

14-15 GEORGE V, A. 1924

Now, you say "On what grounds do you want this \$900?" and I merely turn to you and say, "On the ground of future security." Look here: I understand that this is an informal talk. I have not come here prepared to say anything very much; in fact in approaching Mr. Speakman this morning, who graciously lent his aid to us in this matter, and your committee who have so kindly given us this time this afternoon, I asked him as a matter of advice, I said, "What do you think would be the best move we could make at the moment to bring this matter to a conclusion?" and he suggested that we might meet the members of the Parliamentary Committee because, at first, I should have said that yesterday we had been honoured by a visit from the Honourable Minister of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, who was so kind to us and so gracious and so fine. He made to us a very wide statement. He said that there was no doubt at all as to the continuation of the bonus, and he said upon the finding of the Ralston Report—that report would be in turn handed over to your committee, and afterwards your committee would deal with this question of this bonus, and he said in conclusion, "Let me express the hope that the committee will report favourably"—that is, that they will include the bonus as a part of the permanent pension. We appreciated that immensely, but we saw and felt that perhaps if we were to let go this opportunity at this time we would not be doing altogether the right thing, and after digesting his remarks we decided that we should make some further effort, and to-morrow we meet the Cabinet, and we are going to place before them our case.

Now, we have sounded out public opinion. Hundreds of resolutions have been passed. Labour organizations are behind us; we had resolution one only the other day from 20,000 men. A resolution came in this morning from one of the large social organizations, fraternal organizations of this country. The Navy League at a meeting here yesterday graciously passed a resolution supporting us, so we have found that public opinion is practically unanimous as to our request. You might turn around and say "Well, this is a question of finance," but we are not asking you to spend one single dollar more than you are already spending. Now, the fact remains that up to the present time, in sounding out opinion, we knew that there was a request being made by resolution that there should be \$1 for every percent of disability, which would make the pension \$1,200 a year. We, as disabled men, come to the conclusion that we would be entirely satisfied if our security were promised for the future, and that we would be entirely satisfied with \$900.

Now, let me tell you a little story, just this. In gathering together in Ottawa, we did not know whether we were doing altogether the right thing in bringing these men here. Still, we wanted to do the right thing; our motives were sincere and honest. I was coming down on the train from Toronto the other night, and I could not help but notice these men as I went through the train, and I saw fully 70 men who had lost limbs or a limb, as the case may have been, sitting up all night coming to Ottawa. Why? Because every one of them was making a sacrifice. They were coming here because they were anxious, and we are asking you at the moment that if you consider our request an excessive request, that you should tell us. If you think that we are wrong, you should tell us, because we are tired of this agitation. We want to retire to our Club House—we have very fine quarters in Toronto—and take things easy. Believe me, it is not an easy task for a disabled man to be continually fighting for these things. It does seem to me strange that returned soldiers should have to come back to this country—I am merely giving you a personal impression—it does seem to me strange that we disabled men should have to be actually asking at this moment for compensation to recompense us for the loss of earning power. It does not seem to me right. I know that is the general feeling in our organization, and I think, Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, that you should give us at the present time some assurance. Perhaps you will say "We cannot give