

# COMPENSATION TO DISABLED MEN.

## Far-reaching Schemes of Vocational Training.

At present about 50,000 pensions are administered by the Board of Pension Commissioners in Canada. The number will be considerably increased when all the men in military hospitals are brought home. According to the estimate of the Minister of Finance \$30,000,000 is a minimum sum to allow for yearly expenditure in the form of pensions to disabled Canadian men and the dependents of Canadians.

The Committee of Repatriation and Employment, in a very clear bulletin issued to explain the relationship of the several departments and boards to the national task of restoring Canada back from war to productive industry, gives the Board of Pension Commissioners understanding of what a pension is, in part, as follows:

### Compensation.

The idea is that the pension is not a gift from Canada as a reward for good services done. It is a compensation paid as a right by Canadians, through their Government, to those of their fellow citizens who have been incapacitated while performing public service. Its object is to enable its recipients to live, on equal terms and unhandicapped by their disability, in competition with their fellows who have not been incapacitated. It does not remove from the pensioner the obligation to be self-supporting and to provide for his dependents.

Compensation by the state to men disabled in the war is provided in several ways in addition to the awarding of pensions. Commendable work is being done by the vocational training branch of the Department of Civil Re-establishment. Patients are helped while they are in the military hospitals, by instructors who act in co-operation with the medical doctors. They are taught useful occupations, such as weaving and basket-making, but this kind of instruction is more for the purpose of helping to restore them to health. When patients are able to move about, however, they are induced to take part in practical class work, having a choice of wood-working, poultry-culture, motor mechanics, gardening, book-keeping, type-writing, and general education classes. Canada is credited with being in the forefront of the Allied Nations in the employment of this form of healing, called occupational therapy.

When the invalided men reach Canada, and while they are still under military hospital control, they are interviewed as soon as possible by representatives of the vocational training branch, who are themselves returned men. The interviewers get the necessary information with regard to the physical condition and the industrial experience of every invalided man, with a view to offering each man such assistance as he individually may require. Upon the advice of the Disabled Soldiers' Training Board, the returned man may then select a course of industrial re-education. The man's own previous experience is taken into account, so that, if possible, his early training may be of some service to him in the occupation he has decided to take up. It is stated that the industrial retraining courses are giving

every satisfaction; seventy-one per cent. of those who have taken the courses have been located by follow-up officers as successfully engaged in the occupations for which they were trained. The actual number of failures has not reached five per cent.

Vocational training is made possible for disabled men by the liberal policy of the Department of Civil Re-establishment, in supporting each man with pay and allowances adequate for himself and dependents, while he is taking the re-training course. While he is thus paid, he does not draw any pension allowance, but the degree of proficiency or industrial independence obtained through re-education is not allowed to influence, to the disadvantage of the man, whatever pension may have been awarded to him. The purpose of the state is to help the disabled man to earn a livelihood in addition to his pension.

Some of the courses of vocational training are given in established technical schools and University engineering and agricultural departments. New schools are also being equipped. Private companies, including railway shops, motor-car factories, sugar, steel, and other industrial enterprises are co-operating with the Department of Civil Re-establishment to give the disabled men the practical training they require. In some districts it is possible to combine the work in the schools with practical experience in the manufacturing industries. School training is given in the use of certain tools, in the operation of machines, and general education to enable the man more readily to take his place in the factory.

### A Special Department.

Up to the 1st of December, 1918, a total of 1,984 returned men had graduated from retraining courses, and have been placed in civil employment. On same date, 7,176 men had been officials approved for such courses. The Civil Re-establishment Department has also taken over a large number of institutions in the country for the care of men who do not seem to be ready for industrial re-education. There are at present 3,490 patients under treatment in over 150 institutions. These men are cared for by the Medical Services Branch of the Department. Occupational therapy, it is stated, is playing a big part in helping to restore the incapacitated men to health, and the vast majority of cases recover. Until it is decided that they are fit to take industrial re-education and become self-supporting, such cases are cared for in special hospitals. Discharged men who suffer from recurrence of disability are entitled to free medical care and hospital treatment as long as they live.

While the state cannot pretend fully to compensate the disabled Canadian men for the great sacrifices they have made in defence of Canada, and in the cause of justice, it is some satisfaction to know that everything possible is being done, so far as the state can help. There will never be a word of complaint from the loyal Canadian people because of any expenditure the Government may sanction to help the disabled men on their way back to health and economic independence.

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