

Orange River damage worst in memory

SEQUEL TO FLOOD — RUIN

Help to farmers promised

'MAIL' MAN

JAMES FOX

ON THE SPOT

UPINGTON.

THE damage caused by the Orange River flood over the last four days is the worst in memory, according to officials from Cape Town who crowded into Upington yesterday.

Between 70 and 80 per cent of the irrigated lands lying in the Orange Valley from Upington 50 miles downstream are ruined and this damage will amount to millions of rands loss for the farmers.

These approximate figures were confirmed yesterday by the Minister for Agricultural Economics and Marketing, Mr. Uys, who flew over the flooded area after the water had subsided by at least seven feet this morning.

Mr. Uys told local officials: "The damage is much worse than I thought. We will act as quickly as possible to put things right again for the farmers."

Commissions of inquiry of all the departments concerned would come as soon as possible after which no farmer would go under financially as a result of the floods, he said.

"The drought before the floods minimised the income of the farmers and most of them will have no money this season."

Mr. Uys said that the farmers would be helped either by loans or subsidies but it was too early to say exactly what the Government would do.

Mr. Uys added: "When the Verwoerd Dam and all the other dams are built, you can ask yourselves whether you will ever see another flood like this in your lifetime."

Subsidence

The dramatic subsidence of the water yesterday morning showed up the damage to the irrigated land. Enormous sand drifts cover what used to be fields — some as much as three feet deep. However the silt is not so serious, and may even act as a useful fertiliser.

The third death from the floods was reported yesterday when a body was washed up on a downstream island. As in the other cases, police are suspending all investigations until the waters finally subside.

As the river subsides, the stench of mud and slime hangs over the river. The Divisional Council of Gordonia, which is responsible for 140 miles of the river, is already preparing to ward off typhoid and malaria, by administering prophylactics and spraying the river banks from the air.

A Roodepoort family was completely isolated yesterday when the Hamberg Dam overflowed.

Mrs. T. Cairns, of Wander Street, Hamberg, said she looked out of the window and saw water lapping against the walls of her house. Firemen were called out and they managed to change the course of the stream.

All roads leading to Florida Lake have been closed to traffic.

The flow of water at the Vaalharts weir where the Vaal has continued to rise is expected to rise to 50,000 cusecs.