

ception of what the resolution before us means, and exactly what it proposes. For this reason I hope the house will permit me again to read the text of the resolution. Before doing so I wish to say that we should distinguish very carefully between the concrete proposition which the resolution embodies and proposes, and the preamble and other words by which it is accompanied. I would like hon. members to note in particular the preamble, and then the proposition itself. I submit that as respects the preamble it is one which any political party might apply to any other political party at almost any time. Indeed it is one which might be applied by parties other than political in commenting upon the failures or inadequacies of policies or principles which they oppose. The resolution reads:

Whereas under our present economic arrangement large numbers of our people are unemployed and without the means of earning a livelihood for themselves and their dependents; And whereas the prevalence of the present depression throughout the world indicates fundamental defects in the existing economic system;

Therefore be it resolved that, in the opinion of this house, the government should immediately take measures looking to the setting up of a cooperative commonwealth in which all natural resources and the socially necessary machinery of production will be used in the interests of the people and not the benefit of the few.

The first two paragraphs find fault with the existing economic system. So far as hon. members in this house are concerned, I think we might as well declare at once that there is not an individual here who for one minute would say that the present economic system is perfect. Indeed, if it were perfect, it would be different from almost everything else in this world. Certainly the present economic system is very far from perfect. Evidence is abundant that it has failed in certain, possibly many particulars. But the point that is important for us to consider at the moment is whether that failure is due exclusively to what might be described as a social order based upon the institution of private property which has prevailed in the past, and which exists at the present time, and which is the one aimed against in the resolution, or whether it has failed as a result, in part at least, of some of the weaknesses and faults of human nature; weaknesses and faults which I submit will not be changed by a transition from one particular form of government or state control to another. Also, it is important to consider whether a change to the socialist state, which is what the resolution advocates, would not only serve to make present conditions worse than they are.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

The preamble, as I have said, might have been applied in past election contests by either of the historic political parties in reference to its opponents with as much force as it can be applied to either or both of these parties, by the group that is citing it with reference to existing conditions. I remember, at the time the Liberal party appealed for office and was returned to office in 1921, conditions were not unlike those at the present time. The depression then existing was not world wide as it is at the moment; conditions were not as bad; so far as Canada was concerned it was nevertheless a great depression. I need not remind the house that conditions were certainly very serious. For a year or so after the Liberal administration came into office we heard from one of the leading Conservative journals in Montreal of little else save "the whispers of death," as though the end of all things had come under the then existing economic conditions. We had pointed out in the campaign that we believed the then existing conditions were in part due to the policies which had been in force under hon. gentlemen opposite while they were in office. I think we drew attention to the fact that they were in part due to the war and the consequences of the war, but we also pointed out that they were due to mistaken policies, and we indicated that if returned to power we would change those policies and substitute others which we hoped would bring about a better condition of affairs.

And that is exactly what we did, and what happened. After we came into office we reversed in many particulars the policies of hon. gentlemen opposite. They had been raising tariffs, we immediately lowered tariffs. They had been introducing other measures which were restricting trade; we took steps to remove those restrictions, and in a short time, as hon. members know, instead of huge deficits and increased taxation and continued depression, this country had for seven years in succession surpluses instead of deficits, reductions in the public debt accompanied by reductions in taxation, and a great increase of trade and employment with consequent prosperity, throughout the dominion.

I might say that my right hon. friend in the last general election, in opposing the then Liberal administration, adopted very much the same course, only he went a great deal further in what he promised. We were then at the beginning of a part of the present world depression. My right hon. friend stated that it was due to the mistaken policies of the administration. He put it all down to the policies of the administration then in