

As remarked by the hon. member for Chambly-Verchères, the intention of the Bill is not to conscript the whole man-power of the country, but only 100,000 men, and it matters little once those 100,000 men are enlisted, whether such or such a class is exempted, as what is needed is production and farmers engaged in sustaining the productivity of the Dominion, to support our own population and help supply the Allies.

Mr. BOULAY (translation): I fully agree with what has been said by my hon. friend from Chicoutimi-Saguenay (Mr. Girard). As far as possible, it is desirable to allay public anxiety and to ease the minds of many people who are anxious to know which are the classes that are going to be conscripted, and everybody knows that it is in the interest of the country that the agricultural class should be taken care of and exempted. I think that at this phase of the debate on this Bill, it would be desirable to insert a clause such as suggested by the hon. member for Chicoutimi-Saguenay to subsection A of the exemption section. By adding the words suggested by my hon. friend, the debate would be simplified and it would also meet the views of the Government which is acting in the general interest of the country. I may further say that it would meet the views of the people in general, and more particularly the views of the farmers who do not expect to be disturbed in the work in which they are engaged and who should be left at home, unless we want to throw the whole industrial machine of the country out of gear. I believe that the Government should not hesitate to insert those words, or else, we might add after clause F another one which would be clause "G", worded as follows:

That, it is expedient in the national interest that all the bona fide farmers and fishermen, instead of being employed in military service, should be maintained in the work in which they are habitually engaged.

If this would not be covered in paragraph (a) we could make another paragraph (g) and put it in there; so that it would be well understood which are the classes we want exempt. I think this would save quite a lot of discussion and would meet the views of the majority of the members of this House.

Mr. BRADBURY: I do not know very well how the House could adopt the amendment offered by my hon. friend. The principle of the Bill, as I understand it, is that there should be no exemptions. If we start to exempt the farmers, fishermen, and so on, there is no telling where we may end.

[Mr. Girard.]

An hon. MEMBER: And the lawyers.

Mr. BRADBURY: Lawyers are pretty well exempt anyway.

Mr. RAINVILLE: I do not mean by this amendment that it is to be a special exemption. I just mean to advocate the principle of the law as it is to-day. The hon. member knows very well that to interpret the law we may use the preamble just as well as any other part of the Bill, and saying that the judge will be called upon to decide as to what are the most essential industries is just repeating what is in the preamble.

Mr. BRADBURY: I agree with the idea and the argument of my hon. friend that the agricultural classes should not be disturbed, as far as possible. There is no intention in this Bill to disturb the agricultural class any more than any other class, but as was said by the Solicitor General a few minutes ago, take the case of a farmer working say 100 acres of land and having two or three sons to help him. If these two or three sons have volunteered for the front, the position of that farmer is different from the position of another farmer who may have two or three sons on the farm whom he can spare.

An hon. MEMBER: Provided they are wanted.

Mr. BRADBURY: Provided they are wanted. It is only fair these men should be selected. I think that is the principle of the Bill, and that is what every member of this House understands. I should object strenuously to support any Bill or any suggestion that would exempt any class of people in this country. This Bill must apply to everybody. The farmer has responded nobly already, and I am sure when the time comes to make the selection required for this 100,000 men the farmer will not be drawn on unfairly. But, where there are places, and we know there are hundreds, where farming districts have not done their duty, this Bill will compel them to do their duty. Other farmers have done more than their duty. I can cite you dozens of cases in my own constituency where men have gone who should not have gone, and who would not have gone if we had selective conscription. I think this Bill is a step in the right direction.

Sir SAM HUGHES: Would not the farmers, as a class, resent the insertion of any such clause?