

Manitoba Flood

given by the dominion, the provincial government and the Red Cross to the different municipalities. Provision was made to cope with the situation that had existed in 1948, but now the flood has gone beyond the 1948 boundaries. We find that today we have one of the largest rivers in the world in Manitoba, since the Red river is fourteen miles wide at some parts. It covers many fine agricultural areas, as well as many of our cities and towns such as Morris, Emerson and St. Jean, all situated in the constituency of Provencher.

If the river continues to rise it may overflow into the cities of St. Boniface and Winnipeg. I must admit that the fact it has not done so already in St. Boniface might be due to the wisdom of our city fathers in placing sewer gates along the river. These are the only sewer gates in the province at the moment, and they are stopping the overflow of the river into the lower part of the city. If the water level goes beyond the 1948 mark, it is admitted that the sewer gates will not be effective. Naturally when cities the size of St. Boniface and parts of Winnipeg are flooded, the demand for relief is great. I think arrangements should be made immediately, not only by the provincial authorities but also by the federal authorities, to provide immediate relief for those who may be affected in that area. I believe a statement from the responsible officials should go forward, even though the Minister of Justice has stated that he does not feel that a responsible or honest individual in public office should make a statement until he has received all the facts concerning the amount of money which will be needed to cover the damage in the province of Manitoba; but that is not a matter which need concern the house at the present time. It is the principle that is involved, and that was my stand when I made the statement to the press last Saturday that the situation in Manitoba was one of national emergency; and I feel that I am as responsible and as intelligent as any other member of this House of Commons.

As I have said, the situation is one of national emergency; and even though I am not able to assess immediately the damage which has been caused already or which will be caused in the coming week, the federal government, in my opinion, has a great responsibility with regard to floods in Manitoba. In my research I discovered that this is the first time that the flood situation in Manitoba has been debated in the House of Commons, although we have had other floods. The largest flood was in 1916 and there was one in 1897. It is quite true that the population in southern Manitoba then

was not as thick as it is now; but this is the first time that this situation has been brought forward from the national viewpoint.

The public works that have been done in Manitoba and the attention given by the dominion government in the past have really been shameful, I would say as a result of my research into the amount of money which has been spent for public works in my own province of Manitoba; for example with respect to the damage done by the Red river or the Seine river which is another river that crosses the city of St. Boniface and as to which every year the provincial government of Manitoba receives a report, which is always shelved for future reference without any action being taken. The present Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson), who was then premier of the province, should know something about that matter also. Those are true statements.

We ought to be able to spend some money in Manitoba if we can spend money in other parts of the country running into millions of dollars, using as an excuse, "Well, it is due to navigation," and so on, when it might have been just simply to build retaining walls in areas which have been flooded. It is true that other cities and towns might be built close to a larger river than the Red river in the province of Manitoba. Nevertheless we are a progressive province in western Canada and right now I will make this statement. I have sought in the past, and I will continue to seek from the federal authorities, greater consideration with respect to our province in western Canada, such as is given chiefly to the two great provinces of Ontario and Quebec. At times I would say that beyond the boundaries of those two provinces Canada does not exist.

The situation is grave at the present time. Without prolonging my remarks, I would say that I expect the federal government will not only assure the provincial authorities that they are willing to give financial assistance at the present time with regard to this important problem but also that they will seek from those responsible, such as the international joint commission, a permanent solution to the problem. As the minister said a little while ago, it is quite true that it is impossible to seek complete control of the waters. Nobody is asking for that. But if in Manitoba federal aid had been given for the purpose of studying the problem of the Red river, as was done on the other side by the United States authorities, who have spent over \$17 million up to the present time, it is possible that the situation in Manitoba in the Red river area would not be as bad as it is today.