

*Unemployment Insurance*

any pitfall in that direction and we are now able to bring in a measure which has the complete support of all the provinces.

I have tabled this afternoon the correspondence which has taken place between the dominion and the provinces. It is I think of a historical character. It is as important I believe as any material that appears in the volumes of the royal commission on dominion-provincial relations. For that reason I suggested a little earlier to-day that it might be printed in the votes and proceedings of to-day so as to be found permanently in the records of this parliament.

I do not think I need say more. As a matter of fact, not having received the consent of all nine provinces until this year, we could not possibly before this particular session have introduced in a manner which would avoid all questions a measure for the amendment of the British North America Act. There were, if I recollect aright, three provinces, namely New Brunswick, Quebec and Alberta, which prior to the beginning of this year had not given their full approval. But each of these provinces, recognizing the national importance of this measure, and, I believe being moved to see it in a clearer light as a consequence of the problems which are inevitable at this time of war and which will arise when the war is over, have agreed to join with the federal government in giving unanimous approval to the enactment of the measure.

That enables me, I hope, to answer in part the question which my hon. friend the leader of the opposition asked, and which was, whether the government can give any undertaking that the measure will be put through at the present session of parliament. I believe that, inasmuch as this resolution will pass the House of Commons with the approval of hon. members on all sides, and that it is pretty certain to meet with like approval in the other house, the government at Westminster will lose no time in passing the amendment which we are requesting by resolution. How long that will take in the present circumstances no one, of course, can say. But I should be rather astonished if it is not possible, notwithstanding present conditions, for the government at Westminster to amend the British North America Act, in accordance with our wishes, within a day or two. I should think that it would not be necessary to wait to send Britain the submissions by mail, but that, the circumstances being what they are, a cable from the ministry informing the British government that both our houses

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

of parliament had unanimously agreed to the address and requesting that action be taken as speedily as possible, would be met with very prompt action on the part of the British government.

As soon as the British North America Act is amended in the particular required a bill will be introduced, and it is certainly our intention and desire to have the bill go through at the present session. There will have to be something wholly unforeseen at this moment to prevent that course being carried out by the government. It is certainly our present expectation as well as our present desire.

I may have omitted reference to some other matters which have been mentioned, but I believe the only one is that alluded to by my hon. friend the acting leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation group, who regretted that it was not possible for us to make the request to the British government somewhat larger, more all-embracing, than the one which is being made and which is confined to unemployment insurance. May I say that, if we had ventured to go beyond unemployment insurance, we would probably have met with further objections on the part of some, if not of all, of the provinces. As the correspondence will show, one of the circumstances which enabled us to get the approval of all of the provinces was the fact that we were asking for only one amendment, specifically related to unemployment insurance. I imagine the provinces have felt that they would like to wait and see just how that amendment works out before they give their consent to amendments of wider scope.

Mr. J. R. MacNICOL (Davenport): As one who in quite a number of sessions has advocated unemployment insurance, I am going to support the resolution, and I hope that I shall be able also to support the main provisions of the bill. I appreciate the difficulty which the government has had. Having taken the stand that it was a constitutional question, they have proceeded from that point of view, after having appealed to the privy council for its decision, and are preparing to bring in a bill with the consent of all the provinces.

There are, I believe, only two other federated nations having unemployment insurance laws which have had the same problem to grapple with. In Switzerland, with its twenty-five cantons, they could not come to the same satisfactory conclusion as has now been reached in Canada, where all the provinces are in unison with regard to carrying out the plan. The result in Switzerland was that in nine of the cantons there are compulsory unemployment insurance laws; in fourteen the law is