

Mr. BLATNIK. No further questions. Next is H.R. 2402, Potomac River, abandoned vessels.

POTOMAC RIVER, MALLOW'S BAY—ABANDONED VESSELS

General NOBLE. Mr. Gurnee will report on that.

Mr. BLATNIK. We have a letter addressed to the chairman of the committee, the Honorable George H. Fallon, from the Bureau of the Budget—no, from the Secretary of the Army. The Bureau of the Budget advises that, from the standpoint of the administration's program, there is no objection to the presentation of this report for the consideration of the committee.

Mr. Gurnee, a brief description of this project.

STATEMENT OF MARK S. GURNEE, CHIEF OF THE OPERATIONS DIVISION, DIRECTORATE OF CIVIL WORKS, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Mr. GURNEE. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, H.R. 2402 would authorize and direct the Secretary of the Army to remove from the Potomac River and to destroy the abandoned ships, ships' hulls, and piling located in Mallow's Bay between Sandy Point and Liverpool Point, Md., and at Wide Water, south of Quantico, Va., and any other abandoned ships formerly in these locations which have drifted from those areas. It would also authorize him to accept from the State of Maryland any contribution the State may wish to make toward such removal and destruction.

In the 1920's the Western Marine and Salvage Co. purchased 232 vessels with the intention of salvaging, dismantling, and removing all portions of the vessels which might be marketable and then destroying the remains. The salvage operations were conducted at Sandy Point Farm, a tract of land nearly surrounding Mallow's Bay. The method and scope of the operation was to remove all machinery, boilers, pipes, and engines, and to strip the vessels of all metal easily removable. The vessels were then towed to Mallow's Bay where they were burned to the water's edge and then pulled as near to the shore as possible.

Subsequently, the Court of Appeals of Maryland ruled that the vessels were abandoned. The Sandy Point Farm, a tract extending almost completely around Mallow's Bay, is presently owned by Idamont, Inc., which, it is understood, is a real estate development firm.

The Secretary of the Army's views on this bill were submitted to this committee by letter of February 9, 1968, as already noted. In his letter, the Secretary stated that since the wrecks in their present location are not considered obstructions to navigation, the Department of the Army is without authority and funds to effect their removal. However, we are maintaining careful surveillance over the derelicts to insure that they do not break away and become obstructions to navigation.

While these wrecks may possibly represent a potential source of hazard to navigation, it is considered that this hazard could be resolved at a lesser cost than by removal. The buoyancy of the hulks which