

I suggest that the minister press upon his colleagues in the government the need for a proper employment service. This problem of the unemployed veteran is not settled. Sooner or later the Canadian government will have to face it again. In the meantime this government is running away from it. We have here another example of the present government furthering and creating disunity in Canada through its failure to give leadership on these problems so vital to the welfare of our people.

Mr. MacNEIL: The minister made a statement on March 17 bluntly rejecting the main recommendation of the veterans' assistance commission, and we have since had an opportunity to gauge the reaction of the ex-service men and the public generally. There has been found disappointment everywhere at the attitude taken by the minister and his unwillingness to assume additional responsibility with regard to the problem outlined by the commission. The approach to the problem has been very carefully and ably outlined by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green), and I wish to support his position and to add a few observations on my own account.

I did hope that as a result of the Hyndman commission report, the work of the parliamentary committee of 1936 and the interim and final reports of the veterans' assistance commission we had now reached the position where this problem could be brought to a stage of finality, where sufficient evidence had been gathered to enable the minister to present to parliament a well-rounded program disposing of the residual features of the situation. As I have said before, inaction or delay in these matters is always more costly than prompt action.

I have perused the report of the veterans' assistance commission with great interest. This report is something more than merely an interesting document; it represents a very careful analysis of the situation in all its aspects. For the first time in recent years it affords a fairly accurate measure of the dimensions of the problem, and also makes concrete proposals for dealing with it. The report deals with the obligations of this country in regard to ex-service men, promises made in years gone by, tells exactly what has been done and what remains to be done, and makes an effective plea for ex-service men, not on compassionate grounds, but for a satisfactory solution of their problems in the public interest.

A very important point it makes is that there are no constitutional barriers in the

way of effective action by this government in regard to this problem. In connection with the general problem of unemployment we have frequently been told that constitutional difficulties prevent action by the federal government. This report shows how the government by aiding ex-service men as suggested in the main recommendation could ease the burden resting upon the municipalities and ameliorate much of the general social distress which is apparent across Canada. I was struck with the reminder contained in this report of the promises made to the soldiers and the circumstances under which they were made. May I quote briefly from page 27:

Sir Robert Borden addressed the Canadian fighting forces at Vimy Ridge in 1917 in words ascribed to him as follows:

"You are men actually facing the enemy day and night. You are suffering greatly from fatigue, overstrain and lack of rest. The marvel of it is that men could undergo such a strain without breaking; but you have never yet broken, and history will appreciate that in days to come.

"You men are about to enter one of the most serious engagements that ever faced the Canadian corps. I cannot, at this moment, give any information as to where this attack will be staged; whether it be successful or not, it is to be borne in mind that it will not be an easy success . . . We feel confident that you will succeed where others failed; for you have never yet failed in anything that you have set your hand to as a Canadian corps.

"You can go into this action feeling assured of this, and as the head of the government I give you this assurance; that you need have no fear that the government and the country will fail to show just appreciation of your service to the country and empire in what you are about to do and what you have already done.

"The government and the country will consider it their first duty to see that a proper appreciation of your effort and of your courage is brought to the notice of the people at home, and it will always be our endeavour so to guide the attitude of public opinion that the country will support the government to prove to the returned men its just and due appreciation of the inestimable value of the services rendered to the country and empire; and that no man, whether he goes back or whether he remains in Flanders, will have just cause to reproach the government for having broken with the men who won and the men who died."

In these words Sir Robert, on behalf of the government, entered into a contract every whit as binding as that between Canada and the holder of victory bonds. In a certain sense the contract was more solemn. The victory bonds were, after all, pretty much a business transaction. The contract between Canada and her men going overseas reached beyond business into the realm of the ideal.

The report brings to the attention of the minister evidence that gives an excellent perspective of the entire problem. Boiled down it is this: there are practically 15,000 unemployed men, as far as they are able to esti-