

*Unemployment Insurance*

of all the western provinces, and I think of some of the eastern provinces. This conference recommended a system of unemployment insurance.

Mr. LAVERGNE: That is altogether a provincial matter.

Mr. HEENAN: They suggest a conference with the federal authorities. The Trades and Labour Congress has consistently advocated such a scheme for years. It has also been advocated by various national unions of working men. Recently a royal commission has been appointed by the government of Quebec, and having regard to the attitude of that province towards workmen's compensation and its activity in dealing with other social ills, I am satisfied that before very many years Quebec will lead Canada in social legislation.

Mr. LAVERGNE: Their compensation act is not a success.

Mr. HEENAN: Then we have no less a person than the hon. Senator Robertson, the Minister of Labour, in the course of a speech at Haileybury on January 13, 1930, advocating a system of unemployment insurance. We have had other gentlemen taking pretty much the same stand, and I want to say that I, too, have advocated this form of insurance. I advocated it before I was Minister of Labour, I advocated it while I was Minister of Labour, and I am still advocating it today. A system of unemployment insurance has also been endorsed by many city and town councils throughout Canada.

To-day there are about twenty-seven schemes of unemployment insurance in existence. Of these about one-half are of a contributory nature while the balance vary in certain particulars to meet the different needs and circumstances.

Those opposed to unemployment insurance point to the British system as a warning and misrepresent its operation. For instance, they point to the fact that there may be 2,000,000 unemployed receiving what is termed the "dole." This is a misleading picture. I had occasion to look into the matter personally one year, and while I found there were 1,000,000 people registered as unemployed, this did not mean that they were all receiving unemployment benefits; as many as 150,000 went off the register each week, and another 150,000 came on. In other words, there was a turnover weekly of 300,000 on and off the list, showing that the receipt of unemployment insurance did not demoralize the recipients and encourage them to remain out of work. Many of these men received from the fund

[Mr. Heenan.]

only two or three weeks' benefit. Many others who registered did not receive any benefit whatever, because they had not been on the unemployed register for the required number of days. So to point to the unemployment insurance scheme in Great Britain and call it the dole is not a proper representation of the English system. I am sure that in this country we can devise a scheme which will meet the needs of Canada much better than we are doing at present. As the hon. member for North Winnipeg said, we have a haphazard system, rushing to the governments to seek relief; we have overlapping, and because of that overlapping our large expenditures of money do not bring about the proper results. In my opinion it would be far better if we could evolve a scheme whereby the different parties and the state could contribute towards unemployment insurance so that men, when out of work, would know they were receiving benefits to which they had contributed.

There is another aspect of unemployment insurance for Canada which I should like to bring to the attention of the house. I believe a young country can begin a scheme of that kind with much better results than would be the case in an older country. In Canada we have a large area; our people follow various occupations and, as hon. members know, we have men who are reluctant to go from one part of the country to another. If we could have an insurance scheme whereby every man out of work would be registered and would have to report at certain periods and register as being still out of employment, we might be able to develop a method whereby a great many of these men could be placed in employment. At the present time we have about sixty-six employment offices located all over the country. We could increase the number of offices and find out where there was work for a man of a particular trade or calling who was registered as being out of employment; we could see to it that the man would get the job, and he would know there would be a job waiting for him when he arrived. In that way we could greatly cut down the cost of unemployment insurance.

I do not want to go into this matter at any great length at this time, but with the hon. member for North Winnipeg I believe the time for investigation is at an end. We ought to take some steps now, and take them quickly; we must take some immediate action—and by that I do not mean we must act to-day—to evolve and establish some scheme to take care of the unemployed. The Prime Minister dwells on the fact that we are now collecting data in connection with the census, and the Minister of Labour has mentioned