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CALLS UPON UNION GOVERNMENT TO CARE FOR WIDOWED MOTHERS

Capt. C. G. Power of Quebec Cites Instances of Mothers of Soldiers Suffering Through Inadequate Pensions — Rowell Under Cross Fire On Moving To Shelve Eight-Hour Law.

(Special to The Advertiser.) OTTAWA, March 15.—The majority of the day in the House of Commons was taken up by a discussion upon a motion of Capt. "Chubby" Power of West Quebec, which called for a fixed rate of pension to widowed mothers of the war, regardless of what their own private income or circumstances might be, and upon a resolution of William Duff of Lunenburg condemning the "monstrosities" which members of the Canadian navy who served during the war are asked to wear upon their lapels as a badge.

Judging by the testimony of men on both sides of the House, there are very many cases of real hardship among those who happened to be left widowed, and without support because of the war. It is contended that in many instances pensions, after having been awarded on a fixed basis, were pared down almost to nothing on the plea that the pensioner had private means, or was earning money in a position. In fact, as W. F. Cocksbutt of Brantford pointed out, if the pension was continued in some cases the unfortunate widow would be in debt to the pension board.

Rowell Asks Distinction. The president of the private council desired that a distinction must be made between the act as passed by Parliament, and the administration of that act by the pension board, to which he paid tribute. Under the act as amended last session, he pointed out that it had been decided that earnings should not be taken into account.

But if no regard were taken for private fortunes he estimated that the additional cost of pensions would be in the neighborhood of \$5,000,000. He moved finally that the whole matter be referred to the pensions committee, which will sit once again this session.

Too Responsible. Hon. C. C. Ballantyne, minister of naval affairs, took full responsibility this afternoon for the fearful and wonderful device which members of the Canadian Navy, who served in the war are called upon to wear on their lapels. From the descriptions given of the "badges" by members on both sides of the House it would appear that Mr. Ballantyne felt that if the navy in question were small and unpretentious, the badge designating service therein should be at least noticeable. Mr. Mowat of Parkdale likened it to the regalia of the "grand lodge of the order of pelicans." MacMaster of Bromes compared it to the Cairnmore Brooch which Highlanders wear upon their "shawls," and was promptly called to time by McKenzie of Cape Breton, who looked upon the comparison as a slur on the brooch, and who informed his Lowland friend from Bromes that they were not shawls, but plaids.

Duff of Lunenburg called the badges "monstrosities," which he would not have his dog wear about with him. One type consisted of a huge device

with two "fouled" anchors (a most disagreeable suggestion to a seafaring man), with a large scroll, and with a massive crown on top. The badge was glaring white in character, and of a substance which appeared to be a combination of zinc and tin.

Labor Under Handicap. It appears that the naval veterans are laboring under a handicap as compared with the veterans of the junior branch of the service who wear the well-known bronze button of the returning soldier, inasmuch as the seafaring position very frequently depends upon recognition of service through that button, and inasmuch as the "monstrosities" of the naval service are not known when worn, and very infrequently worn at best, the minister was advised to scrap the ornaments and to have issued to the naval men a badge similar to that worn by their brethren of the land armies.

J. A. Burnham of West Peterborough undertook during the evening to withdraw his motion with regard to the eight-hour day, following a speech by Hon. C. J. Doherty, in which the minister mostly pleaded that the federal authorities had no jurisdiction. Mr. Burnham withdrew his reference to the members of the private council who didn't appear to know where they stood on the matter.

Quoted Instances. Mr. Power quoted instances of pensions being paid down to a few dollars a month, and of widowed mothers who had their sons in the war had some other small income from another source. If she managed to pick up \$100 a year, her pension was reduced by just so much, and Mr. Power urged that no distinction be made in awarding pensions between the widowed wife and the dependent mother of dead soldiers.

Mr. Hume Cronyn of London and Major D. L. Redman of Calgary supported the motion, the latter stating that it was simply going a step further than last year, when mothers were taken care of for the first time. It was now intended to include widowed mothers with sources of income other than the pension.

Cocksbutt Supports W. W. F. Cocksbutt of Brantford, who also strongly supported the motion, criticized the pension board, which body he said, was either held up by red tape until it was helpless or did not know how to do its duty when its duty had been pointed out to it. He had been almost forced to tears, he said, by some of the cases brought to his own personal notice. Another grievance he had against the pension board was that when a mother had struggled for months to get a case attended to the settlement was often upset in a few months. "When a home has given a son, a father or a husband to the country's service it is the bounden duty of the country to see that want does not lie in the house, and I don't believe the people of Canada wish that want should exist there," he said.

Mr. E. W. Nesbit (Oxford North) remarked that the pensions board was merely an administrative body which

could merely function within the limits of the act, and that it was unsatisfactory, then it was the business of the House to change it. It was unfair to blame the board of pensions commissioners for a failure to act.

Increase of Round. Major Andrews, D.S.O., member for Winnipeg Centre, thought the only solution to the pensions question was to make an increase all round. The whole scale at the present time, especially the lower end, was too low.

Hon. Newton Wesley Rowell stated that the union of the two governments to appoint a committee at this session to deal with returned soldiers' questions, because he said, several very important questions on this matter would have to be dealt with. (Quebec South) paid tribute to the board of pensions commissioners, which during the debate was warmly criticized. "They are all men who have been at the front, and I am sure have every sympathy with their returned comrades," said the former.

On his promising that the committee would be appointed this session, Mr. Power withdrew his motion to amend the pensions act so as to bring in all widows, irrespective of any private means they may have or their pension they may earn in addition to their pension.

The House then took recess.

House Restaurant. The speaker, at the opening of the evening session, read a message from the Senate that a special committee had been appointed by the Upper House for the purpose of considering and reporting upon a scheme for the placing of the new parliamentary restaurant, when completed, both as to equipment and administration on a party with a first-class club or hotel dining-room.

The House was invited to appoint a special committee to sit jointly with a special committee of the Senate. Mr. Duff (Lancaster) raised the question of service badges for Canadians who had served in either the Canadian or Imperial naval service, or in Canadian or overseas waters. The men who had served in the naval service he said, were not satisfied with the badges issued by the naval service department.

Hon. C. C. Ballantyne said that special medals had been struck for ex-service men of the navy after careful consideration had been given to the advisability of distinguishing the naval men from military men. He gave some figures of Canadian contingents to the naval forces. Five thousand Canadians served in the Royal Canadian Naval Service in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. These men were properly proud of their connection with the navy, and wanted a medal which would distinguish them as belonging to the navy. Three medals of silver had been struck, corresponding with the three classes of medals issued by the militia department.

Shining Discs. H. M. Mowat said that the ex-naval men were undoubtedly disappointed with the big shining discs, which they were asked to wear, and which, unfamiliar to the general public, might well distinguish them as members of some "ancient order of pelicans."

W. Nesbit (Oxford North) said he would give the men the same badge as was given the soldier if they so desired.

Mr. Redman (Calgary), A. R. MacMaster (Bromes) and D. D. McKenzie (Cape Breton) also spoke, and Mr. Duff, closing the debate, said the present issue of badges should be recalled. He wanted to know who asked for them. Was it the sailors or the men in the navy department?

The minister had sent him over a design of the badge. It included two fouled anchors. Surely the members knew that a vessel when she fouled her anchor went adrift. There was no need to set these men adrift, even without putting such a monstrosity as this on their lapels.

If the Great Veterans' Association were agreeable he would urge the minister to scrap all the different issues of badges and have one for both services. The motion was carried.

The motion was carried.

Ministers' Resignations. Sir George Foster said he wished to reply to the question which Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King had asked on Friday regarding the resignations of cabinet ministers since the last session of Parliament. In order to answer this question, he proposed to lay on the table the correspondence between the prime minister and the ministers in question. Hon. S. C. Mewburn and A. K. MacLean, Sir George accompanied this with the statement that the resignations had not been the result of any differences with the policy or policies of the Government. The letters of resignation of these members will be printed in Hansard, the House having agreed to this course.

Hon. Mackenzie King questioned the acting prime minister regarding an Associated Press dispatch from London, which stated that the status of Canada's representatives to Washington had been decided upon by the British and Canadian Governments. Sir George Foster replied that the correspondence on this question was still proceeding. When that was completed it would be tabled.

J. H. Burnham's resolution on the eight-hour day law was again brought up.

Not in Position. Hon. Newton Wesley Rowell said that the Government was not in a position at present to frame legislation on this question. An important constitutional question was involved, the explanation of which for the benefit of the House would be made by the minister of justice. In answer to a cross-fire of questions from every part of the House, Mr. Rowell explained that, first, the official report of the Washington labor conference containing its recommendations for eight-hour day legislation had not been received by the Government; second, they might find that the federal Parliament would have to refer the question to provincial authorities; third, the Canadian peace treaty to accept the recommendations of the labor conference and the vote of Parliament would govern the adoption or rejection of such legislation.

Donald Sutherland (Oxford South) was puzzled to know why the peace treaty defining as separate from industry. Hon. Mr. Rowell said if the convention did nothing else it was well worth while, because it had caused Japan already to bring in a measure to shorten the hours of labor in that country. It was proposed to start with a nine and a half hour day in Japan, and give all employees one day a week rest. The Japanese Government had agreed to this.

"If we can realize that the opposition from a labor standpoint is, in the future, coming from the Orient, this feature is very important for Canada and the United States. Japan has also practically promised to come to the principle of an eight-hour day within five years, and that will mean a great deal when China wakes up with her millions of workers," he said.

Hon. C. J. Doherty, in reply to several queries, stressed the fact that the resolution contained the words "subject only to the right of express private contract." Thus he urged, legislation based upon the resolution was outside the jurisdiction of the House. "Has this parliament the power to enact an eight-hour day?" Hon. Mr. Doherty replied that in his opinion it had not. In answer to further cross-firing he intimated that the only way it could be done was for the Government to make it a criminal offence to keep an employee working more than eight hours a day. He did not think any such action as that was desirable.

The amendments to the optium and drug act and the civil service superannuation act will be before the House tomorrow. The House adjourned at 10:55 p.m. until tomorrow.

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