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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON 25

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APR 30 1952

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Mrs. E. Lillian Ruppert, Authorized Certifying Officer

Bureau of Employment Security

Department of Labor

Dear Mrs. Ruppert:

Reference is made to your letter dated April 10, 1952, transmitting a certified invoice in favor of the Triple "A" Water Company, Bradley, California, in the amount of \$158.73 representing the cost of furnishing drinking water to Government facilities at the Imperial Fair Grounds, California, and requesting a decision as to whether or not this claim may be certified for payment.

It is reported that the water was purchased for the use of the staff of your Department at the Reception Center, Imperial Fair Grounds, California, where no water was available within a reasonable distance which could be piped into the building. It is indicated also that the same situation now exists at the new location of this center on the Bright Ranch, which would indicate the possibility of receiving similar claims for certification.

You state in your letter that you are cognizant of the decisions of this Office prohibiting the use of appropriated funds for the purchase of drinking water where the available supply although not considered desirable for consumption because of a disagreeable taste,

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is not unpotable. However, you point out that in this case the only available water supply comes from an untreated open canal source used only for irrigation or toilet flushing and that it has been declared unfit for drinking purposes by Loy E. Ritts, Sr., United States Public Health Officer.

The purchase of drinking water is ordinarily a personal matter and may be regarded as a charge against appropriated moneys only upon the showing of necessity from the standpoint of the Government. However, it has been recognized as a duty upon the Government to supply drinking water where none is available in the offices or other public quarters, or where that furnished is unwholesome or not potable. 2 Comp. Gen. 776.

In the case presented the evidence shows that there is no city water available within a reasonable distance which could be piped to the premises occupied, and the only water otherwise available is carried in an open canal without benefit of purification or treatment of any kind, seemingly indicating that such water was never intended for drinking purposes. Also, a Public Health Service officer has advised that the water unless properly chlorinated should not be used for drinking purposes.

Accordingly, you are advised that the certified invoice from the Triple "A" Water Company, which is returned herewith, may be certified and vouchered for payment, if otherwise correct.

Sincerely yours,

Henry C. Warren

Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosures