

Manitoba Flood

treasury whatever it may be necessary to take to compensate those people who have suffered heavy losses.

In this instance, Mr. Speaker, I am not speaking so much, as I sometimes do and as we all do, for the people of my own constituency, because it so happens that the working people of Winnipeg North Centre, who frequently are hit by disasters of one kind and another, although there is flooding in Point Douglas and water in many basements, have not been hit as heavily in this instance as the people of the other Winnipeg and surrounding constituencies—Winnipeg North; Winnipeg South Centre; Winnipeg South, which has suffered very heavily; Selkirk, St. Boniface, Provencher, Springfield, and so on.

When a tragedy like this occurs some of the differences between us melt away, and we are all anxious that those who have suffered should receive the kind of assistance they need. So it is that all of us from the affected area are speaking for all who have sustained losses. It is utterly impossible for a family that has lost everything to try to get back on its feet. A loss of \$2,000, \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000, in some cases even more, such as many people have sustained, is more than one family can stand. Nevertheless the total loss is such that the amount required to meet this need would not greatly upset the national budget. In fact I would hope that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) might also accept my suggestion about going to Winnipeg, because I imagine he will have to be called in when there is a discussion about the amount of money involved.

I know there are frequent calls for economy from the floor of the house, and the Minister of Finance will say that we must be careful now. I think if the Minister of Finance, who is not noted for his soft heart, were to take a trip this week to Winnipeg and see what our people are suffering, it would make a difference when the time comes to discuss the amount to be voted to compensate for the losses involved.

The main plea I make to the government at this time is that they make it clear, just as soon as they possibly can, that the financial assistance to be made available, in keeping with the assurance given by the Prime Minister on Monday, May 8, will take the form of compensation directly to individuals who have suffered losses, directly to those who need it.

I was sorry that the Minister of Resources and Development (Mr. Winters) had to give a negative answer to the question I asked on the orders of the day. I had in mind a front

[Mr. Knowles.]

page story in this morning's *Globe and Mail* under the by-line of Warren Baldwin. The heading of the article is:

Housing Act will assist Winnipeg rehabilitation, federal minister implies.

It is a lengthy story about various things Mr. Winters had said would be done, and it contains this paragraph:

Resources minister Winters said today that legislation such as the National Housing Act would be used to the limit of its scope. Consideration is also being given, he disclosed, to the possibility of special arrangements under the act and of changes in the legislation, if necessary.

It was the point about changes in the legislation if necessary that appealed to me most. To tell people who already have heavy mortgages on their homes, and whose homes are now flooded, that they can secure a further loan under the National Housing Act is of no help whatsoever, because a further loan will simply mean that they will then owe more on their homes than they are worth. The suggestion that there might be changes in the act to cope with this particular situation was the one that held out a bit of hope. I am sorry that the minister had to give a negative answer today. I hope that, having had a chance to read Warren Baldwin's story in this morning's *Globe and Mail*, he will think the matter over, come to the conclusion that it was a good idea anyway, and perchance give a more favourable answer later.

Mr. Fraser: It was also on the air.

Mr. Knowles: The hon. member for Peterborough West (Mr. Fraser) says that it was also on the air. That is true. I heard it this morning. It was on the air that the Minister of Resources and Development had disclosed that assistance would be forthcoming, and possible changes in the act.

There are a great many steps that the government can take. Something can be done by making changes in the National Housing Act. Something can be done by way of stockpiling necessary materials. Surely we should see to it that there is no unemployment in the greater Winnipeg area for some time to come, having regard to the reconstruction and rehabilitation work that will have to be done there.

All that lies in the future. The immediate concern, next to the emergency itself, is that there be an assurance that the financial aid offered will take the form of direct compensation to those individuals, both in rural and in urban and suburban areas, who need it.

While I am on my feet may I say it strikes me that, although it has meant a