

reason that otherwise they would be contributing and receiving none of the benefits. That, it seems to me, is the way to cut the Gordian knot. I do not want to be critical of the government; this is a question which has been largely acceptable to the house; a great many hon. members from all parties have accepted it. Yet the rather inane—I say that not offensively—reference in the speech from the throne regarding it is not very encouraging. About unemployment insurance the speech contained one little sentence:

The government have not altered their view that a national unemployment insurance scheme is essential to a permanent policy of meeting the problem of unemployment.

But that does not help the poor fellow who does not have the insurance. That is merely a pious expression of opinion, with which I do not quarrel, but it does no good to the people who want to see unemployment insurance in force. I think the government might well put it into effect, and wait for the provinces to cooperate with them. That is the way it appeals to me. We tried it the other way and our method was ruled *ultra vires*. Let us accept that decision for the time being and try the other method. That is the only suggestion I make. To bring into effect such legislation as suggested in this resolution of the hon. member for Comox-Alberni, would show a real desire on the part of the government to live up to the protestations it has put forth.

Hon. NORMAN McL. ROGERS (Minister of Labour): I should like to begin by congratulating the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Neill) upon his unique success with this resolution. It has produced the most harmonious debate we have had thus far in the present session. So far I believe the resolution has received the support of everyone who has taken part in the discussion. I am pleased indeed to be able to give it my support in equal measure; not only that, but I share the hope expressed this afternoon by the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis) that the reception accorded to this resolution from representatives of all groups in this house may have its due effect in those provinces which thus far have not seen fit to consent to the enactment of a national system of unemployment insurance.

The hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Manion) referred a moment ago to the events leading up to the present position with respect to unemployment insurance in this country. He alluded particularly, and quite properly from his point of view, to the Employment and Social Insurance Act of 1935. I hope he will acquit me of any desire to recriminate

if I refer briefly, as he has done, to the circumstances surrounding the enactment of that act. I interrupted him when I did—he kindly permitted the interruption—simply to make it clear that the administration of which he was a member did not do, when it had the power, what he himself now suggests ought to be done by this administration.

Mr. MANION: We did what we thought we had the power to do.

Mr. ROGERS: It was equally open to his government to enact unemployment insurance in a manner similar to the old age pensions legislation, and in that way avoid any possible question of invalidity of that legislation. It was in August, 1934, that Mr. Bennett, then Prime Minister, sent an invitation to all the provinces asking them to come to Ottawa some time later in the year in order to consider a number of specific questions, including unemployment insurance, minimum wages, hours of labour, and also the employment services to which my hon. friend has referred. The very form of that invitation, the very fact of it, made it clear beyond peradventure that it was the view of the government of that day that the jurisdiction over all these related matters belonged to the provinces. The very purpose of the conference was to induce the provinces to transfer their jurisdiction over these matters to the dominion in order that the dominion might thereafter introduce legislation which would not be declared invalid by the courts.

This matter has come before the house on other occasions. I remember putting the question directly to Mr. Bennett last year as to when and why he changed his mind as to the proper jurisdiction over these questions. Immediately after sending that letter to the provinces Mr. Bennett went to Geneva to attend the assembly of the League of Nations. While he was away, there took place in this country what has become known as the little general election. There were five by-elections, and it happened that they all went against the then government. My hon. friend's colleague, the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Stevens) was also extremely active at that time and was making a special appeal to the wage-earning population of this country. Whatever the reasons may have been, we all know, and my hon. friend will recall, that shortly after Mr. Bennett's return the country was startled by a series of radio addresses, in which there was a complete volte-face on the part of the government with respect to its previous views as to where jurisdiction over these industrial matters properly lay.

Following those radio addresses we had introduced in the session of 1935 a series of