

*Supply—Pensions—Veterans*

There is a general feeling throughout the country that unemployed war veterans should be accepted as the responsibility of the dominion government. Particularly is this view prevalent amongst provincial and municipal authorities, and among responsible veteran organizations who have to deal with the class of veteran included in this report.

During the recruiting period in Canada, many war-time promises were made to the troops by men in public life, no doubt in all sincerity at the time, but it would not be correct to say that all of the promises had been fulfilled.

There is no doubt that the veterans keeping in mind these promises, believe that they are and should be accepted as a definite responsibility of the dominion government when unemployed.

It is not altogether surprising that, in view of the attitude of provincial and municipal authorities on this matter of unemployment relief responsibility, veterans, who have to seek local assistance, do so with a feeling of humiliation. Disillusionment and bitter thoughts prevail amongst many of these men to-day, yet they have held themselves aloof from all that is not good citizenship. They stand for law and order, but they feel that they deserve better than their present lot.

Our veterans are a strong moral force in the nation and, during years of depression, their attitude has had a steadying effect on the community in general.

By its efforts to solve the unemployment situation, the dominion government has already recognized that unemployment is basically a national problem. In the case of ex-service men, the commission feels that unemployment is essentially even more of a national problem, because the influences that contributed most to the unemployability of these men had their origin in a national emergency.

I heartily endorse these words.

Mr. BLACKMORE: I do not wish to say much at this late hour, but I do want to associate myself earnestly with the previous speakers. All things considered, our treatment of our returned men has left very much to be desired, and I think something further should be done for them. If this system under which we are living renders Canada incapable of doing more for her returned men, that fact alone stands as a condemnation of the system and for all thoughtful men it should be a sign that the system must be changed. Manifestly a country like Canada can do more for her returned men than she is doing. I shall never be satisfied until at least all that is asked for and recommended by these two commissions is done.

Mr. ISNOR: I realize that the minister is anxious to get this item through, and I do not propose to take up time except to reply briefly to a remark made by the hon. member for Vancouver North. I would hesitate to criticize actions or supposed actions taking place in Vancouver, which is rather a long distance from Ottawa, and still longer from

[Mr. MacNeil.]

Halifax, and for that reason, without knowing my facts, I would hesitate to make criticisms of conditions at such a distance. I live in Halifax; I am there the greater part of the time, and when I am in Ottawa I keep in touch with matters pertaining to my constituency. I have on my desk and in my file letters from various returned soldiers' organizations in Halifax, and almost without exception they have been good enough to write thanking me and asking me to express to the Minister of Pensions and National Health as well as to the Minister of National Defence their appreciation of the cooperation given to returned men not only in regard to pension matters but with respect to the general employment situation. I hesitate to say that the hon. member for Vancouver North raised the question from political motives. Knowing him, I would not say that he had spoken from that point of view; but in regard to the question raised the other day by an hon. member sitting on the other side of the house, when he asked a question based upon a telegram he had received from an individual in Halifax, it was shown later that the information was not according to the facts.

Last Christmas the complete list of names which was forwarded by the secretary of the veterans' assistance commission was accepted 100 per cent, which shows a willingness to cooperate on the part of those who are in authority in Halifax. I believe the same can be said to a very large extent with respect to various projects now being carried out in Halifax. I say, therefore, with all due respect to the criticisms offered by the hon. member for Vancouver North, I am satisfied that in the very large percentage of cases, almost wholly, this government has the support of the returned men not only in Halifax, but also throughout Nova Scotia.

May I say one word in reference to another criticism offered by an hon. member in reference to a certain undertaking in Nova Scotia. He did not mention the county, but the reference was to the town of Yarmouth. I have been informed that, regarding the recent project in connection with the airport in the town of Yarmouth, a responsible party wrote to the honorary secretary of the veterans' assistance commission in Halifax, stating that fifty per cent of the men on that project were returned men and that a large number of unemployed returned men of Yarmouth were being taken care of. That is altogether different from the picture presented by the hon. member for Vancouver North. The hon. gentleman did not state his authority for the statement he made. Perhaps he will give us the name of the person who sent the letter.