

Manitoba Flood

of people affected, including municipal councils, voluntary relief committees, the Red Cross, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the army, the navy, the air force"—not to mention our own provincial government—"all the way through has been admirable, because they were ready and prepared." He said, "The people of Canada may rest assured, whatever losses they may have, whether of life, of limb or of property, are being, by these methods, kept to an absolute minimum."

Now, I made it very clear to Premier Campbell at all stages, as the minister in the government representing Manitoba, that I should be glad to get from him and convey to my colleagues for immediate consideration any representations or requests he might see fit to make under the circumstances.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Has the minister any estimate of the damage to date?

Mr. Garson: My hon. friend asks whether there is any estimate of the damage to date?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes.

Mr. Garson: I do not think there is. I should think it would be highly improbable that there could be because the damage can change from hour to hour, let alone from day to day.

Mr. Diefenbaker: But what is the latest estimate?

Mr. Garson: The point here is that until the present phase of the situation is over—and it is one of rescue of property and people, and attempt to deal with the physical aspect of the flood—it would be an act of gross negligence, in my opinion, on the part of the provincial government to be wasting its time arguing as to how the division of the costs should be made. Mr. Campbell has too much common sense to be carried away by any such suggestion as that of the hon. member for Souris (Mr. Ross) that we should put some engineers in an aeroplane, fly them around to look at the situation, and by the effervescence of their inner consciousness conjure up something to do about the immediate situation.

Mr. Ross (Souris): Again may I say that I did not make that statement. My proposal was to fly them in there and have them on the ground. I have had experience with engineers' reports.

Mr. Garson: I suggest to my hon. friend there is very little that the best of water level engineers can do at this particular moment to stop that flood.

Mr. Ross (Souris): They would have knowledge for the future.

Mr. Garson: Of course they would, but this is a very fine thing for some person to suggest from the comfort of his desk in the House of Commons to people out on the ground who are engaged in getting Mr. John Doe from a place where he is likely to be drowned to a place of safety. It seems to me that the wise, sensible and common-sense thing to do—and in this respect I am in complete agreement with the premier of Manitoba—is to concentrate, focus their full efforts on, and devote them to, the job in hand. The premier of that province knows enough about this government to realize that he does not need to adopt the attitude of a police court lawyer toward us by raising the question now as to what we are going to do or not going to do. He has the statement of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), and he knows that in any event we will do the fair thing.

Mr. Ross (Souris): What about the flood victims of 1948?

Mr. Garson: We know enough about Mr. Campbell and his colleagues, and I will put it a little bit wider than the hon. member for Souris and include his Conservative colleagues in Manitoba in this statement, to know that they are men of good judgment, high principles and energy. We know that they will bring to us a statement, whatever it may be, that it is or is not a national emergency fortified, as I am sure it will be, with proper proof because the government of Manitoba does not say things unless it is prepared to prove them. I hope the hon. member for Souris does not want them ever to follow any other course. When we receive that representation, we shall know it is one that comes from honourable people, and that we can depend upon it.

Mr. Ross (Souris): I have never followed any other course in my twelve sessions here.

Mr. Garson: In the meantime—this in reply to the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras)—I have said to Premier Campbell: "If you want me at any time I am prepared to come, but I do not want to go out and get under your feet when you are trying to do a job unless you want me".

Mr. Knowles: So you sent Les.

Mr. Bryce: You did not want to get your feet wet so you sent Les Mutch.

Mr. Garson: We did not send him. He was sufficiently concerned with his own constituency, which is very much affected, that he went on his own initiative. I wonder if the hon. member who made that interjection is implying any criticism of him for having done so.

Mr. Bryce: Not in the least.