

was given very close attention by myself as well as by the other members of the Government. So far as I know it is the largest gratuity by far which has been given by any of the nations engaged in the war. Now, I am very glad of that, I think the country can afford not only to be just but to be generous in regard to the returned men. I have always held the view myself that to the extent that it is necessary the Government should not hesitate to expend in this last year which, as I have said, is a war year, such amount as is necessary to prevent hardship, and to enable the men to get re-established in civil life. The principle of the gratuity now asked for has not appealed to me. It is indiscriminate; it applies to all; and in my judgment—and I am only putting forward my own view—the amount is so great, having regard to the general financial condition of the treasury that I was quite unable, as Minister of Finance and Acting Premier at the time, to see that the Government should consider it favourably. That was my view about it then, and it is my view now.

*By Mr. MacNeil:*

Q. I would like to present the case in a slightly different light. The proposal that emanates from the Great War Veterans, which is merely a suggestion, is in slightly modified form from that presented in the interview which you mentioned. We appreciate the generosity of the Government as to what is being done, but we feel to-day that there are a large number of men who have been dislodged from their ordinary activities who are more or less adrift in our commercial and industrial life to-day, and we have attempted to find during this enquiry the exact extent of that problem. I have in mind your statement which you made in the House, and also this afternoon. One way in which this country may recover its balance after the war is by increased production and thrift, and we are attempting to-day to place this problem on a strictly business basis as far as possible. We must recognize our obligations to the disabled, to the dependents of those who have fallen, and we must not let that sentiment be lost sight of. But, for the moment, to put it on a strictly business basis, we are advocating re-establishment only for those who need re-establishment, that is, that the onus is placed on the man to prove to the state that he requires their aid. We are asking also that the man receive aid in such a manner that the re-establishment is calculated to develop our resources, both human and material, and increase industrial expansion. We want simply the opportunity for that man to get a foothold again, to put his back to the wall and maintain his maximum production. Now, as an economic problem do you not think that extraordinary measures might be justified, within certain limitations? We have at all times the interests of the country at heart; we do not wish to inflict any undue burden on the country, or suggest any such burden, but looking at the problem from the purely economic aspects would it not be a wise investment to put such men who have capabilities in such a position that they will themselves respond to the burdens which are upon us? We are not asking to-day for an indiscriminate hand-out, as has already been explained to the Committee, but we are asking that a man receive aid as far as he required it, as applied to the development of our resources and the required expansion of our industrial activities. That is the underlying principle of the suggestion made; the details may be discussed, and we offer those details as a basis of discussion; but do you not think that it would be a wise economic investment for the country at the present time?—A. I do not think I could give a general answer to that, Mr. MacNeil. The principle of increasing production through the returned soldier has been adopted in the Land Settlement Act. That plan was based upon security which the Government has there; the Government has the land and a mortgage upon whatever else is taken. There will be a considerable loss on that, I do not know how much, but I think that was good legislation. Now, I do not know what you have in your minds in regard to other re-establishment, but from what I understood the gratuity was being asked for to be given to all the ranks overseas, or practically all; and for reasons I have given, and the amount involved, I have been unable to regard it favourably. If you will give me any concrete case that you have in mind I will be very glad to consider it.