

FRASER VALLEY DYKES

The Great Area They Make Safe for the Operations of the Farmer.

How Government Aid Has Made a Success Where Private Effort Failed.

The problem of converting the 100,000 acres of the Fraser valley, which are more or less influenced by overflow and the action of tidal waters, into cultivable land, has been one confronting the settlers of New Westminster district ever since settlement was first effected. Perhaps in no part of Canada and certainly not in British Columbia can there be found more fertile lands than exist in this delta valley, and it would be difficult otherwise to find anywhere conditions more favorable to agricultural success. The fertility of the soil under good cultivation has been remarkable and wherever the products of the Fraser valley have been exhibited they have invariably elicited admiration and surprise. It was therefore a matter of great moment to the Westminster district and to the province as a whole that some system should be devised whereby these lands could be conserved to the uses of settlement and add to the wealth of the province.

Many parties have been made in the past, but owing to the uncertainty of the seasons and the flooding of the Fraser river, these have been less than a failure as a private enterprise. After the floods of 1884 the government turned its attention to dyking matters and devised a scheme of reclamation and protection by sections including in each a certain tract of land, the dyking of which was placed in the hands of commissioners. Unfortunately for the experiment the depression which had set in became very marked, and it was decided after a good deal of consideration that the best and cheapest method was to perform the work under the direct control of the government, and legislation was introduced and passed in 1887 and extended in 1888 which consolidated the dyking enterprises in the Fraser river valley, bringing the whole under one control and subject to a uniform charge in the matter of expenditure.

In order to indicate the progress of dyking matters in Westminster district, it will be necessary to give a review of the original condition of the lands and the various stages which have led up to the present completion of the enterprises.

ORIGINAL CONDITION OF LANDS.
The lowlands were of great agricultural and pastoral value, but were rendered valueless from overflow except as pasture during the season of season. Lower or more frequently flooded areas being grass lands, and the higher or less frequently flooded areas being covered with brush. The soil is a heavy peaty, but for the most part a rich, loamy character. All this land, its value being evident, was taken up by settlers and others early in the history of the province and has been held practically in an unimproved state and not capable of systematic cultivation until an effective system of dyking could be inaugurated. Thus for years, except in favored spots, the valley of the Fraser has lain dormant and yielding not one hundredth part of what it was capable of under more favorable conditions.

APPROXIMATE AREAS.
The various sections which have had

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Cogitlam.....	115,742 3/4	9,944 1/4	1 3/4	1,381
Pitt Meadows.....	29,938 6	4,296 1/4	1 1/4	1,381
Maple Ridge.....	106,445 6	6,487 1/4	1 3/4	1,381

GOVERNMENT SCHEME.

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RELATIVE VALUE OF LANDS.

It is impossible to state what the value of the lands contained in the various areas affected will be, but a careful estimate places it on an average at \$50 per acre, while in Chilliwack perhaps a little higher. At the present time, with the exception of the lands in Chilliwack, which are worth perhaps \$35 an acre, the lands are practically valueless, except for pasture during the summer months, and not worth more than \$5 or \$10 per acre.

GENERAL ADVANTAGES.

Here may be pointed out some other advantages of an important character to be obtained under government supervision and control.

1.—The guarantee against the work being scamped, in other words, its substantial character. This does not imply that work performed under the commissioners is necessarily or intentionally ineffective, but they had not among themselves the necessary professional knowledge of what was required or when work was properly done, though the commissioners undoubtedly did the work in the best way possible.

Incidentally it may be remarked that the expenses of supervision is less than under commissioners from the fact that there is now only single management to be paid for.

2.—The removal of the commissioner, or as he is called, the inspector, from responsibility to what might be termed his constituents or those who elect him by a majority and who, if they pleased, put him out of office. The present system enables the superintendent to do his work fearlessly.

3.—The immediate control of funds under government management, getting money under the commissioners, for example, in 1887, Maple Ridge began pumping when the gates were closed. The City of Westminster, however, had short of funds and could not collect from the settlers. Had they not had aid the land would have been flooded and valueless. The government came to their rescue and saved them. The case of Cogitlam was similar. Take the case of Chilliwack. The dyking of the dam was very great. The commissioners could not have moved except in accordance with the act, and they would have been obliged to have filed plans, to have held a court of revision, etc., etc., with the result that the opportunity would have passed before they could have obtained a new set of plans. The case of Matsqui is also similar. Under the rules laid down for the commissioners, work could not have been proceeded with until after the

places, the work being carried on by commissioners under government supervision. In the same year much of the old dyke broke away but the gates stood. In 1887 the commissioners made an effort to repair the damage but unsuccessfully abandoned it. The government in the same year took the matter in hand by dyking work. It is far from being complete but it is hoped that the work so far as it has gone will protect the lands this year pending completion next.

Start—dyke was begun in the year 1882 under the Municipal Act. The dyking work. In 1886 new gates were put in. A portion of the new dyke was built and the old dyke strengthened in certain places as a municipal undertaking. The railway embankment was used as a dyke, its bridges filled in and a set of gates inserted in the Chilliwack stream. These were washed out in 1884 and the damage has never been repaired. If the old bonds can be purchased for a reasonable sum the government will probably undertake the repair of the work.

Sumas.—No works have yet been undertaken to reclaim these lands, but extensive surveys and examinations have been made with this end in view. The undertaking has not been found practicable so far, but possibly in the near future it will be again considered.

Agassiz.—Trusting to the already formed railway bank the settlers of Agassiz have been enabled to divert a small stream running into the Pitt river and thus completed in the year 1892 the dyking of the lands. In the year 1893 a freshet of the river (not of the Fraser) washed the gate out and the break has never since been repaired. The government now contemplates taking this matter in hand.

Chilliwack has never been dyked, and until lately no scheme has ever been formulated. Recently the settlers petitioned the government to take action in hand and there are examinations being made with a view to its entire reclamation. In the meantime as a matter of urgency dams are being put in at Hope, Camp, Half-Moon and Greyligh sloughs, with intervening dykes.

Survey.—A few years ago the Surrey flats bordering on Mud Bay and lying between the Nicomekel river and the high grounds north of the flats were dyked from tidal waters, and gates inserted in the serpentine river flowing through the flats. The dyke has been greatly weakened and the gates almost totally wrecked. This was a municipal undertaking and the damage has not been repaired. The government contemplates taking the matter in hand and doing such work as the settlers will derive benefit from.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC FEATURES.

The advantages to be derived from the undertaking of these works by the government wholly under its own direction and control is very great as the statement following will show. For the four systems, Maple Ridge, Cogitlam, Pitt Meadows and Matsqui, the only ones in which it is possible to institute a comparison as between the old and the new methods taken together show a saving of \$200,000. Not only that, but the annual interest payable is very much reduced, although the total cost estimated under the government scheme is somewhat greater than that estimated under the dyking commissioners. The annual interest under the government scheme was about \$20,000 whereas under the government scheme it will be \$17,000, or a saving of \$3,000 per annum in interest. As yet the government scheme is impossible to institute a comparison with reference to the other schemes, but similar advantages obtain to the land owners, to the district and to the province generally. With respect to the districts already referred to the following comparative statement clearly and adequately shows the saving that will be effected and the advantages of the present scheme:

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court of revision, with the result that the land would have been flooded. The government, however, was able by the exercise of powers outside of the act to help in an emergency, and the district has been benefited by it. Altogether the change from a system of division of responsibility and of incomplete supervision, to one of systematic control and of minimum expenditure has been a most beneficial one and will result over and over again to the advantage of the district affected.

ESTIMATED COST.

Chilliwack.....	\$131,000
Agassiz.....	10,000
Hatzie.....	10,000
Curry.....	27,000
Sumas.....	19,729

FIGHTING FOR FOOD.

Supplies Intended for Spanish Troops Carried Off by Raising Insurgents.

London, May 30.—A despatch to the Standard from Key West says: Intelligence has been received from Cuba that portion of the army of Gen. Maximo Gomez, consisting of 300 cavalry and 500 infantry, on Saturday at daylight attacked, captured and held for two hours the town of Remedios in the province of Santa Clara. The Cubans were under command of Carrillo, and the object of the attack was the capture of a supply of provisions sent three days before the Spanish troops, numbering 3,000 men. Gen. Carrillo's hearing of their arrival sent to Gen. Gomez for reinforcements, and having received 100 infantry and 200 cavalry, decided to attack at dawn. The Cuban army of 800 men, Friday night about three miles from Remedios: no fires permitted and all orders given by word of mouth instead of by bugle. At 3:30 a.m. on Saturday the troops formed for the attack, the cavalry under Gen. Carrillo being in front; the infantry, under Col. Borra, constituting the second line. They were almost into the town before the sentries gave warning. The cavalry charged and practically decided the capture, and the infantry seized every scrap of food, which was sent to Gomez, as well as 304 Mauser rifles and 30,000 rounds of ammunition, under an escort of fifty cavalry and 100 infantry.

The loss of the Cubans was four killed and three wounded. The Spanish loss was 32 killed and 63 wounded. The Cuban troops had eaten nothing but "jujua" for several weeks, and had no bread or coffee. Consequently they are revolting on canned beef, sardines, coffee and other dainties they captured. Two hours after the town was taken, the Spanish troops were reinforced, returned and recaptured Remedios. Five Cuban troops had eaten nothing but "jujua" for several weeks, and had no bread or coffee. Consequently they are revolting on canned beef, sardines, coffee and other dainties they captured. Two hours after the town was taken, the Spanish troops were reinforced, returned and recaptured Remedios. Five Cuban troops had eaten nothing but "jujua" for several weeks, and had no bread or coffee. Consequently they are revolting on canned beef, sardines, coffee and other dainties they captured. 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