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## THE DISCUSSION IN PARLIAMENT ON THE PROPOSED DOMINION HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

DR. ROOME moved March 10th, 1890 :

That in the opinion of this House, the time has come when the Federal Government should establish a Health Department with a responsible head, presided over by a Minister or Deputy Minister, for the purpose of preventing the spread of disease, collecting mortality statistics, and educating the people, as far as possible, in all health and sanitary matters.

He said : In rising to move this resolution, I do so believing that the time has come when this important subject should receive the earnest attention of this House, as well as of the people of Canada. I shall endeavor to express my thoughts on this matter, and the arguments which I have to bring forward, in such a manner that, though I may not be able to properly place them before the House myself, they may, at all events, induce discussion, and I hope that other hon. members may be able to make them more impressive than I can. Looking at the history of Canada since the confederation of the Provinces, observing the vast progress which she has made, the large and various industries which have been built up, the rapid growth of her cities and towns—in fact, looking at the great and increased prosperity of the whole Dominion, and asking ourselves what has brought that about, I have only, I think, to refer to the speech made last Session by the young and talented Finance Minister, in order to prove that not only this Parliament, but previous Parliaments, have brought about this prosperity by spending millions of dollars in building up our great railway system, which extends from ocean to ocean, and which, with her branch lines, gives us now one of the best railway systems in the world. Parliament has also spent millions of dollars in enlarging our canals, so as to join together our great inland lakes and to make a complete chain of communication, so that our producers and our consumers are brought close together, and we are able to compete with the other nations of the world. While, therefore, the different Parliaments have been spending money on railways and canals, on the erection of

public buildings, on the encouragement of immigration, at the same time hardly any thought has been given, scarcely a word has been spoken by any of our Legislators as to how we might protect the lives of our people and rescue many from untimely graves by preventing the spread of these epidemics which occasionally appear amongst us. We in Canada to-day feel proud of our country, believing that we have the nucleus formed of a great nation. And while we boast of our most excellent form of Government, whereby our laws are strictly enforced, protecting our lives from the hands of the assassin and murderer, our property from the thief and robber, we have done nothing comparatively speaking in the way of protecting our lives from those zymotic diseases which are constantly amongst us.

As we are now a prosperous people, having devoted so many years in opening up our country, I think it would not be amiss if we were to expend some of our time as well as money, in devising means to lessen the spread of disease whereby thousands are cut of in the prime of life and often our best and most useful citizens, to say nothing of the sickness and suffering our children have to endure from diseases ingenerated into their system in childhood, which weakens and often cripples them through life, which if the cause was removed : by health teachings and sanitary regulations they would grow up to be strong men and women. It is not the numerical population which constitutes the strength of a nation, but it is the physical and mental development as well, as we might say :

“ Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.”

Now, Sir looking at this subject from a practical point of view, it would be the first duty of every statesman to legislate for the health of the people. Let us consider for a moment what could be accomplished by such legislation. England to-day stands foremost amongst the nations of the earth in having given her attention to health legislation, and during the past