

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Draftee E621251 was in very good health when he began his training. At Debort he contracted a bad case of the grippe, which finally affected his lungs. Finally he was discharged with two months' rest at home. The pension commission decided that he suffers from spontaneous pneumo-thorax, which arose during his service in Canada, but gives no right to pension according to section 11, paragraph 2 of the Pension Act, because the evidence does not establish that it is a consequence of his military service. Here it is admitted that he contracted this pneumo-thorax during his service; yet they deny him a pension. We have to fight that case, because it seems to me that the man should have his pension immediately, without any undue discussion.

Private E621922 had suffered from pleurisy of the right lung before his training. The military doctors accepted him just as he was. He was sent to Debort, where he had pleurisy of the left lung. While on leave he was X-rayed, and the plate was shown to the doctors at Debort, who told him that he could go home if he signed a renunciation of his pension. Actually he is convalescing at home, and the pension commission has not yet decided his case, which has continued since last year.

In October, 1942, soldier E100251 had shoes which were too small and injured his feet; his size was eight, and he had shoes which were sixes. He asked that they be changed, but the sergeant refused. He was kept on guard for several months wearing shoes which were too small for his feet. Finally he was taken to hospital, and was allowed five per cent for his pension, or \$3.75 a month. He is a big man, and suffers so much from his feet that during whole weeks he is unable to work. He is the father of a family.

One of the saddest cases I have is that of E554528. While this draftee was doing commando drill he was required to ride a motorcycle at Valcartier. He had never been on it before; the non-commissioned officer put it in high gear; the motorcycle went forward while he was sitting on it, overturned, and the soldier broke his leg, the femur and tibia, in three places. Several inches of his tibia were so badly broken as to resemble dust. After six months in the hospital he walks with difficulty, using a crutch and a cane. On September 27, 1943, the Minister of Pensions and National Health wrote me, "I have now the pleasure to inform you that the Canadian pension commission has granted this soldier the right to a pension for fracture of the femur and the left tibia." We are now in mid-April, and the man has got nothing yet. He went to Quebec city to see a doctor, who first told him

[Mr. Pouliot.]

that it was of no use for him to go to the hospital again, but afterwards offered to admit him. The soldier said, "You told me it was of no use for me to go to the hospital. What I want is my pension. They cannot give me another bone to replace the part which has been broken."

I am quoting these and they are enough to show that what is most urgent for the rehabilitation of veterans is not the creation of a new department but a change of personnel. That is the reform which is urgent and which the army is asking for. To replace the present department of pensions by a new department, if the personnel is the same, would only change the place of the evil. To improve the conditions of the veterans it is not necessary to change the law. The only thing needed is to understand it and apply it according to its letter and spirit.

The soldiers I have met are all totally indifferent to fine promises that may be realized at the time of the millennium. All they want to know is what will happen to them the day they are demobilized.

Mr. KNOWLES: We of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation would like to express approval of the general principle of establishing a department of veterans' affairs. From the point of view of efficiency of operation, we think it is a particularly good idea to bring all matters relating to veterans under the direction of one department, and because of that we have no hesitation in supporting the resolution that is before us at the present time. However, we want to point out that the creation of a new department, the setting up of machinery, and even the replacing of personnel in the department, as suggested by the last speaker, are not sufficient unless there goes with all these things a change of policy, and I would characterize the kind of change that is needed by using one word and saying that the policy should be far more generous in its treatment of veterans than has been the case thus far.

There are some things I should like to say of a general nature in connection with our proposal that the policy of the government towards veterans should be more generous, but before I do so I wish to report to hon. members something I learned a few days ago in the city of Winnipeg. I find that there are eight veterans of the present war on relief in that city, young men who have served in the forces, whose health or other conditions are such that they have had to be discharged, but for whom this government has made no provision. The conditions are also such that they are unable to secure employment. There they