

Manitoba Flood

of the snow was delayed, and the rivers were wide enough to carry off the waters as the snow melted.

I believe we have to tackle this problem of conservation, that we must tackle the problem of water. It is a strange thing that in some parts of our country floods at various times prevent cultivation, and also do irreparable damage to the land by carrying away the top soil, while in other parts of the country, such as the province of Saskatchewan, the great waters flowing down to the sea run wastefully through a part of the country often parched and desolate because of lack of water. The water is there to be utilized when we are prepared to spend several hundred millions of dollars in order to conserve and use it for irrigation when that is necessary.

I remember when on February 21, 1938, I introduced into the house a resolution concerning the utilization of Saskatchewan river water for irrigation, it was stated that the cost was prohibitive. At that time an estimate had been given by an outstanding hydraulic engineer in this country of approximately \$400 million to do a complete job right from the mountains. It would probably cost more now. When we are able to spend, because it is essential that we shall spend it, the sum of \$420 million this year for defence—as I said, it is quite proper we should spend it—it seems strange that we should think an amount of \$400 million to rehabilitate a whole countryside as prohibitive. So it is with this flood in the Red river valley. Whatever is necessary to protect the people of that fertile and productive region from such disasters in the future should be undertaken by our government. I also join with those who say that the people who have suffered from this very great disaster should receive compensation and assistance in order to rehabilitate their homes, their businesses and their farms. I would say the same thing about any part of the country in which a national disaster was caused by drought, by fire, by grasshoppers, by floods or by any other natural visitation of that description.

I rose to say that all of us would be glad to support the minister and the government in every step that can be undertaken to assist in this great disaster, hoping that as similar disasters arise through this or other causes the federal government will help the various provinces, as the federal parliament has often done from time to time in the past to relieve our distressed citizens from the impoverishment and difficulties subsequently experienced.

Mr. Fernand Viau (St. Boniface): I rise to take part in this debate because I intend to
[Mr. Coldwell.]

second the motion presented by my colleague the member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras). I have followed the day by day reports on the flood situation which have appeared in the press. With a large portion of Manitoba threatened by this flood I feel that I should support the motion of my colleague, and in so doing I declare that the flood situation in Manitoba is a national emergency. I join with the other members who have spoken, the member for Souris (Mr. Ross), the member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), as well as other Manitoba representatives who feel that the flood situation in Manitoba is a national emergency.

The other day the mayor of Morris, Mayor Shewman, made a statement. He happens to be the Progressive Conservative member representing that constituency in the provincial government. The deputy premier, who happens to be a Progressive Conservative representative in the provincial cabinet, agreed with the mayor's statement. I must admit that I have no sympathy for this coalition government, but nevertheless the people of Manitoba are looking for a statement from responsible authorities that will assure them of financial assistance. The premier of Manitoba has to date refused to give any assurance that assistance will be forthcoming. His reply constitutes a policy of wait and see. According to the press reports, which presumably are correct, he said that although the situation is serious it may be too early to say that, from the financial point of view, it constitutes a condition to be declared a national emergency.

As I said a moment ago, surely if this house feels it should take time to discuss this matter it has already been characterized as one of national emergency. It is quite true that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) could not make a statement to this house this afternoon, because apparently he has not discussed the matter with his colleagues. Nevertheless, since the minister took part in this debate, that is proof that it is a national emergency. The situation as it is today is far worse than it was in 1948. I delayed my return after the Easter holiday not only to view the flood situation in Manitoba, because it had then reached the peak of 1948, but also to satisfy myself that arrangements had been made by the provincial government with the Department of National Defence to assure the transportation of sandbags or troops to areas in which they may be needed. I had experience in dealing with the problem in 1948, the first time I had had to deal with such a problem since I was elected as the federal representative. Arrangements had been made to co-ordinate the aid