

The War Service Grants Act and the Veterans Insurance Act, passed at the present session, round out the most comprehensive programme yet adopted by any nation for the welfare of its war veterans and their return to active civilian pursuits.

The Department of Reconstruction is engaged in making preparations for the speedy conversion of war industries to meet peace-time needs and to maintain industrial employment. It is also promoting and co-ordinating programmes of national and regional development, housing and community planning, and other projects which may be required to maintain employment in the post-war period. It is responsible for the orderly disposal of surplus war assets in the national interest. Representative agencies are already engaged in this large and important task.

To assist in the conversion of war plants, and in the development of small and medium-scale enterprises, an Industrial Development Bank has been established. It is now in operation.

In keeping up the level of employment after the war, housing should play a large part. To provide for the construction of new houses, the repair and modernization of existing houses, and the improvement of urban and rural housing and living conditions, the National Housing Act was greatly expanded in scope.

In the decennial revision of the Bank Act, made at the present session, special recognition was given to the importance of credit in stimulating employment. The new act has greatly improved the credit facilities and the banking services available to the people of Canada. By supplementary legislation, special provision was made for intermediate and short term credit to farmers for the improvement and development of farms and farm homes.

The Department of National Health and Welfare is engaged in organizing and administering important activities of the federal government in the field of health and social welfare.

In opening the present session, I said that, in the opinion of my ministers, plans for the establishment of a national minimum of social security and human welfare should be advanced as rapidly as possible. In the establishment of this national minimum, the new department has the responsibility for federal measures to promote health and welfare, and for the planning of comprehensive insurance against social hazards.

A considerable measure of social security is already provided under federal and provincial social legislation. But the working out of a comprehensive national scheme in which federal and provincial activities will be integrated will require further consultation and close co-operation with the provinces.

I announced, at the opening, that the government was prepared to recommend a measure to provide for federal assistance in a nation-wide system of health insurance. Such a measure would include assistance to the provinces for preventive medicine. I also stated that the government was prepared to support a national scheme of contributory old age pensions on a basis more generous than that of existing pensions. The introduction of these measures is conditional upon suitable agreements with the provinces. My ministers reaffirm their readiness, as soon as such agreements are reached, to proceed with these great social reforms.

Recognizing the importance, to the maintenance of post-war employment and to the achievement of social security, of close co-operation with the provinces, the government undertook and is carrying forward preparations for the holding, at the earliest appropriate date, of a Dominion-Provincial Conference.