

Supply—Veterans Affairs

for service to the men. From what I read in appendix A, I must say that the commission was entirely within its rights when it did devote its attention to the staff of the Shaughnessy hospital and the doctors employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, because those were the purposes which were set forth in the appendix. What needs to be explained is why in the world the appendix or the order in council had failed to set forth the real purposes for which the minister of veterans affairs had apparently given his word there would be an investigation.

Then, of course, the next thing the commission has to do is to explain why they did several other things that I have mentioned, and I expect the minister to give the committee and the country answers to these questions. Why was it that this commission saw fit to take the most important evidence on phonograph records that were never transcribed and rendered available to the general public? Why was it that the commission, having before them the job of investigating 62 cases, saw fit to call only four or five cases? Why was it that the commission saw fit to swear some of the witnesses and to leave a number of the witnesses unsworn; and, if my information is correct, to swear the very men who should not have been sworn and not to swear the men who should have been sworn? Then the next thing that the minister ought to explain is why the commission submitted to him and to the country a sketchy report in which we have their opinion instead of the evidence upon which they based their opinion.

Then I should like to ask the minister if he will tell us another thing, after he has had time enough to go into this matter—I am not expecting his answer today because he could not have known that a thing like this would be brought up, and consequently he is at a great disadvantage in attempting to answer what I have said—I should like the minister to tell us what he thinks can be done to guarantee justice to these 62 men who were evidently deprived of justice if the evidence of Mr. Kirchner submitted on their behalf is true; because this commission, either because of the terms of reference prescribing the duties set forth for the commission or because of the way the commission discharged its responsibility, neglected to look after that matter. There are 62 or 63 men there. I have the personal files of a number of these men in my possession, and Mr. Chairman, they constitute material that is a serious reflection on the Department of Veterans Affairs of those days. I shall be glad to bring down to the committee some of the evidence in support of some of these

[Mr. Blackmore.]

cases. I think the minister will not be able to square the department until he is able to take several of these cases at least and explain away the irregularities which are attributed to the Department of Veterans Affairs by the evidence of these men. I should like to know what he proposes to do now with respect to these 62 or 63 men so as to guarantee or to give them some sort of guarantee that they are going to receive justice.

Mr. Lesage: That is about forty minutes.

Mr. Blackmore: That is all right. If we spent five times forty minutes to clear up an abomination like this, we would be doing very well. This constitutes an outrage of the first magnitude, so far as I can see.

Then I think the minister ought to explain, as I have already indicated, in considerable detail, just exactly how it came about, if it is on record, that after the late Hon. Ian Mackenzie promised the house by implication on July 16, 1947 that a committee would be set up to examine into the charges which were laid by the hon. member for Acadia and the hon. member for Swift Current, he failed completely to keep the promise under the terms under which the commission was set up. This is the first that I have had to say concerning this matter, but it will not be the last, Mr. Chairman, in this session.

Mr. Blair: I am obliged to leave shortly in order to attend an important committee. As a member of the opposition, it is not my purpose to defend the government at any time, but I believe in telling the truth; and I think that those things which are good should receive attention. When there is something to criticize, I think it should be criticized.

I have before me the terms of reference of this committee and they are as follows. They were to report to the Minister of Veterans Affairs on:

- (i) the adequacy of the treatment provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs with respect to the cases concerning which Mr. Kirchner has made representations;
- (ii) the qualifications and competence of departmental doctors treating these cases; and
- (iii) the adequacy of pension consideration given to the cases concerning which Mr. Kirchner has made representations.

In so far as Mr. Kirchner is concerned, that is absolutely none of my business. He was a distinguished soldier, twice decorated for gallantry. But I am going to say this. Every person is not a psychiatrist; every person is not a surgeon, nor an orthopaedic man nor a man trained in the subject of internal medicine. With regard to the records being kept, I think that the hon. member who has just spoken would not want his history spread before the public on paper as the report of a