

Supply—Pensions—Veterans

Pension appeal court, \$19,800.

Mr. MULOCK: I understand from a statement made the other day that there have been four more appointments to facilitate the hearings of these appeals. Is that correct?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: This is the pension appeal court item; that is under the pension commission.

Mr. MacINNIS: Where the pension board appealed from the findings in the first instance and the appeals were lost, from their point of view I should like to have some information regarding five cases that have been under consideration. One of them was settled last year and of the other four, one of the pensioners, a Mr. Smith of Vancouver, has written to me. These four are still waiting on the acceptance of the findings of the commission in their cases. Can the minister give me some information regarding these cases?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: These cases were decided as to entitlement and the matter is now receiving final consideration by the chairman of the pension commission. It came up the other day. Someone wrote to me and that was the information.

Mr. MacINNIS: The persons concerned may expect final settlement shortly?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: They will receive final consideration shortly, yes.

Item agreed to.

War veterans' allowances, \$2,250,000.

Mr. SANDERSON: How many are now receiving assistance from the war veterans' allowances?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: The total number in force on December 31 last was 6,755, and there were dependent allowances of 97.

Mr. SANDERSON: How does that compare with the year before?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: On March 31, 1934, there were 5,837. It is gradually increasing.

Mr. REID: What would be the cost if the age limit were lowered from sixty to fifty-five?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: If the age of entitlement were changed from sixty to fifty-five it would cost some two million dollars a year more.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: Has the minister before him the numbers in the two classes—that is, the class that are in receipt of allowance because they have arrived at the age of sixty, and the class that are in receipt of allowance because, although not yet sixty, they are so

[Mr. Sutherland.]

disabled mentally or physically as to be unemployable. The answer the minister gives will have a bearing on this question, because a large proportion come under the class who, though below sixty, are receiving allowance on account of disability that makes them unemployable, and that class would not increase by the lowering of the age of entitlement.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: Under sixty there are 2,065, and over sixty there are 4,690.

Mr. REID: In view of the fact that over two million dollars is provided for relief for unemployed pensioners, I wonder how many of those would come between fifty-five and sixty. It is true it would take two million dollars more if the age limit were reduced, but has the minister considered exactly what the actual cost would be provided those on relief were taken up and the limit lowered?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: This takes into account everyone who would be eligible between the ages of fifty-five and sixty whether on relief or not. If they were on relief they would be eligible for this if the age were made fifty-five.

Mr. POWER: Only yesterday I made inquiries of the officers of the department as to what the extra cost would be if the age at which the war veterans' allowance began were lowered from sixty to fifty, and I was told that next year instead of \$2,500,000 it would run to \$7,500,000, and within ten years the total expenditure on the upward curve would run into \$106,000,000 instead of \$42,000,000. These figures seem to be in the hands of the officers of the department and it would be well to have them known to the public before further agitation is carried on to lower the age from sixty to fifty. If the cost is only \$2,000,000 we may have an agitation, but if it is clearly shown that we shall move by leaps and bounds and that the very principle on which the War Veterans' Allowance Act was founded will be destroyed, then that ought to be made quite clear right at the beginning of any propaganda for lowering the age limit; because the principle on which this whole legislation was founded was the presumption that a man of sixty was likely to be incapable of earning a living. But I have never heard anywhere that a man of fifty was to be put aside as incapable—let us hope not, as I believe the Minister of Railways suggests. I think the country ought to know just what expense would be involved.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: The estimated expenditure during the coming fiscal year, as the act is at present, will be approximately \$2,500,000. If the age were changed to fifty-five it would cost \$4,500,000. For the period of