

Pension Act

give full consideration to and report upon problems which will arise from the demobilization and discharge of members of the forces from time to time during and after the conclusion of the present war, and their rehabilitation into civil life. The problem was a serious one in November of last year, and is becoming more serious as time goes on. A special advisory committee which was set up by the cabinet recommended that a division be created to be known as the veterans' welfare division, the functions of which should be to advise and assist former members of the forces in matters pertaining to reestablishment in civil life, and to perform such other duties as might be prescribed by the Minister of Pensions and National Health relating to the welfare of such former members of the forces. These were the duties which devolved upon the veterans' welfare division:

1. To establish subdivisions at such points throughout Canada at which the Department of Pensions and National Health maintains offices and/or where the establishment of such subdivisions is deemed to be advisable;

2. To interview, advise and assist former members of the forces;

3. To become conversant with all the regulations relating to pensions, allowances, medical treatment—

I need not list all these various duties. The fact remains that they are so vague as to be of no real value, and consequently this problem of the rehabilitation of the ex-service man is not being given the attention it deserves.

I am suggesting that the problem can be dealt with in two ways. There is the long view of the problem and then there is the short view, or what should be done immediately. I should like to have the reaction of the minister to some recommendations appearing on pages 62 and 63 of the report of the veterans' assistance commission of 1937. On page 62 I find this paragraph:

There is a general feeling throughout the country that unemployed war veterans should be accepted as the responsibility of the dominion government. Particularly is this view prevalent amongst provincial and municipal authorities, and among responsible veteran organizations who have to deal with the class of veteran included in this report.

During the recruiting period in Canada many war-time promises were made to the troops by men in public life, no doubt in all sincerity at the time, but it would not be correct to say that all of the promises had been fulfilled.

While I agree that this refers more particularly to the men who were demobilized after the war of 1914-18, it can also be applied

[Mr. Marshall.]

to the situation which presents itself at the present time. Then at page 63 of this report I find this very fine recommendation:

After giving the matter considerable thought and bearing in mind the representation made by organizations throughout the country, by honorary local committees, and information obtained from various sources, the commission has come to the conclusion that it can do no less than recommend that the dominion government accept responsibility for all indigent unemployed veterans who were domiciled in Canada at date of enlistment and who saw service in a theatre of actual war.

In this recommendation the commission suggests that these be dealt with in two groups:

1. The War Veterans' Allowance Act to be amended to take in a larger number who can prove unfitness, et cetera;

I do hope that when the committee comes to discuss the War Veterans' Allowance Act due consideration will be given to this recommendation.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): That has been carried out to a certain extent since the report was written.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes; but the second recommendation to which I now come is the one to which I have particular reference:

2. The remaining number to be taken care of while unemployed by the payment of an allowance to be known as provisional economic allowance.

The minister would not for a moment suggest that this recommendation has been carried out. It was endorsed by the Canadian Legion at one of its annual conventions only a couple of years ago, but thus far no steps have been taken to implement it. To me it is the most important recommendation of all. It goes on:

The basic rate of the provisional economic allowance to be:

Single men, \$18.75 per month;

Man and wife, \$30 per month.

That is a long range view of the problem, but what should we do with regard to these men at the present time or until this committee meets and brings in definite recommendations? There came to my desk this week a recommendation which I believe is the best I have heard or read thus far. I pass it on to the minister for his consideration, as a method of dealing immediately with the problem of caring for the unemployed discharged men of this war.

I would suggest that each military district set up immediately (and this can be done by telegram in twenty-four hours) a special service company into which would be transferred all men in the category of those being discharged to-day, to remain on strength for some disposition (medical treatment, pension, vocational