

I realize the difficulties in connection with jurisdiction and in the matter of the distribution of powers as between the federal and provincial governments, but these matters must be faced. We who believe in a system of free initiative are faced with a challenge more strongly than ever before, that we assure the people of the same measures of social security as promised by those who believe in state regimentation. We must assure the people that those measures can and will in fact be implemented by this parliament and that where parliament lacks the power immediate measures must be taken by cooperation with the provinces to establish a comprehensive system of social security.

We must face the fact that everywhere in this dominion people are saying that we who believe in a system of free enterprise will promise social security but are unready to take the responsibility of seeing that it is brought into effect. I fear very much that legislation such as this will add to the fears of the people in that connection. We have a greater responsibility than the mere passing of legislation granting powers, and must face, I repeat, the responsibility of assuring social security under our present system with freedom; otherwise those who believe that these things cannot be secured under our present system will follow the leadership of those who believe that freedom is incompatible with the adoption of social security.

As far as the setting up of a ministry is concerned, the Progressive Conservative party advocated that at its convention in Winnipeg. It advocated the appointment of a minister of social security and reconstruction who would be charged with the administration of social security in this country, and also that the state's share of the cost of the social security system should be borne by the dominion in order to secure an equality of social security throughout the country as a whole.

As I look over this legislation, section 5 would lead me to believe that a great measure of social security is promised and will be adopted, whereas in point of fact, practically the outstanding matters under that section that can be carried into effect will be those in paragraph (g) which refers to the administration of certain acts which will come under the jurisdiction of this department, and the enforcement of rules or regulations made by the international joint commission.

I ask the Prime Minister to place before the country fairly and squarely the powers of this parliament. In addition, I ask him to bring in at the earliest possible date legislation to implement the social security programme and make it applicable to-day and not as of July 1,

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

1945. What the people are asking is this: What are you going to do? What is your plan? What instrument are you going to set up to carry the plan into effect? What machinery have you in mind? We need more than just the machinery provided here; we need the actual adoption of measures which will assure this country that degree of security which all the united nations are asking for while, at the same time maintaining our freedom.

Mr. G. H. CASTLEDEN (Yorkton): Mr. Speaker, in making a few remarks on the establishment of this department I should like to point out the great need there is in Canada for health and social security. These reforms are long overdue. Canadians in our armed forces and Canadians at home have not forgotten the depression of 1930-39 when under both a Tory and a Liberal regime this country knew want, insecurity and deplorable depression. A million Canadians were on relief and the youth of this land was denied the ordinary right of life. When you want to kill a tree the best method is to cut its roots. If you want to destroy the well-being of a country deny to its youth the right of life. It was only six short years ago when the prayer of the young men of this land, as was stated the other day before the reconstruction committee, was, "give us war in our time, O Lord." I do not think we could have a more glaring condemnation of the failure of the Canadian economic system.

Then overnight Canada blossomed forth into great production. Has not Canada shown what she is capable of producing? With a large percentage of her labour population away she has exceeded any production records that ever existed. She surprised even herself. If the natural resources of this country were properly developed we could exceed the powers of the Canadian people to consume.

Canada reaped a harvest from those years of depression in the fact that when her young men were called to the armed services the records show that between forty-five and fifty per cent were unfit physically or mentally to don the king's uniform. In thousands of homes throughout this land ill health, insecurity, poverty and want have brought our national standard to a point possibly lower than any of the other self-governing dominions of the British empire. The crime of the whole thing was that it was so unnecessary, as has been proved since this war began.

This bill to set up a Department of National Health and Welfare is in the same category as the other bill to set up the Department of Reconstruction, but I am afraid it is only a gesture to hide the failure of our economy.