

I found this impression upon my own heretofore expressed opinion, that the present rates of pay are no more than commensurate with the services rendered, and upon my knowledge that they are very naturally so estimated by the assistants themselves, and upon the sense they must have of the precariousness of their employment, and indeed the certain shortness of its continuance; those, whose duties lie altogether east of Hancock, having but a month more to serve, and those west of it not probably more than six months—indeed, as the former have already entered upon the last month of their service, no reduction which might be made could affect them. I am at present however, so confined to mere conjecture upon the present point of inquiry, that if a more specific answer be required of me, the indulgence of farther time will be indispensable. I feel satisfied that the saving (which could not be made to exceed \$1,200 or \$1,500) to result from a reduction of the pay of the assistant engineers, would be more apparent than real; when its probable effect upon the interests of the work is duly considered. To replace by strangers the present assistants, were they (familiar as they are with every detail) to leave the service, would undoubtedly at this stage of the work most seriously, almost fatally, retard its progress and completion, and deteriorate its execution. The saving just supposed could not possibly compensate for this—nor indeed a much larger one. Entertaining these convictions, I could not recommend a reduction in the existing rates of pay of the assistant engineers, but if so desired by the committee, will communicate upon the subject with these officers as soon as may be practicable, and report the results:

Which is most respectfully submitted,

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