

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): I must say that I am in substantial agreement with almost everything my hon. friend has said. I realize that he brought up this question last year before the committee of this house. At that time the issue was as to the actual placement of ex-service men. I must say that even with the limitations existing, the work performed by the veterans' welfare officers has been magnificent. They placed a thousand men in January alone. According to our records, of nearly 45,000 men discharged from the forces, there are 1,062 out of employment at the present time. That is a marvelous record for the Dominion of Canada. Of course, there are exceptional conditions prevailing in the country at the present time.

I agree with the suggestion that the actual placement of these men should be in the hands of those who are charged with that special responsibility. My colleague (Mr. Mitchell), who is himself a returned man, I am sure will agree with the suggestion of the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green). I hope the condition to which reference has been made will be corrected as soon as possible. There should be absolute cooperation between the departments, and the placement of ex-service men should be in the hands of ex-service men themselves.

Mr. GREEN: Can we take it that this will be the policy of the Department of Labour from now on?

Mr. MITCHELL: My hon. friend can rest assured that there will be absolute cooperation between the two departments. Anything that is practicable will be done for the returned men of this country.

Mr. GREEN: The Minister understands my question?

Mr. MITCHELL: I understand it clearly.

Mr. GREEN: I am asking that the representative of the Department of Pensions and National Health shall be free to go out and seek jobs. After all, the effectiveness of this plan will be decided only when there are many more men being discharged than have been discharged to date.

Mr. MITCHELL: I understand the question.

Mr. GREEN: My other suggestion was that in the national employment agencies preference should be given to returned men.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): I will try to advocate that as strongly as I possibly can. I think the principle of this bill should be applied as widely as possible.

[Mr. Green.]

Mr. MARTIN: How many veterans' placement offices are there in Ontario?

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): I could not say offhand, but I think there are about six. There is one in each of the main centres. I understand there is one in Windsor.

Mr. MARTIN: Yes.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): I think there are about six or eight in Ontario.

Mr. MARTIN: It strikes me that that is an inadequate number of placement offices for a population of 3,000,000 people. There is a very good officer in Windsor, but it is not very convenient for people who live many miles outside the city to come to see him. As a matter of fact, I have had some experience in this connection. There is not enough publicity given to the existence of this officer or to the existence of the office. I think the minister should consider increasing the staff.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): I shall be glad to give attention to it.

Mr. GREEN: The Minister of Pensions and National Health has gone part way, but he has not answered my question. He says he will advocate that men from the fighting forces be given preference in the employment agencies, but he may not be a successful advocate.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): That happens frequently.

Mr. GREEN: I should like to know from the Minister of Labour whether or not his department will change its policy. These business men who are helping you to place soldiers are worried about this. They are the ones who have brought the question to a head. One of them sums it up by saying:

At present when a man is through with the department of pensions and health and goes to register with the Department of Labour, there is no follow-up programme. The staff of the employment service includes many veterans who quite naturally will give a discharged man every consideration. But the Department of Labour has not established it as a policy that veterans shall receive preference, although the dominion government have asked industry to do so.

That is exactly the point. Will the Department of Labour announce a policy and give directions to its employment agencies that preference shall be given to the returned man who comes seeking a job? This is a point which is vital to many men and the ministry should make up their minds about it.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): What was the date of the statement which my hon. friend just read?