

On section 4—duties and powers of minister—paragraph a:

Hon. Mr. McMEANS: I would ask the honourable leader of the Government if "the conservation of child life and the promotion of child welfare" would extend to the case of neglected children?

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: This is a new class of work which is to be established in connection with the department, and just what range of duties it will cover I am not prepared to say at the moment. The scheme will have to be worked out by the department in accordance with the general policy of the Bill. Of course, the work of looking after neglected children, etc., is one that is undertaken by benevolent organizations, provincial institutions, and others, and there will be necessarily a co-ordination of all those benevolent activities.

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: Would not this be a case into which the question of co-operation as between the Dominion and the provincial authorities would largely enter?

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Yes.

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: And I presume that the policy of the department would be very largely that of advising with the officials of the provincial governments as to the work that should be done, and trying to have the same class of work done in all the provinces.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Yes.

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: So as to co-ordinate the work in that way. I understand that at the present time the governments of certain of the provinces do take some notice of this question of neglected children and are trying to provide for it.

Hon. Mr. DE VEBER: The work provided for in this paragraph is not carried out to any great extent by the provincial governments, but it is being done to some extent by cities. In the city of Lethbridge, in which I live, we have established a Nursing Commission. Nurses go among the foreigners and teach them the proper feeding of their children and look after them. The commission also obtains certified milk, sells it to those who can pay, and gives it free to mothers who are not able to pay for it. I may say that death amongst children, in nearly every city, is due, not exclusively, but very largely, to the condition of the milk that is fed to them. These matters and a number of others, I consider, are provided for in this paragraph regard-

ing the conservation of child life and the promotion of child welfare.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: But this is a duty that devolves more particularly upon the provinces. I do not know what help the Federal Government may be able to give, but child welfare should be attended to by the provinces. Under this Bill you can extend the activities of the Federal department to nearly every branch of the work done by provincial organizations; you can cover the whole provincial jurisdiction; but I am convinced that the Federal Government will find that under the constitution it is somewhat limited in its scope.

Hon. Mr. McMEANS: I may say, in explanation why I asked the question, that the clause, which merely speaks of "child life and the promotion of child welfare," seems to me to be very restricted. As the honourable gentleman (Hon. Mr. Dandurand) has just pointed out, a great deal depends upon the provincial authorities. Most of the provinces have laws by which a neglected child can be taken away from its parents. My object was to ascertain whether the Government of Canada intended to engage in such child welfare work as that of taking care of neglected children. If so, they would need to have machinery that is not provided for in this Bill; that they should have the right to go into the home where the child is neglected, through drunkenness or cruelty of parents, or is not receiving proper nourishment, and to have the child taken away and put into a home or other institution. The Bill apparently does not provide for any action of that kind. This clause may work out in the future, but it looks to me as being so indefinite as to be not of much use.

Hon. Mr. DE VEBER: I understand that the purpose of this Act is to make uniform the laws governing all the provinces. Each province now has a provincial Act and no two provinces have exactly uniform laws. As I understand the way the department will be run, there will be a minister of health and a deputy minister. Annually, or oftener if it is thought necessary, the department will ask the different provinces to send representatives, who should be, of course, their provincial health officers. They would meet here in Ottawa, exchange ideas and discuss matters put forward by the provinces, and regulations applicable to all the provinces would be issued; consequently the laws in regard to public health would be uniform throughout Canada. I may just cite as an instance the quarantine laws.