

SUMMARY OF ADDRESS MADE TO ORGANIZATION MEETING OF
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON PENSIONS AND RE-ESTABLISHMENT,
MAY 2, 1924, BY MR. JEAN J. DENIS, M.P., AFTER
BEING ELECTED CHAIRMAN.

GENTLEMEN,—My first words to you, upon being elected Chairman of this Committee, must be words of thanks for the very high honour you have conferred upon me and also the confidence you have placed in me.

However, it is not without a sentiment of diffidence that I am accepting the Chairmanship of this Committee. Indeed, although I am thankful to you for your generosity towards me, I do not know whether it is a gift that I am receiving at your hands or a burden which I am assuming to carry. It is a gift, indeed, if I consider the confidence which you are placing in me, the very important work which, together, we will be called upon to accomplish and the opportunity which shall be given me to recognize the services rendered to all of us by the returned men. It is a burden if I consider the amount of work which will, of necessity, devolve upon me by reason of my being Chairman of this Committee. At all events, I may assure you that in the fulfillment of this new duty I shall give all the attention, care and steadfastness of which I am capable.

There are several Acts of Parliament relating to the Returned Soldiers: we have the act known as "The Pension Act," "The Soldier Settlement Act," and the "The Returned Soldiers' Insurance Act." We have also "The Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment Act." All of these Acts were passed about the time of the conclusion of the Great War to help and assist the returned men. All of these Acts are important. They have been amended practically every year—each of them. Doubtless you will be called upon in the course of the present Session of Parliament to recommend new amendments to these Acts.

I need not tell you what the object of this Committee is; this you know as well as I do. This Committee is simply a body organized to look into the different questions which are presented to us, study these questions, study the proposed improvements to the laws now existing, express an opinion of these laws and upon the proposed amendments, prepare these amendments as they should be prepared in the opinion of the Committee and report to Parliament.

In the course of our labours we have two things to consider; one is the needs and the rights of the Returned Soldiers, the other is the resources of the country and its capacity to meet these needs. Of the needs and the rights of the returned men I could not speak too emphatically. Not only are the men deserving of our admiration, but they have acquired rights which we must make it our duty to meet in the fullest possible way.

We read in ancient history that the fate of two great nations was once decided, by consent of both nations, by the combat of three warriors representing each side. I am referring to the battle between Horatii and the Curiatii. It was in the early days of Rome, when that city was at war with Alba. The two armies were facing one another. In order to avoid the massacre which would surely ensue if the two armies were allowed to clash, the Romans, on the one side, and the Albans, on the other, agreed that the battle would be fought by three brothers, the Horatii on the side of the Romans and Curiatii on the side of the Albans. The battle was so fought by three men on each side and victory favoured the Romans. The two armies did not clash and the decision was accepted as representing a victory by the Romans over the Albans.