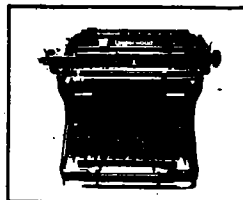


# Byline, Argus



## '... take your chances'?

Not much choice was given Hamilton's residents by the U.S. Corps of Engineers when spokesmen for the federal agency presented a preliminary response a few mornings ago to a 1980 request for help in bettering that upriver town's weak flood control system.

Between do nothing, and "take your chances" positions, and the drastic alternative of moving the entire community to higher ground, the engineers gave only highly improbable options.

Two of these choices, deep-dredging the river channel or building new upstream storage, are barred as long as the upper river lies in the Congressionally-ukased Wild and Scenic Rivers category.

Another intermediate option would be to place the town's buildings on higher foundations — in which case, said the engineers, the structures would be endangered by onrushing water-borne logs in time of flood.

This left constructing a new system of levees as a possibility, immediately downgraded by the engineers because of its effect on the river level above town.

The proposal to move the entire town tends to fail as a viable proposition, not only by the reluctance of Hamiltonians to relocate but also because of the uncertainty of the availability of the higher ground property and, probably one of the greatest stumbling blocks, the fact that the Corps would pay only \$2 million of the relocation costs.

This, by current rough estimates, would leave \$2.8 or more million dollars to be raised locally. Would the currently money-strapped state help? Not likely. Could the county government or the town itself produce this kind of financing? Dubious.

It will be interesting, not to add surprising, to see if the Corps produces any more feasible solutions to Hamilton's flooding problem when it completes its "reconnaissance" plan next month.

Hamilton residents may wonder whether they are being given little more than excuses for doing nothing. With harsh memories of floods as recent as 1980, 1979 and 1975, they have cause for continuing concern.

—S.C.M.