

Pension for Tuberculosis

In 1922, and again in 1925, special provisions were made for persons pensioned as the result of tuberculosis. In view of the peculiar nature of this disease parliament decided that, subject to certain conditions, pensions awarded for tuberculosis incurred by one who had service in a theatre of actual war should be at the rate of 100 percent in all cases and, for one who had not served in a theatre of actual war, at the rate of 90 per cent.

Furthermore, it was provided that when such a pension had been awarded it must not be reduced within a period of two years. The wisdom of this measure will be apparent to all who are familiar with the necessity for persons in whom tuberculosis has been arrested to find a mode of living which will not bring about a recurrence of the disease.

Basis of Pension

Two important basic provisions of the Canadian pension legislation which have existed from the very beginning and which should be emphasized at this time are:—

1. Disability pension is based upon the degree of physical disability actually caused by the injury or disease.

The importance of this principle is appreciated when one considers that men earn their livings in widely different ways. Certain types of workmen require a high degree of bodily strength whereas others, who may be described as brain workers, do not find their earning capacities greatly reduced by even serious physical injury. It was felt from very early in the history of our pension legislation that no just and equitable basis could be found for awarding pension if earning capacity were taken into account. The assumption was that every man is entitled to the full use of his body and limbs and that impairments arising out of war service should be pensionable equally.

2. The second principle is related to the first. It asserts that no deduction in pension shall be made because of other earnings. Pension is straight compensation for disability or, in the case of dependents, for the loss of the family breadwinner.

Having thus followed the history of pension legislation from 1916 until the outbreak of the present war and, in one or two cases beyond that date where amendments adopted more recently relate to those who served in the war of 1914-18 and earlier wars, I shall now turn to other aspects of veterans' legislation as developed during and subsequent to the first great war.

MEDICAL TREATMENT AND HOSPITALIZATION

Up to the outbreak of the war of 1914 the assumption had always been that the care of invalided soldiers was the function of the army medical corps. Due to the heavy volume of casualties returning from Europe in 1915 it was found necessary to supplement the activities of that corps by appointing a civilian commission to provide additional hospital premises.

Since this involved, not merely the acquisition of buildings, but their conversion and equipment for hospital purposes, the Military Hospitals Commission soon found itself deeply involved in hospital management, and there was a period of confusion as between the functions of the army corps and the civilian hospital commission in this regard.

I do not think that any fully satisfactory solution was found during the war, but with the end of hostilities, the army medical corps withdrew and the entire administration of hospital services and medical treatment for veterans became the responsibility of the civilian Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-Establishment.