

*Manitoba Flood*

Of course I am not asking for relief for myself, but for those who are in far greater need of it.

The Minister of Justice spent about half an hour telling us what the Premier of Manitoba was doing. We in this house are not particularly interested in that. What we want to know is, what is the government of Canada going to do in the face of a national emergency? The Minister of Justice may disagree with the contention that there is a national emergency, but up to the present all members of parliament from Manitoba are pretty well united in the belief that this is an emergency of national proportions.

Of course these floods are not new. They have been recurring periodically on an average every eighteen years since recorded history began, but this year they happen to be the highest we have known since the year 1826, causing untold damage and devastation. In 1916 there was a similar situation, and the engineering department of the United States department of agriculture made a survey and also presented a report which I have not been able to get my hands on; nor do I know what has happened to it. I think, however, nothing was done with the report. However, in 1948, after the then serious flooding conditions had taken place, the matter was referred to the international joint commission, and we have been told that for two years they have been analysing the information which has been given to them. We have been told by the Minister of Justice that they have received four interim reports and the international joint commission is still analysing the information. When I told my wife that on Friday, after hearing it, she suggested that through the Secretary of State for External Affairs I should extend an invitation to the international joint commission to carry on their deliberations in our home and then they might come to a decision very much quicker than they would otherwise. After all, when you get water lapping around your knees it does help you to make up your mind. I am quite sure that she was speaking not only for herself but for every other woman in that part of Manitoba who has been driven out of her home.

We know the reason for these floods. Perhaps at the present time we have found no way of checking them. We do know that given a certain type of winter weather a flood is almost inevitable, that type of winter which is cold, which is dry, a winter in which there is not very much snow, a winter in which the ice on the rivers becomes very thick, and which is followed by a cold spring, where there is no run-off. Then finally we

get a sudden thaw, and in a few weeks most precipitately we have the sort of condition that exists now.

The dangers to the health of the people are obvious. Here again I should like to pay my measure of tribute to the Red Cross for the really excellent work that it is doing, not only the Canadian Red Cross, but also the United States Red Cross. The United States and Canadian Red Cross societies are working in the closest co-operation with each other to alleviate human suffering. The municipalities of course are also doing their share in so far as the prevention of the spread of virulent diseases such as typhoid is concerned.

There has been some loss of life, which is a tragedy. There has also been a loss of property, which is not nearly so tragic, though for those who have suffered, it is a matter of great importance. There are a substantial number of people who have not yet recovered their financial feet from the floods of 1948, and now once again they find their homes, and perhaps their furniture, destroyed. These are the people for whom I think all of us speak. These are the people who need some assistance to rehabilitate themselves. One should notice that it is not they who are asking for help, but others in another position who are suggesting that this is a national disaster, and that it is the responsibility of the nation to come to the aid of those who need help.

In his remarks the Minister of Justice pointed out that nothing very much could be done in Canada alone. That I think is debatable. Here I should like to make a suggestion to the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fournier), because according to Mr. W. D. Hurst, the city engineer of Winnipeg, there is something which might be done to alleviate the serious consequences of flooding. As one hon. member pointed out,—I think it was the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras)—it is not the first forty feet of the flood that does the damage, it is the last two or three feet. If we could find some way of getting an increased run-off, then we might reduce that last two or three feet of flood water. Here is a suggestion, as I said, which was given by Mr. Hurst, who is the head of the engineering department of the city of Winnipeg:

From approximately Middlechurch to St. Andrews there exists in the bottom of the river, a submerged dam which is known as Lister's rapids. The extent of this dam is approximately 7 to 8 miles in length. Studies were made a number of years ago by the Manitoba drainage commission and others for the cutting of a channel through this submerged dam to pass approximately 75,000 cubic feet per second. At that time it was estimated that a million, more or less, cubic yards of rock would have to be removed in connection with the execution of this