

The Canadian people are making and are willing to make a great effort on behalf of freedom. They are offering their lives; they are offering many of the conveniences of pre-war life. They are not complaining. They see lives lost; they see tanks, guns, shells, ships and planes destroyed, all of which are entered on their side of the ledger as debits. On the other hand we see certain financial institutions in this country, privately controlled, entering on their side of the ledger huge profits, with interest attached. In other words, our loss is their gain, so it would appear that we are working at cross-purposes.

In conclusion, let me voice the opinion that if we are to reestablish our men; if we are to give our people that new heaven and new earth; if we are to astonish those people who now believe we may have chaotic conditions after the war, let us say once and for all that we will see that the financial system of this country, which to-day is privately owned and controlled, which to-day has a life-and-death hold over this country, is made an instrument of the people, through their government. Then, Mr. Speaker, and only then, I say, are we going to be able to deal with post-war problems in a realistic and effective manner.

Mr. A. G. SLAGHT (Parry Sound): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to address the house on the subject of this bill, and would not have done so but for two addresses that have been delivered here to-day. The first was by my good friend the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Roebuck), who, I am sorry to say, is not in his seat at the moment. The hon. gentleman occupied a very important position as attorney-general of Ontario, and in that position he had a record in the protection of the interests of the working men and of the soldiers of which he may well be proud. It is with some regret that I differ with him because of his treatment of this bill. With much that he said looking to the future I agree, and it is with regret that I differ with him, in the strongest possible manner, when he describes the bill introduced by our new Minister of Labour (Mr. Mitchell), the first piece of legislation introduced by him, if my memory serves me correctly, as a mere gesture—just a gesture.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. SLAGHT: I hear some very mild and modest "hear, hear's" from hon. gentlemen to my right. I shall be treating with one of their heroes in just a moment.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): The hon. gentlemen angularly opposite to your right.

Mr. SLAGHT: I mean the two groups, for whose leaders I have great respect.

Mr. MacINNIS: Why not the rank and file?

Mr. SLAGHT: I said across, but to my right. Nobody is in doubt as to whom I am directing these observations.

I say to the hon. member for Trinity that the great development of his speech was a brilliant description of his ambition as to the future legislation and the future course which should be adopted in this country. With that development in his speech I am in full accord. But let me say to him that to use a phrase of that kind, namely, that the bill is a mere gesture, when it is introduced by our Minister of Labour, may, while not intended by my hon. friend so to do, work evil in the country. That will have an effect, more than the statements to which I shall refer in a moment or two, and which have come from across the floor.

Is it a mere gesture that a bill which, if it becomes law, requires employers to reinstate employees under conditions not less favourable to them than those which would have been applicable had they not enlisted, should be placed on the statute books? Is that a mere gesture? Is it a cause of complaint, voiced in a mild manner, that there have been selected the members of the armed forces as those of primary concern? Is it a cause of complaint that they shall first be reinstated in positions where they can earn their living? Is it a mere gesture that sections 5 and 6 of the bill would prevent an employer without reasonable cause from terminating the employment of his employee? Is it a mere gesture that under section 6 an employer may not terminate employment, in expectancy that the employee might enlist? Those are not mere gestures; they are definite statutory provisions.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): They turn out to be, though.

Mr. SLAGHT: A doubting Thomas over there says they may turn out to be.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): I am judging from your past action, from the way you treated the soldiers in the last war.

Mr. SLAGHT: You are?

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Yes.

Mr. SLAGHT: You are not judging from my past action.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): I am judging from the past action of the government.