

the waters; only, there the extent of the riparian owners' rights formed the storm-centre about which all other water questions revolved, and the riparian owner was the man accused of holding up the use of water, while here the early record holder in his rights occupy the same unenviable position.

The fact that from earliest times only recorded rights to the use of waters have been recognized in this Province, coupled with the further fact that for several decades records were granted and administered in a very loose way by the Provincial authorities, has resulted in bringing about an anomalous situation, which it is hoped the enactment of the proposed Bill may alleviate in part at least.

The holders of the early records in many cases failed to make the slightest development under their records for ten, twenty, or even thirty years, and yet they were undisturbed by the Provincial authorities in their holdings. Not only were these old records vague and uncertain in their terms, and their validity in many cases open to question, but they were often filed away in dusty and forgotten volumes. The utmost ignorance which prevailed on every hand in regard to the available water-supply of the various streams added to the difficulties of the local administrators.

The very inertia of this situation gave many of the later record-holders a false sense of security in their position, while some were in entire ignorance of former filings. In not a few cases the men in these last-named classes were among the most active in their respective communities in the clearing of lands, in the building of ditches, and in the general development of their particular part of the Province.

As long as there was plenty of water in the streams to satisfy all users there was no reason for complaint; but with the rapidly increasing population that came with recent years and the correspondingly increased demand for agricultural products, an impetus was given to the clearing of larger areas of lands and to their preparation for irrigation. The gradual completion of works by the early record-holders and the calling for all the water to which their records entitled them, or, rather, to all the water which could be used beneficially under those records, brought the situation to an acute stage.

Already the later record holders have in many instances been compelled by their more fortunate though not always more vigilant neighbours to close their headgates in the heart of the irrigation season, and more cases of this kind are sure to follow. Thus, through no fault of their own, but rather through the slowness of the Provincial authorities in times past to deal with water records, these later record-holders have had the fact brought home to them that the records under which they have used water and carried on development are to-day practically useless.

It is my opinion that the Public Irrigation Corporation Bill as now revised, if enacted, will do more than almost any other single measure to alleviate the conditions which I have outlined in the foregoing paragraphs. Such an Act would be the medium through which the inequities in the relative positions of the holders of the earlier and later records could, to a large extent, be removed. It would give an opportunity for the townspeople of an enterprising community to join forces with the neighbouring farmers in shouldering a common burden and bringing about a common prosperity, just as has been done in California and other States; or if there were no disposition for such united effort the farmers could operate independently under the measure.

LOCAL CONTROL.

The key-note of the measure herein advocated is local control. Co-operative management in this phase of industry seems to have worked remarkably well wherever it has been tried, and has prevented a great deal of petty bickering and complaining between water-users and irrigation companies. Contrary to the usual rule, this is one sphere of activity where farmers have been able to conduct an important business creditably. So popular is this idea in the United States that very few private irrigation companies are now formed that do not sell the land and the water system together, so that eventually, when the land-owners have completed their payments, they own and control the water system as well as the land.