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BRITISH COLUMBIA IRRIGATION BILL.

Irrigation in Western Canada is becoming more scientific annually. The work done by the Western Irrigation Association is bringing results. The addresses have been instructive. The Association has encouraged united action, and one of the direct results of this educational campaign has been the introduction of the Irrigation Bill recently presented to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

The bill is founded on the Water Clauses Consolidated Act of British Columbia, and is shaped largely on the legislation governing irrigation matters in Colorado, whose Water Rights Act is the most complete and workable in America.

The bill would divide the Province into districts, with a chief water commissioner for the whole Province and commissioners for each district having control over local matters. These water commissioners would have the direction, control, management and charge of the distribution of water.

A Board of Investigation is to be appointed to enquire into existing rights. It will also be part of their duty to examine all claims presented, to determine their priorities; and, in the case of irrigation, to determine the quantity of water which each may be entitled to, and to establish the character of his works.

Having obtained a license under the new system, the licensee is expected to promptly proceed to put himself in a position to commence the necessary works to utilize the water. Having made, as required, a certain examination and survey, if the quantity intended to be used is small, that is to say, it does not exceed four cubic feet per second, he will apply to the Water Commissioner for the purpose of obtaining his approval of the proposed works, and it will be the duty of the Water Commissioner to see that the proposed works are of a character which will safeguard the public interest, and do as little injury as possible to persons whose lands may be adjacent to or crossed by the proposed works.

In the case of licensees using water in any larger quantities than four cubic feet per second, they will have to obtain the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, and supply all the information that is necessary to enable the Executive Council to decide whether the plans as submitted to them are of a character fit for the work intended to be carried out, and also to enable them to adjudicate properly upon the question submitted.

Special care has been taken to protect municipalities desiring to use water for domestic purposes. The Rivers and Streams Act and amendments have been incorporated under the head of clearing streams for driving logs. A great deal of the legislation upon this subject has been recast, as is the case with nearly all the matter contained in the bill, but the powers of the County Court judge have been retained.

Provision is made for the storing of water and the expropriation of land.

In British Columbia there are so many vested rights, and landowners have built irrigation ditches without much governmental inspection, that it may take years to eliminate water waste and adjust existing conditions.

Alberta and Saskatchewan must follow with similar measures.