

1. Florida's greatest asset is her wet lands. Out of the state's total area of 38,000,000 acres, more than 20,000,000 acres are classified as "swamp and overflowed", and were ~~received~~<sup>granted</sup> by the Act of Congress, ~~of~~<sup>at</sup> September 28, 1850, which specifically provided "that the proceeds of said lands, whether from sale or by direct appropriation in kind (granting lands for drainage) shall be applied, exclusively, as far as necessary, to the purpose of reclaiming said lands." This was Florida's rich heritage from the parent government. Of the eighty million acres of "swamp and overflowed" lands east of the Rocky Mountains, 25% are within the borders of our state. We have more than twice ~~the~~<sup>as much</sup> acreage of such lands as our nearest rival -- Louisiana. With this great storehouse of latent wealth we should be the leaders in all matters pertaining to reclamation.

The Supreme Court of the United States, (*Mathis vs. McGee*), has decided that the grant of swamp and overflowed lands by the United States upon conditions, and the acceptance of the grant by the state, constitute a contract, and it is further stated that "The contract required the State to appropriate the lands granted to the purpose of reclaiming them." The constitution of the United States says that the constitution and the statutes of the United States are "the supreme law of the land," so that it was not only the contract, but "the supreme law of the land" which required the appropriation by the state of the granted lands to the purpose of reclaiming them. But what use has been made of our rich legacy? Like prodigals, our public servants, to whom this sacred heritage was entrusted, have frittered away the great bulk of it, until only a mere vestige remains. More than 16,000,000 acres have been illegally granted to railroads under the pretense of "internal improvements", without reference to drainage; another 2,000,000 acres have been given to canal companies -- mostly for the construction of transportation canals in tide water, with little, or no drainage benefit. Only a paltry 2,000,000 acres remain for drainage purposes, of which approximately one fourth has been utilized for that purpose.

There is hardly any portion of the state which does not require more or less drainage. This is so obvious as to require no argument. But to finance the drainage operations -- there's the rub. To undertake to do it by taxation alone is most difficult. The problem becomes increasingly difficult with the size of the district involved. Again do we perceive the wisdom of our forefathers in providing ample means for unlocking these vast storehouses of wealth by granting us the land that we might bond it, or bargain it, or sell it, and use the proceeds thereof to defray the drainage cost. It now behooves us to claim our birthright which our unfaithful servants attempted to give away for a mess of pottage, while we were yet in our swaddling clothes. It is our duty to demand this birthright, to restore it, to the public domain, and to use for its rightful purpose.

2. Numerous efforts have been made in various sections of the state to create drainage districts and float bond issues. With very few exceptions -- and most of them of a wholly private character -- it has been next to impossible to sell the bonds. We need not look far for the reason, because even the Everglades project, under the supervision of the state officials, has not been fraught with brilliant success. The state's project -- viz., the Everglades -- must continue to be the barometer of all drainage operations in Florida. We cannot escape the fact that financiers will

very largely gauge all other drainage districts by what the state accomplishes, or fails to accomplish in the matter of making good its promises, of setting a high standard in the business administration of drainage work, <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ engineering skill, ~~of~~ <sup>in</sup> financial ability, <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ soundness of securities. To succeed in draining the Everglades, or such portion thereof as economic conditions justify, and demand, will facilitate the financing and drainage of every other project in Florida. But to putter along indefinitely with no substantial results, and with no assurance of permanent drainage in sight, with no adequate provision for complete reclamation of any <sup>considerable</sup> part of the Glades, with very little conception of the engineering requirements, with interminable delays and excuses, and with a financial policy which, pursued to its logical conclusion would cause the project to collapse within a very few years — such a result would react against every other drainage enterprise in the state, give a black eye to drainage bonds and retard Florida's progress for a generation, at least. This disaster must be averted by wise planning, coupled with prompt and decisive action. Whatever difficulties have been encountered are directly traceable to the departure from the plain proviso which accompanied the grant, and which constitutes a covenant running with the land, viz., that the lands and the proceeds thereof shall be used exclusively, as far as necessary, for drainage. When we violate the law we must pay the penalty. There is only one way to <sup>and adjust matters</sup> get right, and that is to turn about face and obey the plain mandate of the law. We must go back to original principles. The land must be used for the purpose specified, and that which has been wrongfully diverted must be restored to its proper status; and the place to begin is with the project already in hand, viz., the Everglades.

3. We must redeem Florida's honor by placing the Everglades drainage project on a sound business basis.

Approximately 20,000 persons purchased land in the Everglades on the strength of Florida's promise to reclaim the same. The good faith of the state is at stake. Florida's name is a by-word and a reproach in financial circles as a result of the

bungling policies pursued by the state administration in its feeble attempt to finance  
 the reclamation project, and the tardiness with which it ~~has~~ <sup>is approaching</sup> any effect-  
 ive drainage. The state has been deprived of at least 50,000 to 100,000 additional  
 citizens in the Everglades alone, not to mention great damage inflicted upon other  
 sections of the state. A most serious blow has been dealt to colonization and de-  
 velopment projects throughout all Florida. Capital has been frightened off, and  
 actual values have been greatly depreciated in many, if not all portions of the  
 state. It was the initiation of Everglades reclamation that brought Florida into  
 the lime-light, introducing an era of unprecedented prosperity. It was the unbusi-  
 nesslike management of the project, and its attendant nation-wide scandal, which,  
 more than any other one thing, slowed up Florida's progress. A new policy and a  
 business regime must be inaugurated to re-establish Florida's good name and credit,  
 and give new impetus to immigration and solid growth.

The Everglades represent the largest reclamation enterprise in the world. There  
 are some 4,000,000 acres within the boundaries of the drainage district. The land  
 is of unusual productivity, and constitutes one of the most valuable assets of the  
 state. With a family of five to each 40 acres, the Everglades would support a popu-  
 lation of 500,000 <sup>(worth \$1,000,000,000 to us @ \$2000 per capita)</sup> — almost equal to the present population of the state. Valued at  
 \$50 per acre (\$100 per acre has been refused in several instances), this land would  
 be worth \$200,000,000, when drained. The taxes alone from this area when placed  
 under cultivation, will amount to a great deal more than the present value of the  
 1,400,000 acres of watery wildern<sup>ess</sup>, title to which is still held by the State,  
 and not utilized in a proper manner to finance the reclamation work, but often re-  
 ferred to as the property which is "being preserved for all the people of the State"  
 — presumably for "educational purposes." The people of the State must now determine  
 whether they would rather have a perpetual frog pond of 1,400,000 acres in extent,  
 bringing in not a penny of revenue, but only add<sup>ing</sup> odium to the State's reputation, or  
 have this frog pond converted into real agricultural land, settled and developed by  
 prosperous people, and placed upon the assessment rolls at a ~~valuation~~ sufficiently

@ At \$2000. per capita, (value of each new citizen), we are short \$100,000,000 to  
 \$200,000,000 on this item alone, not counting the loss in land values.  
 Can we afford such luxurious losses?

high valuation to bring in a princely revenue to the State.

4. We cannot keep our cake and eat it too. As laudable as the effort may be, we cannot preserve these watery lands for education and at the same time fulfill the conditions of the grant. The grant, <sup>of Sep. 28, 1892</sup> from the national government says nothing about education. There was a separate act conveying educational lands, viz., Section 16 out of each surveyed township. The swamp and overflowed lands were granted for reclaiming said lands. It would be just as wrong to try and divert the swamp and overflowed lands to the educational fund as to divert them to railroads and canal companies. We cannot be parties to a breach of contract and be honest with ourselves. The lands received for drainage purposes must be dedicated irrevocably to drainage. The effort on the part of the State administration to accomplish drainage solely by taxation, and to preserve the remaining swamp and overflowed lands in the Everglades for educational purposes, or any other purpose than drainage, is economically unsound, and in direct violation of the contract with our federal government. The present policy has been pursued, no doubt, for the purpose of trying to court favor with those who have not understood the <sup>Conditions</sup> ~~relation~~ of trust concerning these lands. But with a general knowledge of the facts, the people can be depended upon to do that which is right, and just, and honest. They will no longer permit themselves to be made parties to a breach of contract with the United States government. The people will insist upon the proper fulfillment of that contract, and the effacement of the record of shame left by their unworthy servants. Only a lack of familiarity with the facts has prevented the people of our state from rising up in arms to correct this most grievous wrong; and we be to the ~~present~~ office seeker who again attempts to intrench, or perpetuate himself in power by an offer of contribution to the school fund of these lands, which must be used for the one purpose of drainage and reclamation -- <sup>noe to him</sup> who would betray the state's honor for mere temporary prestige. It requires only a simple statement of truth to forever eliminate the mysterious halo placed about that school fund. Section 16 in every township, when drained, will be worth a great deal more than the entire present value of all the wet lands still held by the state. Drainage,

however, as already pointed out, cannot be accomplished by taxation alone. To continue such a policy, would result in certain disaster, which would jeopardize not only all the remaining lands held by the state, but, <sup>as already pointed out</sup> would hinder every other drainage project in the state.

5. The first step to be taken in order to demonstrate our good faith is to, <sup>revert policy established in Feb. 1913 and</sup> place the state lands in the Everglades squarely behind the drainage project, with the distinct understanding that these lands will be used as security for the bonds, and that they will be sold as they are drained, and the proceeds placed in a sinking fund to retire the bonds.

6. The proper legal steps should be taken, without delay, to recover the illegally granted lands within the boundaries of the Everglades. It is a practical certainty that at least a million acres can thus be added to the drainage fund. This, together with the 1,400,000 acres already on hand, and supplemented by a reasonable tax, if necessary, should make very attractive security for any quantity of bonds deemed necessary to reclaim the Glades and maintain the drainage works. Insufficient security has been one of the great stumbling blocks to the sale of Everglades bonds. Insufficiency of the bond issue itself has been another stumbling block. Financial houses are not afraid of big bond issues, when backed up by ample security. But they will not handle half-baked propositions, having neither head nor tail.

7. All quit claims and assignments of railroad land grant claims, received by the state board of education when improper and unnecessary compromises were effected by the Trustees, should be transferred to the I. I. Fund and forever cancelled.

8. All monies improperly paid to the state board of education by the Trustees, under an unconstitutional provision, should be repaid to the ~~III~~ <sup>II</sup> Board, and used for the proper purpose of drainage.

9. A separate local commission of three capable men should be appointed to take direct charge of the Everglades drainage project, and to devote their entire time to the reclamation work. These men should be clothed with sufficient power to employ all necessary engineering talent, including a consulting engineer of national reputa-

tation, and to do all other things needful to push the project forward to early completion. It is unreasonable and unbusinesslike to imagine, even for a moment, that a 200,000,000 project could be directly managed at long distance by a board already overtardened with multitudinous state duties. A trust of one tenth, or even one one-hundredth the size would justify the undivided attention of several capable men located right on the ground. How much more is this true of the world's greatest reclamation project, with the good faith of the state back of it, and her honor at stake.

9. Not less than \$50,000,000 to \$60,000,000 worth of bonds should be authorized for the project, to be sold only as needed. Discriminating bond purchasers want to know in advance that the project is amply provided for -- that the bonds authorized and other means available are sufficient to complete the enterprise, without the necessity of re-financing, with all its attendant loss.

10. All present drainage work should be continued. Much additional work should be inaugurated, however. A policy of drainage by zones, or units, should be adopted, and the new work should be concentrated first on the area which was retailed to thousands of small purchasers, who are dependent on Florida for a square deal. This area, for the greater part, is located along the <sup>Coast</sup> rim which, fortunately, from an engineering and economic point of view, is the easiest to drain. Such a plan of unit drainage would make it possible to drain an area nearly as large as the drained portion of Holland within the next few years, whereas the present scheme of trying to drain all the Glades at once would require, at the present rate of progress, some fifty or sixty years to accomplish -- provided the land owners were able and willing to pay taxes that long, and provided they lived long enough to see it through. We cannot afford to wait fifty or sixty years before settling the Everglades problem -- it must be done during the next administration at Tallahassee.

The present stiff, unwieldy, and unsatisfactory drainage tax must be abolished and a more flexible taxing arrangement substituted, whereby taxes will be levied according to benefits received, with only a very light tax for areas set apart for

for future drainage operations, and which are only indirectly benefited by present work. Incidentally, all drainage taxes should be reduced to a minimum as soon as funds are available from the sale of drained state lands, wherewith to pay interest and provide for the sinking fund on drainage bonds.

11. If there are any state lands left over after completing the drainage and providing for maintenance as aforesaid, then we can turn our attention to donating such lands to the school fund -- but not until the trust of drainage is first fulfilled.

12. All <sup>now</sup> necessary and overlapping laws with respect to drainage should be simplified and reconciled, and the hydra-headed boards, of which the governor and his staff are now officials, should be boiled down to simple and direct form, with all complications and conflicting emotions removed. The whole proposition of drainage, indeed, seems to be in need of a house-cleaning.

13. The fallacy and futility of the present policy of attempting to <sup>accomplish</sup> ~~support~~ the drainage solely by taxation, is evidenced by the fact that already the small owners have become so discouraged and so disgusted that approximately 33% have allowed their lands to be sold for taxes during the past two years. Several <sup>individuals</sup> corporations, which acquired title to large bodies of land, have either met with disaster, or are on the verge of bankruptcy. Still others can hold out for only two or three years longer. The taxing system, with no relief in sight for several generations to come, is tantamount to confiscation. The load is simply too heavy, and there is no means of refinancing such corporations, unless a definite, clear-cut plan of engineering and financing is adopted that will produce an absolute result within a reasonable time. With no adequate plan of relief, either as to engineering or financing, in sight, let alone many other problems to be solved in connection with an enterprise of such magnitude, disaster and ruination only can follow.

The reason for this is plain when one considers that the bulk of the land on which taxes are lapsed goes back to the state. <sup>An increasing</sup> ~~The~~ burden of taxes, therefore, under  
(Commissioners).

(Commissioner)

Everglades

the present system, falls on the state. How can the state sell sufficient lands to pay the taxes, when present owners are forfeiting investments of hundreds, and even thousands, of dollars for the paltry sum represented by taxes. Would you buy under similar circumstances, especially when you knew that there was no comprehensive or adequate plan on foot to complete the drainage? Very few people want to buy a dead horse. The animal must be resuscitated, and the only way to do this is to straighten out the fundamentals, as hereinbefore set forth.

A further illustration of the state's inability to sell sufficient lands to meet even their present cash requirements is the fact that right now the Everglades drainage fund owes more than \$400,000 to the Florida banks for amounts borrowed to keep the dredges going.

Millions of dollars worth of good bonds of Florida municipalities, school districts, etc. have been sold within the past three years. That the present drainage <sup>and mail</sup> program outlined by the state administration is basically wrong is proven by the inability of the commissioners to sell Everglades drainage bonds in sufficient quantities to restore public confidence in the project. The bond market has never been more favorable than at the present moment, and if there was ever a time in the history of the world that any really good bonds could be sold, that time is now.

The only dredging contract of any consequence now in progress in the Everglades, requires a substantial cash payment each month, the balance being paid by notes, due in one year, with the privilege of renewal for another year, bonds being attached to the notes as collateral. The boasted sale of a large block of bonds to this contracting firm is therefore a myth. If the bonds ultimately become the property of the contracting firm, it will probably be through the state's default, and not because of the merit of the issue itself. Still again, what great good can come from the sale of a puny million or two million dollars' worth of bonds on a \$50,000,000 or \$60,000,000 project? This small sale -- even if it were a sale -- would be only a drop in the bucket. We must stop temporizing and get down to business. This is no school boys' play. We must look ahead and see the finished project -- and plan intelligently to that end.



14. Due to the present ineffectual drainage policy, values in the Everglades have greatly depreciated. Just prior to starting drainage operations many thousands of acres of state land were sold at \$1 to \$2 per acre. The last large sale of state lands <sup>in the Everglades</sup> about four years ago, was at the rate of \$15 per acre. Within the past twelve months approximately 250,000 acres, which had been sold at \$2 per acre went back to the state because the purchaser could not resell it even at a profit to himself of approximately \$1 per acre. Other lands which had been retailing at \$30 to \$50 per acre cannot now be sold at any price. While most of the values were speculative, based upon the hope of drainage, it may now be fairly stated that the depreciation in even speculative, or trading values, has been not less than \$10 per acre for a large portion of the 'Glades. It requires no mathematician to figure out the great loss that has thus been visited upon Florida through the reactionary drainage policy of the state administration.

As a result of the great activity in lands which followed the inauguration of drainage operations in the Everglades and the wide-spread publicity given thereto through magazines and other publications of national circulation, values were enhanced in almost every part of Florida. Cheap, cut-over lands, and other unimproved areas, jumped from \$1.50, or \$2, or \$3 per acre to \$5, \$10, and in some instances, as high as \$15 and upwards per acre. Generally speaking, prices reached the high water mark about three or four years ago -- that is, ~~that is~~ <sup>before</sup> ~~when~~ the Everglades difficulties began to be aired <sup>and</sup> before investigation committees, <sup>and</sup> in the courts and elsewhere. Since that time values generally throughout the whole state have been pretty much at a standstill, and in some localities have shrunk considerably. The newspapers and magazines all over the country devoted reams of space to Florida's so-called "land scandal". It was reported far and wide that Florida had failed to make good on her drainage project. This was the message that reached the financial circles, and prospective homeseekers, who suddenly changed their plans about investing in Florida. Public confidence was, in a large measure, destroyed, and all Florida felt, and still feels, the ill effects. The real trouble then was princi-

pally of an engineering character. This was remedied in part by the temporary employment of an engineering commission, which outlined, in a general way, some of the work to be accomplished and <sup>gave</sup> an approximate estimate of the cost of certain main canals. The Engineering Commission in question limited its report, <sup>very largely</sup> to answers to certain questions propounded by the Trustees. Had the engineers been given a free hand they would undoubtedly have made certain recommendations concerning the <sup>best</sup> manner <sup>procedure in</sup> of reclaiming the Glades proper, aside from the general control works regulating the water level of Lake Okeechobee. This has been intimated by at least one member of the Engineering Commission, who, incidentally, also called attention to the fact that he has adopted a much higher run-off factor since completing his report to the State officials, which new factor is more in harmony with the basis used by other high class engineers, and would greatly increase the estimated drainage cost shown in said report.

Before receiving the report of the Engineering Commission the State administration went ahead blindly, and recommended <sup>(in 1913)</sup> a total bond issue of only \$6,000,000 -- about ten per cent of the real needs of the district. (In the administration Bill of 1915 the bond issue was reduced to three and a half million dollars, with the proviso that future legislatures might authorize, not to exceed \$3,000,000 per session, or an average of \$1,500,000 per year. There is no way of knowing that any additional amounts will ever be authorized. The whole matter is so uncertain <sup>and indefinite</sup> as to be unattractive to bond houses.) What is even worse, however, they adopted a resolution (February, 1913) which stated in effect that it should be the policy of the Trustees to withhold the remaining state lands, and require the drainage of the Everglades to be done by taxation. As already pointed out, it would be an absolutely impossible proposition to complete drainage in this manner, or to even satisfy the purchasers of bonds, not to mention the fact that this resolution acts as a direct impairment of obligation of contract with the United States Government. Therefore, it is plain to be seen that instead of meeting the occasion like <sup>some and intelligent</sup> business men, and providing ~~the~~ proper remedy to offset the terrific <sup>blow</sup> dealt the State ~~through the unfavorable publicity~~ <sup>at</sup> afore-said, the Trustees bungled the whole proposition, and missed the great opportunity to

which their constituents expected them to measure up. Whatever of hope has been awakened in the minds of investors through the temporizing methods and policies of the present administration is of a wholly effervescent sort, and is bound to be dissipated in short order, unless the basic errors are corrected and a business regime installed to properly direct the work and provide ample means to finance it. Otherwise we may look forward to a total collapse of the project, from which it will take many years to recover, and to regain public confidence in Florida investments. People outside of our borders do not discriminate between the Everglades and Gainesville, or Monticello. To them, any mention of Florida <sup>or the Everglades</sup> means the whole state; and knowing the Everglades to be a state project you can appreciate what their mental attitude will be if Florida fails to make a success of the work which she has undertaken. But success can only come by handling the project with more intelligence than has been used during the past few years, and by giving a square deal to all concerned, by placing the lands squarely behind the proposition for the sole purpose of drainage. The present administration has had its chance to do the right thing, and it has fallen down. New blood must be injected into the Board, and a constructive policy as herein outlined must be adopted and vigorously carried into effect.

The present status of the Everglades project and the lack of foresight of the present state officers in dealing with it, have either held back or depreciated values throughout the entire state. Some have estimated this loss as high as \$10 per acre; but if we were to assume a more conservative estimate of even \$1 per acre you can see that Florida's loss through this one item alone is approximately \$39,000,000 -- a sum equivalent to several times the value of our annual citrus crop -- enough to build a network of hard surfaced roads throughout ~~the~~ all Florida. Do you not see where this has a very direct bearing on your well being, even <sup>the</sup> located several hundred miles from the project?

The effort of the present Trustees in trying to save approximately 1,500,000 acres of land <sup>in the Colades</sup> "for all the people of the state" is ridiculous and absurd? Let us

see what this effort has brought <sup>forth:</sup> us: One third of this acreage at the market price which prevailed four years ago was worth practically as much as the entire acreage at the present market price, owing to the great depreciation of values. So the saving, you see, has not been very great! Unless a radical change for the better is made without delay, the market price five years from now will be but a fraction of the present value.

Even the courts of other states have taken judicial notice of the backward drainage policy, framed, fathered and defended by the state administration. A Federal judge, after having heard the testimony of most of the state officials, said, in effect, that it looked to him like Florida was trying to drain the Everglades by draining other people's pocket books. Such statements from the bench and published broadcast, have not helped Florida's cause, nor assisted in bringing new settlers within her gates. The damage done has been incalculable, and it is high time to apply the much needed remedy. The Augean stables must be cleansed. The Everglades must, and can, stand on their own feet. It is not fair either to the state, or to the project that the lands should continue to be used as a political football. There can be no question among honest men as to the proper purpose to which the lands should be devoted, and unreservedly dedicated -- viz., that of drainage exclusively. To attempt to place any other construction upon the trust is to attempt to evade our plain duty, and to avoid carrying out our contract with the United States Government.

15. When Broward started the first drainage operations in the Glades, he did not have the abundance of engineering data which we now have at our command, but his first idea was basically correct, viz., to completely drain a given area of the Glades before tackling the remainder -- and his early maps confirm this fact. This plan, <sup>Somewhat</sup> ~~slightly~~ modified, is the plan determined upon by practically all high grade engineers who have given this matter serious study. They refer to it as "progressive ~~drain~~" or "seggeated zone drainage". It conforms with the economic necessities of the situation and meets the needs of the thousands of small purchasers who are expecting a

a square deal from Florida. It is Broward's plan brought to life again. Had Broward lived it would unquestionably have been adopted and placed in operation long since. Broward was big enough and broad enough to <sup>have</sup> profit by the engineering facts which have been revealed during the meantime, and he would also have met the financial emergency. <sup>Had he lived, thousands of</sup> Thousands of acres of land which were sold first to small purchasers, and whose money made it possible to inaugurate the project, would now be permanently drained and under cultivation. We would have had something to point to besides a narrow fringe of land around Lake Okeechobee, <sup>and thousands</sup> of disappointed investors would now be boosters.