

WHITE HOUSE, *March 3, 1903.* 1

To the House of Representatives:

I return without approval House bill 14051, entitled "An act granting the consent of Congress to N. F. Thompson and associates to erect a dam and construct a power station at Muscle Shoals, Alabama."

The recent development of the application of water power to the production of electricity available for use at considerable distances has revealed an element of substantial value in streams which the Government is or is liable to be called upon to improve for purposes of navigation, and this value, in my judgment, should be properly utilized to defray the cost of the improvement. Wherever the Government constructs a dam and lock for the purpose of navigation there is a waterfall of great value. It does not seem right or just that this element of local value should be given away to private individuals of the vicinage, and at the same time the people of the whole country should be taxed for the local improvement.

It seems clear that justice to the taxpayers of the country demands that when the Government is or may be called upon to improve a stream the improvement should be made to pay for itself, so far as practicable. I am advised that at another point on the same river to which this bill refers there is an authorized project for improvement by the Government at a cost of over \$800,000, and that an offer has been made by a responsible citizen to do the entire work without ex-

pense to the Government provided he can be authorized to use the water power. I think it is desirable that the entire subject of granting privileges of the kind referred to in this bill should be considered in a comprehensive way and that a general policy appropriate to the new conditions caused by the advance in electrical science should be adopted under which these valuable rights will not be practically given away, but will be disposed of after full competition in such a way as shall best conserve the public interests.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.