CHAPTER 23

W A T E R A N D P O W E R P O T E N T I A L I T I E S

GENERAL PROBLEMS IN WATER DEVELOPMENT

Water is a precious resource in Palestine. Yet the area under irrigation may be limited by factors other than the supply of water. The prospects for the utilization of water for irrigation cannot be considered apart from the prospects for agricultural production and the markets for farm commodities. Irrigation is a costly process, and -- even though water may be available -- it may not be economically useful. As we have observed in Chapter 13 above, only about ten percent of the exploitable water in Palestine is now being used. An effort will be made in this chapter to indicate the maximum possibilities, but the economic potentialities of water use can only be determined after the analysis of agricultural marketing possibilities made in Chapter 24 below.

As was indicated in Chapter 13, the development of water resources has not been well coordinated nor efficiently organized. Except for moderate activities by cooperatives, private water companies and the Palestine Electric Company, most exploitation of water resources has been done by individual users. Reliance has been placed upon drilling of wells in the coastal plain, limited use of spring water in the Beisan and Jericho regions, and some pumping of river and lake waters. Despite the urgent need for water for irrigation, even these sources have been far from fully exploited, and there is ample evidence of wastefulness and hit-or-miss procedures.

In recent years, considerable progress has been made in the formulation of various comprehensive proposals for utilization of water and for maximizing irrigation of the land. Unfortunately, the Government has played a relatively minor part in the development of such schemes or in providing basic data for their creation. As a result, there are wide variations in the estimates of potential water resources and in the different plans to utilize these resources fully and efficiently. All of the comprehensive schemes have been designed