

through the legislation which is on the statutes to-day establishing in Canada national unemployment insurance plan. These are two of the most important social insurance measures which could possibly be enacted.

Hon. members will notice further that there is mention in the statement of policy of the legislation being enacted in part by the provinces and in part by the dominion. Most of the social security legislation existing in the provinces of this country to-day has been put on the statute books by Liberal governments. Consider the matter of workmen's compensation, mothers' allowances, maternity benefits, health measures and the like; go through the different provinces of this dominion and you will find that most of the social security measures in Canada have been enacted by Liberal governments since this Liberal platform was adopted.

What are we doing now? To-day we are seeking to carry this whole programme a step further. We are now face to face with so much in the way of social security legislation in Canada that we feel it is necessary, if there is to be an avoidance of waste and extravagance, to have the whole system coordinated. We realize that the matter of health insurance, all that relates to sickness and invalidity, is becoming increasingly important. We feel that at this stage there should be, before there is a further enactment on social security lines, a clear understanding of the place all health measures should hold in a complete national plan.

I could enlarge on that, but I think I have said enough to make it clear that, so far as the Liberal party in Canada is concerned, it laid down, for the first time in this country, a comprehensive programme of social security. It outlined that policy from beginning to close. It did not expect to carry it out in the first year or two—we knew its fulfilment would necessarily run over a series of years—but we have already implemented that programme in large part, and we will continue to do so so long as we have the opportunity.

A paragraph which is of importance, it will come up in connection with other measures, is this:

... on matters pertaining to industrial and social legislation an effort should be made to overcome any question of jurisdiction between the dominion and the provinces by effective cooperation between the several governments.

Well, have we succeeded in that?

In regard to the question of pensions, we had to consider the matter of jurisdiction as between the provinces and ourselves. We met that question by a cooperative arrangement

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

whereby the dominion undertook on conditions which ensured a common practice to pay so much and the provinces to make a contribution of so much, and we allowed the administration of pensions then to be carried out further by the provincial governments. We met the difficulty by conferences. When we came to unemployment insurance we were again faced with the question of jurisdiction. We felt there should be a national scheme of unemployment insurance, but the government of the day had no authority so to legislate. The British North America Act had left property and civil rights in the control of the provinces, and that included unemployment insurance. After carefully discussing the matter with the provinces, after having a committee of this house carefully explore the situation, we were convinced that the wise thing with regard to unemployment insurance was to have a national insurance scheme, not a provincial scheme. Having agreed to that, the next step was to get the British North America Act amended.

There has been much said in this debate about the obstacle of the British North America Act. I do not think that the amending of that act is a matter we need to be in the least concerned about, once we decide that we want it amended in any particular way. I recall very well what was done in connection with the unemployment insurance measure. After this house had agreed upon an unemployment insurance measure, an address was presented from this parliament to the British parliament, requesting that the British North America Act should be amended so as to put "unemployment insurance" into section 91 of the British North America Act, thereby giving the federal government the power to enact a national measure of unemployment insurance.

Mr. HAZEN: With the consent of the provinces.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Oh yes, I say that it was done with their consent. The consent practically of all. That is important in these social insurance matters. Any government in this country that ignores the provinces and tries to ride roughshod over them is not going to aid in settling any questions of social security, it will only make an existing situation worse. But approach matters in the right way, in the spirit and method in which I believe this committee will, as a great national problem affecting provinces as well as the dominion, and I believe it will be possible to get agreement between all. It is