

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

previous floods and it looks very much as if it is the case now. Following the damage that was wrought to the river valleys of British Columbia in the 1948 flood there was established a diking board for the Fraser river area, financed 75 per cent, I believe, by the federal government and 25 per cent by the provincial government. It engaged in an extensive diking program. Since that time the dikes in that area have been allowed to deteriorate, regardless of the fact that the Fraser river board, which also was appointed following the 1948 flood, in 1958 in its preliminary report, I believe it was, or one of the interim reports pointed up this seriousness and recommended that the amount of some \$17 million be spent to bring the dikes in the valley up to the 1948 flood peak level; but nothing has occurred.

Unfortunately we in the northern part of the province, particularly along the Skeena valley, did not have the benefit of any such board to study and survey the situation, but it does not appear to matter much because we there, too, are faced with equally as disastrous a situation as they are in the lower Fraser valley regions, perhaps the only difference being one of population. In a situation such as this, communities large or small should be protected to the full. There are millions upon millions of dollars of land value, of investment by people, of homes, and their savings and lives involved. Very easily all these could be wiped out of existence. Yet we get the sort of answer, in regard to dealing with this situation, that we got earlier today from the minister. I am not blaming him for having given that answer; under the circumstances it was obviously the only one which he could give. I asked whether any federal agency was going to be able to assist or step into the picture, and in reply the minister said he was quite certain that the government of Canada would act, in the normal course of events, upon application of the government of the province of British Columbia.

To my mind it is high time that we quit looking upon the British North America Act and its jurisdictional barriers as an instrument to prevent action on the part of the government to save the lives and property of people of this nation. We are in the midst of a great controversy about amending the British North America Act. Surely this is one of those things that we should be able to get immediate agreement upon in order to allow such organizations as the emergency measures organization, which is relatively

useless for any other purpose, to be able to assist people and work with them to preserve their property and prevent damage taking place.

Surely to heaven, on the heels of the disaster that befell the Albernis and other parts of the west coast of Vancouver island, we should have learned that it is necessary to move quickly. I urge the government: Please do not wait for Premier Bennett to send a letter asking for help. Offer it immediately. Show some courage and determination at the federal level to indicate that the government of Canada is also interested in the preservation of lives and property. Let us start from that point and forget about the barriers that the B.N.A. Act may present. Let us take the initiative and make it clear that we are willing, able and desirous of offering all possible help because, after all, the people who live in the Fraser valley and in the Nass and Skeena valleys are equally important as those who live in other parts of the nation and we should not allow the whims of the premier of a province with regard to whether he should wire, write or phone for assistance to be the guidepost with respect to whether or not we should help.

**Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member for Skeena has made a very worth-while contribution tonight in his review of the situation in our province of British Columbia. We are a province with a very great proportion of the area set on end, and when we have snowfalls out of the ordinary, as we have had during the past winter, we are always troubled when the spring thaw sets in. With temperatures exceedingly low up to the present time and freezing remaining at a very low level of about 2,000 feet on the hills, a sudden change in temperature at this time causes the people of these valleys to worry.

We are fortunate that in spite of a somewhat higher snowfall during the winter the water content of the snow does not seem to be higher than normal and is probably even lower than normal. The hon. member made special reference to the Fraser valley and the great flood of 1948. There was a much greater flood in 1894 but there were very few people in the Fraser valley at that time. But in 1948 the losses incurred amounted to \$18 million to \$20 million, and it is quite obvious that if a disaster of the same magnitude occurred today the losses, due to the tre-