

Supply—Northern Affairs

addressed by Mr. A. G. Underhill, the district engineer at Calgary. It was sponsored by the central Alberta association of chambers of commerce and, as I say, it was attended by a great many from western Saskatchewan. I have here a copy of the report which has been prepared by Mr. Underhill, the district engineer at Calgary.

I might say that those individuals who are familiar with it prefer to refer to it as the William Pearce plan rather than the Red Deer river diversion plan, Mr. Pearce having been the originator of the idea.

I might also say that members of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act program have worked on this project since 1939. Mr. Phillips, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. A. B. Cooke and Mr. Huddleston are the four engineers under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act who have been working on this plan. I should also add that Mr. L. B. Thomson, the former chairman of the P.F.R.A., was completely sold on this diversion plan. About a year and a half before his death I had the privilege of listening to him address the chamber of commerce at Kerrobert, and he produced his maps and plans at that time. As I said, he was completely sold on this idea. I do not intend to go into the plans and specifications, but the purpose of the plan is to bring water from the Red Deer river down through Alberta into Saskatchewan as far as the South Saskatchewan river. I know that the Minister of Agriculture, coming from the prairies, is very appreciative of the importance of furnishing water to the prairies, as is the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. I would like to compliment that minister on his appointment to that very important department, and I know that he will appreciate the difficulties that some of the small towns must face in regard to the supply of water. The cities of Edmonton, Calgary and Saskatoon are built by rivers, but there are many quite large towns dependent on the surface supply of water rather than on rivers, lakes or even wells. Quite a large number of towns in my constituency are dependent on the surface run off in the spring for their water supply. I do not have to emphasize the need those towns have for water, nor the effect upon those towns if they were supplied water through this project.

I realize that the minister is not in a position to go ahead with this plan at the present time, and that, as it affects two provinces, there will have to be co-operation between the federal government and the governments of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, but I should like to urge the minister to give consideration to this plan, and remind him that it is not a question of irrigation

but solely of furnishing water for stockmen, towns and villages who are now up against the problem of obtaining sufficient water to supply the needs of their citizens.

I might also mention that the chambers of commerce of several towns in my district including Kerrobert, Kindersley and Eston are particularly interested in this project. I should also like to pay tribute to the chambers of commerce organization of east central Alberta for the effort this organization has made in bringing this matter to the attention of both the government of the province of Alberta and the government of Canada. I would particularly like to commend Mr. Richard Fritze of Castor, Alberta, who is president of that organization. I hope the minister and his officials will keep this project in mind. I might also suggest that if Mr. L. B. Thomson, who was in my opinion one of the greatest men who ever had anything to do with P.F.R.A., had lived, we should probably see, in the not too distant future, the conclusion of this project.

Mr. Mitchell: I should like to direct the minister's attention a little further north than the prairies, and make a further plea in regard to consideration of the grand replenishment and northern development canal. For the sake of a shorter name we have taken the first letters of each word and called it the Grand canal.

It will be remembered, Mr. Chairman, that representations were made a year ago on behalf of this replenishment canal, and I do not think it is necessary to go into the details or objectives of it at this stage. One of my constituents, who is the prime mover of this project, has spent a great deal of time and money investigating the possibilities of the project. It is true, perhaps, that the members of the committee did not take a very amiable or favourable view of the representations which were made a year ago, and thought the project was perhaps fantastic, but I should suggest that it is entirely capable of realization, and that the necessary moneys required could be provided as a result of the following hydro developments, and replenishment of the great lakes water through the reversal of the flow of rivers now flowing into James bay.

I should like to draw the committee's attention to the fact that it has recently come to our attention that our neighbours across the Bering sea in the northern part of Russia have considered a similar project in respect of the northern Siberian rivers, and have sent engineers there to investigate and make a study, with the intention of using those waters for the same purpose as we envisage in the proposition I have put forth. I realize this would be a gigantic undertaking, but