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No. 53/32 WATER PROBLEMS ON THE CANADIAN BOUNDARY

An address given to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, Toronto, by General A.G.L. McNaughton, May 28, 1953.

....I count it a very particular privilege to have been given this opportunity to talk tonight about some of the current problems in relation to water and the uses to which it may be put which exist along our 5,655 miles of boundary with the United States. This boundary extends from between the Province of New Brunswick and the State of Maine on the Atlantic Coast to between British Columbia and the State of Washington on the Pacific; further north it extends from the Portland Canal on the Pacific Ocean, inland of the Alaska Panhandle and thence north along the 141st degree of west longitude between the Yukon Territory and the United States territory of Alaska to the Arctic Ocean, whence it continues, according to our assertion, to the North Pole.

The international problems in relation to the use of water which are developing along this boundary, and for which solutions must now be found, are mostly the consequences of the historical processes which marked the evolution of Western civilization on the North American continent. In those times the uses to which we now wish to put water were not of any great significance in the life of the people, and so it is not to be wondered at that the aspects of the use of water which we have come to value received then but scant attention in the making of boundaries and the like.

The original London and Plymouth Companies were chartered by James I in 1606, and sections of the original boundaries of their geographic zones have persisted to this day. In those early days settlement came in from the sea, and rivers became a favourite topographical expression to choose for the practical demarkation of developing political administrations, although most of the customary extravagant assertions of ownership of distant territory continued to be expressed in geographic terms.

In that era this method had much to commend it. Waterways were the most direct, and almost the only, avenues of travel into the hinterland and, having been traversed by the explorers, their courses were indicated on the primitive maps of the day and could be recognized on the ground with some moderate degree of certainty. Their median lines of flow could be ascertained with all necessary precision for the circumstances then existing and, even if an island or so had to be arbitrarily assigned to one country or the other, or some branch or larger tributary