

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not think my hon. friend is quite right about that. When he said he did not wish to interrupt I was a little doubtful, because I have had so many experiences with him in that regard; if he wishes later on to comment on what I am saying now he will be free to do so. I repeat that this parliament voted the money for old age pensions as a grant to the provinces. They accepted the grant and undertook to administer the old age pension scheme. It was within the competence of this parliament to make that grant, and it is equally within the competence of the present parliament to make grants for the purpose of children's allowances.

I should like to say a word to my hon. friend the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (Mr. Coldwell) and some of the members of his party in reference, not so much to any criticism they offered, as to a sort of credit they have been seeking to take unto themselves to which I do not think they are entitled. During the course of the debate one after the other of the members of that party made it a point to say that only since their group came into existence has the public begun to appreciate the importance of human resources as contrasted with natural resources, suggesting that it is they who have been the first to place the emphasis upon human well-being, and that we must be grateful to them for having given the human factor the importance it has assumed to-day.

Well, as a matter of interest I have looked up a debate in this house in which, when I was Minister of Labour, I took a leading part in 1911. I am going to read a paragraph from what I said at that time, in order to let hon. members see for themselves just how long before some of them were born the party on this side of the house was advocating full attention being given to human resources and human problems as contrasted with natural resources and purely material considerations. The debate had to do with the manufacture of matches. It had been discovered that the use of white phosphorus occasioned a frightful disease to the workers in match-making establishments. When I became Minister of Labour, being familiar with action that had been taken at the International Labour Office in Switzerland with respect to a substitute for white phosphorus which would avoid a serious occupational disease, I sought in this parliament to have that substitute used. Under the jurisdiction this parliament had—I need not go into the details at the moment—it was possible to have the measure considered as one concerning trade and commerce. It is of interest to note that at that time the same exception to proceeding was taken by hon.

gentlemen opposite as is being taken by their successors to-day, namely, to question its constitutionality; they doubted very much if the ministry had the right to interfere in a matter of the kind. Let me read a paragraph to illustrate the sort of thing the Liberal party was trying to cope with. The condition of the workers in that industry was so horrible that as Minister of Labour I would not believe what my own officers told me as to those conditions, which they themselves had investigated, and before speaking in this house, I personally visited the homes of some of the people who were working in the establishment in which white phosphorus was being used in the manufacture of matches. This is what I said in the house at that time:

When I read that report I hardly believed the statements that were made in it, and I decided that before I would mention the subject in this house I would verify the statements myself. The two last cases, I think, were about as bad as any reported in the list, so I went to the homes of these people myself and had a conversation with them. I will vouch from personal observation for the truth of every statement that is contained in the account of the two last cases I have read. One of the women I talked with had both of her jaws removed entirely and had the abscesses in her mouth to which I made reference. The bones taken from that woman's face are at the present moment in my office. That woman is supported by a sister who has to earn the food required for each of them, and she has been rendered an invalid for the rest of her life. I went to the other home and I talked with this woman, who had lain in bed for four years. At the present time she is the only support of her mother, and she is able to earn \$4 a week. She is without a lower jaw at all and she told me that during her illness she pulled her jaw out with her own hands, such was the condition of the bones at that time.

It is not a pleasant task to bring facts of this kind before the house, but I must say that when I came back from attending a conference at which this subject was being discussed and these facts were put before me, I felt I would be negligent in the duty I owed this country if I hesitated to bring into parliament for the sake of concealing facts of this kind similar legislation to that which has been enacted in Great Britain.

Now will my hon. friends of the C.C.F. please listen to the next paragraph:

We talk a great deal in these days about the conservation of natural resources, but I think that more important than the conservation of natural resources is the conservation of human resources, the conservation of human health and of human life. Resources are well enough; our lumber, forests, ore and minerals were given to us for a purpose, but they were given for the preservation and not the destruction of life. So in the Department of Labour we have taken as one of the objects before us, as part of the work which I trust it will be possible to carry on through the years to come, this important question of the preservation of health, the conservation of human life, the