

recently conversing with the right hon. gentleman—I doubt whether there are rights which can be enforced in the courts. But the facts are that these taxi drivers, 400 or 500 of them, returned men, have lost large sums of money.

Mr. JEAN: Has that been proved? That is the point.

Mr. MITCHELL: That is the point before the courts.

Mr. HACKETT: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that 400 or 500 taxi drivers in Montreal have lost large sums of money—

An hon. MEMBER: Claim to have lost.

Mr. HACKETT: —and they have lost these sums of money because an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs was false to his mandate. Someone may say, are you going to prejudge this servant of the department? Well, I will say that if I do prejudge him I am but following the example of the department which dismissed him summarily for his participation in this case. But the point I wish to make is that these men claim that they have lost these sums of money because this employee of the department was false to his mandate. If this employee was the cause of their loss, as they contend, it was not the fault of the veterans; it was the fault of those who selected the man and put him in the position which enabled him to be false to his duty and the veterans.

That may not give rise to a claim at law. Undoubtedly the department did not engage this man for the specific purpose of betraying enabled him to be false to his duty and the veterans.

Mr. MACKENZIE: These employees were not appointed by the department at all but by the civil service.

Mr. HACKETT: That is one of the questions which the minister may wish to investigate a little further, and inasmuch as there are a number in the same category, the opportunity for going into them will arise if the suggestion which I am going to make to the minister is, in his appreciation, a feasible one.

The fault was not the fault of the veterans. A man masquerading as the friend of veterans was false to them and the veterans in consequence have suffered irreparable loss. The Minister of Labour says, why prejudge them? Why not await the finding of the court? That sounds reasonable enough.

Mr. MITCHELL: It should sound reasonable to a lawyer.

Mr. HACKETT: It sounds reasonable enough. The difficulty is that 500 veterans, every one of whom every man and woman in Canada wishes to help, have been put in the position that if they must wait for the final decision of the court, it will be too late.

Mr. MACKENZIE: Will my hon. friend forgive me? I hate to interrupt him.

Mr. HACKETT: The minister does not disturb me in the least.

Mr. MACKENZIE: According to the statement of the men themselves, they are all working and earning a living with the cars purchased with their money, part of which may have been derived from war service gratuities or reestablishment credits.

Mr. MITCHELL: They are all working. That is the point.

Mr. HACKETT: I do not think my right hon. friend will wish to rest his case on such a weak and wavering reed as that. My right hon. friend knows—and his heart is too big for him to contradict it—that most of these men are in a serious plight. Their earnings and the bulk of their gratuities have been pledged and lost through the duplicity of an agency of his department.

Mr. MACKENZIE: There is no proof of that.

Mr. HACKETT: If they must await the outcome of the trials, relief will come too late and this group of valiant soldiers will have to suffer a damage which cannot be made good.

Now, what is my suggestion? We have attempted, whenever occasion arose, to be helpful to those who answered the call of duty. As a country we have done well by our veterans. Daily we are sending aid abroad, even to the enemy, even to those who fought against us, because we are proud of our humanitarianism. Here is a group of veterans who have suffered through the blighting of their hopes, if in no other way, as no other group of veterans has ever suffered in Canada. I am going to suggest to the right hon. gentleman that this matter be not shoved aside. I do not think he wants that to be done. I am asking him to give play to those generous sentiments for which he is known in the house, to bring into being some kind of committee or commission which can find out how much these men have lost, and to bring before the house some kind of legislation which will make them whole and do that immediately. But there is a danger in attempting legislation of this kind unless it be surrounded with all possible safeguards. The