

*Supply—Veterans Affairs*

**Mr. Gregg:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. Both the department—and particularly the medical phase of the department—and the Canadian pension commission have taken a very keen interest in these men ever since their return to Canada. It was requested at that time that special attention be paid to learn of conditions which had come about because of their service and to have special medical examinations carried out. After discharge each case was followed up and re-examinations were carried out at regular intervals of all who would co-operate or who could be located.

During the past year I authorized a special medical review of all cases under one medical adviser specially selected for that purpose. This officer was recommended to me by the medical people themselves and is Colonel John Crawford who was senior medical officer of the Hong Kong force and who was himself of course a prisoner.

In this study he has access to all reports available to us, and he has the co-operation of outstanding specialists. The Canadian pension commission has conducted a constant review of all cases and has not hesitated to concede entitlement. They pass up no opportunity of finding out if the physical incapacity may be attributable to experiences during the imprisonment.

The total number of survivors of the Hong Kong force is now, or was at the last check, 1,415. Of these, over 1,000 are in receipt of pensions, with approximately 200 more with entitlement to treatment for disability. I would like the committee to know that the utmost attention is being given to the care of these Hong Kong veterans. I would like hon. members to know too, so that any evidence of hardship that may come to the attention of any hon. member of the house might be passed on to me. I do that because I think it is important to all of us to discourage any expressions of pity on behalf of these men, which is the last thing they want, and which their leaders tell me does not help at all in the recovery from the difficulties or the disabilities they have owing to their imprisonment.

I would like to assure my hon. friend and the committee that under this item the treatment services and the pension commission are giving special attention to these men. If we can find them, as we can in practically every case when they are willing, we try to have them in at regular intervals whether they apply for it or not.

**Mr. Green:** Did the minister say that over 1,000 out of 1,415 are drawing pension?

**Mr. Gregg:** Correct.

[Mr. Green.]

**Mr. Green:** And that another 200 are entitled to treatment because of war disabilities?

**Mr. Gregg:** That is true.

**Mr. Green:** There are only about 200 who are not disabled at the present time?

**Mr. Gregg:** And they are being carefully watched.

Item agreed to.

Canadian pension commission—

533. Administration expenses, \$2,132,824.

**Mr. Fulton:** This is an item for the administration of the Canadian pension commission. Can the minister tell us what was actually spent last year on travelling expenses of the staff?

**Mr. Gregg:** Last year the travelling expenses of the staff were \$85,300. When I say "staff", of course I mean the most important item is the review board which travels extensively. Frankly I am glad to see the chairman of the pension commission encourage extensive travelling because I feel it is very important that these boards should get out, as the hon. member for Kootenay West said last year, and raise the flag even at some of the subsidiary centres as well as in the main city in the province. This year under this item we are asking for \$90,000. This amount covers the cost of travelling for the commission staff at head office and the districts. During 1949-50 approximately \$85,000 was expended for this purpose. A large portion of the expenditure is incurred by the review boards which traverse the country and consider pension appeal cases. The anticipated increase in their work necessitates a slight increase in the amount required for the new fiscal year.

**Mr. Fulton:** I am not being immediately critical. I notice, for instance, there are 73 medical officers on the commission, according to my calculation of the breakdown. I do not imagine that is in any way too many. But then there is a very heavy item for professional and special services in addition. It amounts to \$100,000 this year, and was \$115,000 last year. It just strikes me that perhaps one is justified in making some inquiry as to the reason why such a substantial amount is necessary when there are after all quite a fair number of medical officers with the pension commission itself.

**Mr. Gregg:** That in the main comprises outside specialists' reports.

**Mr. Fulton:** How would that arise? Does the commission itself want to submit the case for outside help?

**Mr. Gregg:** That is correct.