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Principal Contents of this Issue

INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

DAILY newspaper despatches from Ottawa state that "F. J. Bisaillon, K.C., a prominent Montreal lawyer, has been named by the government to succeed P. B. Mignault, the new judge of the Supreme Court, as a member of the International Joint Commission. The actual appointment has to be made by the British authorities, but his name has been recommended by the Cabinet."

It is to be greatly regretted that the Cabinet has not recommended an engineer for this position instead of a lawyer, and we hope that it is not too late for a change to be made in the recommendation either by the Dominion Cabinet or by the British Government. Nearly all of the questions that must be decided by the International Joint Commission are engineering questions. Law and legal procedure have entered but little into the discussions and decisions of the commission.

It does not require a lawyer to decide how much water can be diverted from a stream for power purposes without interfering with navigation. The "K.C." hardly qualifies a man to decide the extent to which boundary streams can be polluted with sewage without endangering the health of communities which use those streams as water supply. Acquaintance with judicial procedure is no recommendation of one's ability in deciding the value of a lake as a storage pond for water power development. Blackstone is not the reference to whom one would turn in deciding the effect upon the great lakes of the water diversion through the Chicago Drainage Canal, or the effect upon the St. Lawrence River level of the construction of a submerged weir or of a dam.

Practically without exception every problem that has come before the International Joint Commission, or which is at all likely to come before it, is of an engineering nature and can best be determined by engineers. It is high time that the authorities at Ottawa should recognize that there are some other professions besides that of the law which are capable of useful public service.

WATER POWERS OF THE EMPIRE

FOLLOWING are the conclusions arrived at by the water-power committee of the Conjoint Board of Scientific Societies, whose preliminary report has just been issued:—

(1)—That the potential water-power of the empire amounts in the aggregate to at least 50 to 70 million horse-power.

(2)—That much of this is capable of immediate economic development.

(3)—That except in Canada and New Zealand, and to a less extent in New South Wales and Tasmania, no systematic attempt has as yet been made by any government department to ascertain the true possibilities of the hydraulic resources of its territories or to collect the relevant data.

(4)—That the development of the empire's natural resources is inseparably connected with that of its water-powers.

(5)—That the development of such enormous possibilities should not be left to chance, but should be carried out under the guidance of some competent authority.

The Conjoint Board, composed of members selected from the various scientific societies in Great Britain, was appointed to advise the government on various technical and scientific problems, the solution of which is essential to the welfare of the empire. A strong committee of this board, under the chairmanship of Sir Dugald Clerk, was appointed "to report on what is at present being done to ascertain the amount and distribution of water-power in the British Empire."

Their report states that "to enable the empire to recover, with any degree of rapidity, from the financial burden imposed by the war, it will be necessary to develop, in a much greater degree than heretofore, its latent resources," and adds that "it must be realized that without an ample supply of cheap energy, much of this wealth must always remain latent."

The committee, recognizing that private capital may not be largely available after the war for the mobilization of the empire's latent stores of energy, recommends that the question of state-aid, where necessary, be seriously considered.

The report concludes with a number of constructive recommendations urging the government to appoint an Imperial Commission of Conservation or an Imperial Water Power Board which shall include a representative from each of the overseas dominions and dependencies. This body would co-operate with the various governments of the empire in investigating and developing hydraulic energy, chiefly in an advisory capacity.

It must be recognized that this report is merely a preliminary report. No doubt much more work will be done before the final report is issued by the committee, and many of the weak and vague parts of the report as it now stands will unquestionably be strengthened by consultation with a greater number of authorities throughout the empire.

It is to be hoped that the committee's final report will include much more accurate and detailed statistical