

Floods in British Columbia

occurred, trucks loaded with rock and sandbags can cross in a never-ending stream, whereas, in the case of dikes constructed with a single roadbed, traffic is impeded and cannot flow over in the same way. On the small dikes it was necessary to employ a system somewhat after the fashion of the Chinese coolie method, whereby individual men carried sandbags on their backs.

In the end, it will be necessary, so far as the 200 miles of dikes are concerned, to construct broad dikes with a gravel roadbed on top.

The next part of this question to which I wish now to call the attention of the house refers to the statements which the Prime Minister made on June 9, in which there appear these words:

The costs of rehabilitating the areas affected by the floods to be settled by subsequent agreement between the two governments . . .

The peak of the flood is over and the question of temporary repairs will soon be settled. The question of long-range planning of new dikes and controls and building them need only be finished by flood time next year, but the third point is an important one, that is to say, the point of re-establishing on the farms of the Fraser valley as soon as possible those farmers who have been displaced by the flood.

Immediate announcement of such a program would do a great deal for the morale of the farmers. Most of the farms were established by the present owners or by their fathers or grandfathers as a result of great effort. The land in British Columbia is not easily cleared, and in two or three nights the farmers there saw the work of thirty, forty or fifty years swept away. They are now housed in quarters provided by the Red Cross in New Westminster and Vancouver, and they are wondering how and when they will get back to their farms and, above all, how in the world they will face the coming year.

At the moment the estimate of the loss in crop this year is \$25,000,000. The main crops—strawberries and raspberries, about which this house has so often heard from the hon. member for Fraser Valley—are almost completely lost. Hay and grain, vegetable crops are destroyed, and livestock have been lost or dispersed. Valuable equipment including barns, machinery, houses and so on, have been completely ruined by the flood.

Some program must be worked out eventually, and it would be well if an announcement could be made without delay as to what the farmers can expect in immediate financial and material aid. There must be planning in order to get the farmers back on the land; what crops are still possible this year. There must be assistance to the farmers so far as their

[Mr. Sinclair.]

cattle are concerned, because the Fraser valley, as well as being the great berry district of British Columbia, is also a great dairy section.

Provision should also be made for feed grain for their cattle and poultry over the winter. I think an immediate announcement of such a program would do a great deal to restore the morale of the farmers. I also think the implementation of such a program will save us a great deal of money in the end, because if we can put these farmers back immediately with enough financial assistance to carry themselves with one crop for this winter, they will be that much more ahead, and then our program of relief for the winter-time will be so much less.

The question of the control of the river by dams is, I believe, one that has been mentioned in the house. In this connection it is interesting to notice the effect of dams on the Columbia river. As most hon. members know, the Columbia river starts in British Columbia, goes around the big bend and then winds up in the United States, flowing between the states of Washington and Oregon. Two of the three biggest dams in the world are on the United States part of the Columbia system, namely, the Grand Coulee dam and the Bonneville dam. Yet, despite those tremendous dams, it was impossible in any way to check this tremendous flood down the Columbia river. Actually the losses on the lower part of the Columbia river were even greater than they were on the lower part of the Fraser river. It is perhaps questionable whether any effective system of flood control in the Fraser river watershed could be devised which would completely control such an unusual combination of circumstances as were met with this year. Undoubtedly such a system of dams would help a great deal in relieving the effect of ordinary spring freshets which we have every year, and in reducing even our present flood damage to a minimum.

This country has done so much for the distressed people of Europe that I think the people of Canada expect the federal government and the government of British Columbia to do just as much, if not more, for these Canadian farmers who have had such devastation wreaked on them so quickly. I would suggest to the government that this third part of the program announced by the Prime Minister, the actual financial details of what aid is to be provided and how it is to be provided, should be announced as quickly as possible. I say that should be done, not only to reassure the farmers of the Fraser valley but also to reassure the people of Canada.

In this afternoon's mail I had an interesting example of just what this means to those