

WATERWORKS OVERHAUL OFF FOR DURATION

System to Be Patched Up, But Not Rehabilitated.

By WINDSOR BOOTH
Records Washington Bureau
WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—Philadelphia's long-delayed \$18,000,000 waterworks modernization program apparently is going to have to wait now until after the war.

War Production Board engineers told WPB power branch officials in a closed hearing today that the decrepit system can be patched up and made to do for the duration, thereby releasing critical materials for uses they consider even more vital.

Pumps to Be Diverted.
Under their plan, it was understood, 15 new electrical pumps now on order—and 75 percent completed—to replace the wheezy old steam-driven equipment at the Lardner's Point and Torresdale pumping stations would be diverted to mushroom war production centers where there is no pumping capacity at all to supply the rapidly increasing population.

The WPB engineers, it was learned, were severely critical of the Philadelphia Water Bureau's maintenance of present equipment. New pumping stations, they reported, would not solve the city's problem unless they were given far better care than that given existing equipment.

Final Decision.
The final decision will come from Herbert S. Marks, chief of the WPB power branch, after a review of the transcript of today's hearing. Reports emanating from the session, however, left little doubt in the minds of observers that he will uphold the engineers' findings.

The engineers were under no illusion about the Philadelphia water system. They inspected it themselves recently and said they were "amazed at the run-down condition we found."

The system has been "neglected and apparently riddled with potholes for years," they said, finding that although the water rents have been producing revenues of more than \$8,000,000 a year, little or no money has been spent in recent years to keep the plant in shape.

Some 40 Years Old.
Nevertheless, they declared, the old steam pumping equipment—some of it nearly 40 years old—still can be repaired, at least to a point where it can be made to operate. And that could mean far less critical materials than new equipment.

emphasized that an adequate water supply is vitally essential for under government control. He went repeatedly to the under the circumstances the city could not guarantee the service of water supply unless the work was permitted to go through and sufficiently high priorities be granted on needed materials.

Still No Action.
"The WPB engineers have been in Philadelphia for more than a year and they all agree with me that the plan is to replace the old group of engines made a favorable report but still there was no action from the WPB. The plan in Philadelphia to get in such condition through WPB's failure to give us adequate priority ratings—has resulted in increased water demands of the Army, Navy and war industry—that they were finally driven to consider the deferment of the work. I would consider it if it is the critical situation regarding our pumping plants was given prompt consideration by the Federal Government."

While we wanted to be helpful it was necessary to consider Philadelphia's contribution to armament. A breakdown would mean less steel and fewer ships.

Situation Called Grave.
Chief McLaughlin and his associates reported to Director Neeson upon their return to Philadelphia, warning the gravity of the situation.

"Any WPB proposal providing for the construction of new equipment Director Neeson has asked is simply an invitation to trouble and delay," he said. "The only guarantee that Philadelphia's water supply will be able to meet the added demands of the war effort is that

the city shall be furnished with the essential pumping units demanded by the director."

He again said that he and his associates stressed the need of quick action by the Federal Government, and were emphatic in rejecting the suggestion that temporary expedients might be devised to get along without the new equipment.

"The position of the city representatives is that WPB has no more important problem before it than solving Philadelphia's water supply," said McLaughlin.

WPB Advocates Repairs.
The WPB engineers submitted a report on the condition of the Philadelphia water system, declaring that although it is operating with 40-year-old steam equipment it can be repaired to the point where it will serve.

City representatives quoted the WPB engineers as saying they are convinced Philadelphia can continue to make out with the existing pumping stations, adding that there is no guarantee the stations if begun would be completed before the end of the war.

McLaughlin and Van Loan strongly opposed the assertion of WPB engineers that the Lardner's Point pumping station, although admittedly out of date, "will last for 100 years if given reasonable care."

Two high officials, discussing the possibility that stations now under construction may not be completed until after the war, said:

"Our engineers are convinced that Philadelphia can make out with its present pumping stations, and that they are rehabilitated and kept in repair. The fact that the new stations are nearly finished is no guarantee that they will be finished before the war is over, or that they will not be destroyed."

A large part of the hearing was given over to discussion of the Lardner's Point pumping station, he said. The Philadelphia delegation contended Lardner's Point is completely out of date and no longer serviceable.

"Will Last 100 Years."
WPB engineers said: "The station will last 100 years if it is given reasonable care. About all it needs is its shafts recastered. The pumping station is being constructed and the parts are slow moving. Pumping stations of the Lardner's Point type are much simpler and build far faster than the complicated, electrically driven pumps. The War Bureau is asking for."

Today's hearing, presided over by Arthur E. Gorman, chief of the war production division of WPB's power branch, was attended by three Department of Public Works officials from Philadelphia—Martin J. McLaughlin, chief of the Water Bureau; Seth M. Van Loan, engineer in charge of the rehabilitation program; and John M. Brogini, superintendent of the pumping station, and Nathan M. Jones, of Pittsburgh, consulting engineer on the project.

The Philadelphians rejected the city's plea for higher priorities than the present A-1 and A-1-J ratings on the water program, which they said were too low to be of much value.

McLaughlin, in reply to questions, said there was no thought of improving the water supply itself—the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers would continue to be the source—but the capacity would be increased to meet the 30-million-gallon rise in daily demand since 1941.

"Chlorine Cocktail."
The improved, modern purification equipment, which was an integral part of the original program, designed to outmode the notorious "chlorine cocktail," apparently has been shelved for the duration already.

The engineers were pressing their case here. The chief, Director of Public Works Robert C. Clark in Philadelphia, the only improvements for which they could hope to obtain Federal attention now were those which would increase or conserve the flow of water to war plants.

War Engineers Oppose.
Neeson said 70 percent of the program authorized by the voters in April, 1940, would be well under way now except for the war and that the delay causes a constant violation of the law and forces "constant vigilance and heavy maintenance expense."

He said that the chief responsibility for the present plight lies with the "indecisive

After the hearing, presided over by Arthur E. Gorman, chief of the war production division of WPB's power branch, it was indicated that WPB engineers favor patching up the existing plant and leaving the water system until the end of the war in order to conserve critical materials for use elsewhere, they consider even more vital.

Fifteen electrical pumps now on order—and 75 percent completed—are to be shifted to other localities where war munitions are being made.

It was indicated that the present inadequate, steam-driven pumps will continue in operation at Lardner's Point and Torresdale.

"Here Evision"
"This is merely an evasion," said Director Neeson. "I call upon the WPB engineers to show me any place in America where an adequate water supply is more needed than in Philadelphia and where the breakdown of that supply will be more serious than the war effort."

"The WPB is trifling with danger—serious danger," said Philadelphia's chief engineer. "The WPB is trifling with danger—serious danger, if Philadelphia's water supply is not to be broken down under the tremendous additional strain now imposed upon it, war industries valued at billions of dollars will be affected."

Serves Notice
"I want to serve notice at this time of the danger and to declare that the city administration will not acquiesce in such a disaster. This problem is squarely in the lap of WPB engineers including the War Production Board. I want Mr. Marks to tell me where—in or out of military service—critical materials are more vitally needed than they are in the rehabilitation of Philadelphia's water supply. It is my reasoned opinion that this is not to do this. The statements of his own engineers support my position."

Gorman said the outcome of his negotiations with OPA and the War Production Board I asked for 49,000 tons of critical materials valued at \$5,800,000. They dilly-dallied with that for five months. It then agreed to a reduction to 25,000 tons and at the end of five months I received an A-4 priority rating which was useless.

Refused Advance
"They refused to advance the priority rating during the negotiations, but subsequently WPB advanced it to A-1 and A-1-C. The A-1-C rating covered chemical equipment valued at \$750,000. The difference between this figure and Clark's figure represented the cost of critical materials."

"In the meantime I advertised the pumping contracts for Torresdale and Lardner's point pumping station in August-September, 1941. I then considered pipe-line extension contracts."

"Both contractors and manufacturers found it really impossible to obtain anything under an A-1-J rating because WPB had superimposed AA-1 to AA-4 ratings on top

of the single A rating. As a result we went ahead, advertised for construction bids for Queen Lane filtration works and the Torresdale pumping station. We were constantly changing plans with the result that we did not have in the filtration works or the new pumping station the materials specified by the original design."

Little Success
"We have had little success in keeping our construction work under way. From the outset in all my conferences with the Government I stressed the fact that the city's water plant was obsolete, worn out and in need of maintenance, and we had billions of dollars worth of armament contracts under way in Philadelphia that depended on an ample water supply. There is in addition the problem of war workers being added to the group."

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But that will be small satisfaction. We can't just shrug our shoulders, say that Washington must bear the blame and let it go at that. The city administration must persist in its efforts to obtain the improvements.

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If these engineers can show how further patching is possible on the antiquated machinery now serving the city, they can point to any other community in the country where a breakdown in the water supply would be more disastrous to the war effort than in Philadelphia, the latest report might be regarded as fairly reasonable.

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Should the system break down, with calamitous consequences to plants turning out billions of dollars' worth of war contracts, responsibility, as Director of Public Works Neeson asserts, will rest with the WPB.

But that will be small satisfaction. We can't just shrug our shoulders, say that Washington must bear the blame and let it go at that. The city administration must persist in its efforts to obtain the improvements.

That the pumping stations and other supply facilities are in a deplorable state is well known. Even the WPB engineers admit that. But they insist that the present pumps and other equipment should be patched up somehow or other and that the 15 new electric pumps ordered by the city and now nearing completion should be sent to other war industry cities.

If these engineers can show how further patching is possible on the antiquated machinery now serving the city, they can point to any other community in the country where a breakdown in the water supply would be more disastrous to the war effort than in Philadelphia, the latest report might be regarded as fairly reasonable.

It is easily demonstrated that nothing short of wholesale rehabilitation will make our water facilities dependable, and that, if materials for water projects are to be made available for any city, Philadelphia rightfully has first call on them.

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Agency Writes Neeson for More Details on Rehabilitation Plan.

By WINDSOR BOOTH
Records Washington Bureau
WASHINGTON, Nov. 20—WPB probably will allocate enough critical material to complete two of the 15 electric pumps the Philadelphia Water Bureau has on order, officials disclosed here today.

WPB engineers have told Herbert S. Marks, chief of the power branch, that two new pumps, plus rehabilitation of the city's present equipment, will keep the Philadelphia water system going for the duration.

Write to Neeson.
Meanwhile, power branch officials announced they have written to Director of Public Works John H. Neeson, asking additional information on the amount of critical materials needed to complete the so-called "Philadelphia plan," which includes installation of 15 electric pumps and abandonment of present equipment.

The information Neeson is asked to furnish will be checked against a plan proposed by WPB engineers, which is to center shafts and repair existing facilities and to install no more than two electric pumping stations.

Seek Prompt Reply.
Arthur E. Gorman, head of WPB's water production division, said he hopes Neeson can supply the information early next week, so WPB can make a prompt decision.

"There was no response here to remarks made by Neeson that the city has been given all the wrong people in Washington and that another Eastern city, Philadelphia, was granted all the critical material it required."

Maurv Mavers, chief of WPB's municipal requirements branch and the only official in a position to reply to Neeson, was out of the city today.

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