

spoken; the hon. member for Weyburn (Mr. Douglas) characterized it as a mere gesture, the hon. member for Parry Sound (Mr. Slaght), who undertook to spank him, thought it was a fine piece of legislation. I do not think it is worthy either of great blame or great praise; it is but an instalment; I do not suppose it is intended to be anything more. I think that is a fair statement of the position. This bill, as every one who has followed it will know, is in compliance with the promise made by the former Minister of Labour in June last when he brought down a certain order in council.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): A promise made to my hon. friend.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Exactly so. We had an undertaking—I do not remember exactly how it came about—that that order in council would be followed by legislation at this session to give effect to its terms, and so far as I have been able to appreciate the bill, it is in fulfilment of that requirement. But to say it is a complete measure of rehabilitation for the returned soldier who finds himself out of employment would be far from the mark. This bill, and the order in council upon which it is founded, follow precisely a measure which was introduced in England, and it was merely—and I do not use that word in any derogatory sense—one short step to meet a situation which had emerged. I think the Minister of Pensions and National Health (Mr. Mackenzie) and the present Minister of Labour (Mr. Mitchell) will bear me out when I say that, taking it by and large, employers of labour have cooperated with the government in an exceedingly fine spirit.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): In no instance have we had any occasion to impose the order in reference to any large employer of labour in Canada.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I am glad the minister says that, because that clarifies the position, and corroborates what I thought was the case. There may have been an odd instance where there has been refusal or inability to reinstate returned soldiers in their former employment. But I am glad to hear the minister say what he has said, that there have been very few cases in which application has been made to him to use the compulsory powers that are given in this bill.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): Mostly in cases of municipalities and institutions, not in connection with industry.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Then that gives industry a clean sheet, though I did not

rise to ask for a clean sheet for industry. If this, however, is intended to be a rehabilitation measure for all the armed forces, I say to the minister that it falls lamentably short. I do not think it was ever so intended; and the minister is grappling, not with the most important problem but with a minor part of it. He can say what he likes; we can all say what we like, but let us not blind ourselves to that fact.

Mr. MACDONALD (Brantford City): It is a necessary part, though.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I agree, and I am not condemning the principle of this bill; the hon. member must not misunderstand me. It is good as far as it goes, though I want to tell the minister this—and I am going to have something more to say about it a little later on—that I think I could drive a coach and four through this bill in defending an action under it.

Mr. MITCHELL: You could with any bill; that is what they have lawyers for.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Well, that is a frank admission on the part of the minister. I doubt if any case will ever come before the courts under this bill. I hope it may never be necessary; but just by the way, who is going to take the action? The bill is absolutely silent as to that; the machinery is not there. It is deficient in that respect. But that is a detail which perhaps I should not discuss in dealing with the principle. I call it to the attention of the minister now, so that at a later date he may give us some information as to the intention of the government in that regard.

May I say what perhaps I should have said in the very beginning, that I am glad to welcome the minister, as I have told him privately. He and I were in the House of Commons together a number of years ago. I do not propose to pour upon him any fulsome flattery to-night. The minister understands something about labour problems, but I should not like him to arrogate to himself what I thought he was inclined to do just a moment ago, full knowledge of everything in relation to labour.

Mr. MITCHELL: I never said that.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Perhaps I misunderstood the minister. I am going to try to help him in connection with this bill. In the committee stage I am going to point out some of the good features of it and some of its weaknesses. But the bill only touches the fringes of a problem with which this country will be confronted increasingly day by day during the war and in the post-war period.