

(Mr. Duranleau) was in Montreal the other day in order to discuss going on with the proposals made by Mr. Beatty.

Mr. BENNETT: It certainly does.

PENSION ACT AMENDMENT

Hon. MURRAY MacLAREN (Minister of Pensions and National Health): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the inquiry of the hon. member for North Battleford (Mr. McIntosh) and other hon. members as to whether the government proposes to introduce legislation to amend the Pension Act during the present session, may I inform the house that the government has given very careful consideration to the statement submitted by the associated veterans in connection with the operation and administration of the act. Representatives of the five service organizations concerned were heard by the government on April 23, and the view taken by the government is indicated by a letter to Major J. S. Roper, chairman of the associated veterans, which reads:

Ottawa, April 23, 1932.

Major J. S. Roper, M.C., K.C.,
Dominion President,
The Canadian Legion of the
British Empire Service League,
(Chairman of the Associated Veterans),
Ottawa.

Dear Sir,—

With reference to the legislative proposals submitted in January and to the hearing held to-day by the government at which were present representatives of the associated veterans, i.e., the Amputations Association of the Great War, the Sir Arthur Pearson Club of Blinded Sailors and Soldiers, the Canadian Pensioners' Association of the Great War, the Army and Navy Veterans in Canada, and the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League:

Under the amendments to the Pension Act of 1930, the Pension Tribunal has operated for only eighteen months and the Pension Appeal Court for fifteen months. When the legislation of 1930 was passed, it was suggested that it should at least have a fair trial before further amendments were made. The government is of the opinion that it can hardly be said that the time it has been in operation has afforded a real opportunity to test its effectiveness. Every effort will be made to improve the administration of the act and to expedite decisions being made. Our information warrants the belief that, when parliament again meets, we should be in a position to definitely determine the weakness of the present act and desire that every effort should be made to ascertain what amendments may be necessary.

The government will be pleased to refer the whole matter to a committee of the associated veterans' organizations, in conjunction with a committee appointed by the government, the report to be presented to the government before the first of, say February, 1933.

On behalf of the government, I desire to thank you and your officers and members not

only for the spirit in which you have approached the matter under consideration, but also for the real assistance you have been in the administration of the act, and to express the hope that, as a result of cooperative effort, the conditions of which you complain may disappear.

Believe me, I am,
Yours faithfully,
(sgd.) Murray MacLaren,
Minister of Pensions and
National Health.

The reply from Major Roper reads as follows:

Ottawa, Canada,
April 24, 1932.

Colonel the Hon. Murray MacLaren,
C.M.G., P.C., M.P.,
Minister of Pensions and
National Health,
Daly Building,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Sir:—

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your very courteous letter of April 23, regarding the legislative and other proposals affecting ex-service men and women in Canada submitted to the Right Hon. the Prime Minister and members of the government of Canada by representatives of The Army and Navy Veterans in Canada; The Amputations' Association of the Great War; The Sir Arthur Pearson Club of Blinded Sailors and Soldiers; The Canadian Pensioners' Association of the Great War, and the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, hereinafter referred to as the associated veterans.

Since these proposals were presented in January, a survey has been made of the complaints arising from the operation of the present act from one end of Canada to the other. On investigation these complaints resolve themselves into three major classes, viz.: complaints re (a) the congestion of cases in the Board of Pension Commissioners for Canada and the Pension Appeal Court; (b) the length of time it takes to get a final decision; (c) the unnecessary appealing of cases by commission counsel. The associated veterans are pleased to have the assurance of the government that every effort will be made to improve the administration of the act and to expedite decisions being made. This will in a measure satisfy some of the complaints.

The associated veterans have further taken into consideration the proposition made by the government to refer the whole matter to a committee of the associated veterans' organizations in conjunction with a committee appointed by the government, the report to be submitted to the government before the first of February, 1933. After taking into consideration the statements made by the government to the associated veterans yesterday and having due regard to the times through which Canada is passing the associated veterans while realizing the necessity of immediate remedial action, have come to the conclusion that they should accept this proposition provided that the report is made to the government when complete and any necessary legislation evolving from the same is presented to the next session of parliament. This also will enable a very close study to be made