

Flood Control

other seven provinces, and the people of those provinces, from getting justice in Canada? It is time that the government took a stand on it and told the two premiers, one former premier and one present premier, that they cannot dictate to the rest of Canada.

FLOOD CONTROL IN THE FRASER RIVER SYSTEM

Mr. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops): I want to refer to a matter of great concern to my province, namely, the question of flood control in the Fraser river system. Undoubtedly the matter is fresh in the minds of hon. members, owing to what happened last year and the great disaster which occurred throughout many parts of the province, but particularly in the lower Fraser valley, and to a very considerable extent in the interior portion of the province on both the Columbia and the Fraser river networks. There is, however, a Columbia river authority which is now looking into the matter of control of the Columbia, and it appears to be forming concrete plans to deal with that question.

In my riding, however, the tributary rivers of the Fraser, and the Fraser valley itself, are being looked into by an organization set up last year, known as the Fraser river board. The grievance which I have in mind, Mr. Speaker, is that not only is progress distressingly slow, but so far as we know there is no assurance that the resources of the area will be developed and the problem tackled in the way in which it should be.

Because we have no assurance, because progress is so slow, I feel called upon to mention the matter tonight and to put it forward as a grievance. I describe it as a grievance for two reasons. Firstly, because it was taken up at least two years ago—and I am referring only to my own experience with this matter—as I have occasion to know, because I put it before the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fournier) and other officials of this government by letter and by speeches in the House of Commons, pointing out that in British Columbia we had need for a program of flood control, development of power and irrigation. As early as April of 1947 I wrote to the Minister of Public Works. I also wrote to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) and the Minister of Fisheries suggesting that the three federal departments should co-operate in a survey of the Fraser river system; that they should co-operate between themselves and with the provincial government in the development of some integrated project along the lines of the great projects in the United States, providing for power, flood control and development of irrigation. Not much progress was made. In fact, it would be fair to say nothing was done until after the floods of last spring and summer in British Columbia.

The second reason why this matter is a grievance is that, although the work is being pressed forward now in the lower Fraser valley on the completion of the dikes in that area, not enough is being done now to deal with the threat of floods in the future.

In this respect I want to refer to a further letter of mine to the Minister of Public Works dated March 7 of this year, in which I set the matter before him at some length. I should like to refer to passages in this letter because they deal in detail with what I think are the requirements of the problem. In my letter to the minister I said:

As I stated in the house when speaking in the throne speech debate on March 1, the flood situation in British Columbia this year, at least in the Fraser river basin, is as serious, if not more serious, than it was last year. The ground was absolutely saturated as a result of very heavy rains last fall; lakes—even the lakes which normally dry out—were unusually full at the beginning of winter and there would appear to be very little margin of slack or low water to absorb any portion of the normal spring run-off. The consequence is that instead of the run-off taking some time to fill the intermediate lakes and rivers as normally, the first flow will almost immediately be reflected in a rising of the level of the main rivers, since there is no intermediate stage of low level water to check it.

We have had snows of more than average depth this year . . .

I find there was an error in my letter. I said that we had snows of more than average depth whereas I should have said that we had snows of average depth. The letter continues:

—and an unusually severe winter. It may well be, therefore, that we will have an unusual spring—if the run-off is at all sudden, then I would very much fear the danger of floods as serious as those of last year.

It is for this reason that I am disturbed that no progress has been made by the Fraser river board beyond apparently the stage of preliminary survey and that no construction appears to be authorized for this year. Incidentally, if you will examine the report of the Fraser river diking board, recently tabled by the Right Hon. C. D. Howe, in response to a request of mine, you will see at pages 5 and 6 passages which fully support the contention which I advanced last year when discussing the floods and have, indeed, made for several years now; namely, that the proper way to control these rivers is by dams in the upper reaches on the lakes and headwaters of the river. The report states definitely that dikes alone in the lower reaches can never afford permanent security from floods.

In view of this fact and in view of the likelihood of floods, I am taking this opportunity of writing you to repeat the suggestion made in the house on March 1 and to urge that you press the work of the Fraser river board to a more rapid conclusion and, particularly, that every conceivable effort should be put forward to ensure that construction on at least some of the key projects should be begun this year. I would suggest, as examples, the Quesnel and Clearwater lakes. You will, no doubt, have noticed that the provincial government plans a power project in the Quesnel area; this immediately suggests a further possibility along the lines I previously urged—that flood control and power projects should advance