

They claim that:

The history of imperial pensions in Canada is a story of the most arrant callousness and neglect. Men who had no knowledge of imperial pensions regulations and no authority to guide them as to their rights were taken advantage of in the most cold-blooded manner. There is no question that, particularly at the present time a resolution in parliament requesting a British royal commission to investigate the case of imperial pensions in Canada would bring results.

They say that while imperial veterans through their organization are asking the Canadian government to grant them certain social services granted Canadian ex-service men, their chief objective at the moment is one that cannot be reasonably denied them by parliament. Here is their request. They are asking this parliament to petition the parliament of Great Britain, requesting that a royal commission be set up in this country to travel from Halifax to Vancouver and Victoria to listen to the grievances of these ex-imperials. It may be said by some hon. members that this parliament would have no right to appeal to the parliament of Great Britain, but this is not the first time in the history of Canada that an appeal has been made concerning matters affecting Great Britain. I hold in my hand a memorandum of a petition that passed this house in 1903, in which this parliament asked that the parliament of Great Britain grant home rule to Ireland. That was passed after a great deal of discussion, and I need not take the time of the committee to read it.

Mr. POWER: It has been suggested to me that if it took as long for the imperial veterans to get their commission as it did for Ireland to get home rule after that petition of 1903, it would not do them very much good.

Mr. REID: I was just meeting the argument that might be advanced, that it would be out of place for this parliament to make such a request. But I shall come a little closer to our own time. In 1934 Australia got some redress from the imperial government with regard to settlers who had been induced to leave England and settle in Australia. A commission was set up by Great Britain in conjunction with Australia, and a total of some £30,000 was granted. There were ninety-two settlers returned from Australia, and 292 British immigrants stayed in that country after receiving some assistance from the British government; but this assistance would not have been procured but for the fact that an appeal was made by the Australian government to the imperial government asking that the commission be set up.

[Mr. Reid.]

I appeal to the minister and the committee. This is all that the imperial veteran is asking at the moment. He wants this parliament to petition the parliament of Great Britain asking that a commission be set up that will travel across this country and inquire into these cases, many of which are very serious and tragic. I do not think it is too much to ask the minister to give the matter some consideration. He still has time to bring down a resolution or to make an appeal to the Prime Minister. This question has been placed in my hands on account of the fact that in British Columbia we have more ex-imperials than in any other province, and I deemed it my duty to bring up the matter at this time.

Mr. LANDERYOU: May I ask if the minister has negotiated with the imperial government at all in regard to this question?

Mr. POWER: I think the imperial veterans discuss it pretty constantly and persistently with the representative of the British ministry of pensions here in Canada. The British government have a representative of the ministry of pensions in Ottawa, Mr. Owen, who has all to do with imperial soldiers in Canada.

Mr. GREEN: This is the item under which it was arranged earlier in the session we should be at liberty to discuss the report of the veterans' assistance commission. There was some discussion on it one night when the item was up previously, about two months ago, but that was a one-man performance with the minister taking all the parts; he then told us that he was not going to accept the main recommendation of the commission.

Before I proceed to deal with that report, I should like to add a word in support of the suggestion that the government do something to help the imperial veterans. I agree with the hon. member for New Westminster that for many years the lot of the imperial veterans in Canada has been a tragic one, and anything that can be done by this parliament to assist them certainly should be done.

This, I suggest, is the session when the commission chickens are coming home to roost. Two years ago this government quite cheerfully tied several difficult problems to several commission chickens, with the result that they were flown away and did not have to be faced until this year. Now these chickens are back with reports. There is the veterans' assistance commission, known as the Rattray commission; the national employment commission, known as the Purvis commission; the