

*Prisoners of War Medical Examinations*

men when they were attested was not what we would have liked it to be, and now we get reports from the Canadian Pension Commission, when applicants apply for pensions, that the disabilities from which they are now suffering are of pre-enlistment origin. I do not see how the commission can make such a decision with the lack of evidence before it, since the medical examination at the time the men were attested was very scanty and in many cases did not detect any disability.

I would also remind hon. members that we who have the privilege of sitting in this house representing the people of Canada have an additional obligation to see to it that our veterans are not just remembered on Remembrance Day for their services to their country but that they receive a square deal 365 days every year. This does not apply solely to the veterans for whom this plea is made. It applies to the families of the veterans, to the families of enlisted men who were prisoners of war and who are now suffering disability as a result of service to their country. We have an obligation and a responsibility to do what we can to further the desire of our country to look after our veterans.

The branches within the department have two responsibilities. Granted, one is to watch the pursestrings to see that no one gets a pension to which he is not entitled. However, I would say there is not enough emphasis given to the benefit of the doubt clause, section 70, about which we have heard so much. The other responsibility is to see that the country's obligation to those who served in the armed services is carried out.

To bring this matter a little closer home to members of the house, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say I know of several veterans on the House of Commons protective staff who are suffering because of their service to their country. For example, just the other day one member of the protective staff had a severe stroke. He is a disabled veteran. In fact ever since leaving the armed services he has lived with one lung. He thought he could carry on. However, because of chance, and maybe because of the nature of his duties, he suffered a stroke. He has been in receipt of only a 20 per cent disability pension stemming from his service to his country. Now his wife and children are going to suffer the consequences if he passes on, as many people do after suffering such attacks.

There are also other people serving on the protective staff who have nervous disorders which may or may not be as a result of service to their country, but we have ample

[Mr. McIntosh.]

proof in briefs from various veterans organizations, complete with medical reports, to show that we in Canada and authorities in other countries are not yet aware of the results of spending a long time as a prisoner of war. I would like to read portions from some of these briefs but they contain some almost unpronounceable medical terms.

I am sure many hon. members will agree that the requests for assistance they receive from veterans fall into three categories. In this instance I am referring to late applicants who up until now have not made application to their country for a pension, those who are having difficulty in establishing that their present illnesses are attributable to war wounds.

This is very difficult in the case of what we call a good soldier. Most men who have served in the armed services know that a good soldier very seldom went on sick parade. If he could possibly walk he did not go on sick parade. I am not trying to belittle those who did get pensions, those who had complete medical reports, and I am not saying it was very easy for them to get pensions. But many men, no matter how ill they were, did not report to the M.O. unless they were carried there and forced to go to hospital. These are the people who are now having difficulty in establishing their right to the pensions that the people of this country promised them if they ever needed them. The people I am talking about are very proud. I know most hon. members must have a number of letters on their files from such persons.

The second category of request deals with the conditions of service under which men served, and the third relates to P.O.W.'s.

All of us know that when men were P.O.W.'s, particularly in the European theatre and I assume the same applies to other theatres, no medical records were kept of their disabilities and other troubles during the time they were P.O.W.'s. With respect to the Dieppe veterans I understand this covered a period of three and a half years. At the moment I am not referring to the Hong Kong prisoners who were looked after, perhaps not as well as we would have liked but I think they are quite satisfied with the treatment given them by the country they served. But there are a great number who were prisoners of war in the European theatre and who should get the assistance that the country promised them.

I could refer to many articles on this subject that have appeared in the press. I have a