

export credits. Provision was also made for the expansion of the trade commissioner service of Canada.

During the session, all customs duties on farm implements were removed, thereby helping to keep down farm costs, with benefit alike to the producers and consumers of agricultural products. By this important measure, my ministers have also given concrete evidence of Canada's readiness, in association with other nations, to further international trade by the reduction of tariff barriers.

The assurance of opportunity of employment for all who are willing and able to work is the corner-stone of the Government's programme to achieve prosperity and social security. There is a special responsibility to establish the men and women of our armed forces in useful and remunerative activities. The maintenance of a high level of employment and production after the war is the first essential of a policy which also aims at a rising level of human well-being. The many important measures enacted at the session now closing mark substantial progress towards the attainment of these goals. Practically all these measures are already in force. Viewed collectively, they form an impressive legislative achievement. In their comprehensiveness and inter-relation, they constitute a major instalment of a programme to prevent the possible recurrence of unemployment and insecurity in post-war years.

To further the Government's policies of full employment, social security and human welfare, three new departments of government have been established, all of which are now under the direction of responsible ministers of the Crown:

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs;
2. The Department of Reconstruction; and
3. The Department of National Health and Welfare.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has charge of the rehabilitation and re-establishment of members of the armed forces, and of the administration of veterans' pensions and allowances.

The new department is already administering measures directly related to the re-establishment of veterans in civil life, the care of disabled veterans, and the provision for the dependents of those who have given their lives. The administrative machinery for this vast undertaking is being steadily developed and improved. Nearly 200,000 veterans of this war have already been re-established in civil life.

The War Service Grants Act and the Veterans Insurance Act, passed at the present session, round out the most comprehensive programme yet adopted by any nation for the welfare of its war veterans and their return to active civilian pursuits.

The Department of Reconstruction is engaged in making preparations for the speedy conversion of war industries to meet peacetime needs and to maintain industrial employment. It is also promoting and co-ordinating programmes of national and regional development, housing and community planning, and other projects which may be required to maintain employment in the post-war period. It is responsible for the orderly disposal of surplus war assets in the national interest. Representative agencies are already engaged in this large and important task.

To assist in the conversion of war plants, and in the development of small and medium-scale enterprises, an Industrial Development Bank has been established. It is now in operation.

In keeping up the level of employment after the war, housing should play a large part. To provide for the construction of new houses, the repair and modernization of existing houses, and the improvement of urban and rural housing and living conditions, the National Housing Act was greatly expanded in scope.

In the decennial revision of the Bank Act, made at the present session, special recognition was given to the importance of credit in stimulating employment. The new Act has greatly improved the credit facilities and the banking services available to the people of Canada. By supplementary legislation, special provision was made for intermediate and short term credit to farmers for the improvement and development of farms and farm homes.

The Department of National Health and Welfare is engaged in organizing and administering important activities of the federal Government in the field of health and social welfare.

In opening the present session, I said that, in the opinion of my ministers, plans for the establishment of a national minimum of social security and human welfare should be advanced as rapidly as possible. In the establishment of this national minimum, the new department has the responsibility for federal measures to promote health and welfare, and for the planning of comprehensive insurance against social hazards.

A considerable measure of social security is already provided under federal and provincial social legislation. But the working out of a comprehensive national scheme in which federal and provincial activities will be integrated will require further consultation and close co-operation with the provinces.

I announced, at the opening, that the Government was prepared to recommend a measure to provide for federal assistance in a nation-wide system of health insurance. Such a measure would include assistance to the provinces for preventive medicine. I also stated that the Government was prepared to support a national scheme of contributory old age pensions on a basis more generous than that of existing pensions. The introduction of these measures is conditional upon suitable agreements with the provinces. My ministers reaffirm their readiness, as soon as such agreements are reached, to proceed with these great social reforms.

Recognizing the importance, to the maintenance of post-war employment and to the achievement of social security, of close co-operation with the provinces, the Government undertook and is carrying forward preparations for the holding, at the earliest appropriate date, of a Dominion-Provincial Conference.

In the belief that the family and the home are the foundation of national life, provision has been made for family allowances to aid in ensuring a minimum of well-being to the children of the nation, and to help gain for them a closer approach to equality of opportunity in the battle of life. Family allowances are being administered by the Department of National Health and Welfare. The registration of children begins to-morrow. The payment of allowances is to begin from July 1.

In the opinion of my ministers, the Family Allowances Act and other social security measures designed to ensure a national minimum of human welfare will aid materially in maintaining production and employment.