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**U.S. HIGHWAY 11W
SPECIAL JOINT INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE
RECORDS**

RECORD GROUP 63

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SCOPE AND CONTENT

For fifty years, Highway U.S. 11-W was a well known treacherous bit of road in Tennessee, referred to as “Bloody 11-W” by John Knochel, President of ASG Industries in the September 20, 1973 hearing held in Rogersville. The summary report called it the “highway of broken promises” (p.5). Bumper stickers for the hearings said “pray for me, I drive bloody 11-W”. It had been listed according to the report of the Joint Committee as one of the “killer highways” in the U.S., responsible in one year for 1,068 wrecks and 35 deaths.

A Senate Resolution 17 authorized a special committee in 1973 to inquire into the situation on 11-W. The Senate committee was chaired by Senator Fred Berry of Knoxville, a Republican; it was an odd set of circumstances where a Republican senator from East Tennessee was investigating the lack of help from the first Republican governor in 50 years. The sectional concern of the committee is obvious from the make up of the committee. For the purpose of cooperation, the Senate committee met with the House committee which was meeting under the authority of House Resolution 75. Senator Berry mentions the confusion resulting from two resolutions being passed when one joint resolution would have sufficed (July 23, 1973-Nashville).

One of the exhibits was from a recreational company called Camelot which mentioned some 4800 cars had traveled 11-W to its grounds in one 6 week period. The industrial concentration in the area is considerable and the persons testifying indicate the continued development and investment depending upon a safer thoroughfare. Exhibit No. 1 from Col. Choate’s testimony on August 14, 1973 indicates the type of investment per company from 1968-73. According to September 20, 1973 (p.2) part of the expansion was based on promises of the Clement administration.

Commenting on the hazards of the 11-W, one traveler who had been seriously injured said that one “curve for a trailer that is fully loaded, (sic) it tends to rock at the top, rock and then it throws you off the highway. There is no possible way to get back on the highway” (because of the shoulders). (Rogersville September 20, 1973 p. 47) The basis of many of the complaints were that not only was the road treacherous but on reckless driver and one accident could tie up the road in both directions. The road is only two laned much of the way and there was little way that a wrecker or an ambulance could get through to the injured. Enforcement of highway safety is difficult because “there are not many places where they (the highway patrol) can pull a car over to stop them”. (Knoxville September 21, 1973 p. 25). The diversity of opinion seems to focus on and agree that there have been promises in every governor’s administration since “1926 (when) the present 11-W was built. That’s the way it is right now.” (Knoxville, September 21, 1973 p. 50). One individual said he “hope(d) to get the privilege to vote for a governor who will actually do something about it instead of promising” (Knoxville, September 21, 1973 p. 30).

The amount of traffic on 11-W is legend. In a hearing (Knoxville, September 21, 1973 p. 63) on person said “Bloody 11-W is the only highway in the United States

carrying 16 lanes of traffic on two lanes.” Earlier testimony (Knoxville, September 21, 1973 p. 55) “there’s no way to get from Knoxville to Grainger County except you come (sic) 11-W.” (Nashville, July 24, 1973 p. 5) Rep. Hurley talked about alternative routing on U.S. 11-E but said the ICC had not approved a routing on U.S. 11-E. (Knoxville, September 21, 1973 p. 38) one individual said “two for lane highways are needed in that area and I think you’re kidding yourself when you say that to complete I-40 is going to relieve the congestion on 11-W because it’s not going to do it.”

The concern for widening the highway rather than providing an alternative highway (I-40 or 11-E) was so widespread that residents were willing to donate land. Rep. Hurley said (Knoxville, September 21, 1973 p. 7) that the “people in this area were so concerned about this road that they gave property out of their front yards”. The Dodge Plant was built in March, 1971 and at the dedication, Rep. Hurley read a letter from Commissioner Smith (Gov. Dunn administration 1971-1975) assuring him that construction would start immediately on a road in front of the plant. This promise was a long series of promises noted by Clement in a remark (August 25, 1973 p. 25) that “all the rabbits in Grainger County were bald headed from knocking, from running into the survey sticks”.

The carnage on the highway is extreme. One resident complained (September 21, 1973 p. 29) that “I’ve seen some people killed at the entrance of my driveway. I’ve helped pull them out of cars with the tops of their heads cut off. But I haven’t seen any dirt moved.” Further one resident said (p. 32) “now this has been going on, I know personally since 1949.”

This record group is small and includes a summary report. There has been included a name index of those testifying. The transcripts are also indexed by date so that a list of participants is available for each hearing. There are very few exhibits, which almost all given from the governmental agencies which have been asked to submit them. One poignant bit of testimony was in the September 21, 1973 hearing in Knoxville when one participant talks about progress and what it has done in Rutledge, Tennessee in Grainger County. The transcripts have not been proofread, and in some cases appear to be approximate verbatims. There are no tapes to help complete the testimony. For example, the September 22, 1973 Rutledge meeting stops in mid sentence with a disclaimer at the bottom that the tape stopped.

One final note is the timelessness of the testimony. George Bull testified of the relative danger of his son in Vietnam verses the risk to the family being near 11-W. In fact the son while in Vietnam was notified his mother had been killed on 11-W.

A comment to Sen. Fred Berry at the end of some non standard notes on the Grainger County, Rutledge, TN hearing on September 22, 1973 when Dorcas Griffin gave the highlights of the testimony and then adds “excuse the errors, the machine or me is getting old.”

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

- 1 Transcript July 23, 1973 Nashville
- 2 Transcript July 24, 1973 Nashville
Exhibit (following page 1) Col. Dawson, Highway Patrol, summary
accident report
Exhibit page 122A Ray Dickerson, Industrial Development, list of new
industries 1968-72
- 3 Transcript August 14, 1973 Nashville
Exhibit page 3A Dr. Choate, Commissioner of Economic and Community
Development, listing by company of investment 1968-73
Exhibit page 53A Commissioner Department of Transportation, highway
obligation on U.S. 11-W between Knoxville and Bristol since January
1971
- 4 Transcript August 15, 1973 Nashville

Box 2

- 1 Transcript September 20, 1973 Rogersville
Exhibit page 28A Charles Waters, President of Camelot, explanatory letter
concerning traffic on U.S. 11-W
Exhibit page 62 following Stella Dudjer, statement
- 2 Transcript September 21, 1973 Knoxville
Exhibit 114A State Highway Functional Classification
- 3 Transcript September 21, 1973 Kingsport
- 4 Transcript September 22, 1973 Rutledge
- 5 Summary report Joint Committee on U.S. 11-W

Box 3

- 1 Copy of Box Number 1, Folder 1
- 2 Copy of Box Number 1, Folder 2
- 3 Copy of Box Number 1, Folder 3
- 4 Copy of Box Number 1, Folder 4

Box 4

- 1 Copy of Box Number 2, Folder 1
- 2 Copy of Box Number 2, Folder 2
- 3 Copy of Box Number 2, Folder 3
- 4 Copy of Box Number 2, Folder 4
- 5 Copy of Box Number 2, Folder 5

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Roman numeral indicates number of hearing and subsequent pages indicate where the bulk of the individual testimony lies.

Adams, John Blair VI p. 58-65
Andes, J.F. Knox County Volunteer Rescue Squad VI p. 67-73
Arcues, Marty Product and Traffic Manager, Aladdin Plastics V(a) p. 15-20
Bailey, Richard F. Treasurer, ASG Industry V(a) P. 14-15
Bates, Mary Lou VIII(b) p. 32-33
Boswell, Don V(a) p. 13-14
Brown, John Plant Manager Dodge Mfg. Division of Reliance Electric V(b) p. 11-17
Bull, George VI p. 76-85
Carpenter, Gale Capt. Hawkins County Rescue Squad V(b) p. 62-64
Carpenter, Hugh Engineer, DOT VI p. 85-125
Choate, Pat Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development III p. 1-5
Christianson, Dexter President, Knox County Jaycees VI p. 71-75
Clear, Robert Director of Planning Kingsport IV p. 49-69
Collins, Frances 11-W Safety Committee VI p. 41-49
Collins, Paul V. VI p. 49-57
Crews, Ronald V(b) p. 45-55
Crow, Jack V(b) p. 64-65
Dawson, Lt. Col. Richard Highway Patrol, Department of Safety I p. 29-30, II p. 1-24, III p. 7-9
Denney, Fran C. Sales Mgr. Norris Industries III p. 55-82, VIII(a) p. 3
Dickerson, Ray Industrial Development Division I p. 40, II p. 120-122
Disney, Mrs. Fred VIII(b) p. 11-14
Dudger, Stella Secretary, Dodge Division of Reliance Electric V(b) p. 62
Edens, Paul Director of the Office of Research and Planning II p. 106-120
Edwards, Capt. John Highway Patrol, Knoxville, Department of Safety VI p. 125-138
Eisenbee, Robert Director Public Safety Kingsport IV p. 29-70, VII p. 10-23
Finley, J.H. Trustee, Grainger County VIII(b) p. 20-28
Griffin, Mrs. James Secretary, Grainger County 11-W Committee VIII(b) p. 29-32
Gose, James H. General Manager, Norris Mfg. Company VIII(a) p. 4
Grubb, Terry Acting Regional Traffic Engineer, DOT III p. 82-89
Harris, Fred E. Chairman, Grainger County Industrial Development Board IV p. 7-23
Hays, George VI p. 65-67
Hopkins, Frank Vice President, Teamster Local 480, Nashville IV p. 79
Jones, Rev. A. Carr Minister Methodist Church VIII(b) p. 1-10
Johnston, Sherwood Senior Civil Engineer, DOT V(b) p. 39-49
Knochel, John C. President ASG Industry V(a) p. 1-12
Kunnuth, Harry Personnel manager TRW V(b) p. 3-11
Kyle, Kay Knoxville News Sentinel V(b) p. 28-38
McCamus, C.R. Regional Engineer, DOT, Knoxville IV p. 1-7

McElhaney, Ray Manager, Grainger County Chamber of Commerce and Director of
Douglas Cherokee Economic Authority IV p. 23-28

McMillan, Joe M. VI p. 31-36

Matthews, Harlan Comptroller's Office I p. 50

Mays, Hugh VI p. 37-40

Mize, Charles H. VI p. 28-31

Mize, Mrs. Charles H. President, 11-W Committee for Safety VI p. 21-28

Odle, Bob Development Engineer DOT II p. 38, 62-63

Phillips, Carl Capt. Grainger County Rescue Squad VIII(a) p. 3

Purkey, Mrs. Jack V(b) p. 56-62

Sample, D.S. "Bo" Industrial Development, Kingsport VII p. 24-26

Skilton, William H. VI p. 138-140

Smith, Lawrence President, Industrial Board of Grainger County VIII(a) p. 1-2

Smith, Robert Commissioner of Department of Transportation I p. 22-28, 30-57, II p. 22-
65, 126-129, III p. 50-54, IV p. 80-121

Speegle, J.W. Personnel Manager, Standard Knitting Mills VIII(a) p. 3

Spoden, Hal Kingsport Chamber of Commerce VII p. 4-9

Stancell, Doug Motor Carrier Division, Public Service Commission I p. 23-28

Tennyson, Howard Teamsters Union Local 549 Kingsport, Tennessee I p. 44-45, 52-55,
VII p. 37-42

Terrell, Ray Director of Bureau of Planning and Programming II 27-28, 37, 66-106, III p.
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Thomas, Jack State Planning Coordinator I p. 41, II p. 122-125, IV p. 71-78

Towers, William D. General Manager, Holston Electric V(b) p. 18-28

Watchel, John President, Kingswood School VIII(b) p. 15-20