

Manitoba Flood

Mr. William Bryce (Selkirk): I want to support the motion made by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras) for federal aid, financial and otherwise. I also want to join with the other Manitoba members in their remarks pertaining to floods. I should also like to extend my congratulations to the Red Cross and the various organizations that have contributed help in the area that has been so badly hit by the flood; I refer to the constituency of the hon. member for Provencher. His constituency has been harder hit than any other so far.

In my own constituency I have the Red river to contend with and also the Assiniboine river. I should like to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that conditions there are bad. If the Red river keeps rising and the Assiniboine river backs up, the banks there will not hold the water and you will find that thousands and thousands of acres will be inundated while the Assiniboine river will be making its way to the La Salle river. I think the Manitoba members will understand that situation fairly well, and that is what will really take place.

Mr. Knowles: It will be one big lake.

Mr. Bryce: I listened attentively to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson). I am pleased to learn that the Manitoba government benefited by their experiences of 1948 and are in some ways prepared for the flood when it comes. According to today's news, it is quite evident that the flood has not yet reached its peak at Winnipeg.

Some Manitoba members are no doubt getting letters from their constituents. I am in the position of having a constituent sitting right in the gallery here. The basement of his house in the flood area is filled with water. You can see what my worries are in this connection. It is bad enough to have people writing to you; but when you have people who can call on you and tell you about it, it is much worse. The west Kildonan district is flooded now. Basements are flooded.

I get many letters these days asking that the flood gates at St. Andrews and Lockport be opened. I have taken that matter up with the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fournier) and he has assured me that if it is necessary to open these flood gates they will be opened, and that his engineers are right on the job and looking after matters. In fact, when I was home at Easter I spoke to Mr. Anderson, the district engineer. He understands the situation thoroughly. From past experience I know that we can depend on the Winnipeg staff—that is, the federal staff—to do everything they can.

The hon. member for Provencher raised an important question, namely, that there will

[Mr. Viau.]

be a great deal of wheat that will not be sown and the farmers will sow more oats and barley if the land ever gets dried up in time; and it is doubtful if it will. But assuming that it will, a great deal of oats and barley should be needed. The government should consider that matter and see to it that seed oats and barley are available so that these grains may be sown where wheat was intended to be sown.

There is no use my threshing old straw. The Manitoba members who have already spoken have covered the situation fairly well. I rose only to support them. This matter of floods affects my constituency greatly. I hope that effect will be given to what the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) said as reported at page 1981 of *Hansard*:

Hon. members can be assured that it is the desire of the government to treat every part of the country in the same way. Should there ever be in any part of the country the sort of disaster there was in the Fraser river district, the people of that section would be entitled to expect that they would be treated in the same way as the residents of the Fraser river valley were treated.

I would rather have had from some minister of the crown or from the Prime Minister himself the assurance that financial aid will be given there, because it is going to be needed. The flood is going to be much worse than it was in 1948. While the intentions of the Minister of Justice are good, having regard to what he said, I would still support the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Viau), who spoke prior to me, when he said that something definite should be done, because Winnipeg and the districts surrounding it are in serious condition.

Mr. Alistair Stewart (Winnipeg North): The member who has just spoken happens to be my member of parliament. I have complained to him, but he is really inaccurate when he points out that my basement is flooded. If it were only my basement I should be very happy indeed. This is the second time in two years we have been rendered homeless owing to these floods.

I listened to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) with some attention. He gave an interesting speech. But he took over half an hour to say what the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) said the other day in a sentence, namely:

We shall endeavour to ascertain what the situation is, and then determine what action, if any, should be taken.

Action is very necessary; but not action now from an engineering standpoint. Obviously that is too late. As the Minister of Justice said, the problem now is not an engineering problem; it is a matter of relief.