

February 3, 1937

[Message To Congress - Public Works]

FDR Speech File

RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

RECORD GROUP 16

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

OF FEBRUARY 3, 1937

RELATING TO

SIX-YEAR PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, 1955

Feb. 3, 37  
H.T.  
Read  
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TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

During the depression we have substantially increased the facilities and developed the resources of our country for the common welfare through public works and work relief programs. We have been compelled to undertake actual work somewhat hurriedly in the emergency. Now it is time to develop a long-range plan and policy for construction -- to provide the best use of our resources and to prepare in advance against any other emergency.

In a previous message, I have suggested a permanent planning agency under the Chief Executive in order that, among other things, all public works proposals may filter from the many individual departments and bureaus to a central planning place and thence to the President.

I have also suggested to the Congress that following this course of planning the President will annually submit to the Congress a list of projects which have been studied and approved and, at the same time, inform the Congress, through the Budget, of the total amount of Federal funds which, in his judgment, should be appropriated for public works during the following fiscal year.

The list of public works submitted by the President in the Budget Message would, of course, be wholly advisory, for it is within the discretion of the Congress to eliminate projects from this list, to alter the scope of projects or to add other projects.

The report of the National Resources Committee on public works planning which I submit today should, of course, be read in conjunction with the recommendations for highways, bridges, dams, flood control, and so forth, already under construction, estimates for which have been submitted in the Budget, and also should be read in conjunction with other special reports, such as the report of the Great Plains Committee which I expect to submit to the Congress in a few days.

The National Resources Committee submits a six year program, based on selection and priority of public works. The period of six years is arbitrarily chosen and can, of course, be made to fit into annual future appropriations made by the Congress.

The report also contains recommendations on the timing of public works and division of costs in their relation to the necessary organization of future continued planning. I have already referred to this in my message relating to the reorganization of the Executive Branch of the Government.

As an example of the kind of reservoir of projects constituting the six-year program, a Drainage Basin Study is included in the report. This summary list of projects involving the uses of water is not to be regarded as fixed or final, as the report itself notes, but rather indicates a great forward step in the development of the planning process, considering not one project alone but the relationships between a great group of projects dealing with water use and control.

Through the formulation and annual revision of a program of all types of construction, revision and adoption of the program by Congress and appropriations under regular budgetary procedure timed in part in relation to economic needs we can provide for the orderly development of our resources and the provision of needed facilities for our people.



The White House,  
February 5, 1937.