

*Forces—Reinstatement in Employment*

to take in this house is that in this Dominion of Canada one of two things must be done: employment must be provided or, failing that, adequate maintenance for every man who is willing to work.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): Hear, hear.

Mr. MacINNIS: I base my position in this house on that principle. It may be good policy from a political point of view to advocate a preference for the returned men.

Mr. HOMUTH: That is not fair.

Mr. GREEN: On a question of order, Mr. Chairman, the member is making an unfair implication.

Mr. MacINNIS: I make no implication, but if my hon. friend is so touchy, I will not put it in that way.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): If I may interrupt, for the last twenty-five years every single party in this House of Commons has agreed on a preference for the ex-service men.

Mr. MacINNIS: I agree and have always agreed on a preference for the ex-service men in the civil service and in various other services. But you will find employers who will be quite willing to say that they want to give a preference to the returned men, but who, when the war is over and demobilization comes, will pit the returned men against the men who did not go to the front.

Mr. HOMUTH: No.

Mr. MacINNIS: Then disprove it. I know it, from what happened after the last war. I have seen returned men used to break up workmen's organizations, and come pretty near to killing men at that, too.

The first thing you will be confronted with, and particularly in connection with your employment offices—that is altogether a different thing from the civil service, to which I shall refer later—is this: On the one hand you will have elderly men looking for work, men who could not get into the armed services. On the other hand you will have young men who were not of an age to go into the armed services. Why in the matter of employment should you discriminate against the young man who was not old enough to go into the armed services, and who, if he had been, would have enlisted or, if he had not, would have been conscripted into the forces? The employment offices are definitely a part of the unemployment insurance scheme. The man who, when working and a contributor under the scheme, becomes unemployed, if he does not get a job through the employment

[Mr. MacInnis.]

offices, will receive unemployment insurance benefits. Would it not be better, instead of making a division between the men who went to the war and the men who did not go to the war, to pay adequate maintenance to the returned man until such time as there is a proper employment for him? To do otherwise would be only for the benefit of those who want to make a division in labour's ranks. While the war is on, and before this problem is pressing upon us, we should first decide on the principle and then stick to that principle that every man, woman and child in Canada who is willing to work shall get work or adequate maintenance.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: I do not agree with the argument of the hon. member who has just spoken. I do not see how this legislation causes any cleavage whatsoever. As the Minister of Pensions and National Health (Mr. Mackenzie) has said, the members of this house, regardless of party, have given lip-allegiance at least for the last twenty-five years to the principle of a preference to the men who have served their country, and I for one do not want to see that principle departed from regardless of the argument advanced by the hon. member.

A reading of this legislation shows that while it is a step in the right direction, it is rather haphazardly put together. Without regard to party all hon. members believe that the surest guarantee that men will be employed after the war is the arousing of a public sense of responsibility now. We know that in the transition period from war to peace great difficulties will be experienced in order to assure to those who serve their country the right which their country owes them of receiving back the job they gave up in order to go to war. We do not want these men to return to the humiliation and despair of unemployment and to an economic struggle once more against those whose physical standards will be very much better than theirs.

I think, too, that this bill is designed to prevent the exploitation of the returned men by any employer who would take advantage of their situation. Looking over the bill, however, I find it difficult to understand why many changes have not been made in order to provide against a large number of contingencies, not possible contingencies, but those that face us even now. I am not going to be critical and say that this is piecemeal legislation. But I do think the house should approach the whole problem of rehabilitation of service men after discharge at once.

Let me run over the bill, without going into unnecessary detail. I would point out first that it merely touches the fringe, the very out-