

*Mr. Cornwell*: I congratulate the sub-committee on the report which has been brought down, but I regret that they have not gone more fully into the question of unemployment insurance. This is no new subject, for such a system has been established for many years in a number of other countries. Unemployment has been with us for the past three or four years in a very acute form. It has been discussed broadly, and it has been considered in Parliament. Cabinet has discussed the question: I do not say that Parliament has discussed it fully, but Cabinet has considered it. Legislation in the form of a very moderate proposal was submitted by the labour representatives to Cabinet, and, that being the case, we were anticipating—some of us who were not members of this sub-committee—that the sub-committee in its report would urge the Government to establish an unemployment-insurance Fund. When we advocated that proposal the workers agreed to contribute one-third of the cost of maintaining the fund. That proved that we were earnestly desirous of the establishment of this fund, and willing to do our share in assisting to solve the problem of unemployment. We also proposed that the local authorities in the country districts should receive assistance for putting in hand urgent work, and to meet the cost of that work this fund would be of great assistance. We feel sure that had Cabinet and Parliament given greater consideration to that Bill which was introduced it would have won favour with the majority of members of the House. While some of the members on the Secondary Industries Committee endeavoured to get this proposal for unemployment insurance brought forward as a recommendation, we did not have sufficient time to allow members to discuss the Bill, and seriously consider the advantages of the scheme not only to the workers, but to the country as a whole. I very much regret that the sub-committee failed to come to a unanimous decision on this particular question, but we hope that the fact of its being included as an addendum to the report will influence the Government to take some notice of it and give the subject of unemployment insurance careful consideration in the very near future.

*Mr. A. Cook*: As a member of the sub-committee, I wish to say that we did give the question of unemployment insurance very great consideration. It was discussed from every possible angle. The various schemes in operation in different countries throughout the world were looked into and fully considered, but unfortunately the gentlemen on the other side could not see their way at this stage to join with the employees' section in recommending to the Government the immediate introduction of an unemployment-insurance scheme. I think that this was at the back of the minds of members on both sides at the time they arrived at their final decision; that the proposals of the employers' section will eventually make available to the Government further information on the question, so that in the near future—with the data that is to be gathered, with the experience that is behind us on the unemployed question, and with a certain amount of knowledge of what is likely to take place in the future—the position should receive very thorough investigation by the proposed committee which is recommended to be set up. I do not think there would be any opposition from the other side if after all the available information was received and considered a proposal to bring down an unemployment-insurance scheme was adopted. I do not think that there would then be much objection from the employers' side. As one of the workers' representatives on the sub-committee, I wish to say that I am still of the opinion that in order to solve this problem eventually some system of unemployment insurance must be introduced. I want to make it clear that I do not mean an unemployment-insurance system whereby the unemployed man would be compensated with money for being unemployed; I refer to a scheme which will provide against unemployment. I desire to see the Department or the Board which is to administer the measure make provision by looking ahead so that work may be found for the men as they become unemployed. I believe that such a system will prove the solution of the problem. If that system were introduced, and a Board set up consisting of experts who could view the position and make provision for work ahead, there would be very few unemployed in New Zealand next winter, and there would be very few men to whom it would be necessary to pay money in the form of relief, because provision would be made for work to be available for them when their casual occupations closed down. I believe that the greatest problem in connection with unemployment is that of the casual workers who are compelled to flock into the towns when their seasonal occupations, such as freezing, threshing-mill, and shearing industries, cease. Those workers, under present conditions, are compelled to come into the cities and towns, and so flood the ranks of the unemployed. Under a comprehensive system of unemployment insurance, when those seasonal industries closed down there would be work provided to keep such men in the country districts—afforestation or some other class of work. Much has been said, both in committee and in open conference, about the welfare of the country; but the welfare of any country, in my opinion, depends on the welfare of its people. With a prosperous and satisfied people the welfare of any country must be assured, but with a vast army of unemployed any country will go back. No greater evil can befall any man or woman than to become an unemployed person. Instead of becoming good citizens, such people are forced to become undesirable citizens if the duration of their unemployment is of any great length. There is no argument against that; they are forced into places which do them no good, and this applies especially to the young boys and girls. If they were usefully employed such evils would not be placed in their way, and they would get that start in life to which they are entitled. I am still of the opinion that the Government would be well advised to leave this matter no longer in abeyance, but to carefully consider and introduce some unemployment-insurance scheme during next session. If this were done it would be to the advantage of every citizen in New Zealand. Every person should be made responsible for the scheme. It should be made compulsory that contributions should be made by the employer, the Government, and the employee, and also the person who is neither an employer nor an employee—the retired person, so long as he is a ratepayer. The responsibility for the scheme should fall on the shoulders of every adult person in the Dominion: they should all "do their bit" in order to provide employment for the unemployed, and so assist the country.