

*Unemployment Insurance*

provinces to discuss these matters so as to prevent overlapping. When that is done, it will be possible to develop further the scheme that has been put into force in some parts of the empire as well as in foreign countries. I would not undertake to be responsible for any scheme until far more complete information is made available than now exists, and the extent to which the provinces will cooperate and coordinate their efforts with those of the dominion must of course be determined. I can only say that the minister has already taken in hand the question of a conference for the purpose of trying to settle that. Vain efforts have been made to settle it; it is only fair to say that efforts have been made by hon. gentlemen opposite, but health policies seem to have an amazing attraction for provinces at one stage and to arouse an amazing dislike at another. If it is possible for provincial authorities to provide the policies and have the dominion provide the money, they are very popular, but if the order is reversed they are not so much in vogue. I agree with an observation made I think this session by the hon. gentleman from Edmonton in regard to efforts of what I describe as private agencies to secure grants from time to time for the purpose of promoting public health; unless there is a more definite relation of their activities to those of the federal authority from whom the money is obtained I have not observed very satisfactory results. Here the report of the actuaries upon the matter is perhaps responsible to some extent, but if the contemplated efforts as indicated by correspondence can be put in the form of a definite arrangement or agreement I think matters will be in a far more advanced position than they are now.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Do I understand then that this section does not in any way commit the government to the undertaking of a general health policy?

Mr. BENNETT: I thought I made it perfectly clear the other day that this is not an undertaking on behalf of the federal government to pay any sums of money. That is to be dealt with in another way. The section says:

The duties and powers of the commission under this part of this act shall be exercised, so far as may be found practicable and expedient, in cooperation with any department or departments of the government of Canada—

There being a health and pensions department to which that refers.

—with the dominion council of health, with any province or any number of provinces collectively, or with any municipality or any number

[Mr. Bennett.]

of municipalities collectively, or with associations or corporations.

This goes further than most of the provisions because of the relation between municipalities and industry, the employees of which are insured under the act. It is to relate the question of health to insurance under the act.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: If the Prime Minister's contention in regard to this measure of unemployment insurance is correct it is not necessary at all to confer with the provinces. Why may I ask should it be necessary to have these conferences with the provincial ministers in respect to national health? National health is a national subject, and, to use the words of the Prime Minister, the voice of Canada is not the collective voice of the provinces, but that of this parliament.

Mr. BENNETT: That is right.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: If that is correct I do not see the necessity for any conference with the provinces. I must say that personally I favour the idea of conference, and I think that equally there should have been a conference with the provinces in regard to unemployment insurance.

Mr. BENNETT: I think that on a moment's reflection the right hon. gentleman will realize why we have dealt with it in this way. The provinces cannot under any statute that may be enacted by this dominion be released from their obligations with respect to the health of their people. They have their health departments, and expend large sums of money in clinical and other work, for instance dental services. Whether men are insured or uninsured is not a matter of concern to them; their liabilities and obligations are there. That is one of the matters that has engaged the attention of successive governments, because the provinces in carrying on these health activities seek from the dominion sometimes special grants and sometimes merely what you might call propaganda effort. What I said with respect to insurance when I was moving the second reading of the bill had no reference to health, because that now rests with the provincial authority, and is an obligation which they are carrying out in a very clearcut manner. None of the provinces are undertaking responsibility with respect to the matter with which this bill deals. It is believed that this furnishes a unique opportunity to tie the efforts of the provinces and the dominion into one coordinated whole. I may be wrong; my hopes in that regard may be too great, but here you have the insurance officers, the inspectors and everyone