

CHAPTER VII

EARLY OPERATIONS IN THE DISTRICT

1. "The Drainage Administration"¹

The establishment of a Bureau of Irrigation and Drainage Investigations in the Office of Experiment Stations of the United States Department of Agriculture in 1903 opened the way for federal aid to Florida in securing information on the Everglades problem. The first move toward securing such help came in a voluntary offer from Charles G. Elliott, engineer in charge of the Agricultural Department drainage investigations, to Governor Broward on February 28, 1905. Elliott had made some examinations in 1904 in the Dade County area. He wrote:

Florida is a most interesting field for the development of unknown agricultural industries. We notice that the reclamation of Florida swamp-land is enlisting the favorable attention of the people of that State. . . . We shall be pleased to cooperate with you [in] determining the practicability of draining and otherwise improving the hidden resources of the wet lands of Florida. 2

Replying on March 3, Governor Broward thanked Elliott for his offer and assured him that the office of drainage investigations could be of great assistance "in reclaiming

1 "Drainage activity became so extended during Broward's time that his term was dubbed the 'Drainage Administration.'" K. T. Abbey, Florida, Land of Change, 366.

2 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 25, 1259; see also Number 1, 22.

the overflowed lands of south Florida."³ The governor wrote Elliott that he desired to reclaim the land at the expense of the land itself and asked the engineer to suggest laws of other states on this subject which might be adapted for use in the peninsular state. Replying to the request for pointers on drainage laws, Elliott singled out those of California and Louisiana, and added that nearly all of the northern states provided for the "organization of drainage districts and for the assessment of the cost to be distributed over the area as it is benefited."⁴

The litigation which followed the passage of the Florida drainage law posed a difficult problem for the Board of Drainage Commissioners in trying to answer the allegations that the state officials did not have sufficient technical knowledge on the engineering phases of the reclamation job. The railroads and allied timber interests of the state again joined forces and sought to enjoin the state officials, this time to prevent the collection of the tax and to have the law declared unconstitutional on the plea that the commissioners' haphazard drainage policy did not sustain the special assessment and consequent expenditure of tax monies.⁵

³ 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 25, 1259-1260.

⁴ Ibid., 1260.

⁵ Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 15. "The opposition to the drainage of the Everglades here in Florida is chiefly that of landholders of very large holdings who object on the ground that should this vast area

Following up his correspondence and a personal visit with Elliott, Governor Broward, on January 16, 1906, wrote Secretary James Wilson of the United States Department of Agriculture to secure the cooperation of the federal drainage engineers. The knowledge possessed in the drainage division, Broward wrote, "could aid us very materially. . . ." ⁶ The governor closed his letter by stating his appreciation of the fact that monies for drainage investigations were limited; he planned to write each member of the Florida congressional delegation and show him how Wilson could aid the state in engineering experimentation and the encouragement of immigration.

Secretary Wilson responded to the request of Broward on January 26, stating that he would "be glad to detail the engineers of this department engaged in drainage investigation for a conference with your engineers from time to time for the purpose of determining the best plan and most practical methods for reclaiming the immense area of Everglade land." ⁷ Further investigation, Wilson believed, should also

of rich land . . . be placed on the market the effect upon their holdings would be a reduction in price. From the State's standpoint we want settlers, and land must be sold at such prices that it can be purchased by the farmers." Letter of Governor N. B. Broward to Congressman S. M. Sparkman, May 23, 1906, 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 5, 210.

⁶ 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 5, 208.

⁷ Ibid., 209.

be made of the fertility of the land and its possibilities for the growth of crops adaptable to the subtropical climate.

A series of letters and subsequent conferences between Florida officials and representatives of the Department of Agriculture in the spring and summer of 1906 were climaxed by examinations by the drainage division engineers of the Everglades area, beginning in January, 1907.⁸ Broward, an astute politician, was anxious to procure the assistance of the federal engineers for political reasons. Said he:

I don't care for the saving to the State. I could hire an engineer; but there is a fight on down here, a political one, in this matter. If I should hire personally an engineer for making this survey these people would say, "It is Broward's engineer and Broward's report," and for that reason I wanted to get the department, which I know is interested in the matter, to send a man down here to make an investigation.⁹

Led by the officials of the Southern States Land and Timber Company, land owners claiming to represent three million acres in the state filed suit in the District Court of the United States, Southern District of Florida, against the Board of Drainage Commissioners of the State of Florida and the several tax collectors of Dade, De Soto, and St. Lucie counties on January 11, 1906, seeking an injunction against the levy of an acreage tax for drainage purposes

⁸ Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 16, 130, 140; 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 5, 212 et passim.

⁹ James O. Wright testimony, 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 3, 77.

under the 1905 Act of the legislature (Chapter 5377).¹⁰
 Almost a thousand pages of testimony and a large assortment of charts, maps, engineering data, and similar information were collected and the case was heard throughout 1906 and into 1907. On April 6, 1907, federal circuit Judge James W. Locke made permanent an injunction which prohibited the demand for and payment of such taxes.¹¹ Judge Locke, in his declaration that the law was unconstitutional, pointed out that it left to a delegated agent the power to levy taxes and that the legislature departed from its constitutional powers in authorizing an executive board to determine what lands were subject to assessment.¹²

While the litigation was in progress in 1906, the dredging was also under way in both branches of the New River, west of Ft. Lauderdale. In his message to the 1907 legislature on the condition of the state, Broward went into some detail on the work and plans of the drainage commissioners.¹³ He informed the legislators that the plan had been to build six dredges and to place two in the New River and one each in the Miami, Caloosahatchee, and Kissimmee

¹⁰ 1907 Commission Report, 307.

¹¹ Journal of the House of Representatives of Florida (1907), 658.

¹² Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville), April 7, 1907; 1907 Commission Report, 307.

¹³ Journal of the House of Representatives of Florida (1907), 15.

rivers and Lake Okeechobee. The latter dredge would work south to meet one of the New River machines. On completion of the Miami-Okeechobee Canal and the New River-Okeechobee Canal the dredges were to be engaged in cutting parallels and cross canals throughout the Everglades and Kissimmee Valley, reclaiming the lands near the northern boundary of the district. The governor stated that the Commissioners had expected the drainage taxes to be paid, but instead were being sued by the large land syndicates and the Florida East Coast Railway, which had enjoined tax collections.

Touching on a sore spot the chief executive asked the legislature to appoint a committee to investigate "the charges and innuendoes intended to reflect upon the present Trustees, and make a report of their findings at the earliest possible date. . . ."¹⁴ Broward launched a general assault on those newspapers of Florida which, he said, had misinterpreted the truth and twisted the news, papers which attacked public officials because these officials did not serve the same "interests" as the publishers. Specifically singling out the campaign carried on against the drainage tax law of 1905, he pointed to deliberate falsifications by the Jasper News, Florida Times-Union, St. Augustine Record,

¹⁴ Journal of the House of Representatives of Florida (1907), 3.

Gainesville Sun, and Tampa Tribune. The governor recommended the passage of laws to control the publication of untruths, deceits, and slander; and he suggested that the several state's attorneys be empowered to file information against liar's, deceiver's, and slanderer's statements in the press.¹⁵

The request for a legislative committee to investigate "the Acts and Doings of the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund; Defining its Duties and Powers, and Making Appropriations for Carrying Out the Provisions" of the various improvement acts resulted in the passage of a law to this end on May 31, 1907.¹⁶ The act, providing for a commission of three members of the Senate and four members of the House, to be elected by their colleagues, was to investigate the Internal Improvement Fund from its inception and was to be vested with the necessary power to summon witnesses and secure records. The commissioners organized on June 24 and remained in session through November 5, 1907. Conducting a minute search into transactions, accounts, and miscellaneous aspects of the Fund's history, the Commission published almost two hundred pages in its report of the activities of the several boards of trustees. In regard to the various

¹⁵ Journal of the House of Representatives of Florida (1907), 3, 64-70.

¹⁶ Chapter 5632, Laws of Florida, 1907; Acts and Resolutions Adopted by the Legislature of Florida at the Eleventh Session under the Constitution of 1885, 117-119.

charges of malfeasance and misappropriation of the Fund's monies, which had drawn the ire of Governor Broward, the investigation was unable to locate a single editor or reporter who was able to prove his accusation. As for the drainage policy of the Trustees, the Commission arrived at the conclusion that the policy was feasible, and that it was

. . . the first duty owing to the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund to drain and reclaim this barren waste, that it may be made available for agriculture, and be added to the State's taxable property. 17

Shortly after the receipt of the verdict declaring the 1905 drainage law unconstitutional Broward sent a special message to the legislature asking that body to amend the 1905 act by legislative establishment of boundaries for the Everglades Drainage District, by a legislative declaration of the purposes and application of the proceeds of drainage taxes, and by a definition of the lands in the district as "swamp and overflowed lands patented to Florida under the 1850 Act of Congress."¹⁸ W. S. Jennings, Counsel for the Trustee-Commissioners, who had drawn the 1905 law, also drew the specifications for the amended law.¹⁹

17 1907 Commission Report, 281. Included among the seven members of the Commission were two future governors of Florida, Park Trammell and Fred P. Cone.

18 Journal of the House of Representatives of Florida (1907), 663.

19 Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 15.

The legislature complied with Broward's wishes and passed an amended act defining the Glades District boundaries, encompassing most of the mainland area south and east of Lake Okeechobee, and the other recommendations which had been made.²⁰

The trend of events in the Everglades may be gleaned from a resolution passed by the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund in February of 1907 to the effect that no swamp or overflowed land owned by that body in the newly created drainage district would be sold for less than five dollars an acre unless subject to salt water overflow or not susceptible of drainage.²¹ Further evidence of the interest in the state operations in the New River was the appointment of a joint committee from the 1907 legislature to visit the lower east coast area and make a report on the work that had been done "by the Trustees in the matter of building dredges and digging canals in the neighborhood of

²⁰ Chapter 5709, Laws of Florida, 1907. In a letter of January 21, 1905, W. S. Jennings had referred to W. F. Coachman of the Consolidated Land Company as "our president" who had expressed a willingness to finance the Trustees in drainage operations. Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 26. This company had been a partner in the two suits instituted by the Southern States Land and Timber Company against the Trustees. Jennings as Counsel for Governor Broward's boards had framed both of the drainage laws which the land companies attacked as unconstitutional. See also 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 18, 841; Number 26, 1325.

²¹ I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 11-12.

New River, and to visit the Caloosahatchee River, and consider all the facts and data bearing on drainage and reclamation. . . ."²²

The report of the Joint Committee on Drainage, spread on the pages of the Journal of the Senate on May 13, 1907, gave the status of the Drainage Commissioners' dredging operations to April first. The Everglades had dug a canal a little over a mile long, to a width of sixty feet and a depth of ten feet from the headwaters of the north fork of New River.²³ The Okeechobee was working in the south fork of the New River toward the rock rim from which point it was planned to dig westward into the glades. The legislators estimated that

. . . from evident effects of present work, complete drainage will result at an average of 906 acres per mile; or 6 miles will drain 5,440 acres, worth when drained \$163,200. 24

The Committee observed several truck farms along the canal banks and closely examined a crop of tomatoes growing on land which they were informed had been under twelve to eighteen inches of water before the canal had been cut. "The character of the crop was finer than anything of the kind ever seen by any member of this committee," and it was believed to be worth \$700 an acre.²⁵ The soil of the

22 Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1907, 1052.

23 Ibid., 1054.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 1055.

reclaimed land was declared to be a very rich alluvial deposit. The Committee was especially interested in the comparison of the costs of excavating rock and soft material by the state dredges with the costs of excavating under the competitive bidding system of the United States Corps of Engineers. Reciting the amount of material moved over a period of six months and the total costs, not including original equipment or replacement costs, the Committee found the Florida drainage work was being handled for eight cents per cubic yard for rock and six and a third cents per cubic yard for mud, while the federal government paid up to a hundred per cent more for similar work about the state. ²⁶

W. S. Jennings, General Counsel, and Governor Broward made a "tour of inspection of the drainage canals" in November, 1907. ²⁷ Jennings declared

To the point of view of a layman, the work done has been something marvelous, and the achievements far beyond the most sanguine or hopeful expectation of those in charge of its inauguration.

That the canals are a success and are reclaiming the land as the dredges progress, is thoroughly established. The canals reduce the water level from the surface to a point six feet below the surface of the ground as shown by the water in the canal, and the land for a mile on either side

²⁶ Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1907, 1057-1058.

²⁷ I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 122.

of the canal is entirely reclaimed, and is practically ready for cultivation, and the general influence of the drainage reaches to a much greater distance than one mile. 28

Referring to the price to be set on these newly reclaimed lands, regarded as a serious problem because of the many considerations in this experiment in the Everglades which would never enter into the ordinary conception of the utility of land, Jennings said:

The success of the development of that country will be dependent upon settlement as much as the soil. It appears to me that, notwithstanding the flattering opportunities offered for the accumulation of wealth, that it will not attract a man of family to move into that territory until the experimental period, both of the success of drainage operations and of sufficient settlement is assured, to establish some convenience of travel, schools, churches, etc. . . . it necessarily falls upon a few pioneers to enter this territory and develop it until the success of the drainage work and the profitable production of crops on the land is assured. . . . It is my opinion that a reasonable price for the land, one that will induce bona fide settlement, is of far more importance to the work than a policy of establishing a price that makes the undertaking more hazardous and lessens the real inducement for permanent development and settlement. 29

Jennings urged that the State reserve alternate lots from each sale so that tracts of private owners would be bound by state lands. The Fund would then obtain the benefit of the rise in prices which will inevitably follow the settlement in this district. ³⁰ The former governor felt that the

28 I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 122.

29 Ibid., 124.

30 Ibid., 125.

work in the Ft. Lauderdale area was a great success and that the opposition had been overcome by the results of the work.

The litigation relating to the title of the Everglades lands was settled in December, 1907, by a compromise with the Trustees and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company. The settlement was due, in part, to the work of the dredges

. . . which can only be kept in operation by the sales of unclaimed lands at a nominal value ranging below 33 1/3 per cent. ^[sic] average, the lands behind the dredges reclaimed by said operations selling readily at from fifteen dollars per acre. 31

The connection between Jennings' report on drainage and land policy and the desire of Trustees to quiet the title of the Everglades lands is obvious. Having succeeded in getting the federal courts to void the 1905 drainage law the various land companies, under the leadership of the Southern States Land and Timber Company, soon attacked the drainage tax law of 1907. Blocked in their efforts to finance the reclamation project through taxes the Trustee-Commissioners sought revenue through the sale of state lands. 32

31 I. I. B. Minutes, VII, 134-135; see also 1907 Commission Report, 355-356 and Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 15.

32 The total acreage assessed in the district was 4,229,526.50. The list of complainants who sought to enjoin the Board of Drainage Commissioners from collecting the drainage taxes, and the acres of land they claimed was

At the time the state dredges began work in 1906, Everglades lands had little or no market value. Rufus B. Rose was offered a million and a half acres at twelve and a half cents an acre shortly before Broward's inauguration.³³ In August, 1907, the Trustees had given a thirty day option on 25,000 acres back of Miami at \$1 an acre but the option was allowed to lapse.³⁴ The first large sale of Everglades land was made to R. P. Davie and associates of Colorado Springs, Colorado, on June 3, 1908. The sale comprised 27,500 acres at the rate of \$2 an acre in the area around Township 50, Range 41, South and East. According to the terms of the sale the tract was

. . . to be used for general farming and vegetable growing and the establishment of an

as follows:

Southern States Land and Timber Co.	1,070,257.20
Mississippi Valley Realty Co.	187,201.02
Empire Land Co.	748,251.24
Consolidated Land Co.	806,958.60
Frank Q. Brown	102,933.15
Florida Cypress Co.	83,840.00
Model Land Co.	127,939.00
Florida East Coast Railway	150,030.00
Boston and Florida Atlantic Coast Land Co.	58,050.30
Total Acreage Represented	<u>3,335,460.51</u>

Journal of the House of Representatives of Florida (1907), 103.
33 R. E. Rose, The Swamp and Overflowed Lands of Florida,
 8-9.
 34 I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 89.

experimental cane farm for the growth and production of sugar cane on a large scale and for the purpose of establishing sugar mills. . . . 35

On October 12, 1908, Walter R. Comfort of New York City bought 6,422 acres for \$2 an acre in the vicinity of Township 53, Range 40, South and East; and, on November 14, J. H. Tatum and Company of Miami purchased 12,000 acres at prices from \$2 to \$3 an acre.³⁶ In early December the Trustees closed a sale for 80,000 acres in Dade County for \$100,000 with the Davie Realty Company through the agency of W. S. Jennings; the largest sale of 1908 was made in the very last week of Broward's administration when the Trustees contracted with Richard J. Bolles of New Mexico for the sale of 500,000 acres for \$1,000,000.³⁷

The Bolles sale covered lands located in Dade and Lee counties and was made with the specifications of installment payments extending to 1916 or longer, depending on the completion of certain drainage canals. The articles of agreement which Bolles signed with the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund provided for five main canals: North and South New River, Miami, Hillsboro, and Caloosahatchee; and

35 I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 261.

36 Ibid., 438-440; 457-458.

37 Ibid., 471-475; 502-512. W. S. Jennings received \$3,390 for his services as the Trustees' agent in the Davie-Comfort sales and \$3,750 for his services as agent in the Davie Realty Company deal. Ibid., 446, 474.

if funds remained, two secondary canals: Cypress Creek and Arch Creek.³⁸ The Trustees were to expend half of the purchase price of each acre "solely and exclusively for drainage and reclamation purposes."³⁹ The Board of Trustees had bound themselves and their successors, in the Bolles deal, irrevocably, to a plan of reclamation. During the hearings before the Congressional Committee in 1912 it was disclosed that, in addition to the fifty per cent of the Bolles receipts being spent for drainage, fifty cents of each dollar paid on the land to the Trustees was likewise to be expended on drainage; thus Bolles actually secured his Everglades holdings for fifty cents an acre, the remaining dollar⁴⁰ and a half being used to reclaim his holdings.

³⁸ I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 502-513.

³⁹ Ibid., 507. As in several of the previous sales W. S. Jennings, the Trustees' Counsel, had acted as the agent. When the Bolles proposition was presented to the Trustees by Jennings he requested them to provide other counsel to examine the contracts and deeds which would follow successful negotiation. Ibid., 490. Jennings appeared as a witness for both parties at the consumation of the articles of agreement. Ibid., 512-513. In the hearings before the Moss Committee in 1912 it was insinuated that Jennings received a gift of 27,000 acres of Everglades land from Bolles, but objection was made to the question before a definite answer could be given by the witness. 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 7, 261. Jennings' earnings in 1907 and 1908 included \$5,000 yearly as counsel for the Trustees; \$10,000 for legal fees in representing the Trustees in the L. & N. Railroad and Wisner Land Company suits; and \$7,040 as a commission for the Davie land sales, a total of \$27,040. 1907 Commission Report, 288-289.

⁴⁰ 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 4, 143-144.

Incident to the discussion and sale of the various tracts of lands in the summer of 1908 was the desire on the part of both vendor and purchasers to place more dredges in operation. In his testimony before the 1907 Joint Commission of the legislature investigating the Internal Improvement Fund, Broward said:

The project in [sic] the outset, contemplated six (6) dredges of the same capacity as these we now have, but we have been unable to obtain the six dredges for want of funds. . . . If we saw our way clear we would put on these dredges and complete the work within four years from the time we began--yes, the whole thing. 41

With the completion of the first Davie sale and the projected Comfort and Tatum sales, the Board of Drainage Commissioners was in a position to contract in August, 1908, for the machinery needed for two more dredges.⁴² Machinery for the dredges was shipped to Tampa, where the dredges were built in the early winter of 1909. The first to be completed, christened the Caloosahatchee, began working in the upper channel of the river of the same name in April, while the other, the Miami, was towed to the headwaters of the Miami River and started working northwestward on the long trip to Lake Okeechobee.⁴³

41 1907 Commission Report, 322.

42 I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 277, 287-293, 302, 492.

43 Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, 47.

If it can be said that Jennings set the policy of the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund to reclaim Florida's wet lands, it certainly follows that Broward determined the course and inaugurated the drainage program. In no uncertain words Broward maintained that it was the aim of the Trustees to lower Okeechobee's level by the means of several canals of sufficient size and, with the aid of numerous lateral canals, to carry off the rainfall from the Everglades lands through which they passed. He declared:

We are going on the theory that it is the duty of the Trustees to dig the canals the same as the water mains in a city, that are owned by the city, and laid by the city, and tapped by private individuals. 44

Broward believed fervently in the Everglades project and pushed it with veritable missionary zeal for, to him, "all doubt of ultimate success has been removed. . . . [It is] only a matter of time when most of this vast area will be made fit for cultivation."⁴⁵ He stated many times in

44 1907 Commission Report, 322. Broward proposed the following arterial canals of sixty foot width: two from New River to Okeechobee, one from Okeechobee to St. Lucie River, one from Okeechobee to deep water in the Caloosahatchee River, and two down the western edge of the Everglades from Okeechobee to the Shark River Area. Broward also proposed dredging canals from the arterial cuts along the eastern border of the Everglades into the headwaters of both forks of Middle Creek, the two Cypress Creeks, and the Hillsborough River; and finally, to connect the main canals with laterals, "until all of the swamp and overflowed lands . . . are reclaimed, so far as it is practicable, meaning profitable to do so." Ibid., 321.

45 N. B. Broward, "Draining the Everglades," loc. cit., 1448.

his speeches and writings that the area would provide homes and occupations for millions in the cultivation and processing of the various crops that could be produced. Enumerating such advantages as fertile soil, subtropical climate, abundant rainfall, proximity to markets, ample transportation facilities, and healthful conditions, he felt that the Everglades were without peer among the lands of the world.⁴⁶ If sugar cane were relied on for a staple crop, scientists had assured him that half a million acres in the Everglades would make the United States independent of an annual expense of \$150,000,000 to foreign nations for sugar.⁴⁷

When Broward left the governor's chair his dreams of Everglades drainage had been translated into partial accomplishment. He continued to fight for drainage and made it an issue in his last political battle for a seat in the United States Senate, which he won in the same spectacular manner that had characterized his election to the governorship. Death terminated his promising career before his official entrance could be made into the national arena.⁴⁸

Opinion on the work of Broward in undertaking the

46 H. B. Broward, "Homes for Millions: Draining the Everglades," Collier's, XLIV (January 22, 1910), 19.

47 Ibid., 19; H. B. Broward, "Draining the Everglades," loc. cit., 1449.

48 C. H. Brevard, A History of Florida From the Treaty of 1763 to Our Own Times, II, 208.

Everglades proposition has been divided. One of Miami's pioneer merchants wrote that the reclamation of the Everglades was a boon to that city from the wide publicity given the work and the consequent influx of people to southeastern Florida.⁴⁹ A more recent and somewhat extreme observer of Florida history remarked that the Broward administration marked the first activity in Everglades reclamation, and that from then

. . . until now the whole has been a political football of greater dimensions than anything yet invented and has furnished more sinecures for pets of subsequent administrations than any other one of the five departments of the State's activities. 50

2. The Wright Report

In his first message to the 1909 session of the legislature Governor Albert W. Gilchrist, Broward's successor, referred to the attack on the constitutionality of the 1907 drainage act in the United States Court for the Southern District of Florida. On June 27, 1908, the court had declared in favor of the constitutionality of the act, whereupon the case had been appealed to the United States Circuit Court at New Orleans. On February 23, 1909, the court again upheld the act, although one of the three judges rendered a

⁴⁹ Isidor Cohen, Historical Sketches and Sidelights of Miami, Florida, 166-178. Hereinafter cited as Sidelights of Miami.

⁵⁰ F. W. Dau, Florida Old and New, 297.

dissenting opinion. Gilchrist declared that the appellants were endeavoring to carry the case to the United States Supreme Court, but that in the event the suit was settled out of court he recommended a reduction of the drainage tax from five to three cents an acre, "as such tax, with the amount of money derived from sales already made, would be amply sufficient to continue drainage operations."⁵²

In that section of his message devoted to drainage, Gilchrist reported that the dredges Okeechobee and Everglades, in twenty-three and thirty-two months respectively, had dug fifteen miles of canal at an operating cost of \$7,591.36 per mile and a total outlay of \$377,642.22.⁵³ From a comparison of costs of the excavation of rock and dirt, Gilchrist inferred that the total costs would be lower as the dredges progressed into the muck soils though this would be offset somewhat by the lengthening lines of supply.

Following the precedent established by the previous legislature, the session of 1909 appointed a joint committee to visit, inspect, and report upon the progress and

⁵¹ Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, Appendix, 15. The appeal of the suit from the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit to the United States Supreme Court was dismissed on October 11, 1910, with each party paying its own costs. 218 United States Supreme Court Reports, 686.

⁵² Ibid., Appendix, 14.

⁵³ Ibid., Appendix, 46.

conditions of the work being done by the Trustees of the Improvement Fund in the Everglades drainage program.⁵⁴ The committee visited the dredges working in the canals leading from the branches of the New River, at Ft. Lauderdale, in the headwaters of the Miami River, and below Lake Hicpochee in the Caloosahatchee River and described the progress in favorable terms. While at Miami the party visited the farm property of Walter Waldin at the edge of the 'Glades. Waldin was described as a "prosperous farmer, formerly of Iowa." He informed the members of the legislature that his "average on irrigated Glades land has been a trifle over \$800 per acre per year net for the first four years."⁵⁵

The committee noted that the money to continue drainage would be derived from the balances due on the Bolles, Davie, and Tatum sales and the drainage tax levy. The withdrawal of Everglades lands from sale by the Trustees was praised by the legislators because increasing values would

⁵⁴ Concurrent Resolution Number 9, Acts and Resolutions Adopted by the Legislature of Florida at the Twelfth Regular Session under the 1885 Constitution (1909), 685.

⁵⁵ Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, 1591. Waldin thought "a net of \$300 to \$500 can be made per acre on drained Everglades land by intelligent culture and close application to the following crops: Tomatoes, beans, eggplants, cucumbers, Irish potatoes, mango peppers and squash." He believed one-half as much could be made in "many farm crops" such as sugar cane and bananas planted between the rows of young citrus trees. Ibid., 1591-1592.

accrue from their reclamation. The committee assured the legislature and the citizenry of the state that none of the general taxpayers' money had ever been used for drainage in the Everglades, nor could it be without an appropriation by the representative body. The committee declared:

No person owning land outside of the Everglades need have the slightest apprehension that any tax will ever be levied or collected on his land, or any of his property for the drainage of the Everglades. 57

Included in the committee's report to the legislature was an abstract of the drainage investigations which were being made by the engineers of the United States Department of Agriculture. The group fully endorsed the abstract and expressed the opinion that every means should be exerted to inform the people of the state in order to counteract the "misinformation and prejudice now existing with reference to the Everglades. . . ." 58 Recommending that the Trustees sell the lands in the district in small parcels to settlers only, that the Trustees push the works of reclamation with all possible dispatch by letting contracts to private bidders for dredging, and that the federal government be urged

56 Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, 1604. Land sales for cash in 1907 had come to \$35,659.70; in 1908, \$121,131.42. I.I.B. Minutes, VII, 53. The Trustees had resolved to sell land in the Everglades to settlers only after February 19, 1909. Ibid., VIII, 49.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 1623.

to open a cross-state waterway through Lake Okeechobee, the committee closed its report by advising the Trustees to secure another dredge under the Bolles contract "as soon as is possible and practicable."⁵⁹

The difficulty of running four dredges in the Everglades, some four hundred miles from Tallahassee, together with the demand for additional dredges, led the Drainage Board to advertise for bids in the late fall of 1909 for private contractors to undertake the canal excavations.⁶⁰ The advertisements called for bids on three hundred miles of canal from forty to sixty feet wide and six to ten feet deep.

Early in January, 1910, while the Trustee-Commissioners were investigating answers to their call for bids on excavation, the land companies seeking to enjoin the 1907 drainage tax law in the United States Supreme Court approached the state officials regarding a compromise of the pending suit.⁶¹ W. S. Jennings, who had retained his position as counsel for the Board, conferred with representatives of the six land

⁵⁹ Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, 1624. Both houses of the legislature adopted resolutions in the 1909 session urging full prosecution of the drainage works in the Everglades and congratulated the Commissioners on the successful outcome of the litigation requiring all land holders to bear a proportionate share of the reclamation costs. Ibid., 2027-2028; Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, I Session, 139.

⁶⁰ I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 237-238, 275-283.

⁶¹ Ibid., 301-311.

corporations. A tentative agreement was reached under which the complainants would dismiss the suit and pay all drainage assessments on their lands from 1907 through 1912, provided such funds were applied to the excavation of specified canals, and provided 60,000 acres west of Homestead were detached from the drainage district and maintained as a watershed and reservoir for Key West.⁶²

At a meeting of the Drainage Commissioners and land company officials, held in Tallahassee on January 12, 1910, a settlement was proposed. The settlement included the following points: (1) tax suits to be dismissed, each representative paying his own costs; (2) drainage taxes on all lands to be paid from 1907 through 1912; (3) contracts for 200 miles of canals to be completed in 3 years; (4) R. J. Bolles' contracts to be paid in six years and payment of Bolles' drainage taxes for the years 1907 to 1912; (5) elimination of Florida East Coast and Model Land Company land southwest of Miami from the drainage district; (6) preparation, adoption, and carrying out of adequate drainage plans to be supervised by a competent engineer.⁶³ Articles of

⁶² "Minutes of the Board of Commissioners of the Everglades Drainage District," I, 1. Hereinafter cited as E.D.D. "Minutes." The author used eight volumes, typed and bound manuscript. They are located in the office of the secretary of the Board, Miami, Florida.

⁶³ Ibid., 8-16.

agreement embodying these proposals were signed on January 31. The agreement stipulated that the tax suits would be withdrawn when the state officials accepted a bid for canal excavation.⁶⁴ With the settlement of the drainage tax question by the six large land holders the commissioners were assured of sufficient income to continue operations. In pursuance of the agreement a contract was let for the excavation of 235 miles of canals. On the recommendation of James O. Wright, whose employment fulfilled the sixth condition of the agreement, the Commissioners accepted the bid of the Furst-Clark Construction Company of Baltimore, Maryland. This contract called for the movement of 18,000,000 cubic yards of earth and 6,000,000 cubic yards of rock at eight and twenty cents a yard respectively.⁶⁵ Included in the negotiations was the transfer of the four state dredges to the Baltimore firm for \$145,000. Canals specified to be completed included the North and South New River, Miami, and Hillsborough; and one connecting the Miami with the

64 E.D.D. "Minutes," I, 19; I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 351-361, 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 4, 126-127. The six large landholders at the conference were Pearl Wight, president of the Southern States Land and Timber Company, of New Orleans; W. S. Harvey, president of the Empire Land Company, of Philadelphia; Walter F. Coachman, president of the Consolidated Land Company; James E. Ingraham, vice-president of the Model Land Company, and of the Florida East Coast Railway; and Walter F. Coachman and Richard J. Bolles for the Florida Land and Timber Company of Chicago.

65 I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 410-411.

Gulf Coast if there were sufficient funds.

In the winters of 1907 and 1908 the field examinations of the Office of Drainage Investigations of the Department of Agriculture were made in the Everglades as had been requested by Governor Broward and authorized by Secretary Wilson. During both years survey parties worked in and around the area checking land levels and soil depths. ⁶⁷ James O. Wright, a supervising engineer of the Drainage Investigations Office, prepared a report on the basis of these studies and the information he had secured in Tallahassee and elsewhere. Wright's conclusions were questioned by his superior and by his associates in the department, and as a consequence the publication of the findings of the examinations was held up pending further study and revision. ⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the Trustees of the Improvement Fund and others interested in the Everglades had been anxious to secure the basic facts of the engineer's findings. In the early winter of 1909 an abstract of the forthcoming report was furnished to the Trustees and also to Henry Clay Hall, an attorney for an Everglades land syndicate of Colorado Springs, Colorado. ⁶⁹

66 I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 430-434.

67 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 22, 1070-1080.

68 Ibid., Number 9, 337-387, Number 10, 409-410, Number 21, 1039-1040; letter of Arthur E. Morgan to the author, March 9, 1946.

69 Ibid., Number 21, 1039-1040, Number 26, 1328-1329.

In the 1912 Congressional hearings a conflict of testimony developed between J. O. Wright and C. G. Elliott; the latter declared the Trustees requested a copy for Hall and themselves, while the former stated that Secretary Wilson authorized a copy be given to Hall and that subsequently a copy was delivered to the Florida officials.⁷⁰ Instructions sent with both abstracts requested that the information be withheld until publication of the complete report, but in March, 1909, Governor Gilchrist secured permission from Secretary Wilson⁷¹ to publish the extracts.

The extracts from the report related entirely to the plan proposed by Wright for draining the Everglades. After examining Lake Okeechobee and its watershed, and running lines across the Everglades from west to east and along the borders, Wright submitted two plans: first, construction of an eighty mile dike around the southern shores of the big lake with outlet canals for drainage and water control; and, second, construction of one or more canals from Lake

⁷⁰ 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 3, 108-109; James O. Wright, Why Was Wright's Report Supressed?, 6.

⁷¹ Ibid., Number 12, 560. On the basis of a letter Elliott wrote to the Florida Trustees on March 6, 1909, internal evidence points to the credence of Wright's version over that of his superior. Elliott wrote: "In order that you may have the same information that has been given to Mr. Hall. . . who was recently furnished an extract from the forthcoming report on the Everglades." Ibid., Number 12, 559. The excerpt furnished the Trustees appeared with the report of the Joint Committee of the legislature of 1909, Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, 1605-1623.

Okeechobee to tidewater. The first plan Wright rejected on account of the estimated expenditure of \$5,300,000 for construction plus the possibility of backing the waters on lands on the opposite sides of the lake. Wright's second plan advocated the construction of eight canals from Okeechobee: Caloosahatchee, Hillsboro, Palm Beach, North, Middle, and South New River, Miami, and West. His plan for West Canal proposed cutting this outlet from the present location of Clewiston to the vicinity of the Big Cypress Swamp. He sought a combined discharge of 4,000 cubic feet of water per second at the lake and 10,000 at the tidewater outlets to take care of both the lake discharge and the runoff along the canal banks as they passed through the 'Glades.⁷²

Wright estimated the total cost of the canal excavations would amount to \$1,900,000 in

The upper Everglades ^[which] comprise an area of approximately 1,850,000 acres, lying south of Lake Okeechobee, and is the only part in which the depth of the muck will warrant the expense of reclaiming.⁷³

Wright noted that as far as could be ascertained the fertility of the Everglades muck was the same as that of the Kissimmee River Valley at St. Cloud, where the Disston agricultural operations were carried on from 1888 to 1898. He stated that

⁷² Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, 1605-1620.

⁷³ Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 179.

the drainage and irrigation of the Everglades by gravity canals was well within the bounds of feasibility and recommended a plan for the main canals roughly eight miles apart leading south and southeast from Okeechobee to tidewater. Wright's design did not include the necessary secondary or lateral canals which he knew would be essential, but which he recommended be dug by the local districts or parties involved. Wright based his plan for controlling water levels in Okeechobee on the use of locks where the canals entered the lake, and his costs of excavation on the operating expenses of the state dredges.⁷⁴

3. The First Land Boom

One of the conditions of the settlement between the Everglades land owners and the Trustees had been the employment by the board of a competent drainage engineer to plan and supervise the operations of reclamation.⁷⁵ Agreement prevailed among the two groups at the conference in

⁷⁴ Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 133. "From the work at Fort Lauderdale, it has been demonstrated that with a good dipper dredge the rock can be handled at a cost not exceeding 8 cents per cubic yard. With suitable equipment there is no doubt that the muck can be removed at a cost of less than 4 cents per cubic yard." Ibid., 137. Comparison should be made with the Furst-Clark bid accepted by the Trustees in 1910 of 20 cents for rock and 8 cents for earth. I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 430-434.

⁷⁵ I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 301-311.

January, 1910, on the selection of James O. Wright, a supervising engineer of the Drainage Investigations branch of the Department of Agriculture and the official who had directed the 1907-1908 federal examinations in the Everglades. The major works in the first ten years of state operations in the area were based in large measure on the recommendations contained in the abstract of the Wright report delivered to the Trustees in March, 1909.

The activity of the reclamation operations in the southern part of the peninsula together with the advertising given the Drainage Board's program attracted the attention of land buyers. The Davie, Bolles, and Tatum tracts had been divided and subdivided for resale to individual purchasers who were interested through land sales promotion campaigns. In the

⁷⁶ I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 301-311, 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 4, 126-127. The land companies agreed to cooperate if the drainage board, ". . . would employ a certain engineer, which the Board did at a stipulated salary of \$5,000 per annum." Address of John W. Martin, Governor of Florida on the Everglades and the Drainage Problem, West Palm Beach, October 28, 1926, 5.

⁷⁷ 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 16, 765. The complete Wright report was not published until 1911, when it appeared in a compilation of various papers, The Everglades of Florida, issued as Senate Document, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 140-180. The Wright excerpt was "reprinted by the land companies in the form of a 'dodger' and was distributed 'with their compliments' to prospective investors as the opinion of the Department of Agriculture regarding their 'proposition'." H. Parker Willis, "Secretary Wilson's Record: 2, The Everglades," Collier's, XLIX (March 23, 1912), 15. Hereinafter cited as "Secretary Wilson's Record."

summer and fall of 1910 the Trustee-Commissioners also advertised Everglades lands in Florida and midwestern papers.⁷⁸

The Trustees met on October 20 of that year to consider bids on block sales of 50,000 acres, but received none of a satisfactory nature; however, on November 16, a sale of 50,560 acres was made to E. C. Chambers at \$15 an acre. This sale led Gilchrist to remark that it had "placed the fund on 'easy street' with ample funds to complete the work on hand and in sight."⁷⁹

In October, 1911, the Trustees offered ten acre canal front tracts to bona fide Florida citizens at \$35 an acre, lands behind canal front tracts at \$30 an acre, and all other acreage at \$25 per acre.⁸⁰

The Everglades received a great deal of publicity, in addition to the paid advertisements, in the accounts of travelers and general writers. Authors wrote in detail about the drainage and agricultural plans for the Everglades. D. A. Simmons wrote in Collier's that

When Okeechobee's surface has been lowered five or six feet, it will draw in the water from the surface of the Everglades, and the work of reclamation will be complete. 81

78 I.I.B. Minutes, VIII, 557, 587.

79 Ibid., 567, 597. R. E. Rose, The Swamp and Overflowed Lands of Florida, 13. Lands in the Chambers' sale were located between townships 47 and 52 South and ranges 30 and 40 East.

80 I.I.B. Minutes, IX, 234.

81 D. A. Simmons, "The Florida Everglades; How They Happened; What They Are; What They Will Be," loc. cit., 536.

This same writer stated that lateral canals would be dug by the state to connect the main arteries,

. . . but these will be intended for transportation purposes rather than for drainage as . . . the soil is so very porous that a heavy rainfall disappears within a few minutes and it is thought that when the impounded water is drained off the land will take care of the natural precipitation. 82

As for agriculture, Simmons' opinion settled on sugar cane growth and manufacture as the chief prospect. "Enormous crops can be grown without any fertilizer whatever," he said, and the Everglades could supply vegetables through the winter for all the cities and towns east of the Rocky Mountains.
83

By 1910 the rapid growth in Everglades land sales was approaching "boom" proportions. The Bolles interests sold ten thousand ten acre farms at twenty to twenty four dollars per acre; the Everglades Land Company sold two thousand of the same size at the same price; the Everglades

82 D. A. Simmons, "The Florida Everglades; How They Happened; What They Are; What They Will Be," loc. cit., 536.

83 Ibid.; See also N. B. Broward's "Draining the Everglades," loc. cit., 1448-1449; and "Homes For Millions," loc. cit., 19; T. E. Will, "The Everglades of Florida," loc. cit., 451-456; Day Allen Willey, "Reclaiming the Everglades," Cassier's, XXXIX (March, 1911), 418-432, and "Draining the Everglades," Scientific American, CIV (January 21, 1911), 67-69; A. W. Dupuy, "Air-line Across the Everglades," World's Work, XV (February, 1908), 9893-9897; L. C. Persons, "Everglades of Florida," Harper's Weekly, LIV (November, 1910), 6; S. M. Ball, "Reclaiming the Everglades," Putnam's, VII (April, 1910), 796-802.

Plantation Company, a thousand ten acre farms at fifty to a hundred dollars an acre; and the Everglades Land Sales Company, a thousand ten acre tracts at thirty to fifty dollars

⁸⁴ an acre. It was estimated that forty per cent of the sales were to prospective settlers, and the remainder to small speculators who hoped to get an increase later on, "when they come out from under the water."⁸⁵ One commentator warned his readers that much of the land being sold in the area could be traversed only in a boat, and he added, "I think as a rule the buyers understand that. If they do not it is their own fault."⁸⁶

Perhaps the most spectacular sale of Everglades land was that of the Bolles interests. Richard J. Bolles set up a corporation, the Florida Fruitlands Company, which sold 16,000 contracts for small plots of the land he had purchased from the Trustees. An advertisement which appeared

⁸⁴ Winthrop Packard, "The Rush for Florida," Technical World, XVI (March, 1910), 20-23.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 21; H. Parker Willis, "Secretary Wilson's Record," Collier's, XLIX (March 23, 1912), 15.

⁸⁶ Ibid. "There is a project on foot which glibly promises to drain the Everglades. Several dredges are lustily digging ditches through which this flood water is supposed to drain rapidly off some thousand square miles of level . . . land. To look at these tiny machines merrily at work on one hand and the area of water they attack on the other is to smile once more at the Atlantic Ocean, Mrs. Partington, and her mop." Winthrop Packard, Florida Trails from Jacksonville to Key West and from November to April Inclusive, 1910, 253.

in a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania newspaper on February 5, 1911,
sought prospective Bolles Company buyers:

Florida Farms-Florida Everglades Special
Everglades and Lake Okeechobee Excursion

February 21

Applications are coming in--only 16 days until we start. Time is short. Reserve your space now. The cost of this trip will return to you one-hundredfold and we pay a large part of all the expenses. . . .

Secretary Wilson, of the United States Agriculture Department, says the doubting Thomases who are waiting for the Everglades to develop before buying will regret it all their lives. Write for our literature.

Ten acres of Everglades is as good as 100 acres in the North. We need you to help spread the knowledge of this wonderful land in this territory.

All the land we have for sale is rich black soil, known as muck. Our soil will not run through your fingers like table salt. 87

In March, 1911, thousands of contract holders or their representatives converged on Ft. Lauderdale to select their tracts, through a lottery, from the Bolles purchase. At the meeting the question arose as to who would survey the tracts. Since the section lines had not been established, the location of the lots varied in the important consideration of their proximity to the drainage canals. Bolles conquered the

87 Exhibit "Z," 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 26, 1323. "A story is told of one of the prospective northern suckers who saw the high water mark on one of the trees about five feet above the ground [Caloosahatchee River, 1911]. He asked the land agent what caused it and the latter stated that it was made by hogs scrubbing their backs against the trees. After a time the agent asked the visitor if he wished to purchase a ten-acre tract. He replied, 'No, not by a d--d sight, but I would like mighty well to buy a pair of those hogs to take north with me.'" W. S. Blatchley, In Days Agone, 98.

survey problem by stating that he would place a stake or monument in the center of each section, but some of the contract holders refused to accept this compromise or to make further payments on their contracts and instituted a suit for recovery of previous installments.⁸⁸

Under the articles of agreement by which Bolles bought his land the promoter was to make his final settlement to the Trustees in 1916, whereas his sales contracts were due in two years. Bolles' transactions involved 160,000 acres for which he received \$4,000,000 in a "scheme of financing that would have done credit to a Wall Street promoter."⁸⁹ It is evident that he made well over a thousand percent profit.

One of the largest syndicates interested in Everglades promotion at this period was the Everglades Land Sales Company with general offices in Kansas City, Missouri. This company became the agents for the properties of the Everglade Land Company, Everglade Sugar and Land Company, Miami Everglade Land Company, the R. P. Davie interests, and several smaller holders.⁹⁰ Interesting in the light of subsequent

⁸⁸ 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 4, 146-147.

⁸⁹ George T. Odell, "Paradise on the Installment Plan," Technical World, XVII (September, 1912), 21. See also Isidor Cohen, Sketches of Miami, 166-168. At the 1912 congressional hearing Chairman Ralph W. Moss asked James O. Wright, at that time Chief Drainage Engineer for the Everglades Drainage District, if any of the Bolles lands were under water in February of that year. Wright replied, "Yes, some of it is, no doubt." 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 4, 150.

⁹⁰ V. W. Helm, president and general agent, Everglades Land Sales Company to J. P. Hirth, Washington, D. C.,

events is a publicity form letter issued to the public in Washington, District of Columbia, in 1912 and 1913, which informed the prospect that "the work of reclaiming the Florida Everglades is advancing by leaps and bounds."⁹¹ The letter pointed out that six dredges of the Furst-Clark Company were on a twenty-four hour schedule with several more scheduled to begin work. After reciting several paragraphs of praise from various unidentified persons, the communication declared,

Everglades lands are going fast. Within a year, one tract of 64,000 acres, and another of 180,000 acres were sold; another of 46,000 acres is now almost gone. . . .

.
The prices have risen from \$24 and \$30 to \$40 and \$50 per acre. Our fifty dollar land is now almost gone, and buyers can afford to waste no time unless willing to purchase at \$60 and \$80 per acre, at which figures, also, we have land to sell. 92

The letter further offered the facilities of its Washington office, with its displays of 'Glades products, and "lantern lectures" three nights each week. The letter expressed a desire "to present THE opportunity of a life time" to those who had not bought lands; "to those who have,

September 15, 1911, Thomas E. Will Collection, University of Florida Library, Gainesville, Florida. Hereinafter referred to as Will Collection.

91 Unaddressed and unsigned promotion letter of Everglades Land Sales Company, Kansas City, Missouri, Will Collection.

92 Ibid.

we can outline one plan which will simplify their tasks of paying for their lands, and another for obtaining revenue therefrom."⁹³

Among the productions of the advertising campaign of the Everglades Land Sales Company were two books: John Clayton Gifford's, The Everglades and Other Essays Relating to Southern Florida, and Walter Waldin's Truck Farming in the Everglades. Gifford's work comprised a group of reprints of articles from various periodicals on a number of topics pertaining to south Florida in general. In the first article Gifford attempted to compare the reclaimed Florida area with that of the Landes of France and the Heathland of Denmark. He estimated that it cost \$1 an acre to drain the Florida Everglades.⁹⁴

There are agents at work selling this land in every state in the Union . . . the money from the sales is doing the work, and the further it progresses the more land will bring and the more eager people will be to get hold of it. The Board of Internal Improvement is wisely holding back much of the land from sale. . . . In many cases the state has only sold the alternate sections.

By the application of lime, the cultivation of legumes, etc., this soil can be kept at a maximum state of fertility, so that five acres would be ample for the support of an ordinary family. 95

93 Unaddressed and unsigned promotion letter of Everglades Land Sales Company, Will Collection.

94 John Clayton Gifford, The Everglades and Other Essays Relating to Southern Florida, 1-2.

95 Ibid., 10-11.

The book by Waldin was written with a certain amount of background since he had been engaged for several years in farming along the edge of the Everglades.⁹⁶ For the future farmer who would cultivate intensively five acres, Waldin thought a capital of \$700 beyond the cost of the land was necessary.⁹⁷ Waldin said that he had begun with \$600 and six acres of land. He planted the land in tomatoes and received

. . . after six months of close application
 . . . a gain of \$3,400, after all bills were paid including expenses of a family of five. No help was engaged until it came time to pick, pack, and ship. We did the work. 98

Waldin felt there was no part of the Everglades that was not reclaimable or that would not respond to man's influence and energy and become valuable thereby. Among the advantages of farming glades land he listed the ease with which it could be cleared since it was free from trees or stumps, the

96 "Our townsman, H. Dale Miller [one of the vice presidents of the Everglades Land Sales Company in 1912], who had been associated with the Ralston-Helms Everglades interests, was frequently seen on the streets of Miami at the head of processions of bewhiskered strangers whom he conducted to the Walter Waldin demonstration farm, at the edge of the Everglades, a few miles west of the city, from which point 'Dale' gave the prospectors a view of their future imperial domains." Isidor Cohen, Sketches of Miami, 168-169. See also Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Session of 1909, 1591-1592.

97 Walter Waldin, Truck Farming in the Everglades, 12.

98 Ibid., 13.

ease of tilling and irrigation, the climate, the location, and the fact that the busiest season came in the cool winter months. Because of the high nitrogen content of the muck Waldin dispensed with any trace of that element in the fertilizers he used. In preparing the land for cultivation he merely cut the saw grass or other wild growth and plowed, disked, and pulverized the earth until a deep and compact earth remained.

Often in this part of the country it is preferable to plow some time in advance of the cropping season, so as to let the land settle thoroughly, if possible catching some of the later tropical rains to help settle the soil before finally harrowing to a fine seed or plant bed. 99

Waldin offered the newcomer all manner of advice on various crops to plant, markets for produce, fertilizers, and drainage. For the latter subject he suggested the use of a shallow lift pump of great capacity, such as those used in rice fields, to assist the natural drainage and irrigation facilities of the gravity system in use at that date.

My prophecy is that the great Everglade district will not only develop into a most beautiful and prosperous country, but will in a short time prove itself the Eden of North America. 100

99 Walter Waldin, Truck Farming in the Everglades, 21-22.

100 Ibid., 141. Waldin believed the following quantities and/or prices could be made in trucking on Everglades muck: Irish potatoes, 125 bu. per acre; bell peppers, 1200 crates per acre with a net of 75¢ per crate; egg plants, 1200 crates per acre; beans, 200 crates an acre at \$2-3 per crate; celery, 900-1200 crates per acre at \$1 a crate or

Thomas Elmer Will, one of the salesmen and publicity writers of the Everglades Land Company and the Everglades Land Sales Company whose interest in the lands south of Lake Okeechobee became a vocation, wrote that the Everglades provided a logical place for satisfaction of the public interests in "the bringing together of the man and the land."¹⁰¹

Will, who spent the last thirty-five years of his life seeking

higher; cabbage, 3-6¢ per lb. in Miami; melons, \$400 per acre; sweet potatoes 4-500 bu. per acre at 75¢ a bushel; strawberries, 5-10,000 quarts per acre at 35¢ a quart in January-February season. Ibid., 46, et. passim.

101 T. E. Will, "The Everglades of Florida," loc. cit., 456. Thomas Elmer Will, 1861-1935, was born in Stones Prairie, Illinois. Spending his childhood in Illinois and Missouri, he graduated from Illinois State Normal College in 1885. From 1885 to 1888 he taught in Illinois public schools, and in 1888-89 was a graduate student at the University of Michigan and 1890-91 at Harvard College from which he received a Master's Degree. In 1891-92 he was a professor of history and political science at Lawrence University at Appleton, Wisconsin. He served as professor of political economy at Kansas State Agricultural College, and as president of that institution in 1897-98. The next two years he spent in lecturing. In 1900 he became dean of Ruskin College in Trenton, Missouri, where he remained until 1905 when he entered the Census Office in Washington, D. C. In 1906 he served in the Forestry Service of the Department of Agriculture. From 1906 to 1910 he acted as secretary of the American Forestry Association. He joined the sales force of the Everglades land companies in 1910. He served with them till 1912, when he became a free lance writer. From 1913 until his death in 1935 he lived at Ft. Lauderdale and Belle Glade, Florida, where he was very active in public affairs pertaining to the Everglades. J. D. Walters, History of Kansas State Agricultural College, 8-10; Ft. Lauderdale (Florida) Call, June 12, 1926.

to help develop this region, had his attention directed to southern Florida when as editor of Conservation he accepted an article for publication by J. C. Gifford on the Everglades. In January, 1910, Will made a trip to the peninsular state and inspected the southern portion at some length before returning to Jacksonville and Tallahassee, where he met and talked with Broward, Jennings, and Bolles. ¹⁰²

In 1911 Will helped organize and became president of the Florida Everglades Homebuilders Association, an organization composed of buyers of Everglades land, which was open to all landowners irrespective of the company through which they had made their purchases. A tract of land on South Canal, purchased by the Association, was to be farmed by a manager in 1911-1912 to furnish the members information on how to "learn and earn" and "what can be done in the muck lands behind Miami." The Association adopted a constitution and by-laws and set up a schedule of bi-monthly meetings to assist the material interests of buyers of Everglades lands. ¹⁰³

The high tide of the Everglades advertising and sales promotion campaign was reached in an item which appeared in the February 5, 1912, issue of the Washington (D.C.) Star.

102 Memorandum in Will Collection.

103 Florida Everglades Homebuilders Association, printed prospectus, Will Collection.

Business Opportunity--
United States Official Indorsement

First time in the history of the Government such a thing has been done. The Sixty-second Congress has recently issued a document of 208 pages indorsing the great reclamation, climate, healthfulness, and fertility of the Everglades. The greatest opportunity of the century is offered here to the man with small capital to establish himself where the evident cooperation of the Government is sufficient to make the community rich and prosperous. Free literature. Call for some.

Everglades Land Co. 309 G. Street 104

In August, 1911, V. W. Helm of the Everglades Land Sales Company wrote T. E. Will that he had received a letter from Senator Duncan U. Fletcher announcing the forthcoming publication of Senate Document Eighty-Nine. Helm declared: "This is certainly great news and I want to congratulate you on this successful part of the program."¹⁰⁵ Helm asked Will if it would be possible to secure a large number of copies of this document on the Everglades with Fletcher's wrapper "all complete for mailing with his frank."¹⁰⁶ On August 22 Helm

¹⁰⁴ 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 7, 298. On May 2, 1911, a letter had been received by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund from the Everglades Land Sales Company offering to act as agent in the sale of the Fund's lands. The offer was refused. I.I.B. Minutes, IX, 107.

¹⁰⁵ V. W. Helm to T. E. Will, August 16, 1911, Will Collection.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Will was associated with the Everglades Land Sales Company in 1910 and 1911. 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 13, 597. In the assimilation and publication of the various papers of Senate Document 89, Will secured the suppressed Wright Report and went to various libraries and government offices to collect the other material for Senator Fletcher. 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 19, 956, 958, 964-965.

again wrote Will, ordering a thousand copies of the document for \$98 and requesting Will to ascertain prices on copies of the document in one, five, and ten thousand lots.¹⁰⁷ On August 26 Helm informed Will that the company officials were urging Senator Fletcher to persuade President William Howard Taft to stop and inspect the Everglades on a proposed trip to Florida in January, 1912.¹⁰⁸

The 1910-1912 boom in the development and sale of the Everglades and contiguous lands of South Florida was received with very decided differences of opinion in the state and in the nation at large. There were many who had feelings on the subject similar to the Miami merchant, Isidor Cohen, who believed the reclamation of the Everglades had been a boon to Miami and that it was gratifying to note subsequent drainage and agricultural experiments in the area had fully vindicated the attitude of the "boomers."¹⁰⁹ Cohen was convinced that the wide publicity given the reclamation project attracted numerous realty dealers to Dade County who aided in Miami's rapid growth and supported civic enterprises which

107 V. W. Helm to T. E. Will, August 22, 1911, Will Collection.

108 V. W. Helm to T. E. Will, August 26, 1911, Will Collection.

109 Isidor Cohen, Sketches of Miami, 170. "In those experiments the late Walter Waldin had taken a leading part. His farm on the edge of the Everglades, a few miles west of Miami, has for a number of years been the show place and demonstration center, for countless Everglades land exploiters." Ibid.

brought many wealthy and notable people. Many "wide-awake" young business men were drawn south by the Everglades propaganda and remained in the east coast city contributing to its welfare.

110

Joe Hugh Reese, a reporter on the Miami Metropolis (in 1909), writing in 1926 recalled that many newspapers in Florida were against the Everglades project in those early years on account of the exploitation by the land agents and the political connections which resulted. Reese felt, however, that

It was not until that time that Miami and Fort Lauderdale amounted to much. . . . At that period Miami was pretty much of a dead town but the Everglades action woke it up, and in less than two years it was flourishing and has been throbbing with progress ever since.

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It must be said in justice to the land agents that, as a rule, they were men of high and cultured intellect, and they relied upon the estimates that had been officially published, as to the time required to complete the drainage system. 111

During the winter of 1911 W. S. Blatchley, a former state geologist of Indiana, made a trip into Lake Okeechobee where he observed a dredge working in the lake end of the

110 Isidor Cohen, Sketches of Miami, 170-175.

111 Joe Hugh Reese, "Agricultural Possibilities in the Everglades," Florida Grower (Tampa), XXXIII (April 10, 1926), 2-3. "Richard J. Bolles is entitled to the gratitude and the thanks of the people of the State . . . for his enterprise, courage and continued faith in the ultimate success of Everglades drainage . . . as evidenced by his investment of more than one million dollars in their reclamation." R. E. Rose, "The Swamp and Overflowed Lands of Florida," loc. cit., 128.

North New River Canal. After seeing the operation he remarked:

When we remember that the lake is only a great saucer 20.5 feet above tide, and that the Kissimmee drains into it, practically in four months of the year, 48 inches of rainfall from 8,000 square miles of territory, we can understand how visionary is the scheme proposed. Thousands of dollars have been spent in advertising and millions gotten back in profit by selling to widows, orphans, and poor devils in the North, this land, in five or ten acre tracts at \$50 to \$100 an acre. 112

As with any project in which there is a question of success, doubt as to the ultimate reclamation of the Everglades was expressed from the first attempt. The Everglades drainage operations gave rise to land selling by high pressure salesmanship with a considerable amount of speculation. The whole program was subjected to a vast amount of criticism: the methods employed in dredging, the accuracy of the surveys, the estimates of the engineers, the practicability and feasibility of drainage, and the resulting value of the soil. All of these became questions without immediate answers. The enterprise became a subject of national agitation.

The attack came from all quarters. The corporate interests which had lost their grip on the bounty of state lands opposed the work from the outset and fought their way to the United States Supreme Court to stop it. R. E. Rose

112 W. S. Blatchley, In Days Agone, 100.

had no doubt but that an organized system of "criticism, slander, and defamation" had been started by "interested parties, citizens, and newspapers of the state, and of western states" who were envious of the emigration of capital and people to Florida.¹¹³ J. C. Gifford found it hard to believe that there were hundreds of "knockers" among the "home people, who had nothing to lose and everything to gain, and who talked it down by the hour on the street corner to newcomers."¹¹⁴

A concrete expression of skepticism regarding the Everglades land promotions appeared in a letter written to the editor of Harper's Weekly by L. C. Parsons in November, 1910. Parsons cited a prospectus of the Florida Fruitlands Company which offered 180,000 acres for sale. "Nothing like it can be found on the continent today . . . twelve hundred farms and homes are being practically given away."¹¹⁵ The advertisement quoted Department of Agriculture and Florida officials to support its claims. Parsons said he had spent the winter of 1910 in Florida and wondered why so much money was being spent on the drainage of waste land when there were thousands of uncultivated acres in the state. He said that

¹¹³ R. E. Rose, "The Swamp and Overflowed Lands of Florida," loc. cit., 129.

¹¹⁴ J. C. Gifford, The Everglades and Other Essays Relating to Southern Florida, 99.

¹¹⁵ L. C. Parsons, letter to the editor, Harper's Weekly, LIV (November 12, 1910), 6.

questions of frost, fertilizer, irrigation, freight rates, and profits of commission men should be settled before one purchased Everglades lands; he added that he hoped his letter would be a warning to keep the savings of the poor out of the proposition. "I regard the drainage project many years premature."¹¹⁶

George T. Odell, in an article entitled "Paradise on the Installment Plan," launched a severe assault against the promoters who had sold ten acre tracts to "tens of thousands of clerks and stenographers and school teachers all over the United States."¹¹⁷ Odell asked who ever heard of making a living out of sugar on a ten acre farm. Propheying the future trend of land holding in the Everglades, he added:

How many of these silly persons who bought their land "sight and unseen" will have their tiny patches when the time comes that the Florida Everglades is transformed into fertile farms?

Florida has suffered too. There are fertile lands in the state, lots of them, and it is probably destined to be a great agricultural State, but not through these poor deluded people who have bought land by the acre which should have been sold by the quart. 118

116 L. C. Persons, letter to the editor, loc. cit., 6.

117 George T. Odell, "Paradise on the Installment Plan," loc. cit., 17.

118 Ibid., 21. Margaret M. Topham of Miami wrote the following letter to the United States Department of Agriculture on November 13, 1910: "Can not this department take some measures to force the stoppage of sales of so called drained Everglade lands? Not a day but some poor deluded victim arrives here in Miami to find the acres which he has bought, and which have been described to him as a very gold mine for productiveness sometimes as much as 8 feet under

Herman B. Walker of Ft. Lauderdale, one of the out-of-state settlers who bought land in the Everglades on a sales contract from T. E. Will when the latter represented the Everglades Land Sales Company, wrote on January 18, 1912, reciting the grievances of the "pioneers" against the state and the land companies. Walker was trying to get his Everglades tract into agricultural production. The company continued to dun him for payments but he refused to make any more payments until it became evident whether or not the crops would pan out.

Walker insisted that he had not lost faith in the future of the glades, but that he had had his eyes opened when he saw the state selling canal frontage for \$35 an acre while other state lands similar to his were being sold for \$15 an acre.

In view of a congressional investigation of land company methods, I am disposed to believe that all speculative companies will be inclined to act rather decently from now on. 120

water, and with no prospect of that water disappearing. These land companies are flooding the country, particularly the Middle West, with the most fabulous misrepresentations. We who live here know how absolutely cruel are the sufferings of these misguided creatures. The Everglades may be drained someday, but the day has not arrived." 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 25, 1263.

119 Herman B. Walker to Thomas E. Will, January 12, 1912, Will Collection.

120 Ibid.

Walker was convinced that the Everglades Land Sales Company was the only firm making any effort to keep promises for drainage and delivery of land.

The dredging had been done in the wrong end of the canals, according to Walker, since the cuts merely drained the surface water from the edges, which enabled the agents to show drained land to prospects. Pointing out the promise of the company to deliver him "drained" land in a year and a half, Walker wrote that the rate of dredging in 1912 would require at least three years to accomplish the necessary work. As for his crops, he said he found it necessary to put plants in "trenches" or "holes" in the trash atop the soil, but he expected to pick beans and tomatoes from six acres of hand cultivated muck that season.

The company's literature is not directly deceptive as to Everglades conditions, but is greatly so in bulk. The pictures, stories, and experiences shown of successful groves, farms, etc., on muck soil are of course intended to convince the reader that these illustrate Everglades conditions. . . . The whole Everglades proposition is experimental. Nobody knows what it will do, although I believe it will do almost anything when we learn how to do it. . . . You and others have exploited Walter Waldin as an Everglades farmer and he never farmed in the glades. . . .

There is not a farm of commercial size, and not an orchard of any size more than a few weeks old, anywhere in the Everglades despite all the lurid literature. The mosquitoes in the Everglades are fearful; the gnats are blinding and the morning fog looks like a sea. There are all kinds of snakes, every kind of bug that lives,

and my folks cannot keep the army worms out of their clothes and food. 121

Walker wrote Will that the vegetable packing house conditions were not of the cooperative variety, but rather of the exploitative kind, and that the railroads took at least half of what a farmer could get for his produce. The company had done nothing for the purchasers of the tracts except to send a soil pulverizer around six months after it was promised, and to try to get the new farmers to give the combination a monopoly of the packing, boating, and selling of the crops.

The whole combination . . . is, so far as I am able to judge, a mere scheme to get as much as possible out of the dammed Yankee suckers who have come here to plant. . . .

And wouldn't it be well for you to drop a hint to some other of your people that if I go before a congressional committee, I propose to tell everything I know, which won't hurt the Everglades but will raise hell with selling land. 122

The "boom" had become so loud and the clamor so great that the Commissioner of Agriculture of Florida, under the direction of the Internal Improvement Fund Trustees, published a statement regarding the Board's stand on the situation. It

121 H. B. Walker to T. E. Will, January 12, 1912, Will Collection. Dr. Beverly T. Galloway, Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, had been down at the Miami Sub-Tropical Plant Station where he had seen "land sharks bringing people down there and showing them the Government experiment station, which was located on hummock soil and not on the glades, as being typical of what could be done on the Everglades. . . ." 1912 Everglades Hearings, Number 1, 16; Number 25, 1262-1283.

122 Ibid.

said:

Large tracts of lands lying in the Everglades or drainage district are owned by private individuals, companies, and corporations. The Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund have nothing whatever to do with these companies, know nothing of their plans, methods of selling or contracting to sell their holdings. Their financial standing must be found through other channels. While we have no cause to doubt their good faith, we can not in any way indorse or recommend any private enterprise. 123

The Trustees did not wish to be saddled with any responsibility for this land boom.

123 Senate Documents, Number 89, 62 Congress, 1 Session, 119.