

been rendered. But the law lords of the Privy Council no doubt had knowledge that at least one political party in Canada was urging that it was ultra vires, and they knew of course that the nine provinces, as represented by their governments, were so contending. In that atmosphere they gave their judgment. They cannot give any other now. This measure is far more clearly ultra vires than the Social Insurance Act. It would have been declared ultra vires even then, but now, after that pronouncement, it cannot be declared otherwise.

I know there are those who say, "Well, pass it anyway, and maybe it will precipitate some change in the statute which is the foundation of our Constitution." Well, I would rather go about the matter more frankly and more directly. I fear vast sums will be paid under this legislation and we shall be left in a bog.

My next words are addressed to the general character of the measure. That it has features laudable from one angle of view, there is no question, and I for one do not doubt the bona fides of the Minister who introduces the Bill. We have for years been purchasing one of the great commodities of this country—wheat. We have been doing so because we could not witness the devastation which would result throughout Western Canada if a certain price were not paid for its primary crop. At the same time we have been contributing many millions to alleviate distress and maintain subsistence on a rather meagre but reasonable level. The Minister's attitude—and it is the only attitude anyone can take who favours this measure—is that he would much prefer to have people in our agricultural districts who suffer distress because of failure of their crop, and in a major degree through no fault of their own, placed in a less humiliating position than that of being in receipt of relief. I should prefer it too, but what I do fear, and what I am as convinced of as I can be of anything, is this: you cannot work the scheme of civilization in harmony with the liberty which we have as free citizens in a democratic country on any National Socialistic basis. It may not be a pleasant conclusion to reach, but it is inexorably true, that free people cannot maintain their institutions and make the machine function without the suffering of people who through failure of individual effort or by the hand of fortune are in distress. It cannot be avoided. We got away from it in some degree, though not so far as we are getting away now, in respect of old age pensions. We lifted off the individual what seemed like some measure of humiliation due to his failure to store up something to live on in his old age. Now we know the abuses which have

resulted. Yet the old age pension scheme has more to defend it, because the individual must be in need before he is entitled to a pension, but assistance under this proposal is not based wholly upon need. Clearly under this Bill, and frankly by the word of the Minister who is its sponsor, a man may be in receipt of this insurance when he has no need at all.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Exceptionally.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: It may be exceptionally. I will come to a discussion of that a little later. It is based, not upon need, but upon the principle of insurance. Really it is insurance to which the State will have to contribute without question, and in tremendous measure.

When you take away the consequences of failure, due in many cases to shiftlessness—not always, but very often, in major degree—you take away that incentive which is the essential of a free people. The democratic machine cannot continue to operate in that way. Under the totalitarian system there would not be much difficulty in directing people on semi-desert land to go where the State says they ought to be; but it cannot be done under the institutions we support. We put a premium on their staying on this semi-desert land, and if failure comes they will not feel they are in receipt of charity, but will be supported in the belief that what they are getting is their right.

I should like the State to be able to do all these things now proposed, but it cannot. When you try to make democracy work along with National Socialism you produce two results. First, you drive irresistibly towards bankruptcy, for he who promises the highest and widest distribution gets the vote. You also weaken the moral fibre of your people. The two systems will not go together. Other states have tried, and you know what has resulted. We may try, but year by year we find ourselves down deeper and ever deeper financially, with the moral fibre weaker and ever weaker; and the end need not be described.

For these reasons I am opposed to the measure. I do not say this Government is the first to take this path, but I believe the path is wrong, and we must recognize the truth and reverse our steps.

The Hon. the SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion for the third reading of the Bill?

Some Hon. SENATORS: Carried.