

connection with the subject matter before the house, but old age pensions is a subject by itself.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): May I suggest that if the hon. gentleman is not satisfied with the bill in principle, he should suggest something better.

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): I did not hear what the minister said. All I am saying is that we do not want charity for these men when they come back, and because old age pensions are not on a contributory basis they are looked upon as charity. We do not want people as they grow old to be objects of charity. Therefore I suggest old age pensions as another factor to be considered. The minister seems to think that I disagree with the principle of the bill. I am trying to say that I agree with the principle, but that is no good unless we have something more.

Mr. T. L. CHURCH (Broadview): I wish to say a few words on the principle of this bill. It is entitled:

An act to provide for the reinstatement in civil employment of individuals who enlist for service in his majesty's forces or who perform essential war employment.

It goes on to define employer and employee and contract and the duty of employers and so on. On second reading the clauses cannot be taken up clause by clause. I believe that this bill is going to be largely a scrap of paper except as it applies to government employees. In the last war the city of Toronto was a pioneer in this matter. When any employee enlisted he was guaranteed that his position would be open for him when he returned from the war. We had several thousand employees, including outside boards. Everyone who enlisted was notified that his position, as far as the city and the various outside boards were concerned, would be held for him until he came back, and that was carried out. The practice spread to the province and to some departments of the federal government.

The principle is all right, but under this bill I point out that the classification of federal employees herein is hardly proper. It is all right for those who go overseas or serve time in training, but to apply it to a few who just leave one department to get better pay in the Department of National Defence is all wrong. This matter was discussed in England, as the minister said. We have the cart before the horse in this bill, because the government must decide what it is going to do with industry in this country. The definition of a civil employer is given, a man who engages people by contract, sometimes written, sometimes verbal. But what is the position

of industry in this country to-day? They do not know. In England it is the same. Take the small retail business man, having ten or fifteen or twenty employees; where does he come in? Under this bill and with the barriers and restraints of trade and artificial burdens imposed by these various bureaucratic bodies and the government, the small independent business man is being put out of business, so that when the employee comes back there is no business, the store is closed. Take, for example, one large industry in Toronto of which the minister knows; to-day the key is turned in the door. I will give the name of the industry to the minister privately. That industry was ruined by the abolition of the British preference and the war. The result is that a number of men who joined up quickly, went overseas and enlisted in the British forces are to-day out on the street.

If the government want to enact this bill, let them first decide upon their policy in regard to industry after this war, and not appoint boards to destroy all competitive industry. That is the first duty. The way things are going both here and in England no one will be able to conduct a business. A certain amount of bureaucratic legislation may be all right, but when you have a small industry trying to compete with a department store, for instance, what is going to happen? A man cannot carry on his small, independent business with all the artificial burdens and barriers that have been established.

I believe in protection, and so do hon. gentlemen opposite. That will have to be the backbone of this bill. If not, there will be nothing to support it; it will be just a paper charter, just a scrap of paper. No one will want to be an employer under these conditions, though perhaps they are necessary in time of war. Once the war is over, however, these same dollar-a-year men and boards will want to continue these policies for a great many years, and as a result no one will be able to qualify and keep a contract made with his employees under this bill.

I protest against this sort of thing. I would refer to only one industry that might come under this employer and employee arrangement. That is the building and construction industry, which is practically standing still to-day. I think, shortly after the present minister came into this house, a committee was appointed to try and place the construction and building industry on a proper basis; that was in 1935. During the depression that industry was put on the shelf, and it went to ruin. The government embarked upon a housing scheme; my former leader, Viscount Bennett, who was then Prime Minister, went ahead and revived