

Carson

copy

March 30th, 1916.

Hon. Ion L. Farris,
Jacksonville, Fla.

My dear Mr. Farris:-

The method most favored by the present Trustees to dump the whole Everglade project overboard and wash their hands of all further responsibility in regard to it, is to suggest that "if any additional drainage work is desired in any portion of the project, over and above that which is now planned and under consideration, sub-drainage districts should be formed." This is the old spiel that the State Administration has been handing out for considerably more than a year. All of their satellites have been "pounding it home" at every opportunity. The idea is absurd, although the present State officers no doubt are trying to justify their contention by virtue of the fact that the State Board of Education holds assigned Railroad grant claims for more than twice the acreage remaining in the Internal Improvement Fund. They are anxious no doubt to turn over all of the residue to the School Fund as quickly as possible in order to make good on their political promises up-State.

As you of course appreciate, it would be nothing short of criminal to abandon the State drainage of the Everglades and require that the land sold to small purchasers be reclaimed by spasmodic efforts to form sub-drainage districts. In the first place it would be a plain violation of the conditions of the original grant from the United States Government. In the second place it would be impracticable as well as impossible because of the widely divided and scattered ownership. In the third place, even if it were possible to form sub-drainage districts, there would be no end of conflict and confusion between the various sub-districts and the separate management thereof. Pandemonium would reign supreme. And finally, even if such sub-drainage districts were formed, and the several managements harmonized, there would still be the difficulty of marketing drainage bonds for a district within a district, with a superior lien of the drainage bonds of the larger district, not to mention the many other contingencies which would arise in the investigation by bond houses of such a complicated conglomeration of frenzied finance. Moreover, if difficulty has been experienced in selling bonds for the big district because of insufficient security, why should it be supposed that bonds of lesser districts within the big district, with even less security behind them, should prove more attractive to bond buyers.

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The puerile or vicious suggestions of the present administration along this line illustrate still further their absolute inability or unfitness to cope with the problem or supply a practical remedy to the situation.

You will no doubt be interested in the enclosed legal opinion bearing on this matter of proposed Sub-drainage districts within an already organized district.

After all has been said and done, there is only one right way to clean-up the Everglades mess, and that is right along the line of your announced platform of principles and policies. Radical steps must be taken to bring about the following results, namely:

- (1) To transfer the project and management to a separate commission with permanent headquarters conveniently adjacent to the project.
- (2) To clothe the Commission with sufficient authority to do everything needful to accomplish speedy drainage, according to the unit plan.
- (3) To provide a method of taxation for drainage purposes of sufficient flexibility to meet every contingency, whether of bond houses, segregated drainage, concentrated drainage, lateral drainage or whatnot.
- (4) To confer upon the Board full authority to provide whatever security may be required to facilitate the issuing of bonds on a business-like basis, and to authorize bonds in such amounts as are necessary in conformity with estimates of engineers of National reputation, and to market such bonds from time to time as needed to vigorously prosecute the drainage operations and keep pace with economic requirements.
- (5) To remove the project as far as possible from political entanglements, and place it upon a sound business basis.

I believe that the bill, as drafted by the Everglades Drainage and Development League, and presented at the last session of legislature, already covers these points in a very effective manner, but our minds are open to conviction, and we shall be very glad to have you point out wherein any portion of the bill may be improved.

It must be borne in mind that the Everglades are one inclusive project, but that they must be drained progressively or in units; that the formation of sub-drainage districts within the boundaries of the Everglades Drainage District would be undesirable and impracticable; that the entire project and all parts thereof should be under one management; that all of the drainage ditches clear down to laterals

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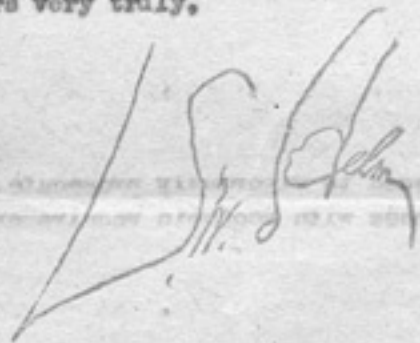
should be financed and installed by the same management; that the Commissioners should be able to fix the drainage tax for concentrated work in given areas according to expenditures for local improvement.

The bill, presented by the League, provides for all of these contingencies, and looks forward to the final completion of drainage in any given portion of the district, or of the whole project. It also anticipates every reasonable requirement of bond buyers, and is intended to cover every financial condition that may present itself.

It would perhaps not be amiss to state that several bond houses who have reviewed this bill have indicated their willingness to purchase almost any quantity of bonds that might be issued under its provisions. This assurance confirms our viewpoint that the project is fully able to stand on its own feet if backed up by a business-like law such as proposed in this bill.

However, if in your opinion we have fallen short in our efforts, won't you kindly submit your suggestions for improving and strengthening the bill? Please return to us one copy of the bill which we are sending you, together with your comments. You may wish to retain the other copy for your files.

Yours very truly,



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