

take it to the markets of the world. This was made possible as a result of a canal system built by the Canadian people. I am informed that all vessels pass through those canals without charge or expense, and that no additional freight charges are added to the cost of the goods handled in that way. Looking at the map I have wondered if it would not be possible to bring Manitoba and Ontario together by eliminating that thousand-mile stretch of competing railways running through what is now a barren and unproductive land, by nationalizing, taking over and making a national railroad canal do what is done by our water canals when they circumvent Niagara falls, and use the water highway from Montreal and Quebec to Port Arthur.

Let the government take over and operate that railway canal at public expense. Make it serve as do the canals on our waterways. Let the people of Canada assume the expense of operation. Eliminate the charges for that part of the haul from the cost of goods from western Canada to the east, and from eastern Canada to the west. This is a thought which I believe is worthy of earnest consideration. If we are to keep our people united, let us think in terms of economic rather than geographic consideration and those means which can bring us closer together.

One other thought, and I shall have finished. The economic security of our western plains is being menaced. The hon. member for Davenport (Mr. MacNicol) is a much-travelled man, and one who is certainly aware of most physical and geographical problems confronting our country. Everyone appreciates his interest and his recognition of the necessity of developing the natural resources of western Canada.

I should like to direct the attention of the house to something that has happened as a result of the transfer of the natural resources of Alberta and Saskatchewan to those provinces. If you will look at a map of Canada you will observe that the great rivers which water our plains have their origin on the east slope of the Rocky mountains. Prior to the transfer of the resources the dominion government carried on an excellent and extensive programme for the preservation and protection of the forests on the east slope of the Rockies. As I say, it is on this slope that the Saskatchewan, both North and South, the Red Deer, the Bow and numerous other rivers have their source. On account of financial reasons Alberta has not been able to maintain the same organization for the preservation of these forests, and the result has been that in the intervening years thousands of square miles of forest growth have

[Mr. Edwards.]

been burned. These slopes are being denuded by recurring forest fires, and the flow in these rivers, instead of being a blessing, is becoming a menace. I am advised that each year the water-table under these great plains is becoming lower and lower. I earnestly recommend to the committee on reconstruction and post-war problems that they consider the advisability of having the government enter into some arrangement mutually agreeable to Alberta whereby this government may again obtain control of the east slope of the Rocky mountains. We would thereby ensure that the forest growth which acts as a reservoir for these rivers will be maintained as an economic measure to make sure as far as possible that our western plains will not become in fact a dust-bowl.

Mr. A. H. BENCE (Saskatoon City): Mr. Speaker, I intend to restrict my remarks as much as I can because I think if it is at all possible we should complete the work of setting up this committee this afternoon. I do not propose to reiterate any more of the remarks that have been made in this debate, except to say that the work of the committee on reconstruction is inextricably interwoven with the work of this committee. I agree with other members who have said that full employment across the whole of this country is a necessary premise to any effective system of health insurance or other security measures.

I have no fear, as far as employment in this country is concerned, with respect to the period immediately after the war, especially in those parts of the country which have been highly industrialized. It must be obvious to all that within a very short time after the war these districts will be working at a high peak in order to meet the requirements for consumer goods which will be in effect at that time. But there are other parts of the country which will not have the advantage of supplying the badly required consumer goods, and it is in connection with that problem that I wish to say a few words. It seems to me that unless we first establish proper conditions under which we can provide employment for all who are able to work, we shall not be able to have an effective social security system. I discussed this matter at considerable length during the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne, and I shall not go into the facts and figures I presented to the house at that time.

In my opinion the greatest obstacle to the setting up of a balanced economy and the bringing of prosperity, not only to Canada