

war, that can engage the attention of members of this house. In view of the sad experiences after the last war I am sure a great many people in Canada felt that we would do better during and after this war. I doubt, however, if that hope has been realized. It is interesting to go back and see what we have done to care for and reestablish our returned men in the two and a half years that Canada has been at war. I remind the house that in the first two years we were at war, that is, prior to October 1 last, we did absolutely nothing for the men who were being discharged from the fighting services. The sum total of our contribution to their welfare was to hand them one month's pay and turn them loose to fend for themselves. I think the most pathetic sight I ever saw was in walking down the main street of my own town and meeting a man whom I had last seen in uniform. He was pale, shaky and walking very slowly. To my amazement I found that this man had been discharged from hospital still running a temperature, with a month's pay in his pocket and a cheap suit on his back. He was looking for a job, but was not physically capable of taking one if someone had offered it to him. I took up his case with the responsible authorities. After a long exchange of letters nothing was done, and the Canadian Legion in my district finally succeeded in helping him to secure some employment.

Our treatment of the men discharged from the fighting services in the first two years of this war is something that ought to make every member of this house blush for shame. I will say more; it has been a deterrent in our recruiting campaign. Nothing will tend more to keep young men who are thinking of joining the active service forces from doing so than to have returned to their community some man who cannot get a job and cannot rehabilitate himself, and for them to see him either going on relief or going from one government department to another to see if someone will not take care of him until he can find employment.

That is the situation. Hon. members will remember that in 1940, when this parliament was first convened, the Prime Minister had on the order paper a resolution calling for the setting up of a select committee of this house to study the whole problem of reconstruction and rehabilitation. For some reason which has never been explained to us, that motion was taken off the order paper. No committee was ever set up. I believe an inter-departmental committee was set up under the Department of Pensions and National Health, a committee composed of a number of univer-

sity presidents and I believe a representative of one labour organization. But nothing has been done toward harnessing the abilities of this house, or of business, industry, labour and agriculture, to the problem of laying out a comprehensive and adequate scheme to take care not only of the dribble of men coming out of the armed services now but also of the hundreds of thousands of men who will be demobilized when peace comes.

To be fair, of course, one must say that there has been some change by the government in the past few months. On October 1, 1941, order in council P.C. 7633 was passed, marking the beginning of a recognition of the government's responsibility in respect to these men. Under this order in council returned men are given benefits under the unemployment insurance scheme, single men receiving \$9 a week and married men \$13 a week for periods varying in accordance with the length of their service but in no case to exceed fifty-two weeks. Under this scheme there is also some attempt to help these men get placed in civilian employment. But even here, tied up as it is with unemployment insurance, these men are finding it very difficult to be adequately taken care of. Only yesterday I received a wire from Edmonton, Alberta, which said:

Discharged soldiers this war starving Edmonton. Unemployment insurance cheques delayed repeatedly at Calgary. Must have action now.

The difficulty is that the problem of re-establishment and reconstruction is tied up with the unemployment insurance scheme, with only one placement officer in the province, to whom these men have not access. These men come back; they are confronted with all sorts of red tape and find themselves either inadequately cared for or improperly reestablished in civilian life.

Now, coming to the bill itself, I would say that while there can be no quarrel with the principle of trying to reestablish men in civilian life, this bill is of course merely an improvisation. The hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Roebuck) called it a gesture, but a beautiful gesture. I think it might better be called a gesture but an empty gesture.

Mr. MITCHELL: It is not fair to say that.

Mr. MARTIN: Was this bill not approved by the legion?

Mr. MITCHELL: It was approved by the legion.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): By whom it was approved is not the important thing. The important thing is whether or not it will contribute materially toward reestablishing and rehabilitating men coming back, not only now