

42

LMNED-MF

5 September 1973

Honorable F. Edward Hebert
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Hebert:

This is in response to your 17 August 1973 letter in support of Mr. David Levy's request for a public meeting on the Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, and Vicinity Hurricane Protection project.

I assure you that if I thought the desired meeting would gain acceptance of the demonstrated and established merits of the project by Mr. Levy and associates, I would not hesitate to schedule it. Unfortunately, I do not believe such would be the case. We have met with Mr. Levy and others from St. Tammany Parish, both privately and publicly on numerous occasions to explain the project in detail. For reasons best known to themselves, the participants not only ignored all explanations but proceeded to criticize project features and project results which do not and will not exist. For example, the allegation that there will be a dam across The Rigolets and/or the Chef that will preclude the existing interchange of water between Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne or Mississippi Sound (except during hurricanes), and thus convert the lake into a stagnant and polluted body of non-saline water is without fact. This was amply revealed by the Waterways Experiment Station model of the project which was demonstrated to the St. Tammany Parish Police Jury and other officials as far back as May 1961. Neither will the project trap water and cause unusual flooding in St. Tammany Parish during periods of heavy rainfall or operation of the Bonnet Carré spillway.

LMNED-MP

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I must also deny allegations that the 13.2-foot deep by 110-foot wide lock planned for The Rigolets is too small to pass vessels constructed in the Tangipahoa or Tchefuncte Rivers or in Bayou LaCombe or Bayou Bonfouca. Project dimensions in these streams are all less in either width or depth, or both, than those of the proposed lock.

I should point out here that Mr. Levy and others he purportedly speaks for claim not to object to hurricane protection per se but seek a change to essentially a levee only project. We have studied such a proposal. We find that a project of this nature would be more expensive and because of poor soil conditions in the area would take considerably longer to build.

I should also point out that the project, as it exists today, has been closely coordinated with the state and has had the support of every state administration, including the present one, since its authorization. It has also been recognized by engineering authorities as being effectively and efficiently planned and comparatively simple. Factually, in its basic concept, it is little different from putting a lid on a boiling pot to keep most of its contents from running over onto the stove.

As a matter of information, Mr. Levy and others from St. Tammany Parish have repeatedly contacted Members of Congress on their objections to the project. As a result of such a contact with and subsequent request by Senator Long, I am planning a meeting in my office with a small group of interested citizens to again go over the project with them in the hopes that they will gain the understanding necessary to appreciate its features and purposes. In view of your interest in Mr. Levy's position I will include him in the list of participants.

LMVED-MP

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If I may provide you with further information on the project of interest, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Sincerely yours,

RICHARD L. HUNT
Colonel, CE
District Engineer

CF: w basic
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