

It is obvious to every member in the committee that Canada has fallen far short of using the share of the waters of those two rivers which was apportioned to her by the order of October 4, 1921. The serious thing for us as members of this committee and as responsible members of the House of Commons of Canada in this year 1942 is this, that a very valuable asset belonging to the people of Canada as a whole—not only to the people of southern Alberta—is in danger of being lost because Canada has neglected to construct the irrigation projects which would enable her to use beneficially the water which was apportioned to her as her share on October 4, 1921.

On the other hand, what has the United States done? She has not been asleep at the switch as Canada has. She has constructed irrigation projects with which she can use all her share of the St. Mary river waters and the Milk river waters, as well as all of Canada's share of both of those waters. What does that mean? What does that imply? I ask any hon. member to tell me what he thinks that must mean in the minds of the people of the United States.

Before I have finished my observations the question is going to be raised that we in Canada cannot afford in war time to build these irrigation projects. May I now point out that in 1921 the recommendation was made to the government of Canada that those irrigation projects should be constructed. But after the last war Canada went on a saving spree, as a result of which the irrigation projects were not constructed, and they have not been constructed up to the present time—with, of course, the consequent risk of the loss of these precious possessions.

I turn now to the recommendations of the committee as they are found at page 8 of the report. I propose to read only part of two of the recommendations. I read as follows:

The construction of the main reservoirs and connecting canals would provide the necessary facilities to store in Canada Canada's share of these international waters and would thereby be an insurance against the loss of a valuable resource. The construction of the main reservoirs and connecting canals is, however, not enough and unless provision is made, by extension of irrigation works to provide for beneficial and productive use, the expenditure involved by the dominion would not of course be justified.

Then, skipping a portion, I reach the following on the same page:

(a) That the dominion undertake and assume as a 100 per cent responsibility the construction of the main reservoirs and connecting canals to provide storage facilities for Canada's share of the waters of the St. Mary and Milk rivers as apportioned under the order of the international joint commission of October 4, 1921.

[Mr. Blackmore.]

And again:

(b) That the dominion's part in the construction of the project be carried out as a federal post-war development, and that the cost thereof be regarded as non-recoverable.

With the last part of that recommendation I have no quarrel, namely, that the cost be non-recoverable. But with the first part, namely, that the construction of these projects shall be deferred until after the war and shall constitute a part of the post-war reconstruction programme, I do emphatically disagree, for the reasons I have already indicated.

History will repeat itself. I voice the apprehension before hon. members that if the construction of this project is deferred until after the war it will again be neglected, as it was neglected after the last war. The first thing we know we shall have lost in Canada for our children, and our children's children, to the end of time, a most precious heritage—

Mr. GRAYDON: Is this an essential war-time project?

Mr. BLACKMORE: Before I answer that, may I just paint a picture for the hon. member.

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): Is the report before the government? Is the hon. member discussing the merits of the report, or whether the government has done nothing in connection with it?

Mr. BLACKMORE: Just now I am answering the question of the hon. member for Peel, as to whether this is an essential war-time project. May I just conjure up to him this picture: If the war on the Pacific develops, as it might do, and the Japanese should happen to gain footholds on the western coast—which God forbid—or if they should develop such striking power there as would necessitate the maintenance on Canada's part of a very large defensive force along that coast—

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member has the unanimous consent of the committee he may continue; otherwise he is out of order. The matter now before the committee has nothing to do with the merits or demerits of the report; it is simply an item covering the expenses of preparing the report. Therefore it is not in order, under our rules, to discuss at this stage the contents of the report. We are called upon to determine whether it is expedient to pay \$500 for the general expenses incurred by the committee. Is this expenditure appropriate or not? That is the only question