

SKAGIT FLOOD DANGER TOLD AT CONFERENCE

SEVENTY ATTEND ANNUAL
CONFERENCE IN THIS CITY;
SPEAKERS STRESS NEED
FOR EQUALIZED TAX

With a number of speakers stressing the fact that the citizens of the state of Washington must join forces as a whole to secure adequate flood control facilities, the fourth annual meeting of the Puget Sound Flood Control council was in session today at the local city hall. Such eminent authorities as Col. H. J. Wilde, United States army engineer; Col. Howard A. Hanson, president of the Puget Sound council; Glen H. Smith, outside construction engineer for the Seattle City Light department; and J. B. Fink, director of the Washington state department of conservation and development, left no doubt in the minds of the seventy delegates and interested listeners present that immediate steps must be taken for state recognition of the danger from floods of Washington rivers and streams, and the loss of life and property damage occurring therefrom.

Mayor C. W. Vaux welcomed the visitors, representing five northwest counties, to the city, and a short response was given by Charles M. Dial of Seattle, representative of the chamber of commerce of that city.

Briefly outlining the work of flood control organizations to date, Col. Howard Hanson, who has served the council efficiently as president for the past year, touched upon many points of interest. His chief appeal to the listeners was to consider the discrepancies in the request of funds, and in the number and size of flood control projects, not only in the state of Washington, but also Oregon and California.

Col. Hanson feels that the state should equalize the cost of flood control throughout the various counties of the state, and should assume the burden of the costs of lands and damages to property in construction work relative to flood control. "The individual counties can then make adequate plans to bear the cost of maintenance of flood control works," Col. Hanson stressed.

The speaker made an interesting statement when he listed the appropriations asked of the federal government by the three Pacific coast states for flood control projects. Washington has requested the sum of \$55,000,000 and Oregon \$102,000,000. The state of California, according to Col. Hanson, "wishes the modest sum of \$486,000,000."

Further pointing out the inequality of distribution of requested funds, Col. Hanson stated that

conditions were all in order for a flood in the proportions of that of 1815, but the rain broke one day early."

If such a flood should occur, all of Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, Hamilton and La Conner would be under water, and most of Mount Vernon. Every farmhouse on the Skagit flats would stand in 7 to 15 feet of water, explained Mr. Smith.

In the report of the survey made in 1923, Mr. Smith further commented, Mr. Stewart recommended that should the Skagit valley area ever get six inches of rain or more in one day, the whole valley would be abandoned without attempting to take any possessions along. He also recommended that dikes twelve feet high be built around the entire city of Burlington.

In his second point, Mr. Smith showed by a series of charts how the City Light project on the Skagit river has materially lessened the danger from floods by its huge reservoir at Diablo. The Baker river reservoir at Concrete also is instrumental in lessening flood danger. The city of Seattle has spent \$25,000,000 on the Skagit power project, and receives 85 per cent of its current therefrom. Thus, the city of Seattle is deeply interested in flood control work in the Skagit valley.

J. B. Fink, director of the Washington department of conservation and development, gave a brief outline on the state flood control plans. Mr. Fink believes, contrary to other speakers on the morning's program, that the only feasible means of raising money for flood control work is through local improvement districts. He explained in detail how flood control districts are organized and maintained, and pledged the assistance of his department in any plans that districts and counties of the state might contemplate.

Kindly contradiction to Mr. Fink's advocacy of local improvement districts for raising funds was made by Col. H. J. Wilde, U. S. army engineer, who stated firmly and conscientiously, "I believe the only way the state of Washington will ever get any real flood control program into action is through statewide taxation to carry on the work of the projects." Col. Wilde discussed the many disastrous eastern floods of the last few years, and stated that taxpayers here, as well as in the communities involved, were paying for flood control in the east and the south.

The speaker explained how flood control projects are started, and stated that due to the many requirements of the law, it takes 2 years or better to start any new flood control project.

He briefly outlined the federal

flood control act of 1936, and pointed out discrepancies in such. Col. Wilde stated that so far he, nor his office, has any idea of how much money will be available for flood control in this state, but that without money, nothing can be started.

"Authorization is not appropriation," Col. Wilde said. "Many people read in the newspapers that congress has authorized such and such, and they expect that work will be started next morning on whatever project is involved. But this is misleading. Congress may 'authorize' a great many things, but actual work cannot be started until congress appropriates the funds. Many projects are authorized, which never receive appropriations."