

that would be just and fair criticism. But when you are dealing with the provisions made for hospitals at the present time, grants in aid, provisions with respect to the maintenance of health, at least in these provinces, and when the statement is made to us by many of the provincial premiers that they propose to deal with a scheme of health insurance, what are we to do? What do we propose to do here? We propose to lay the foundation for a national health measure, and you cannot do that in a night; nor have we in all the departments of the public service the information that would enable any scheme of health insurance to be adopted. The census figures in 1931 were prepared so as to enable us to deal, with some degree of actuarial certainty, with the problem of unemployment insurance, which has been discussed in this country for a considerable time. We now have the information based on that census. But I say to this committee with perfect frankness that we have no such information with respect to a system of health insurance.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): We have in our province.

Mr. BENNETT: I know what they have there, because they have talked the matter over with us. The preceding government discussed the matter at some length and Doctor Young—I hope he is still living—as long as fifteen years ago was endeavouring to accumulate the information that would enable them to deal with the problem. Now, laying the foundation as we are, we propose to proceed with the accumulation of knowledge that never has been gathered before in the terms in which it will be gathered here; and secondly, not to impose this structure of health insurance upon that body of information. For what would happen if the government brought in a bill dealing with health insurance, having regard to conditions in the provinces and their facilities? What we do propose to do is to follow that to its logical end and, in the first instance, to do what one hon. gentleman suggested—I do not know where he derived his information—give such assistance to the provinces at this time as will enable them to coordinate their efforts with this plan. And I believe that ultimately it will be found that the provinces, in their desire to coordinate and to cooperate, will in all probability place the administration, the broad administration, not the detailed administration, with this commission. But to do it now, without having anything further than we have at the present time, would be ridiculous.

We are endeavouring to attain the very object which members of this house have asked for; we are endeavouring to reach the end which they so much desire; and we are met with this suggestion, "Wipe it out; don't pay any attention to that; we would rather see it taken out of the bill altogether". They do not want to lay the foundation but to build an edifice hanging in the air, to swing in space and fall down. Does the committee seriously consider what is involved? The strong language of the hon. member for Vancouver Centre (Mr. Mackenzie) does not improve the situation. His strong and vigorous and, I think, wholly unwarranted attacks against myself on public platforms are wholly unworthy of a former cabinet minister and a member of the profession to which I belong. But that is not a matter of importance; I mention it to-night only because he has seen fit to talk in his usual—I would not use a harsh term—irresponsible language.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. BENNETT: I say that deliberately, because it must have been irresponsible. Now, you have here an earnest effort to achieve an end; and the thanks we get for endeavouring to achieve it is to be told, "Wipe it out." Why in the name of common sense should you say that because one set of men are endeavouring to grapple with a situation it is wrong, whereas if another set of men grappled with it it would be right? It does seem very strange, does it not? I ask each one of the members opposite me from the various provinces to take these two sections and apply them to the facts in their respective provinces and to ask themselves whether they know of any method by which, honestly administered with the cooperation and aid of the federal authority, both financial and otherwise, you could lay the foundation for a scheme of national health. When the proper time comes, if the minister succeeds in his endeavour to bring about some concerted plan of effort, we will take the necessary steps to assist in seeing that it is carried out—whether through this commission or whether through the provincial health departments, depends entirely upon the attitude of the departments. And the reason this goes no further than to lay that foundation is that we are unable to speak with any degree of authority as to their views. At one time they express one view, at another time another, and on another occasion still another, depending very largely on the political complexion of the governments that express the views. Here you have the purpose