

Mr. BRADBURY: No doubt the farmers would take it as an insult if any such clause were inserted. The farmers are just as anxious as any other people to do their duty, and they have done it. I cannot very well understand what my hon. friend wants. To my mind the interpretation of the Bill is very clear. The intention of the Government in submitting the measure to Parliament was that the selection should be made absolutely equitable and fair, and the provisions of this Bill covered this.

Mr. MARCIL: Does the Solicitor General intend setting a standard by which those local tribunals are to proceed on his definition of the so-called national interest, or is each tribunal to be allowed to decide in each individual case and have a standard of its own as to what is the national interest?

Mr. MEIGHEN: In subsection 3 of section 5 there are regulations looking to the uniform application of the Act. There is a regulation which might cover generally the intentions of the tribunal as to what principles should guide them in determining what is in the national interest. That was done in Great Britain. I have before me a document published under the signature of the Right Hon. Walter H. Long for the guidance of tribunals, and the general principles by which they may well be governed. The English Act practically combined our first two exemptions in one. They followed that by an outline of the principles by which the local board of tribunals should be governed. I will read a portion of this document:—

12. The following observations as regards the different classes of cases may be of service:

Employment cases (section 2 (1) (a))—the question to be considered in these cases is not whether the man has a claim for exceptional treatment in his own interests, but whether it is or is not in the national interests that he should be retained in civil employment. "National interests" has to be construed broadly. It covers not only services which minister directly to the prosecution of the war, but also services which are essential to the country at the present time. Whether, for instance, in the maintenance of the food supply, or of the export trade, or in the performance of other services which it is desirable should be carried on in the interests of the community.

In deciding cases of this class, local tribunals should take into account not only (a) whether the service is such as ministers to the national interests at the present time, but also (b) whether it is in the national interests that the particular man should continue in civil employment, and whether, even if the services which he renders are essential, they cannot be performed by available men not of military age or otherwise not fit for military service, or by women.

Then they proceed to a similar treatment of the cases covered by our second clause of exemptions. I might also read it:—

13. It is provided that exemption (which must in this case be conditional or temporary) may be granted to a man who is being educated or trained for any work, if it is expedient in the national interests that he should continue to be so educated or trained. It is not intended that the mere fact that the man is being educated or trained shall be a sufficient reason for exemption. It must be clearly shown that it is in the national interests that he should continue his education or training either because he will become so valuable for work ministering, directly or indirectly, to the national requirements in connection with the war that it would be unwise to take him away from his education or training, or because, quite apart from any services which he is likely to render during the course of the war, his education or training will hereafter render him so essential to the community that it would be unwise to interrupt his education or training.

The presumption will generally be that a man undergoing education or training who is young and free from the responsibilities of older men should do his duty for the country at the present time by undertaking military service,—

That is the prima facie presumption.

—and therefore it is for the Local Tribunal in each instance to make sure that the conditions in the particular case are such as to justify special treatment before exemption is granted.

They go on to outline what in their judgment should cover cases of serious hardship which is our third class of exemption. Then they proceed to deal with cases of ill-health or infirmity. I do not say for a moment that the regulations that may be promulgated by the central appeal judge would be identical with those in England, but I read these to indicate the general scope that may be covered by the regulations. I could not say whether there is any reason or not for deviating very widely from them. At the moment I do not know.

Mr. PARDEE: By reason of the fact that there is uncertainty as to who will and who will not be exempted under the provisions of this selective conscription measure, and more especially as there has been a great deal of talk about its effect upon agricultural production, a doubt has been brought to the minds of a great many people in the agricultural industry as to how far selective conscription would go with them. I quite agree with the principle of the Bill, and I believe that nobody should be exempted from conscription under the measure. On the other hand, my opinion is that as far as possible the work of the agricultural community and the productiveness of this country ought not to be, even