

that while those other countries that have been raising their duties have been passing through more or less difficult times, this country, which has lowered its duties, is experiencing prosperity unprecedented and an expansion in trade unequalled by any other country in the world.

I want to follow my hon. friend, if I can, in the matter of brevity as well as on the various points on which he touched. My hon. friend next spoke of the Welland canal and denounced us for proceeding to build terminals before we were sure that all the necessary dredging had been done between the Welland canal itself and the point at which the terminals were being built. Then he asked what was being done, and said he would like to know if there were any negotiations in progress. If my hon. friend had asked that question first I think it would have been more logical. There are negotiations in progress. The waterway to the terminals, the connection between lake Ontario and Prescott, will be worked out in due time, but these matters involve international negotiations, and where international negotiations are involved they cannot always be completed within a given time. I can give my hon. friend the assurance that we are moving in the matter just as rapidly as circumstances will permit.

As to the paragraph in the speech from the throne dealing with railway matters, I think I had better leave that for the Minister of Railways and Canals to explain when he introduces his bill.

Mr. BENNETT: What bill?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: His measure with respect to the railways.

May I say a word as to the paragraph in the speech from the throne concerning legislation to be introduced in regard to war veterans and their dependents? Here let me say that I am just as anxious as my hon. friend and, I believe, as every other hon. member of the house, to have this question kept altogether out of party politics. I believe the policy that has been adopted in this house of having these matters referred to a committee on which there are representatives of all parties, and as far as possible representatives of the war veterans themselves, is the best possible way to deal with the returned soldier problem. The bill which will be introduced by the government will be referred to such a committee and will be dealt with by it. There has been a great deal of criticism of the pension board and the appeal board. Something was said this afternoon as to a Conservative government having introduced the legislation respecting the pension board. I had understood it was the Union government, but the

more we hear about the Union government the more conservative in character we find it to have been. However, so far as the pension appeal board is concerned, that body was created by the present administration. I remember hearing the late Mr. Fielding say on more than one occasion that he thought it was the first duty of any minister of the crown to defend those who are in the public service, that they were not in parliament where their own voices could be heard, and that where parliament assigned a duty to civil servants or to commissions it was part of the obligation of a minister of the crown to see that on the floor of this house ample justice was done their position. For that reason I wish to say that I believe the members of the pension board and the appeal board in the discharge of their duties have done what they honestly believed was what parliament expected them to do. I know personally the members of these boards and I cannot think of them as gentlemen who are hardhearted or who would wish to do other than what is right and just in every way. But they are restricted by legislation passed by this parliament. Possibly they construe the law rigidly and, on occasion, mechanically. If that is the case may I say I am in entire sympathy with my hon. friend opposite and with General Sir Arthur Currie and every other person who has spoken on behalf of the veterans, they feel that those boards should interpret the legislation in a generous way. Where a question of doubt arises as to whether or not disability is due to a man's service overseas, if it is a real doubt I for one believe the soldier should be given the benefit of that doubt, and I am confident that that is the will and the wish of the people of this country.

Mr. HANSON: But you did not vote for that principle.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend knows better than that.

Mr. HANSON: My leader pointed it out.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Let me say a word about what my hon. friend's leader said. This afternoon my hon. friend did draw the attention of the house to an amendment which he moved, I think, in 1927, the amendment was:

For the purposes of The Pensions Act the disability on discharge of an applicant for a pension who actually served in the theatre of war shall, in the absence of misrepresentation or concealment on enlistment, be conclusively presumed to be attributable to military service.

That was the amendment which was moved. What did the Minister of Pensions say in re-