

is invoked over a period of time. As you well know, there are claims in which section 70 does not need to be invoked. A man who has lost an arm in combat almost automatically gets entitlement. It is not a question of giving him the benefit of the doubt; his claim is obvious to everyone, as we all know. But in cases of systemic disease and the like, inevitably disputes arise as to whether the condition was incurred during service. It is this type of claim to which section 70 was designed to apply.

We have not been following the procedure of actually stating in the decision that section 70 was invoked in this particular case for any very great length of time, and there has not really been time at this stage to give you a completely accurate assessment. The best I could do was, fairly recently, to ask that ten C.E.F. files be drawn—and as you know C.E.F. means world war I—on which there were favourable decisions. Of those ten files containing favourable decisions, two were granted for gunshot wounds from world war I. It is rather astonishing to me that a person who served in world war I and suffered from a gunshot wound would not make an application for a pension until this late stage, but we do get some. Many of the old boys are independent fellows and they feel that they can get on all right and therefore do not bother anyone, but there are some of them now who are reaching the stage where their wounds are beginning to bother them and they are coming forward for the first time for this entitlement. Of these ten files, two were in this category. Of the other eight, in the form the decision is written it was stipulated that section 70 had been invoked in granting the claim. As I said, I would not presume to suggest this is a completely accurate measurement of what the commission is doing in this way, but I would say that this result suggests that 80 per cent of the C.E.F. claims are granted under the provisions of section 70. I think a statement was made to that effect sometime ago in this committee. The figure may have been a little higher than that, and it may well be that we will find the figure is higher when we are able to get a completely correct analysis of the situation.

Even courts of law have been known to condemn innocent men, and I do not think we as commissioners can presume attributes which are not present in judges and juries, so we are going to make mistakes. Human beings do make mistakes; we are not perfect. But I can assure you gentlemen that the mistakes are errors of judgment which are not due to incompetence on the part of the members of the commission or to a lack of good faith or a desire to help their fellow veterans. I do not think anyone—including myself and members of the commission—has any claim to exclusive interest in the welfare of veterans. I think there are many many people who have very great interest in the welfare of veterans, but I suggest to you that the members of the pension commission do have an interest in the welfare of veterans.

I think it is understandable that where a veteran makes a claim and this claim is supported by advocates and friends and his member of parliament and so on, if the claim is granted he does not and should not be expected to go to the trouble of writing to all the people who have been interested in his claim telling them that he has received a favourable decision at the hands of the commission. Some do, but the majority do not; they accept it and do not bother to tell everybody about it.

On the other hand, if the individual's claim is rejected, he naturally does write and complain about it. This is not unnatural; it is quite an ordinary thing to do and quite a proper thing to do. So people acting on behalf of these veterans are bound to gain the impression that all these claims are turned down or that section 70 is never used, or something like this, because they never hear of the claims that are granted, they only hear of those and receive complaints about those which are refused. This is something that is inevitable