

even if we want to do so. I know we have many other responsibilities in addition. If anyone in this house should stand up in his place and suggest that we should repudiate our national debt or the interest charges thereon, I know there would be protests from every corner of the house. Hon. members would rise in their places and talk about our obligations, our duties and our responsibilities, and they would refer to the honour of this Dominion. I think we have no greater duty and no greater responsibility than taking care of the poor in our midst, and I think as a parliament we should look upon that as our first duty. Although the time which we may devote to this very important question is limited, I hope the government to-day will not disappoint the hundreds of thousands of people who are expecting us to give some attention to this matter.

On former occasions both parties have committed themselves to the principle of unemployment, sickness and invalidity insurance. In a speech delivered by the present Prime Minister during the session of 1928 he came out openly in favour of a scheme of this character, and the leader of the opposition has done the same thing. We have the leaders of both parties in favour of some such scheme, so why should there be such difficulty in our getting together and finding ways and means of doing something this session for those who are at present unemployed, and for men over whom unemployment hangs like a dark cloud. There are hundred of thousands of people out of work to-day, and many more are working on short time. The labour movement of this country is looking to parliament on this occasion in the hope that it will do something at least along the lines of the action taken a few years ago when it passed the Old Age Pensions Act.

I hope the government will stand behind the pledges it has made, the pledges which were incorporated in its platform and the pledges which many of its supporters gave to their constituents, as well as the statements made by the right hon. the Prime Minister when he was leader of the opposition during the session of 1928.

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker I do not propose this afternoon to traverse at length the ground covered by the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat (Mr. Heaps). I desire only to point out two or three problems which must be dealt with before this question can be determined.

First, there is the question of the respective jurisdiction of the federal parliament and the

provincial legislatures, which has to some extent been determined by the law officers of the crown. As has been pointed out by the provincial premiers, there is no reason to doubt that with the joint action of the provinces and the Dominion some satisfactory solution of this problem can be found. It has been suggested that a conference should be called between the provinces and the Dominion for the purpose of discussing this problem and if possible finding a solution. The hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Heenan) suggested the other day that this matter might have been discussed at the recent Dominion-provincial conference. I can only say that the question could not be dealt with at any such conference in one or two days, or in half a dozen days; there are questions which involve consequences of the most far-reaching effect in every possible way so far as the body politic is concerned. There is not only the setting up of the machinery but there is the question of the ways and means by which that machinery is to be maintained.

At the present time a large number of corporations that have thousands of employees make provision for their future after they have reached a certain age. Provision is made in some cases for invalidity through sickness, and in others for the payment of a small sum while unemployed and still in the service of the company.

This resolution proposes two things, to which I will direct attention. First, it suggests that the government should take into consideration the immediate establishment of a federal system of insurance. I do not think my hon. friend is well advised in leaving the word "immediate" in his motion for the simple and obvious reason that it must be known to him and to every hon. gentleman who has read any book upon the subject or who has given time and consideration to the problems involved that it cannot be dealt with in three weeks, six weeks, one month or several months. So far as that feature is concerned, I would suggest that he delete the word "immediate" from his resolution. I suggest also that after the word "federal" and before the word "system" he add the word "contributory," thus making it a federal contributory system. Then I would suggest that the words "after satisfactory arrangements have been made with the provinces" be added at the end of the resolution. As has been so clearly stated by the hon. gentleman, insurance against unemployment, sickness and invalidity can never be successful if each province has