

*Supply—Resources and Development*

out that the Department of Resources and Development has a direct interest in this problem through its interest in the National Housing Act and the effect of these floodings on its own interests in that area. There is also the question of the waterways involved, because this department is already making surveys of other waterways. It is for the reason that these two subjects come directly under this department that I believe it would be appropriate that I make certain observations now, recognizing as I do that a number of related subjects are obviously at the present time outside the field of this department.

I wish to place before the government my belief that some new approach should be made to the over-all problem that is faced today in Manitoba. First of all may I make it quite clear that in any remarks I make I am certainly not suggesting that there should be the slightest attempt to override the executive jurisdiction of the provincial governments over municipal law and municipal administration. Nor am I suggesting that the plans that should be developed would at any time fail to recognize the authority under the British North America Act of the provincial or municipal elected bodies and their administrative officials. There are, however, reasons why, it seems to me, I should place this suggestion before the minister now, so that if the government finds that it can agree with the proposal put before it, there will be time to bring it into effect.

There has been a certain amount of discussion of the question whether this great disaster, affecting not only the city of Winnipeg but also the tremendous area from Winnipeg south to the border of the United States, should be dealt with entirely by the provincial government or by some combined organization within the provincial area, or whether there should be some direct intervention by the dominion government. I believe that it is necessary that a bill be introduced in the House of Commons—I suggest it would be appropriate that the Minister of Resources and Development introduce it, having regard to the concern of his department already with this question—so that provision which does not now exist might be made for effective co-operation among dominion, provincial and municipal authorities in dealing with this complex question.

When it is said that this is entirely a provincial matter—and I qualify that by making it quite clear that the Prime Minister stated that the dominion government intends to accept responsibility for the financial aspect of the problem—when it is said that it is a matter that should be handled entirely within the province, it should be pointed out that the dominion government is irrevocably

involved in this whole question now, and that it cannot divest itself of the direct responsibility and the direct interest that it already has on a large scale.

It is my opinion—and I believe it is shared by everyone else who has seen that area—that this is the greatest disaster of the kind which has ever occurred on this continent. It is nothing but a miracle that there was no substantial loss of life as a result of the floods. But although there was not a large number of deaths—and all of us will rejoice in that fact—we have seen nothing comparable with the damage to this large city itself and to the country stretching more than eighty miles to the south.

My own impression is that the extent of the disaster will not be known for some considerable time. The unhappy truth is that many people will hardly be aware of the extent of their own losses until the water has receded and they can determine not only the damage to their houses, their furniture and other belongings, but also the immense amount of work which will be required to restore the land around the house, to remove the wreckage and to repair the erosion that has taken place in areas where a heavy current has been running continuously for weeks.

I would point out that the dominion government is deeply and directly committed in several ways. For instance, it has direct interest and direct obligation under such legislation as the National Housing Act, the Veterans Land Act, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act and related legislation.

A great many of the homes, still largely under water even at this date, in the flood area of Winnipeg, are homes where these direct interests of the dominion government are substantially involved. Moreover, in the great area to the south of Winnipeg the dominion government has a direct concern under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, and other legislation which affects the rural areas.

There is another way in which the dominion government comes directly into this. The Red river is a navigable stream; so also are some of the other rivers concerned. For that very reason they come under the authority of the dominion government, and the working out of arrangements in connection with these rivers would, I submit, come within the scope of the responsibilities of this department.

There is another aspect to this problem. In both the Red and the Souris, which empties into the Assiniboine, the waters rise on the United States side of the border. Therefore, since they are international waters, those waters can only be dealt with effectively by