

economic security shall be the least we can assure them upon their return. Let us assure them of a condition of national vitality, and that they will not return to a devitalized homeland.

I trust that in making this explanation I have exploded the myth that the government has been somewhat hesitant with respect to legislation for ex-service men. We are doing this. It may be a slow thing, but we shall do more, and more and more as the years go by. In our effort I trust we shall receive the cooperation of all hon. members, to ensure that those who are now fighting our battles will come back to a land that will give them the best that Canada can give.

Mr. REID: Mr. Chairman, my chief purpose in rising is to ask the Minister of Labour a question, but before doing so I should like to refer to a statement made a short time ago by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan, a statement which has been repeated on one or two occasions. These hon. members have pointed out that the men who were doing war work in factories were just as essential to the war as others. With that I am in accord. But I think I must say that, after all, there is nothing which can take the place of the man who offers his life.

Mr. COLDWELL: I said that last night.

Mr. REID: Every hon. member has his own reason for not taking part in this war, or the last one. But I can say, as one who was in charge of making shells and guns, that I would not for one minute suggest that my work was comparable with that of the man who takes his life in his hands when he flies in the air to meet the enemy, meets him on the high seas or in the trenches. There has been the suggestion that those in this country who are earning high wages are on the same plane as those who are offering their lives. The suggestion has been repeated on one or two occasions. However, I do not believe the hon. member who repeated it a few moments ago had that in mind.

Mr. COLDWELL: I qualified it.

Mr. REID: We could not for one minute begin to offer full payment to our returned men which would be adequate for the sacrifice they are making. But we can do something, and the minister has pointed out that this measure represents but one of the first steps.

We say to the man who has left his occupation, "We will give you an insurance, of some kind, so that when you come back you will have your job." The very fact that the government has seen fit to introduce a measure of this kind seems to show that after the last war there must have been some employers

[Mr. Ian Mackenzie.]

who were not friendly to ex-service men. True, I know and every hon. member knows of many employers who were not favourable to the employment of ex-service men. But I would point out to the Minister of Labour that this bill will not entirely solve the problem of those who leave, and then come back.

It will bring other problems as well. I have in mind men who saw service in the last war, and who are taking the place of men who are now serving in this war. I know that representations have been made to me respecting these men. I have been asked, "Why is special privilege being given to men enlisting in the present war? Some of them saw three years' service in the last war, in France, but could not get a job; but now that they have one, we are going to take this job away from them after the war, and give it to someone who saw service in this war." I draw this point to the attention of the committee and the minister.

Someone has said that you could drive a coach and four through this legislation. Well, I am not a lawyer, but I have heard enough to believe that that could be said of almost any act on our statute books. A lawyer, if he saw fit to do so, and if his fee was large enough to prompt him to do so, could drive a coach and four through any act.

At the present time this bill is very popular, and it will remain popular as long as the war lasts. But I am wondering just how popular it will be after the war, with a certain class of employers. How popular will it be after the anxiety and excitement die down?

My question to the minister is this: Has the government considered what position this bill will occupy in the country if someone raises the point that it is not constitutional for the dominion government to impose this legislation upon the provinces? Personally I want employers to be placed in a position where they will be compelled to take the men back, if they are not willing to take them back voluntarily.

But I have heard arguments about old age pensions and other acts being unconstitutional, and ultra vires of the dominion government. I am wondering if the Minister of Labour has considered that point of view, and if he has placed safeguards in the bill, so that no one may raise a constitutional question. No doubt other hon. members have heard constitutional questions raised, but we do not want that to happen with legislation of this kind.

Mr. MITCHELL: That thought was in our minds when the bill was drafted. If the hon. member will turn to the preamble he will find these words: