

for the purpose of elaborating some hygienic organization to take charge of this work and effectually carry it out. I think that such a system would effect most important results to the state, that it would save more money than any one has any idea of, more suffering than perhaps one-fourth of the medical men in this country could save, more lives every year than we are bringing in by immigration, and more wealth than would pay a very large share of our national debt.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD then said : Mr. Speaker, the importance of this subject cannot well be over-estimated ; and if there were any doubts as to that, the able and impressive speech of my hon. friend who moved this resolution, supported, as he has been, by the remarks made by other hon. gentlemen, would convince us that it is a subject which should not be overlooked. It has not been overlooked, however, by the Dominion Parliament ; and as far as the Government have been able to act under the powers given to them by the British North America Act, substantial steps have been taken for the purpose of ascertaining the best methods of preventing the spread of disease. The resolution asks that the Federal Government should establish a health department with a responsible head. Well, we have a health department in the Department of Agriculture, and it would not advance the purpose of the resolution at all to establish a separate department, giving another member of Parliament the title of Minister of Health. The Minister of Agriculture, in the first place, is given charge of the census and statistics, and also of quarantine ; and the remarks of the hon. member for Shelburne (General Laurie) show the importance of having these subjects under one head. He has pointed out that in England there are two departments, one looking after the diseases of men, and the other looking after the diseases of animals ; but, as it is now ascertained beyond a doubt that diseases are communicable from man to animals, and from animals to man, it is of great importance that the whole subject of health should be under one head. One of the difficulties to be encountered in this matter arises from the divided authority of the Federal Parliament and that of the different Provinces. I think, if I remember aright, that before 1872 there were certain statutory powers given to the Federal Government on this subject ; but it was found, from the nature of the

division of powers, that the officers who could be best utilised for the purpose of collecting mortuary statistics, and who could really aid most effectually in the stopping of the spread of diseases, were officers of the Provincial Governments—so much so, that Parliament repealed the clauses giving those special powers to the Federal Government. The same reason which induced Parliament then to throw the responsibility principally upon the Provincial authorities exists at this moment. . . . The Federal Government have spread throughout the country only a few Custom house officers, excisemen, and such officers, and if the responsibility of attending to this subject were thrown upon the Federal Government only, it would be absolutely necessary to appoint a staff of special health officers at an enormous expense, who would not be able to do the work so well as the Provincial Governments with their extensive machinery.

It has occurred to me, after listening to the very able speeches of the hon. gentlemen who have spoken, that the best plan would be—and I would suggest it to my hon. friend before asking him to withdraw his resolution, after having fully impressed Parliament with the subject—to have a convention, to which the Federal Government would ask the various Provincial Governments to send representatives, for the purpose of endeavoring to frame some united plan for exercising the various powers conferred upon them by the Constitution in such a manner that they could unite in one system and carry it out as efficiently and inexpensively as possible. It has occurred to me only since I have heard this discussion, that the general feeling of the House is that that suggestion could well be carried out, and we might combine the Provincial and the Federal Governments in the adoption of some united system. I again say that I think we owe a debt of gratitude to my hon. friend (Mr. Roome) for bringing up this subject, and I think every member, no matter on which side of the House he may be, will agree with me that it has been well and impressively placed before the House, and in such a manner that we cannot ignore it. I now ask my hon. friend to be satisfied with the progress the subject has made in the House, and to agree that his motion should be withdrawn.

Mr. LAURIER then made a few remarks.

The motion, then, with the leave of the House, was withdrawn.