

The Address—Mr. Zaplitny

twelve rural municipalities and some unorganized territory. That brief was presented to Premier Campbell of Manitoba and his cabinet, and here in part is what they had to say:

Almost two months of continuous rains prevented normal seeding operations from being carried out. It is estimated that only between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of intended seeding was actually done. Of this, much was so severely damaged by water that the crop will not be worth reaping. In some cases, no seeding whatever was possible, and in other cases seeding had to be done over again in the hope of getting some return from the summer-fallowed land.

Another feature of the losses sustained is the fact that much of the unseeded land could not even be summerfallowed, and much of the newly broken land could not be worked. This is a loss which will be carried over into 1954, and where noxious weeds poured out their seed, the losses will continue for several years more.

I want to refer now to another brief which was presented to the government of Manitoba by a delegation from the Manitoba farmers' union. They said in part:

We have stated previously in no uncertain terms that the flooding this year is much more serious than that experienced by the farmers of the Red River valley during the flood in 1950, at which time all farmers affected were able to put all or most of their crops in after the flood waters subsided. This year's unusually heavy rainfalls have made it impossible for many farmers to seed their land, and many of those that did get the opportunity to put some portions of their crops in have lost it anyway when flood waters inundated their land.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, to place on the record much more documentary evidence to show that the situation is really serious. I feel a bit resentful about the fact that whereas at the time of the Red river disaster a great deal of publicity was given to it right across Canada—and rightly so—in this case, for one reason or another, not much has appeared in the press to impress upon the public generally something of the nature of the seriousness of this flood.

As I pointed out, we presented our case to the provincial government of Manitoba and were advised that it may be necessary to have this situation declared a national emergency, in which case it would involve this parliament. If a move is made in that direction, I hope it will receive the support of all the members of this house, because it is something which could occur in any constituency in Canada; it has occurred before. It is going to take the co-operative efforts of both the provincial government and the federal government to be of some assistance.

I wish also to refer to another phase of this problem which is perhaps even more familiar to the western members, namely the operation of the Prairie Farm Assistance Act.

There has been some talk to the effect that this act would be invoked to look after the situation which I have just described. It is true that to some extent the provisions of that act would be of some assistance to some farmers, but it is also quite safe to say that, because of the way in which the act is written, less than 10 per cent of the farmers who have lost their crops would receive benefits under it.

I might also point out that the minister of agriculture of the province of Manitoba—and I think his word could be taken as fairly authoritative in that province—himself has stated that the Prairie Farm Assistance Act is going to be of little value in the situation such as we have it. I have a copy of the letter here, but I will not take up the time of the house to quote from it; it is available.

In any event, the minister of agriculture of that province has sent certain recommendations to the government of Canada, asking for certain amendments to the act. While those amendments do not cover the situation entirely, they would be of some assistance if they were carried through. His recommendations were sent on September 3, and I have a copy of them here. On my way to Ottawa last Friday I happened to meet the minister of agriculture of Manitoba at Winnipeg, and at that time he had not received any indication from this government as to what action would be taken on the proposed amendments.

I certainly hope that some amending of that act will take place, because not only is it not going to apply to any great extent in this particular situation, but the whole operation and history of that act, so far as Manitoba is concerned, has been such that the farmers are becoming extremely restive about its provisions.

Of course we realize—and we want to be fair about it—that we cannot expect to withdraw every year every dollar we put into the fund. We realize that it is there for the protection of all the farmers of the three prairie provinces, and we are quite satisfied so long as it is providing assistance to the farmers. But since 1939, when the act went into operation, it is a fact that the grain farmers of the province of Manitoba have contributed \$11,903,000 under that act; that is almost \$12,000,000. In that same period of time they have received only \$3,394,000 in benefits. That is just a little better than 25 per cent of what they have put in.

As I have said, we do not expect to be always on a level with our contributions; but