

*Unemployment Insurance*

of atmospheric grandiloquence in which he indulged during the Christmas festivities, when he promised the people of Canada not only insurance against unemployment but also health insurance, invalidity insurance and insurance against old age. Here, if you please, is his glorious contribution; here is the contribution of his government to the great cause of health insurance in the Dominion of Canada. The Prime Minister knows that I have been very friendly to many of the sections in this bill. I have cooperated to my utmost, because I believe in the principle of unemployment insurance, but when I see this thing, part IV of this bill, as the contribution of this government to the cause of health insurance in Canada, Mr. Chairman, it occasions me the most profound disappointment but very little surprise.

According to section 41 the commission from time to time may submit to the governor in council proposals for cooperation by the dominion in providing any of the benefits enumerated in paragraph (a) of the preceding section, for such action as the governor in council—just listen to this—is authorized to take. I think for the first time that is an admission by the Prime Minister of some other jurisdiction. The section goes on to provide that the commission may undertake special investigations in this regard, subject to the approval of the governor in council concerning the scope and nature of each such investigation. In my humble judgment part IV of the bill is completely useless with regard to the practical application of measures for the development of national health insurance in this dominion. The Prime Minister knows as well as I do that when the Liberal government of England passed that first great bill in 1911, the one scheme effected both national health insurance and unemployment insurance. That joint measure came into effect in England on the first day of July, 1912, with unemployment insurance affecting some 2,250,000 and health insurance affecting some 13,000,000. In 1920 or 1921 unemployment insurance was extended in the old land to cover practically the same number covered by health insurance. But honestly, Mr. Chairman, if there is any merit in this bill, with its limitations, its reservations and its uncertainties, so far as unemployment insurance is concerned, there is absolutely no merit in part IV, because it gives the commission that is to be set up nothing more than the power to consult, to confer, to cooperate, to become a glorified post office, a bureau of information—doing nothing constructive, nothing emphatic and nothing progressive to bring

[Mr. I. Mackenzie.]

about what we have wanted for years, and what my hon. friend from St. Boniface (Mr. Howden) has been advocating for the last four years, a real scheme of national health insurance in the Dominion of Canada.

Mr. HEAPS: I am rather disappointed in part IV of the bill, and I quite agree with some of the remarks made by the previous speaker (Mr. Mackenzie). I do not know why this part was included in the bill, unless it is simply a preface to something of greater importance. But if part IV is to remain in the act could we not amend it in such a way as to give far more power to the commission than they are to have under the present measure?

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): They have none now.

Mr. HEAPS: They have none, as my hon. friend has remarked, but I think some provision should be inserted which would empower the commission to give grants in aid to the provinces or municipalities that have in force health insurance schemes. If British Columbia decided to inaugurate a scheme of health insurance then I think the commission ought to have power under this section to make a contribution to that province in order to further any such health insurance scheme. I think it would be entirely within the jurisdiction of the federal government to do so; I believe on several occasions the Prime Minister has stated in this house that the government have power to make grants to the province if they see fit so to do. As a matter of fact on previous occasions we have given grants to the provinces, I believe, in aid of certain health matters coming under the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities. I understand that several provinces are considering certain matters pertaining to provincial health insurance measures. If the federal government, through the commission, could set up a standard of health insurance satisfactory to all parties, that might be adopted by the provinces in order to have such legislation as nearly uniform as possible throughout the length and breadth of the dominion, it would be a very great piece of work, and some provision should be placed in section 4 of the act which would empower the commission to make the necessary grants out of the federal exchequer towards health insurance in the various provinces.

Mr. LAPOINTE: But what would be the use of this parliament if any commission is to have the right to grant the people's money as it pleases?