

ASSISTING IN THE INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS BY THE UNDERTAKING OF USEFUL PROJECTS THEREIN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

JUNE 17, 1944.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state
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Mr. BELL, from the Committee on Insular Affairs, submitted the
following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 5029]

The Committee on Insular Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 5029) to assist in the internal development of the Virgin Islands by the undertaking of useful projects therein, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

The Committee on Insular Affairs has given a great deal of consideration to the economic problems of the Virgin Islands. Extensive hearings have been held at which testimony was received from Governor Charles A. Harwood, of the Virgin Islands; representatives of the Interior Department; and from the Federal Works Agency.

During the investigation of conditions in Puerto Rico by a subcommittee of the Committee on Insular Affairs last June, some of the members of the subcommittee had an opportunity of visiting the Virgin Islands, at which time they received first-hand information as to existing conditions of the public facilities and services of the Virgin Islands. This inspection as well as the testimony presented at hearings held in December 1943 and May 1944, has convinced the committee that the Federal Government should make early provision for urgently needed public facilities to serve the inhabitants of the Virgin Islands. These islands have been and will continue to be very important possessions for the defense and economic well-being of this country.

In early hearings on the necessity for public-works improvements in the Virgin Islands, Governor Harwood showed a definitely strong interest and understanding of the need for the permanent development of the islands. At the request of the committee, he made exhaustive

studies of the costs and types of projects needed most. It is the feeling of the committee that his assistance in this respect was invaluable in that this appears to be the first over-all and comprehensive program for the permanent betterment of the Virgin Islands that has been submitted to the Congress. Throughout his appearances before the committee he evidenced a very deep and abiding interest in the future welfare of the people of the Virgin Islands.

It is the consensus of opinion of many members of the committee that when these improvements, particularly those for hospitals, sanitation, water supplies, roads and streets, and recreational facilities have been completed the economy of the Virgin Islands will be benefitted greatly through increased tourist trade because of the attraction of the natural beauty of the islands and the mild weather there. There is no question in the minds of the committee but that these projects will be of permanent and lasting benefit to the residents of the Virgin Islands.

The committee have felt it wise to continue the construction of public works for the Virgin Islands in the Federal Works Agency, which is the established Federal agency responsible for the construction of public buildings, public roads, and various public facilities. The need for permanent and modern public facilities in the Virgin Islands is undeniable. The committee believe that a long-range program as outlined in this legislation is definitely needed to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands.

The committee have authorized specific projects for the reason that it felt that only in that manner could the most vital and most seriously needed projects be assured of consideration. The committee were unanimous in the feeling that this authorization should not be in a blank-check form but should describe the projects on which the Government could spend its money most wisely.

Under present law all of the Federal revenue from the sale of rum and other alcoholic beverages produced in the Virgin Islands goes directly to the Treasury of the United States, while in the island of Puerto Rico such revenue is allocated to the insular government, where it is available for use to provide and improve the public facilities and services of the island. During the fiscal year 1943 the Federal Treasury received approximately \$9,000,000 revenue from the sale of alcoholic beverages produced in the Virgin Islands. In the current fiscal year 1944 it is estimated that the Federal Treasury will receive from these sources a sum amounting to approximately \$28,000,000. In recognition of the important difference between Puerto Rico, which receives the benefit of the wartime increase in rum revenue, and the Virgin Islands, which has not derived any advantage from this wartime increase in revenue, it is the strong belief of the committee that a portion of these increased revenues should be authorized and appropriated for use in providing and undertaking the worth-while and needed public improvements contemplated by this bill.

The committee recognize that it is not possible at the present time to make accurate estimates of the funds that will be needed to carry out each of the projects authorized in this legislation, nor is it possible to include a complete description of each project in the body of the legislation. However, the best available information concerning the scope and estimated cost of each project authorized is included in this

report. If this authorizing legislation is approved by the Congress it will be the responsibility of the Federal Works Administrator to justify the appropriation of funds for any or all of the projects authorized in this legislation.

Inasmuch as wartime scarcities of materials and manpower exist, it is the feeling of the committee that the costs of any of these projects not completed soon may be revised downward in the post-war period. It is for that reason that the committee feel that any amounts appropriated for these projects should be subject to the full and complete scrutiny of the Committee on Appropriations before funds are allocated. It is believed that a portion of the funds should be appropriated immediately to enable the Federal Works Administrator to make the necessary studies, investigations, estimates, plans and specifications, preliminary and final, of the projects herein authorized so that the construction of the projects can be undertaken as soon as materials, labor, and shipping facilities become available.

The following brief statements concerning each section explain the important provisions of the proposed legislation.

Section 1: The preamble to H. R. 5029 is a concise statement of the purpose of the legislation which is to assist in the internal development of the Virgin Islands, and for the benefit of the government, municipalities, and inhabitants thereof, by providing or undertaking useful projects on lands owned by the United States, the government of the Virgin Islands, the municipality of St. Thomas and St. John, and the municipality of St. Croix. It is recognized that this legislation may not include all of the useful projects that eventually should be undertaken in the Virgin Islands but it does include those urgently needed for the benefit of the islands. The estimated cost of each project is included in the legislation with a provision that the Administrator may vary the cost of any individual project by not more than 25 percent. The funds authorized in section 11 for the over-all program, however, would not be changed. The committee recognize that the estimated costs are based on a rough review of the needs of the islands and when final plans for each project have been completed, the estimated costs will vary from the amounts indicated.

Section 2: The provisions of this section authorize the Federal Works Administrator to request an appropriation of funds not to exceed 5 percent of the total amount authorized, for the purpose of making studies, investigations, estimates, and plans and specifications prior to allocating definite sums of money for the construction of individual projects. It is recognized that the tentative estimates submitted to the committee may need to be adjusted after more complete plans have been prepared and prior to the allocation of funds for individual projects.

Section 3: The provisions of this section are necessary in order to expedite the construction of projects authorized by this legislation. Acquisition of land and project work thereon may be accomplished while awaiting final approval of title by the Attorney General. It is expected that a large majority of projects will be constructed on land already owned by the Government of the Virgin Islands and/or the municipalities of St. Thomas and St. John and St. Croix. It may, however, become necessary for the Federal Works Administrator to acquire land in some instances, and under the provisions of this

section, the land and the projects constructed thereon will be conveyed upon completion of such projects as prescribed therein.

Section 4: Some funds are now available to the government of the Virgin Islands and the municipalities of St. Thomas and St. John and St. Croix for use in connection with worth-while projects. This provision would authorize the Federal Works Administrator to receive and accept from these governmental units funds, materials, supplies and equipment for use on the projects herein authorized. The provisions of this section are permissive and not mandatory.

Section 5: It is the intent of the committee that the actual construction of the projects authorized in this legislation should be undertaken by contract methods. However, it is recognized that some of the small projects and parts of the larger projects, especially those involving repairs and improvements to existing facilities, might better be constructed by the direct employment of workers in order to expedite the completion of the projects. Every effort will be made to give the public and private organizations and workers located on the islands an opportunity to assist in carrying out the provisions of this act. The provisions of this section also provide that the Administrator shall determine the rates of pay, hours of work, and the employment of persons engaged upon projects authorized herein. This will make it possible for the Administrator to fix the rates of pay and hours of work to the local conditions and will not require the involved procedure of hiring project employees through the regular provisions of laws and regulations designed for workers in the continental United States.

Section 6: The provisions of this section are necessary to permit the Federal Works Agency to perform its own procurement in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and to handle all warehousing necessary in the operation of the projects. Procurement in the continental United States will be performed by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. The wording of this section has been cleared with the Treasury Department and has been approved by the Director of Procurement. This language is necessary in order to carry on any force account operations and will make for more efficient use of the equipment and supplies that will be needed to prosecute the various projects authorized by this legislation.

Section 7: This is a usual provision waiving the procedure prescribed under section 3709 of the Revised Statutes up to \$500.

Section 8: This provision is similar to that in other legislation and is necessary to take care of compensation for project workers employed by the Federal Government. The detailed methods and regulations involving the handling of this provision will be cleared with the United States Employees' Compensation Commission. In brief, it provides for smaller amounts of compensation than are provided for regular employees of the United States.

Section 9. The provisions of this section are taken from existing legislation and will be of great assistance in settling minor claims that may arise in constructing projects authorized by this legislation.

Section 10. It will be necessary to write rules and regulations to carry out the major provisions of this act. Any rules and regulations affecting other Federal agencies are to be cleared with those agencies prior to their release.

Section 11: Inasmuch as the projects will be carried on over a period of years and because of the fact that the planning of all projects

should be started immediately, the legislation authorizes that funds for the projects and for administrative purposes be made available immediately and remain available until expended. Although the Administrator will have the authority by the terms of this section to employ engineers, architects, and consultants, without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes, and the civil-service and classification laws, it should be the policy of the Administrator to use where possible the existing personnel of the Federal Works Agency and other Federal employees in carrying out the provisions of the act. Wherever convenient, the Public Buildings Administration should be used in the planning and supervision of building projects, and the Public Roads Administration should be utilized in the planning and supervision of highway and roads projects. However, it may be necessary to employ some engineers, architects, and consultants from outside the Federal service. This section will enable the Administrator to transport to the Virgin Islands and return to their homes officers, employees, and other persons engaged in carrying out the provisions of this act. The provision relative to the disbursement of funds in this section has been recommended by the Treasury Department and conforms with the standard practices of the Government.

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS AND ESTIMATED COSTS

ISLANDS OF ST. THOMAS AND ST. JOHN

1. Hospital facilities----- \$565, 000
 This project provides for the following: (a) The construction of a new 125-bed hospital complete with quarters and equipment; (b) the construction of a cistern, catchment area, and other water-supply facilities at the hospital; and (c) remodeling and rehabilitation of the present hospital.
2. Sanitation and fire-protection facilities, including sewer and water system----- 563, 695
 This project provides for the following: (a) Extension of existing sanitary sewer system; (b) extension of sanitary sewers and construction of laterals to serve new public toilets; (c) construction of public toilets in congested areas; (d) extension of salt-water mains with fire hydrants; (e) replacement of old water mains and construction of new pumping units; and (f) equipment and miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
3. Intercepting sewer, including sewage treatment and disposal----- 278, 000
 This project will be undertaken in conjunction with the construction of the sea wall as outlined in item 6. It provides for the following: (a) Construction of sanitary intercepting sewer behind the proposed new sea wall, such sewer to collect sewage from all city sanitary sewers now discharging directly into the bay; (b) pumps or lifts for the pumping of the intercepting sewage to a treatment plant; (c) construction of sewage-treatment and disposal plant; and (d) equipment and miscellaneous and appurtenant work

4. Water supply facilities----- \$883, 750
- Complete engineering information is not available to determine what type of permanent water-supply facilities should be provided for the island of St. Thomas. The present water facilities and the possible future expansion include the construction of water catchment areas and storage reservoirs in various locations on the island, including shallow or gallery wells for emergency supplies, but under this project detailed engineering and economic investigations will be conducted to determine whether the present system of water supply should be expanded and whether a new dam and-reservoir with pumping facilities and distribution system should be built. The cost of this work varies from \$522,000 to \$733,750.
- The water-supply facilities to be constructed on the Island of St. John provides for five cisterns and catchment areas and the necessary distribution system estimated to cost \$150,000.
5. Schools and education facilities----- 566, 000
- This project provides for the following: (a) new high school with complete facilities centrally located on property owned by the municipality of St. Thomas to accommodate 600 to 800 children, (b) rehabilitate remaining four schools for use of 1,400 children, (c) remodel and improve the building now used by the high school to serve as a fifth elementary school, (d) repair and reconstruct the Madison, Robert Herrick, and Monroe rural schools, (e) construct school at Lurkenlund, (f) construct new teachers' residence at Monroe school, (g) new 2-room school in Nisky area and three new schools on the island of St. John, and, (h) equipment and miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
6. Water front highway, seawall and harbor facilities----- 1, 097, 500
- This project provides for the following: (a) new municipal pier with small boat basin; (b) new seawall and reconstructed water front extending from Frederiksberg Point westerly to Careen Hill; (c) construction of water-front highway to extend from Frederiksberg Point westward to connect with Bourne Field road north of Gallows Hill; (d) drainage, landscaping, and miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
7. Highways and roads----- 1, 387, 300
- This project provides for the following: (a) Widening existing highways, including installation of culverts, head walls, and catch basins; (b) hard-surface paving of all main roads and improvements to secondary roads; (c) construction and improvement of a road system on the island of St. John to permit truck traffic between settled areas; and (d) miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
8. Street improvements including storm water drainage----- 327, 200
- This project provides for the following: (a) paving streets and roads and resurfacing existing pavements; (b) widening streets and constructing retaining walls; (c) constructing and improving storm water drainage system; and (d) miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
9. Engineering surveys----- 35, 000
- This project provides for engineering surveys and resurveys, including the preparation of accurate maps and the recording of existing monuments, landmarks, and other information to insure more accurate property descriptions and to facilitate the transfer of land titles.

10. Improvements to and construction of public buildings----- \$630, 000

The general program of improvements to and construction of public buildings for the islands of St. Thomas and St. John include the following major items of work: (a) The construction and equipping of a Federal building for the United States courts and other Federal agencies, estimated to cost \$325,000; (b) improvements to the Governor's mansion and the administration building, estimated to cost \$50,000; (c) major repairs and improvements to the Public Works Building, Fort Christian, Blue Beard's Castle Hotel, military cemetery, and the construction of garage and workshops estimated to cost \$125,000; (d) the construction of two small buildings on the island of St. John where governmental activities can be centralized, estimated to cost \$45,000; (e) the construction of a home for the aged on the island of St. Thomas, estimated to cost \$85,000; and (f) equipment and miscellaneous and appurtenant work.

11. Prison facilities----- 105, 000

This project provides for the following: (a) Rehabilitation of old Fort Christian for use as police headquarters with only 5 or 6 cells for transient prisoners; (b) construction of a new penitentiary at Sugar Estate site completely equipped.

12. Recreational facilities----- 80, 000

This project provides for the following: (a) Construction of bathhouses; (b) improvements to beach; (c) installation of sanitary facilities; (d) construction of roads and approaches; and (e) the development of playground areas, park areas, and athletic field.

13. Telephone and radio communication facilities----- 170, 000

This project provides for the following: (a) Improvement and enlargement of present telephone system; (b) laying submarine cable between St. Thomas and St. John; (c) replace present radio-telephone sets with new units to operate between all Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico; (d) establish 2-way radio telephone communication with the mainland; and (e) install automatic dialing telephone system in St. Thomas to replace present magnetic system.

14. Malarial control----- 31, 875

This project provides for drainage and grading and other appurtenant work necessary to eradicate mosquitoes and aid in malarial control in the Long Bay area.

15. Hospital, electric power plant and improvements to administration building, Cruz Bay, St. John----- 47, 500

This project provides for the following: (a) a small hospital with 2- or 3-bed wards, delivery room, nurses' quarters, equipment, etc., at Cruz Bay; (b) repair to the administration building; and (c) the construction of an electric power plant to provide electricity for the hospital and other facilities in this area.

16. Abattoir and cooling plant facilities----- 75, 000

This project provides for the following: (a) the construction of an abattoir equipped to the standards that will permit of Federal Government inspection, estimated to cost \$50,000, and (b) the construction of a refrigerating building for the chilling and holding of carcasses, completely equipped, estimated to cost \$25,000.

17. Public market facilities----- 80, 000

This project provides for the repairs, improvements, and reconstruction of the present public-market building, including equipment, miscellaneous, and appurtenant work.

ISLAND OF ST. CROIX

18. Hospital facilities----- \$475, 000
- This project provides for the following: (a) New 100-bed hospital complete with quarters and equipment to be constructed midway between Christiansted and Frederiksted; (b) rehabilitation of existing Kings Hill Courthouse which will be used in connection with the new hospital; (c) rehabilitation of a small municipal building or of several rooms in each town, together with equipment, to serve as a clinic; and (d) rehabilitation of the leper-colony facilities and the addition of 10 cottages to replace the present temporary structures.
19. Sanitation and fire-protection facilities, including sewer and water systems----- 244, 600
- This project provides for the following: (a) Extension of existing sanitary sewer system, including outlets for house connections, estimated to cost \$127,800; (b) extension of existing salt-water-distribution system, including new pumping equipment and fire hydrants, estimated to cost \$116,800; and (c) equipment and miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
20. Water supply facilities----- 490, 000
- This project provides for the construction of additional water catchment areas and storage reservoirs in suitable locations in the 2 towns of St. Croix, the rehabilitation of existing old reservoir and catchment areas in the rural area for emergency use, and equipment, and miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
21. School and educational facilities----- 510, 000
- This project provides for the following work in Christiansted: (a) New high school for approximately 400 students; (b) 2 new elementary schools, including the rehabilitation of the old high school; (c) staff headquarters, special rooms, and auditorium for the elementary school; and (d) equipment and miscellaneous appurtenant work. The project also provides for a new junior high school, including vocational training and domestic science for 150 students, and the rehabilitation of an old school building for the elementary school, both of which are to be located at Frederiksted. In the rural areas provision is made for the construction of a new school to eliminate the use of an inadequate rented building and the reconstruction and repair of 4 rural schools.
22. Highways and roads----- 606, 000
- This project provides for the following: (a) Hard surface paving of approximately 26 miles of existing dirt road; (b) widening approximately 20 miles of existing hard surfaced highways; (c) paving and repaving streets and roads in the towns where necessary, including improvements to storm-water drainage system; and (d) equipment and miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
23. Improvements to and construction of public buildings----- 73, 000
- This project provides for the rehabilitation of the custom house houses at Christiansted and Frederiksted, the Steeple Building at Christiansted and the old Dutch Community Center, estimated to cost \$35,000. The project also includes the reconstruction of the existing public works building, to be used as a municipal equipment garage, estimated to cost \$25,000. In addition \$13,000 is included for the purchase of refuse and garage-collecting equipment, to be operated in conjunction with the municipal equipment garage.

24. Prison facilities----- \$113, 000
- This project provides for the following: (a) Construction and equipment for new prison for the use of the island of St. Croix; (b) rehabilitation of Fort Christiansted for police station; (c) rehabilitation of Fort Frederiksted for police station; (d) replace floor Kings Hill police station.
25. Recreational facilities----- 30, 000
- This project provides for the construction of bleachers, with sanitary and water facilities and other recreational facilities at playgrounds in Christiansted and Frederiksted.
26. Telephone and radio communication facilities----- 150, 000
- This project provides for the rehabilitation of the present telephone system together with extensions outside of city limits and radio-telephone communications to the island of St. Thomas.
27. Malarial control----- 50, 000
- This project provides for drainage and grading and other appurtenant work necessary to eradicate mosquitos and aid in malarial control in the La Grange and Williams Swamp, the Water Gut Area, and the Gallows Bay Area.
28. Municipal pier for Christiansted----- 190, 000
- This project provides for a reinforced-concrete pier, storage shed, and approaches on concrete piling, together with miscellaneous and appurtenant work.
- The committee was emphatic in its approval of this item that this work should not be done until Army engineers shall have completed the necessary dredging and improvement of the harbor.
29. Public market facilities----- 174, 000
- This project provides for the enlarging and improving of the existing public markets in Christiansted and Frederiksted, including necessary sanitary facilities, estimated to cost \$24,000. The project also provides for the construction and equipping of 2 cold-storage and market facilities, 1 at Frederiksted and 1 at Christiansted, estimated to cost \$150,000.

