

March 27th, 1916.

Hon. Ion L. Farris,  
Jacksonville, Fla.

My Dear Mr. Farris:-

I am enclosing herewith a copy of deed from the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund to John William Clark, dated April 1st, 1915, and recorded in Book 139 of Deeds at Page 141, Dade County, Florida, omitting therefrom the covenants, reservations etc. referring to rights of way for canals, reservations of oil, phosphate, etc., and promise to pay drainage taxes for 1914 and 1915.

Please note that John William Clark is the assignee of the "Carrabelle, Tallahassee and Georgia Railroad Company", and that the land deeded to him is located in the Everglades some five hundred miles from the railroad which received the original grant from legislature.

Also please note that as usual the trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund required the Railroad Company to "assign and transfer to the State Board of Education of the State of Florida all rights, claims and interests in and to any land grants made or claimed to be made by it".

The land deeded to John William Clark was under a compromise agreement, the consideration being the assignment to the State Board of Education of all "Land Grants made or claimed to be made to it" as aforesaid.

The interesting feature about this transaction is that it was consummated by the present administration, and was planned by the former administration of which four of the present Trustees were members.

I assume that you have a record of the very extensive acreage deeded by the previous administration under the compromises of December 1912 to various railroad land grant claimants. If not, I should be glad to procure this data for you. This frittering away of the swamp and overflowed lands to railroads is most inexcusable - and when considered in connection with the refusal of the present administration to place the State lands behind the <sup>the</sup> bonds in a proper manner, so as to facilitate the drainage, it is nothing short of criminal.

The policy of the Trustees in requiring the railroad companies to assign their land grant claims to the State Board of Education seems to have special significance. These assignments of land grant claims now held by the State Board of Education amount to approximately three million acres - representing approximately twice as much land as remains in the Internal Improvement Fund. The fact that these land grant claims have not been cancelled, and remain unsatisfied of record, seems to present unmistakable evidence of a deep laid plot on the part of the present administration to entirely divest the drainage fund of all of its remaining assets at some opportune time, and take the last step in defiance of the National Government, and to further dishonor Florida's name for an assumed personal political advantage, hoping that a large donation to the school fund through diversion of lands which should be dedicated to drainage, would make more friends up-state, ~~and~~ would be lost to other sections through failure to carry out Florida's drainage promises.

With the exception of Broward's good work, the whole record of the swamp and overflowed land business in Florida is a record of shame and disgrace, filled with abomination and rottenness. And the policy of the present Trustees is to perpetuate the rottenness.

As one of our friends stated "If anything can be more distant in connection, and more plainly plain railroad graft than to deed lands five hundred miles away from the railroad aided, I don't know what it is". It ~~is a disgrace~~ for the Trustees to give the railroads school fund money, or robbing the school children and the insane asylum because the beneficiaries are helpless". The drainage trust fund is no less sacred than the school trust fund, and its manipulation for the benefit of the railroads to the tune of approximately seventeen million acres is no less despicable than would be the diversion of school fund lands or moneys for equally venal purposes. Every member of the present Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund is guilty of these culpable acts, and the present comptroller as "Master of the Board" is doubly culpable because he has seen the longest period of service and ~~the most~~ should have been able to guide his associates into cleaner and straighter paths.

Trusting that this supplementary information may be of assistance to you in showing up at least one of your opponents in the gubernatorial race, I am,

Yours very truly,