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Condition of the Frigate  
"Constitution".

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CONDITION OF THE FRIGATE "CONSTITUTION."

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,

IN RESPONSE TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE OF JANUARY 25, 1916, CALLING FOR ALL FACTS BEARING UPON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE FRIGATE "CONSTITUTION" AND THE AMOUNT OF MONEY ESTIMATED TO BE NECESSARY TO PUT THAT VESSEL IN A CONDITION OF GOOD REPAIR.

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FEBRUARY 7, 1916.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

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NAVY DEPARTMENT,  
Washington, February 2, 1916.

SIR: In reply to the resolution of the Senate of the United States, dated January 25, 1916, directing that all facts bearing on the present condition of the frigate *Constitution*, and also the amount of money estimated to put that vessel in a condition of good repair be communicated to the Senate, the department submits the following from reports of the Board of Inspection and Survey for Ships, and from the commandant of the Boston Navy Yard, regarding the condition of the *Constitution* and the estimates to repair this vessel:

The *Constitution* was extensively repaired about seven years ago, the cost being about \$100,000. The principal items were repairs to outside planking and top timbers, new spars, blocks and rigging, repairs to upper and lower 'tween decks, new channels and chain plates, new copper sheathing along the water line, and repairs to fixed joiner work. She was not docked at that time, the last docking being in 1897.

Since the above repairs were made the vessel has been in charge of a ship keeper. No regular working gang has been assigned for general upkeep other than one enlisted man.

In 1911 extensive repairs were made to the rigging by the yard force, and at different times the paint work has been touched up by enlisted men from the receiving ship.

The main deck leaks; the main rails and bulwarks are rotten in a number of places; the fife and pin rails are rotted away; the rigging needs tarring down; some of the spars are badly checked, due to insufficient protection; the paint work and joiner work are not kept up; and the ceiling is rotten in many places.

The work authorized on the vessel should be in accordance with the policy of the department. If it is only intended to make the upper works presentable and the spars and rigging safe, this can be

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done for a moderate expenditure and the rest of the vessel allowed to gradually rot away until unsafe to even float alongside the dock. If, however, it is desired for the sake of sentiment to keep the vessel afloat and in a good state of repair as long as possible—that is, to continue to carry out the spirit of the appropriation under which the vessel was extensively repaired seven to eight years ago—then extensive repairs should be made at this time. The vessel should be docked and the underwater planking, framing, and sheathing placed in good condition; and the rotten ceiling and planking inside should all be removed and renewed. This work, in addition to that necessary to make the upper works presentable, which is listed below as requested by the commandant, would involve a considerable expenditure, probably well over the 10 per cent limit to which repairs to wooden vessels are limited by law. The docking of the vessel would be a difficult and expensive job, as special care would be necessary to avoid damaging the hull; but as the bottom planking has not been exposed since 1897 and as the copper sheathing undoubtedly is gone in a number of places, exposing the bottom to the action of worms, it is believed to be necessary to dock the vessel if there is to be any certainty as to her condition.

In connection with the condition of the bottom it is noted that in 1912 the vessel made about 30 inches of water a month. Now she makes about 25 inches a week and is said to make more in rough weather, indicating that there is some working of the vessel alongside the dock.

The estimates below assume that the present rates of wages and costs of materials will not be materially increased before the completion of the repairs:

Item.	Labor.	Indirect.	Material.	Total.
1. Removing and replacing topmast, topgallant mast, all yards and tops, repairing, and replacing them.....	\$800	\$160	\$250	\$1,210
2. Removing all rigging, repairing and replacing shrouds and other heavy gear, and renewing light gear.....	1,400	280	940	2,620
3. Remove, temporarily stow, and replace battery.....	360	110	80	550
4. Remove and replace ballast, cleaning as may be necessary.....	300	100	25	425
5. Docking and undocking, and care and preservation in dock.....	1,600	380	150	2,130
6. Special shoring and staging while in dock in connection with repairs.....	3,500	1,225	1,100	5,825
7. Remove old copper sheathing.....	600	210	.....	810
8. Remove defective outside planking.....	3,200	1,100	.....	4,300
9. Remove and replace decayed underwater framing.....	3,900	1,350	5,000	10,250
10. Fit new outside planking, using new copper through fastening.....	10,500	3,500	16,500	30,500
11. Calk new planking and recalk old planking below water line.....	2,200	750	500	3,450
12. Recopper entire bottom.....	2,000	700	7,800	10,500
13. Repair, renew, and refasten inside ceiling below berth deck, including new fastening.....	6,900	2,400	3,500	12,800
14. Repair, renew, and refasten berth-deck beam knees.....	1,200	400	3,000	4,600
15. Repair decayed berth-deck beam ends.....	1,400	510	600	2,510
16. Repair and renew orlop-deck beam knees.....	650	230	1,600	2,480
17. Repair decayed orlop-deck beam ends.....	400	140	300	840
18. Remove and replace joiner work on gun and berth decks.....	800	380	150	1,330
19. Remove lead lining from magazines, tin sheathing from bread and sail rooms, and decayed woodwork underneath; replace with new material.....	2,200	1,080	2,710	5,990
20. Remove and replace miscellaneous bulkheads below berth deck, including chain and shot lockers, to permit repairs to bottom planking.....	480	160	250	890
21. Recalk and make miscellaneous minor repairs to planking of spar, gun, berth, and orlop decks.....	2,800	900	1,150	4,850
22. Recalk top sides above copper line.....	820	280	140	1,240
23. Repaint ship throughout.....	2,600	900	1,400	4,900
24. Miscellaneous minor repairs to catheads, figureheads, gunport shutters, airports, and lenses, blocks, fife, and pin rails, main rails, and bulwarks.....	800	300	350	1,450
25. Miscellaneous minor repairs which can not be specified at this time.....	3,500	1,700	500	5,700
Total.....	54,910	19,245	47,995	122,150

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The reports from which the foregoing are quoted were made June and September, 1914. The department's estimate of \$150,000 covers not only the estimates given above but also makes allowances for additional work that will undoubtedly become apparent only after the repairs in question are undertaken. It also makes allowances for the increase in cost of labor and material.

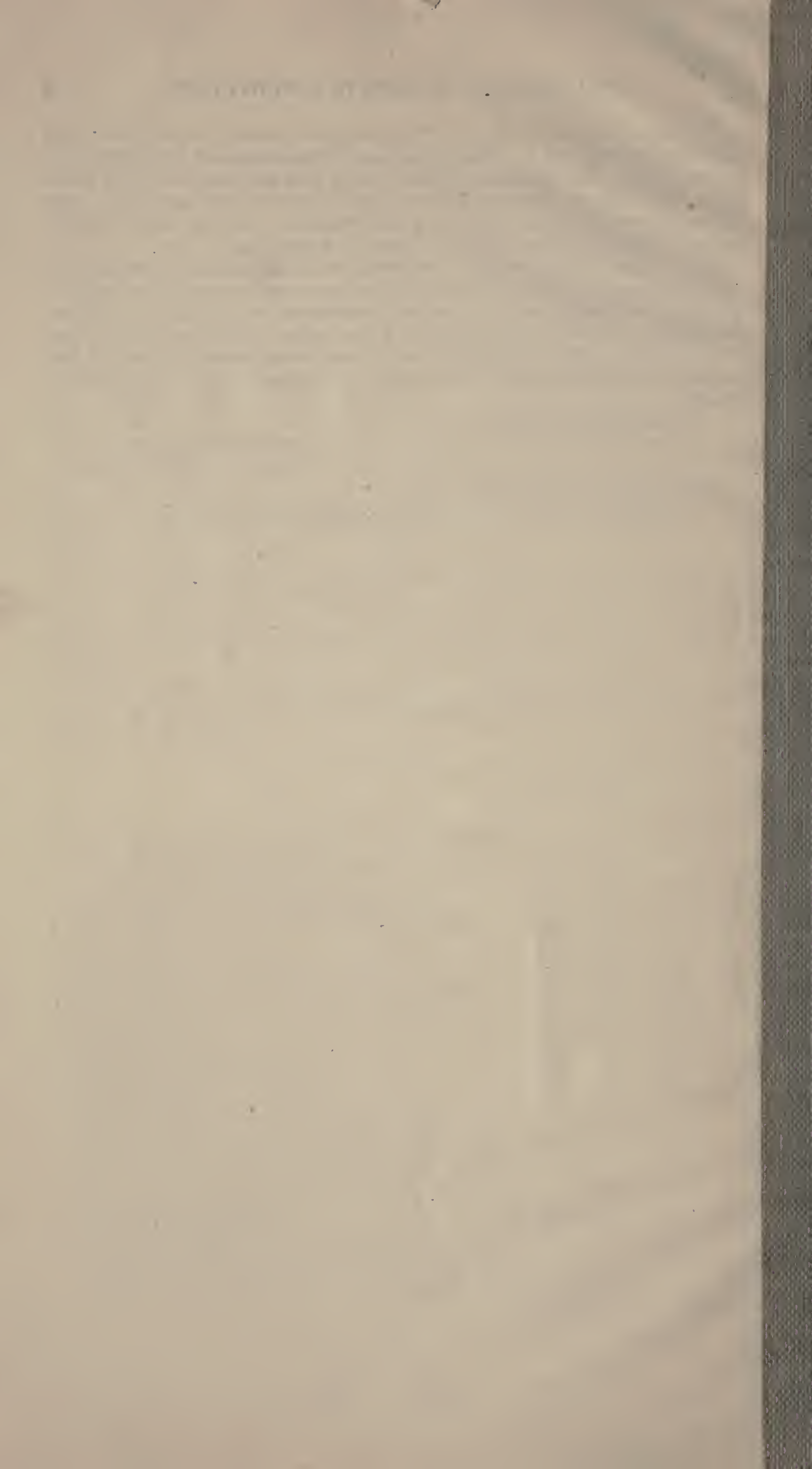
The repairs and alterations referred to in the second paragraph of this communication, that were made some years ago at a cost of \$100,000, included work necessary to restore the vessel as nearly as possible to the condition in which it was when it took part in its historic battles. The estimates now under consideration are for the purpose of repairing and preserving the vessel for a long period of years.

Very respectfully,

JOSEPHUS DANIELS,  
*Secretary of the Navy.*

Hon. JAMES M. BAKER,  
*Secretary Senate of the United States, Washington, D. C.*







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