

In the United States part of the work of the research committee now operating there is to compile thousands upon thousands of things which can be made in those plants that will cease operating when the war ends. Then I went on:

I suggest, therefore, that some research board or committee be put into operation to look for opportunities to keep these plants going, which ordinarily will cease production at the end of the war and consequently throw men on the streets.

In a word, it seems to me very clear that one of two or three things must be done in the interim or transition period, from the time the men return until they are absorbed into industry, either in their old plants, which must take place within three months, or in the making of new lines in the present large munition plants. In the first place they might be kept enrolled in the services under pay and allowances, if that is the correct military term, or at any rate maintained until they have something to do. I would not limit the period to three months, for I remember very well what happened after the last war when the men came back to the plant in which I had the great privilege of serving. Many of them were not able to go back to the plant in three, four or six months. It was not that all had been wounded; the nerves of many had been so wrought up by shot and shell that they were not able to steady themselves sufficiently to return to work. But in due course they came back, and I believe they were all reestablished, in the plant with which I was associated. So there is an interim period for which provision must be made, for I hope and pray that they will not be allowed to wander about the streets with nothing to sustain them.

In the second place I said the other day, and I repeat now, that there are countless thousands of jobs that can be provided by the government covering the interim period, in connection with works that will be self-liquidating. Someone said the other day that this could not be done, but I have had a great deal of experience in these matters and I know it can be done. These works can be paid for, and I know that in the last analysis they will not cost the country anything. Above all, no matter what it costs, it is essential that these returned soldiers be employed either by the government or by industry, or else be maintained with pay and allowances. I had hoped that before this section passed, the minister might tell us something about just how the interim or transition period is going to be dealt with.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): Was my hon. friend in his seat when I spoke previously this afternoon?

[Mr. MacNicol.]

Mr. MacNICOL: Yes, I was, and I appreciated very much what the minister said.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): Later in the session I had intended to go comprehensively into the discussions we have been having—they are only discussions so far—exactly in reference to the point now raised by my hon. friend. The estimate of very prominent men in industry to-day is that 40 per cent of those now working in war industries will be displaced when peace comes again. Therefore in my judgment it is the primary duty of any government to lay plans to see that provision is made for the care of these men during that transition period, which is exactly the point raised by my hon. friend, as I followed him. Just as we transferred from a peace-time to a war-time industry, with all the organization necessary to complete that process, so I think we should have control boards in every industry of Canada to start now, or in the very near future, to prepare plans for the reorganization back from war-time to peace-time industry. Later on I hope to expand on that theory, but I thought this bill was a very minor piece of legislation, and I was not prepared to deal with that matter in a comprehensive way.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Probably a word or two still needs to be said before we leave this stage of the bill. A wide latitude has been allowed in this discussion, and I think rightly so. We are just beginning to confront the real problem that is going to face us, and there should be a good deal of frank and unimpassioned discussion among hon. members, with the object of trying to find a solution.

During the discussion a good deal has been said concerning a new order. Last spring we had the Prime Minister, I believe, speaking of a "new heaven and a new earth." Last night I listened to the hon. member for Danforth (Mr. Harris) talking about a new order. I listened closely, to try to find out what he had in mind regarding the new order, but I was not at all satisfied. I am afraid that this good man, for whom I have a great deal of respect, represents in his uncertainty a very large cross-section of Canadian public opinion. Let me draw to the attention of the minister something which I am sure he does not need to have drawn to his attention; the fact that we cannot have a new order by just talking about it. First you have to know what you mean by your new order, and then you must devise means by which you can achieve that new order. I wish the Prime Minister had taken a little more trouble to tell us, and perhaps he may do so yet, what he conceives to be the new order. In a way we in the west were all built up over his "new