

that they are medically unfit, that they should go to the federal department. When they go to the federal Department of Pensions and National Health they are told that their disabilities are not such as can be recognized for pensions, war veterans' allowance or unemployment assistance. Their plight is serious in that regard because of the general pressure now being exercised to reduce relief expenditure. For that reason I feel that the minister should not be too blunt in closing the door on negotiations with regard to this problem. The problem has not yet been solved. He rejects the recommendation of the commission in this respect, and if he does not suggest some satisfactory alternative the problem will assume more definite aggravation in the days to come.

I also wish to add a word in support of what has been said about the plight of imperial ex-service men in Canada. Everywhere there is pathetic evidence of their distress—men who, encouraged to come to Canada, have given every evidence of a desire to establish themselves as satisfactory citizens in our community, men who when they left the United Kingdom surrendered what advantages in the way of social services they might have enjoyed if they had remained in their own land. As a parliament we cannot deny all responsibility for their present tragic plight. I do not suggest that the Canadian government should assume full responsibility for their welfare; but I do suggest and urge that the minister take suitable action to enter into negotiations with the British government whereby, with a general cooperative effort, some provision may be made for their needs. Possibly at another time—the hour is growing late—we may have an opportunity of dealing more extensively with this particular problem, which is most urgently demanding our attention in all communities in Canada. The most conservative estimate I have yet seen of the number of imperial ex-service men in Canada is 76,000. I think we owe it to them at least to enter into negotiations on their behalf. The minister stated formerly that he did on one occasion while overseas, interview officials of the British ministry of pensions. May I suggest to him that a passing and more or less casual interview of that sort is hardly sufficient. We have records of negotiations successfully consummated previously with regard to those who served in imperial units, who had pre-war domicile in Canada. Part of that agreement is incorporated in the Pensions Act, part of it stands apart from the Pensions Act; but by reason of negotiations entered into by Canadian government officials it was possible that

when the problem has been fully stated on their behalf by the minister or some representative of the Canadian government we may find it possible to evolve some scheme which will ease the tension of the present situation. It is most unsatisfactory at the present time to find so many of these imperial ex-service men in want, in desperate straits, and with no direct avenue of negotiation on their own behalf.

I have just a word to say upon the discussion which took place earlier in the evening with regard to the employment of ex-service men on dominion government projects. In the house the other day some reference was made to the situation in Halifax. Only this morning I received a communication from an organization in that city stating that they have a definite grievance, that when the veterans' assistance commission sends a list of the unemployed ex-service men available for special improvement projects, this must be o.k.-ed by a representative of, or personally by, one of the sitting members for Halifax. When the list is o.k.-ed—on the basis of political considerations, as I am informed—it is then referred to Colonel Vince, the head of the local engineering branch of the National Defence department. A selection is again made from that list, and the definite complaint is that by reason of that procedure of selection civilians are actually placed on the work to the exclusion of veterans who are competent and available. They say that many of those in charge of projects frankly state that they are not prepared to employ ex-service men.

As I have stated, the ground has been thoroughly covered by the hon. member for Vancouver South, and I desire to place myself on record as indicating my support of all the recommendations of the veterans' assistance commission. I find it hard to believe, from what I know of the character of the men who composed that commission, and the nature of the inquiry conducted across Canada, that they would make this recommendation in respect of a provisional economic allowance unless they were earnestly convinced that there was no satisfactory alternative to solve this problem. May I, in closing, quote a few sentences from page 62 of their report:

We are convinced that we would not have done our duty if we failed to make recommendations that would cover them all—

Referring to the entire 15,000.

—and that if we recommended remedial legislation to cover only a portion of the unemployed veterans who saw service in a theatre of actual war, we would not have completed our difficult task.