

Columbia River Treaty

appeared before us. It had this to say about the behaviour of the government of Canada in this regard. It spoke of the various possibilities:

As noted above, neither the feasibility nor the costs nor the benefits of any of these alternatives—these alternatives to the Columbia river diversion—

have been evaluated in detail. The diversion routes have been identified on paper only, with little or no on-site investigations of terrain or soil conditions. . . . It is interesting that this does not prevent the government of Canada from quoting unit-cost figures from the same Crippen-Wright report in order to "prove" that alternative sources are considerably less expensive. These figures, of course, are meaningful only when considered in the light of the location of our future needs for water, the volumes involved, the diversion routes and the possible benefits. . . . It should be equally obvious that one cannot compare the unit-cost of a diversion of 26,000 c.f.s. into the North Saskatchewan with the unit-cost of a diversion of 6,000 c.f.s. into the South Saskatchewan basin or even into a higher point in the North Saskatchewan basin, whence it could more easily be diverted to the south.

Only the most general conclusions can be drawn safely from the investigations made to date that these conclusions clearly support the view that a Columbia prairie diversion may well be an exceedingly important component of a future water plan for the prairie provinces, considering the location of future water requirements, the volumes involved and the potential benefits to the prairie region and the whole of western Canada.

In his evidence before the committee, Dr. Cass-Beggs had a few things to say with regard to the estimated cost of the various alternatives which were so kindly suggested to him and to the prairie provinces by the knowledgeable Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) by other government witnesses before the committee, and by members of the committee. He pointed out that it might be advisable to take note of the relative distances involved. Whereas the Columbia waters would be some 300 miles from where they were to be used in the prairie provinces, the Peace river was some 950 miles away; that no estimate had been made at all of transmission costs and that, moreover, it would require the immediate investment of many times the sum required to build installations permitting the diversion of the Columbia river to the Saskatchewan basin; that the payment of interest on this vast investment to be undertaken many decades before it would be needed would in itself constitute a burden far in excess of any of the costs involved in the Columbia diversion scheme. These matters, however,

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were not the subject of careful consideration by government witnesses. They had not been asked to consider them. They had only been asked to consider power and, in one instance, specifically the matter of finance; evidence narrowed almost to the point of disappearing.

We were told repeatedly that there was no danger whatever of losing control of our water to the United States. Doubts were cast on some admittedly second or third hand evidence that plans were being dusted off for the diversion of Columbia river water to the southwestern states of the United States. But only a while ago there were press reports of even more ambitious plans being produced by the Parsons Engineering Company for diverting the Athabaska, the Peace and the Mackenzie along with the Columbia and the Fraser to satisfy the thirst of the southwestern states. Members may say that these plans are grandiose and not likely to be fulfilled, but it would be a bold man who would today place any limit on man's ingenuity. And I do say this: At least they illustrate the fact that there are thirsty eyes in the United States fixed on Canada's water resources while at the same time we have thirsty eyes at home which have been looking to the government of Canada to protect their future water requirements.

I am fully in agreement with the idea that we must co-operate with the United States; no one in his right senses would have any other attitude toward this development. I have been surprised at the manner in which government witnesses and government members on the committee have erected a straw man composed of the suggestion that if we did not go along with this treaty the Americans will pick up their marbles, go home and refuse to play. Nothing could be more ridiculous or more absurd. We are told, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, that the Americans have alternative storage basins for flood control. But the slightest examination of the evidence shows that all the storage basins they have are subject to the most severe pressure from local interests for other use and even if they were available they would not be of sufficient size to satisfy flood control requirements. The very suggestion that the Americans are only casually interested in the treaty and have merely signed it in order to accommodate their good Canadian friends is too difficult for me to swallow, particularly after conversations I