

SUPPLY

LULU ISLAND EROSION—STATEMENT OF MR.
REID ON MOTION OF PRIME MINISTER

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister) moved that the house go into committee of supply.

Mr. THOMAS REID (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, before you leave the chair I should like to air a grievance. Some time ago I appealed to the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Stewart) in connection with a matter which affects many farmers on Lulu island. I have received several telegrams stating that there is grave danger of flooding of their lands and I desire to draw this serious matter to the attention of the government. There is perhaps such a thing as natural erosion of lands which might be termed an act of God, but the erosion to which I now refer, involving some 5,000 acres of cultivated land and over 100 families, has been caused by the action of the Department of Public Works in closing up in 1925 and 1927 certain channels of the Fraser river, thereby throwing the current of the river against the bank of Lulu island. I know that the Minister of Public Works says it is not possible for the department to assume full responsibility in this matter, and I quite realize that no government can be held responsible for all erosion which may take place to river banks, provided of course they are natural. But the matter I am putting before the house is one where the Department of Public Works has interfered with the course of the stream, closing up one channel and so throwing the Fraser river over against the dyke lands in the municipality of Richmond. I claim that responsibility does rest with the dominion government and they should come to the rescue of these farmers. The danger is so serious that if the dyke breaks through not only will over five thousand acres of land under crop be destroyed but the whole dyking system of that district will also be completely ruined. I am again appealing to the minister and to the house to come to the assistance and rescue of the farmers and settlers in that district.

Hon. H. A. STEWART (Minister of Public Works): The hon. member has from time to time corresponded with the Department of Public Works regarding this matter and we have received telegrams from New Westminster and those interested in the situation he has described. Careful consideration has been given to these representations and the

facts, as I recall them from the file, are these. These dykes were built many years ago, and long before the Public Works department made any construction or in any way undertook to control and direct the flow of the Fraser river. They were constructed by the municipalities interested, operating through a dyke commission with, I believe, powers of local assessment against the land's benefit and possibly with provincial assistance. The matter has been referred to the engineering department and they assure me that nothing that has been done by the Department of Public Works in the Fraser river has in any way contributed to the erosion that is now taking place. The responsibility appears to be provincial and municipal, and the Public Works department, while sympathetic, interested and anxious to discharge all obligations that can possibly rest upon the dominion government, feel nevertheless that they are in no way responsible for conditions as they now prevail. This house can well understand that the dominion government cannot undertake to protect private property against erosion, and the only obligation that does rest upon the dominion government is where any works have been undertaken that have been the cause of or that may have contributed to the erosion; and our engineers are very positive that nothing that has been done by the dominion government has in any way aggravated the situation or contributed to the conditions that now exist. Under these circumstances I submit to my hon. friend and to this house that the matter is one for provincial and municipal action and not for action by this government.

DUTIES ON FISHERMEN'S SUPPLIES AND REPAIR
PARTS FOR IMPLEMENTS—STATEMENT
OF MR. BROWN

Mr. J. L. BROWN (Lisgar): I might take this opportunity of bringing to the attention of the government certain complaints that have come to me. I had hoped that either the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Matthews) or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Rhodes) would be present when I took this matter up, but since we hope that we are approaching the end of the session, and as a fitting opportunity might not arise again, I will discuss it now. The question has reference to certain rulings of the Department of National Revenue in regard to the collection of duties. One complaint comes from Prince Rupert, and it seems to be that the Department of National Revenue is imposing a dumping duty upon certain fishermen's sup-