

*Manitoba Flood*

stands. I had referred to the Selkirk settlement. Many of those affected by this flood today are the descendants of the Selkirk settlers who in 1812, driven out of northern Ireland by the Duchess of Sutherland, found their way to Hudson bay, where they spent the winter of 1812, and thence by lake Winnipeg to the Red river. This situation and its possibilities were revealed in 1946; and I feel that after that experience, which was but a repetition of what had happened many times before, the international joint commission should have taken speedy action.

This afternoon the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) took it upon himself to deal in a rather cavalier manner with this matter. At one time he clothed himself in the garment of sanctimoniousness and managed to imply that those who had discussed this matter had votes in mind. I am sure he would not have given that implication as far as the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras) was concerned, or as far as the hon. member for Souris (Mr. Ross) was concerned, or in reference to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). It is not a matter of votes; it is a matter of asking for action now, that when there is a national disaster this parliament should act. The minister says he does not know yet whether it is a national disaster. He did not advise the house just how great the damage must be before it becomes a national disaster. Where is the point of differentiation between a matter of local importance and a national disaster? When such a large area has been already threatened or flooded, when the people living in that area have requested help, whether or not those requests have come from the government of Manitoba, surely that is evidence that there is need for action to be taken now.

Can one conceive what will be the attitude of those people, driven from their homes, in many cases having lost everything, when tomorrow morning they get the message from the government of Canada, through the mouth of the Minister of Justice: "We gave you a warning; the farmers in that area were warned on April 20"? Does this mean that because they did not get out, they must suffer? The minister says they were warned. What is the meaning of those words? What is the difference whether or not they were warned; what bearing has that on whether it is a national disaster? I cannot understand the minister when he makes a statement like that. The answer coming from the mouth of the minister today is, "You were warned. I know not what your loss may be. It cannot be estimated at this time, and not being able to estimate it—"

**Mr. Garson:** On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that, as my hon. friend must know, I never said what he is attributing to me, nor did I say anything it would be possible to construe as the hon. member is construing my remarks.

**Mr. Ross (Souris):** *Hansard* will tell the story tomorrow.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I accept the minister's denial of the meaning I had ascribed to his remarks. *Hansard* will tell the story, as my hon. friend says.

**Mr. Garson:** Certainly it will.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** It will tell the story of a speech by the Minister of Justice which, instead of giving hope to the people of Manitoba in the inundated area, consisted of circumlocution and denial of responsibility on the part of the government of Canada by its member from the province of Manitoba. Who speaks of votes? Who brought up the question of votes but the minister? No other hon. member has implied that the question of votes was in his mind. There was no such suggestion in the remarks of the hon. member for Provencher, whose speech was measured in its consideration and complete in its revelation of conditions. There was no such suggestion in the speech of the hon. member for Souris (Mr. Ross). Surely the minister should forget about votes and realize the situation that exists today in Manitoba, and give those people at least some hope that for the loss they have suffered through no fault or action of their own, they may be reimbursed. Certainly it cannot be the responsibility only of the province of Manitoba. As the minister has said, the cause of the disaster arises in large part outside Canada, and that is the best argument I can advance as to why, whether the loss be great or small, it is the sort of disaster that demands compensation from the people of Canada as a whole rather than from the province of Manitoba or the local authorities.

I do not want to dwell longer on the subject, Mr. Speaker. It is in matters of great importance such as this that parliament really shows at its best. Regardless of party, regardless of the province from which members come, all of us, as Canadians, want to do our best when a situation such as this arises. We can only hope that even yet the minister, rising again on a question of privilege, will be able to give hope to those people, rather than to talk about the subject of votes. Why votes? Why not hope for those people today who are asking it of the parliament of Canada? They are asking it through the member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras); the member for Souris (Mr. Ross);