

*The Address—Mr. Gardiner*

was in the minds of a great many people when I came to Ottawa sixteen years ago, and it was the question that I first discussed when I went to Alberta in the first year that I was here as minister to discuss the question at Hanna with the people who were concerned with the project. We then spoke of irrigating a million acres of land as a result of a development that was going to take place first on the Red Deer river, and then on the North Saskatchewan and so on, a part of which was to fill the Tramping lake, with the storage of water to be utilized in that area. At that meeting—it was the first meeting that I attended in relation to these developments—it was suggested by someone—without looking at the records I am not in a position to say who, and I have not had time to look up the records since before lunch—that such a development was almost impossible, and that we should be considering in that area a much smaller development, the possibilities of which could not be questioned. And so a little later we took on discussing what is known as the Red Deer project, and that project has not been proceeded with up until now although practically all of the engineering necessary to proceeding with it has been done, and it would be possible, with a very little more work, to undertake construction work on that project.

Out of that decision there grew the possibilities of the development of the South Saskatchewan. Therefore beginning back about 1938 or 1939 we began to investigate the possibilities of building a dam on the South Saskatchewan river. The nature of the possible dam and the location have changed from time to time in accordance with the reports that have been made by engineers. The first suggestion of a rather conclusive kind that was made was that we ought to build the dam not very far east of a point directly north of Swift Current, and that by building a dam there we could raise the water up to a level where it would run by gravity out on the north side of the Saskatchewan and make possible considerable irrigation there. Well, we investigated all the possibilities of that and found out finally that it would be impossible to build a dam at that point. I am not going into the details as to why the engineers reported that the construction of a dam there—a dam that could be kept there—was an impossibility; and therefore that project was dropped.

Then we moved down the river from that point and investigated all of the possible sites for a dam until we finally got to what is known as the Coteau creek site. To make a long story short, the engineers eventually

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reported about 1946 that there was a possibility of building a dam at that point. We provided them with funds to go on with their investigations and make absolutely certain of that fact.

I do not think anyone questions the possibility of building a dam near Coteau creek on the Saskatchewan river. As the leader of the opposition said this afternoon, a site has been chosen there which could be utilized if it is thought wise to spend the amount of money required in order to develop a project for that purpose. I am speaking from memory now but I do not think I am far out when I say that the dam would be about 210 feet high and would provide for the storage of water to a depth of about 190 feet. It would create a lake 145 miles long extending some miles west of the bridge which was built last summer by the Saskatchewan government across the Saskatchewan river north of Swift Current. If created, that lake would be the largest body of water in the settled portion of the prairie provinces and as such would be no mean lake as compared with many lakes in the Dominion of Canada. In other words, in the very centre of the area known as the drought area there would be created a large lake in the valley of the South Saskatchewan river.

I recall we were discussing the possibility of building a weir only twelve feet high at Saskatoon. The matter was discussed in this house for some days and then we finally determined that it would be all right to build the weir. The suggestion was sent over to the Senate where it was discussed and it came back that the suggestion was not receiving the required support. I recall an old friend of mine with whom I served many years ago in the legislature of Saskatchewan, on the Liberal side, and who later became a Conservative. He was then in the Senate as a Conservative, and as assistant leader—I refer to Senator Calder—got up on the floor of the chamber and said something which is very true with regard to western Canada. He said that he had driven all over western Canada in the early days as a school inspector and that he knew the country from one end to the other. He said that any project which would retain water or delay the flow of water out of that area was a worth-while project and should be considered by any government. Those may not be his exact words, but that is their effect. So from that time on the matter went through without any further objection.

I say now that the placing of a lake in the centre of Saskatchewan could have nothing but good results no matter what else might be considered in relation to it. That is the position taken by the P.F.R.A.;