

JULY 7, 1954

DIFFERENCES ON JORDAN WATER PLAN
SEEN NARROWED.

WASHINGTON, JULY 6 - (USIS) - Informed sources said here today differences between the Arab States and Israel on the actual allocation of water in the Jordan River development plan have "narrowed materially."

They expressed belief that if agreement can be reached on the sharing of water, other questions on the plan can be resolved quickly.

The sources said it is likely Eric Johnston, personal Ambassador from the President to the Arab States and Israel on the Jordan River issue, will make another trip to the Near East within the next few months. A number of factors, engineering and otherwise, but engineering principally, will determine the time of the trip.

Johnston is said to have made it clear to Israel that the Litani River will not be involved in the Jordan development scheme, since the program is not a regional development program, but the development of a watershed.

When agreement is reached, it was emphasized, work can start "almost immediately" on the Jordan development program. It was suggested a timetable for the completion of the scheme might include eight or ten years, but lands could be brought under irrigation "very quickly" as the work on the project progresses.

The sources said Arab acceptance of the five principles governing the Jordan River development scheme was expressed in a joint Arab communique.

Israel's acceptance of these same principles was expressed by Prime Minister Moshe Sharett in a press conference recently, the sources added.

It was pointed out that discussions of the Jordan project will be continued by the Arab States and Israel through Mr. Eric Johnston, and that there will be no direct communication between them on this matter.

It was said that on his last trip to the Near East Mr. Johnston had received "every cooperation and courtesy" from officials in Cairo and Tel Aviv. The results of Johnston's visit were characterized as "great progress," and "a material step forward." The sources said their belief is that the Jordan project is a key to the economic development of the area and that possibly with this development the political situation can be improved.

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