

*Pension Act—Mr. Power*

records. I emphasized the importance of accurate records in my remarks to the house some months ago, from the experience I had had in the last war. Members will realize the vital importance of this subject, and I should like to ask the Minister of National Defence or, since he is not in his seat, the Minister of National Defence for Air (Mr. Power), to see to it that every possible care is taken with regard to records. It will be apparent that after the lapse of years the written record of a man's service is all that the pension commission has to depend upon in order to adjust his pension.

The bill that is now before the house for third reading represents the considered views of the majority of the committee, all of whom were sincerely anxious to do everything possible for the veteran and his dependents. We must also remember, however, that we have a responsibility to the taxpayers. This bill is undoubtedly a great improvement on any previous act, and will adjust many of the grievances pointed out to us in the committee. Three or four members who spoke yesterday, I notice, disagreed in one or two particulars. I give place to no one in my desire to do everything possible for the veterans who served in the last war and for those who will return after this war. For them I have every sympathy and respect, and I very much hope that they will be satisfied with what we have been able to accomplish in this bill. For if it does not give them all they ask, it is at least a serious and sympathetic attempt to do them justice.

In conclusion may I pay a tribute to the unflinching courtesy and ability of the chairman of the committee, and express the hope that the committee may be continued under his chairmanship during the present war, so that if any matters arise which need adjustment they can be referred to it at any time.

Hon. C. G. POWER (Minister of National Defence for Air): I rise simply to keep up an uninterrupted record of over twenty-three years of having always spoken on a pension bill, and to endorse what has been said by my hon. friend who has just spoken (Mr. Bruce). For many years in dealing with pensions it was brought home to me as it was to all other members who had something to do with pension legislation, that one of the great difficulties in seeing to it that justice and fair play was given to the men lay in the fact that faulty records had been kept in a great many instances in the last war. I remember making special reference early in this war to the question of records, in my conversations and, I believe, in some written communications to the then minister of

[Mr. Bruce.]

national defence. I also took the trouble, I believe on the day war broke out, to write to the then minister of national defence, now minister of pensions (Mr. Mackenzie), asking him to be particularly careful about the medical examinations which were held on enlistment. Perhaps he may return the letter to me now. On the other hand, I think I can boast that, so far as the Royal Canadian Air Force is concerned, there will be very little to complain of on the ground of incomplete and faulty medical examination on enlistment. In fact, the complaint is and has been that the medical examination is perhaps more severe than it should be.

I might refer to some observations made by the leader of the Social Credit party. I was not in the house at the time, but if I am to judge from what appeared in the press he referred to the scandalous treatment of ex-service men. I have in my hand the comparative scales of pensions indicating, and it is well known, that in some cases, in fact, in almost every case, the scale of pensions awarded to Canadian ex-soldiers is higher than that paid anywhere else in the world.

I wish to refer to the expression "scandalous treatment," as applied, I presume, to the treatment of soldiers since the last war. May I point out that ever since 1918 there have been committees of this house, composed of members representing all political parties, dealing with the problems of ex-soldiers. These committees were headed by men such as Mr. W. F. Nickle, of Kingston, who in the early days of pension legislation spent almost all his time and devoted a great deal of his admittedly great legal talent to laying down the principles of the pension legislation to be drafted. There was Hon. Newton Wesley Rowell, a man eminent for his judicial knowledge and his desire to be of benefit to his fellow man in the way of social service and welfare. There was the late Mr. Hume Cronyn of London, than whom no man ever devoted more time and energy to the good of the ex-soldier. There was the late Sir Herbert Marler; and all down the line hon. members of this house, year in and year out, gave their attention and time and energy to endeavouring to assist the ex-soldier. Time after time the house has unanimously passed the reports and recommendations of these pension committees. Time after time association after association of returned soldiers has endorsed the recommendations and legislation brought down by these committees.

My hon. friend, upon giving this matter further consideration, will perhaps inquire of his own conscience whether he was deliberately intending to discredit all the work which