

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

October 12, 1945.

The Special Committee on Veterans Affairs met this day at 11.00 o'clock a.m. The Chairman, Mr. W. A. Tucker, presided.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister will continue his statement, gentlemen.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE: Gentlemen, yesterday you heard the first two portions of the presentation which I want to place before the committee. It was purely factual. This morning I shall continue with the second two parts which, you will be glad to know, are shorter.

GENERAL AND STATISTICAL REVIEW OF RECENT ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

In the foregoing review of the six year evolution of Canada's post-war rehabilitation program, year by year, I have covered only the highlights and perhaps not all of them. Certain omissions were intentional.

Thus, in the interests of clarity, matters that are to be dealt with by this committee have been only touched upon until I come to deal with the specific proposals calling for action.

Similarly there are some phases of the program that have been developed by gradual stages. I see no object in analyzing the various steps by which final results have been reached, as it is with the latest phase of development only that this committee will be directly concerned.

However, there are one or two general matters that should be mentioned before we go on to the specific proposals with which the committee will be asked to deal.

Thus, I should like to make it clear that the women members of the forces have been brought under all rehabilitation legislation on the same terms as the men. From the standpoint of our legislation and administration, they were members of the forces and they are veterans.

Then I should mention that the staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs has been greatly enlarged and is still expanding to cope with the responsibilities laid upon it. In recruiting our new staff we are accepting on the male side only war veterans, and to a predominant extent, veterans of the present war. The deputy minister and other senior departmental officers have visited the forces overseas along with representatives of the Civil Service Commission to insure that overseas personnel had the fullest possible opportunity to apply and be examined for the most responsible positions in the department. The services, even before fighting ceased, agreed to release men with special qualifications needed by our department, if they could possibly be spared.

For stenographic and other duties usually performed by women, we have given full preference to former women members of the forces, and we are organizing a special division for the rehabilitation of women which is staffed by women who have served in the forces.

Interviewing and counselling officials have been trained for their duties in special schools conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Ten such courses have been held, each lasting three to four weeks and with an enrolment averaging more than one hundred each. These classes have included not only members of the staff of my own department, but officers of the defence services