

The Senate proceeded to consider the Report of the Special Committee.

Hon. F. L. BEIQUE: Honourable gentlemen, when this important Committee was formed I hesitated very much in accepting the Chairmanship, because I felt that many members of this House were much better qualified than I was to do the part of the work that always falls to the Chairman; and I must confess that, when I was called upon to exercise the functions of Chairman, I found, even more than I expected, that my mind was not sufficiently prepared for the work, and that it would have been better to have made another choice. However, I have done what I could, and I think I have given enough time and attention to the matter to understand it thoroughly, and to have become possessed of the facts to a sufficient extent. I was helped by the members of the Committee, who were numerous, and amongst whom were several who had had a large experience in the working of the law.

Our attempt in dealing with the Pension Bill as passed by the House of Commons was to render full justice, as far as could be, to the returned soldiers, and, in their own interests, to decrease as much as possible the expense of working out the law. We thought also that it was our duty to see that the Act was not used for the purpose of giving benefits to persons who had never been in contemplation, and who, in justice, should not derive benefits from that law.

It has always been the opinion of Parliament, I take it, that the law should deal liberally with returned soldiers or members of the forces and their dependents, in regard to injuries or disabilities arising from service. This principle has been jealously maintained by the Committee, and I think there should be no ground for criticism in that respect.

It was stated in the press that the Bill as passed by the House of Commons was the Bill as presented to Parliament by the Minister who had the responsibility in matters of that kind. At the outset we found that this was not the case; that there were in the Bill as passed by the House of Commons no less than four different sections which were not in the Bill when it was presented to Parliament, and which were introduced by members in the House of Commons without proper consideration, as the Committee believes.

Right Hon. Sir GEORGE E. FOSTER: Is it a fact that any or all of those four clauses which were introduced were recommended by the Ralston Commission?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND.

Hon. Mr. SHARPE: None of them.

Hon. Mr. BEIQUE: No. We have ascertained from the Report of the Commission, and from examining the Chairman of the Commission himself, that the Commission knew nothing about those. They were never considered by the Royal Commission.

I will refer in a few moments to those four different sections and shall give the clause which the Committee has adopted, as intended to cover such cases as should be taken care of.

The Committee finds that one of the main questions is the effect on pension of Bill 205. The Committee find that under the existing law every soldier disabled during service is pensionable, but under the proposed legislation, that is, under the Bill as passed by the House of Commons, the pension privilege would extend to dependents of all such men upon their death. The evidence before the Committee indicated that the adoption of this new legislation would involve an expenditure which in the course of 25 years would amount approximately to \$32,000,000. The Committee thought that it was worth its while to see that the returned soldiers were properly treated, but that the expenditure be curtailed, if it was possible to curtail it.

Hon. Mr. BRADBURY I would like to ask just one question. When the honourable gentleman states that the expenditure would amount to \$32,000,000 in 25 years, does he mean the expenditure for administration, or does he mean the payment of the claims that would come in?

Hon. Mr. BEIQUE: The amount that would have to be paid.

Hon. Mr. BRADBURY: In 25 years?

Hon. Mr. BEIQUE: In 25 years.

Hon. Mr. BRADBURY: That is not very serious.

Hon. Mr. SHARPE: Under that one clause.

Hon. Mr. BEIQUE: Under that one clause. The Committee found that under the law as it is now on the Statute Book, ex-service men are entitled to pensions for any disability, whether it was attributable to service or incurred or aggravated during service, and that this provision should be maintained; but that the pension should not pass to dependents unless the disability was attributable to service.

I repeat; the Bill as recommended by the Committee provides that pensions be paid