

The Address—Mr. Coldwell

Then, at page 937, and turning over to page 938, we find this:

I want to repeat that I was the promoter of the project from the time I came to Ottawa, and I will have something to say a little later, in dealing with one of the other questions, as to why I became the promoter of it at that early date.

I do not want to take any of the credit from the Minister of Agriculture that he may take to himself in this connection. I hope any efforts he has made over the last number of years will be successful, and that we shall have this great project completed within the next few years. I say "the next few years" because I am well aware of the fact that a project of this description cannot be completed within a year.

But I was in the house when this project was under discussion in the thirties, when we had that shocking state of drought across the prairies—and when there was little or no support in the house for any pleas that one made for this particular irrigation project. I remember that on February 11, 1937, for example, we were discussing P.F.R.A.—and may I say at once in passing that I will not take one jot or tittle of the credit away from those who promoted P.F.R.A. The original act, of course, was placed on the statute books in the dying days of the Bennett regime. It was amended in 1937, particularly, by the present Liberal administration in Canada and, from the point of view of our Canadian prairies, I think it has been one of the most beneficial policies ever undertaken. I remember that at that time some of us were interested in the larger scheme. The Minister of Agriculture was telling us about the P.F.R.A. and he informed us also about the changes in the committee that had been established under the old Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act and of the discussions that had occurred in that committee. The minister said:

Then, there were projects, such as the building of a dam on the Saskatchewan river, to the northwest of Moose Jaw. This dam would have involved a very heavy expenditure of money, and a further expense would have been involved in connection with pumping the water from the river to the banks. There would have been a further construction of works to carry irrigation to the south and east of the bow of the river.

That matter was discussed before the committee. I assume they got their information from exactly the same engineers as would give it to the department or any other body if it were investigating a matter of that kind. The decision was reached that such undertakings were too costly and perhaps would not bring the results expected from them. It was felt that an expenditure of money to that extent would be more or less uneconomical.

In stating that in the house, the minister did not state it with any disapproval as I remember, or as I can find from the records of the house.

[Mr. Coldwell.]

Mr. Gardiner: The question which is being discussed now is not the South Saskatchewan river project. That was a project that was voted on by the municipalities between the Saskatchewan river and Regina and turned down in 1918. It was a proposal under which water was to be supplied to Regina and Moose Jaw. There was very little discussion with regard to irrigation; it was only in connection with the points along the pipe line.

Mr. Coldwell: This was not in 1918, it was not in 1920, it was not in 1926—this was in 1937. Back in those earlier years the water situation in Regina was most acute and once again this project was brought forcibly to the attention of the city. I remember it quite distinctly because at that time I happened to be a member of the city council.

Mr. Gardiner: I was referring back to the other matter, when discussing it in 1937.

Mr. Coldwell: Excuse me, I did not interrupt the minister the other night when he was taking to himself all the credit for this.

Mr. Gardiner: I still take it.

Mr. Coldwell: I remember those days and I made up my mind that I would go into this Saskatchewan river irrigation project. On February 21, 1938, I moved the following resolution:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should place before parliament at an early date plans, or proposals, for a comprehensive and authoritative survey of water conservation, irrigation possibilities, and other feasible projects for the permanent rehabilitation of the drought stricken area of western Canada and its people.

I well remember that debate and I looked over it again in *Hansard* during the last day or so. My recollection of that debate is that it received a fairly unsympathetic reception from the government and many hon. members in this house. I remember describing the situation that existed then in the western provinces and being told that I was belittling the province from which I came. I know that Saskatchewan, like Alberta and Manitoba, given the right conditions can produce enormous quantities of new wealth. That has been demonstrated again quite lately.

The history of the prairies warns us that while we may have years like those we have just had, years of bountiful rains, they are always followed by periods of great drought. When I was discussing this resolution in the house I submitted reports that had been made by Palliser and Hind, both of whom had travelled the prairies in the 1850's making surveys of the conditions at that time. From their reports we know that the conditions in the period 1930-38 were not