

*Floods in British Columbia*

governmental committees have been set up. There have been many volunteer committees set up, and I want to commend the wonderful spirit shown by thousands of our citizens who not only gave of their time and labour but contributed to their utmost as well.

We look to the future and ask what is to be done. I am one of those who believe it might be advisable to set up a large committee consisting of dominion and provincial representatives, and that an office should be built somewhere in the valley where those who have been flooded out and lost their all can go and find out just what will be done for them. The task is a gigantic one, but a great deal can be done to pacify the people there if definite rather than vague statements are made as to what will be done. I appeal to the Minister of Public Works or some other minister to tell the house and the country what steps have already been taken. We know that one or two officials are in charge, but we are in the dark as to what plan has been formulated, not for the construction of dikes for that will come later, but as to the setting up of a strong committee and the announcement of a plan as to what those who have lost their all may expect in the way of rehabilitation.

May I indicate to the house what may happen and has happened without proper direction. In one part of the valley where the water started to recede one farmer said, "I want seed. I have no money and I have nothing in the bank." He was told, "We have no money for seed but we have for feed." And they haggled for several days over whether he should have feed or seed. Things like that cause a great deal of unrest and discontent, when we have hundreds of people who have lost everything they have. We should stop haggling with a man as to whether he should have feed or seed. The thing to do is to rehabilitate him in the best manner possible.

I trust that the government, if not tonight, will make an announcement shortly, so that many hundreds who have lost their all will have new courage given to them, knowing they are to be helped to re-establish themselves on their property and in the homes in which they have lived for many long years.

Mr. J. H. MATTHEWS (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I have no thought of prolonging this debate, but, as a member from British Columbia and speaking on behalf of the C.C.F. group with which I am associated, I wish to say I concur in everything that has been said by hon. members from British Columbia with regard to the flood conditions in that province. When this matter was first brought before the house by the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank), the

[Mr. Reid.]

country generally had no conception of the magnitude to which this disaster would grow. It was bad enough at the very beginning, but, as the days have followed one after the other, the disaster has assumed staggering proportions.

I for one feel that the debate which has gone on in the house during this session in regard to flood conditions in British Columbia has had a tremendously good effect upon the country. It has brought us a sense of national unity, indicating that we are not just a few provinces set apart from each other, but are closely united. Our interests are common interests. Secondly, the people of the east, are, I know, sympathetic in their hearts. They are just as anxious that the government shall do something for the flood victims of British Columbia as we from the west are ourselves.

I want to concur in what was said by the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton), that we who represent interior constituencies are deeply concerned at the differentiation which has been made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King). The commission which has been set up has been named the Fraser river rehabilitation commission. In response to a specific question, the Prime Minister gave a specific answer that the measures and the agreement entered into so far with the province referred to that particular area only.

Since I spoke last in the house on this question, another large area of my constituency has been heavily inundated. I refer to what is known as the Creston flats. Where the Kootenay river flows into and forms the Kootenay lakes, many thousands of acres have been inundated and are still inundated tonight owing to the collapse of the dikes in that area. While I agree in the main with what was said by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge), that the line will have to be drawn somewhere—certainly we do not think that when any farmer's backyard happens to be flooded he should fly to the federal government and seek aid—in areas such as this where dikes have gone, where people have lost homes and crops, where they have lost their living, even when the waters have receded many of them will be too poor to go back. They have nothing to which they can go back. Therefore I for one concur in the remarks which have been made that the time is now ripe for the government to make some statement which will bring relief and some peace to the anxious minds of the people who are homeless and who have lost their all.