

*Forces—Reinstatement in Employment*

Mr. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I had intended to speak, but when the motion for second reading was put I was engaged in conversation with the Minister of National War Services (Mr. Thorson), and I had not an opportunity to rise in my place.

I deeply appreciate the sentiment expressed on both sides of the house with respect to the bill. I believe it can be fairly stated that all parties in the house agree as to its principle. It was never intended to be a rehabilitation measure, in the sense that we understand the broad question of rehabilitation. As indicated, the bill has been introduced largely because of the suggestion made by the leader of the opposition with respect to the order in council drafted about a year ago.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): On the condition that the order would die.

Mr. MITCHELL: Yes. As I explained, this bill follows the legislation in Great Britain, the United States, New Zealand and Australia. I believe it could be fairly stated that they have found legislation at this time necessary, and that it was not altogether an empty gesture on their part. They must have felt, as we have felt, that legislation of this kind would be necessary to give leadership to industry, and to comment generally on the policy to be adopted at the conclusion of the war in connection with the return of the men in the fighting forces.

If the hon. member for Cape Breton South will examine the bill carefully, he will see the imprint of organized labour in it. It may be said, too, that in the bill will be found evidence of the work of the special committee on demobilization which sat under the chairmanship of the Minister of Pensions and National Health. As a matter of fact, the bill was approved by that committee. It was approved, too, by the national labour supply council, an organization representative of industry and labour, and all shades of opinion in those groups. It was approved by representatives of dominant employers' organizations in the dominion. It was also approved by the labour coordination committee, which crystalizes the viewpoint of the various departments on legislation of this kind.

The bill is sponsored by the labour department rather than by the Department of Pensions and National Health because the idea was born within the labour coordination committee, and then was passed on to the national labour supply council for official approval of representatives of industry and labour.

As is customary in connection with legislation of this kind, both sides of the house took a broad view of the question. I believe that

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

is the wise and sound thing to do in respect of any legislation or policy affecting the returned men in the armed forces. I say that because, after all is said and done, no political party in Canada has a first mortgage on the will to render assistance to the men who make it possible for this parliament to sit to-night.

As I said earlier, it is not my intention to speak at length. As the bill is discussed section by section its various aspects will be discussed. Criticism will be offered and met. When we are discussing returned soldiers' problems I think we must keep in mind the desperate position in which free people of the world find themselves to-day. One hon. member this afternoon mentioned that he had lived dangerously. I think most hon. members who served in the last war, who had the will to live and the will to sacrifice and to drive forward had to live dangerously. I believe the same spirit will drive forward the men at present in our armed forces. My only hope and wish is that the same will to sacrifice, in greater and greater degree, may be inculcated in the minds of our civil population, so that we may pass through this most terrible period in the history of our civilization.

I do not think I should say anything more at this late hour. I believe I should permit the committee to proceed with the business of discussing the bill section by section.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I am surprised that the minister has not gone more deeply into the matter. Perhaps questions by hon. members will elicit further discussion. I should like to ask the minister if in his opinion this bill does not reaffirm the principle that private enterprise not only owes a duty to provide employment but is the best agency to provide employment. We heard a good deal in this discussion, and we have heard it elsewhere, that the government should embark on vast enterprises of public expenditures when this war is over.

Mr. NICHOLSON: The hon. member for Souris (Mr. Ross) said that.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Yes, he was among those who did, and I am not disparaging the idea at all. I suggest to the minister that he should give to the committee and the country his views as to what agency is best capable of providing employment, having regard to the demand for employment that there will be from these men who come back.

Mr. SLAGHT: Let us get on and win the war.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I do not think that interjection was called for any more than was the speech this evening of the