

measure, and I want to commend the government on the courage and initiative they have shown in bringing in and piloting through this bill at this time. I know that every agency that is opposed to the interests of the common people of Canada has utilized every available means to defeat this bill, and I pay tribute to those who had the courage to bring it in and have it enacted.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I have a very few observations to make with respect to the bill, and I should prefer to make them now rather than later. I apologize to the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Roebuck) if I intervened ahead of him.

What has been said here to-day with respect to the administration of the act lends a good deal of force to what I said a few days ago, and I particularly commend to the attention of the minister the remarks of the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon). But more important than that, or at least just as important as the administration of the act, is the question raised by the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat (Mr. Gillis), in regard to the interpretation of the act by the commission. I was amused at the question and answer that passed between the hon. member and the Minister of Pensions and National Health (Mr. Mackenzie). The hon. member for Cape Breton South is not a lawyer, but the Minister of Pensions and National Health is a lawyer, and I am sure he knows—if he does not he should—that nothing that may be said in a parliamentary committee or during a parliamentary debate will have the slightest influence on the interpretation of any statute by any court of law in this country. They repel even the suggestion that they are bound or even influenced by anything we may say here as to the interpretation of a particular section of a statute.

Mr. MARTIN: It is inadmissible.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Even a reference to it is not permitted, as I know to my own cost. Once, when appearing before the Supreme Court of Canada here in Ottawa, I had the temerity to refer to what Mr. Fielding once said with regard to the effect of a section of a particular act. They were very gentle with me, since I was just a country lawyer, but I never forgot the lesson.

Mr. REID: That must have been years ago.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That was quite a number of years ago. It is folly to say that the report of the committee, or anything we may say with respect to the interpretation of any section of this act, will be given effect to by the commission. I am sure the Minister of Labour, as a sound lawyer,

will agree with that. The situation was epitomized by a great jurist in the United States in a book he wrote on the constitution of that country. During the course of a discussion of Mr. Roosevelt's attempt to increase the membership of the supreme court this jurist said, "The constitution is what the judges say it is." That statement created a great furore in the United States, but it was true. The interpretation of the constitution was for the judges, not for the legislative branch or the executive branch of the government. And the interpretation of any law in Canada is for the courts. In this instance the high court of this commission will interpret the law without reference to anything you or I may say, Mr. Chairman. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): But my hon. friend will admit that this parliament has the right from year to year to revise the statute; and there is a recommendation in the report of the committee that the report of the advisory committee be reviewed by a standing committee of this house.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is so; that is the exercise of the legislative function, and it is fortunate that we have that power. If we did not have it we would be bound by the decisions of those who have the responsibility of interpreting these statutes but who have not any responsibility to the public such as we have. That is a fortunate feature of our constitutional set-up. It is the safeguard of democracy.

I was impressed by the tribute paid by the hon. member for Cape Breton South to his leader. It is true that in season and out of season the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth) has advocated the principle contained in this measure; and having regard to his physical condition I should like to reaffirm what the hon. gentleman said as to his devotion to a principle. Perhaps he was a good many years ahead of his time. So is every pioneer who advocates a great reform. In days gone by many of these men were referred to as advocates of lost causes. I have known some of them. Many of them have not lived to see the fulfilment of a cherished ambition in connection with reform. Let us hope that in his declining years, and in that period of ill health through which he is passing, the hon. gentleman will find much satisfaction in the thought that the principle for which in season and out of season he has fought is finally to triumph.

I had hoped the hon. member who has spoken would have given us the benefit of his further examination of champions for this cause. Had he done so I am certain that