerns in the world, in Everglades bonds. Conferences with them led to their agreeing to take enough of these bonds to complete the financing of the Everglades, if the Legislature would pass an Act permitting the Drainage Board to levy an ad valorem tax as well as Drainage Tax upon the area. If necessary to guarantee the payment of the interest and create a sinking fund, the Board was also to hold in trust all moneys from the sale of State lands in the area not used for the payment of the State drainage tax after paying the 25% that the Constitution required into the Public School Fund.

These financiers would not agree to handle less than ten million because they stated that it would be a tremendous expense to put on a selling campaign and establish a market for these bonds, and therefore they would not be interested in buying any smaller amount.

They also stated that they wanted to say to the people who bought the bonds that this issue, and probably one more, would conclude the project, as people who purchase bonds don't like to buy bonds over and over again on the same area. They don't feel like taking a half dozen mortgages on the same property. The result of these conferences by me with these financiers was submitted to the Legislature of Florida and they passed the present law under which the Everglades is to be financed. Out of ninety-five members in the House only five opposed it. With thirty-two members in the Senate there was only one in opposition to it.

The Attorney-General of the State of Florida filed with the Legislature a written opinion that these bonds could not be construed as an obligation of the State of Florida.

After the Act was passed the Drainage Board agreed to sell to these financiers ten million dollars worth of bonds bearing 5% interest discounted where the Drainage Board would have to pay $5\frac{5}{8}\%$ for the money. No Drainage bonds have ever sold for more, and it was such a splendid price everybody was pleased to be able to get enough money to put this project back on its feet, guaranteeing its ultimate completion. No other Drainage District in this State, or in any other part of the United States that I have ever heard of, has ever sold 5% bonds on a $5\frac{5}{8}\%$ basis.

The maturities of these bonds have not been definitely decided, but, as a matter of common sense, they ought to be made to mature after the present bonds that are now outstanding become due and payable. There would be no sense in making this issue

become due and payable at the time the others are due. The exact date of their maturities has not been definitely settled, therefore, it is impossible for me to give to those who are uninformed what each bond will bring figured in dollars and cents over a period of years until the Board decides definitely the maturities. But, as an illustration: a one-year \$100 bond would bring \$99.40, a five-year \$100 bond would bring \$97.31, a ten-year \$100 bond would bring \$95.27, and so on down through a graduated scale depending upon the length of the maturities. Anyone can figure it out for themselves who desire to do so. As a matter of common sense the maturities ought to be over a period of years so that they can be easily taken care of when they become due so that succeeding administrations will not have the trouble that this administration has had with finances. Sound business policy in the handling of finances will always figure the rate of interest that the money cost; not so much whether the bonds brought a little over par at a higher rate of interest. In other words, a 6% bond that brings above par might be a more costly bond than a 5% bond that brings a little less than par, because the margin in the interest of a 6% bond over a 5% bond will exceed the difference between what is realized between the two classes of bonds. A twenty-year 6% One Thousand Dollar Bond will net the holder in interest alone \$1,200, a 5% bond of the same denomination will net the holder only a thousand dollars in interest; so that it can readily be seen that, if the 6% bond brought a little above par in the first instance and the 5% bond brought less than par, in the long run the 5% bond discounted is a great deal cheaper to the borrower.

So the ten million dollars of bonds that will be issued will bear 5% interest on the face of the bond and discounted so the purchaser will get 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ % interest on his money. Is there a man in this audience that would feel like lending his money secured only by a drainage problem for less than 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ % interest? Most of the money loaned today has to be secured, and then they get from 6% to 8% interest and sometimes 10%. Walk into any bank, if you will, and see whether you can borrow money on 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ % interest basis.

Now why all this hue and cry at this late date about the bonds not having brought enough money? During Governor Catts' administration there were six million dollars worth sold which were the first bonds on the area. They were 6% bonds and the money cost the district as much as 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ %. Nobody

was heard to complain. This was 1% higher per year in cost to the district than the present sale, and, at that time, there was no indebtedness on the area at all, which should have made the bonds more attractive. Why didn't the President of the State Chamber of Commerce complain then in his individual capacity, and why didn't our United States Senator have something to say? Not a word was heard from either one of them. In Governor Hardee's administration \$5,250,000 worth were sold bearing 5½% and 6% interest and the Drainage Board had to pay as much as 6½% interest for some of the money received. If our Senior Senator, Honorable Duncan U. Fletcher, and the President of the State Chamber of Commerce, failed to observe what happened in Catts' administration, they had a fresh opportunity to do so in Hardee's administration. Not a syllable of protest came from them. Yet the aggregate amount of bonds sold by Hardee and Catts, together, exceeded this present sale by \$1,250,000 and at a higher rate of interest, costing the Drainage Board considerably more money. Yet these gentlemen took no notice of that, notwithstanding the fact that they were all sold to a single firm.

But when all of the bonds were sold that could be sold by prior administrations, and the area, practically in bankruptcy, handed to me owing \$10,255,000, valued at \$15,000,000 on the tax books, no money in the treasury, and this administration arranges for sufficient finances to complete the entire project, that the State has been trying to do for the past twenty-two years, at a lower rate of interest, and deferring the payments over a longer period of years, so that succeeding administrations could more advantageously handle the situation, these gentlemen, the President of the State Chamber of Commerce and the Senior United States Senator, begin to complain and find fault. Find fault because of what? Because this administration has financed a project that the State of Florida had never been able to finance in its history before; took it when it was practically in bankruptcy, and arranges for sufficient money to complete it at a lower rate of interest than was ever obtained before; put it on its feet and gotten one of the largest banking houses in the world interested in it, not obligating the State of Florida or costing the people one cent, making it stand on its own basis alone, I get into a dispute and argument with these gentlemen for so doing. My friends, what a remarkable situation. I should receive their commendation and assistance. Instead of that, I receive criticism of an unwarranted nature;

and instead of aiding me, and advising the people regarding the facts, they come out with statements in the press altogether incorrect, and write letters throughout the State giving untrue statements in order to stir up hostility and create doubt in the minds of the people.

I shall now proceed to refute some of the statements made by Senator Fletcher. Senator Fletcher states that these bonds are State bonds and should have brought more money, which is ridiculous and absurd. I call your attention to the Constitution of the State of Florida as contained in Article 9, Section 6, which prohibits the issuance of any State bonds except for repelling invasion or suppressing insurrection; and the drainage of the Everglades could not be considered as an invasion or insurrection. Any bonds issued, except for these two purposes, would be absolutely void and worthless. If the fundamental law of the land, such as the Constitution, is not sufficient to dispel any idea that they are State bonds, then I call your attention to Sections 1180 and 1187 of the Revised General Statutes of Florida, which state that no obligation of this Article shall be construed as an obligation of this State, but only as an obligation of the Drainage District herein created. So, if the fundamental law or the statutory law is not sufficient to dispel any idea that may be lurking in the minds of some, I call your attention to Section 5 of House Bill 290, as passed by the Legislature of 1927, which re-affirms the Act, providing that it shall not be an obligation of the State of Florida. Again, if a fundamental or statutory law is not sufficient to eradicate any vague hallucination that may be percolating in the minds of those who will not be convinced by the plain wording of the statutes and Constitution, then the words in the agreement with these financiers, which provides plainly, in writing, without any equivocation, that it shall not be an obligation of the State of Florida, would not convince them and they cannot be convinced.

But, for fear that some infinitesimal vestige may yet remain in the minds of those who like to talk and not reason, it will be written in the face of these bonds that they are not an obligation of the State of Florida. If this is not plain enough to everybody that they are not an obligation to the State of Florida, then I am at a loss as to how to convince them after reciting the authorities as above stated.

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and I'd be unworthy, as Governor of this State, if I disclaimed that right and was afraid to defend it.

I am sure you will possibly hear some say, "Oh, well now, he shouldn't have answered the Senator." Why don't they say, with a sense of fairness and reason, that the Senator should not have attacked me, especially by circulating statements that were unfounded in fact?

If I wound the feelings of anyone in defending myself from unwarranted attacks by the Senator, I have no apologies to make, but am sorry that he has distorted ideas of fairness and propriety.

The Senator further states, by insinuation, that brokerage has been paid for the sale of these bonds. This I positively deny, and herewith assert that not a dollar of brokerage has been paid to any living human being or promised to be paid.

He further states that attorney's fees have been paid for handling this matter. This I positively deny, and herewith assert that no attorney has gotten one dollar for this matter or promised anything. Thanks to Florida's able Attorney General, Honorable Fred H. Davis, who is conducting this lawsuit when it is not in his line of duty, and the State of Florida will not be required to spend one penny because of his willingness and patriotism in helping the State out in this matter.

Senator Fletcher has been in the United States Senate for eighteen years, and has never helped the Everglades nor gotten one penny of appropriation to help control the flood waters of the area. Yet in the recent Mississippi floods the Senator left Florida and went to Mississippi in order to view the situation so that he could help provide money when Congress convenes in October to control the flood waters in the Mississippi. He also called upon the President, urging him to convene Congress in extraordinary session to help control the flood waters of the Mississippi. What did he do when the flood waters of Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River devastated the Everglades area last September and drowned more people than were drowned in Mississippi? He did not go near the people of his own State who suffered from the flood waters here. Over two hundred of Florida's sons and daughters perished in the flood waters of Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee river; and Congress met two months after this catastrophe, and he never introduced a bill to help these people in his own State, and now admits in the press that he is unable to do anything to control the flood waters of this area. I feel sure that had he evinced the same interest in controlling

the flood waters of Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee river that he evinces in controlling the flood waters of the Mississippi river, that he would have come to the scene of horror wrought in Florida last September, which possibly would have stimulated him in an effort to help his own countrymen. If the United States government can help to control the flood waters of the Mississippi river, it certainly can help control the flood waters of the Kissimmee river, which flow the same way and are wet, and are both capable of drowning people. I know not what course others may take, but if I were a United States Senator, representing this sovereign State, my voice would not be hushed in Washington while my own people suffered from causes such as mentioned above. If I had no well-defined plan of my own, I could at least consult my colleague and see if he could not devise some plan to help the people whom I represented. My fellow countrymen, if you had visited this area and seen the situation, the mothers whose children had been swept away from them by raging torrents of water that came down on them, you would feel as I do—that their cause is just and that they have a right for somebody to protect and make a plea for them in the national capital and stop quibbling over unimportant details, which their own statements show that they know nothing about.

Senator Fletcher also states that the Government has no jurisdiction over the Everglades. Everyone knows that the Government has no jurisdiction over the land. Land does not drown people. It is the water that does that, and that is what the United States had jurisdiction over. If they can say what the lake level must be, and control navigation on the lake and in the Kissimmee river, why can't they control the water which they take suzerainty over? I believe that after eighteen years of service he claims he has succeeded in getting the government to make a survey. The government has been making surveys in that vicinity since 1847 of water in which he says that the Government has no control. What we need is fewer surveys and more action. Senator Trammell and Congressman Drane both claim credit for the same survey. To whom the credit is due I am not in a position to say, as it is in dispute between these three gentlemen. Yet the fact remains that not a dollar has been spent by the United States government in the greatest reclamation project on earth, where the State of Florida is trying to reclaim an area larger than two States of the Union

combined, and our Senator admits that he can do nothing to help us.

Having answered Senator Fletcher, I shall now proceed to discuss with Mr. Dann some of the questions that seem to be troubling him. The State Chamber of Commerce refused to entertain a motion at two previous meetings looking towards some solution of the Everglades problem. They would take no cognizance of this great project. After the project has been financed and put on its feet, only awaiting the decision of the Supreme Court of this State to pass on the validity of the bonds, he is heard to come forth with criticisms and writes a letter imparting information to the Chambers of Commerce throughout the State and leading citizens giving incorrect information, stating in the letter that the bonds were $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ when they were 5% bonds. He also states in his letter that definite surveys should be had as to how the work should be done. This was done fourteen years ago, and the Board has just had three of the most competent men in America to go over the work within the last ninety days approving the plans and stating that we are following the correct course. How many more surveys are necessary? He also states in his letter that a survey should be made as to its agricultural possibilities. The Supreme Court has decided that the obligation is on the State to drain the entire area, which was acceptable to the Federal Government, or the lands then become subject to another grant made to the railroad companies, if the State did not carry out the obligation to drain them. I hold in my hand the finest illustration of whether the lands are productive or not—a letter from R. G. Dahlberg, President of the Celotex Company. His firm owns 48,000 acres of land in the Everglades, none of it for sale, and on which they will spend three million dollars in planting sugar cane and erecting a sugar refinery by October of 1928. In this letter he also states that they expect to spend around twenty-five to thirty million dollars in developing the sugar industry in the Everglades, furnishing employment to between twenty-five and thirty thousand people; that he considers it the richest land in the United States, and that he believes that the Florida Everglades and Louisiana can furnish all the cane sugar used in Continental America, and that means \$500,000,000 worth of sugar a year. His firm is the largest producers of cane in the United States, and has about twenty-five to thirty million dollars invested in the State of Louisiana, in which Senator Fletcher doesn't want the floods to

bother. He concludes his letter by saying that the Everglades bonds is a tax upon their property. They will have to pay the interest and he thinks the terms are most excellent, and brought a far better price than he ever had any idea I could sell them for. If anyone wants to read this letter I shall be most happy for them to do so.

I also have a letter from the Brown Company of Portland, Maine, which owns seventy thousand acres in the Everglades. They state that they have made searches all over America, and found the Everglades of Florida the best land, after six years of research, to produce peanuts on, and this is the peat land that Mr. Dann refers to as being worthless. They have spent over a million dollars in the Everglades, and expect to spend millions more in cultivating this land, raising peanuts, furnishing labor to thousands of people, using the peanuts to make a preparation like Crisco. They have no land for sale, and are a ninety-million-dollar corporation. They, too, commend me for the sale of the bonds and for the price obtained for them, and are glad to pay the tax in order that the land may be drained.

Every Governor of Florida, from Jennings down, has expressed confidence in the Everglades, as well as individuals such as these large concerns, which are fixing to operate there. But every now and then you hear, from a man living in some isolated quarter, who knows nothing about the question of the Everglades, their worth, or the feasibility of draining them. This should be enough proof to Mr. Dann, by these two illustrations alone, that they are of value. Since January of this year, over six million dollars' worth of winter vegetables have been shipped out of the area.

The question as to whether the Everglades shall be drained or not is not now open for debate. That is a settled question, and has been settled since the year 1855. The legislature of 1855 commanded the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund to drain the swamp and overflow lands and open them up for settlement and cultivation. This act became a law long before I was born or Mr. Dann ever saw the light of day, and it is no time now to discuss the question of whether they should or should not be drained.

I hold in my hand tonight a letter from Hon. Jules M. Burguières, who was President of the State Chamber of Commerce before Mr. Dann succeeded him to that office. This letter is dated July 8th, 1927, and says, in part, that he is a large taxpayer

of the Everglades Drainage District; that he has been identified with it for thirteen years; that he deems it his duty to endorse my views at this time on the affairs of the Everglades; that he was President of the State Chamber of Commerce, and, on his retirement, was succeeded by Mr. Dann; that he is still a Director of the State Chamber of Commerce, and that Mr. Dann is not speaking for the State Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Burguières further says in his letter that he knows what the Board has contended with in trying to sell Everglades bonds, and that he desires to congratulate me for having been able to sell \$10,000,000 worth of bonds at a better price than they were ever sold for before, after the area was already bonded for \$10,255,000, and closes his letter by saying (I am repeating his own language), "It is a remarkable achievement, considering the deflation that has taken place in Florida real estate, and is a tribute to your indefatigable efforts." Mr. Burguières writes further that, because of his knowledge and experience in the Everglades, he wishes to heartily endorse the form outlined by me in financing the District, and that he thoroughly approves of the terms on which the bonds were sold, as well as their price.

If anyone desires to see this letter, I have it to offer for observation.

Will Mr. Dann now have the temerity to say that Jules M. Burguières, whom he succeeded as President of the State Chamber of Commerce, knows less about the Everglades situation than he (Dann) does? Will that gentleman have the effrontery to tell this audience and the people of Florida that this man, who has given thirteen years of study to it and has lived adjacent to it, and owned, at one time, more land in the Glades than any other person, except the State, is uninformed? It is a recognized fact that Mr. Burguières is one of the best-posted men in the State on the Everglades, both as to its physical and financial problems, and he is one of Florida's foremost citizens.

Whose opinion would you rather take as to the price of the bonds and the drainage problem—Jules M. Burguières', who has worked with and in the drainage of the Everglades for thirteen years, or Herman Dann's, who has never had anything to do with it, and who, after sending out criticizing matter all over the State, and was challenged to debate on the subject, confessed that he knew little or nothing about it, when he wrote the man who challenged him

asking for information on the subject with which to debate? I feel like quoting Robert Burns:

“O wad some pow’r the giftie gie us
To see oursel’s as ithers see us.
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
And foolish notion.”

Senator Fletcher and Mr. Dann have tried to create the impression that information has been kept from the public, which is not correct. The Legislature was fully advised in the premises and the matter was carried in newspapers in streaming headlines and the sale and the price of the bonds were given to the press.

Why is it that these gentlemen, who know so much about the Everglades, haven’t come forward long before with some plan of financing and handling them? Why have they waited until someone else has accomplished the work and then begin their criticisms? Statesmanship and civic pride would have suggested that they suggest some way in which it could have been done. No; they have had no plan, and, like the State Chamber of Commerce stated, at its last meeting, it was too big a problem for them, but it doesn’t seem to be too big a problem for Senator Fletcher and Mr. Dann to criticize it, never having come forward with a suggestion on the subject until this criticism after the problem has been solved. It is an easy matter for anyone to criticize the conditions of the weather, but there is a big difference between criticism and constructive construction.

I suppose that some fellow will come along now, after it is done, and say he would have paid a better price for the bonds. Of course, after Dillon, Read & Company, the largest financiers in the world, has taken hold of the matter, these fellows can easily come forth now, stimulated, and with a little more courage. That is always to be expected, but they never came forth before. That reminds me very much of the man who watched a large fire and couldn’t put the blaze out himself, but said afterwards that he could have done much better than the firemen who did put it out.

In the beginning of the drainage of the Everglades the land was valued at from 25 to 50 cents an acre. Since the drainage started the land has increased in value, and, in 1925, the average value per acre of the land sold was \$108.66 per acre. At this ratio the Everglades had a land value of four hundred and

sixty-seven million dollars. Is it worth spending ten or fifteen million dollars to keep and improve?

For every million dollars that the Drainage Board has spent the land values have increased twenty-three million. Yet Mr. Dann says it ought to be looked into carefully, and see whether it should be drained, and whether or not we would have a market for the lands. Good land is always worth money, and settlers will come from all over the world to live on and develop rich soil. Due to the fine climatic conditions in this great State, these lands are capable of raising all kinds of garden vegetables in the dead of winter and staple crops in the other seasons of the year.

I shall not take up your time to go into detail as to whether or how we got the money, where it is, how and when it is to be paid, and whether in currency or in checks, or did they take the bonds, or equally puerile questions that Mr. Dann asks.

Now, as to the question of the price of the bonds. I think I have sufficiently explained that. Yet let me state this, in order that Mr. Dann may get a thorough knowledge of how bonds are sold. The splendid City of St. Petersburg, the fifth city in Florida, sold their bonds at a much less advantageous price—6% bonds at par—when the Everglades bonds were 5% bonds, costing the Drainage Board 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ %, which was three-eighths of one per cent better than the bonds of St. Petersburg brought. Bartow sold her bonds on a 6.35% basis; Clearwater sold hers, costing 6.75% for the money. Leesburg sold hers, costing the people 6.93% for the money. West Palm Beach sold hers—the last that they were able to sell—costing 7.18% for the money. They have not been able to sell any more lately for any price. The splendid City of Orlando sold their bonds for 5.69%. The City of Miami sold theirs for 5.41%—just a little better than the Everglades bonds. I shall not stop to mention more of the cities, but will give you some figures on the counties of Florida and see what they got for theirs. Bradford County sold their bonds to cost the people 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ %; Highlands, 6.16; Marion, 5.86; Osceola, 6.46; Pinellas—this splendid county—5.99; Sarasota County sold theirs for 6.34; Union County for 6.44.

All these splendid counties of Florida did not sell their bonds for anything like as favorable prices as the Everglades bonds sold for. But may I ask Mr. Dann one question: Why it is that he sat still and permitted bonds of this magnificent City of Florida, St. Petersburg, his home town, to sell, where the people had to pay 6% for the money they got, and

why he permitted his county, the County of Pinellas, one of the best in Florida, to sell their bonds so the people would have to pay 5.99% interest and then complain about the sale of the Everglades bonds being sold to cost 5.62½%? It strikes me that he should follow that old injunction in Holy Writ which says, in effect, "First, cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

If I had permitted the bonds of my own county and my own city, such as this splendid community, to sell where it would cost my people considerably more than the bonds of the Everglades, you would not have heard me if I was President of the State Chamber of Commerce criticizing the action of the Board in disposing of the Everglades bonds. I believe that I have answered everything in the world pertaining to the Everglades that has been asked me and have given to you, ladies and gentlemen, a comprehensive idea of the magnitude of its problems and perplexities. I am sure that this information will be sufficient for Mr. Dann and Senator Fletcher, unless they are like the old Irish lady, who stated that she was open for argument, but all hell would not convince her.

Shall we be like the proverbial burro that infests the Pampas Plains of South America, when they are attacked by the mountain lion that comes from the Andes—they run together in a hurdle—and instead of putting their heads together, which would be the right course to pursue, they turn their tails together and kick each other to pieces, leaving the crippled to be devoured while the others scamper off to a place of safety. Whereas, if they had put their heads together, instead of turning their tails together, they might have been able to repel the lion by kicking. I shall not engage in such farcical exhibitions with Mr. Dann and Senator Fletcher, but shall leave those who are disgruntled and complain to follow the example set by the wild burro of South America—kicking themselves and their State to pieces, if they can and will do so.

Some people have stated, "Well, if it is not a State obligation legally, it would be a moral obligation to pay these bonds if the district did not." My answer to that is this: If it would be a moral obligation to pay these bonds if the area didn't, wouldn't it be a moral obligation to pay the other \$10,255,000 bonds that have already been issued? The time to talk about moral obligation was before the first bond issue. As a matter of common sense, since we have spent as much money as we have, isn't it the wisest

course to go ahead and finish the undertaking, or shall we be like the foolish man who started to build a house, half finished it, and then left it unfit for occupancy?

Every county in which the lands are, except one, is almost unanimously in favor of the drainage plan; they will have to pay the taxes, no other part of the State will, and why should it disturb other sections of the State. The Everglade section is satisfied and will have the bills to pay themselves.

Out of the eleven counties in which the lands lie, there is only complaint coming from one county and that is the County of Dade. May I suggest to the good people of Dade county that they investigate carefully the reasons for these complaints? They may find a negro in the woodpile. The complaint might not have been so strong in Dade county if I had been willing to let a few land-grabbers dike off 250,000 acres of the State's lands in Dade county and buy it for \$1.25 an acre, and let the remainder of the Everglades go.

For the benefit of the people of Dade County here tonight, I want to state that no part of your county is taxed except that part that lies in the area. The area has never been extended. You were not in favor of extending the area and coming in, and that was not done. Surely you cannot complain about the area that is benefited paying the costs of the benefits.

I am aware that some agitators have made all kinds of statements about what the taxes will be on the land situated in the area, which statements are false, ridiculous and absurd. Suppose a half-mill ad valorem tax is put on the lands lying in the drainage district. The entire amount for the eleven counties would be around \$50,000, and Dade county's part would be a fractional portion of that. Suppose the lands lying in your county did pay from \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year for their own drainage, wouldn't it be worth it to you to have this great area drained right at your doorsteps? Will \$8,000 or \$10,000 a year put Dade county in bankruptcy or beggar its people? You are putting up \$400,000 for a convention to go to your city for two or three days. Don't you believe it just as wise an investment if you paid in taxes \$8,000 or \$10,000 a year for a few years for the purpose of opening up this great agricultural area right at your doorstep? Would it not be worth as much as a convention that would go to your city for two or three days?

I am advised that attorneys are haranguing your people trying to get the large sum of \$50,000 to con-

test the financing of the Everglades. May I suggest to you the propriety of taking this amount and paying your ad valorem taxes for eight or ten years, and let these lawyers alone? I believe you would come out better in the long run.

When I think about the complaints that come from Dade county it reminds me of a cartoon that I once saw of Santa Claus filling a boy's stocking full of presents, and some evil-minded man standing to one side handing the boy a brick and telling him to hit Santa Claus with it.

We are trying to give Miami and Dade county a substantial background, so that the ships that come into her port can haul sugar and every kind of produce from her harbors, making Dade county a great agricultural and shipping section as well as a tourist resort. Will she let us do it, or will she throw the brick at Santa Claus

This additional \$10,000,000 bond issue will not increase the acreage drainage tax. In fact, if \$20,000,000 was put on it, it would not increase it. The only increase in taxes will be about one-half mill ad valorem tax amounting to \$50,000 scattered over all the district lying in the eleven counties. From the present drainage tax we get enough now to pay the interest and create a sinking fund on the \$10,255,000 outstanding bonds, leaving us a balance of \$750,000 with which to pay the interest and create a sinking fund on the \$10,000,000 contemplated, so there will be no occasion to raise the drainage tax for years to come. Just here let me state to you that there are over 2,000,000 acres in the Everglades now paying 10 cents an acre drainage tax. Don't you think 10 cents an acre drainage tax is cheap to take the water off the lands? A good ice-cream soda or cigar will cost you 15 cents. If some man wanted the timber and stump removed from his land so he could cultivate it, he would be happy to have it done for from \$50 to \$75 an acre. We are now taking volumes of water off the land, and fixing it for cultivation, with over 2,000,000 acres paying 10 cents an acre. What is the difference in removing stumps and timber and removing water in an effort to fix the land for cultivation?

Since the beginning of the drainage of the Everglades, over \$2,000,000 has been paid into the State School Fund from the proceeds of the sale of State lands in the Everglades, without cost to the School Fund, which lands were heretofore not worth one dollar.

The Educational Board has a large area yet in the District and 25% of the money derived from the sale

of all other State lands in the District go into the School Fund without a dollar's cost.

The permanent school fund of the State will be increased millions if the drainage of the Everglades is continued and the school children of the State will derive benefits from it.

When the drainage of the Everglades began, the School Board owned school lands in the Everglades valued at about \$25,000. These lands today are easily worth \$1,000,000. The School Fund has profited over \$2,000,000 in cash by the sale of State lands, from which they receive 25% of the proceeds.

The Board has been forced to abandon the work, and there is not a wheel turning, because they have no funds, and the only way that the work can go ahead is for the sale of these bonds to be concluded. Unless it is concluded the Everglades are doomed. We have also \$1,500,000 in outstanding indebtedness that we have borrowed from other available sources, and must have the money from the sale of these bonds to pay this outstanding indebtedness as well as carry on the work.

Let me give you two typical illustrations of the motives behind some of these people who are attempting to criticize the Everglades drainage plan. One newspaper in Florida came out boldly in its editorial column and criticized me and the drainage plan and said that they had always been for me, but they were going to be against me and the drainage plan now because I had declined to remove a constable from office who had given the editor of the paper some impudence on one occasion.

Another newspaper, whose owner doesn't even reside or vote in Florida, has taken the opportunity all through my administration to criticize everything I have done and distort it, giving wrong information, and nothing has ever been right, and has constantly indulged in false innuendoes, putting articles in paper that has never happened except in his fanciful imagination, and he is also against the Everglades drainage plan; and the reason he is against it is because I am for it; and why he is against me is because I declined to remove the sheriff of his county, who would not permit a relation of the editor's to run a gambling house.

I admire the conduct of Samson of old, with his blinded eyes and his short-cropped hair—a slave in the treadmill of the oppressors. Yet he had the courage, when his returning strength came, to beg the boy that led him to lead him to the pillars of the temples of the evil-doers, and, encircling the

pillars with his arms, he prayed for strength to pull them down as a retribution to those who mocked at the toil of honest men. Though he perished with them in the wreck, yet his courage and fortitude today is, and will be through all ages, a model of heroism and courage, he being willing to sacrifice his own life in order that those who did evil might perish also. These gentlemen differ vastly from Samson, I am sure. They would pull down the super-structure of progress upon the heads of the innocent; they'd put the brakes on the wheels of progress. They never would perish in the fall, but stand off at a safe distance and gaze at the wreck that their own ignorance and stupidity had caused.

I have defended the State of Florida when she was criticized by her assailants over the nation since I have been Governor. I have lifted my voice in Northern cities in defense of her people, and her interest, and I shall never permit those who would tear down her institutions to go unchallenged any more than I would permit those who would do so through envy and malice to assail her unwarrantedly.

If the President of the State Chamber of Commerce sees fit to try to break up the financing of this great project and give his State a black eye, in showing to the world that Florida cannot complete a project that she began twenty-two years ago, joined by the Senior Senator of the State, I shall not permit them to circulate and make statements unchallenged that are not borne out by facts. It seems to me that, in common fairness, I should have the support of the Senior Senator of this State and the President of the State Chamber of Commerce, in an effort to carry on this great work to a successful conclusion, rather than to have insinuations and circulation of statements that are inaccurate, which can do nothing but injure Florida and her progress.

As stated before, I own no land in the Everglades and have no pecuniary interest in them in any way, shape or form, but, as Governor of this State, it is my duty to do the best that I can in solving this problem for the people of Florida. I shall never bring back the standard of progress to the people of Florida, but, if possible, will bring the people up to the standard. Never will I be found in the tents of inactivity when the State needs me most. From a farmer boy in South Florida, where I was reared, I have written my name in the history and geography of this State, and I shall not let political ambition or political preferment thwart me or hinder me in an

effort to do the best that I can for the people of my State.

Through panics, freezes, yellow fever, real estate boom and slump, and Civil War, the people of this State have shown courage and fortitude. They never shirk when the time comes for action.

Your speaker, as long as he is Governor, will never make peace with any political factions at the expense of the public. I solicit the moral support of the thinking, intelligent people of this State in an effort to solve this problem that has been before Florida for twenty-two years and which I inherited from preceding administrations.

I have done.



