

AUGUST 26, 1947

FLOOD PROJECT STILL UNSETTLED

A new river channel across the Burlington bend, or nothing, that seemed to be the consensus of the group of farmers residing in that area who met last night with Skagit county commissioners, Burlington city officials, and representatives from the state department of conservation and development, U. S. Army Engineers and the county planning commission, at the city hall in Burlington.

Form Committee

Upshot of the meeting, which included three hours of debate on whether to have rock revetment work or a new channel, was the forming of a committee of farmers who plan to make a personal call on Col. L. H. Hewitt, district head of the U. S. Army Engineers in Seattle, to attempt to convince that gentleman that the channel should be dug.

Engineers' Stand

The Army Engineers' stand on the matter was outlined last night by Byron Clark, assistant to Col. Hewitt, who was sent to the meeting by the latter. Clark said that Col. Hewitt's job was concerned primarily with navigation of the Skagit river and he had to abide by certain rules and regulations governing the same.

The colonel was not opposed to a new channel, Clark said, but he said that the channel would have to be wider than planned by state and county authorities and an amount of around \$400,000 would have to be put in escrow to take care of possible damage by siltation below the cut.

Escrow Matter

State Representative Sverre Om-dahl, who was present at the meeting, asked Clark if it was common practice to ask that money be held in escrow on matters of flood control. The engineer replied that the Skagit river case was first to his knowledge.

County's Part

Lowell Hughes, chairman of the board of county commissioners, explained thoroughly the county's part in the picture. Originally he said, both the county and the state had agreed on matching money for the new channel work. However, when it was presented to the U. S. Army Engineers for the permit necessary from that office, the new stipulations were presented and the cost was more than either the county or state could possibly match.

This meant, the commissioner added, that the only alternative to use present funds, would be to install rock revetment work along the most dangerous part of the Burlington bend. His statement was corroborated by Ed Berg, of the state department of conservation and development, who said that the state was in a position at the moment to match the county's flood control funds, 2 to 1. This was made possible, he pointed out, due to a special appropriation and if not

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Flood Project

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used this year, may not be available again.

Action Needed

That definite action of some sort should be taken at the Burlington bend this year, was brought out by several individuals present, including John Gould, A. H. Ward, chairman of the water resources committee, Commissioner Eddie Carr, and John Nordmark, county planning engineer.

Despite a plea from several authorities that rock revetment should be installed right away, now that it would be impossible to construct the channel, most of the farmers present stood pat on their decision for a new channel. Mr. and Mrs. Austin Lightle, whose farm has suffered the worst loss from erosion at Burlington bend, stated that they would refuse to sign a damage waiver to allow the installation of rock revetment in place of the new channel.

A little humor was injected into the meeting when an unidentified farmer suggested that Lightle plant spuds across the oxbow bend in the river and then "dig them up real

tions get some stern reminder that — no matter what money they use or manipulate — no nation can sell more than it buys over a period of years — and no nation can buy more than it sells.

deep."

Downstream Silt

Another farmer asked the U. S. Army Engineers' representative if he thought more downstream silt would result from the 16 acres of soil necessary to be removed to make a new channel, or the 24 acres that have already been washed from the Lightle farm and more that may be expected.

Clark replied that there is a difference between natural siltation and unnatural siltation but did not amplify his statement.

Actual work in constructing a new cutoff amounts to the removal of 271,000 cubic yards of dirt for the 1600 feet distance, county engineer H. O. Walberg told the audience last night.

The meeting, which was presided over by Dr. George H. Stollwerch, president of the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, was called to make a definite decision, one way or the other, so that immediate steps could be taken this fall before new floods this winter create more damage.

The newly-organized committee of farmers expect to call on Col. Hewitt's office in the next two or three days. If no favorable accord is reached, the rock revetment project may then be considered favorable, it was indicated.

While most American farmers have little use for acorns, many European farmers use them as feed for hogs.