

Family Allowances

I had better correct a few of his ideas about who has been first or last in the advocacy of social legislation. Also I was one of the early advocates of mothers' allowances. My interest in this reform arose from having lived in a neighborhood in which children blessed almost every home, and from early childhood I saw what it meant to a family if the breadwinner either died or was killed. How long mothers' allowances have been on the statute books I do not know.

Mr. HOWDEN: May I tell my hon. friend that a Liberal government in Manitoba enacted workmen's compensation and mothers' allowances in 1915. Manitoba was the first province in Canada to do so.

An hon. MEMBER: No.

Mr. MacNICOL: It is not important which province was the first. I know that Ontario was very early in the field, thirty years ago, and long before the late leader of the C.C.F.—for whom I had high regard and a very friendly feeling—was in this house.

Another early piece of legislation, which was mentioned by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart, was unemployment insurance. May I say that I went to Europe and visited several European countries which had unemployment insurance and studied the benefits of their legislation. Perhaps I should yield precedence to the Prime Minister and some others as being ahead of myself in advocating unemployment insurance, but I was very early an advocate of it, because I earnestly believed in it. I did so because in the plant with which I was associated were hundreds of men, the very flower of Canada. There are no finer men than the average industrial worker. No class of men have rendered more service to their country. I might instance the hon. member for Huron-Perth, who was a foreman in a small plant in the town in which he lived, and during that period found time also to serve as mayor of his community, as chairman of the hospital board, and in every worthwhile effort in the town in which he resided. He is but one of thousands; I could name many others. I name him because I see him sitting over there and because we have a certain affinity, having both laboured in businesses associated with iron and steel, his company making steel boilers and other agricultural machinery for farmers, and the large company I was associated with making boilers and radiators and steam equipment of one kind and another.

I advocated unemployment insurance because on so many occasions I saw good honest citizens laid off work through no fault of their

own and no fault of their employer, and as their wages were never high they suffered much distress.

Another piece of legislation which I advocated many years ago was the old age pension. Numerous men have supported conscientiously and honestly this social reform. The Prime Minister was an early advocate of it; I heard him speak on the subject many years ago.

Many other pieces of social legislation have been discussed in recent years. Some are federal, some wholly provincial. If all of them are not on the statute books I hope they soon will be. The importance of maternal allowances cannot be disputed. Too often the advent of a little "treasure" into the home is a heavy handicap to the breadwinner, the ordinary humble honest heroic citizen. The allowance should apply at least to every family whose income is not more than \$2,500 a year. If this provision is not on our statute book it should be. It is in effect in England. Of course in Canada the present Prime Minister and his predecessors have been faced with the problem of the nine provinces. I hope the time is not far distant—now that space is almost annihilated with the advent of radio and aeroplanes and swift automobiles and fast trains—when the federal government will have much more power than it has to-day, so that it can do what New Zealand has done, what Australia, whose federal constitution permits a little more latitude than ours, has been able to do, and what the British government long ago put into effect.

Mr. Chairman, I was almost going to say I am a worshipper of the old country; they have been so far ahead of us and any other country in social legislation. They have set the way for all of us and they deserve unstinted praise. The reason why they have been able to do it is that they are not circumscribed by nine provincial governments, from whom they had to get permission to do certain things. I am not going to speak on the constitutionality of this measure; it does not interest me. If this government has the power to do it, then I give them all credit for having gone ahead with it. This constitution business is something I am not competent to talk on. Therefore I have no reference to make to it.

Another thing that I have seen in my long association with industry is the terrible hardships that are experienced by the workingman's family when he, the bread-winner, becomes sick or his wife becomes sick. They have no sick benefits. For some years we have had this in some plants. We followed the programme which was adopted in England, away back in the early nineteenth century.

[Mr. MacNicol.]