

the war; it is now, in order that our people may understand that we really are in earnest when we say that the world will be remade on a better pattern.

My time has expired and I do not wish to transgress further upon the courtesy of the house. But I want to say again that if we are to impress the people of Canada with our sincerity; if we are to convince them that we are indeed in earnest about doing the things that we believe should be done in the realm of social security, then we should not wait. I think the Prime Minister once said that one way of getting rid of an awkward question was to refer it to a committee. I hope that this is not just getting rid of an awkward question. If it is, I can assure hon. gentlemen opposite that the people of Canada will hold them to strict accountability.

Mr. J. A. ROSS (Souris): I listened attentively yesterday to the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) speaking on this resolution that a select committee of this house be set up to examine and report on a national plan of social insurance which will constitute a charter of social security for the whole of Canada. In the past twenty-three years the right hon. gentleman has been Prime Minister for some sixteen years and leader of the opposition for the remaining seven. On August 14, 1937, with the concurrence of the then Minister of Finance and the then Minister of Justice, he had set up what was known first as the Rowell commission and later as the Rowell-Sirois commission on dominion-provincial relations, recommending to that commission first, that it was expedient to provide for a reexamination of the economic and financial basis of confederation and of the distribution of legislative powers in the light of economic and social developments of the last seventy years. That commission, as most hon. members will remember, made an exhaustive and detailed study of prevailing conditions throughout this dominion and submitted a lengthy and comprehensive report to the present Prime Minister on May 3, 1940.

This afternoon my colleague the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) made reference to a speech delivered in Toronto last October by the Prime Minister to a gathering of labour people and to the very fine sentiments he expressed at that meeting. The hon. member also referred to those principles of social security which were enunciated by the Prime Minister in 1919 when he accepted the leadership of the Liberal party, and the speaker who preceded me, the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell), quoted at some length from that chart of the Prime Minister's which was set forth in 1919.

I should have thought, in view of all these circumstances, that the Prime Minister would present to the house at this time a bill on social security and health insurance setting forth the government's policy, instead of presenting simply the resolution now under discussion.

The report of the royal commission on dominion-provincial relations accentuates the need for some central authority to obviate the dangers of fluctuating provincial incomes during depression periods. The report shows us the urgent needs of the provinces prior to the war and their inability to carry on the necessary social and health services. It goes without saying that the situation of the provinces is even more desperate now that the war has made it necessary to invade provincial fields of taxation.

The need for a collective attack is clearly shown by the evidence brought forward by the various provinces in their submissions to the Rowell-Sirois commission. In brief, here is the picture. I quote:

Costs of medical services are increasing, but the ability of their people to pay is not increasing.

The high incidence of preventable disease and death.

Inadequacies of hospital facilities, especially in rural areas.

Inadequate accommodation in mental hospitals.

The expenditures on behalf of the mentally diseased and mentally defective have increased more rapidly than the general population rate.

The problems of cancer, mental illness, venereal diseases and tuberculosis, which ignore provincial boundaries, can best be attacked by unity, rather than by nine more or less sporadic provincial attacks.

Early diagnostic and preventive measures are needed all down the line.

The urgent need for properly organized services in the field of maternal and child health.

The increase in the costs of dependency because of illness and premature death.

The crying need for federal responsibility and financial aid—in fact, some system of national health insurance—if the problem is to be solved.

They acknowledge their provincial lacks, but state that they are unable to finance the health services they should be giving to their people.

I quote further from this pamphlet on Canadian nutrition surveys which have been made. It says:

In Canada, nutrition surveys at different income levels have been made in cities across the country; and they show that Canada has a serious nutrition problem. Dr. L. B. Pett, director of nutrition services, in the Department of Pensions and National Health at Ottawa (and also secretary of the Canadian Council on Nutrition) is conducting a wide-spread campaign to develop interest in nutrition on a community basis.

He says: "What people are we trying to reach? The answer is—everyone. . . . The Canadian dietary surveys indicated that while