

Mr. HOMUTH: The fact of the matter is that in this war we have done away with the patriotic fund. It does not exist, as it did at the time of the last war.

Mr. RALSTON: That is correct.

Mr. HOMUTH: I want to associate myself with the hon. member for Renfrew South. In the last two years we have had many cases such as those cited by him. The nearest military hospital to my constituency is in London. There have been cases where soldiers have become suddenly ill and have had to have operations immediately. The doctor in charge could not wait until he got that soldier admitted to Westminster hospital. In such circumstances the patients have been taken to local hospitals, and because of that fact have been refused hospitalization.

Mr. RALSTON: Is my hon. friend right about that? He is speaking about a soldier who is actually serving?

Mr. HOMUTH: A soldier of the last war.

Mr. RALSTON: Oh, I misunderstood. The Westminster hospital is that of the Department of Pensions.

Mr. HOMUTH: Yes. This is a serious matter, and much hardship has been caused because of the condition I have described. I suggest the committee might very well recommend that if in the opinion of a doctor from the Department of Pensions and National Health a man should be taken to a local hospital, he might be so taken and the doctor's advice accepted.

Mr. PERLEY: In the first instance, when the department was calling up trainees, did it not send out a notice that such trainees were to go to the nearest practitioners to receive preliminary examination? Were not those practitioners or doctors provided with certain forms to be filled out? Then did not the trainee take the form to the training centre or to the camp when he came before the board. If after that procedure the trainee developed pneumonia and died, or his death resulted from any other injury or disease, what claim, if any, would his parents have upon the department? Possibly we should not discuss dependents' allowances on this resolution.

Mr. RALSTON: I have no objection. Perhaps I am treading on the ground which should be covered by my colleague the Minister of Pensions and National Health, but I might reply in regard to such a case as that described by my hon. friend, in which a soldier takes cold, or incurs some disability during his service at a training centre—

Mr. PERLEY: After he has passed the preliminary examination.

Mr. RALSTON: This is a case which has to be dealt with by the pension commission. But of course if the soldier can possibly be made well, we endeavour to do it. I do not think the hon. member for Vancouver South was quite fair when he said, to use his own expression, that the country would just throw him out on his ear. The department is just as anxious as anybody else to see to it that the man is restored to health if it is possible to do so. But naturally the Department of National Defence cannot take the responsibility if it is shown that the man has no chance of qualifying within the physical qualifications set out in categories A and B. After that he has to go to the Department of Pensions and National Health, if he has a claim that his disability was "attributable to service as such". Those are the words of the act. The answer to my hon. friend, in short, is that the board of pension commissioners and nobody else—I say this advisedly—can decide definitely whether a case is one in which pension should be allowed.

Mr. POULIOT: If we look at the estimates for the Department of Pensions and National Health we see that the amount for the pensions branch has decreased from \$56,378,553 to \$53,921,407. I presume that reduction is due to the fact that many veterans of the world war of 1914-18 have been enlisting in this war. But what has surprised me very much since I have been a member of the House of Commons is that no check-up has been made by the department of the pensions granted throughout this country. I know of cases where soldiers who were unworthy have received pensions, and other cases of well-deserving veterans who did not receive pensions. For a time I complained of the board of pension commissioners, saying that the members of it were not qualified to sit on the board because they had had no medical experience. The answer given to me by the department was that they had fine military records. That seemed to cover everything. One of them is a high-ranking officer, a very fine man—and the Minister of National Defence may listen to me; I am not making what he calls an attack on him. I have nothing to say against this man personally, but I do say he is not qualified to sit on the board of pension commissioners because he knows nothing about medicine.

I shall refer to some specific cases. There is the case of regimental number 897, one of the first to enlist in the last war. He was a husky fellow, a lumberjack, well-built