

GET FIGURES AT RIVER HEARING

Skagit County Men Show Need of Improving the Skagit River.

A large crowd of Skagit county farmers and merchants attended the hearing in the Mount Vernon Commercial club rooms Friday and heard facts placed before the investigating committee from the War Department as to why the Skagit river should be improved. Col. W. J. Barden, of the United States Engineer's office in Seattle, was chairman of the hearing. A report prepared by the Skagit County River committee, and signed by H. L. Willis, of the committee, William Hayton, president of the Commercial Club, and also by the chairman of the river committees of the Commercial Club and Rotary Club, was read by Mr. Willis and supplemented by various other speakers.)

Those who talked included Mr. Willis, J. M. Humphrey, manager of the Skagit County Dairymen's association, Capt. H. H. McDonald, James O'Hearne, Sidney Lewis, James Thompson, of the Carnation Milk Products company, F. C. Johnson, secretary of the Farm Bureau, Alfred Polson, representing the seed growers, F. N. Haley, of Anacortes, and Mr. Truman, of Lyman.

George B. Reay, county commissioner, emphasized the need for protecting the farmer from high water stating that the last high water had cost the county \$100,000. C. C. Nelson also stated that this high water had cost Diking District No. 3, \$24,000. Other talks on the need of flood protection were made by J. O. Rudene and W. J. Knutzen.

The first speakers gave figures showing the need of improvement of the Skagit river from a navigation standpoint and gave proof that the tonnage from this valley was increasing from year to year.

Mr. Willis declared there were 120,000 tons or 8,000 car loads of farm products shipped by boat from this valley each year and that the dairy products alone were valued at more than two million dollars while the products of the seed growers would reach \$200,000. J. M. Humphrey stated the dairymen's plants shipped 8600 tons by boat in the first 11 months this year and that the dairy products shipped during 1923 would easily reach two and a half million dollars.

Captain McDonald said he planned to put on a larger boat and give daily service between Skagit points and Seattle. James O'Hearne, who said he represented the Tom Moore Booming company, gave 96 million feet of logs as the tonnage of his company last year. He urged the clearing of the South Fork of the river at the shingle mills to the south needed an outlet badly.

The Carnation company is shipping the bulk of its products by water according to Manager Thompson. Secretary Johnson of the Farm Bureau gave the following production figures of the valley this year: 25,000 tons of hay; 18,000 tons of straw; 900,000 bushels of oats; 30,000 bushels of wheat; 275,000 bushels of potatoes.

The Skagit Valley Seed Growers' association shipped out a million pounds of their product this year, according to Alfred Polson, who stated he believed a like amount was grown by independent growers. Practically all of this was shipped by boat.

In closing Col. Barden stated that the proposed dredging at the mouth of the river would be expensive and that this work would have to be kept up from year to year. He stated the high water in the past had been caused by the contraction of the river at the bridges and that the present system of dikes had also caused more contraction of the stream.

The colonel also stated that the federal government at present was making no provision for flood control except on the Mississippi and Sacramento rivers, and that the engineer's office was confined entirely to navigation problems and that the hearing here would be considered only from that standpoint.

All reports were filed with the colonel and all oral evidence was taken down by his stenographer.

The opinion seemed to prevail that if protection against high water in the Skagit river was to be secured it must come from the county and state and not from the federal government.

The committee urged the building of jetties at the mouth of the river and the dredging of the river. The colonel and his staff in company with Commissioner Reay visited the North Fork of the river that afternoon.