

Mr. ELLIOTT: I just wanted to say a word in answer to some of the suggestions of the hon. member for Fort William. I think we are all agreed that the fullest possible measure of justice should be meted out to the men in this country at the present time who find themselves impaired in health and efficiency on account of their war service. But may I just point out to my hon. friend, who put the question more or less to me, that it is not a new question. It was discussed last year at considerable length with regard to reducing the age limit for certain classes, and the most pathetic appeal perhaps that came to the government during the whole course of that legislation was the appeal that was re-echoed by the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George this afternoon on behalf of the blind. There are several classes who feel, honestly and sincerely, that they should be entitled to come within the purview of this act, and at an age far below the seventy year limit. That matter was carefully considered last year, and it was thought to be unwise in the interests of old age pensions to attempt to make an exception on behalf of any one particular class. I think the House is fairly unanimous in regard to that at the present time.

I quite agree with what has been said by the member for Fort William, the member for Vancouver-Burrard and other hon. members. I know, having been Minister of Soldiers Civil Reestablishment for a time, how interested these hon. members are on behalf of returned soldiers, who certainly are entitled to every consideration. But may I call attention to the fact that the special committee that considered this question did not recommend a pension for those under seventy years of age—

Mr. CLARK: That point was never considered by that committee.

Mr. ELLIOTT: That was in 1924, when the war had been over for six years, and if it were not considered by that committee, that is not the strongest evidence my hon. friend could adduce that it was a very live issue so far as this bill is concerned.

Mr. McGIBBON: Nobody says that it is a live issue anywhere in Canada.

Mr. ELLIOTT: Perhaps my hon. friend will finish later on. May I call attention to the fact that in England up to 1925 there was no exception to the seventy year limit, and only after 1925 was the contributory provision introduced. Perhaps the strongest argument, and the one that must appeal par-

[Mr. J. W. Edwards.]

ticularly to those who have been looking after the interests of the provinces, is that raised by the hon. member for East Calgary and the hon. member for Red Deer, supported by the hon. member for Frontenac-Addington, that pensions for returned soldiers is a federal matter.

Mr. IRVINE: Is not that the very reason why it should be taken up here and in this bill? If we agree that service at the front has reduced the longevity of earning power of a soldier by five years, and he becomes indigent in Alberta at sixty-five, does it not fall upon that province to take care of him until he is seventy without any aid from the federal government at all? For that very reason I argue that we ought to provide for that class in this bill.

Mr. ELLIOTT: I cannot agree with my hon. friend, and I think on second thought he will agree he has taken an incorrect view of the situation. Whatever pension a man is entitled to on account of impaired efficiency due to war service must surely be a federal matter, and not a matter resting upon the provincial government. For the reasons given, I think that the bill will be in danger, and you are not assisting I believe the cause that we all want to assist, if you make any exceptions in favour of any particular class. The matter was considered, as I said, a year ago, and the best judgment of the whole House at that time was that it would not be wise at present to attempt to go further than to put through a bill that would give relief to those over seventy years of age.

Mr. McGIBBON: Would the minister seriously argue before this House that the qualification for a pension should be age limit rather than incapacity to earn a living? Surely the only justification for an old age pension is that a man's physical infirmities unfit him to earn a living. There is no other justification for it under heaven.

Mr. ELLIOTT: My hon. friend is quite right if he is dealing with inefficiency pensions, but this is an old age pension. Age is the basis of limitation.

Mr. McGIBBON: Surely the minister will not seriously contend that a man who is physically fit at seventy and can earn a living should have a pension, while a man who is physically unfit at sixty-five and unable to earn a living is not entitled to a pension.

Mr. MANION: I cannot agree at all with hon. members, whether they belong to my own party or other parties, who claim that the