

*Manitoba Flood*

the member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles); all of whom know the problem and all of whom are experienced; all of whom realize that the people in this part of Manitoba are asking not for evasion, not for circumlocution, but for a statement which will restore to them the hope that has been denied them as a result of this flood.

Coming from a neighbouring province, I know something of the situation in Manitoba. I know there is no one in my province who would not be happy to hear this evening that the government of Canada, through its responsible minister, the Minister of Justice, is going to do something to help those people out, rather than have that minister merely indulge in a speech of great length consisting of platitudes on the one hand and, on the other, praise for the social agencies that are entitled to praise. He spoke of everything but what the motion is requesting, namely, a promise of action from the parliament of Canada.

**Mr. J. W. Noseworthy (York South):** Mr. Speaker, the question under discussion, that of the Manitoba floods, is a subject of interest to all members in this house, and not merely those representing Manitoba constituencies. It is a matter of concern to the country at large. In the first place, I think it is a subject on which the members from all parties, and from every province, should inform the government that they are in favour of the support which has been requested for those who are suffering from these floods. I fail to see where the statement made by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) gives that assurance. The minister made a valiant effort to defend the do-nothing policy of the government so far as this matter is concerned. As a matter of fact, he found that so little had been done by this government, he had to spend nine-tenths of his time stating what the premier of Manitoba had or had not done, whichever way one sees it.

The only assurance the minister gave the house was contained in a statement made by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) as reported in *Hansard* on page 1981. That statement does not bind the government to a single thing. The Prime Minister said:

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.

Anything the Prime Minister said with reference to this subject was qualified by that statement. Provided the people in the Red river district suffer a disaster as great as that suffered by the people in the Fraser valley, then they may expect government assistance.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Failing to suffer to the extent the people of the Fraser valley suffered, there is no assurance whatever of any support. The statement by the Prime Minister reminds me of one he made in Toronto during the election campaign on the subject of unemployment. While there, a local reporter tried to pin him down as to what the government would do in the event of unemployment developing in any part of the country. After one or two questions the reporter got up to the point where he said, "Suppose there are 500,000 unemployed in the country, will the government take any action?" The Prime Minister replied, "Oh yes, if we get 500,000, certainly the government will take some action." Of course, we did not get 500,000.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I do not think the hon. member should develop that subject during this debate.

**Mr. Noseworthy:** You rule that I cannot finish that statement, then, Mr. Speaker? My point is that the statement by the Prime Minister as recorded in *Hansard* does not give any definite assurance that these people will receive any assistance. I think that is the point which the members of this house from every province, and from all parties, are attempting to impress upon the government. They believe that the Manitoba people should, under the circumstances, be given some definite assurance, here and now, that they will be assisted.

There is another reason why this question is important to those of us who live outside the province of Manitoba. This question of flood control is one that interests the people in all parts of Canada. There are few years in which some section of the country does not suffer a disaster. I believe the government should be required at this time to make some statement of policy regarding flood control. I go back to 1943, when there was a subcommittee of the committee on reconstruction appointed for the express purpose of studying this question of conservation, particularly the conservation of water and power resources. In its recommendations that committee states:

Canada, fortunately, is free of devastating floods such as occur on the great river systems of the United States, China, and other countries. Damaging floods, however, affect various parts of the country periodically and property losses from such floods could be prevented or mitigated by the construction of flood-control works in many localities.

That is the statement of a committee set up by the federal government, a committee that undertook to show that the federal government had some responsibility in the matter. The assertion is made that property losses could be avoided if work were undertaken to