

74TH CONGRESS } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES { REPORT
1st Session } No 284

CAPT RUSSELL WILLSON

MARCH 4, 1935 — Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed

MR STARS, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H R 5564]

The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H R 5564) for the relief of Capt Russell Willson, United States Navy, having considered the same, report it to the House with the recommendation that it do pass.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is to give Capt Russell Willson, United States Navy, \$15,000 in full settlement for a certain invention of his used in connection with the secret communication facilities of the Navy.

The value to the Navy and to the Government of this invention cannot be measured in dollars and cents. Its value to the Government may be judged by the fact that it was used during the World War in all dispatches between the Navy Department and naval headquarters in London, including those concerning movements of transports, where its secrecy protected thousands of lives and millions of dollars worth of property.

Being aware of comparative ease with which confidential and secret messages were intercepted and decoded by unauthorized persons, Captain Willson conceived and perfected this invention while on a tour of sea duty in 1916. For Captain Willson to have patented this invention would have destroyed its usefulness in that it would then have been open to public inspection, instead, he gave it to the Navy.

The efficiency of the device may be more fully appreciated from a statement made before the committee during the hearings on this bill which is quoted as follows:

Toward the end of the World War a dispatch from a diplomatic agent in Copenhagen reported that copies of all cables were reaching Berlin and all were being deciphered except those in Navy cipher.

This bill provides for long-delayed compensation for a device which during the World War was the basis of the Navy's system of secret communications.

2

CAPT RUSSELL WILLSON

The Navy Department favors this proposed legislation as is indicated by the letter of the Secretary of the Navy to the Speaker of the House of Representatives which is hereby made a part of this report

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, February 4, 1935

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D C

MY DEAR MR SPEAKER There is transmitted herewith a draft of a proposed bill for the relief of Capt Russell Willson, United States Navy. The proposed legislation provides that the Secretary of the Treasury is authorized and directed to pay Capt Russell Willson, United States Navy, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the sum of \$15,000 in full settlement for a certain invention of his used in connection with the secret communication facilities of the Navy.

Captain Willson while serving at sea in 1916 conceived and designed this invention relating to the secrecy of naval communications, and developed it in 1917 without suggestions, ideas, or help from any other person at any time. He submitted the invention to the Navy Department which accepted it in 1917. The invention has been used by the Navy continuously since that time. For reasons of public policy, it has never been patented. Captain Willson has not in any way, directly or indirectly, received any compensation for his work in producing this invention, nor for its use by the Navy during and since the war.

The sum of \$15,000, which the Navy Department believes should be appropriated, is modest in comparison with the value of the invention to the Government during the World War and during the 16 years thereafter that it has been in continuous use.

The Navy Department recommends that the proposed legislation be enacted.
Sincerely yours,

CLAUDE A SWANSON