

according to need. There is nothing difficult or hard to understand about that. But there is one thing certain, namely, that the adoption of such a system will not leave things as they are. It will not leave the control of the means of life in the hands of people who control them now. It will vest the control of the means of life in the people to be organized socially for the common good.

As I said, we welcome the opportunity to sit with this parliamentary committee to try to formulate a scheme of social security based on social insurance that will provide for many of the hazards that beset us.

There is just one other thing I should like to say. We have been told on numerous occasions that the government has taken away the functions of parliament. Here is a motion introduced by the Prime Minister himself which has put in the lap of parliament, if I may use that term, the question of working out a social security through a social insurance scheme for Canada. If the members of this house will bring in a comprehensive scheme and see to it that it is forced through the house, then there can no longer be any claim made that the government has usurped the functions of parliament. Here is an opportunity for parliament, and I hope the members of parliament will show that they are equal to the occasion and use it.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): I should like my first word to be one of appreciation of the contributions which hon. members have made to the debate. It is, I think, true that the discussion has shown that there is general agreement among all parties in the house as to the importance of the questions to be referred to the committee, as well as of the magnitude of the problem involved. What has been said has served to indicate to hon. members the many-sidedness of these social problems and the necessity for a careful and wide study in approaching them in the hope of making a practical and immediate contribution.

Listening to the debate has impressed me more and more with the fact that the government has taken the right course in suggesting at this stage that we should have in Canada a national system of social insurance and also that the government has adopted the right course in appointing a committee to consider all aspects of a national insurance scheme before bringing forward any particular measure which is to be part of any further legislation along social security lines.

I doubt if anything could illustrate better the wisdom of the course which the government has adopted than an item which appeared

in the press this morning. I hold in my hand a clipping from the *Ottawa Morning Citizen* of March 5 entitled, "Health insurance plan for Quebec favoured in report". The item reads as follows:

Quebec, March 4.—Enactment of a health insurance system by the Quebec legislature was recommended in a report made to the government by a hospital investigation commission, it was announced to-day.

The commission was set up by the government in 1940 to study the financial situation of hospitals and of insane asylums and to study the working conditions of employees in the institutions.

Members of the commission recommend that the province, the employer and the insured contribute to the cost of a health insurance system and that a special commission be named to administer the system once it was established. The recommendation urged that the premium be calculated to cover the family and not the individual.

We have been criticized, Mr. Speaker, for not having brought in a concrete measure relating to health insurance. May I say that I have been long enough in public life to realize that no matter what an administration does, it is pretty certain to meet with criticism. We have been criticized for deciding to have this matter carefully studied by a committee of the house before bringing forward further legislation. Had we taken the opposite course and come forward with a concrete measure of health insurance, I am sure the first criticism that would have been made would have been that the government had not given consideration to what the provinces might be doing or wish to do in this matter before attempting to override them with legislation of its own. We would certainly have had cited as evidence of this, perhaps not yesterday because it was only announced through the press to-day, but certainly to-day, reference to the commission that had been appointed in the province of Quebec and to the recommendations which it had made to the provincial government. Both would have been cited as an evidence of the fact that instead of trying to work out something in the nature of a cooperative nation-wide plan between the provinces and the dominion we had only succeeded, by rushing ahead with our legislation, in raising unnecessary difficulties between the dominion and the provinces. That must be perfectly apparent from what I have just read.

More than that, listening to what my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Graydon) said when he was speaking, I think he would have come forward and said that we had dealt with just one aspect of the question, that we had said nothing about giving more benefits in the way of insurance