

Mr. Green: Is it a fact that the power potential of the Columbia river system is about three times the potential of the whole St. Lawrence system?

Mr. Lesage: Well, it all depends on what you call the Columbia river system and what you call the St. Lawrence river system. If you include tributaries in both instances, well, I do not know which would be the greater. What has the hon. member in mind, the Columbia river alone? And if the Columbia river alone, is it on the Canadian side only, or both on the Canadian and United States sides? As far as the St. Lawrence river is concerned, does it include the international rapids or all of the power which can be developed on the United States side of the St. Lawrence? It is difficult to answer the question because it is not specific.

Mr. Green: I shall put it this way. In the committee on external affairs last year General McNaughton told us that the Columbia river system had over three times the power potential of the St. Lawrence.

Mr. Herridge: I have one question. I have listened very carefully to the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra and the minister's answers, which were as clear as possible. Is it right to assume that no dam or public work of that nature could be built on the Columbia river or any part of its system that affects the levels of waters at the international boundary without a recommendation from the international joint commission?

Mr. Lesage: It is difficult to answer a question when it is not qualified. Works could be constructed downstream or upstream, and they might affect the level of the water by increasing or decreasing it. What has the hon. member in mind?

Mr. Herridge: What I have in mind is this. I presume from the minister's answers to the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra that it is safe to say no dam or work of any nature could be constructed upstream in Canada above the 49th parallel, on the Columbia river or on any of its tributaries, if that dam or other work affected the level of waters at the international boundary, without a recommendation from the international joint commission.

Mr. Lesage: It might increase the level, of course, if the dam were built. For instance, take the building of a dam just north of the boundary where the Columbia comes back into Canada. The building of a dam there would have the effect of raising the waters on the United States side. The international joint commission would have jurisdiction

then over that. Where it would not have jurisdiction would be if the water were held back by a dam so that the level of the water downstream would be lower. Then the international joint commission could not, as I understand it, prevent the building of the dam, but an action for damages might lie for those who were affected by the works.

Mr. Herridge: I would like to follow this up for a moment, because it is an interesting question to the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, myself and a good many other members from British Columbia. I understand the minister to say that it would not require a recommendation from the international joint commission to build a dam or other works on the Columbia river, or on any of its tributaries, if the water level at the international boundary was lowered for a certain time of the year. That is quite contrary to my understanding of the boundary waters act. I understood there had to be a recommendation of the international joint commission for any disturbance of the level of the water at the international boundary.

Mr. Lesage: The director of the water resources division died two weeks ago.

Would it be possible to allow this item to stand so that I can study the question? I would not like to mislead the committee. This is a very difficult question of jurisdiction and I am sure hon. members will appreciate the circumstances under which I have to work.

Mr. Hodgson: Before leaving this item I think it would be well that members of the committee and the minister be reminded of the Chicago water steal when they dropped the levels of lakes Huron, Michigan and Georgian bay by 20 feet a number of years ago.

The Deputy Chairman: Is it agreed that item 314 be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Water resources division—

315. Fraser river—50 per cent of the cost of investigations to be carried out by the "dominion-provincial board Fraser river basin" (formerly under Department of Public Works), \$165,000.

Mr. Green: Mr. Chairman, the work under this item has been under way for some years. Can the minister tell the committee what progress has been made? As I understand it, it is an investigation of the whole Fraser river basin.

Mr. Lesage: Mr. Chairman, this investigation has been going on since 1948-49 and at our request we have been having an investigation made to determine how long the investigation is going to last.