

the corporate limits. It is contemplated that, by means of these institutions, water-users will be enabled to co-operate effectively and on a large scale in the solution of their water problems.

AN AID TO AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

British Columbia is today agriculturally in about the same situation as was the State of California in 1887 when the "Wright Act" was passed. This Act made possible the formation of corporate bodies similar in purpose and organization to those just described, and was the first Act of its kind put into practical operation in North America.

In British Columbia to-day, as in California in 1887, the best of the agricultural lands in the more settled parts of the Province are taken up. Especially is this true of the lands which are so situated that the waters of adjacent streams can be brought upon them by short gravity-ditches. Furthermore, as was the case in California then, so now in the more arid parts of this Province the natural flow of the more important streams has been recorded many times over.

The day of "cheap" water for irrigation purposes is a thing of the past. The bringing of water-supplies to the higher valley lands now being occupied involves the construction of storage-works in the headwaters of streams and the building of canals with headgates far up in the rocky canyons. Such works generally cost anywhere from five to fifteen times as much per acre as the primitive ditches of the early settlers, and involve an outlay that is beyond the financial ability of individual land-owners.

This is a serious problem, and in reaching its solution one of two courses must be pursued. The Government must either permit privately owned companies to become organized for the purpose of building and owning and operating the water-supply systems, or some form of co-operative ownership and control must be devised which will enable the land-owners themselves to do this.

In a former article* I endeavoured to point out that the practice prevalent in this Province of forming "carrying companies" which own no land and whose sole function is to store and carry water at stipulated rates for others is not only contrary to the spirit of the "Water Act," but is not in the best interests of the Province. Better acquaintance with conditions in the Okanagan Valley and in the Railway Belt has only confirmed me in the above opinion.

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION.

Without disparaging co-operative effort on a smaller scale, provision should be made for large and effective combinations among the water-users. A multiplicity of small canals and ditches cannot do for an arid section of country what a large unified system planned for the good of all will do, and the former is incomparably the more expensive and more wasteful method in the long run. Moreover, capital on a large scale is required to build irrigation structures of the most approved type and of adequate capacity to serve large tracts of land. To procure this capital good security must be given, and this is often beyond the reach of individuals.

It would not be difficult to point to a dozen or more partly settled valleys in this Province to-day which, although possessing good soil, a comparatively low altitude, and climatic conditions sufficiently favourable for the production of crops of a wide range, are prevented from attaining their highest development because they lack proper water storage and distribution systems. The Bill is designed to help such localities in attaining a greater agricultural prosperity.

WILL LESSEN WATER-RIGHT CONTENTIONS.

There is one rather unfortunate element in the water-administration problem in British Columbia which makes it quite distinct from that of any other Western Province or State. I refer to the status of the water titles. To be sure, California and the other Western States had their problems, too, relating to the ownership of

* Report of Water Rights Branch, 1912, pp. 21, 22.

Copies of this report may be had by addressing William Young, Esq., Controller of Water Rights, Victoria, B.C.