

The Address—Mr. Coldwell

that this project is desirable and feasible. As a matter of fact I went to a great deal of trouble because of the lack of interest in it by the government and because of the lack of support for it in this parliament to see some of the most competent engineers I could find in this country, even one who is a very competent water engineer but whose political activities I have criticized from time to time, and to secure their advice on this particular matter. The advice I received at that time was that the project was feasible and I have never lost my faith in it. I have been told by engineers that dams placed at intervals along the South Saskatchewan river right back to the Red Deer river would irrigate a very much larger area of land than we contemplate irrigating under the proposed South Saskatchewan scheme. However, at that time it received very little support. Even my good friend, Mr. MacNicol, a man who subsequently did so much to assist us in popularizing the project, at that time knew virtually nothing about the South Saskatchewan river scheme. He made a speech discussing water conservation, at that time a problem in the province of Ontario.

What was the official stand of the government at that time? It was given during the course of the debate by the minister who spoke for the government, the Hon. Mr. Crerar. What did he say? As recorded at page 682 of *Hansard* for February 21, 1938, he mentioned some small schemes and then said:

There were several others, including finally one known as the North Saskatchewan project. That project contemplates the diversion of the waters of the North Saskatchewan river—

He discussed the North Saskatchewan; I discussed the South Saskatchewan.

—somewhere west of Prince Albert, bringing them down over the countryside of which the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar spoke this afternoon to irrigate the lands lying beyond. They hoped in that scheme to embrace some 1,410,000 acres but the cost would be about \$75 an acre. There is no question that engineering science could solve the problem of irrigation.

Then, sarcastically, he added:

As an engineering question, it is not an impossible thing I suppose to take the waters of lake Superior and put them on the prairies of Saskatchewan.

Near the end of his remarks he said:

I think the facts I have given are sufficient to indicate certain conclusions: First, that there is today a complete body of information available along the lines suggested in the resolution of the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar. In the second place, extensive surveys have been made as to the possibility of utilizing the water available for irrigation in Saskatchewan and Alberta. May I say in passing that these reports indicate that of the acreage which could possibly be benefited by irrigation over 90 per cent is in Alberta. So that if we look for relief in undertaking vast and costly schemes of irrigation on the prairies I am afraid we are doomed to disappointment. That, however, does not mean

that in certain localities irrigation projects cannot be undertaken but such projects must be on a modest scale such as those being undertaken today, which are situated almost entirely in Alberta.

That was the attitude, and consequently when I hear a good deal of credit being assumed by members of the government, the government party and even by the opposition, for popularizing this great scheme, I want to say that there are others in the country who have spent a good deal of time and energy and have done a great deal of talking in order to try to get support for this great irrigation project. It is not often—I do not know when I have done so before—that I have risen in the house and have made something of a protest against the assumption on the part of hon. members on the government side, or even in the opposition, of all the credit for everything that they subsequently are forced to do or support by public opinion in this country.

That is why I am saying something about the matter this afternoon. There is no question whatsoever that the project is feasible. I think it was unnecessary for the government to appoint a new commission to review all the reports that other committees and commissions have made on this project in the past. May I say that I was very much surprised to note the composition of the commission. This is primarily an irrigation project. Indeed, to the extent that it may become a power project, and I hope it will, that is more or less not the concern of the federal parliament because power is under the control of the provincial governments of Canada. Nevertheless a project that is primarily an irrigation project is being reviewed by a commission consisting of three gentlemen, for whom we have respect, only one of whom is primarily an irrigation expert, Dr. Widdsoe of Salt Lake City. As the minister has said, he is one of the outstanding authorities on irrigation on this continent or indeed throughout the world. In fact, I have seen some writings of his concerning irrigation in various parts of the world. The other two gentlemen were both primarily power men. I was rather surprised that we had a commission composed of one irrigation man and two power men to make an investigation of what is primarily an irrigation project.

This is a big project. As the minister has said, it will be the largest project of its kind on this side of the Canadian-United States border. Before I moved a resolution in the house in 1938, I made it my business to see the great earth dam at Fort Peck, Montana. I also went down to the State of Washington and saw the Coulee project. I say immediately that the Fort Peck dam was not primarily an irrigation project but