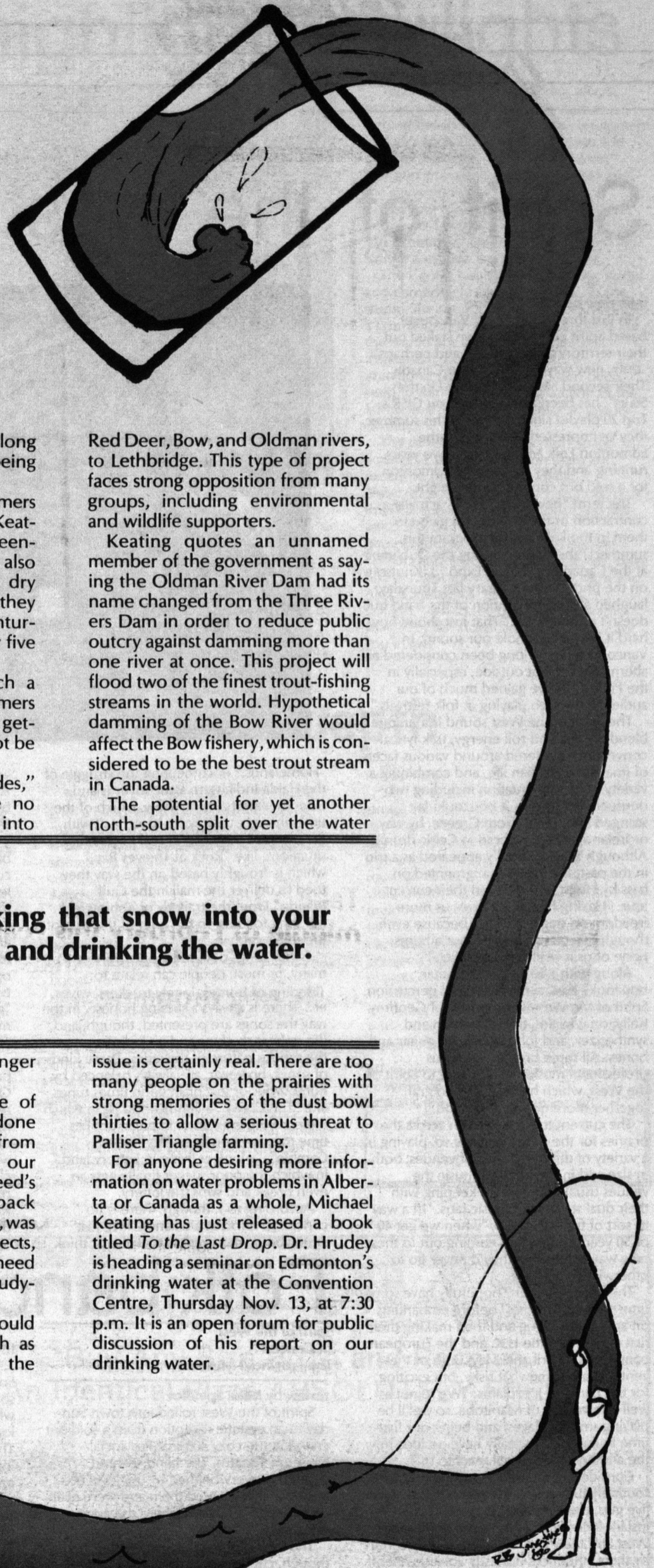


WATER



prairies, has only one-seventh the annual flow of a major eastern Canadian river, such as the Ottawa." This means that any pollution will not be easily diluted.

Keating points to the desire of the west to diversify our economy as a threat to our clean water. "You should do it intelligently, not create the problems that plague eastern Canada and the U.S. In the trade-off for so-called 'economic gain', you get a horrendous bill for cleaning up the mess. The States have estimated it will cost 100 billion US dollars to clean up toxic waste sites." Alberta has over 50 toxic waste dumps, which the Ministry of the Environment is currently trying to identify and clean up. In effect, says Keating, "the people are forced to subsidize the excess profits of the industrialists."

Keating is also concerned with what he perceives as the "potential for horrendous water wars" in Alberta. He points out that Lethbridge, in the 'Palliser Triangle' of southern Alberta, "is the irrigation center of Canada", and that they are "running out of water."

The supply of water from southern Alberta rivers is virtually exhausted. The Oldman Dam, currently under design, is "the last dam" in the south of the province, says Keating, "there is no more water coming." This leaves only two options.

The first option is to "stop irrigation farming," Keating says, "the flood irrigation technique has been used since the time of Moses."

"It is wasteful. Most of the water goes past the plants," he said. Keating pointed out that the water either drains straight into the river system or evaporates, especially in the heat

of summer, and "falls as rain a long way away from the plants being irrigated."

The problem of drought summers is expected to increase, says Keating, due to the so-called 'greenhouse effect'. Research has also shown that there have been dry cycles in the past. "Historically, they have lasted as long as two centuries," he said, "and occur every five to six hundred years."

We may be entering such a drought cycle again. While farmers normally endure bad years by getting bumper crops, this may not be the case in the future.

"The next two to three decades," says Keating, "there may be no good years. We could slide into

Red Deer, Bow, and Oldman rivers, to Lethbridge. This type of project faces strong opposition from many groups, including environmental and wildlife supporters.

Keating quotes an unnamed member of the government as saying the Oldman River Dam had its name changed from the Three Rivers Dam in order to reduce public outcry against damming more than one river at once. This project will flood two of the finest trout-fishing streams in the world. Hypothetical damming of the Bow River would affect the Bow fishery, which is considered to be the best trout stream in Canada.

The potential for yet another north-south split over the water

Now imagine taking that snow into your house, melting it, and drinking the water.

more frequent droughts, longer droughts, fields will shrink."

In anticipation of this type of problem, the government has done studies on potential diversions from the north to the dry south of our province. One of Peter Lougheed's original campaign planks, back when he was opposition leader, was a promise to oppose such projects, but, says Keating, "the Lougheed government has been quietly studying diversions."

Under one such plan, water could be diverted from as far north as Rocky Mountain House, via the

issue is certainly real. There are too many people on the prairies with strong memories of the dust bowl thirties to allow a serious threat to Palliser Triangle farming.

For anyone desiring more information on water problems in Alberta or Canada as a whole, Michael Keating has just released a book titled *To the Last Drop*. Dr. Hrukey is heading a seminar on Edmonton's drinking water at the Convention Centre, Thursday Nov. 13, at 7:30 p.m. It is an open forum for public discussion of his report on our drinking water.

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