

**STATEMENT OF HON. E. C. GATHINGS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS**

Mr. GATHINGS. That is mighty kind and thank you so much, gentlemen of the committee.

I would like to present a statement of Mr. Charles Rose, president of the Board of Commissioners of Drainage District No. 17 of Mississippi County, Ark.

This statement goes into great detail and in my opinion shows the validity of this great project.

Mr. JOHNSON. Hearing no objection, the statement will be printed in the record at this point.

Mr. GATHINGS. Thank you, kindly.

(The prepared statement of Charles Rose follows:)

**STATEMENT OF CHARLES ROSE, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
DRAINAGE DISTRICT NO. 17 OF MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, ARK.**

(Re Belle Fountain Ditch and Tributaries, Missouri, and Drainage District No. 17, Mississippi County, Ark.)

My name is Chas. Rose and I am President of the Board of Commissioners of Drainage District No. 17, a special improvement district located in Mississippi County, Arkansas. Drainage District No. 17 has within its boundaries 160,000 acres of land, the City of Blytheville, Arkansas, with a population of 30,000 people, the Blytheville Air Force Base and the Towns of Yarbrough, Gosnell, Dell, Roseland, Armorel and Etowah. Approximately 75,000 people live within this district.

Drainage District No. 17 was created by special act of the legislature in 1918 and since that time this district has spent \$9,679,693.34 for flood control and drainage and all of this money was raised by taxes levied against the lands within the district.

At the outbreak of World War II the U.S. Government acquired approximately 3,200 acres of the highest land in our district to be used for the construction of facilities for the Blytheville Air Force Base. This property is located approximately three miles Northwest of the City of Blytheville. At the time of acquisition, runways, barracks, maintenance hangars and other buildings were constructed.

At the conclusion of World War II the Base was turned over to the City of Blytheville for use and maintenance, with a recapture clause, and in 1953 the recapture clause was exercised and reactivation of the base started. Tactical Air Command was first located at the base and later the base was transferred to Strategic Air Command and today this base is a massive installation consisting of approximately 700 acres of paved runway, many miles of paved streets and at least 1000 buildings, including housing units, hangars, maintenance buildings and others. An additional expenditure of \$1,600,000.00 has just recently been approved for additional construction when the base again reverts to Tactical Air Command in 1970.

When the air base was first activated the government requested that all of the acreage upon which the air base was located be removed from Drainage District 17's tax books and this request was accordingly granted by the district and in order to make up the deficit for the loss of taxation from these lands, additional taxes were charged against the remaining lands in the district owned by private citizens. We realize that the Blytheville Air Force Base is a vital necessity to this nation's welfare and represents a fine industry for the merchants and businessmen of the City of Blytheville and surrounding territory; however, it is not profitable to the farmers and landowners in the area, but represents a burden from a drainage and flooding standpoint. The run-off from the base causes agricultural lands to become inundated and also impairs school and mail routes which represent an added annual cost in repair and maintenance. The disposal of excessive and accelerated run-off from the base is estimated by engineers to approximate 740 cfs, or an additional discharge into our ditches of 333,000 gallons of water per minute.