

Supply—Veterans Affairs

royal commission especially if the case were confidential. When you are dealing with veterans, I do not think there is one hon. member in this committee who would want the veteran's personal history spread before the public to make reading.

Serious charges were made against the hospital at Vancouver. If the hon. member wants to read some of those charges, I have the file in front of me. I am not going to place them before the committee.

Mr. Blackmore: Would the hon. member tell us who laid the charges?

Mr. Blair: Yes; and I have them signed.

Mr. Blackmore: Was it Mr. Kirchner?

Mr. Blair: Yes.

Mr. Blackmore: When did he lay the charges?

Mr. Blair: Would you like to hear them?

Mr. Blackmore: I want to know when he laid them.

Mr. Blair: On May 26, 1947. It is signed in print and also initialled by Mr. Kirchner. Those charges referred to things in Shaughnessy hospital which would not be tolerated at any time by the Canadian public, let alone the veterans. If you wanted it, Mr. Chairman, I could read into the record here certain statements that have been made, but I do not feel like doing that. Suffice it to say that serious charges were made against this hospital and against the surgeons who were operating and working in it. Dr. McGarry, now deceased, and I investigated the surgery in that hospital. We were up there at eight o'clock in the morning when the operating room first started to work. I must say this so far as the hospital was concerned. I reported to the veterans affairs committee when I came back. Dr. McGarry was not feeling well. I found it necessary to report before the veterans affairs committee that the hospital surgeons were most competent. I saw some of the finest work being done out there that I have ever seen in my life. There were statements made about the disabilities caused to men through an operation on the spinal discs. We found that the records of that hospital were far above the average. I should not say "far above." Let me withdraw that. We found that the records were equal to and slightly better than those of some of the best hospitals in this country. You have to be fair about these things.

We found that hospital most efficient. Do not let it be said that I am covering up doctors because I am a doctor. I covered nobody when it came to the plight of the veterans or the disability of any man. But

these were most competent doctors. I see now that one of the surgeons has been appointed to a new chair of surgery in British Columbia's new medical school. When I saw that I remarked to myself that they had obtained a good man.

So far as the other branches of the hospital were concerned, we found equal efficiency; and so far as the whole report of the committee is concerned let me again draw your attention to this. If the committee did not write down on paper the result of the interview with every man—and when the hon. member says that there were only four or five cases investigated I want to tell him there was a thorough investigation—

Mr. Blackmore: How many cases?

Mr. Blair: We saw forty or fifty; at least I saw them personally out there, looked at them and examined them. It is quite all right to clear myself in this matter, and I am not defending the government because I would criticize them if I found something wrong. I criticized it before the veterans committee with the result that a clause was put in the veterans act which made it impossible or nearly impossible for some of these things to happen again.

As regards what we found in 10 per cent of the cases, I did criticize the government. I am calling a spade a spade. If a thing is true, if a thing is good, say so; if it is not, say so. We found in 10 per cent of the cases that we investigated out there that the government, or through its agency the Canadian pension commission, was not giving the benefit of the doubt to veterans. At that time in the veterans committee we brought in some enabling legislation which makes it imperative that the Canadian pension commission give the veterans the benefit of the doubt.

At first I did not feel like defending this thing because I was satisfied in my own mind that this commission had done a good job. Everybody wants to be a doctor or a psychiatrist. I believe in keeping the confidence of any patient that I examine. I could make statements in this House of Commons with which every hon. member would be in complete agreement, including the hon. member who has made these serious charges. It is sufficient to say, sir, that this committee was absolutely satisfied with the good hospital and the good staff, and that these serious statements which have been made regarding the mutilation of veterans had no foundation whatever. The hospital was most efficient. It had a good staff. I am perfectly sure that I am right in saying that it had as good a staff as could be obtained in any section of the country, and that the citizens of British