

made by the provinces, but there is no uniformity in social legislation. The result is that in one province the deathrate in childbirth is very much greater than in other provinces, and in saying that I have no particular province in mind. The fact is that there are not uniform social services; and if we are in earnest about doing something for the men who will return after the war; if we are to have the social consciousness of the ordinary man on the street carried into legislative effect, then I believe the time has come when the field of social legislation should be taken over by the dominion government. I believe there would be very little difficulty if representations were made to the provincial governments. In his speech the Prime Minister indicated that there might be some difficulty, but he also indicated that in regard to many matters he believed the provinces would be prepared to permit the federal government to put such legislation into effect.

We in his majesty's opposition have certain definite ideas in reference to this problem. We believe that the state's share of the cost of all social security measures should be borne by the dominion, and the time has come when this should be put into effect. In the next place we believe that it is the obligation of the government to make available to every citizen adequate medical, dental, nursing, hospital and prenatal care, with further advanced public health and nutritional principles so that health may be safeguarded and preserved; that the time has come to put into effect legislation to assure adequate payment for the maintenance of unemployables; retirement insurance, and the payment of increased old age pensions at an earlier age than seventy years. I am going to pause there for a moment, Mr. Speaker, and suggest that there could be no better way to assure the morale of Canada as a whole than for the government immediately to bring into effect cost-of-living allowances for old age pensioners. Let us forget the difficulties of financing as far as old age pensions are concerned, as between the federal government and the provinces. Old age pensions for the period of the war should be immediately increased to a point much higher than the present destitution level. If that could be done it would meet with approval all over Canada; it would not require the approval of the provinces if the dominion government were prepared to pay the extra cost, and by paying that extra amount we would bring new hope to those people, many of whom to-day, by reason of the small allowance, are living under circumstances very little better than destitution.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Finally, if ever there was a problem to challenge the imagination it is the after-war problem, the problem of the new world of which the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt have spoken so often. Just in that connection I thought it was particularly appropriate that the messages read earlier today should have been sent to the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the President of the United States. It was appropriate on account of the fact that they have dominated the world situation; they have given hope to the democracies; they have built up a determination in their nations that know no word but victory. Both have been leaders in social reform, and to-day the social security legislation of Great Britain is far ahead of ours, while across the line in the United States President Roosevelt in the last ten years has brought in social legislation designed to improve the lot of the common man to a degree never before equalled on the continent of North America. We believe this matter of social security is so important that the government should now appoint a minister of social security and reconstruction, to be charged with the administration of social security measures. That is what we advocate in our platform. We believe that with the load of responsibility at present being carried by the Prime Minister and the other members of the cabinet, with the division of responsibility among departments as far as social legislation is concerned, this problem, which now looms larger than ever before, is worthy of a minister to head a department which will administer social security laws for the uniform benefit of all parts of Canada.

I come back once more to the resolution setting up the committee. If read cursorily, this resolution gives promise that something will be done; but if read carefully, it says only that a select committee will be set up; that the committee will investigate; that it will study systems in Canada and elsewhere. There is no suggestion in the resolution that any action will be taken. That may be perfectly proper, but what is significant is that when the Prime Minister, whose interest in social legislation has always been very keen, delivered his speech yesterday he left no hope with those who heard him that the recommendations of the committee would be carried into effect in whole or in part. I think the people of Canada have a right to be assured now by the Prime Minister that jurisdictional difficulties with the provinces will be removed. Let him frankly inform the house of the attitude taken by each of the provinces if they have been consulted, and, finally, whether or not it is the intention of the government to bring in a resolution to amend the British North