

particularly the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. The national problem is the Canadian National pension fund. From time to time representations have been made to me in regard to the rules and regulations concerning this fund. These regulations are made by the directors of the Canadian National Railways, and the fund is administered by a board of seven members, four of whom are officers of the railway and three are elected from the ranks of recognized labour organizations of the Canadian National. The administration of the fund is under the superintendent of pensions, with the company in the position of trustee of the contributions. Generally speaking, the retirement age is fixed at sixty-five, with the pension fund regulations constituting a contract between the company and each employee. The basic pension provided for under sections 12 and 14 is \$300 per annum, which amount is provided at the sole expense of the company. Section 12 of the regulations reads:

Every employee who joins the service of the company hereafter before attaining the age of forty-five years shall, if he remains continuously in the company's service to age sixty-five, be entitled to receive upon his retirement a basic pension of \$300 per annum, which amount shall be provided at the sole expense of the company.

Section 14 reads:

Every employee in the service on January 1, 1935, who entered the service before attaining 50 years of age, and who at such date shall have had more than ten years continuous service shall, if he remains continuously in the company's service to age 65, receive upon retirement a service pension of such amount as is represented by one per cent of his highest average salary for any ten consecutive years multiplied by his years of continuous service at the said date. Such service pension shall be provided at the sole expense of the company. No employee shall be entitled to both a basic pension and a service pension.

My reason for bringing this matter to the attention of the minister is this, and I am sure other hon. members are in the same position. From time to time employees of the railway company complain regarding inequities in the regulations and anomalies in interpretation which have resulted in injustice to not a few; and the employees feel that under the interpretation of the rules they have not been fairly dealt with. The attitude taken by many is that in the interpretation of the rules the letter rather than the spirit is adhered to. Having regard to the rates of present-day pensions, the representations made to me on the part of many who are eligible for pension is that consideration should be given to an increase in the amount of the basic pension; secondly, that the provisions applicable today respecting the award-

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

ing of pensions are determined in large measure upon continuity of service. Where there have been breaks in the service under circumstances which, upon examination, are shown not to have been of a serious nature, it is recommended that a change should be made in the regulations to enable a small break not to be permitted to operate to the detriment of the employee. The third representation is that a number of changes should be made in general with regard to these provisions, details of which at the present time I am not going to place before the minister.

I make this appeal to the minister, because this fund is subject to recourse by all employees of the Canadian National railways who come within the ambit of its provisions. I think the minister would be doing a worthwhile act if he would let the employees of the railway know he would appreciate suggestions and representations from them individually as to changes which should be made in the pension regulations, and that, in particular, examples they have in mind, whether personal or otherwise, indicating that injustices have been done, should be brought to his attention to the end that recommendations might be made on the part of the board to relieve the individuals in question from the inequities which result from too strict an application of the regulations.

I believe, if the minister were to follow those suggestions, he would receive a large volume of representations, provided that the employees knew that when they make representations their identity would in no way be revealed to anyone else. On the basis of the composite representations which would come to his attention, suggestions might very well be made to those charged with the making of the regulations—and the power, of course, rests with the board—to make changes in order, not only to bring the regulations up to date in accordance with present-day conditions, but to remove anomalies in the interpretation which so often occur.

I make this suggestion to the minister because I realize he is as anxious as anyone can be to assure the maintenance of the morale of the employees of the Canadian National Railways who contributed so mightily, as did all railway employees during the days of war, to the victory which came to our country and the empire.

Railway employees gave their all; and when the story of the war, including the story of their contribution, is written, that contribution will stand alongside the service of all other sections of our community. These employees cannot speak directly to the minister;