

This subject of appeals was the occasion of a great deal of controversy for nearly twenty years, and several procedures were attempted without achieving the desired results until in 1933 the Board of Pension Commissioners and the pension tribunals were abolished. In that year a new body was created known as the Canadian Pension Commission, with powers and functions similar to those of the Board of Pension Commissioners but with greatly enlarged personnel. Instead of three commissioners the Canadian Pension Commission was given no fewer than eight members who might be increased to twelve, with an added provision for the appointment of not more than five "ad hoc" members. The right of appeal to a separate pension appeal court was preserved.

Provision was made, however, that unsuccessful applicants should have the right to appear personally before a quorum of two commissioners who were to travel throughout the country and hear the applicants personally in public. The pension appeal court continued to exist until 1939, when it was finally abolished and the function of hearing appeals was conferred upon appeal boards consisting of members of the commission.

Present Procedure

To complete the discussion of this subject of appeals I should explain the present procedure for hearing pension applications arising out of former wars. When an application is made the commission gives what is known as a first hearing. The decision rendered at this hearing is based on the examination of the documentary evidence of file. If the decision is adverse the applicant is given the opportunity to make application, within three months, for a second hearing at which he may present a written argument and any evidence which he believes has been overlooked. Prior to second hearing he is furnished with a copy of the summary of evidence on file and he must list all disabilities with respect to which he wishes to claim. If the decision on second hearing is adverse the applicant has a right, within six months, to apply for a personal appearance before an appeal board consisting of three members of the commission. These appeal boards travel throughout the country and hear the applicants in person together with such other witnesses as they may produce. The decision of an appeal board is final.

Veterans' Bureau

In 1930 parliament adopted another important innovation in the interest of pension applicants. Provision was made for the establishment of a veterans' bureau, independent of the commission, the members of which were to function as advocates on behalf of pension applicants. This principle has steadily been developed, and today it is customary for most applicants for pension to go to the veterans' bureau and have their claims prepared by a trained expert who has no other duty or interest to serve than that of making the best possible presentation on behalf of the veteran. In this connection, I should not fail to pay tribute also to the admirable work of the adjustment officers of the various veterans' organizations in helping applicants to prepare their pension claims.

One of the tasks undertaken by the veterans' bureau is that of tracing down former comrades of the applicant who may have knowledge of incidents not recorded in the man's service file. Sometimes witnesses have been followed half way around the world and statements obtained from them corroborating claims which were otherwise without support except the bare statement of the applicant. Similarly copies of old records of treatment in prisoner-of-war camps and similar documents, often in possession of other governments and inaccessible to private citizens, are obtainable through this official channel.

Compassionate Awards

Returning now to amendments that flowed from the work of the Ralston Commission, we find that in 1923 and 1924 by progressive steps power was