

genius of the Canadian people, their ability and their engineers have developed and processed the things they require in order to produce the social security, improvement and welfare of the Canadian people, so as to make the benefits of science available to the masses—until these things are done for the welfare of the people, we can look in vain for any improvement in the social condition of the people of Canada. To the extent to which we can provide ourselves with these requirements we shall have abundance; and when we have surpluses arrangements can be made to exchange them for the things we require from other nations. When that is done we can look for the day of social security in Canada and then provide ourselves with the health services which we need.

It has been implied by other speakers that such a system would mean state regimentation. A democratic cooperative commonwealth in Canada will bring the first real freedom that the Canadian people have known for some decades. This house will do well to remember that we can never have real democracy in this country, political democracy, until we have an economic democracy. Until that is achieved, the passing of such bills is like putting a patch on an old tire. We are not opposing this bill, but we do not look upon it as being very helpful.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): I shall not say more than a few words, since I am anxious to get the bill through. I appreciate the general expression of approval of the principle of the bill to establish the new Department of National Health and Welfare, though some hon. members, like the last speaker (Mr. Castleden), have damned the measure with faint praise, while my hon. friend the member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) has been unduly suspicious about the good that is likely to come out of it. As he was speaking my mind went back to the time over forty years ago, when I received a communication stating that the Liberal government of the day had decided to establish a Department of Labour in Canada, and I was asked if I would undertake the organization of the new department. When I read through the debates I found that the hon. gentlemen opposite had for the most part been questioning the advisability of starting a Department of Labour, and the line of argument they presented almost parallels what the hon. member for Lake Centre has said to-night.

First of all, there was the question of jurisdiction. Was the government sure that parliament was within its jurisdiction in establish-

[Mr. Castleden.]

ing a federal Department of Labour? Was not that something that belonged to the provinces? Up to that time labour questions had been dealt with either by the municipalities or by the provinces, and was it not a waste of public money to start this new department? Then, there was the argument that it was in the nature of class legislation, caring for people who did not know how to take care of themselves. It was said that every man ought to be able to look after himself without having a department of government to look after him. There were other questions as to what was to be done. Was the government prepared to give some guarantee as to measures that would be carried out, and so forth and so on. Well, the department was started. I am rather proud to say that, when I came to Ottawa to begin the organization of the new department, I had first of all, with the assistance of the then Postmaster General, to find a building in which it could be housed and I had to ask for the loan of his stenographer, so that I might have the stenographic assistance necessary in beginning to organize the work of the new department. I will not say more than that, except to indicate that if a cause is right, the purpose is a good one, and the necessity exists, there is every reason why what may have small beginnings will grow into a service that will be of great national importance.

Is there anyone, to-day, who would say that we ought to abolish the Department of Labour? Is there anyone who would say that the Department of Labour has not been performing its duties within the jurisdiction of this parliament and that it has not been a means and the instrument for furthering the enactment of law after law which has been of the greatest possible benefit to people of all classes in this country? Up to that time there had been no machinery to deal with industrial disputes. The first act that was passed was one having to do with conciliation in industrial disputes. That was followed later by a special measure to deal with disputes on the railways. That was followed still later by the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. That measure has been followed by others dealing with industrial disputes. I think I am safe in saying that the work which has been done by the Department of Labour in the last forty years in the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes represents a contribution to the national life whose value it would be very difficult indeed to estimate. And as is the case with all these things that are good in themselves, what they may have served to prevent is something in addition which cannot be estimated.